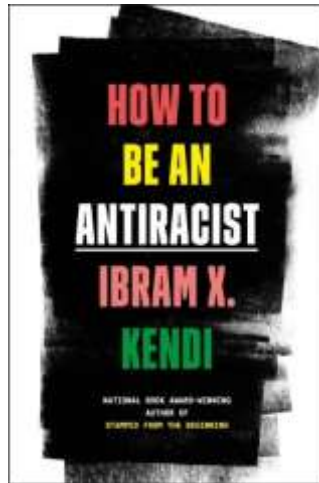


# Journal

The following are entries pulled from a journal created for a “Rhetorical Theory for Workplace Writers” class instructed by Dr. Sherena Huntsman. The subject matter was pulled from articles and exercises used in the class. The tone is personal and casual.

-Nicole Cooper

## Race vs Ethnicity – inspired by “Race, Rhetoric and Technology” by Angela Haas



The concept of race versus ethnicity is mentioned in Haas’ “Race, Rhetoric and Technology” article. Recently I began listening to Ibram X. Kendi’s “How to be an Antiracist” in which he also discusses the difference between race and ethnicity (amongst a multitude of other race related ideas.) I scoured the internet was was not surprised to see supporting opinions that both race and ethnicity are social constructs. Race is typically defined by a person’s skin color and other physical qualities. The word race has long been used to divide members of society. Ethnicity encompasses qualities of an individual such as language, nationality and culture.

For example, I know a woman who is white but was born and raised in Africa before emigrating to the U.S. as an adult. She identifies as a white (race) African (ethnicity.) She is the parent of my son’s friend. Often, I have heard her child talk about being half African. As a white American that is a concept that was difficult for me to hold in my mind. For me I had always thought of the word African and associated it with black skin. Which according to Kendi is a racist viewpoint. Seriously my mind has been blown wide open with his book which could quite literally be called a manual for how to not be a racist.

In reading the article about racism and technical communication, it was easy for me to see a need for educating the creators of technical communication about the ways that societal racism has infiltrated all aspects of our world. And the benefit of being aware of how to communicate as an anti-racist.

I identify as a white American. I grew up in the Seattle area in a mostly white neighborhood. I went to mostly white schools. Until college when I had the enriching experience of living in the dorms with 6 racial minorities (I even wrote an essay about it at one point and referred to us as the United Colors of McMann Hall.)

Fast forward some years (a lot of years) to today. I'm still white. I live in a mostly white neighborhood. Recently my kids were part of an extracurricular exercise group. On the first day I was the designated adult to meet the instructor at the local park. As I waited, a car pulled up and as I saw the driver I thought "Oh, I wonder if that is him?" It was then I realized the thought processes that Kendi is encouraging us to examine. The instructor happens to be a black guy. The fact that my first thought was NOT "Who is this black guy?" shows that something in my mind is changing. That type of awareness and growth is what I Hass and Kendi are both asking us to examine and nurture.

*(continued next page)*

## Self Expertise Surprises



### **Dr. Mark Brackett, author of “Permission to Feel” with the team from Oji Life Lab.**

The most difficult thing about the self-expertise exercise is the realization that the majority of my “professional” experience and skills were gained almost 20 years ago. In reading the job descriptions, it was clear to me that there is a lot left up to interpretation by the hiring managers or HR department. I truly appreciated when Dr. Sherena mentioned typos and that if we are ever in a position to review resumes, we do NOT become the kind of person who tosses a resume because of a typo. Back to the job descriptions. If I look carefully at a job description, and then all the listed information along with it, I find many areas of hypocrisy. The biggest of which are positions listed as “entry level” but still require 3-5 years of experience. That makes no sense! Thankfully I am a creative person and can embellish my aged-out experience to match most jobs that interest me. However, it always comes back to “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” Meaning, either through association on a resume, or through networking, most people I have talked to (and I talk A LOT) have secured their current position through a personal connection or referral. Therefore, it makes sense to me that I have had a little trouble breaking into the Boise scene. Not only is my experience and education outdated, but I am a transplant from Seattle via Oregon and (gasp) California. I am counting my blessings and thankful that I have resources and access to brush up on my formal training. Essentially I can use the job descriptions as a shopping list for education focus. That is how I ended up taking Microsoft class and am now in the Technical Communications program. That said, I keep seeing a lot of reference in pop culture about “soft skills” and “emotional intelligence.” On LinkedIn there is a multitude of articles by people like organizational psychologist Adam Grant and author of “Permission to Feel” Mark Brackett. Dr. Brackett is also a founding member of the Oji Life Lab a coaching service aimed at teaching emotional intelligence. These references claim that “soft skills” are just as valuable and sometimes more valuable than formal education or training. Having spent the past 17 years as a primary care giver to our 3 kids, I would argue that I have gained an invaluable range of soft skills. However, in our society (by that I mean in the U.S.) a stay at home Mom is not as valued as a high-powered executive Mom. I find it difficult to “prove” my value without that formal experience and training. Which leads me to something Dr. Sherena said.... (next entry in my journal 😊)

## **Women Not Talking About Their Children in the Workplace: Why didn't Dr. Sherena talk about her children and family while in graduate school?**



**“Women are supposed to work like they don't have children and mother like they don't work outside the home.”**

End the Plague of Secret Parenting

If mothers and fathers speak openly about child-care obligations, their colleagues will adapt.

MAY 21, 2019

**Emily Oster**

Economist at Brown University

## **Giving Up: How Gendered Organizational Cultures Push Mothers Out**

[Emma Cahusac](#)

[Shireen Kanji](#)

First published: 18 January 2013

When I was consulting with Dr. Sherena via Zoom about the group project options, I brought up all of the different “languages” parents learn while raising kids. And Dr. Sherena said (I am paraphrasing from memory) “wouldn't it be nice if we could take everything we learn as Moms and translate it into the professional world? When I was in graduate school I never talked about my kids.” Why didn't she (or should I say “you” since Dr. Sherena you are the only one reading this? Ha ha ha.) The unfair social pressure on women to be “tough” and dedicated is

why! You (changing to you) couldn't be perceived as soft and therefore less intelligence and credible. You would not be respected. You did not bring an entire part of your life to the table. This seems to be in direct conflict with the assertions of Dr. Brackett from the Oji Life Lab and his claims that soft skills are invaluable. "Leaning in" as the billionaire Susan Sandberg advises is a whole lot less easy for those of us balancing on the line of tradition (stereotypical?) family structures. Sorry Susan but life is easier if you can pay people to clean your house and pick up your dog's poop. Fact. Children need care. Another fact. Women grow babies. Also fact.

WOMAN + BABY = CARE

CARE+WOMAN = LESS

Less. Less energy. Less focus. Less dedication. So, women feel like we have to conceal our parent role to maintain the competitive edge professionally.

"women professors at my university told me that when they were more junior, they made it a point never to put pictures of their children up in their offices."  
(Oster)

What is the answer? The answer is authenticity. Another thing I see tossed around leisurely in pop culture but rarely experience in the real world. Be your whole self. And that means bringing the role of parent into the professional world. I see the need to hide parenting as part of the backlash of women's liberation. Woman CAN do it all. Just not all at the same time, giving our current social structure. What we need is open, authenticity. Bring the parenting role into the professional space to truly be agents of change.

"We can't fix problems that we pretend don't exist; we can't improve the lot of parents at work if we pretend, we aren't parents." (Oster)

I think allowing people to be truly authentic professionally will open the gates for "soft skills" to gain the acknowledgement they deserve. The only way to do this is to be brave! (another buzz word thanks to Brene Brown. Who has ideas that I admire, but in my opinion is kind of a self-centered and insecure?)

# The End

*Thank you for considering me!*



Shhhh. I'm not actually 28!