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Exploratory Paper

In this paper I will touch on three issues that have become very personal. The issues of the Common Core State Standards that have been implemented in forty-two states, rape culture, and body shaming in the media. Although two of these topics seem the same at first glance, there are two different issues at work. Particularly in the area of rape culture, the predominant issue is the normalization of rape due to prejudice and social attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Body shaming focuses on the main stream views towards the standards of beauty. The issue I will start with is the implementation of the Common Core Standards in New York.

The newly implemented Common Core State Standards(CCSS) are a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live.[[1]](#footnote-1) These new standards are being implemented in forty-two states and the country’s capital. Though the standards were created to unify the education system, there are flaws that can harm students that are learning in its early stages. In Zan Crowder’s essay “From the Editorial Board: The Politicization of the Common Core”, the many over looked inconsistencies in the CCSS are discussed.

We also worry that the cycle of educational reforms has reached a critical point

where teachers and students are being distinctly disserved by the never-ending

procession of revisions to already questionable policies. The scaffolded nature of

the CCSS would require twelve years of implementation in order to assess the success

of the new program. (Crowder 3)

Zan’s argument is very similar to the feeling many parents and students currently attending New York schools. As a former high school student that experienced the earliest years of Common Core, I can attest that the implementation was harmful to the current education structure.

The key concern I have when looking at CCSS is the pressure it puts on many of the students that have been affected since its introduction in 2013. For many that were accustomed to the Regents exams and less centralized method of testing, the new standards did significant damage. According to an article in *The New York Times*, my concern is reinforced with fact.

Students are terrified by these tests because the results can jeopardize their prospects for advancement and graduation. In New York, the number of students who scored “proficient” plummeted by about 30 percentage points in 2013, the first year of testing. Some 70 percent scored below the cutoff level in math and English; the 2014 results in math were modestly better, but the English language scores didn’t budge. (NY Times)

CCSS, though created for the benefit of students, was introduced in a way that was not successful.

To move into my second issue; rape culture has become a vicious issue in society. Sexual assaults and rape are commonly looked at as a crime in which the victim must prove their innocence. As described in *the Albany Law Review*, “Sexual assault of women by men

is a significant problem in the United States, as approximately one in five women are victimized

over the course of their lives. Despite the wide scope of this problem, it has been estimated that at best only five percent of sexual assaults result in a criminal conviction.” This low conviction rate is a direct result of the idea that rape is an everyday occurrence that can be blamed on the victim. To say that a woman is not a victim because of her choice in clothing or sexual preference is taking away the sense of security that should be present.

As recently as 2011, women have started to take a stand against this issue in the form of Slut Walk.

The Slut Walk movement started in Toronto, Canada in response to an insensitive remark made by a police officer regarding sexual assault. Over the weekend a rally was help by celebrity Amber Rose. Rose’s stance is similar to many women’s in regard to rape culture.

[W]e recognize that shaming, oppression, assault and violence have disproportionately impacted marginalized groups including women of color, transgender people and sex workers, and thus we are actively working to center these groups in this event," reads a statement on the Amber Rose SlutWalk webpage. "We deeply value the voices of marginalized groups and have a strong desire to find common ground among all of our intersections. (CNN)

The idea behind the Slut Walk is that women own their bodies and have the freedom to choose how they are viewed.

After looking at all three of the issues, the one that I will be expanding on is rape culture. As a female that understands the stigmas that women face on a daily basis, the attention I feel can be given to this issue is priority. Rape culture has become the deterrent in many women coming to terms with assault and correcting the issues women face with the criminal justice system.

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1. http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)