

# “It Is A Non-Negotiable Order”: Public Libraries’ Body Odor Bans and the Ableist Politics of Purity

Nat Lazakis

**ABSTRACT:** Most urban US public libraries have rules authorizing spatial exclusion of people whose body odor is described as “offensive,” despite critics’ identification of such policies as anti-homeless discrimination. Focus on socioeconomic deprivation as a temporary obstacle to producing an odorless body, however, obscures librarians’ role in demonizing people with odor-related disabilities. This paper shows how library rhetoric spreads ableist assumptions about embodiment, interpretation and power. Advice literature addressed to librarians presents patrons’ bodies as simple-to-read texts, in which odor is an unambiguous sign of neglected hygiene. Such beliefs uncritically reproduce elements of classist and racist ideology, while sidelining disability as a disposable exception. The article urges librarians to give up claims of epistemological mastery over patrons’ bodies and make libraries accessible spaces for all.

**Keywords:** Body Odor, Class, Disability, Hygiene, Public Libraries, Race



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 6 (2020) pp. 24–52. Published 24 August 2020.

## Introduction

In 2017 a New York news site reported on the recent experience of a man identified only by his first name, Will, who was confronted by a librarian in the Pine Hills branch of Albany Public Library after another patron “complained about his body odor.” Will has hidradenitis suppurativa, a skin condition in which blisters can break open, sometimes releasing a smell which transgresses the modern Western requirement of absolute odorlessness. Expressing a standpoint all too familiar to people with body odor conditions, he “said he tries to stay out of public spaces when he can. ‘I shower and clean my clothes every day, more than that ... I always find the farthest seat away from people.’” The complaint resulted in Will leaving, dismayed that the librarian had publicly shamed him “[i]n a room full of people, in a loud voice ...I was so insulted I didn’t let her finish. I walked out ...If she had pulled me aside, I would have been happy to explain it to her.” A public library spokeswoman

said one other person was within earshot during the brief conversation but Will said multiple people were nearby. Either way, he said, “There should have been none.”

“What about people who wear adult diapers or a colostomy bag?” Will said. He said he also believes the policy exists as “an excuse” to throw out homeless people, a claim the library denied.

“You don’t need an employee going around sniffing people,” Will said. “If you don’t know what a person is going through, you have no reason to open your mouth” (Masters 2017).

The library whose employee classified Will as offensively embodied following one other patron’s complaint has rules which are typical of the overwhelming majority of its counterparts in the US (see Appendix I). This article examines the criteria used by public libraries to distinguish between bodies which are deserving of access to knowledge or exclusion, as well as assumptions which deny attention to odor-related disabilities. To make sense of odor bans, I bring into conversation research on libraries as institutions that reinforce middle-class and white privilege with disability studies on bodily exclusion. I briefly revisit an odor-related court verdict which asserted strong-smelling patrons’ right to use public libraries, as a reminder that odor-related eviction is not inevitable. Then I focus on how four conspicuous themes in advice literature written for librarians and library conduct rules reinforce an exclusionary epistemology of odor. These texts reassure librarians

that their olfactory evaluation yields objective knowledge about patrons' bodies, that body odor is a behavioral choice, that strong-smelling embodiment is often a sign of other stigmatized qualities, and that odor aversion is usually an object of consensus. By identifying body odor with poor hygiene and criminalizing it as a behavior, library discourse acknowledges odor-related disability only as an exception to be grudgingly accommodated after first being classified as a disgusting problem to control and eliminate.

Of course, not all US public libraries have odor bans, and considering the hierarchical relations within libraries as workplaces, lower-ranking librarians as well as working-class staff like security guards may occasionally be required to enforce such rules despite disagreeing with them. Therefore this article's criticism focuses on librarians and related policymakers in senior positions who use their authority to condone olfactory discrimination. I am not dismissing public libraries' social contributions, but instead urge institutions with odor bans to recognize the unethical implications of segregating or harassing the differently embodied, and to follow the example of their counterparts which operate successfully without such bans.

Some librarians defend odor bans by claiming that they are rarely enforced (Masters 2017). Even if few patrons are subjected to Will's disturbing experience, I argue instead that the bans communicate a harmful narrative about the relationship between non-normative embodiment, interpretation and power. Rules of conduct are often displayed in prominent locations and viewed by dozens of library users daily. US public libraries are sites which many patrons frequent from early childhood, thus they serve an influential socializing and educational role. As such, library rules exercise a pedagogic function, their wording reinforcing tenets of neoliberal ideology (Ventura 2012; Wilson 2018). Odor bans in particular teach that spatial exclusion of an undesirable other is acceptable as long as it is articulated in terms of smell, not race, sex or other identities protected by law. They prompt users to decontextualize others, judging only the aesthetic effect someone's odor has on a stranger rather than taking into account why that individual might have a noticeable smell. Patrons are encouraged to actively participate in policing the library as space of purity and bourgeois civility. An affective regime of constant precarity and insecurity is also naturalized, since, in theory, anyone's quest for knowledge could be rudely interrupted if a stranger complains about their smell and sends a librarian over to interrogate and perhaps expel them, although almost all instances of odor evictions I have read of involve socioeconomically disadvantaged patrons, or people like Will who have medical conditions.

Because library rules are enforceable by security guards or police, they are more influential than mere words, and hence are privileged in relation to other, alternative narratives of how to order space or interact with embodied others. On the library shelves patrons may be able to access more body-positive narratives, such as, for instance, *The Dirt on Clean* (Ashenburg 2007) or *The Body Isn't an Apology* (Taylor 2018), but within the library as institution these are powerless to challenge the epistemology enshrined in the odor-phobic rules.

Although advertising of products like mouthwash and deodorant is arguably a much more influential source of odor aversion in US culture (Ewen 1977; Lears 1994; Vinikas 1992), library odor bans' direct connection to enforcement allows them to complement ads' deterrent messages. When disgust is codified into legally enforceable rules enabling spatial segregation, products to keep the conventionally embodied from becoming "disgusting" attain the status of necessities, driving up sales. Exposed to ads, people learn to be repelled by the scent of undeodorized armpits or mouths, and library rules invite them to act upon this disgust in spatially effective ways, by approaching an authority figure and getting someone like Will thrown out or at least shamed, as ads have taught that they deserve. Thus the ad's norm descends from a representational, virtual realm into that of everyday life and concrete performance. As Marta Russell pointed out in an essay on capitalism and disability, "Disabled persons who do not offer a body which will enhance profit-making as laborers are used to shore up US capitalism by other means" (2019, Location 270). Libraries with odor bans offer public space, narrative legitimacy and authority for the materialization, as it were, of advertising's shame-driven enterprise.

Whether communicated by ads or librarians, the hygiene narrative—according to which use of soap, deodorant and similar products ensures odorlessness, and body odor is evidence of being unwashed—acts in ableist ways by erasing disability-related causes of odor. Besides hidradenitis suppurativa, metabolic, digestive and other conditions can also explain strong-smelling embodiment. Among the most researched of these disabilities is Trimethylaminuria (TMAU). Estimated to be genetically carried by up to 1% of the US population (Patterson et al. 2008), TMAU is a non-contagious metabolic condition in which the nutrient choline is processed in unconventional ways, leading to body odor which some people consider strong, especially after the consumption of meals containing it (since choline is found in almost all foods, its intake can be reduced but not eliminated). Given the hegemony of the hygiene narrative, people with such conditions face systematic discrimination when trying to access employment, transportation, knowledge and other resources. Despite being nominally

protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act, employees with a diagnosed odor condition may be spatially segregated or even terminated if accommodations pose a “burden” on employers.<sup>1</sup> In transportation, recent odor-related complaints have gotten passengers removed from flights (Bever 2019). The arbitrariness of such evictions and likelihood that some are motivated by racist or other forms of hatred was showcased when a female passenger from Nigeria along with her young children were removed from a Houston to San Francisco flight after one “white male” passenger complained to the crew about her smell (Phillips 2018). Activists and patient advocacy organizations vocally protest such discriminatory policies (see Appendix II), yet ignorance about odor-related disability remains the norm.

It is important to clarify the relationship within this article between the two kinds of oppression which Will mentioned, disability-related and class-related. First, it is not my intention to reinforce stereotypical associations between homelessness and poor hygiene. I am critical of the way that library discourse classifies odor in terms of hygiene (rather than disability), and a cursory examination of librarians’ own rationalizations of odor bans (for instance, a search on the American Library Association website) reveals that most discussions about odor bans revolve around homeless patrons. It is not possible to challenge librarians’ neglect of odor-related disabilities without engaging the socioeconomic framework the odor-ban conversation is currently set within.

Second, although this article focuses on how public libraries’ odor-phobic discourse results in discrimination against patrons whose odor is caused by socioeconomic deprivation as well as patrons with odor-related disabilities, it is important to recognize that members of these groups—despite having common enemies—may not understand themselves as having any shared interests. While people like Will may benefit from a politics of destigmatization, body positivity and counter-aesthetics, people who are socioeconomically deprived are more likely to demand housing or increased access to shower and laundry facilities in shelters and other public buildings. Indeed, the latter group may read a project of body odor destigmatization like the present one as reactionary, since it could appear to naturalize what—for some—are the effects of temporary material scarcity. These objections are an important reminder that there are irreducible differences in the standpoints and needs within what cannot in any case be called a community of strong-smelling people. This paper does not downplay the injustice of socioeconomic deprivation, but criticizes the naive, normalizing and puritanical fantasy

---

1 <http://www.askjan.org/limitations/Body-Odor.cfm>

that if everyone is provided with an apartment with a shower, all bodies will magically become odorless.

Third, although this paper is intended to redress social scientists' lack of interest in odor-related disabilities, and hence privileges the experiences of people like Will who have such conditions, I am not implying that people with disabilities are more deserving of library access than conventionally embodied people who are deprived of hygiene resources for socioeconomic reasons. Indeed, in a small number of instances the constituencies may overlap, as in the story of one member of an online TMAU support group who reported becoming homeless as a result of olfactory discrimination. Libraries ought to be accessible to all patrons regardless of how or why they smell.

### **Public libraries' spatial politics**

Controversy over odor bans usually revolves around socioeconomic discrimination (Berman 2007; Mars 2013; Williams 2016). While critics are correct to identify bans' classist intentions, however, it is also important to ask why librarians are reluctant to interpret strong-smelling embodiment in terms of disability. This section synthesizes studies of libraries as spaces of middle-class and white privilege with disability studies to argue that body-related assumptions contained in these hierarchical traditions have emboldened librarians to interpret and discipline patrons' bodies while discouraging engagement with more inclusive narratives.

An outspoken critic of odor bans, Sanford Berman described them as "Classism in the Stacks" (2007). Bans have received extensive treatment in library-related research and commentary, but these publications generally focus on how they affect patrons who are socioeconomically deprived. Some argue that class-based exclusion is unethical; as Corina Bardoff recently pointed out, "People who are experiencing homelessness have few or no options to access information other than public libraries, and thus the interest of library patrons in studying without smelling foul odors, for example, does not outweigh a person's right to information or their right to simply be in a public space" (2015, 19). In some cases the ethical injustice of odor bans is dismissed by citing "solutions" like portable showers placed near library buildings (Ruhmann 2014). Others focus on librarians' duty to provide healthcare information to such patrons (Williams 2016). However, attempts to be helpful to patrons perceived as dishevelled often operate within a framework in which bodily signs correspond predictably to socioeconomic status:

I would think the biggest obstacle is that maybe we're not allowed to go up to people and say 'hey, it looks like you haven't had a shower in awhile—are you homeless? Would you like to find out what your local resources are?' (Williams 2016).

Pointing out the dangers of stereotyping “the homeless,” Thomas Muggleton rightly notes that “people who are identified as “homeless” users to be ejected may simply be people who place little stock in their appearance, while people who are perceived to be “normal”, legitimate users may in fact be homeless people who are adept at maintaining their appearance in spite of their circumstances” (2013; see also Kelleher 2013).

Other class-related studies have identified the reproduction of social inequality more generally at the heart of libraries' function within advanced capitalist societies. In a recent essay, Stephen Bales applies Althusser's theory to illuminate academic libraries' function as “ideological scaffolding for capitalism” (Bales 2016, 5): “The library patron interpellates as an *initiate* inside the I[deological] S[tate] A[pparatus], integrating into the hierarchy of the library, presenting no challenge to the *status quo*, and helping to reproduce class division in an information-driven society” (17). This insight could be extended to the ways in which public libraries screen bodies, although the reliance on security guards and even police to remove the impure from the “temple” reveals that libraries can pursue a coercive as well as an ideological mission.

Douglas Raber drew on concepts from Gramsci to argue that librarians exercise “a profession that rather consistently overlooks its own contribution to the imbalances of power and knowledge that in turn contribute to the systematic exclusion of certain groups of people from full participation in capitalist social formations” (2003, 45–6). Prior to Raber, Michael Harris had also invoked Gramsci to identify “long and broad structured silences relative to the ways in which social, economic, and cultural power relations shape the nature and extent of library service in America” (1986, 221). These left-wing writings as well as research on librarians' attitudes toward homelessness suggest that librarians usually confront strong-smelling patrons through the lens of sociopolitical stereotypes about poverty. If odor is read uncritically as a marker of class, librarians may make patronizing assumptions when interacting with such individuals, based on stereotypes about low education and irresponsibility.

Besides US librarians' bourgeois identity, their profession's overwhelmingly white institutional culture (Sierpe 2017) also partially explains discomfort with non-normative

bodies. Nirmal Puwar showed that in traditionally white-dominated spaces, contemporary ideologies of diversity and meritocracy have not displaced body-related judgments:

social spaces are not blank and open for any body to occupy. There is a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time. While all can, in theory, enter, it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designed as being the ‘natural’ occupants of specific positions (2004, 8; see also Ahmed 2007).

Moreover, in white-dominated spaces of intellectual activity, a dualistic hierarchy of mind and body downgrades bodies themselves as something impure to be controlled and erased, but “certain bodies are more capable of eluding detection than others” (Warren 2003, 45). Attentive to inscriptions of power on bodies, research on libraries as spaces of whiteness has shown that dress codes and grooming advice are used by white librarians to reinforce negative stereotypes about non-white colleagues. Jessica Macias described how “a young Black staff member” was made to feel that her hair was in need of control, and was a source of contagion:

I was asked to remind her to wear her hair back so that it would not fall forward in her face, on the desk, or on the materials that library patrons were borrowing. Suddenly, the library had turned into a restaurant, and our books were likened to food that her hair could contaminate (2017, 116).

Racism has long been intertwined with beliefs about purity, including the notion that white, middle-class people are experts in hygiene and somatic control, and that darker bodies are unruly and dirty (Anderson 2006; Bobel 2018; Classen 1992; McClintock 1995; Zimring 2015). The ideology of whiteness inspires a set of assumptions about purity and bodily discipline which some librarians arguably apply to subordinate colleagues as well as patrons. In this sense, adherence to norms which appear commonsense to librarians may function to “foreclose spaces in which we might confront white supremacy through interrogations of its complexities, practices of critique that do not always produce clear answers for the questions they pose” (Hudson 2017, 205–6).

Of course librarians are unlikely to consciously articulate racist stereotypes about dirtiness; they may point to instances of applying hygiene bans to white patrons as evidence that they are judging behaviors rather than identities. Still, the preoccupation with mastering and disciplining the body (Singh 2018), the certainty that space cannot be inhabited unless all traces of physical impurity have been banned, reproduce colonialist and racist structures of feeling despite efforts to convert them into colorblind, meritocratic norms. As Dana Berthold



pointed out, “Even those of us who readily admit a strong historical link between hygiene and racism find ourselves resistant to the idea that our own preoccupation with hygiene has some racist roots” (2010, 3). Yet today hygiene is:

a conception linked to white privilege in our particular time. On one level, this is a self that is alienated from the physical world and therefore aims to subdue the indicators of its own physical embodiment. In this regard, the self is anxious about bodily boundaries because it defines itself through what it excludes or washes away. On another level, cleanliness is more abstract and has to do with belief in one group’s moral superiority over another group considered less civilized and “closer to nature.” On both levels, the alienated other is what makes this self a self (14).

While research on class and race partially explains librarians’ negative assumptions about strong-smelling embodiment, disability studies offer a framework for interpreting indifference to odor-related medical conditions. They have found a set of ableist assumptions cited or unconsciously reproduced by institutions to limit access to people with disabilities. Focusing on exclusion in a university campus, Tanya Titchkosky (2011) showed how administrators use space and narrative to restrict the differently embodied from full participation. David Mitchell identified in academia a systematic refusal to “re-imagine the materiality of disability as desirable variation” (2016, 19). Far from thinking ahead so as to design spaces for participants with a range of embodiments, authorities often rely on legalistic excuses to justify exclusionary policies. The way that ableist administrators first implicitly define certain bodies as unwelcome and then retroactively accommodate them so as to be in compliance with the ADA has been described as “passive aggressive” (Dolmage 2017, 77).

Synthesizing the above studies helps contextualize librarians’ treatment of patrons with invisible yet smellable disabilities. They suggest that to date, librarians’ understanding of olfactory difference has been shaped by classist and racist constructions of body odor, stifling doubt and wonder about alternative interpretations, including disability-related narratives.

### **Odor bans on trial**

Commenting on activists’ use of US courts to contest oppressive institutions’ control of space, Edward Soja noted that “justice is almost entirely blind to the concept of unfair geographies and specifically spatial injustice. I say almost, because occasionally such explicitly spatial claims of injustice break through to open up new possibilities for remedying

the problems involved” (2010, 49–50). This section revisits three trials related to public library hygiene bans. I argue that the initial verdict of *Kreimer v. Morristown* (1991)—to the effect that olfactory nonconforming people cannot be spatially excluded any more than people with non-normative visual appearances can—articulated a serious challenge to the hegemony of olfactory discrimination. Although the verdict was overturned and subsequent library literature has avoided confronting it, the argument itself deserves to be reclaimed by opponents of odor bans.

The first trial concerned the expulsion of Richard Kreimer from Morristown, New Jersey, Public Library (Malmquist 1996, 96). The case was one of dozens concerning the rights of homeless people to exist in public spaces, although most of the others involved sitting/sleeping on sidewalks, panhandling, or police confiscation of possessions (Mitchell 2003; Feldman 2004). The aspect concerning this article is whether body odor perceived to be offensive by one or more others can be grounds for spatial exclusion. The initial verdict by the US District Court, District of New Jersey (Judge Sarokin) denied any essential difference between visual and olfactory nonconformity:

[T]he only indication within the [Morristown library] policy as to what constitutes a “nuisance” is hygiene that “annoys” others. This hygiene aspect of the library policy *is no different from an “ugly rule,” whereby the library staff could eject patrons whose physical appearance caused others distress.* The policy neither contains nor refers to identifiable standards, thereby failing to provide adequate notice to actual or potential library patrons. At the same time, the policy affords the library staff and police excessive discretion in its enforcement . . . .The paragraph 9 “smell test” is the most dramatic example of such unreasonable provisions; it conditions access based on patrons’ personal attributes and/or identity rather than on clearly identified standards for disruption; the fact that some may find the patron “offensive” does not qualify as a disruption (*Kreimer v. Morristown*; my emphasis).

Many US cities did enforce “ugly laws” until well into the twentieth century, prohibiting people with visible disabilities from earning income in public spaces (Schweik 2009). By 1991 it was too obvious to need mention that such individuals could no longer be expelled from public. The US District Court innovated by declaring that strong-smelling people must have the same rights. If someone is offended by the Other’s smell, it is up to them to move away, not to spatially exclude the person who offends them:

At oral argument, defendants' counsel ... attempted to distinguish the library's "smell test" by noting that under the "ugly rule" distressed patrons could simply avert their eyes. *Similarly, the patrons and staff who do not appreciate the perfume, cologne, and other odors of certain patrons could relocate their seats.* The court recognizes the difficulties in establishing standards for a "smell test," but those difficulties do not make vagueness permissible (ibid, note 13; my emphasis).

In subsequent accounts of the case, library literature has summarized the initial court's verdict in ways that omit the argument collapsing visual and olfactory offense. They only convey the part of the verdict which faults the Morristown library for failing to offer a concrete definition of offensive hygiene (Shuman 1996, 10–11). This refuses to engage with the court's claim that *any* effort to objectively define offensive appearance or hygiene is subject to "unfettered discretion," and hence unreliable:

No one can dispute that matters of personal appearance and hygiene can reach a point where they interfere with the enjoyment of the facility by others. But one person's hay-fever is another person's ambrosia; jeans with holes represent inappropriate dress to some, and high fashion to others. Thus, no matter how laudable and understandable the goals of the library may be, we cannot—we dare not—cross the threshold of barring persons from entering because of how they appear based upon the unfettered discretion of another (*Kreimer v. Morristown*).

The Third Circuit Court of Appeals later ruled in the library's favor, accepting without any critical interrogation the perception that the man's odor had been a nuisance, and claiming that his right to seek information was limited by the fact that he had been bothering others:

Lastly, the court examined Rule 9 which stated "patrons whose bodily hygiene is offensive so as to constitute a nuisance to other persons shall be required to leave the building." The court held that this rule was reasonable and valid, as it only prohibited behavior that was disruptive, but did not bar a patron from permanently entering the library, and had a level that the behavior must reach before expulsion (nuisance). The court went on to state that while the library's standard of "nuisance" was broad, it was not necessarily vague and unconstitutional. It would be impossible to list all of the various factual predicates of a nuisance, and the court pointed out that the term "nuisance" allowed the library to use an objective reasonableness test (Malmquist 1996, 97).

A third court case would decide in favor of another homeless man who was turned away before he had even entered a library, ordered by security guards to “clean up” (Armstrong v. DC Public Library (2001)). Its verdict, however, was not based on unconditional assertion of the rights of strong-smelling people, but on the finding that DC Public Library employed an excessively vague description of what constituted unacceptable appearance (Mars 2013).

Although Judge Sarokin’s argument in the Kreimer case has been swept under the carpet, the equation he drew between smellable and visible difference is an important conceptual foundation for solidarity with olfactory nonconforming patrons, whether they are experiencing homelessness like Kreimer or have medical conditions like Will. Some readers may dismiss Sarokin’s argument on the grounds that its legalistic focus on rights does nothing to combat more deeply entrenched prejudices against either visible or olfactory differences. Simply conceding that people with olfactory differences have the right to exist in public space would not be sufficient, of course, to dismantle the numerous sources of our culture’s olfactory hatred. Indeed, people can no longer be spatially expelled on the grounds of visible differences, yet discrimination related to such differences—racism, sexism, sizeism, queer-phobia and bias against people with visible disabilities—remains intense. To date, however, movements resisting such oppressions have not benefited olfactory nonconforming people. The latter have arguably been ignored because of the persisting assumption of an underlying hierarchy between olfactory and visible non-conformity. People experiencing olfactory discrimination will be unable to claim solidarity from other social movements until the injustice of their spatial exclusion is acknowledged. Although Sarokin’s argument is not sufficient as a platform against olfactory discrimination, recovering it marks an important first step to reversing the overwhelming indifference toward odor bans and other forms of olfactory hatred.

As the remainder of the article discusses, library discourse defending odor bans avoids grappling with Sarokin’s position that expelling a strong-smelling patron is no more just than expelling a patron of non-conforming visual appearance; it has developed several rhetorical strategies to make the right of spatial expulsion appear self-evident and above criticism.

### **Bourgeois aesthetics as standard of objectivity**

The question of whether body odor can be measured objectively was debated in all the odor-related court cases, with a spectrum of three positions emerging: (i) it is impossible to determine a standard for body odor being so objectively offensive as to merit expulsion (US District Court, District of New Jersey, Kreimer v. Morristown); (ii) an objective standard is

theoretically possible to define, but a particular library's behavior policy failed to adequately define it (US District Court, District of Columbia, *Armstrong v. DC Public Library*); and (iii) a patron meets the criteria for being objectively offensive, and can be expelled, when their body odor annoys/becomes a nuisance to/offends others (Third Circuit Court of Appeals, *Kreimer v. Morristown*). In the latter case, objectivity is problematically identified with aesthetics. This section shows how library discourse presents patrons' embodiment as a simple-to-read text and authorizes symptom interpretation as if librarians were medical professionals. These texts' certainty that odor corresponds to poor hygiene obscures the standpoint of disability.

Librarians deliberating whether to adopt a ban on body odor will not find an explicit position issued by the American Library Association. Instead, its "Guidelines for the Development of Policies and Procedures Regarding User Behavior and Library Usage" state that policies:

should not restrict access to the library by persons who merely inspire the anger or annoyance of others. Policies based upon appearance or behavior that is merely annoying or that merely generates negative subjective reactions from others, do not meet the necessary standard. Such policies should employ a reasonable, objective standard based on the behavior itself.

Will body odor be classified as generating "negative subjective reactions," in which case strongly scented people should not be banned, or as unacceptable according to an "objective standard"—and more importantly, who gets to decide? This vague language invests librarians with the authority to apply them in particular situations, to determine whether the body of the Other is merely annoying or objectively merits expulsion. The librarian is identified with the rational—with Mind itself—and the annoying patron with body.

Although some of the reading material on homelessness recommended by the ALA gravitates toward tolerating body odor of patrons who cannot access hygiene facilities, ALA-published *Public Library Services for the Poor* condoned librarians threatening strong-smelling patrons with arrest:

Our rules: "Yes, you really do put yourself at risk of arrest if you curse out a staff member, or masturbate under the table, or smell so badly that the entire room reeks of your odor" (Holt and Holt 2010, 113).

Bizarrely, the authors followed the above threat with the information that "bad odor is one of humans' most sensitive indicators of a health problem..." (ibid). Were they implying that

people like Will with health problems which cause body odor should be arrested, or that only “bad”-smelling people who are healthy should be arrested?

The most detailed, practical and recently published set of advice on body odor supports librarians’ right to expel strong-smelling patrons. The fact that the ALA published Ryan Dowd’s *The Librarian’s Guide to Homelessness* (2018) appears to indicate its official approval of body odor bans. Dowd, who directs a shelter for homeless people and also offers an online course on interacting with homeless patrons at [homelesslibrary.com](http://homelesslibrary.com), has expressed a range of positions on the topic of library eviction. Interviewed by *Street Roots*, a paper produced for and by people experiencing homelessness, he opposed expulsions. This statement was framed in an exchange about hierarchy, in which he clarified that he is not critical of rules, but is just offering a more empathetic approach to get people to follow them: “if you treat people with human dignity, more often than not they will follow your rules and not cause trouble.” Responding to the interviewer’s critique of power asymmetry, he explains that that is not the problem:

**T.:** *We’re not enslaving people any longer, but this economic apartheid is a form of forced servitude and so, when you have the power and a position of authority, you are by definition practicing the side of the aggressor. At least in my opinion.*

**R.D.:** There’s nothing inherently wrong in being the one with power. It’s how you use it. Somebody is going to have more power in any interaction. But if you abuse that power, that’s a problem. If you use your power to crush poor people, when you use your power to kick poor people, kick homeless people out of libraries, that’s not an ethical use of power (Topaz 2018).

Ethical or not, his book and website offer a step-by-step technology for evicting library patrons with body odor. Clicking on “Start Here,” the website’s visitor (presumed to be a librarian) is led to “Ryan’s Quick Advice,” a heading poised over six black-and-white photos of faces, each of which corresponds to one challenge. “Body Odor” is at the very top of the list, visually connected to the photo of a man with longish grey hair mostly covered by a sock cap. The website does not indicate the source of the photographs or whether their subjects consented to have their images used in this way.

Clicking on “Body Odor” leads to a page titled “Body Odor in Your Library: A five step strategy.” Without acknowledging arguments against body odor bans, Dowd implies that an “Odor Eviction” is acceptable if the librarian decides on it. Examined as ideology, Dowd’s

“quick advice” on body odor functions to naturalize librarians’ authority over patrons’ bodies, to the exclusion of any counter-argument:

The “Odor Eviction” is when you tell a person that he or she *must* leave now and may not return until after a shower. It is a non-negotiable order (Dowd 2018, 186; emphasis in original).

While Dowd recognizes that overly sensitive patrons may request the expulsion of someone who does not smell so bad (2018, 187), he invokes the unreliability of patrons’ noses only to elevate the middle-class, professional librarian’s nose and aesthetics. Why the librarian’s verdict that a patron’s smell is “truly unacceptable” (ibid) is any more reliable than a patron’s is left unstated.

Body odor is presented as something factual which the librarian can objectively measure and evaluate:

Just be very “matter of fact” about it, like you are telling someone when their books are due (186).

He reproduces the stereotype that people with body odor do not know it (but the objective librarian does):

Do not tell a person to leave until he “doesn’t smell” (he probably doesn’t think he smells now) (186).

Hey, you probably didn’t know, but you have a little bit of an odor. You might want to make sure you bathe and wash your clothing before tomorrow. Thank you (homelesslibrary.com).

The patron’s body and clothes are represented as simple-to-read texts. The expert librarian can tell at once what the “real problem” is:

I recommend that you specifically ask the person not to return until after he takes a shower and washes his clothes (never forget the clothes; they are often the real problem). If the problem is halitosis, be specific about brushing teeth (Dowd 2018, 186).

Information from the Monell Chemical Senses Center, which researches Trimethylaminuria and other non-hygiene-related body odor medical conditions, suggests that “most dentists and physicians” have difficulty identifying the source of certain odors:

Chronic halitosis originates on the rear, top-part of the tongue surface where a bacterial plaque can develop. Why some people develop this and some do not is not exactly known. This plaque is similar to the plaque on teeth and gums, but is caused by a different group of bacteria.

Chronic halitosis can exist without the presence of gum or periodontal disease; persistent oral odor is unlikely to come from your teeth and gums (so cleaning them doesn't help this situation) or digestive tract. Most dentists and physicians are unaware that *chronic bad breath is an oral, tongue-derived situation* (Monell, emphasis in original).

Middle-class professionals' certainty that they can diagnose causes of body odor without medical examination or training is reflective of hierarchical assumptions about non-normative embodiment. The standpoint of patrons with disabilities like Will's is dismissed, and an epistemology of simplicity, clarity and predictability reinforced.

## **Classifying odor as behavior**

For supporters of US public library odor bans it has been important to insist that body odor, which they almost always interpret as bad hygiene, is a behavior. This definition erases odor-related disabilities and integrates odor ban discourse with neoliberal glorification of personal responsibility. When odor is classified as a behavioral choice, library rules follow a simplistic epistemology of embodiment, according to which people choose the condition of their body and may be held accountable for it. This framework has no place for medical conditions and, as the ALA's Hunger, Homelessness & Poverty Task Force recognized in 2005, insistence on behavior obscures the fact that body odor can result from deprivation of housing and hygiene facilities:

We want to clarify that poor hygiene and homelessness are conditions of extreme poverty, not types of behavior—a view inadvertently promoted by “problem patron” literature in recent years.

Some librarians pay lip service to the conditions-of-poverty definition of body odor only to slip back into the behavior-and-punishment idiom:

No users challenge the librarian's ability to treat every visitor with respect more than those who visibly act out their pathologies. Their dirt, smell, and plastic garbage bags, old luggage, or even shopping carts filled with “their stuff” are the overt



conditions they bring with them .... The prior paragraph, of course, is *not* about the homeless, but it marks out some of the behaviors prohibited or regulated by nuisance law in our state and many others as well. People who behave as nuisances in public places, including libraries, are subject to penalties like temporary and long-term exclusion from the institution or arrest and prosecution under specific prohibitions or under terms of more general trespass laws (Holt and Holt 2010, 111-12; emphasis in original).

Some expulsions may be motivated by patrons' identity rather than their smell. In his study of anti-homeless legislation in Seattle, Timothy Gibson showed how business owners blocked the establishment of a hygiene center in the early 1990s (intended to offer toilets, showers and laundry machines for the homeless) because they feared that the presence of homeless people in the area would drive away customers (2004, Chapter Seven). The services offered by the center would have disarmed the sanitation-related excuses typically given for anti-homeless discrimination, making it obvious that even when clean, they are still undesirable.

Nonetheless, neoliberal rhetoric of meritocracy compels librarians to legitimize undesirability in terms of uncleanness, which in turn is represented as behavioral choice. This move from criminalized identities to criminalized conducts is part of a broader shift from centuries-old anti-vagrancy laws to late-twentieth century anti-homeless policies (Feldman 2004). Scholarship on homelessness has revealed the disturbing implications of classifying body functions and survival activities as criminal conduct: the homeless are either dehumanized as passive victims without any agency, or, to the extent that they are endowed with agency, it is deployed to present them as criminally responsible (Feldman).

The strategy of classifying body odor as behavior inscribes it within a neoliberal, meritocratic logic in which individual responsibility for bad choices deserves punishment. Neoliberalism is a "new-style Darwinism, which praises the "winners" for their vigor and intelligence and vituperates the "losers" in the "struggle for [economic] life" by pointing to their character flaws and behavioral deficiencies" (Wacquant 2009, 6). These losers never get to enjoy the freedoms promised by neoliberalism, which is "*liberal* and permissive at the top, with regard to corporations and the upper class, and *paternalist* and authoritarian at the bottom" (8; emphasis in original).

When library behavior rules naturalize the equations of odor = bad hygiene = behavior, they increase the likelihood of patrons with odor-related disabilities receiving disrespectful

treatment. Confronted by librarians, it would be up to individual patrons to explain why they are exceptions to the hygiene narrative which has already defined them as undesirable problem-bodies. Some may prefer to walk out, as Will did, rather than debate with gatekeepers who hold negative preconceptions about odor as chosen conduct.

## **Body odor as problem among problems**

When defences of odor bans include descriptions of “smelly” patrons, they often represent such individuals as transgressive in multiple ways. This strategy, I argue, allows them to avoid confronting the possibility of a body odor medical condition, as well as the injustice of expelling someone who “offends” only through their odor. I interpret this rhetorical strategy in the context of critiques which show how neoliberal ideology appeals to emotions of disgust and fear to demonize marginalized groups.

Advertising, a main source of stereotypes about body odor, typically depicts strong-smelling people as irresponsible and insufficiently disciplined, yet eager to produce docile bodies once they learn about a deodorant or mouthwash which will restore others’ acceptance. Library texts favoring bans, on the contrary, imply that even if strong-smelling patrons’ odor were not an issue, they would still be out of place in libraries for other reasons. Their undesirability is overdetermined. This displaces attention from the body odor ban itself onto issues of mental health, harassment and gender (strong-smelling patrons are almost always represented as male, thus naturalizing a higher standard of complete odorlessness for females to live up to). This is how Dowd connects the dots between being strong-smelling, hating hygiene, being mentally ill and male:

Someone who has really bad body odor most likely has a *very* strong aversion to bathing (probably because of mental illness). If you agree to allowing the person to stay for today if he bathes tomorrow, you are likely to be having the same conversation again tomorrow (2018, 186).

The broad publicity given to the Kreimer case of the early 1990s reinforced demonizing stereotypes of strong-smelling people who offend in multiple ways. His “disruptive behavior”—at least according to the librarians who banned him—included “staring at and following patrons, talking loudly, and emitting an offensive odor” (Malmquist 1996, 96). “Problem patron” literature has been full of such figures which enable the elevation of aesthetics and emotion over ethics and politics. In librarians’ narratives like the following, body odor coupled with mental illness arouse disgust and fear: “[T]his man just appears out

of nowhere. He's bald with irregular patches of hair and he smells horrible." Based on his claim to be "a CIA agent" and other statements, the writers conclude that he is a "problem patron" and "obviously mentally ill," although it is admitted that "he doesn't DO anything actually threatening" (Salter and Salter 1996, 33–4; emphasis in original). "A Hollywood director couldn't make up anything stranger than that ..." they gasp melodramatically (34). The library as public space is portrayed here as a zone of risk, where menacing and disgusting bodies can emerge unexpectedly, unnerving middle-class onlookers. The graphic, emotional language legitimizes policies of control and spatial exclusion.

Critics of neoliberal ideology and culture have pointed to ways in which "decontextualization," "disimagination" and "disposability" function to reduce complex narratives and alternative social arrangements (Ventura 2012, 60; Wilson 2018). Neoliberal rhetoric disparages public spaces like libraries and buses, and prepares subjects to keep different others at a distance through emotions like disgust or fear. Body odor serves as a catalyst of decontextualization and distancing, since people with a noticeable smell are to be spatially excluded without any interest taken in their stories, needs or strengths. When Will commented that the librarian didn't know what he was "going through," he was referring to a process of decontextualization in which he was singled out and his complexity reduced to an offensive body.

Work by Ange-Marie Hancock (2004), Karen Soldatic and Helen Meekosha (2012) and Imogen Tyler (2013) has shown the important role of emotion in demonizing groups which neoliberal ideology designates as undeserving or inferior. Such rhetoric populates public space with alien, menacing figures whose main function is to transgress the boundaries of the sovereign, spatially individuated self through a range of qualities or activities such as smelling strong, chewing loudly, coughing, sexually harassing or panhandling. The prescribed response to these situations is to experience disgust or fear and to protect the self, usually through market-provided products, such as headphones, antibacterial wipes or simply avoiding public places by purchasing a private vehicle and buying books rather than borrowing them.

The figure of the smelly mentally ill patron exemplifies how an "intersection of oppressed identities" functions to direct disgust onto a devalued group (Hancock 2004, 20). Although disgust has a visceral component, the fact that it has been strategically whipped up against groups like female, black welfare recipients, disabled women and the Roma should caution

against uncritical readings of “problem patron” discourse (Hancock 2004; Soldatic 2012; Tyler 2013). As Hancock asks, “In the case of the politics of disgust, can emotions really serve a liberatory, participatory purpose?” (2004, 137).

The body odor/mental illness link has also been promoted by some homelessness advocates in an effort to disprove “[t]he popular association of homeless people with dirty clothes, offensive smells, and torn clothing . . . In fact, such images of the homeless are representative of only a small fraction of the population, most often those with severe mental disabilities” (Wright 1997, 207). While it is laudable to combat stereotypes, this strategy throws people with body odor caused by lack of hygiene facilities or physical difference/disability under the bus, and leaves intact the puritanical norms of absolute odorlessness used to exclude such individuals in the first place.

A 2016 survey of 550 individuals experiencing homelessness in Portland, Oregon found that approximately one in five had been denied access to shelter and/or meals because of perceived or actual lack of hygiene, and most important, documented that the availability of hygiene facilities (showers, washing machines) is inadequate compared to demand, meaning that some people are turned away despite *trying* to meet their hygiene needs (Hawash 2016). “While there are homeless service providers and shelters that offer showers, bathrooms and laundry facilities or vouchers, hours and capacity are limited, with demand greatly exceeding supply,” Emily Green noted in a discussion of these findings (2017). Unfortunately, librarians who rely on ALA-recommended literature on homelessness will miss this complexity, taking home only the damaging stereotype that most people with body odor are mentally ill and do not know that they smell. What if instead of the mentally-ill-smelly-patron trope librarians were introduced to individuals who were clearly visiting the library for research purposes and ‘offended’ only by the way they smelled? It would be harder to obscure the deeply unethical implications of preventing someone from accessing knowledge because of their body alone.

## **Elusive “people”**

Library discourse on body-odor-as-problem constantly reproduces a binary in which one lone individual is juxtaposed to a vague, numerically unspecified “people” or “others” who are supposedly offended:

What do you do about the guy working quietly at a table in the reference area whose body odor is driving people out of the room? (Cuesta 1996, 79).

Offensive bodily hygiene that constitutes a nuisance to others (Rule 7, Houston Public Library Rules & Policies).

The odd disjunction between cause and effect in one public library's rule serves to raise doubts about who is excluding individuals with body odor in the name of "others." The rule's wording implies that the effect of offense to an unspecified number of other patrons can be predicted before the strong-smelling person even causes it by entering the library (hence, entry can be prohibited):

To prohibit entry by patrons whose bodily hygiene is offensive so as to constitute a nuisance to other patrons or require them to leave the building (Rule 28, St. Louis Public Library).

In this case, the librarian or security guard prohibits entry to the undesirable person not as a result of other patrons' articulated complaints, but a priori, as a proxy of the predicted-to-be-offended other patrons.

Such formulations depict offended people's reaction as natural, shared by an unspecified number of others and above criticism. No additional context or metanarrative is needed to make sense of why they were offended; the fact that they claim to feel so is a sufficient explanation. No expert validation is requested (no medical diagnosis to explain their neurological hypersensitivity, for instance). This legitimization of squeamishness functions to erase objections like that of Judge Sarokin, who stated that it was up to the offended parties to move to a different seat if they chose to, and who argued a relativist position against the notion that there is some objective standard of offensive odor.

Nebulous constructions of offended "people" or "others" require additional scrutiny in view of the conclusions of much social science research on the relationship between disgust and political ideology. One recent publication finds that study participants with right-wing authoritarian views are more disgusted by body odor than liberal-identified participants, a result which agrees with earlier research into connections between authoritarianism and hygiene preoccupation (Liuzza 2018; Edsall 2016; Helzer and Pizarro 2011). The "Body Odor Disgust Sensitivity" study shows that there is considerable variation in people's identification of what is disgusting, and in their tolerance threshold. Thus, it is likely that a library user whose odor bothers a few people enough to complain to the librarian will be noticed with displeasure but tolerated by a few others, and noticed not at all or minimally by another group. If it is correct that this variation corresponds to differing positions on the political spectrum, the fact that ALA-published books on homelessness have supported body

odor bans—which cater to the most easily disgusted, authoritarian attitude—is cause for concern, especially given the revival of authoritarianism in the Trump era.

## **Conclusion**

This paper argued that whether enforced or simply posted in library spaces, odor bans perform socially destructive work, endowing middle-class library professionals with epistemological authority over patrons' bodies, presenting odor as a behavioral choice and legitimizing aversion toward strangers who may have disabilities. Librarians cannot consider their space to be an inclusive one as long as their rules include such bans. Institutions attempting to become truly welcoming to all members of their communities must remove any policy that authorizes spatial exclusion based on odor.

While some odor-related complaints may continue to be received after bans are ended, patrons unhappy about someone else's smell can be invited to sit somewhere else in a well-ventilated library that has chairs in a variety of locations throughout the building. Libraries could offer laptops for one or two-hour loan, so patrons who want to use computer resources without being in close proximity to another person could do so in a spot of their choice. Librarians can undoubtedly find solutions to such practical and logistical concerns by consulting their colleagues working in institutions without odor bans.

Apart from ending discriminatory bans, cultures of ableism, classism and racism can be more constructively challenged by proactively focusing on accessibility and varieties of embodiment. For instance, libraries should invite local disability rights activists to suggest improvements and participate in policymaking. They should organize frequent talks, workshops and other activities for employees and/or patrons, aimed at dismantling toxic assumptions rooted in oppressive traditions. As far as odor-related disabilities are concerned, many activists and patient advocacy groups are attempting to raise awareness (see Appendix II), so librarians who want to move beyond demonizing stereotypes can learn through personal narratives, interviews and creative writing. These are some ways that public libraries can nurture what Tanya Titchkosky described as “the project of denaturalizing what seems to be ‘natural’ exclusion” (2011, 6).

## **Appendix I**

The following is a sample of 50 urban US public libraries (one per state) indicating whether their rules include a body odor ban (language varies by library and may refer to “odor,”

“body odor,” “offensive hygiene,” etc). All data was collected from the libraries’ websites (accessed December 2018).

#### HAVE BODY ODOR BAN:

Anchorage, Alaska Public Library (hereafter PL)

Phoenix, Arizona PL

Central Arkansas Library System

Los Angeles, California PL

Orlando, Florida PL

Atlanta, Georgia PL

Hawaii State Public Library System

Chicago, Illinois PL

Indianapolis, Indiana PL

Des Moines, Iowa PL

Kansas City, Kansas PL

Lexington, Kentucky PL

New Orleans, Louisiana PL

Portland, Maine PL

Baltimore, Maryland PL

Boston, Massachusetts PL

Detroit, Michigan PL

Hennepin County Library, Minnesota

Jackson, Mississippi PL

Missouri River Regional Library, Jefferson City, Missouri

Billings, Montana PL

Omaha, Nebraska PL

Las Vegas, Nevada PL

Concord, New Hampshire PL

Newark, New Jersey PL

Santa Fe, New Mexico PL

Onondaga County Public Library, Syracuse, New York

Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library, North Dakota

Cincinnati, Ohio PL

Tulsa, Oklahoma PL  
Multnomah County Library, Oregon  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania PL  
Providence, Rhode Island PL  
Charleston, South Carolina PL  
Rapid City Public Library, South Dakota  
Nashville, Tennessee Public Library  
Houston, Texas Public Library  
Salt Lake City, Utah PL  
Richmond, Virginia PL  
Seattle, Washington PL  
Kanawha County Public Library, West Virginia  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin PL  
Laramie County Library, Wyoming

#### DO NOT HAVE BODY ODOR BAN:

Birmingham, Alabama PL  
Hartford, Connecticut PL  
Dover, Delaware PL  
Boise, Idaho PL  
Durham, North Carolina PL  
Fletcher Free Library, Burlington, Vermont

#### AMBIGUOUS:

Denver, Colorado PL (rule bans “Personal hygiene that poses a health risk”)

## **Appendix II: Body Odor Disability Learning Resources<sup>2</sup>**

### *Patient advocacy:*

MEBO Research <https://www.meboresarch.org/> and <https://www.meboblog.com/>

### Body Odor Sufferers YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC68UT3yIGIYKsiNCefeDG2w>

---

2 Opinions expressed in the materials listed here do not necessarily agree with the author’s.



*Online support forums:*

Curezone website. <https://www.curezone.org/forums/f.asp?f=326>.

RareConnect TMAU forum. <https://www.rareconnect.org/en/community/trimethylaminuria>.

*Creative writing and personal narrative:*

Fidoe-White, Kelly. 2017. Interview about TMAU. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAO1vMiMbPI&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAO1vMiMbPI&feature=emb_title)

Mahakoe, Kamau. 2018. *Ashley Smells Like Garbage!* Kindle Edition.

Rosalia, Crissan. 2018. Interview about TMAU. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u\\_vh5Z6i45s&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_vh5Z6i45s&feature=emb_title)

## References

Ahmed, Sara. 2007. "A phenomenology of whiteness." *Feminist Theory* 8(2): 149–168.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139>

American Library Association. "Guidelines for the Development of Policies and Procedures Regarding User Behavior and Library Usage." Accessed at:  
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/guidelinesdevelopment>

———. 2005. "Hunger, Homelessness & Poverty Task Force." Accessed at:  
<http://hhptf.org/article/2/are-public-libraries-criminalizing-poor-people/>

Amster, Randall. 2008. *Lost In Space: The Criminalization, Globalization, and Urban Ecology of Homelessness*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

Anderson, Warwick. 2006. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Ashenburg, Katherine. 2007. *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Kindle Edition.

Bales, Stephen E. 2016. "The Academic Library as Crypto-Temple: A Marxian Analysis." In *Class and Librarianship: Essays at the Intersection of Information, Labor and Capital*, edited by Eric Estep and Nathaniel Enright. Sacramento: Library Juice Press.

Bardoff, Corina. 2015. "Homelessness and the Ethics of Information Access." *The Serials Librarian*. 18 December 2015. DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2015.1099590>

Berman, Sanford. 2007. "Classism in the Stacks: Libraries and Poverty." *Journal of Information Ethics* (Spring 2007).

Berthold, Dana. 2010. "Tidy Whiteness: A Genealogy of Race, Purity, and Hygiene." *Ethics*

*Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 6 (2020) pp. 24–52.

- & *The Environment* 15(1): 1–26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2979/ETE.2010.15.1.1>
- Bever, Lindsey. 2019. “A Jewish family was booted from a flight over ‘body odor’ — but says anti-Semitism is to blame.” *Washington Post*, January 25, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2019/01/25/jewish-family-was-booted-flight-over-body-odor-says-anti-semitism-is-blame/>
- Bobel, Chris. 2018. *The Managed Body: Developing Girls and Menstrual Health in the Global South*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brown, Wendy. 2006. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Classen, Constance. 1992. “The Odor of the Other: Olfactory Symbolism and Cultural Categories.” *Ethos* 20(2): 133–66.
- Corbin, Alain. 1986. *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*. Translated by Miriam L. Kochan. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cuesta, Emerita M. 1996. “Problems with Patrons in the Academic Library.” In *Patron Behavior in Libraries: A Handbook of Positive Approaches to Negative Situations*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Dolmage, Jay Timothy. 2017. *Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Dowd, Ryan J. 2018. *The Librarian’s Guide to Homelessness: An Empathy-Driven Approach to Solving Problems, Preventing Conflict, and Serving Everyone*. Chicago: ALA Editions.
- . <http://www.homelesslibrary.com>. Accessed December 15, 2018.
- Edsall, Thomas B. 2016. “Purity, Disgust and Donald Trump.” *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2016.
- Ewen, Stuart. 1977. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Feldman, Leonard C. 2004. *Citizens without shelter: homelessness, democracy, and political exclusion*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gibson, Timothy A. 2004. *Securing the Spectacular City: The Politics of Revitalization and Homelessness in Downtown Seattle*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Green, Emily. 2017. “Survey of homeless Portlanders reveals barriers to good hygiene.” *Street Roots*, 2 March 2017. Accessed at: <https://news.streetroots.org/2017/03/02/survey-homeless-portlanders-reveals-barriers-good-hygiene>
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. 2004. *The politics of disgust: the public identity of the welfare queen*. New York: New York University Press.

- Harris, Michael H. 1986. "State, Class, and Cultural Reproduction: Toward a Theory of Library Service in the United States." *Advances in Librarianship* 14: 211–252.
- Hawash, Lisa. 2016. [Portland State University Hygiene Project Report]. Accessed at: <https://www.pdx.edu/syndication/sites/www.pdx.edu.syndication/files/Hygiene%20Project%20Report%202016.pdf>
- Helzer, Eric G. and David A. Pizarro. 2011. "Dirty Liberals! Reminders of Physical Cleanliness Influence Moral and Political Attitudes." *Psychological Science* 22(4): 517–22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611402514>
- Holt, Leslie Edmonds and Glen E. Holt. 2010. *Public Library Services for the Poor: Doing All We Can*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Hudson, David James. 2017. "The Whiteness of Practicality." In *Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Science*, ed. Gina Schlesselman-Tarango. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press.
- Kelleher, Angie. 2013. "Not just a place to sleep: homeless perspectives on libraries in central Michigan." *Library Review*. 62(1/2): 19–33. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531311328122>
- Lazakis, Nat. 2019. "The Taboo of Body Odor Medical Conditions and Ecological Counternarratives." *Ethics and the Environment* 24(1): 19–43. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2979/ethicsenviro.24.1.02>
- Lears, Jackson. 1994. *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Liuzza, Marco Tullio, Torun Lindholm, Caitlin B. Hawley, Marie Gustafsson Sendén, Ingrid Ekström, Mats J. Olsson, Jonas K. Olofsson. 2018. "Body Odour Disgust Sensitivity Predicts Authoritarian Attitudes." *Royal Society Open Science* 5(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.171091>
- Macias, Jessica. 2017. "Looking the part." In *Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Science*, ed. Gina Schlesselman-Tarango. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press.
- Malmquist, Katherine. 1996. "Legal Issues regarding Library Patrons." In *Patron Behavior in Libraries: A Handbook of Positive Approaches to Negative Situations*, edited by Beth McNeil and Denise J. Johnson. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Mars, Amy. 2013. "Library Service to the Homeless." *Public Libraries Online*. April 26, 2013. <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2013/04/library-service-to-the-homeless/>
- Masters, Emily. 2017. "Library staffs deal with patrons' body odor, other issues: Man with disease that causes odor walks out after hearing complaint." *Times Union*. Jan. 20, 2017. <https://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-local/article/Library-staffs-deal-with-patrons-body-odor-10872443.php>
- McClintock, Anne. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial*
- Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 6 (2020) pp. 24–52.

- Conquest*. New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, David T. 2016. "Disability, diversity, and diversion: normalization and avoidance in higher education." In *Disability, Avoidance and the Academy*, ed. Claire Penketh and David Bolt. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mitchell, Don. 2003. *The Right To The City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: Guilford.
- Monell Chemical Senses Center. "TMAU and Body Malodors." Accessed at: [https://www.monell.org/contact\\_us/tmau](https://www.monell.org/contact_us/tmau)
- Mugleton, Thomas H. 2013. "Public libraries and difficulties with targeting the homeless." *Library Review* 62(1/2): 7–18. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531311328113>
- Patterson, Kristine Y., Seema A. Bhagwat, et al. 2008. "USDA Database for the Choline Content of Common Foods." Accessed at: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/SP2UserFiles/Place/80400525/Data/Choline/Choln02.pdf>
- Phillips, Kristine. 2018. "Nigerian Woman Kicked Off United Flight After White Man Complained She Was 'Pungent,' Suit Says." *Washington Post*, May 12, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/dr-gridlock/wp/2018/05/12/nigerian-woman-kicked-off-united-flight-after-white-man-complained-she-was-pungent-suit-says/>
- Puwar, Nirmal. 2004. *Space Invaders: Race, Gender, and Bodies out of Place*. Oxford: Berg.
- Raber, Douglas. 2003. "Librarians as Organic Intellectuals: A Gramscian Approach to Blind Spots and Tunnel Vision." *Library Quarterly* 73(1): 33–53. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/603374>
- Ruhlmann, Ellyn. 2014. "A HOME to the HOMELESS." *American Libraries* 45(11/12): 40–44. [www.jstor.org/stable/24603545](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24603545).
- Russell, Marta. 2019. *Capitalism & Disability*. Edited by Keith Rosenthal. Chicago: Haymarket.
- Salter, Charles A. and Jeffrey L. Salter. 1996. "Mentally Ill Patrons." In *Patron Behavior in Libraries: A Handbook of Positive Approaches to Negative Situations*, edited by Beth McNeil and Denise J. Johnson. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Schlesselman-Tarango, Gina, ed. 2017. *Topographies of Whiteness: Mapping Whiteness in Library and Information Science*. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press.
- Schweik, Susan M. 2009. *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public*. New York: New York University Press.
- Shildrick, Margrit. 1997. *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)ethics*. New York: Routledge.
- Shuman, Bruce A . 1996. "Down and Out in the Reading Room: The Homeless in the Public Library." In *Patron Behavior in Libraries: A Handbook of Positive Approaches to Negative Situations*, edited by Beth McNeil and Denise J. Johnson. Chicago:

- American Library Association.
- Sierpe, Eino. 2017. "The Election of Donald Trump to the Presidency and the Crisis of Liberalism in Librarianship." *Journal of Radical Librarianship* 3(2017).  
<https://journal.radicalibrarianship.org/index.php/journal/article/view/23>
- Singh, Julietta. 2018. *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Soja, Edward W. 2010. *Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Soldatic, Karen and Helen Meekosha. 2012. "The Place of Disgust: Disability, Class and Gender in Spaces of Workfare." *Societies* 2(3): 139–56. DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/soc2030139>
- St. Louis Public Library. [n.d.] "Appropriate Use of the Library." Accessed at:  
<https://www.slpl.org/service-policies/appropriate-use-of-the-library/>
- Taylor, Sonya Renee. 2018. *The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Kindle Edition.
- Titchkosky, Tanya. 2011. *The Question of Access: Disability, Space, Meaning*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Topaz. 2018. "Streetwise Advice for the Homelessness Novice." *Street Roots*. 20 July 2018.
- Tyler, Imogen. 2013. *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain*. London: Zed Books.
- United States District Court, District of Columbia. 2001. *Armstrong v. DC Public Library*. Accessed at: <http://www.ahcuah.com/lawsuit/federal/armstrong.htm>
- United States District Court, District of New Jersey. 1991. *Kreimer v. Morristown*. Accessed at: <http://www.ahcuah.com/lawsuit/federal/kreimer1.htm>
- Ventura, Patricia. 2012. *Neoliberal culture: living with American neoliberalism*. Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Vinikas, Vincent. 1992. *Soft Soap, Hard Sell: American Hygiene in an Age of Advertisement*. Ames: Iowa State University Press.
- Wacquant, Loïc. 2009. *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Warren, John T. 2003. *Performing Purity: Whiteness, Pedagogy, and the Reconstitution of Power*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Williams, Rachel D. 2016. "'We're not allowed': Public librarians' perspectives on providing health information to library users experiencing homelessness." *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 53(1): 1–10. DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pr2.2016.14505301079>

- Willse, Craig. 2015. *The Value of Homelessness: Managing Surplus Life in the United States*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wilson, Julie A. 2018. *Neoliberalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Wright, Talmadge. 1997. *Out of Place: Homeless Mobilizations, Subcities, and Contested Landscapes*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Zimring, Carl A. 2015. *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States*. New York: New York University Press.