



Marginalization in Morison's *The Bluest Eyes*

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Abstract

The concept of race, community was originally introduced in the field of history only to make a convenient way to refer to groups of human beings in different geographic locations, not with the intention of separating human beings into different levels or groups. In the beginning there were some distinct reasons why people liked to live in a group for safety and security from animals and sometimes from natural disasters, if they are in groups can help each other to come up from these difficulties, but gradually some distinct reasons took place and people chose group. Somehow these rotten beliefs have been deeply rooted in the mindset of the current generation for long. Discrimination on the basis of language, nationality, and color is still having its existence in many of cultured and so-called high-class people. Some writers turned their attention to raising these unending issues through their fictional and non-fictional works. Alice Walker, John Edger Wideman, Maya Angelou, Gloria Naylor, Ishmael Reed and Toni Morrison are some American writers who tried to give the glimpse of discrimination with African American people through their novels.

Keywords: Race, community, history, human groups, geographic locations, safety and security

1. Introduction

Toni Morrison, in her novel *The Bluest Eyes* which became very popular in 1970 manifested the toughest life of dark-skinned people among whites in America. In this research paper, the first chapter will deal with the concept of racism where a light is shed on some issues which are not only found in American African region but also throughout the world in various forms. Then the life and career of the writer, Toni Morrison is referred to in the same chapter.

In chapter two, a reference to the main theme of this paper, social discrimination, is made with the relation to the story of *The Bluest Eye* to refer to all the common people who are suppressed, marginalized, and neglected while having no faults of their own. Having different Color, features, and physic is not in control of human beings but still they are hatred on the basis of these trivial reasons. The story of the novel can be the story of any suppressed group or individual. **Keywords:** Stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, racialism. This study assessed the relevance and adequacy of the performance indicators to the strategic goals and evaluation report of one private school in Sharjah, UAE. It employs one case study framed after the PDSA model. Coding was used as a technique to content analyze texts from the school's BSC and further supported by a review of the minutes of the meeting and interview of the selected school leaders who have a hand in the performance monitoring. Research revealed that the performance indicators mapped out in the BSC are relevant, however, there are missing indicators for some educational factors identified in the school evaluation report. These are SOD learning achievement, lesson delivery, and planning, participation of the governing body, and performance monitoring by the school subject leaders. When these factors are not monitored, it will affect learning equity, internal locus of control, strategic leadership, and accountability. School leaders need to supply these factors

with relevant indicators, make the entire community aware of the performance measures and allow other school leaders to create their unique indicators being monitored regularly to support the organization's success

1.1 What is racism

Racism involves the belief in racial differences which acts as a justification for non-equal treatment of members of that race. The term is commonly used negatively. It is usually associated with race-based prejudice, violence, dislike, discrimination, or oppression; the term can also have varying and contested definitions. As a word, racism is an "-ism", a belief that can be described by a word ending in the suffix -ism, pertaining to race. The exact definition of racism is controversial both because there is little scholarly agreement about the meaning of the concept "race", and because there is also little agreement about what does and doesn't constitute discrimination. Critics argue that the term is applied differentially, with a focus on such prejudices by whites and defining mere observations of racial differences as racism. *The Bluest Eye* explores the tragedy of the oppression and internalized racism. This novel presents the story of two black families, Macteers and Breedlove. Both are poor African American families, though Macteer is a little better placed who have migrated from Alabama and Georgia (South American States) via Kentucky to Lorain-Ohio, an industrial state, in search of job. The novel shows clearly the evil of racism through the African adolescent female - like Pecola. She, like other African girls, suffered from the evils of racism and sexism in America which was dominated by the white. Pecola was an eleven year old poor, ugly and black girl who longed to have blue eyes. She also hoped that then she would get that love which she desired to get and it would reduce her sufferings in the quarrelsome atmosphere in her parents' house. She was raped by her own father and beaten by her mother because they had been

badly influenced by the vicious standards of the white world. She not only suffered as a black girl but also as an unprotected female. Morrison, who had sympathy for Pecola, was conscious of the neglect and exploitation of black African people by the white. A perusal of the novel *The Bluest Eye* creates an impression that Toni Morrison intertwines the concerns of two main themes in her novel *The Bluest Eye*. She explores the tragedy of the oppression or violation of children, especially poor children and she explores a problem specific to groups targeted by racism, that of internalized racism. This is a kind of thinking produced when members of the targeted group, in this case African-Americans, begin to believe the stereotypes about themselves and imagine that European-Americans are superior in beauty, morality and intelligence. Morrison focuses on this problem of internalized racism as it affects children. The psychological mechanism of internalized racism hinges on the cycle of oppressions.

1.2 Toni Morrison's Life and Career

Toni Morrison is one of the most renowned writers of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Morrison has written nine novels, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning work *Beloved* and the National Book Critics Circle Award-winning *Song of Solomon*. She won the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993, and the Nobel Foundation celebrated her as a writer "who, in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality". Some write for a lifetime and never accomplish the mastery of language and complexity of characters as created by Toni Morrison^[1].

Toni Morrison's brilliant collection of fiction provides a close look into African American communities. As part of her exploration of human relations, Morrison examines the complexities of motherhood and surrogate motherhood throughout her works. In particular, *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Song of Solomon* dramatize the lives of biological mothers and how surrogate mother figures help to maintain social stability in the African American "village," where community members assist in raising children—by obligation or by choice. Community members choose to follow the examples set by others by accepting the call to duty or the obligation to mother the motherless or to reinforce the mothering of another^[2].

The African American village is a variation on the African village system. Christel N. Temple's "Strategies for Cultural Renewal in an American-Based Version of African Globalism" discusses how the "United States is a prime setting for African cultural renewal because it offers a dynamic set of human and technological variables that can link our present to the foundations of our classical African past". African Americans maintain some African traditions because of their usefulness and because those traditions work as a tangible connection to the past. The notion of an extended family dates back to before the forcible separation of the Middle Passage as part of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Temple offers a geographical reference for the origins of the villages in that "our ancestors [came] from West Africa" where they were captured for slavery. Captives were often separated from biological family members. (Temple references Alex Haley's acclaimed film, *Roots*, with characters as examples of the original African villagers that were forced to become part of African American villages.) African Americans learn from accounts

of slavery that families who may have survived the Middle Passage without separation were later separated through slave sales and relocations once they reached America. Slaves would step in to fill the void left by another's missing family member (s), thereby creating a village. The village might well also exist in white communities, but the concept is more widespread and perhaps more acceptable in the African American community. Additionally, even before American Slavery, Africans practiced a village approach to child rearing. Children appreciated more than one mother figure and authority figure outside of their immediate household^[3].

The African American village evolved from the African village, but is not an identical twin to the original village dynamic. Audrey Lawson Brown writes on how an examination of "African-American life-ways concludes they derive mostly from ... post enslavement innovation" and imitation. African Americans added American influences to the African village model. Consisting of members of the immediate biological family as well as the combination of other neighboring families, the African American village takes on a variety of configurations. For multiple reasons, men grew increasingly absent in African American families. Men traded in African slave sales were more mobile than women because "women cared for the children and the elderly" in addition to handling domestic responsibilities. The subsequent absence of African American males resulted from men working long hours away from home, unwed parents, substance abuse, or any combination of reasons. Because men were often missing, women stepped up to take care of the children in the community. Biological and surrogate mothers relied on their own instincts and the support of the village in order to take care of their children^[4].

Born Chloe Anthony Wofford on February 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio, Toni Morrison was the second oldest of four children. Her father, George Wofford, worked primarily as a welder, but held several jobs at once to support the family. Her mother, Ramah, was a domestic worker. Morrison later credited her parents with instilling in her a love of reading, music and folklore^[5].

Living in an integrated neighborhood, Morrison did not become fully aware of racial divisions until she was in her teens. "When I was in first grade, nobody thought I was inferior. I was the only black in the class and the only child who could read," she later told a reporter from *The New York Times*. Dedicated to her studies, Morrison took Latin in school and read many great works of European literature. She graduated from Lorain High School with honors in 1949. At Howard University, Morrison continued to pursue her interest in literature. She majored in English and chose the classics for her minor. After graduating from Howard in 1953, Morrison continued her education at Cornell University. She wrote her thesis on the works of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, and completed her master's degree in 1955. She then moved to the Lone Star State to teach English at Texas Southern University^[6].

Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. It tells the story of a young African-American girl who believes her incredibly difficult life would be better if only she had blue eyes. The book received warm reviews but didn't sell well. Morrison continued to explore the African-American experience in its many forms and eras in her work. Her next novel, *Sula* (1973), explores good and

evil through the friendship of two women who grew up together. The work was nominated for the American Book Award^[7].

The concept of gender confliction is not something that considered as modern, from the romanticism which is the main movement in the eighteenth century had addressed the notion of identity and individuality in such ambivalence understanding. Thus such gender stereotypes which were founded to limit the personalities as Masculine or feminine were precisely the main idea behind this paper.

Feminine term which was used to describe the women in the Romantic era was only taken from the patriarchal framework especially when such term was held into an account the social limitation as well. The ideology that:

“Female role was labeled with the images of emotional weakness such as the fragile management of the situations; they are being projected as weak and inferior to men” (Claudia Carolina Prieto, 2015. P.11)

According to Laura E Berk in his book, *Child Development gender stereotype* is “widely held beliefs about characteristics deemed appropriate for males and females” (2003). She believes that gender roles are “the reflection of these stereotypes in everyday behavior” (Berk, 2003). Berns (1994) approves on the notion of gender role as “a constellation of qualities an individual understand to characterise males and females in his or her culture.” (Block, 1973).

The specific gender role term has been reused in different social and psychological studies by Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* in (1922). He mentioned that stereotypes are a “pictures in our head”. Lippmann claims that “people create representative of reality in their minds, and thus they respond to those representatives and not to objective reality”(Vu, 2008). And the reason behind that is “the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting to direct acquaintance. ... To traverse the world men must have maps of the world” (Lippmann, 1922). Some scholars have agreed with that statement like Stroebe & Insko (1989) considered stereotype as stable, simplified or prejudiced attitude toward particular social groups. While others, proposed “A stereotype is the perception that most members of a category share some attribute.” (Brown, 1995). According to Linda Brannon gender stereotype and gender role are extremely related.

“Consists of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics of, as well as the activities appropriate to, men or women. Gender roles are defined by behaviors, but gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity” (2004)

Gender stereotypes are very dominant; they impact on the conceptualizations of females and males and create social classifications for gender. These classes depict “how people think, and even when beliefs vary from reality, the beliefs can be very powerful forces in judgments of self and others” (Linda, 2004). Consequently, the history, construction, and purpose of stereotypes are significant topics in realisation the influence of gender in people’s way of life.

In a study conducted by Deborah Gorham which was titled *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* in (1982) where she examined the role of females during the victoria era hence she highlighted the notion of “Feminine” which was used to address the women. She stated that:

“Women of those times were seen as objects that complemented men; and on the contrary in the romantic era

which appeared a certain hints of emancipation. The general quality of the terms which might be associated with the reinforcement of women’s subordination as they must behave appropriately and also adopt the behaviors fit for their sex” (P. 85)

The notion of masculine identity which recognizes the significance of the social an economic diminution in creating gender identity for both men/women, the difference of identities can be measured with the power location (Connell, 1995. P. 35). The Hegemonic masculinity which is considered the popular term in every society, this image of “what a man should be or how he should look like” can be seen idealized by social media and even literature.

“If we look at the older culture we see immense and focused efforts going into the raising of boys [...] rituals, teaching methods and processes which have only feeble equivalents in our culture. The Sioux hunters and the Zulu warriors’ even gods and heroes lived glorious lives and cared for and protected their people and their world. Why should a modern man be any less of a man than his ancestors if he wasn’t suited to the masculine list?” (Biddulph, 1994. P.12)

In many studies regarding the male and female identity, certain aspects which became popular statements others might define them as common sense understanding of what a man and woman should be. *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by the English author Emily Brontë, it’s her first and only novel which attracted a lot of attention and considered to be part of the English Romantic-classic literature. In a gothic style the story describes an Orphan who is named Heathcliff as he witness change within from innocence into harsh curl hated and revengeful man. At the end of the story he finally wakes up from the evil within and start to fix his life by preserving his love with the heroine Catherine Earnshaw. The most interesting element in the story which is the setting, the novel only sets in two old mansions. The first mansion which is located in *Wuthering Heights* is a beautiful place surrounding by nature and raw life; the other mansion which named the *Thrushcross Grange* is covered by green garden and high walls.

The story is being told in the late 1801 about a humble man named Lockwood, he is looking to rent a house which is called the *Thrushcross Grange* which is located in the far countryside of England. In there he meets the landlord which is a young and wealthy woman named Nelly Dean who is staying at the old Manor house of *Wuthering Heights*. Lockwood asks Nelly to tell him the story behind *Wuthering Heights*, and she starts to recall her childhood as a simple servant working in the old Mansion. The owner at that time named Mr. Earnshaw, as he goes to Liverpool one day and comes back with a young brown orphan named Heathcliff. The two children named Hindley and Miss. Catherine of Earnshaw didn’t like young Heathcliff however, Catherine and Heathcliff started to love each other and they grew inseparable. After the death of Mr. Earnshaw who preferred Heathcliff, the mansion and the Range are being inherited by Hindley and he started to treat Heathcliff like a common servant. After suffering for a long time all the characters dies from hate and revenge where no one is left happy or fulfilled.

In 2011 a thesis by Ala’a Abdulkareem named “A Psychoanalytical Reading of Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*”, in this study she examined the psychological insights in the text which are considered as “Strikingly Modern” (P.1) each of the characters carries a certain

ambiguity and the power of wickedness yet, they also display a kind of defense mechanism to preserve their mental and psychological stability which was the focus of this study.

“Heathcliff’s suffering throughout the novels has created a conflict between his conscious and unconscious mind. This suffering is resulted in the adoption of defense mechanism as these are repressed, and in constant denial also projection. Also Catherine which display a psychological ambiguity as there is a contrast between what is saying and how she behaves” (P.5)

A thesis by Wraida Marai Imsallim (2014) titled “Symbolism and Imagery in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*” this study had investigated the different forms of images and symbolizes in the text which are being viewed from different angles.

“The surroundings or rather our perception of our surroundings reflects and effects directly upon the personal growth, therefore symbols and images in literature hold much more significance than mere physical presence as they hold within the story of character’s evolution throughout the novel” (P. 103)

Furthermore, a journal article titled “The Aesthetic Concept of the Beauty in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*” by Mohammad Hussein Oroskhan and Esmaeil Zohdi in (2015), this study was dedicated to inspect the application of Edmund Burke main concepts of beauty and aesthetic in literature. This study had drawn the attention to the slandered of beauty and identity at classic England and modern England where it mentioned that:

“In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff, Hindley, Hareton and Joseph are all types of the sublime while Isabella, Cathy and Frances are all considered beautiful. The fact that Edger Linton and Linton Heathcliff cannot be considered as sublime because of their soft and small features which was oppose with the male slandered beauty” (p. 110)

Finally, a thesis titled “The confluence of Gender and its Influence: Towards a new vision of Characterisation in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*” in (2015) by Claudia Carolina Prieto Prieto. In this study the elements of female and male identity were closely being recognized and centered, the female element in the story which was positioned in front of the male identity as supreme had being emerging in the late Romantic era literary texts.

“In *Wuthering Heights* where women are appreciated as agents and at the same time as submissive characters” (P. 4)

2. Marginalization in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

The Bluest Eye is Morrison’s first novel depicted by Harold Bloom in his book *Bloom’s Guides: The Bluest Eye* (2010) as “*anything but a novice work*”^[1]. Bloom’s opinion comes as an agreement with Micheal Wood’s suggestion that *The Bluest Eye* is “*a lucid and eloquent narrative*”^[2]. Because: Each member of the family interprets and acts out of his or her ugliness, but none of them understand that the all-knowing master is not God but only history and habit the projection of their own numbed collusion with the mythology of beauty and ugliness that oppresses them beyond their already grim social oppression^[3].

The cycle of oppression is a complex phenomenon that affects all people who are touched by oppressive systems, whether they are assigned the role of oppressor or oppressed. The child is oppressed and because she is a child. She/he is unable to combat or resist her/his oppression.

She/he is taught to react to injustice and hurts with different kinds of disempowered responses - silence, selfabuse, depression, and rage. When the child grows up in this oppressive system, her/his position often shifts and she/he assumes the role of the oppressor. This cycle is especially clear when seen in the oppression of children, but it is also visible in the oppression of groups of people based on their ethnic identity. In *The Bluest Eye*, the oppressors of Pecola have themselves been hurt by oppressive adults and/or racist ideology. Morrison is very careful to point out that people are not born with the tendency to hurt other people; instead, they are taught to do so when they themselves are hurt. A perfect example of this phenomenon is Pauline, Mrs. Breedlove. She is rejected by the women in the Lorain community because she bears the marks of her colour and class too overtly. She wears the clothing of country people and speaks with a southern accent. Pauline responds by adopting the oppressor’s discourse, particularly the discourse on physical beauty. Measured against it, Pauline is ugly and her white employers are beautiful and deserving of all her care and love. Pauline, thereby, accepts her assigned role on the hierarchy of colour, beauty and privilege. This role leaves her incapable of caring for her daughter or anyone in her family. According to its script, they do not deserve any of her care. Pecola is born with this ideology of racialized beauty. She doesn’t have a chance from the beginning. Her mother has placed all her care in her job and she has internalized the message that black is ugly and white is beautiful to such an extent that she sees Pecola as an ugly ball of black hair when she is born. She and Cholly seem to have given Pecola no love and nourishment. They are so preoccupied with their own war on each other that they never seem to notice the damage it is causing their daughter. Echoing the situation of the Breedloves is that of the MacTeers. Morrison constructs these two families as a sort of plot and subplot along the lines of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The MacTeers do not have it as bad as the Breedloves do. While the parents seem to be quite embattled by poverty, they retain their allegiance to their home. Mr. MacTeer regards it as his steadfast duty to provide for his family and to ensure her daughters’ upbringing in the accepted morality of their time. Neither parent has the time or the emotional energy to nurture their daughters. They treat Claudia and Frieda as pieces of furniture, which are inconvenient, but necessary to care for. Mrs. MacTeer treats them with rough care, but cares nonetheless. She dispenses punishment arbitrarily and too swiftly, not recognizing their physical or moral integrity. She stops short of abusing them for the mere sake of releasing her own pent up frustrations. When Frieda is sexually molested by Mr. Henry, her parents believe her story and act on it swiftly, punishing Mr. Henry, and leaving Frieda to draw her own conclusions about what it meant. Mrs. MacTeer, unwittingly, foists on her daughters the ideology of white supremacy when she gives them white dolls, as Christmas gift, to love and cherish, but she never says directly that her daughters are ugly: Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window sign - all the world had agreed that a blueeyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. ‘Here,’ they said, ‘this is beautiful, and if you are on this day “worthy” you may have it (Morrison 20-21). The MacTeer family seems to represent the mainstream African- American family in Lorain, Ohio at the time the novel was set. Most African-Americans were poor, and most attempted to make it by adopting the code of

respectability. The poor treatment of children was the norm, but the violation of children's innocence was done ideologically more than physically. The Breedlove family represents all the faults of this African- American community writ large. In structuring her novel in this way, Morrison avoids the simplistic analysis which would simply regard the Breedloves as an unfortunate aberration. Instead, they are the logical extension of the norm. Thus, Toni Morrison dealt with the serious problem of racism and sexuality of the black Africans who were living in America. They were much neglected and exploited by the men and women of white- skin against the black-skinned people in that great country. She was perfectly aware of and deeply concerned about the conditions of over-poverty, suppression and exploitation of those Africans in America. In this way, she had clear consciousness of the interrelationship of race, gender and class as Friere has argued, "Indeed, the interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppress them... for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated" (Friere47). You won't find half so much fault in me if you think of me in my forge dress with my hammer in my hand or even in my Pip" (p. 205)

The method in which Joe expressed himself to his best friend Pip displays the difference between the two different worlds and personalities. Joe understands his realities and for that he accept it yet Pip rejects who he is and desire to change it.

Pip tries to mimic the same life style of Miss. Havisham and Estella as they represent the level in which he desires to be; at the same time he rejects Joe and his sister as they represent the person that he tries to forget or denies. His journey for the new self-started when he was invited to Miss. Havisham's house, this invitation wasn't just limited to the location but also for new identity hence, Pip starts his inner and physical transformation as he lost the reality of his social and individual identity. The house affected him greatly as he goes into the new world and being faced with new life possibly.

"I fully believe it.so there can be no competition or perplexity between you and me. And as to the condition on which you hold your advancement in life - namely that you are not to inquire or discuss to whom you own it" (P.323)

Pip knows that his choice of leaving everything behind and starting fresh is considered risky, but he also gives an example of trying to destroy one's limitations and creating new ones

"We change again, and yet again, and it was now too late and too far to go back, and the world lay spread before me" (P.146)

When Pip discovered the truth behind the sender of the money his new identity is being shattered along with it. The dream of climbing the social ladder which he had built for himself has collapsed with his new founded self. From the name of the story the matter of escaping ones identity is just a simple expectation not reality. Pip's search for individuality and selfhood was ended since he rejects to learn that the being a gentleman is an internal change rather than the external imagery of self thus, he mentioned how things have changed and how they are differ now

"Finally, I remember that when I got into my little bedroom, I was truly wretched, and had a strong conviction on me that

I should never like Joe's trade. I had liked it once, but once was not now" (P.96)

Furthermore, the main female character which is Miss. Havisham is considered yet another example for Dickens Liminal characters, after getting rejected in her wedding day she remained liminal in her own traumatic space

"The marriage day was fixed, the wedding dresses were bought, the wedding tour was planned out, and the wedding guests were invited. The day came, but not the bridegroom. He wrote her a letter ... which she received I struck in when she was dressing for her marriage" (P.321)

After getting rejected in the way Miss. Havisham keeps wearing her wedding dress and refuses to take it off. People thought that she was mad but according to Dickens it's just another self-imprisonment for liminal individuality.

Both Pip and Miss. Havisham are looking for their true identity and existence in the progression of their personal problems to settle into that one specific identity which goes under the issues of social class and social perception. The story expressed the emotional struggle and the psychological oppression for desiring and achieving a better life. To create and to challenge the established limited world in order to establish a new one by this transforming who we once were to what we ought to be.

3. Conclusion

The Bluest Eye is an indication of Pecola's suffering in her life and it concludes that the individual is the result of his/her society and in a way or another is influenced by the community's ideals regarding anything. Hence, Pecola is the victim of her community's criterions of ideal of beauty. Not having the demanded criterions of the ideal of beauty makes Pecola feel as if she were dead in an alive surroundings. She does not endure her life facing her failure to get love and respect for not accomplishing the ideal beauty features. Pecola, in her giving up, shows her weak personality and her inability to face her problem of being a black person in a world of white people. She gets shelter in madness. Her madness can be regarded as a psychological suicide by which she achieves her dream of having blue eyes and white skin.

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