

University of South Dakota

USD RED

Dissertations and Theses

Theses, Dissertations, and Student Projects

5-2021

**A NARRATIVE CRITIQUE OF THE FILM LOVING (2016): HOW
NARRATIVES HELP US UNDERSTAND STANDPOINT AND SOCIAL
CHANGE**

Chesney Jo Garnos

Follow this and additional works at: <https://red.library.usd.edu/diss-thesis>

**A NARRATIVE CRITIQUE OF THE FILM *LOVING* (2016): HOW NARRATIVES
HELP US UNDERSTAND STANDPOINT AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

By

Chesney J. Garnos

B.A., University of South Dakota, 2019

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

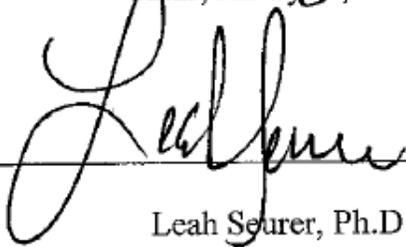
Department of Communication Studies

Communication Program
In the Graduate School
The University of South Dakota
May 2021

The members of the Committee appointed to examine
the thesis of Chesney Garnos find it
satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.



Chair, Jill Tyler, Ph.D.



Leah Seurer, Ph.D.



Timothy Schorn, Ph.D.

Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge my thesis committee for the hours of advice, support, and time each offered me. First, I would like to thank Dr. Jill Tyler; I am grateful to have gained a lifelong mentor and friend in the academic world. You always gave me the reassurance I needed. Second, thanks to Dr. Kelly McKay-Semmler for her guidance, knowledge, and patience; I appreciate your constant navigation, as I could not have asked for a better navigator while obtaining my degree. Next, Dr. Leah Seurer, your classes have provided me with much broader knowledge that has deeply influenced my research and has taught me to gain an understanding of other people's narratives. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Tim Schorn for serving as a mentor on my thesis committee and impacting my education over the past seven years. Your mentorship and classes have encouraged me to advocate for human and social rights, unlocking a deep passion I was unaware I had until higher education.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis, first, to all the individuals who have fought against societal norms to pave a better path for future generations. Additionally, to all the individuals who have interracial and intercultural relationships. May you continue to build relationships filled with understanding, love, and growth. I dedicate this thesis to my family, friends, colleagues, and all of those who have helped me stay mentally sane along the way. Most importantly, I dedicate this thesis to my parents. Dad, you have taught me that no dream is ever too big to achieve and have pushed me to continue my education. Mom, you have taught me to, above all, treat everyone with love and kindness. I owe you both my thanks.

ABSTRACT

The film *Loving* (2016) portrays the true story of the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) plaintiffs in a narrative that individualizes the struggle against institutionalized oppression through a story of a couple's love. This paper will show how (1) the narrative elements in the film *Loving* (2016) combine to influence the viewer's understanding of social acceptance of interracial marriage in the United States; (2) the film's depiction of Mildred Loving's role in advocating for interracial marriage demonstrates the significant tenets of standpoint theory. This paper uses narrative criticism (Fisher, 1985) as a method of analysis and feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1986) from the field of communication studies to examine the film *Loving* (2016). Additionally, this paper will include the history of the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) plaintiff's case and illustrative scenes from *Loving* (2016). When critically examined, this analysis shows the powerful influence of narratives in influencing viewers' opinions on social issues.

Keywords: interracial marriage, *Loving* (2016), *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), narrative criticism, feminist standpoint theory, film

Thesis Advisor



John Tyler, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Thesis Committee Members.....	i
Acknowledgment.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Literature Review	
Introduction.....	4
Background of Interracial Marriage in the United States.....	5
Demographic Diversity.....	11
Narrative Criticism.....	16
Feminist Standpoint Theory.....	19
Chapter Two: Methodology	
Methodology (Procedures).....	28
Research Questions.....	37
Chapter Three: What narrative elements in the film <i>Loving</i> (2016) influence the viewer’s understanding of social acceptance towards interracial marriage in the United States?	
Introduction.....	38
Narrative Elements in the Film.....	38
Chapter Four: How does this film depict Mildred’s role in the advocacy towards interracial marriage? How does her role demonstrate central tenets of feminist standpoint theory?	
Introduction.....	45

Mildred's Role.....	45
Mildred's Advocacy.....	57
Chapter Five: Conclusions	
Introduction.....	58
Discussion of the Results.....	58
Limitations.....	59
Further Research.....	60
Conclusion.....	61
References.....	63

List of Tables

Table 1

This table shows the permanent repeals of anti-miscegenation laws by each State.

Permanent Repeals of Antimiscegenation Laws, by State

<i>Never had such laws</i>	<i>Repealed before 1900</i>	<i>Repealed after 1900, before Loving</i>	<i>Repealed after Loving</i>
Alaska	Illinois (1874)	Arizona (1962)	Alabama
Connecticut	Iowa (1851)	California (1948)	Arkansas
Hawaii	Maine (1883)	Colorado (1957)	Delaware
Kansas ^a	Massachusetts (1843)	Idaho (1959)	Florida
Minnesota	Michigan (1883)	Indiana (1965)	Georgia
New Hampshire	Ohio (1887)	Maryland (1967)	Kentucky
New Mexico ^a	Pennsylvania (1780)	Montana (1953)	Louisiana
New Jersey	Rhode Island (1881)	Nebraska (1963)	Mississippi
New York ^b		Nevada (1959)	Missouri
Vermont		North Dakota (1955)	North Carolina
Washington ^a		Oregon (1951)	Oklahoma
Wisconsin		South Dakota (1957)	South Carolina
		Utah (1963)	Texas
		Wyoming (1965)	Tennessee
			Virginia
			West Virginia

^a Had laws, but repealed them before statehood.

^b Had a law against interracial sex when it was a Dutch colony (New Amsterdam).

Fryer, Roland, G Jr. 2007. "Guess Who's Been Coming to Dinner? Trends in Interracial Marriage over the 20th Century." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21 (2): 71-90.

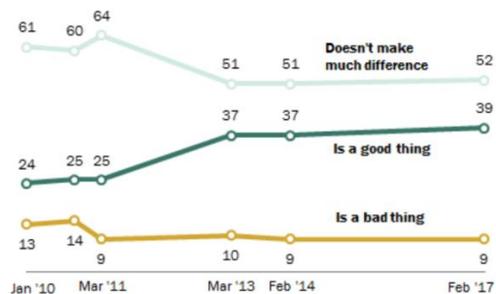
List of Figures

Figure 1

This figure shows the rising prevalence of interracial marriage and attitudes towards it.

Americans more likely to say interracial marriage is good for society than in 2010

% saying more people of different races marrying each other generally ___ for our society



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown. Trends from March 2011 to February 2014 asked about "American society" instead of "our society."

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 28-March 12, 2017.

"Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Brown, Anna, and Livingston, Gretchen (2017). *"Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 years after*

Loving v. Virginia. Pew Research Center". Retrieved on 30 October 2020 from

[https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/05/18/intermarriage-in-the-u-s-50-years-after-](https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/05/18/intermarriage-in-the-u-s-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia/)

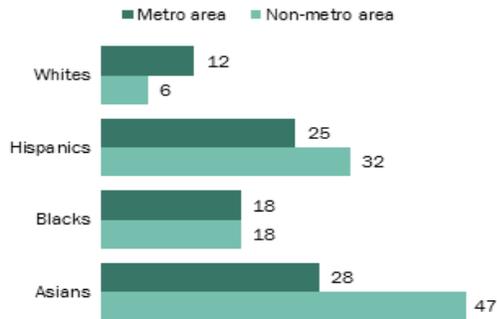
[loving-v-virginia/](https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/05/18/intermarriage-in-the-u-s-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia/)

Figure 2

This figure shows intermarriage rates in metro and non-metro areas.

Whites in metro areas twice as likely to intermarry as those in non-metro areas

% of U.S. newlyweds who are intermarried



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2011-2015 American Community Survey (IPUMS). "Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

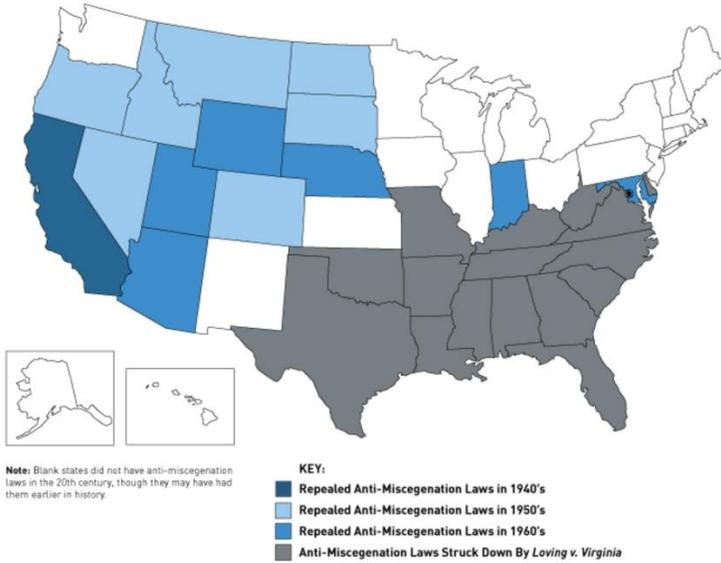
Brown, Anna, and Livingston, Gretchen (2017). *“Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 years after*

Loving v. Virginia. Pew Research Center”. Retrieved on 30 October 2020 from

<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/05/18/intermarriage-in-the-u-s-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia/>

Figure 3

The map below shows the progression of repealed anti-miscegenation laws by state laws which were overturned by the Supreme Court decision in Loving v. Virginia (1967).



Map - the leadup to loving. (n.d.). Retrieved April 19, 2021, from

<https://www.aclu.org/other/map-leadup-loving>

A Narrative Critique of the film *Loving* (2016): How narratives help us understand standpoint and social change

Over the years, marginalized groups and voices in the United States have often been misrepresented or misinterpreted in various media channels, including films. Hollywood films have dominated the movie and television industry for years. The films can be seen as forms of rhetoric as they advance a way of living in the world. As one narrative scholar noted, popular movies are the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves (Cutting, 2016). Critical rhetorical studies have paved the way for traditionally marginalized voices, often people of color and females, to be heard through narratives (Bacon & McClish, 2009). Analyzing and understanding traditionally marginalized voices through the film is crucial to understanding the history and the foundations of our communities today concerning *Loving* (2016). Rhetorical studies focus on how communication influences an audience; in other words, it helps viewers interpret their collective social world and find meaning and understanding. To further emphasize the viewpoints of oppressed groups, narrative analyses can investigate the stories of oppressed individuals. Furthermore, narrative analyses can provide answers on how oppressed individuals and or groups have created societal change.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) United States Supreme Court Case, Jeff Nichol's film *Loving* (2016) was released. The Hollywood romanticized biography depicting Richard and Mildred Loving's story, the plaintiffs in the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case, portrays the significant cultural and social dialogue of the Loving's story. The film tackles interracial relationships with the landmark civil rights case that changed the trajectory of interracial marriage in the United States. Films that translate legal history are particularly

impactful because they show the viewer representations of true-life events. In the film, hegemony is present; generally speaking, one group's leadership or dominance over another is known as hegemony. The representation carried out through the film's characters, Richard and Mildred Loving, provides the couple's story of love conquering and pushing back against a hegemonic discourse of the 1950s and 1960s. *Loving* (2016) presents various challenges Mildred and Richard face; the law enforcement and people in the position of power are predominately White, who enforce laws that they believe will benefit them the most. Today, hegemonic discourse continues; hegemonic discourse adversely constrains women's ability to be empowered in the world (Haynal, 2014). Additionally, race factors into hegemonic discourse. While legal barriers between different races have disappeared, hegemonic racist discourses continue to be present in our current society and culture (van Schijndel, 2019). Hegemonic discourse is constructed through struggles in which various political actors are competing to reach the dominant interpretation through the articulation of identity and meaning; the concept of dislocation plays a significant role. Mildred, as a woman of color, experiences these hegemonic struggles, and is dislocated due both to her race and gender. One of the forms of hegemonic discourse that ruled over the Loving's case was the United States governmental system. Today, that government system is still present and is the current ruling class. This power can be either an advantage or disadvantage depending on one's viewpoint. While interracial marriage has become legalized in the United States, there remains bias around interracial marriage. Additionally, gay marriage has faced similar stereotyping despite being legalized in the United States through similar processes used in the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case.

Loving (2016) presents a formerly decided legal narrative through a film narrative. The film provides scholars the opportunity to examine how the narrative elements of this film *Loving*

(2016) may impact social perceptions, viewpoints, and culture. I will argue that *Loving* (2016) helps normalize the social experiences and acceptance of interracial marriage outside of the film. This thesis identifies the importance of Mildred's role in initiating legal and political responses to laws forbidding interracial marriage. Mildred's character demonstrates feminist standpoint theory by showing her ability to perceive the injustice of miscegenation laws from her unique position in society as a Black-Native woman in love with a White man. Her character is important to analyze to better understand interracial marriage in the 1950s and 1960s from the perspective of a woman of color, as well as how a woman challenged hegemonic discourse. This analysis argues that the White male prohibition of interracial marriage was more than just a law but was an exercise of power enforced by the dominant group, ultimately designed to perpetuate the idea that Blacks were inferior and therefore entitled to fewer rights.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Introduction

Retelling history through narratives allows for creative control in deciding what to include and exclude from the historical narratives. When these stories are retold, it enables narratives to reinforce dominant power structures that exist in our society. Through narratives, viewers can better understand how individuals within narratives can change perspectives and viewpoints on particular events in history; it will allow societies to better understand how historical events have impacted cultural change. Narratives, especially narratives regarding legal cases, have a powerful impact. Films that present legal history are particularly impactful because these events can provide compelling narratives and historical accounts. Plaintiff narratives that are shared allow the audience to understand the narrative through a specific lens or paradigm. Creating narratives that promote the acceptance of “taboo” subjects such as race and sexuality can be highly impactful in accepting and understanding these subjects. It helps these “taboo” subjects become normalized. In this film’s specific case, it helps normalize the relationships of interracial marriage. “While a film may appear highly realistic, implicit are ideological decisions that instruct viewers on what to value, how to interpret socio-political messages presented, and how, in light of these lessons, to act as individuals with agency within those systems” (Doherty, 2017, p. 696). Because movies can be seemingly realistic, it is important to note that the film *Loving* (2016) is told through the plaintiffs’ narrative. Since the movie *Loving* retells the plaintiffs’ narrative, it primarily affects social and cultural conceptions of the law's values and how the values of the law are upheld moving forward (Silbey, 2005).

The section below outlines the background and history of interracial marriage in the United States. It explains how narrative criticism and standpoint theory can be used to analyze

the narratives of the past. The section outlines how historically, women have had to respond to hegemonic stereotypes of race and womanhood that have caused amplified adversity in their day-to-day lives. The film *Loving* (2016) allows the narrative to portray characters who have been oppressed, which helps the viewer understand how a Black woman could push back against racist hierarchy to influence change. The power of feminist standpoint theory in this narrative is the way that Mildred can see different standpoints – she knows that the sheriff will not let her out, she knows that she and Richard will be arrested after their baby is born, she knows that the political system (as personified by Bobby Kennedy) is responsible for changing laws, she knows that the ACLU has an interest in changing the laws, and she knows that media exposure, while it may be uncomfortable for them, is necessary to change public perceptions. Mildred is not uniquely oppressed as a woman by these laws; she is uniquely capable of addressing these laws. This film allows communication scholars to analyze how Mildred's standpoint created a unique opportunity for change in American society regarding interracial marriage. Overall, narrative critiques focus on the oppressed voices who have had to resist domination. It is important to factor in Mildred's unique role and position. While there were other Black women in the film, Mildred provides insight that no other Black women in the film can. For example, Mildred's aunt in Washington D.C. is in the same social location as Mildred for part of the film. What makes Mildred's position different from her aunt's position is Mildred's family dynamic. More specifically, Mildred has a White husband and biracial children. With this unique position, Mildred experiences different forms of bias and oppression from not only the patriarchal system that is the ruling class during the time of this film, but even from her own family members as well.

Background of Interracial Marriage in the United States

To help understand the history of interracial marriage in the United States, it is important to understand the background of migration to the United States. Slavery became the prominent way of life in many places in the United States, especially in the southern parts of the U.S. When slavery replaced indentured servitude as the primary source of labor in the northern regions of the South during the last decades of the seventeenth century, Whites began to work in close contact with Blacks (Fryer Jr., 2007). Since Whites and Blacks started working so closely together, some individuals became intimate with one another. Moran states that coworkers became intimate and blurred the color line (2003). Many individuals during the time did not find these actions appropriate, namely wealthy White men in positions of legal privilege and power, this leading to the development of antimiscegenation laws (laws that forbade marrying across racial lines). Virginia was one of the first to enact statutes that punished Whites for racial fraternization during times of slavery in the United States (Battalora, 2013); the law instructed that a White spouse be banished from the colony within three months of an interracial wedding (Fryer, 2007). Over time, the laws against interracial marriage gave rise to social taboos in American society. Not only did this social issue become taboo for Whites and Blacks, but individuals of other races as well (Brown & Livingston, 2017).

History of Romance and Regulation

While there was romance, there was also regulation. In the United States, antimiscegenation laws differed by state. Table one shows the permanent repeal of these laws (Fryer, 2007). In the first column, twelve states never had antimiscegenation laws. The second column shows the states that repealed antimiscegenation laws before the 1900s. The third column shows states that repealed their antimiscegenation laws before the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). The passage of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1868, which

attempted to make sure that slaves would receive citizens' rights by requiring “equal protection of the laws,” only pushed six states to overturn their antimiscegenation laws (Fryer, 2007). The fourth and final column shows the states that repealed their laws because of that Supreme Court ruling; Virginia is one. It is important to note the well-known 1954 school desegregation case; this decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954) got rid of racial segregation of children in public *schools*, claiming it was unconstitutional (Fryer Jr., 2007). Six months following this court decision, the Supreme Court refused to hear Linnie Jackson's appeal regarding an Alabama statute barring interracial marriage (Fryer Jr., 2007). Moran (2003) shares that one of the judges making a statement referenced the court could only handle one segregation issue at a time, indicating the slow movement towards racial equality. While the court was moving towards a more progressive stance, social trends such as interracial marriage remained too dangerous for the courts to address.

Intermarriage Trends

Understanding the historical context of race in the United States, especially between Blacks and Whites, is crucial to understanding intermarriage trends in the United States today. Since the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) court case, the public has become more accepting of interracial marriage and these types of marriages have become more prevalent. The *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) court case overturned miscegenation laws in the United States. At the time, it is reported that only 3% of all newlyweds were married to someone of a different race or ethnicity (Brown & Livingston, 2017). After the legal acceptance of interracial marriage, this percentage has increased, as it was no longer against the law, but it has remained a social taboo in many communities. In 2015, the rate of interracial couples in the United States rose to 17% (Brown & Livingston, 2017).

Attitudes towards interracial marriage have not only changed since 1967, but they are also still changing today. A research study conducted by Gretchen Livingston and Anna Brown shows a trend toward more people of different races marrying each other (2017), which has increased steadily since the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case. In their recent study, their research found that 39% of adults thought interracial marriage was beneficial for society, nearly a 15% increase in seven years (2017). This seven-year period was from 2010 to 2017 (reference figure 1). While these attitudes have increased, individuals who previously felt interracial marriage was terrible for the United States decreased by 4%. It is also important to consider how the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case historically impacted society's attitude toward interracial marriage.

The historic court case *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) resulted in not only the legalization of interracial marriage, but also inspired interracial marriage trends in the following years. Thirteen years after the legalization of interracial marriage, there was a 2% increase in intermarriages. Since 1980, this percentage has increased to 18%; of these interracial marriages, the most significant percentage increase has occurred amongst Black newlyweds (Brown & Livingston, 2017). White newlyweds have also experienced an increase in intermarriage, from 4% to 11%. These increases ultimately sparked from the Loving's case.

The location of intermarriage also serves as a correlating factor. In the United States, metropolitan areas have a higher percentage of interracial couples when compared to rural communities (Brown & Livingston, 2017). Since 1980, though, there has been an increase in overall interracial marriages in metropolitan and rural areas. One factor that Livingston and Brown assume is the attitudinal differences between urban and rural communities; to validate these attitudinal differences, their research compared their research question to whether individuals felt that people of different races marrying each other was positive or negative. The

statistics showed 45% of adults in metropolitan areas thought it was positive, compared to 24% in rural areas. In metropolitan areas, there is an increased amount of racial diversity, which increases the probability of an individual being a part of an interracial relationship. Livingston and Brown argue that this could be the main factor in the higher intermarriage rates for White metropolitan interracial marriages. The variants are at 12% in urban areas versus 6% in rural areas (Livingston et al., 2017) (reference figure 2).

Intermarriage by Region

Not only does intermarriage vary by metropolitan and rural areas in the United States, but it also varies across geographical regions within the United States. This includes historical legal climates as well. In Roland G. Fryer Jr.'s study, "Guess Who's Been Coming to Dinner? Trends in Interracial Marriage over the 20th Century," he splits his data into five geographical regions (South, North, Midwest, Mountain West, and Pacific West). He focuses on interracial marriages between Whites and Blacks. Interracial marriage rates were low in all five regions across the United States between 1880 and 1960; rates reported in Fryer's study were less than 1% of marriages within those regions. However, racial attitudes towards Blacks differed substantially amongst different regions within the United States (Litwack, 1961). A shift occurred starting in 1960, which correlates with the Civil Rights Movement; the ACLU reports that 14 states repealed laws against interracial marriages between 1948 and 1966 (reference figure 3). One can factor in the newly elected president, John F. Kennedy, who pushed for civil liberties, including human and social rights. In the 1960s, significant regional differences became discernable (Fryer Jr., 2007). The Pacific West became the region with the highest intermarriage rates. Unlike the West and Mountain West regions, the South, Northeast, and Midwest rates generally follow each other closely; segregation patterns followed similar patterns across regions, including the

historical legal climate concerning miscegenation (Echenique & Fryer, 2007). Intermarriage rates were higher for Blacks in states that did not have antimiscegenation laws or voluntarily repealed such laws, versus areas forced to eliminate antimiscegenation due to the deciding Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). While rates in some regions have increased and social acceptance has become broader, there remain negative stereotypes amongst interracial couples and marriages.

Stereotypes of Black Women

Audiences must be aware of the ways African American women are portrayed in films and other characterizations. While there has been a shift in attitudes in our current society, there are still many stereotypes that strongly perpetuate discrimination within culture today. While these might not look the same as they did during Mildred and Richard's period in the 1950s and 1960s, it does not mean that stereotyping does not still occur. Although legal protections have been guaranteed to all racial groups, social and cultural barriers still exist and are reified in informal structures and organizations. The reinforcement of these stereotypes remains prevalent today and is responsible for reinforcing hegemonic power and control (Haynal, 2014). The social and cultural influences of stereotypes have been explained by Stuart Hall and later summarized by Karen Bowdre (2007):

Stereotypes (have) a binary structure that permits contradictory definitions to exist within one stereotype; dialogues regarding African Americans are constructed in films as not being intelligent, or as finding ways not to work or steal. Demeaning assumptions surrounding African Americans became part of social practices, such as disenfranchisement, as well as cultural practices like blackface in theatre (p. 18).

Bowdre highlights the issues African Americans face regarding stereotypes. These stereotypes are reified in film portrayals. Stereotypes of African American women took two extremes, the desexualized mother or the sexualized Black body (Bogle, 1994). The mother figure is often characterized by obesity and independence, such as the Aunt Jemima character, which was pushed into dominant White culture (Bogle, 1994). If not characterized by masculinity, Black women are overly sexualized (Bowdre, 2007). In the film, *Mr. and Mrs. Loving* (1996), which was a much more sexualized film produced in 1996 about the couple, the promotion of a Black woman's sexuality is an attempt to sexualize and discredit women as individuals who are capable of making their own decisions (Bowdre, 2007). The stereotypes of Mildred's character have been portrayed differently in different films. In *Loving* (2016), Nichols depicts Mildred as a woman advocating for her marriage. The viewer can gather different moments within the film where Mildred's intelligence is tested. For example, at the beginning of the film, her friends question her about her decision to marry Richard. Additionally, in the film when Richard and Mildred move to the city, the neighbors question Mildred on her decision to be with a White man. Both of these instances indicate that others are questioning Mildred's decisions that she makes for herself.

Demographic Diversity

Background of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967)

The movie *Loving* (2016) portrays the intimate story behind *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), a Supreme Court case that struck down state laws banning interracial marriage in the United States; the movie *Loving* (2016) tells the story of a couple who lived in rural Virginia in the 1950s (Nichols, 2016). It was illegal to marry someone who was not of the same race in Virginia and other states around the United States; unlike Virginia, interracial marriage was legal in the

District of Columbia, a few hours from where the couple lived. Mildred and Richard Loving both came from working-class families and met through their work on family farms. While both are from working families, the only ‘difference’ that socially labeled Mildred and Richard as different from one another was due to each of their races: Mildred was a Black-Native American woman, and Richard was a White man. Simply, they fell in love and decided to go to the courthouse in Washington D.C. to marry in the United States legally. Unfortunately, Virginia did not recognize this matrimony. These laws were known as anti-miscegenation laws, which were put in place during colonial days; this provided cause for the arrest of both Mildred and Richard Loving, and they were charged with a year in prison each for marrying one another. The Lovings were arrested on July 11th, 1958, in their home. The Virginia Code that was violated was under Section 20-58, which claimed miscegenation was a felony, prohibiting interracial couples from leaving the state to marry, then returning to live within the state of Virginia (Robbins, 2020). After serving jail time, the Lovings had a court case on January 6th, 1959, where they pled guilty; this plea forced the couple out of Virginia, and they could not return together for 25 years. Upon the hearing, the couple then moved to Washington, D.C.

After five years of living in Washington, D.C., the couple was sick of commuting into Virginia separately for work and were unable to visit their families. The film *Loving (2016)* shows one of Mildred and Richard’s sons being hit by a car when playing outside in Washington D.C. The child avoided critical injury, but this caused the couple much distress, especially Mildred. Mildred yearned to move back to Central Point to be in a rural community with less traffic and the freedom to be with their families and friends. During this time, the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing in Washington, D.C., and other states around the United States. The Civil Rights Movement was the struggle by African Americans in the mid-1950s to late 1960s to

gain equal rights, particularly Whites' equal rights (Legal Dictionary, 2020). Mildred wrote to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy about her family's story of being kicked out of Virginia; Kennedy then referred her to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who assigned two attorneys to the Loving case. From there, the ACLU appealed the court's decision to the United States Supreme Court. Eventually, the couple decided to move back to Virginia, risking arrest and even physical harm. Nine years later, the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case reached the Supreme Court. Though the Lovings did not travel to Washington, D.C. to testify before the Supreme Court, one of their lawyers, Bernard Cohen, delivered a message before the court which stated, "Mr. Cohen, tell the Court I love my wife, and it is not fair that I cannot live with her in Virginia" (Sheppard, 2012).

After nine years, the Loving's case finally reached a verdict that would change history. On June 12th, 1967, the Supreme Court voted 9-0 for the overturn of anti-miscegenation laws in the United States; this also took away all criminal convictions the Lovings had in the state of Virginia (*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967). The *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) is a landmark civil rights case. The Supreme Court ruled that laws banning interracial marriage violated both the Due Process Clauses and Equal Protection Acts of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution (Nowak & Rotunda, 2012); the court condemned Virginia's law as laws designed to maintain White Supremacy. Chief Justice Warren wrote:

Marriage is one of the "basic civil rights of man", fundamental to our very existence and survival ... To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications embodied in these statutes, classifications so directly subversive of the principle of equality at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment, is surely to deprive all the State's citizens of liberty without due process of law. The Fourteenth Amendment

requires that the freedom of choice to marry not be restricted by invidious racial discriminations. Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not to marry, a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed by the State (*Loving v. Virginia*, 1967).

The verdict finally allowed for the legal marriage of Richard and Mildred Loving in Virginia! Not only did this historical moment impact the lives of the Lovings, but the future of all interracial marriages in the United States.

Background of the film *Loving* (2016)

Loving (2016) takes its name from the 1967 Supreme Court ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), which gave interracial couples the legal right to marry across racial lines. The historical film is charged with contemporary meaning for cultural and legal ideology (Doherty, 2017). The film was released during an uncertain political climate in 2016 as it was an election year in the U.S; the film first aired on November 4th, 2016. The wider release took place three days after the 2016 election on November 11th (Focus Features, 2016). Jeff Nichols' film creates a more romanticized narrative of the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) court case; romanticism can be defined as turning a challenging or mundane task into something beautiful or wonderful (Rajan, 2010). Through this, the Loving's story becomes one of the powers of love, with moments of struggle the couple faces as broader systemic oppression towards interracial couples in the 1950s and 1960s.

The story of the Lovings became the basis for several films. Still, the movie *Loving* (2016) provides a narrative focused not only on the events that happened leading up to the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) Supreme Court case but the strength of Mildred and Richard's love for one another. The first movie created about the Lovings was *Mr. and Mrs. Loving* (1996), but

unfortunately, this film did not portray the complete truth behind the Loving's story (Walker, 2007). Rather, *Mr. and Mrs. Loving* (1996) highly romanticized the film, and portrayed Mildred as a forceful, sexual woman. Additionally, the film included fictional scenes. The movie *Loving* (2016) was conceptualized by executive producers Colin Firth, Ged Doherty, and Nancy Buirski after watching Nancy Buirski's documentary, *The Loving Story* (2012). Buirski's documentary included interviews with the couple and their loved ones, in addition to footage of the couple's daily lives. Rather than focusing on Mildred and Richard's relationship as the prominent driving force, the documentary focuses on the legal events of the case, rather than their relationship. It does not humanize or romanticize the relationship of Mildred and Richard, while the film *Loving* (2016) does.

Mildred and Richard were married in Washington DC in 1958 because they could not get married in Virginia. The local authorities end up discovering Mildred and Richard's arrangement and have them both arrested for not following the laws of Virginia Commonwealth, eventually requiring Mildred and Richard to vacate Virginia and move to Washington, D.C., to live together and stay married. Over time, the Lovings missed their family and friends in Virginia and returned to visit Virginia. Richard is depicted as visiting Virginia more often for his work, then eventually the couple returned together to Virginia to give birth to another child, despite the court's ruling. The couple was caught by the local authorities and brought them before the courts again. The movie portrays the lives of the Lovings through the trials and tribulations of an unfair justice system at its time and location, leading to equality for all interracial couples in the United States today. The Supreme Court's role in overturning the Loving's case was denied at both the local and state levels. Whatever its creator's intention, the receipt of *Loving* (2016) at this

moment in time comes with a particular academic opportunity to examine it as a narrative within the mainstream culture (Doherty, 2017).

Today's mainstream culture has a responsibility for how it portrays individuals of various races and how it depicts interracial couples in legal narratives, as it provides the viewer with perceptions of reality. In addition to the responsibility of race, *Loving's* (2016) narrative is responsible for telling the legal story of the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) plaintiffs' case. Cases, especially Supreme Court cases, are litigated based on narrative, so legal narrative contributes to which claims are deemed redressable in the eyes of the law (Doherty, 2017). This allows the audience to create a connection to reality. Additionally, since the film depicts a legal case that has already been decided, it allows the viewer to gain a stronger connection with the plaintiffs and their story. Ultimately, this may help the viewer create a more normalized and sympathetic perception of interracial marriage.

Theory

Narrative Criticism

Various forms of communication take place as storytelling. When friends have a conversation about an event that happened to them, the communication often takes place in the form of a story. Films, in particular, portray a narrative. The movie *Loving* (2016) is the story of Richard and Mildred Loving and their marriage. Narratives are popular and compelling, as storytelling is a common form of communication people participate in daily. These narratives help us understand not only ourselves but also others. Narratology is the study of stories and story structure and how these affect our perceptions, cognition, and emotion (Cutting, 2016). Cutting explains that popular movies have provided a highly effective format that allows the rapid processing of complex narratives (2016). *Loving* (2016) allows viewers to understand the social

world during Mildred and Richard's lifetime and interpret how the world has unfolded since the historic event.

Through the use of narrative criticism, this critique focuses on the story the filmmaker tells the audience. We recognize that narrative functions epistemically as a primary cognitive instrument for comprehending the world and functions persuasively to transport the viewer to another place and time, tapping into values and needs to create a strong emotional response. There are different perspectives that narrative criticism can use to analyze artifacts, including characters, events, settings, themes, and structure. Through these analyses, the viewer can better interpret and comprehend the realities and experiences people face. The study of narrative discourse begins with Aristotle and Quintilian, while Vladimir Propp is often credited with starting the formal examination of narrative critique (Foss, 2018).

The critical elements of a narrative were defined as early as Aristotle and are still used today. These include the plot, which includes the beginning, middle, and end. Within the plot itself, Aristotle includes characters, the narrative, and the conclusion (Fisher, 1989). Narrative criticism helps the audience understand the messages and themes of a story. It allows one to better understand daily human experiences, according to Walter Fisher (1989), who developed the narrative paradigm, which was instrumental in framing narratives as fundamental to communication, providing structure for human experience, and guiding people to share common explanations and understandings. The study of narrative criticism can include various forms, from fiction or non-fiction, multiple genres, and various structures. The reader can understand the specific narrative elements in the film *Loving* (2016) that influence the viewers' acceptance towards interracial marriage and how the movie depicts rural communities in the United States.

Narrative paradigm theory suggests that humans are natural storytellers. Because of this, narrative has always been a part of our literary genetic code, Fisher argues (1985). Walter Fisher redefined studying narrative in the communications field; building off the “broad tradition of dramatism,” Walter Fisher (1984) repurposed narrative criticism for scholars of rhetoric (Burghardt, 2010). Fisher understood the paradigm as a means to understand issues in society. For rhetorical critics, Fisher’s (1984) narrative paradigm offered a new foundation for analysis; the foundation helps one understand the persuasive components within a story or narrative. Fisher stated that symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order and understanding to the human experience” (Fisher, 1984).

Fisher shared the belief that humans are not rational beings. Instead, individuals communicate by sharing a compelling story rather than sharing information based on neutral evidence (Fisher, 1984). His paradigm posited a narrative paradigm versus a rational world paradigm. The narrative paradigm takes on the frame that communication is viewed through the following: (1) humans see the world as a set of stories which is often viewed through one’s beliefs or values; (2) despite people claiming that their decisions are rational, people incorporate their perceptions about themselves and others; and (3) narrative rationality requires stories to be comprehensive (Jameson, 2001). One of Fisher’s most influential pieces was his 1984 “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument.” Fisher published five additional essays on the narrative paradigm, in addition to a book that further extended the narrative paradigm’s reach and use by scholars. His work provided an assessment framework, allowing scholars to interpret the theory of communication. The most popular areas of study which use Fisher’s theory include organizational communication, family communication, racism, and even advertising techniques (McNamara, 2014). Despite the theory being used in many

different fields, critics argue that it is not as ‘universal’ as Fisher framed his work. While Fisher argued for the breadth and flexible application of the theory, Rowland argued that the theory should only be applied to communication that fits classic narrative patterns (1989).

Fisher provides the argument that stories are told through an individual’s perspective; the narrative paradigm asserts that any individual can judge a story’s merits as a basis for belief and action (1984). Analyzing *Loving* (2016) through this paradigm allows communication scholars to understand the realities of interracial marriage in the United States. Doherty shares that mainstream cultural narratives, especially films like *Loving* (2016) that share a narrative of a predetermined legal case, help to determine the experiences and types of existences that become normalized (2017). *Loving* is a narrative about the power one couple’s story can have, and quite frankly, how these accounts have the power to impact our laws and lives.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

The genealogy of feminist standpoint theory begins in Hegel’s account of the master/slave dialectic, and subsequently in Marx and, particularly the idea of the standpoint of the public (Changfoot, 2004). Marx’s master/slave dialectic referred to the fact that the master was less aware of what was occurring on the plantation because he was in a position of power and had little to lose, while the slave had to be aware of events at every level to avoid the master’s wrath. While the origins of standpoint theory lie in Marx’s view of class oppression, feminist philosophy incorporated standpoint theory in the 1970s and 1980s. The foundational philosophy behind standpoint theory derives from Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and examines class and social identity amongst individuals (Miller, 2005). Nancy Hartsock further articulated standpoint theory (1983), and Sandra Harding’s work powerfully influenced the development of feminist standpoint theory. Harding has dived into anti-racist and postcolonial work about the

sciences; some of her most influential works include “Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities”, “The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader”, and the *Standpoint methodologies and epistemologies: a logic of scientific inquiry for people* (University of California Los Angeles, 2021). Feminist standpoint theory was selected to accompany narrative criticism in this study as it allows for exploring Mildred Loving's character. Mildred reflects standpoint theory's conclusion on pushing back against overarching positions of power. Standpoint theory helps one understand power relationships (Miller, 2005). Standpoint theory specifically provides explanation and understanding for those who are marginalized by race, sex, and class because these individuals are more sensitive and perceptive to the problems that are experienced.

In the mid-1970s and early 1980s, several feminist theorists began developing alternatives to the traditional methods of scientific research—feminist standpoint theory brought forward the thought that standpoint should be viewed through the lens of women. Feminist standpoint theorists such as sociologists Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins, political philosophers Nancy Hartsock and Alison Jaggar, sociologist of science Hilary Rose, and philosopher of science Sandra Harding extended and reframed the idea of the standpoint of the proletariat to mark out the logical space for a feminist standpoint (Bowell, n.d.). Theorist Sandra Harding is an American philosopher of feminist theory; most of her time as a professor was spent at UCLA (University of California Los Angeles, 2021). She has developed the research standard of "strong objectivity," which argues that starting research from women's lives strengthens standards of objectivity (Harding, 1991). She has been a dominant contributor to standpoint methodology, sharing that worldview depends on the situation. Her research exclusively expanded on the feminist approach, but that does not mean all women share the same standpoint.

Rather, it helps us understand significant differences between men and women. Founded in realms within Marxist ideology, her approach to feminist standpoint theory allows scholars to understand “situated knowledge.” Her expansion of the theory is used to address racism, homophobia, colonialism, and classism and allow scholars to focus on power and the idea of “essential truth,” especially hegemonic realities. Harding’s work has been influential, especially in the social sciences and in gender studies. Harding’s arguments should be thought of as epistemology in critical studies, philosophy for science, methodology for doing research, and a sociology of science. Ultimately, standpoint theory asks questions about knowledge production such as “where is this knowledge being produced? Why does this knowledge add value to research?” Through understanding where knowledge comes from, Harding’s expansion of the theory allows individuals to understand intersubjective discourses.

In one of Harding’s books, she points out that feminists were not the first to scrutinize politics. There have been “struggles against racism, colonialism, capitalism, and homophobia, as well as the counterculture movement of the 1960s and the contemporary ecology and antimilitarism movements, (which) have all produced pointed analyses of the uses and abuses of science (Harding, 1986). Standpoint has brought to light the suppression and exclusion of women and minorities and the needed viewpoints from these groups. Harding shares that epistemic privilege arises from social positions that have been systematically neglected by the social order (1991). In *Loving* (2016), Mildred has been systematically ignored as a Black-Native. Standpoints derive their privilege from the gap between the dominant knowledge and the experiences of subordinate groups (Steckle, 2018). Within Mildred’s struggle, her narrative provides a standpoint that fills in the gaps of subordinate racial and gender groups of her time. It is important to note that those who are marginalized by race, sex, and class are more sensitive

and perceptive to the problems and issues that occur in our society. This is why throughout the film Mildred can see the overall big picture of their interracial marriage and society's reaction to it, while Richard throughout most of the film can only see the smaller picture about their love.

In addition to understanding viewpoint, understanding 'situated knowledges' is vital to understanding Mildred's viewpoint. Donna Haraway defined the term "situated knowledges" as the understanding that all knowledge comes from positional perspectives (1988). Haraway takes a critical view towards the common idea that social sciences are based on objectivity (Haraway, 1988). Mildred's position as a Black-Native woman in the 1950s and 1960s is unique; she is not in a position of political or social power. The 'feminist' part conveys a line of thought that does not deny the experience of specific positions in the world. In contrast, the 'objectivity' part means that we should not fall into the ideological pitfall of becoming relativists where everything matters equally (Jönsson, 2019). This suggests that the social location of the individual influences knowledge. Additionally, it concerns the ways that authority is rooted in an individual's knowledge and even the power these individuals exert. While Mildred has similar experiences as a Black woman, it is important to note that she is not solely defined by these two categories. Mildred's life experiences influence Mildred's standpoint and viewpoint of the world.

This theory for academic purposes has been used to discuss inter-subjective discourses and how authority is rooted in an individual's knowledge. A fundamental tenet of standpoint theory holds that an individual's lived experience is understood through one's social and political experiences. While group experiences create a general perspective, personal experiences through one's standpoint or "point of view" cannot always be precise or predictable (Miller, 2005). Standpoint theory provides a personal lens to a person's lived experiences which shape the individual's viewpoint on the world around them. Generally speaking, standpoint theory

recognizes that those in non-dominant positions are more aware of and sensitive to other standpoints' realities than those in more privileged positions.

Feminist standpoint theory allows researchers to explore power and politics, enabling an analysis of how positions of power and politics affect positions in society. The use of feminist standpoint theory permits the researcher to understand how women, especially women of color, can create long-term change against dominant patriarchies. While this area allows researchers to explore power and politics, different individuals may experience different scenarios even if they are within the same group. It is important for researchers to understand the specific standpoint of the individual being studied so readers can gain clarity on the individual.

In *Loving* (2016), Mildred's vision and persistence provided the beginning of change for interracial couples in the United States. It paved the legal pathway for thousands of Americans. The dominant racist patriarchy in the film *Loving* (2016) is still mainly in control today. The regulations and systems that operate in the United States are systemically White male dominant, yet the dominance continues to be challenged. Women, especially women of color, can better understand oppression and the power exercised over them by White men in privileged positions. Despite not being in 'positions of power,' it is critical to obtain women's insight to understand how women of color challenge the patriarchy's status quo. bell hooks (2000) argues that women cannot gain much power on the terms set by the existing social structure without undermining the struggle to end sexist oppression. Feminist standpoint theorists know that approaching knowledge from a women's viewpoint first allows 'standpoint' to come from an attained position (Borland, 2020). By gaining knowledge from this position, scholars can better understand the lived situations of women and women of color and how these lived situations affect our current society.

Women's suffering under sexist tyranny is a common bond among all women, transcending the particulars of the different forms that tyranny takes (Fritz, 1979). Mildred experiences some of this as a Black woman in the film. Feminist standpoint theory argues that knowledge stems from one's social position, particularly from a woman's viewpoint. There has been a division regarding feminist standpoint theory scholars; the division stands between women's differences and commonalities. Standpoint theorists recognize the differences among women and recognize the common standpoint women occupy outside the center (Hallstein, 2000), which is the approach taken in my research. Additionally, feminist scholar Josephine Donovan (2000) outlines these spaces as common areas of oppression. All women face oppression; this is not, however, to say that all women experience these patterns in the same way. Other influences such as race, culture, and class must be considered, as they play contributing roles in the degree to which women experience forms of oppression (Donovan, 2000).

Standpoint theorists emphasize the importance of social location because they are convinced that people at the top of the societal hierarchy are privileged to define what it means to be a female, male, or anything else given in a given culture. Feminist standpoint theory can help interpret how Mildred Loving serves as a prominent figure in understanding how a woman of color living in rural Virginia in a White male-dominated society influenced the law and societal "norms". More specifically her interracial marriage with her white husband, Richard, classifies her into her own unique standpoint. Because the film is a biography of Mildred and her husband's life, standpoint theory shows the viewer the biases that existed towards interracial couples during the 1950s and 1960s, on top of showing Mildred's unique place. While same race background marriages would be the regular "status quo," Mildred and Richard went against the

social norm of this time. The “norm” included a White man marrying a White woman or a Black man marrying a Black woman. Miscegenation was neither a popular nor a legal option. Mildred supports standpoint theory's conclusion on pushing back against the overarching position of power as a Black-Native woman. She is not in a position of political power, nor is she in a position of power due to her race, sex, or class, yet she goes against the hierarchy and fights for love and marriage between her and her husband; The movie *Loving* (2016) depicts Mildred to be the one who contacted the attorney general's office regarding both her and her husband not being allowed in the state of Virginia for 25 years. Not only does she take the lead in contacting Attorney General Kennedy, but the movie also shows Mildred leading the fight for her and her family up until the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) Supreme Court case hearing. Living her life as a Black woman, Mildred pushes past the patriarchy of White male dominance in the political and legal systems by being committed to change.

Statement of Purpose

Throughout the United States history, racial conflicts between Blacks and Whites have caused significant challenges for interracial relations. Growing up in a small, rural community in South Dakota, I was curious why there seemed to be a strong and lasting negative bias towards interracial couples. Due to these experiences, I wanted to better understand interracial marriage in the United States. I wanted to understand how narrative elements in films or movies influence our social acceptance and our viewpoints on interracial marriage. The three questions I sought to answer include (1) how the narrative elements in the film *Loving* (2016) combine to influence the viewer's understanding of growing social acceptance of interracial marriage in the United States; and (2) how the film's depiction of Mildred Loving's role in advocating for interracial marriage demonstrates the major tenets of standpoint theory.

To examine these questions, I used narrative analysis as my main form of criticism, in addition to using standpoint theory to analyze how the *Loving* (2016) film depicts interracial marriage through the perspective and position of Mildred Loving. This research explains how rhetorical mechanisms in movies can function persuasively to influence viewpoints on interracial marriage. Some of the main rhetorical mechanisms used to analyze this film include the movie's settings, events, character relationships, and causal relations. In addition, standpoint theory helps examine Mildred's role and impact on interracial marriage. The character of Mildred Loving provides a strong character example of standpoint theory because the film shares Mildred's unique perspective regarding her viewpoint on Richard and their marriage. Mildred's standpoint allows the viewer to understand her life as a Black-Native woman in the 1950s and 1960s, which is different from her spouse's perspective as a White man. Though Mildred's position is not one in political control, her unique standpoint positions her to strengthen standards of objectivity. Not only does this film help explain human biases, but it also explains how history and location impact viewpoints on interracial marriage.

Justification

Many fictional films depict women and men in interracial marriages. There are fewer film narratives that focus on authentic, historical life events between interracial couples. Through this biography, the viewer can gain a better understanding of how film narratives operate to challenge hegemony. The successful transaction of experiences through the *Loving* (2016) film's discourse helps establish commonalities between the film and the audience. Fisher explains that "narratives are meant for everyone, across culture, time, and place" (2010, p. 289). This explains why narratives are important to analyze. Narratives, such as the *Loving* (2016) film, share the symbolic actions that give meaning to those who live, create, and interpret these narratives

(Fisher, 2010). While narrative criticism is a popular field of study, the field of communication, in many cases, would benefit from combining narrative research critical theories, such as standpoint theory, to explore more vivid meanings and understandings.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Methodology (Procedures)

The film *Loving* (2016) was analyzed through a narrative analysis guided by feminist standpoint theory. Narrative criticism will be used to provide an in-depth analysis of the messages found in biography films, which helps one understand the messages and themes of one's story. Four main steps must be taken to analyze a narrative critique. The first step is to define the objective of the narrative story being told. In other words, what is the main message this narrative is trying to portray? The second step is to identify the features or narrative elements that were analyzed. The third step is to define the story's outcome. The outcome of the story can show historical landmarks and reveal how narratives influence change. The final step is to determine the impact the narrative has had on society today (Foss, 2018).

Objective

The first step in narrative criticism is to analyze the overall objective of the artifact. For the movie *Loving* (2016), the overall objective is to inspire people to stand up for what they believe in, especially love. In the movie *Loving* (2016), Mildred and Richard knew they wanted to marry one another because of their love for each other. They felt it was wrong they were not allowed to marry in Virginia, and even more confusing that nearly three hours away, they could be legally married. They felt their love for one another, their marriage, was a fundamental right. This movie shows that who one loves is a fundamental right. The movie helps the viewer better understand the historical events that influenced the legalities around interracial marriage and even influenced the viewers' social attitude and bias towards interracial marriage. Additionally, it shows Mildred's treatment as a Black woman and the daily criticism she faced by White males in power roles.

Narrative Elements

The second step to analyze the film was to determine the features needed to answer my research question. Various features of a narrative are important to analyze, such as the settings, characters, narrator credibility, causal relations, and more (Foss, 2018). Before diving into narrative criticism, it is important to understand narrative structure. Narrative structures have served and continue to serve as a prominent grounding for disciplines in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Some of these prominent studies include discourse (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978) and schemata (Brewer, 1985); these studies have helped us better understand and interpret the social world around us (Cutting, 2016). *Loving* (2016) allows viewers to understand how the social world was during Mildred and Richard's lifetime through narrative elements, as well as interpret how the world has unfolded since the historic event.

It is essential to discuss the narrator's reliability in this step to create the story credibility of the movie. The writer and director of this film was Jeff Nichols, an American film director. He based his writing off of two previous movies about the Lovings— *Mr. and Mrs. Loving* (1996) by Richard Friedenbergl and *The Loving Story* by Nancy Buirski; Nichols' film was a more romanticized version than the other movies (McGovern, 2016). The film is categorized as a biographical romantic drama, which is a type of narrative. Through this romanticized version, Nichols provided the overarching themes: love, human rights, cultural and institutionalized racism, and overcoming bigotry.

The characters, the story settings, the events understood through causal relations will primarily be used to analyze the interracial marriage of Mildred and Richard Loving. This means events are understood as leading one to another. For example, Richard and Mildred leave the state to get married; when they return to the state, they are arrested. Their arrests cause the effect,

which is they must leave the state of Virginia and move to a state in which interracial marriage is legal. In Washington, D.C., the dangers and conflicts that arise cause Mildred to reach out to an attorney, who ultimately influenced the couple to move back to Virginia in order to get arrested, facilitating the opportunity for the law to be challenged in the Supreme Court. Seeing the attorney caused their struggle to become newsworthy, which one can argue influenced the Supreme Court to rule in the couple's favor.

The movie allows the viewer to create meaning around why there has been biased towards interracial marriage in the United States. The last step is understanding how the issue is applied to society today. While the United States has since adopted interracial marriage legally, and there is evidence of increasing social acceptance, one can see the social and cultural biases that still exist around some forms of marriage in the United States, such as same-sex marriage. Although legalized in 2015, same-sex couples still struggle for social acceptance and normalization (Macedo, 2015).

Characters: There are various characters in the movie *Loving* (2016), but for this analysis, I am specifically looking at the two main characters, Mildred and Richard Loving, the plaintiffs of the court case. These characters are central to this plot, as they are the two developed characters throughout the film. So much of the story is told through close-ups of their faces, communicating their emotions and perspectives. Mildred Loving is a Black-Native woman who was born and raised in Central Point, Virginia. Her character is portrayed as a strong and honest woman who cares about equality. When living in Central Point in her early years, she views the town as a safe and friendly environment. It is normal for Blacks and Whites to intermingle. Her character progresses throughout the movie, as her role shifts. At the beginning of the film, she displays the characteristics of a young woman. For example, she is blushing and excited when

she talks about Richard to her sister. As the film goes on, the viewer watches Mildred's role become more complex. She takes on more responsibilities, as both a wife and a mother. These responsibilities are what drive her to advocate for change so she can improve her life with her family. Richard Loving is a Caucasian man who grew up in Central Point as well. Richard's character is more introverted than Mildred's. Though introverted, the viewer can tell that Richard feels responsible to provide and care for his family financially. Additionally, the viewer can see that Richard cares for his family's safety; one example is when Richard and his family are living in Virginia, where he and his brother-in-law are guarding their family's house in the country. In many scenes, Richard often keeps to himself and does not speak up. This is the opposite of Mildred. Mildred is more resistant to the treatment from law enforcement than Richard is; she can see that the U.S. attorney general may be interested in their case and how the case strategy proposed by the ACLU attorney may work. Mildred understands that through the ACLU attorney, she and Richard may have a chance to move their family back to Virginia. She also understands the media's influence on their case and others like theirs. Most importantly though, the viewer is able to gain an understanding of Mildred's dissatisfaction towards Richard in regard to being understanding. Throughout the entire film, Mildred sees how Richard feels, but Richard demonstrates little ability to perceive the positions of other characters.

Richard is a silent, hardworking man. His character comes off as stoic, calm, and one who "stays in his lane." He does not see why their marriage is a threat. Though Richard tries, he cannot see a way to talk to the sheriff when his wife is in jail and does not seem to stick up for their marriage. Richard is horrified when the attorneys tell him that their children will be used as the negative outcome of their marriage. At the drag races, Richard holds Mildred close, kissing her proudly. The group of White men stares at them, visibly seething at their intimate interracial

relationship. In this scene, the viewer is able to comprehend the stigma toward interracial relationships amongst Richard and Mildred's peers.

Following the drag races, an event where two or more cars race over a short distance to test acceleration speeds, Richard is seen getting drunk with Mildred's brother and their friends, there is a shift in Richard's character. During the drag races, a group of White men are judging Richard for being with not only the Black men at the drag races, but for dating Mildred. The brother and friends say, "Now you know" "Now you see it, right? You did not feel it before, did you? Now you do!" At this moment, the brother and friends are acknowledging that Richard is experiencing the way that Blacks are treated in Virginia – and he'd never truly felt or understood that before. It was not until this moment where Richard may have finally felt or understood something from Mildred's position. When he comes home, he cries as he says, "I cannot take care of you," revealing at that moment that is all he ever wanted. Even the iconic line, "Tell the judge I love my wife," that Richard says to the attorney, is an eloquent expression of the limits of Richard's perspective. This line is eloquent because it shows that Richard does not care about changing the legal system, rather just for Mildred. It allows the viewer to see Mildred as the driving force for the couple's legal fight. Additionally, this moment shows Richard's vulnerability to his attorney; the attorney is able to gather that Richard is not doing this for "fame", but Richard is still involved in the legal process because he loves Mildred that much. Simply, love should be enough of a reason for the Court to understand why Richard wants to be with Mildred.

Finally, it is important to consider the standpoint or viewpoint of Richard and Mildred. Richard is in the Marx's position known as the "master". He is in a position of power and is not able to see all of the issues and biases oppressed people, like Mildred, are facing throughout this

time period. Richard does not have to worry because as a White man, he is in a position of power in society. Mildred is in the Marx's position known as the "slave". Mildred has to be aware of the social issues that can ultimately make her life challenging, and she must be aware of these social issues and repercussions to protect herself, and eventually her interracial children as well. In this position, Mildred experiences different forms of bias and oppression that Richard does not experience. Her position is also unique from other Black women around her because she is the one participating in an interracial relationship, while her friends and family in the film are not. Mildred is stigmatized by both the oppressors and the oppressed throughout the film, which provides her with insight no one else in the film has. As a mother of interracial children, Mildred takes on an additional viewpoint that only she can truly experience and understand, especially when compared to her counterparts.

Settings: The movie takes place in Caroline County, Virginia, an area dominated by strict Jim Crow segregation laws. Despite this, the town of Central Point had been a visible mixed-race community since the 19th century (Staples, 2008). There are two major settings this film takes place in: in the countryside of Central Point, Virginia, and the city of Washington, D.C. The first 20 minutes of the movie are completely devoted to the bucolic setting of the farm – beautiful views, sunsets, the joyful race scene, dancing, eating, laughing, family, and buying the acre of land.

The city setting is opposite of the warm countryside; rather, the film depicts the city as dangerous, especially for a family raising young children. For example, there is a scene where a car hits their son, which is a triggering event for the family. While that was a triggering moment, there were many other signs of danger in the city as well: the brick that was thrown into Richard's car, the beam that fell very near Richard, the riots that accompanied Martin Luther

King Jr.'s speech. The return, then, to the farm (at Mildred's insistence) again takes them to a more calming place and simpler way of day-to-day life. While there are still threats in the countryside, it is simply the couple's marriage, not threats, that materialize. Additionally, it is important to understand that since Mildred and Richard both grew up in Caroline County, they were both used to the treatment they each have received there. In addition, it is an area where they are both comfortable living.

Events: There stand various narrative features in the film *Loving* (2016), which influenced the social acceptance of interracial marriage in the US. These significant features are described as kernel and satellite moments; the kernel explains the most important part of the story, and the satellites elaborate and fills in the kernels (Foss, 2018). The kernels are the essential parts of the story, that cannot be changed without the story being changed as well. The satellite moments, help fill in the outline of a sequence by maintaining or prolonging the kernel events they surround. Casual relations are another important way to evaluate the structure and message of the film. Besides analyzing the characters, two major events are tipping points for the social acceptance of interracial marriage in this film. One of the primary kernels that provide perspective on how vicious White law enforcement treated the interracial couple includes a scene from the beginning of the film; the scene occurs in Mildred's parent's farmhouse late at night. In this scene, Richard and Mildred are sleeping in their tiny bedroom in their home. Around two o'clock in the morning, police cars are creeping down the old country road towards the Loving's home. The Caroline County police park their cars in the driveway and proceed to break into the Loving's house. The Loving's were sound asleep in their beds, startled to be awakened by the police who barge into their bedroom. The officers were hoping to find Mildred and Richard having sex; two individuals of different races were also criminalized for having sex with one

another (Nichols, 2016). Upon the couple getting arrested, both Mildred and Richard were sent to the Caroline County jail. At the jail, the movie viewer can interpret the unfair treatment Mildred, as a Black woman, receives compared to her White counterpart, Richard. This kernel proves the societal bias towards interracial marriage in rural Virginia during the time Mildred and Richard were living in Caroline county. Additionally, it is essential to consider what the viewer takes away from this major event. This “kernel” shows the viewer racial bias or prejudice (Foss, 2018). From there, the viewer can interpret that kernel to better understand the negative bias that occurred towards interracial couples, specifically Mildred and Richard.

The other primary kernel, which is a turning point in this movie, was when the Loving family was forced to move to Washington, D.C. The family was forced to relocate due to anti-miscegenation laws in Virginia (Nichols, 2016). This event is a kernel because it proves that the bias in rural Virginia and the laws in Virginia are not the same in urban Washington, D.C. Upon the couple’s relocation to the city, which is a significant kernel, two satellite moments affect the outcome of Richard and Mildred Loving’s marriage. The first satellite moment is when Mildred watches television and sees the Civil Rights Movement marches on television; when Mildred sees the events on the television, it compelled her to reach out to the attorney general. Mildred and Richard obtained lawyers for their court case with Virginia about their marriage through Mildred's outreach. The second satellite moment is the injury of Mildred and Richard’s child. This moment triggers the parents, especially Mildred, to want to move back to rural Virginia. Eventually, these moments led to the Supreme Court case, *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), which allowed Richard and Mildred to reside in their home state of Virginia, happily married, to raise their family.

The causal relations among narrative events are a chain of events in which most events are consequences of previous events and ultimately are causes of later events, while temporal relations are narrative events that involve time (Foss, 2018). A causal relation between two events exists if or when the first event leads to or causes another, while temporal relations happen over time, not caused by a cause-and-effect relationship. *Loving* (2016) is built on causal relations, as many of the scenes are the consequences or results from previous events. The marriage of Mildred and Richard Loving went against Virginia law, which ultimately led to Mildred and Richard's arrest. This arrest further led to the court hearing, which over time was heard at the United States Supreme Court, known as the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case nine years later.

The Story's Outcome

The story's outcome shows how historical landmarks, such as the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case affects societal viewpoints on interracial marriage. Not only do historical landmarks influence societal viewpoints, but so do the narratives around interracial marriage, such as *Loving* (2016). The overall outcome of this movie reveals how historical events influence bias toward interracial couples. The film also portrays the difference between societal bias in rural communities versus urban communities. Though these biases occurred and continue to occur towards interracial marriages, the story proves that love and action have the power to influence social norms and even laws, which the viewer can take away; love can overcome societal stigmas. By watching this movie, the viewer can better understand the pain and fear that can result from interracial bias. Many of the individuals who are watching this movie have never witnessed the struggles of prejudice and the fear of the enforcement of unjust laws that the characters experience. The film provides the viewers with this scenario.

The Impact on Society Today

The final step is defining the impact. While the United States now has adopted interracial marriage legally, there remain biases towards interracial marriages in the United States (Brown & Livingston, 2017). The film provides narrative insight into the treatment of interracial couples, which helps normalize a “taboo” subject for some people. It allows the audience to empathize with those who have endured injustice and, even more importantly, allows the audience to empathize with those who have suffered from this injustice.

Research Questions

RQ1: What narrative elements in the film *Loving* (2016) influenced the social acceptance of interracial marriage in the US?

RQ2: How does this film depict Mildred’s role in the advocacy towards interracial marriage?

Chapter Three: Influence of Film Narratives on Social Acceptance of Interracial Marriage

Introduction

Retelling history through narratives allows for creative control in deciding what to include and exclude from the historical narratives. This may enable narratives to either reinforce or resist dominant power structures that exist in our society, including interracial marriage, which is the focus of the film *Loving* (2016). The *Loving* (2016) film is known for humanizing a predominantly political story. The narrative focuses on the couple rather than the historical moment alone (Doherty, 2017). It provides a narrative lens through a historical objective of the plaintiffs and the director of the film, Jeff Nichols. The interpretation of this narrative is also told through the production and performances of the narratives. Jeff Nichols does a good job portraying the couple as an American couple who simply want to live their own lives in the country with their family (Doherty, 2017). Nichols shows the couple as individuals not seeking systematic disruption, instead of seeking love and freedom. At the beginning of the film, Nichols portrays the Lovings as a family that upholds institutionalized racism and heterosexual norms for their marriage (Doherty, 2017). Mildred's character strays away from institutionalization, while Richard's character stands in suit with the institutional hierarchy. Overall, *Loving* (2016) "humanizes" the plaintiffs by depicting the couple as an ordinary, apolitical couple whose valiant legal victory comes from love and patience.

Narrative Elements in the Film

"Well. Is there anything you want me to tell them, and of course, by them, I mean the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States?" Bernie Cohen questions. Richard thinks on this for a moment, and then he nods. He responds, "Yeah. Tell the judge, tell the judge I love my wife."

Bernie Cohen, one of the attorneys in the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) Supreme Court case, and Richard Loving, the plaintiff in the supreme court, converse about Mildred and Richard attending the final arguments in Washington, D.C. The *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case reviewed the following question in the 1967 case: “Did Virginia's antimiscegenation law violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment?” While the case seeks to answer that question, Nichols’ approach to his film *Loving* (2016) looks to humanize the issue. There are very few courtroom scenes in this movie, as Nichols intended. His goal is to portray the story of the personal lives of Richard and Mildred, not the legal arguments or decisions. This lens arguably made the Loving’s story much more compelling to viewers as it positions the courage and honesty of their relationship against the legal system, without over sexualizing the film.

In the scene where Richard and Mildred are sound asleep in their bedroom, two police cars are parked outside in the couple’s gravel driveway. Their headlights and engines are off, and three police officers quietly step out. They walk towards Mildred’s parents the house in the dark and break into the house. The officers make their way through the house until they find the room Mildred and Richard are staying in. The bedroom door is kicked open as Sherriff Brooks shines the flashlight into the bedroom and shouts for the other officers. At that moment, Richard sits up sharply out of bed. Sherriff Brooks states, “What you doin’ in that bed boy?” He yanks Richard out of bed; the officers were hoping to find Richard and Mildred having sex, as it was against the law of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mildred is worried and is also commanded out of bed by Sheriff Brooks. At that moment, Sheriff Brooks asks, “What’re you doin’ in bed with that woman?” Mildred responds, “I’m his wife,” as Richard points to the wall where their marriage certificate is framed. Sherriff Brooks states, “That’s no good here. Get your pants on, boy,” dragging the couple out of the house to the Caroline County jail. This is the first pivotal scene in

the film that provides insight into the injustices in the 1950s in Virginia. The following scene takes place in the Caroline County jail. Upon arrival at the jail, Richard and Mildred are separated. Mildred is put in an individual cell, while Richard is placed in a communal cell. Mildred's cell is small and cramped together, barely fitting the cot.

The successive scene flashes away and shows confederate soldier statues outside of the prison between the jail and the courthouse. This imagery is important to note to understand the values within the community Richard and Mildred are being held, especially those who "uphold" the law and justice systems. The scene leads back inside to the courthouse, where the jailer releases Richard after two days.

The jailer tells Richard that he has made bail. Richard quickly steps out of the cell and moves down the hall, looking for Mildred. He sees her still huddled on the cot in her cell. Richard calls Mildred by her nickname, "Bean?" Mildred lifts her head to see Richard; she instantly gets up and goes to the cell door. Mildred is surprised to see Richard. As Richard approaches her, the jailer grabs him by the shoulder to steer him downstairs and bluntly tells Richard to "go on down." Richard resists and questions the jailer, "what about her?" The jailer continues to respond, "just you." Mildred seems confused while the jailer brings Richard down the stairs. Richard tries to resist the jailer, and yells "That's not right." The jailer does not care and continues to drag Richard toward the bottom of the steps. Again, Richard continues to shout, "that's not right," as Mildred watches him disappear down the stairs and out of her sight. Richard is then brought to the courthouse, which neighbors the jail. He collects his wallet and keys. Richard then goes to sign a paper, where the clerk indicates to Richard that his wife will be talking to the county judge on Monday. During Mildred's continuous time in jail, racial slurs are used.

During that time, Richard is waiting for Mildred to be released from jail. He converses with his friend Raymond. Richard shows deep concern about how the police officers found him and Mildred. His friend Raymond responds, “somebody talked,” while nodding his head to the neighbors. This scene is important in understanding how community members perceive Richard and Mildred’s relationship. The scene indicates that there is no social acceptance towards interracial marriage in their community.

Richard eventually returns to the courthouse, finding that he cannot bail out Mildred. Frustrated, Richard asks if he can get a lawyer. The clerk responds, “Well, you can.” Richard storms out of the clerk’s office door. He stops to take a breath, attempting to stay calm. While he makes his way across the lawn, Sheriff Brooks shouts him over to his office. Richard steps inside to find Sheriff Brooks seated behind his desk and finds himself taking a seat as well. Sheriff Brooks questions Richard, “You planning to bail her out?” Richard responds in a nod. Sheriff Brooks responds, “You best send one of her people up here ‘cause you know they won’t let her out to you.” Richard seems flustered and mumbles under his breath. At this moment, the viewer gains an even better understanding of the standpoint in the film when Sheriff Brooks references ‘her people.’ At this moment, he is categorizing Whites and Blacks as separate.

Richard continues, “She’s pregnant.” Sheriff Brooks is confounded in disgust at this moment; he reacts,

“You do know, better don’t you? Or maybe you don’t. Your daddy worked for a N*, didn’t he? Runnin’ timber?” He shakes his head and continues, “I’m sorry for you. I am. All ya’ll over there in Central Point don’t know up from down. All mixed up. Half Cherokee, Rappahannock, part N*, part White. Blood doesn’t know what it wants to be. You just got born in the wrong place, is all. See, you got to thinkin’ it was fine. You

might think people around here wouldn't care. Hell, maybe they wouldn't if your dumb country ass hadn't gone off and married her, but not me. Do you hear me? That's God's law. He made a sparrow, a sparrow, and a robin. They're different for a reason."

This event is a satellite event with the kernel moment of Mildred and Richard being thrown in jail. The language used by Sheriff Brooks is wildly inappropriate; it shows the viewer a broader understanding of how individuals in positions of power viewed the mixing of races. He backs his reasoning concerning religion, which is arguably a case argued against Mildred and Richard Loving in court. A few scenes later, Mildred is bailed out of jail by her father. The viewer can take away that due to Mildred and Richard's difference in race, Richard could not bail her out while her father could. When Mildred is bailed out, she hesitates as Sheriff Brooks comes to her door. The viewer can understand the fear Mildred perceives of Sheriff Brooks.

Her father, Theoliver, brings Richard back to their home. Mildred gets out of the car and is rushed by a hug from Garnet, Mildred's sister; while Mildred accepts, she is seen frantically looking for Richard and even asks where he is. Garnet responds by saying that the police will arrest them again if they catch Richard at their family's home.

The movie continues, and the viewer can see Richard and Mildred dressed for court in Frank Beazely's law office. The law office is small, with stacks of books and files giving it a functional feel. The county lawyer, Frank Beazely, shares with the couple that he had met with the judge that morning and made a fair deal. He continues to say that while Judge Bazile is his friend, the judge is not a fan of the couple's particular situation. By this, Frank means interracial marriage. Frank states, "If you all plead guilty, the judge is willing to suspend any prison time; in exchange for suspending the jail time, you and your wife, unless of course, you choose to dissolve the marriage, will be forced to leave the state." Richard is puzzled by his remarks.

“Leave the state?” Richard questions. He seems to not fully understand the judge’s question, and neither can he fathom leaving his home, job, or family. Richard’s question shows his disbelief. In this scene, the viewer can understand how unacceptable Mildred and Richard’s marriage was to the individuals in positions of power, including their judge and even their lawyer. Frank continues to explain that Richard is allowed to return for work and Mildred can visit, but the two are never allowed to be in the state simultaneously and certainly aren’t allowed to be here together. Mildred finally speaks up. “For how long? How long will that last?” she questions. Mildred’s question demonstrates her understanding of the “fair deal” within a racially biased legal system. Frank seems reluctant in his response. “Twenty-five years.” In this moment, Mildred understands the agreement, and the hatred behind it much better than Richard does. Mildred knows that the legal system has always been against her as a Black-Indian woman, while Richard has not experienced this as a White man.

The next day, the scene rolls to the picture-perfect small-town county courthouse. It has a large open room with polished wood floors and natural light shining in. Richard and Mildred sit at one of two tables in front of the judge’s elevated bench next to Frank. The court secretary begins to read their charges out loud.

“Richard Perry Loving, being a White person and Mildred Dolores Jeter being a colored person, did unlawfully and feloniously go out of the state of Virginia being married in the District of Columbia on June 2nd, 1958, and afterward returned to the County of Caroline, the State of Virginia, cohabitating as man and wife against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth.”

The Court Secretary takes a seat as Judge Bazile asks Frank to stand. “How do you plead?” the judge asks. Richard and Mildred respond, “Guilty.” Judge Bazile,

“The court doth accept the pleas of guilty and fix the punishment of both accused at one year each in jail. The court does suspend said sentence for twenty-five years upon the provision that both accused leave Caroline County and the State of Virginia at once and do not return together or at the same time to said county and state for a period of twenty-five years. Do either of you have anything to say?”

Richard and Mildred both drop their eyes. Richard shakes his head no, Mildred follows suit. The judge continues to release the couple from custody and tells them to settle their court costs with the clerk. This scene amplifies just how negatively intermarriage was perceived in Caroline County in Virginia. By this point, the viewer is becoming sympathetic to the couple and is placing them as the protagonists of the story. The buildup of the previous scenes shared has shown the opposing perspectives on the couple’s marriage.

Additionally, the extreme sentencing for their marriage seems complicated for the viewer to rationalize due to the intense repercussions surrounding their marriage. These narrative elements impact the viewers' acceptance of interracial marriage because they have humanized the characters at this point. Narrative elements are crucial in depicting how the viewer sees the Lovings. Nichols creates a narrative focused on the couple wanting to live their lives together and provides insight into the couple's extreme punishments. The power of Nichols’ narrative of the Lovings allows the viewer to see the couple as two individuals who love one another while also showing the viewer how unacceptable intermarriage was in both this setting and period in the United States.

Chapter Four: Mildred's role in the advocacy towards interracial marriage

Introduction

The position an individual holds in society is understood through one's social and political experiences. These positions further shape the conditions and subsequent experiences individuals have as well as their interpretations of those experiences. As a woman of color, Mildred plays a vital role in shaping social and historical changes within the United States. Though Mildred would never have imagined that the letter she wrote to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy would blaze the path for interracial couples, her advocacy for her marriage became that foundation.

Mildred's Role

While the film shows Mildred in many scenes throughout the film, it is most useful to highlight the scenes in which Mildred advocates for her marriage and love. The movie depicts a scene from when Richard and Mildred Loving lives in Mildred's cousin's row house in Washington D.C. Mildred sits on the couch, brushing two-year-old Peggy's hair. The television plays in front of them, depicting images of the 1963 civil rights march in Washington. Laura walks in the front door carrying two grocery bags. She pauses in front of the television to watch the march. A commotion upstairs sends Mildred's attention there. Mildred, "You boys, stop that wrestlin'! Come help Miss Laura with these groceries!" Laura, "They say over a hundred thousand people are there. Laura moves into the kitchen. From there, Laura continues, "Can you imagine?" Mildred responds, "Might as well be halfway 'round the world. Laura walks back in, holding items from her grocery bags. Laura responds, "You know what you need to do; you need to write Bobby Kennedy." Mildred laughs at Laura, but Laura continues. "I'm serious. That's what he's up there for. All this talk of civil rights. You need to get you some civil rights." Mildred shakes

her head in affirmation at this. She watches the images flash across the screen. She notices her daughter Peggy's face gazing at the TV. Mildred's eyes go back to the photos. A few days later, Mildred decides she will write Attorney General Robert Kennedy, as her cousin suggested. Eventually, her eyes move down to sheets of loose notebook paper set out in front of her. She puts the pen on the paper and begins writing in a handsome cursive. It reads: "Dear Sir: I am writing to you concerning a problem we have..." Mildred's decision to write this letter became an altering factor that shaped her marriage, her family's lives, and other interracial marriages to come.

Later, while doing laundry, she hears the phone ring. Mildred rushes to catch the phone, balancing the laundry basket on her hip. She answers and states, "Byrd residence." ACLU lawyer Bernie Cohen is heard through the phone, "Hello, I'm calling to speak to Mildred Loving." Mildred responds, "This is she." Bernie Cohen responds, "Hello Mrs. Loving, my name is Bernard Cohen. I'm a lawyer that was referred to you by the ACLU. Are you familiar?" Mildred says, "I'm sorry. No." Bernie responds, "You wrote a letter to Attorney General Kennedy, is that right?" Mildred hesitates; the viewer can tell that Mildred is unsure how to respond but still responds, "Yes." Bernie says. "He was not able to help with your particular case and sent your letter on to the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU contacted me, I'm a lawyer in Virginia, and we would like to help you with your case.' Mildred seems saddened and says, "I see." During Mildred's phone call, her children can be heard running around and calling for their mom. Mildred has to hush them so she can continue her phone conversation. Bernie continues, "Would it be possible for you and your husband to meet with me?" Mildred replies she will have to speak with Richard before making a decision. Bernie can tell she is hesitant and further lets Mildred know that he is located in Alexandria, VA, if traveling was her

concern. Mildred responds, “Well, as I said in my letter, we really can’t afford a lawyer.” Bernie quickly cuts her off, “No, ma’am. The ACLU would take care of any fees.” Mildred nearly drops the phone. There is a long pause in the call. Bernie questions, “Mrs. Loving? Are you there?” Mildred finally responds with a “yes, and we will see you.” Bernie’s excitement does not go unnoticed. “Wonderful,” he states. “I’ll have my secretary call you back to set up a time. Nice speaking to you, Mrs. Loving.” The line disconnects.

This moment in the film is a kernel moment, as it provides details of the first interaction between Mildred and Bernie Cohen, one of the Loving’s lawyers. It is also important to highlight that Mildred is the one who carries on this conversation with Bernie and ultimately makes the decision to meet with the lawyers without receiving input from Richard. This is one of the first critical indicators of Mildred’s advocacy and leadership towards her marriage and rights.

Mildred is the “outsider” within, as explained by Harding (1986).

When Richard returns that night, Mildred tells Richard about the conversation she had with Bernie. When Mildred said that she got a call from a lawyer today, Richard’s response is one of shock. “A lawyer?” he questions. Mildred continues to explain her conversation. She shares that Bernie is from the American Civil Liberties Union, and Attorney General Robert Kennedy told him to call. Richard continues to undress, not responding and not genuinely listening to Mildred. Mildred continues anyway, “They’d like to help with our case.” Richard cuts her off, firmly stating, “We can’t afford a lawyer.” Mildred lets him know that the lawyers would not charge them; finally, Richard pays attention, though his facial expressions show he seems skeptical. Mildred then tells Richard, “We’re going to see him on Thursday. His name is Cohen.” Richard gives a faint nod as Mildred smiles. Richard processes what may have been an ‘ambush.’ This scene provides an example of Mildred’s unique standpoint and advocacy for their

marriage. Mildred is able to see a moment of opportunity for her and Richard's marriage at this moment, which Richard is unable to understand. It goes back to the master/slave dialectic. While the individual in power is unable to see everything, Mildred, as the individual who is not in the position of power, but rather a more similar role to the slave in Marx's dialectic, is able to understand the situation. Despite her husband's hesitancy, she pushes for her love, marriage, and family in this conversation. The viewer can tell that Mildred will not take no for an answer, and the power and connection within their relationship. Mildred understands that working with the American Civil Liberties Union that she will not only be able to change the life of her and Richard, but also for other interracial couples and families as well. Richard is unable to see the overall societal issue at this point because he is simply focused on just being with Mildred.

The following week Bernie is portrayed as a dapper man in a well-polished suit and hat. He carries his briefcase; coming from Richmond, Virginia, Richard uses his friend Jack's office in Alexandria to meet with the Lovings. Bernie walks back to Jack's office and advises the secretary to let his clients, the Lovings, into Jack's office when the couple arrives. Upon entering the room, Bernie removes Jack's nameplate from the office, so it appears that the office is his own, and puts his name on the door. Shortly after adjusting to the office, there is a knock at the door. Bernie tells the couple to enter. Mildred enters first, followed by Richard.

Bernie immediately stands and offers his hand to the couple for a handshake. Bernie kindly introduces himself. Mildred seems happy and nervous, while Richard looks somber and to himself. His demeanor stands out to Bernie, and Bernie takes note of it. After taking note, Bernie thanks the couple for coming in and goes over the basics he previously covered with Mildred on the phone; he shares that he is a member at the ACLU here in Virginia, which is why he was assigned to the Loving's case. Bernie goes into further detail, explaining the courthouse file he

started for the Lovings. “The first step is to appeal the sentence in Caroline County. That will be our fastest route into Federal Court. The problem is...” Richard interrupts, deeply concerned, “Federal court?” Bernie responds, “Yes, the goal is to try and get the Federal Court to hear this case so we can get...” Richard interrupts again, “Scuse me, but I don’t understand Federal Court.” He continues, “Can’t you just go talk to Judge Bazile? I mean, we aren’t hurtin’ anybody. Can’t you just go tell him that?” Bernie attempts to chime in, but Richard continues. “Just talk to him. Tell him if he lets us back in the state, we won’t bother anybody. Bernie responds, “Look, I do not think this is going to be resolved in Judge Bazile’s court, or probably any other court in the state of Virginia for that matter. I believe this is a court battle that could go all the way to the highest court in the land. This case could likely go all the way to the Supreme Court.” Richard reacts negatively to the comments made by Bernie and slumps back into his chair in a dismissive posture. This shocks Bernie, but Mildred reassures Bernie and states that the couple is listening. The fact that Bernie can tell Mildred is his ally in this legal fight, while Richard is not is a detail that shows a great example of Mildred’s ‘standpoint.’ Mildred knows that Bernie can help, and Mildred at least appreciates his offer to help.

The conversation continues, and Bernie explains that it would have needed to be done within 60 days to appeal the judgment of conviction. Now that five years had passed since the arrest and court conviction, the couple would need to be reconvicted. Mildred smiles while Richard gives Bernie a firm nod. Bernie continues, “I’ve given this some thought, and given that you are currently on probation, my suggestion would be for the two of you to return to Caroline County, get re-arrested, and then we will have an avenue for our appeal.” Richard gives a face of confusion and frustration. “You want us to get arrested again?” Richard is confused and frustrated. Bernie responds, “Yes. It is an idea. I, of course, would be there to bail you out.”

Richard responds, “We aren’t gonna do that.” The viewer can see Bernie lose his confidence. Mildred attempts to reassure him with a smile and reaches her hand out across the desk; “We appreciate you,” she shared. The conversation ends there, and Mildred and Richard walk out of the room. Bernie is left feeling disheartened by their conversation. In this scene, Mildred’s advocacy for her legal marriage rights continues. Her various gestures imply that she supports Bernie’s idea, even if she is nervous. Meanwhile, Richard continues to resist; he does not care about the system's legal matters. He seems to be complacent demonstrating his lack of identification with the Black community, despite his love for his wife and children. Instead, he just wants the law to leave him and Mildred alone.

Mildred continues with her vocal advocacy to move back to Virginia after their son Donald got hit by a car. Mildred argues, “We’re moving back to the country. I don’t care what they do to us. I won’t raise my family here.” Mildred is vocal in this scene while packing up her family’s belongings. Richard's response differs from many of his past responses. He first looks down at the luggage and boxes and eventually walks over and sits next to Mildred on the couch. For one of the first times in the movie, Richard breaks down and allows Mildred to embrace him. At this moment, he knows his wife’s determination to return home and the necessary legal advocacy is what is suitable for him and his family. Richard is unable to understand that at this time, while Mildred can as the outsider within (Harding, 1986).

When Mildred and Richard moved back to their King and Queen County Farmhouse in Virginia, there is a period where Mildred had not heard back from the lawyers. Despite not hearing anything back, Mildred continues to write letters. One of her letters reads, “...We haven’t heard anything from you for so long we had given up hope.” This shows Mildred’s persistence. While Mildred continues to write, she does not know that Bernie has still been fighting to have

the Loving's case heard. Bernie talks to his friend, Phil Hirschkop; he shares with Phil that the ACLU referred the Loving's case to him regarding an interracial couple married in D.C. and further arrested for living together in Virginia. He told Phil that the only way the couple could avoid prison was to leave the state for 25 years. Bernie stated,

“I filed a motion to vacate the judgment with Judge Bazile, the original trial judge in Caroline County, but he's stonewalling me. He's had my motion under advisement for months, and I feel like he could keep it that way until he retires. Of course, the ACLU sees this, and I agree, as a potential contender to repeal antimiscegenation laws nationwide. I just need to get the ball rolling, as it were.”

Phil simply responded, “That's a remarkable case.” Phil continues,

“It's a very delicate situation because by appealing, you open up the possibility of sending both of them to prison. I think regardless, you file the 1983 motion explaining your complaint. It'll force Bazile's hand and get you in front of a federal three-judge panel.”

This conversation is just what Bernie needed to continue moving forward with the Loving's case. The scene rolls back to the Loving's home. Raymond, the Loving's family friend, shares that the lawyers called and want to meet with the Lovings once again.

The Lovings meet with both Bernie and Phil this time. Richard squirms in his seat while Mildred sits with composure and optimism. Phil is reading off Judge Bazile's ruling against the Lovings. In part of the statement, it reads, “Almighty God created the races White, Black, yellow, Malay, and red, and he placed them on separate continents.” Phil continues with the Judge's ruling against the Lovings. Phil ends his statement by sharing that “by issuing this ruling, Judge Bazile has given us a road map to the Supreme Court.” Mildred interrupts, “I'm

sorry, I'm confused. He ruled against us, again." Bernie chimed in, "That's right, but now we're allowed to appeal this ruling to the state. From there, if they rule against you, we'll have a chance at the Supreme Court." Richard continues to stay quiet while Mildred speaks up, "That sounds wonderful!" The gestures given by the couple were complete opposites.

Bernie continued to let the Lovings know that LIFE Magazine had contacted them about sending a photographer out to the Loving's; Bernie believes this is a good idea for the Supreme Court to help raise the profile of the Loving's case before it goes to the Supreme Court. At this moment, Mildred looks over to Richard, who does not give much but a shrug. Mildred voices that the LIFE photographer would be fine to come out to the house. She follows by thanking Bernie and Phil for everything with a warm smile.

Upon returning to their home in Virginia, the couple finds a man approaching on foot up their driveway. Grey Villet, a 6'4" man, strides forward with a slender suit carrying a suitcase and camera; Grey waves as he approaches. As Grey approaches, Richard stands his ground as if he were a guard dog in front of the family's house. Grey puts his hand forward to shake Richard's hand; Richard hesitates. Grey walks towards the house, asking Richard if his wife is inside. As he walks towards the house, Mildred steps onto the front porch. Grey continues approaching with a wave and brightly states, "Grey Villet, LIFE Magazine. Something smells good in there. May I?" As he says that, Grey welcomes himself into the house; Mildred follows. Grey joins the family for dinner, sharing his stories as a LIFE Magazine photographer that has the family laughing and allowing themselves to feel comfortable with Grey being there. This moment shows Mildred as welcoming and Richard as standoffish, proving her advocacy even further. Although Richard does offer a gentle laugh at Grey's stories, showing Grey softening Richard a little.

After finishing dinner, Richard makes his way upstairs to play with the kids. Mildred makes her way to the sink to clean up the dishes while Grey shoots photos of her. Grey asks Mildred, “So you go to the Virginia State Court tomorrow?” Mildred responds with a yes. Grey continues to quiz Mildred. ‘You think you’ll lose?’ he asks. Mildred shares, “Well, yes. But I think it’s all right. We may lose the small battles but win the big war.” Grey then smiles at her while he snaps her photo. Grey continues to stay later into the night after the children are already asleep. Mildred and Richard sit on the couch cuddled next to each other, watching the Andy Griffith show on their television; Richard makes himself more comfortable putting his head on Mildred’s lap. At that moment, Grey reaches for his camera and quickly snaps a photo of the couple. Grey’s visit to the Loving’s made it clear that Mildred is the apparent driving force and advocate toward justice for their family.

Mildred continues to advocate for her marriage publicly. The day the Loving’s case was heard at the Virginia Supreme Court building, there were reporters were waiting outside the courthouse waiting to hear the verdict. The reporters outside the courthouse indicate the significance of their case. The reporter asks, “Mrs. Loving, the Virginia Supreme Court just ruled against you. How do you feel about what happened here today?” Mildred confidently responded to the reporter, “Well, I feel hopeful. I’m hopeful.” The news reporter then asks Mr. Loving if he has anything to say about the court. Richard’s response is brief, and he states, “No, I don’t have anything to say.” As they continue home to the farmhouse, he speaks to Mildred in a strained whisper.

As Richard and Mildred pull into the driveway of their farmhouse, Richard says, “I don’t want those people here. I’m done with all these cameras.” Richard steps back, waiting for Mildred to do something. Instead of giving in to Richard, Mildred responds to Richard, “I think

it is important. These people want to help us.” Mildred pulls away from Richard as he bites at his lips in frustration. Mildred continues with the reporters and camera crews, “...it’s the principle. It’s the law. I don’t think it’s right. And if we do win, we will be helping a lot of people. And I know we have some enemies, but we have some friends too. So, it doesn’t make any difference about my enemies.” Mildred smiles kindly, while Richard looks down, trying to avoid both Mildred and the camera.

Another famous scene that discusses the attitudes toward women in this film is during the juke joint scene, or in other words, a bar featuring music on a jukebox and often a dance area. In this scene, Richard is at the shop with his friends Virgil and Raymond. Virgil starts to tease Richard on his choice to marry Mildred. He even goes on to say. “All you gotta do is divorce her. That’s easy. That’s all you gotta do.” Richard responds in question, “Divorce her?” Virgil responds, “That’s right. Easy.” Richard smiles, nods, and replies, “I’m gonna divorce her.” Richard continues to pound down alcoholic drinks and pours his friends another round. Upon Richard’s return home, Mildred whispers to Richard to come to bed. Richard responds, “We have been talking to lawyers near ten years now.” Mildred continues to whisper, “Just come to bed.” Richard abruptly responds, “I can take care of you.” And at this moment, Mildred knows that Richard is drunk. This scene is significant because it shows Richard’s willingness to “throw in the towel” towards their fight against the legal systems, as he is finally starting to see the system does not help people of color. He is starting to understand at this point Mildred’s situated knowledge, but still, in this moment, all Richard wants is to be with his wife and to be left alone from outside authorities.

As the movie goes on, Bernie shares with the Lovings that the Supreme Court of the United States had agreed to hear their case. Mildred is the one who responds. Her hands go up in

excitement, and her facial expressions are happy. Mildred states, "It's a miracle!" Mildred then reaches for Richard's hand; Richard has not moved, smiled, or said a word. Bernie follows Mildred's response by letting the Lovings know that they are both allowed to come to hear the arguments at the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. Finally, there is a reaction from Richard; he responds, "No. We won't need to do that." Bernie cuts him off and says, "Well, it's a very big honor to sit in front of the Supreme Court. Very few people..." Richard now cuts off Bernie, "No. That's fine. Scuse me." Richard leaves the room. Bernie looks at Mildred, who continues to hold a smile on her face. Bernie then asks Mildred, and she responds that she will not go without Richard. This scene shows Richard is reticent in his activism towards the Loving's legal case. He has not pushed for the legalization of his marriage. If anything, he just wants to be left alone.

Bernie follows Richard onto the porch. He says, "You know, Richard, it's of course up to you not to attend, but you should know, the Supreme Court only hears maybe 1 out of 400 cases. It's historic." All Richard has to say back is, "thank you, Mr. Cohen." Bernie is shocked by his response; he follows by saying, "Well. Is there anything you want me to tell them, and of course, by them, I mean the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States?" Richard pauses for a moment and finally responds. "Yeah. Tell the judge, tell the judge I love my wife." Bernie is shocked by Richard's response, but in this response, Bernie is deeply moved by Richard's response, but in this response, Bernie believes he may finally understand Richard. Richard does not care about his case's legality, and instead, he simply wants to be with his wife. this moment in the film illustrates how the director Nichols narrates the Loving's story as their personal story, rather than the legal story, hoping the film would influence viewer sympathy and understanding.

Towards the end of the film, Mildred is seen reaching for the kitchen phone as it rings. She answers and says hello. She can barely make out the voices on the other end. “Yes. Hello Mr. Cohen. What’s that?” Though the voices are unintelligible, excited shouts and noises can be heard. Mildred smiles at this. Mildred then responds, “Yes. I understand. Yes. That’s wonderful news.” At this moment, Mildred knows they had won their case. She then hangs up the phone and pauses in the kitchen to take a moment.

In the next scene, the couple goes into Bernie’s law office. The cameras roll and flash as the couple appears. Reporters stand outside the law office in a conference room. The reporters direct their questions at Mrs. Loving, as she is the one who has been vocal about their marriage over this period. At that moment, Richard pulls her close. Tears are seen in both of their eyes.

Mildred’s fight for her marriage with Richard paid off. At the end of the film, the following text rolls across the screen:

“*Loving v. Virginia* (1967) made the prohibition of marriage based on race unconstitutional. The Supreme Court stated that marriage is an inherent right. Seven years after the Court’s decision, Richard Loving was killed by a drunk driver. Mildred never remarried and lived the rest of her life in the home Richard built for them. Though shy of press and ever reluctant to be called a hero, Mildred was interviewed shortly before her death in 2008. She spoke of Richard, saying, “I miss him. He took care of me.” As wind passes through the leaves that look out over the lower field, Mildred walks over to join her family.”

The end of the film provides a bittersweet ending for the viewer. While Mildred’s ongoing work paid off and she and Richard lived together in Virginia legally, Richard was tragically killed, leaving Mildred to raise their kids independently. The story is telling of Mildred’s resilience and

strong character. She shows the viewer that advocating for what you believe can cause change, even if it is slow.

Mildred's Advocacy

If the audience can appropriately interpret the examples of power displayed within the film, their preconceived ideas based on hegemonic discourse found in narratives and other dominant ideologies are challenged. It is not enough for women who challenge the patriarchal hegemonic system to feel self-empowered as a measure of achievement; the inclusion of the objective sphere is necessary to move beyond an illusion of self-empowerment to actual empowerment in the public sphere (Haynal, 2014). To challenge hegemonic patriarchy, an individual must affect the distribution of power at the ruling level. Mildred does just that multiple times throughout the film. The King and Queen County Farmhouse scene in Virginia where Mildred is writing letters despite not hearing anything back shows Mildred's persistence and pushback towards dominant hegemonic discourse. Rather than accept no response, Mildred continued to write the lawyers.

Hegemonic discourse attempts to legitimize a particular narrative over others. Patriarchal hegemonic discourse supports the stereotyping and marginalization of minority figures, especially women, people of color, and specifically women of color. Through the pushback of Black women, it can influence lasting historical change, just like Mildred. In this narrative, the power of feminist standpoint theory is how Mildred can see different standpoints, which the viewer can analyze throughout watching the film. This narrative, along with other narratives, provides insight and offers opportunities for us to better understand hegemonic discourse and even one's position of knowledge.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Introduction

This section concludes the discussion of the findings, the limitations, the future research that could be continued, and the conclusion for this thesis. The story's outcome shows how landmark cases, such as the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case, affect societal viewpoints on interracial marriage. Not only do these historical events influence societal views, but so do the narratives around interracial relationships, such as depicted in the film *Loving* (2016). The overall outcome of this movie reveals how historical events may mitigate bias towards interracial couples. The film also portrays the difference between societal bias in rural communities versus urban communities. One factor to consider is the demographics of the viewer. In urban communities, I argue that the viewer would be more receptive to interracial marriage, as Brown and Livingston proved through their data on interracial marriage trends (2017).

In comparison, individuals from rural communities may not be receptive to Mildred and Richard's marriage due to less exposure to interracial couples. Though these biases occurred and continue to occur towards interracial marriages, the story proves that love is love; more importantly, that love can win within the United States' judicial system. The viewer can take away that overarching theme that love can outlive societal stigmas, no matter where the stigmas happen. Through watching this movie, the viewer can gain a better understanding of systemic interracial bias, in addition to potentially gaining hope in the court systems. The hope gained from this legal case brought hope for other court cases the viewer may think of while watching the film.

Discussion of the Results

The first research question asked what narrative elements in the film *Loving* (2016) influenced the social acceptance of interracial marriage in the US. The most significant narrative aspects in the film *Loving* (2016) that influenced the viewer's understanding of social acceptance towards interracial marriage in the United States include the characters, setting, causal relations, events, and overall theme.

The second research questions asked does this film depict Mildred's role in the advocacy towards interracial marriage? The results indicate that Mildred's role and unique standpoint are the driving force for advocacy for her and Richard's marriage. The depiction of Mildred Loving's role in advocating for interracial marriage demonstrates the important tenets of standpoint theory. It shows the viewer how her unique position allowed her to create lasting historical change. Mildred's character exemplifies a unique perspective of standpoint and one that supports the concept of standpoint theory. Her position as a woman of color, growing up in rural Virginia, in addition to marrying a white man provides a clear example of her unique standpoint. Due to her unique standpoint that no other individual in the film has, Mildred is put in various positions where she has to push back against the legal system or societal norms. By capturing Mildred's pushback, the viewer is able to gain a better understanding of the hardships Mildred went through in the 1950s and 1960s due to her standpoint. She allows the viewer to see how societal power impacts relationships, but there are still systems that allow for pushback which creates change.

Limitations

Narrative analysis is a method that helps uncover underlying ideologies rooted in stories and the larger culture that crafts the narratives. Narrative critiques fall into the interpretative paradigm, which allows for individual interpretations of day-to-day lives. Since narrative analyses use

stories to describe human experiences and actions, it is important to consider the story's narrator. One limitation of using narratives is that the text is, by its nature, linguistically subjective. To reduce this weakness, I used feminist standpoint theory to help analyze my questions in established theory. Another one of my additional limitations was the film length; due to the film length being so long, it was challenging to use every feature to analyze the film. Despite not utilizing every feature to analyze the film, I used the most vivid and meaningful scenes and dialogue that mattered most in the analysis and the features that best answered the three research questions. Finally, it is essential to consider the trials and tribulations within these nine years for the couple, even though the *Loving* (2016) film is two hours and three minutes. Due to time constraints, the viewers and researchers cannot fully articulate the couple's hardships faced during those years.

Further Research

While the United States now has adopted interracial marriage legally, one can still see bias in interracial marriages in the United States. Movies like *Loving* (2016) help work to break down negative bias towards interracial marriages. Since the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) ruling, there are now more interracial marriages than there were in 1967. While close to 3% of marriages were interracial marriages in 1967, 17% of marriages in 2015 were interracial; the growth of intermarriage has shifted with societal norms as Americans have grown more accepting of interracial marriages (Brown & Livingston, 2017). In 2015, there were close to 11 million interracial married couples in the United States (Brown & Livingston, 2017). As interracial marriage has increased in the United States, there remain various viewpoints on interracial marriage. However, more people are indifferent or believe it is a good thing than in past years, as shared in Brown and Livingston's research (2017). The movie *Loving* (2016) was released before

Brown and Livingston's research was published but based on the extreme marks left from the historical case itself, one concludes that the story of the Loving's depicted through the moving *Loving* (2016) influences the ongoing and developing support of interracial marriage in the United States. It is essential to analyze the trends that impacted society after historical events such as the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case because it can help society understand trends that will happen after other historical events, such as the *Obergefell v. Hodges* 2015 Supreme court case that settled the legalities around LGBTQ+ communities concerning same-sex marriage (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015). One can conclude that same-sex marriage will gain more positive social acceptance and an increase in marriages like interracial marriages since 1967. Crafting conventional legal narratives will continue to play a crucial role in normalizing "taboo" subjects like race and sexuality.

In 2019 in Virginia, a law that required partners to declare their race on marriage applications was challenged in the Virginia court systems; a U.S. District judge ruled the practice unconstitutional and barred Virginia from enforcing the requirement (Jetton, 2019). Today, seven states require couples to provide racial background when applying for a marriage license; these states include Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Alabama (Wood, 2020). One can also conclude that these states would take away this requirement or make it optional.

Conclusion

The main concerns addressed in this paper included (1) the narrative elements in the film *Loving* (2016) combined to influence the viewer's understanding of social acceptance towards interracial marriage in the United States; and (2) the film's depiction of Mildred Loving's role in advocating for interracial marriage demonstrates the significant tenets of standpoint theory.

Through this analysis, the most prominent arguments for what narrative elements in the film *Loving* (2016) combine to influence the viewer's social acceptance of interracial marriage include the two main characters Richard and Mildred Loving, the settings in which different events took place, and the causal relations of the narrative structure of this movie. The movie *Loving* (2016) proves that time influences the acceptance of interracial marriage and the change one can make through her unique standpoint. Overall, the film *Loving* (2016) offers empowering narratives for interracial couples due to Mildred and Richard's lived experiences pushing back against patriarchal and racist expectations. It provides an understanding of how historical moments in the past truly impact and shape the future. It was not the male-dominant system that made the change but the Black woman who was persistent who pushed for the change.

References

- Bacon, J. & McClish, G. (2009). "Telling the story her own way": The role of feminist standpoint theory in rhetorical studies. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 32 (2), 27-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940209391227>
- Battalora, J. (2013). *The Birth of a White Nation: The Invention of White People and Its Relevance Today*. Houston Texas: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003054986-1>
- Bogle, D. (1994). *Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks: An interpretive history of Blacks in American films*. NY: Continuum.
- Borland, E. (2020). Standpoint theory. *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/standpoint-theory>. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412964517.n401>
- Bowdre, K., & C.B. (2007). A Black Camera Interview: Gender Stereotypes in Film and Media. *Black Camera*, 22(1), 15–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27761687>
- Bowell, T. (n.d.). Internet Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy: Feminist Standpoint Theory. Retrieved from <https://iep.utm.edu/fem-stan/#H2>. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483346229.n142>
- Brewer, W. F. (1985). The story schema: Universal and culture-specific properties. In D. R. Olson, N. Torrance, & A. Hildyard (Eds.), *Literacy, language, and learning* (pp. 167–194). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, A., & Livingston, G. (2017). *Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 years after*

- Loving v. Virginia. Pew Research Center*". Retrieved on 30 October 2020 from <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/05/18/intermarriage-in-the-u-s-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia/>
- Burgchardt, C. R. (2010). *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism* (Fourth). Strata Pub.
- Changfoot, N. (2004). Feminist Standpoint Theory, Hegel and the Dialectical Self: Shifting the Foundations. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 30(4), 477–502. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453704044024>
- Cutting, J. E. (2016). Narrative theory and the dynamics of popular movies. *Psychonomic Bull Review* 23, 1713–1743 <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-016-1051-4>
- Doherty, A. (2017). Filmic Contributions to the Long Arc of the Law: Loving and the Narrative Individualization of Systemic Injustice Or, Perfect Plaintiffs In An Imperfect Narrative: Perfectly Optimistic for An Imperfect Post-Election World? *Creighton Law Review* Volume 50. Issue 3. 693-718.
- Donovan, J. (2000). *Feminist theory: The intellectual traditions of American feminism* (p. 184-186) New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing.
- Echenique, F., & Fryer, R. (2007). "A Measure of Segregation Based on Social Interactions." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.122 (2):441-485. <https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.122.2.441>
- Fisher, W. (2010). Narrative criticism. In Burgchardt, C. (4th Ed.), *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism* (p. 289-307) State College, PA: Strata Publishing, Inc.
- Fisher, W. (1989). *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*, Columbia: University of South Carolina. <https://doi.org/10.2307/358142>

- Fisher, W. (1985). "The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration." *Communication Monographs*, 52 (4): 347–367. doi:10.1080/03637758509376117.
- Fisher, W. (1984). *Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument*. *Communication Monographs*, 51(1), 1.
- Foss, S. J. (2018). *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and practice*. Waveland Press, Inc.
- Fritz, L. (1979). *Dreamers and Dealers: An Intimate Appraisal of the Women's Movement*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Friedenberg, R. (1996). *Mr. and Mrs. Loving*. Showtime.
- Fryer, R., G Jr. (2007). "Guess Who's Been Coming to Dinner? Trends in Interracial Marriage over the 20th Century." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21 (2): 71-90.
<https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.21.2.71>
- Hallstein, D. L. O. (2000). Where standpoint stands now: An introduction and commentary. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 23(1). 1-15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2000.11517687>
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599. doi:10.2307/3178066
- Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/027046768600600481>
- Harding, S. (1991). *Whose Science, Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives*. New York: Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501712951>
- Hartsock, N. (1983). The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism. In: Harding S., Hintikka M.B. (eds) *Discovering*

- Reality. Synthese Library, 161. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-306-48017-4_15
- hooks, bell. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. (2nd ed.) Cambridge, MA: South End Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743172>
- Haynal, K. (2014). The Pushback: Female Narratives as Empowerment in Tina Fey's Bossypants and Mindy Kaling's Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me. Published by ProQuest LLC.
- Jameson, D. (2001). "Narrative Discourse and Management Action." *Journal of Business Communication*. 38 (4): 476–511. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002194360103800404>.
- Jetton, P. (2019). Law student helps change Virginia marriage license. Retrieved April 19, 2021, from <https://columns.wlu.edu/law-student-helps-change-Virginia-marriage-license/>
- Jönsson, K. (2019). Situated knowledges, sports and the sport science question, *Sport in Society*, 22:9, 1528-1537. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1435000>
- Kintsch, W., & van Dijk, T. (1978). Toward a model of text comprehension and production. *Psychological Review*, 85(5), 363–394. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.85.5.363
- Legal Dictionary. (2020). Civil Rights Movement. Retrieved October 30, 2020, from <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Civil+Rights+Movement>
- Litwack, L. (1961). *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790–1860*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/67.2.438>
- Loving v. Virginia* (1967). *Oyez*. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1966/395>
- Macedo, S. (2015). Just Married: Same-Sex Couples, Monogamy, and the Future of Marriage.

- Princeton University Press. Retrieved April 23, 2021, from
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1h4mhnr>
- Map - the leadup to loving. (n.d.). Retrieved April 19, 2021, from
<https://www.aclu.org/other/map-leadup-loving>
- McNamara, R. (2014). "How the Narrative Paradigm Affects Military Stories – ProQuest". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2014. 1558721.
- Miller, K. (2005). "Theories of Culture and Communication," *Theories of Communication Contexts*, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.
- McGovern, J. (2016). "Landmark Loving Supreme Court Case to be made into a film." Entertainment Weekly. Retrieved on October 30, 2020, from
<https://collider.com/loving-joel-edgerton-and-ruth-negga-lead-jeff-nichols-next-film/>
- Moran, R. (2003). *The Regulation of Race and Romance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/107.3.886>
- Nichols, J. (2016). *Loving*. Focus Features.
- Nowak, J., & Rotunda, R. (2012). *Treatise on Constitutional Law: Substance and Procedure* (5th ed.). Eagan, Minnesota: West Thomson/Reuters.
- Obergefell v. Hodges (2015). No. 14-566. Retrieved on November 11, 2020, from
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/576/14-556/>
- Rajan, T. (2010). *Romantic Narrative: Shelley, Hays, Godwin, Wollstonecraft*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/book.474>.
- Robbins, R. (2020). "How Loving vs. Virginia dealt a major blow to segregation." Retrieved November 10, 2020, from <https://www.vaildaily.com/opinion/robbins-how-loving-vs-Virginia-dealt-a-major-blow-to-segregation/>

- Rowland, R. (1989). "On limiting the narrative paradigm: Three case studies." *Communication Monographs*. 56 (1): 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758909390248>
- Sheppard, K. (2012). "The Loving Story: How an Interracial Couple Changed a Nation." *Mother Jones*. Retrieved October 30, 2020, from <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2012/02/the-loving-story-documentary-hbo/>
- Silbey, S. (2005). *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 2005 1:1, 323-368
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.lawsocsci.1.041604.115938>
- Staples, B. (2008). "Loving v. Virginia and the Secret History of Race." *The New York Times*. ISSN 0362-4331.
- Steckle, M. (2018). "Situating Feminist Standpoint Theory: Toward a Critical Ontology of Knowledge" *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 7572.
University of California Los Angeles. (2021). Education faculty. Retrieved from <https://gseis.ucla.edu/directory/sandra-harding/>.
- van Schijndel, M. (2019). *Ideology and (counter-)hegemonic discourses of 'race' and racism: A digital ethnography of online interracial dating community AfroRomance.com*. Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences. The Netherlands.
- Vinas-Nelson, J. (2017). *Interracial Marriage in "Post-Racial" America*. Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective. History Departments of The Ohio State University and Miami University.
- Walker, D. (2007). "Pioneer of interracial marriage looks back." Retrieved October 30, 2020 from https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-06-10-loving_N.htm
- Wood, D. (2020). Why does Minnesota's marriage license Application ask for race?
Retrieved April 19, 2021, from <https://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/mn-marriage->

license-race-question/