

The Detrimental Effects of Word Censorship

Words are a made-up, socially constructed aspect of our life that we use to converse with one another. There are many words making up many languages, and we are left with an infinite number of conversations and potential conversations with these words. Words, whether their connotation is positive or negative, help shape our perception of the world, our communities, and even ourselves, which is why they should not be censored.

We use words to express gratitude, love, hatred, anger, excitement, and every emotion in between. Humans have evolved their complex languages over millions of years, with words having unique and individual meanings throughout cultures. Censoring words limits one's ability to express their feelings. For many, using their own words or listening to others' words is an aid in relaxation, along with a way to relate with others and their feelings. Take poetry or music as an example. Artists, in these realms of art, use an abundance of carefully selected and crafted words in order to reach and touch those who come across their art. If we censored words, this ability that they have would be hindered.

I also believe that there is a discriminatory aspect that comes along with word censorship. Many words that have been controversial, in both the past and present, and debated over being censored or not, had to do with minority groups in society, and the language discrimination against minorities is seen in schools today. Black students are taught that African American Vernacular English is "informal" and "incorrect," and are taught to code-switch. I believe that similar would occur if words were censored in society and in the press. "Standard English,"

which reflects white, upper class, systemically privileged groups in society, does not have as high of a probability of being censored as words more commonly used in lower-class minority groups. The censorship of words has the potential to discriminate against people of color, people in the LGBTQ+ community, and economically disadvantaged people, while holding those in power to an even higher pedestal, which would be damaging to our society as a whole.

Some may argue that slurs, such as the N-word or F-word, should be censored. However, I disagree with that. While their original denotations and connotations were used to discriminate against minority groups, these groups have, in today's society, reclaimed those words, using them to uplift others in their community. Censoring these words today, when they currently hold such important and encouraging meanings within their communities, is taking those words away from them again, and indirectly giving them back to those who originally used them to convey their superiority over the groups. Censoring these words would take the power that Black groups and LGBTQ+ groups have gained and give it back to those who already have plenty of it.

It may also be questioned whether cuss words should be censored, but again, I do not think that they should be. Cuss words have evolved to be seen as "bad," however, they have not always held the same meanings as they do today. For example, "ass" can refer to one's bottom, while it can also refer to "any of several mammals resembling but smaller than the related horses and having a shorter mane, shorter hair on the tail, and longer ears especially: donkey," according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Cuss words have grown into the meanings that we hear today and censoring them would simply lead to a new handful of evolved words that will be our next generation's cuss words.

While word censorship is highly debated in our society, I do not believe that it would be beneficial, and would rather be inherently detrimental to some. Every individual has their own unique vocabulary full of words that they have learned in their time, enhancing their ability to make connections, express emotions, and learn. Words provide a baseline for these aspects of one's life, and word censorship takes away from their ability to excel in these areas, whether the impact is large or small. Words allow for new ideas, new inventions, new movies, and so much more, which is why there should not be a censorship on words.