Mission Statement

We are a Feminist and Queer Collective working to counter misconceptions surrounding Women's and Gender Studies through the publication of an annual Feminist and Queer review. We are increasing awareness and knowledge of Feminist and Queer issues through the voices, opinions, and experiences of University of Manitoba undergraduate students from all faculties. We firmly believe in multiplicity of meaning and we therefore reject the idea of singular definitions. For this reason, we are often left with more questions than answers. But, through our publication we strive to empower ourselves and other undergraduate students with the tools necessary to address the important questions.

This publication will be a catalyst for change.
We would like to thank the following donors for their generous support:

+ Margaret Laurence Endowment Fund
+ Women’s and Gender Studies Program

We would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their consideration, commitment, and generosity in the support of this publication:

+ University of Manitoba Students’ Union Womyn’s Centre
+ Ryan Story / graphic designer of issue
+ Brynn Hughes / photographer
+ Shawn Farrell / logo designer
+ Dr. Liz Millward
+ Dr. Shawna Ferris

We would also like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed their work to this issue.
Editors’ note

This publication is the Feminist and Queer Collective’s fifth annual FAQ review. Working in a non-hierarchical manner, the members of the collective seek to provide undergraduate students with an opportunity to contribute to, engage with, and participate in feminist and queer discourse.

The FAQ review stands to actively challenge and complicate traditional notions of “academia”; allowing undergraduate students to value and draw from personal experiences, passions, and knowledge in order to articulate feminist and queer topics, interests, and issues.

In the same vein, the FAQ collective seeks to dispel myths surrounding who and what constitutes a feminist and, by association, the individuals who engage in Women’s and Gender studies. The Women’s and Gender Studies department and faculty is multifaceted and, thus, allows for the interdisciplinary and personal development of its students. We, as the collective, want to shed light on the value of our Women’s and Gender studies degrees and the courses we take within the department.

We hope that this publication not only showcases feminist and queer voices, but also inspires future and furthered engagement with feminist and queer issues and theories.

We thank you, our readers, for taking interest in feminist and queer issues, and for supporting this dissemination and expansion of social and political consciousness.

Eden Frison / Frances Amara / Alberta Johnson
Rei Hutton / Joanna Medha / Charly Wreggitt

Editorial Board
The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of those involved in its creation.

Trigger Warning: this is a general trigger warning as we do not want to assume what may trigger or offend our readers.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6    | GENDERED VIOLENCE IN SNARE  
MARCIA TOMS | 8 | RABBIT LIVES IN THE KITCHEN  
JENNIFER BLACK |
| 9    | ZOMBIES AND THE ABSENT  
CHARLY WREGGITT | 12 | THERE’S NOTHING CUTE ABOUT THE MESS YOU LEFT BEHIND  
CAROLYNE KROEKER |
| 14   | NON-INTRIMATE PARTNER ELMICIDE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
PAM HADDER | 16 | AN EXAMINATION OF THE CULTURE OF CYCLE MESSENGERING AS TRANSPORTATION  
RAE HUTTON |
| 20   | SEX ESTEEM  
KALEE TIBBS |
| 22   | WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD “HOME”?  
FRANCES AMARA |
| 26   | WHO CONTROLS MY BODY?  
AMANDA FRIDYNNSON |
| 29   | SURVIVING IN BRIGHT LIVES: GROWING IDENTITY  
MIRANDA A. AYANABEE |
| 30   | WHAT NOT TO WEAR  
JENNA MIDHA |
| 36   | LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS PROJECT PROPOSAL  
OWEN CAMPBELL |
| 39   | BENEFITS OF A “RACIAL VACUUM” IN SISTH LIT  
SEGUN ANDEMARAIN |
| 41   | LOST IDENTITIES  
TABITHA STEPHENSON |
| 42   | HARM REDUCTION AND NONCONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY  
ALBERTA JOHNSON |
| 44   | THOUGHTS ON FEMINISM FROM A FEMINIST IN TRAINING  
CHARLOTTE ALLISON |
| 46   | RIDICULOUS WOMAN  
AMBER LOGAN |
| 47   | BIG MOUTH BUTCH  
ZOÉ PENNER |
| 48   | I STUDY WOMEN AND GENDER  
KYLE ST. GODARD |
| 49   | ARGUMENT NOTES  
FRANCES AMARA |
| 51   | REFLECTIVE PAPER: EXPERIENCE WITH RACISM  
OGAI SHERZO |
| 53   | TOOTH AND NAIL OR HOURLY WAGE  
CHANAL SHEWANNA RAMRAJ |
| 54   | FEMINISM 6.7  
FAQ COLLECTIVE |
| 58   | PERSONAL AUTOMOBILES, CAR CULTURE AND SOCIAL DIFFERENCE  
MIRANDA TOMS |
| 61   | FEMINIST PRAXIS IN VIGILS AND EMOTIONS  
CHARLY WREGGITT |
| 64   | “ETERNAL SHE” FEMALE LANDSCAPE  
PAM HADDER |
| 68   | A CONVERSATION WITH THE HOMELESS  
NYLA COMEAU |
| 71   | THE PEOPLE OF THE KANYAPUKAK RIVER  
CHANAL SHEWANNA RAMRAJ |
| 73   | PROSPECTUS, AGUILLATIS, LIBERTATUM  
JAMES TUROWSKI |
| 74   | REFLECTIVE SUBMISSION: OPEN YOUR HEART  
WINIFRED COOK |
| 76   | MEMO: PRIVILEGE  
JENNIFER BLACK |
| 77   | A REFLECTION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS TOUR  
RAE HUTTON |
| 79   | VISUAL ART SUBMISSION  
MAHILA LALANA |
| 80   | REVIEWING AND DETERMINING RISK FACTORS FOR INTIMATE PARTNER FEMICIDE  
MIRANDA A. AYANABEE |
| 81   | HOME/NOT HOME  
NYLA COMEAU |
| 83   | URBAN/PEZ COUNTRY. I AM WHAT I AM, NE  
MIRANDA A. AYANABEE |
| 86   | SEEKING ELIZABETH: A PREFERRED READING OF DIRTY GIRLS SOCIAL CLUB  
BY ALINA VALDES-ROMERO | 88 | BLACK AND BLUES  
EDEN FRIESEN |
| 89   | ACCUMULATION AND INCONSEQUENCE  
KAREN HANAN |
| 90   | ABORIGINALS AND THE MEDIA  
FRANCES AMARA |
| 91   | WHAT MAKES ME A WOMAN?  
LILLIAN SMITH |
| 92   | HOME/NOT HOME  
REBECCA QUINN DAVIS |
| 93   | THE ABDICTION OF FENCES (AND ANYTHING THAT MAY LOOK LIKE ONE)  
SARAH-MARIE CHAILLOT |
| 94   | TO AWAKEN  
NYLA COMEAU |
GENDERED VIOLENCE IN SNARE
Lisa Jackson’s (2012) film, Snare, is a haunting depiction of the historic and contemporary violence that plagues Aboriginal women within Canada. Simple in its format, the short film produces startling ‘in your face’ portrayals of the racial violence faced by Aboriginal women, while also providing insight into the ability to move forward and heal after violence has occurred.

Jackson’s decision to initially show the women’s feet and legs (as opposed to their faces) produced a powerfully daunting image that worked to invoke fear of what was going to happen. The faceless nature of the models in the beginning of the film gave off a stark reminder that these women could be anyone; people close to the viewers, or the viewers themselves. As well, the faceless nature reminds us that women are targeted for violence simply because they are women and that “male violence against women... [is] a global problem underpinned by social structures and cultural norms” (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). The reality is that gendered violence does not target ‘specific’ individuals; this is something that could easily happen to any female.

The use of a snare as a means for capturing and hanging the women upside down is very powerful. A snare is “a contrivance often consisting of a noose for entangling birds or mammals” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The image of the snare brings about images of hunting and living off the land; realities of the historical livelihood amongst many Aboriginal people. Taking a method that was used as a means for survival and using it to depict violence towards women showcases how deeply ingrained and historically embedded violence really is. Contemporary racialized violence was born out of notions connected to colonization policies and practices, such as the constructed binary of civilized and savage, hierarchies that place white or ‘light’ skinned individuals at a level above people of colour, the idea of the Indian princess who is available for the taking, and the dirty ‘squaw’ who was viewed as unworthy and second class. Bringing in this historical idea of hunting reminds us of this past and brings a focus to how these racist notions are still present in today’s contemporary Canadian societies.

The use of this hunting technique also works to establish a notion that women are viewed within contemporary societies as ‘up for grabs’ and ‘ready for the taking’. Hunting is often viewed as a masculine sport that places emphasis on the ‘best’ catch. This image places women in the same space as animals, insinuating that they are nothing more than meat that should be captured, enjoyed, and displayed by the hunter (man). This works to display the notion that violence occurs because of a dehumanization of women, particularly Aboriginal women. This form of dehumanization, along with societal structures in Canada that favour a patriarchal model, result in women being viewed as ‘less then’ compared to their male counterparts; racialized and poor women are viewed as even more unworthy. These tactics are comparable to what Lowman refers to as the “discourse of disposal” (2000). This refers to the idea that certain groups of people are marginalized, viewed as societal nuisances and are lacking adequate protection from social structures (the police and the government, as examples), to the point that violence becomes “perpetuated and amplified” (Lowman, 2000) because of a lack of fear of being reported or held accountable by the public. The large numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women across Canada is evidence that a “discourse of disposal” is representative of the images contemporary Canadian societies hold towards this group of women.

Jackson’s film comes full circle with the women becoming, once again, up right. We view their faces and they are situated in a circle facing inwards, towards one another. Jackson discussed how this circle formation could be representative of a “community of women”, and that it could demonstrate healing and moving on (L. Jackson, personal communication, January 29, 2012). Coming face to face with other victims of violence could force a person to think about and face their own experiences. Having a community of supportive women, who have similar experiences to share, is certainly one potentially beneficial way of healing and moving forward. This last portion of the film is just as powerful as the preceding sections. Once again, Jackson produces an ‘in your face’ image that now forces people to look directly into the eyes of female Aboriginal ‘victims’ of violence. We are forced to face this issue head on and see that despite what may have happened, these women are strong enough to stand back up and start to heal.

Dominant societies ability to hide behind myths that ‘violence only happens to specific groups’ or ideas that gendered or racialized violence is minimal, has led to horrendous situations of missing and murdered women throughout our country. This film stands in opposition to those myths. The film beautifully, and horrifyingly, displays racialized and gendered violence for its audiences. It clearly indicates that these forms of violence are a terrifying reality with a historical component that has been ingrained in social structures and policies that still exist in present day Canada.

REFERENCE LIST


rabbit lives in the kitchen
all the time setting the table
plays butter knives between her fingers
contemplating dull edges

rabbit ingests cigarettes by the window
pushes to yield a pane

through the drapes--floral lace--spoiling brown
yellow gray--like coffee and
wine stained teeth
chattering
we listen to grumbling ghost of a rabbit
grinding her wrists against pounded down batter
sigh of a ticking spoon in the pot and groan
of her lean on the counter

we peek in the trash bin when rabbit’s not looking we
cradle our mugs when she is we beg
scrape out our bones but don’t just
spread over toast
our marrow
consume it
Zombies and the Abject

A REVIEW BY ‘AMAZON’ ON OTTO; OR UP WITH DEAD PEOPLE

The role of zombies within culture is one of dehumanization, fear of the Other, and disgust of the abject. This is shown not only through the fear of zombies created through movies, books, video games, and other social formations, but through the desire and rage associated with their often violent deaths. This is shown in the Amazon comments and critiques on Bruce LaBruce’s film, *Otto; Or, Up with Dead People*. While the film is one that strays beyond the usual myths and storylines of zombie films, LaBruce succeeds in portraying the Othering of zombies, and cultures’ fascination with their subjection, in a way many zombie films overlook. This paper starts by looking at the social formation created in Amazon’s reviewers section, showing the ways that it is a useful space for dialogue and conversation on the film, bringing together a variety of voices that may not normally critique a show on a blog. It will then look more closely at the theory of abject bodies to show the importance and relevance to contemporary society that zombie portrayals play in relation to larger societal issues of oppression. The main section of the paper will analyze the comments presented by Amazon reviewers, tying in with theories presented by Kyle Bishop and Kelly Baker. Overall, this paper will redescribe a myth that is a redescriptions of a larger societal myth; *Otto; Or, Up with Dead People*, is itself a critique of the zombie craze prevalent in society. A redescriptions of *Otto* requires a look at the abject state of the main character, something shown through the customer reviews of the Amazon page for the film.

The data for this essay is taken from the Amazon customer review page for the film *Otto; or Up with Dead People*, as well as supporting quotes from the film itself. The customer reviews begin February 7, 2009 (five months after the film’s release date) and end in July 30, 2013. The brevity of available reviews, thirteen in total, quantitatively provides a limited view of individual reviews on the film, but quality-wise provides an assortment of ideas and insights into the film and the meaning of zombies and identity. Of course there is irony within using a website such as Amazon to analyze a movie like *Otto*. A film within a film is taking place, and the filmmaker, Medea Yarn, is struggling to finish her political film about the revolution of gay zombies. For a scene of the film, she takes Otto to a meat factory, followed by a scene set at a garbage dump. Her reasoning behind such spaces in the film is to point out the filth of capitalism, the result of over-consumption and waste, and the stink of the current materialist society. Hence, the use of Amazon as a means of providing consumers with a variety of goods at the click of a button, would be something that would send Medea into one of her passionate rants of anti-capitalism. With this in mind, I acknowledge the problematic aspect of using a website such as Amazon.

A major theme running throughout the film, as well as the comments
Otto’s character becomes a reminder to the still living humans that his position in society is one they could all easily fall into. His mental illnesses and sexuality, on top of his zombie-ness, results in him being perceived as a body to be revolted by within a hetero-ableist patriarchy of privilege. Baker states that, “Edward Ingebrtensen reminds us that monsters set up the limits for humanity: they warn us of boundaries we shouldn’t cross.” The boundaries Otto sets up are not just into the land of the living-dead, but into the realm of hetero-homosexuality, and mental wellness with instability. An Amazon reviewer argues that, “Otto is a guy who thinks that he is a zombie in a world that hates zombies to the point of killing them in broad daylight.” This comment again creates a repetition of fear and revolt of zombies; a feeling normalized within society that is questioned in LaBruce’s film with the seemingly humanistic nature of Otto.

The remaking of zombies that LaBruce takes on, creates a new myth of the possibilities of zombies as sexual, emotional, and politically driven beings. This new myth resonates loudly with the cultural role of zombies, not only with Dead People but with the entire zombie genre. The scenes where zombies are killed in the film are acts of murder committed by men who fear the infection that the zombies are spreading. The desire to kill zombies is stated in the film to increase with the realization that this ‘new wave of zombies’ are specifically targeting men to recruit into their undead political revolution.


Kelly J. Baker, “The Zombies are Coming,” 60.


The scenes where zombies are killed in the film are acts of murder committed by men who fear the infection that the zombies are spreading. The desire to kill zombies is stated in the film to increase with the realization that this ‘new wave of zombies’ are specifically targeting men to recruit into their undead political revolution.
A comment by another reviewer is telling of the individual experience of being structured as abject within dominant society. Dia states that, “Otto is the only undead boy in a living world full of people who he can’t relate to. To him, the living seem to be a single entity – one ineffable person. And he ‘does not like that person very much’.”

His discomfort and dislike of others is apparent in his statement that he does not like the “person” that he sees in others. In this sense, Otto is able to reclaim and other the rest of society, choosing to isolate himself as a form of protection. His decision at the end of the film to go North, is in part out of a desire for colder weather where his flesh will preserve better and where he may meet others like him, but mainly out of need to escape the city that he knows he is not safe in. While his decision to leave society can be seen as further proof of either his mental instability or his zombie-ness (depending on the individual viewers’ opinion of what the film is achieving), it reinforces his desire to not become the “person” that he does not like. Baker argues that, “the zombie apocalypse appears as a meditation about the nature of humanity in our callous and detached moment. Violent fantasy becomes a method to interpret an equally violent but seemingly safe reality...by preparing to kill zombies, we push onto the monster all the things we hope we are not.”

Otto takes on an interesting shift in this form of thinking, distancing himself from the living that he views as undesirable to become. He creates his sense of insecurity within the city, as a result of the city not being a safe place for a zombie. The audience is able to see the other structures that have pushed him to the outskirts of society; fear of his sexuality, mental instability, and homeless state.

Comparing Bruce LaBruce’s film Otto; or Up with Dead People, to the reviews of viewers on Amazon, creates a space for the redescription of zombies as abject beings, and of human-like creatures from which we must distance ourselves in order to function in society as accepted individuals. Examples of views of zombies as the “other,” are shown as well throughout Bishop and Baker, where discussions of zombies in relation to terrorists and societal fears, lies in with the living humans need to kill as many zombies (in as violent a way as possible), as they can. The place for zombies within society is then structured as one on the outskirts of that society, for fear not only of infection and death, but also of the desire invoked by the abject.

---

Dia, Amazon. “Otto; Or, Up with Dead People.” Last modified 2013. http://www.amazon.com/Otto-Or-With-Dead-People/product-reviews/B001L1CNFC/ref=cm_cr_dp_see_all_btm?ie=UTF8&showViewpoint=1&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending


LaBruce, Bruce. “Otto; Or, Up with Dead People. (Germany, Existential Crisis Production, 2008). DVD.
My name is Carolyne and I’m a third year student at the University of Manitoba School of Art. When my peers discovered that I had been intimate with someone who was in a long-term relationship with another woman, I was relentlessly insulted and humiliated by the people I had considered close friends. I was overwhelmed by the words that were thrown at me, and by the bias that had left me to blame. I was painted as a seductress relishing the idea of tearing up a relationship, whereas the man involved was seen either as a helpless victim unable to assert himself, or a strong alpha male. This experience shaped me as a woman, and years later, I realized that I should not need to validate my personal sexual choices. I am not defined by the sex I have. I reject this idea, and I hope that those who have had similar experiences find the strength to refuse to bear this imposed guilt.
Non-Intimate Partner Femicide and Criminal Justice

The term femicide is used to describe the killing of women, with an understanding that gender is a critical, defining factor in these cases (Johnson, H., Dawson, M., 2011, pg. 124). Further, within the category of femicide, two “distinct types of woman killing” have been identified: intimate partner femicide and non-intimate partner femicide (Johnson, H., 2011, pg 128). In Violence Against Women in Canada, Research and Policy Perspectives, authors Johnson and Dawson focus much of their discussions on intimate partner femicide versus non-intimate partner femicide. Despite the fact that, overall, murder rates have decreased and that more men are murdered than women, most intimate partner murders involve female victims, perhaps explaining this particular focus (Johnson, H., 2011, pg.123; 129).

There appears to be less established research relating to non-intimate partner femicide, but statistics collected between 1974 and 2007 show that non-intimate partner femicide comprises about 25% of all female murders – that is the combined numbers of “stranger”, “unsolved” and “unknown” femicide victims (Johnson, H., 2011, pg. 126). Added to this disturbing tally is the mounting evidence that certain Canadian populations have disproportionately high levels of non-intimate partner femicide – for example, Indigenous women in Canada, as reported by Amnesty International in 2004 (Johnson, H., 2011, pg. 129). Clearly, more needs to be understood about non-intimate partner femicide – that is, what societal and personal factors influence non-intimate partner femicide.

Take for example the case of 21-year-old mother of three, Claudette Osborne, who went missing on July 25, 2008 in the area of McPhillips Street and Mountain.
Avenue in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Claudette’s common-law spouse and their children were abruptly left without their loving mother’s presence in their lives and with no answers to explain her disappearance. Ms. Osborne was known to have addiction problems, and as a result of her identified “at-risk behaviour,” police were incredibly slow to respond to her family’s missing person report. According to Ms. Osborne’s grieving partner, Matt Bushby, “The stereotypical response was that this isn’t really an issue; two weeks went by for us.” (Winnipeg Free Press, online, 2013). Stories like the disappearance of Claudette Osborne are all too familiar in Canada, and too often the focus falls harshly upon small aspects of the victim’s life and choices, as if to seek out the victim’s personal defects (victim-blaming) versus showing a complete and balanced portrait of a complex human being. Judgement is made based on ethnicity and this racism is fuelled by sensationalized media reports – time and time again, the victim is blamed for her own demise, particularly if she is identified as Aboriginal.

Matt Bushby has long since given up on Claudette being found alive, but he has been unable to find closure. It is not surprising that since Claudette’s disappearance, Bushby has left Winnipeg to raise their children – he fears for the safety of his little ones: “I can’t help but watch my kids like hawks (sic) ... I try to do things Claudette would have wanted us to do. I take care of them and make sure they have everything they need. It eases some of the stress. They keep me busy” (Winnipeg Free Press, online edition, 2013). Bushby’s account is heartbreaking and offers a valuable viewpoint, in that his story serves to humanize the young Indigenous women whose lives and deaths have contributed to the appalling non-intimate partner femicide statistic.

Claudette Osborne is one of hundreds of Indigenous Canadian women and girls who have gone missing or have been murdered since 2005. Disturbingly, a recent CBC report tells how the RCMP are challenging Canada’s Sisters in Spirit group, alleging that the RCMP only know about 118 missing women. The RCMP also stated that the Indigenous women’s activist group has not fully shared their missing women database (Online, CBC News, 2013). To this, one reader aptly responded, “Frankly, I’m baffled by this because the RCMP are basically saying 500 families didn’t bother to report those missing” (CBC News, online, 2013). Other readers suggested that the difference in numbers is likely because many of those among the 580+ missing and murdered women have been killed (murdered category), so they are no longer missing, thus lobbing the responsibility to apprehend murderers and solve missing persons cases squarely back on law enforcement’s shoulders (CBC News, online, 2013).

It appears that for some reason, the RCMP is trying to accuse Sisters in Spirit of inflating the missing and murdered women numbers. Perhaps years of pressure from Indigenous women’s groups have embarrassed the national law enforcement group, and they are making excuses for their years of racial bias and inaction related to missing and murdered Indigenous Canadian women. It is interesting that RCMP used a female spokesperson to deliver their denial bomb, and it is also noteworthy that the statement came just three days after New York-based Human Rights Watch released its scathing report on the force’s history of racism and violence toward Indigenous females to the BC government (CBC News, online, 2013). Human Rights Watch researcher Meghan Rhoad “told reporters that researchers found levels of fear among aboriginal women with negative stories about police comparable to post-conflict situations, like post-war Iraq” (CBC News, online, 2013).

As a woman who was raised to believe that Canada is a tolerant and peace-loving nation, and a place that embraces multiculturalism, I have come to a hard wall at the end of a bleak road. I now recognize that I am a product of years of consistent propaganda based on a colonialized, patriarchal, and capitalist agenda, where women – particularly Indigenous women – are considered less-than-human and expendable. In reading about Canadian femicide, I realize that the issue is not new and that racism, sexism and classism intersect and contribute to ongoing violence against women. Statistics show that there was awareness of femicide in the 1970s, and perhaps earlier, but no one at a government level saw it as a priority to focus upon (Johnson, H., 2011, pg. 126). It is cold comfort to have both the words to describe gender-based murder of women (femicide) and to have decades of statistics to attest to the validity of the issue, when law enforcement consistently washes their hands of accountability, and the media grafts onto salacious details of sexual violence and perpetuates stereotypes. Biased, discriminatory responses to murdered and missing Canadian women both deter victims of violence from coming forward, and allow the underlying issues which fuel these crimes to continue.

REFERENCES:
The purpose of this paper is to examine the culture associated with bicycle messengering as a form of transportation. With the use of scholarly sources, this paper will underscore the idea that bicycle messengering is more than an occupation; it is a lifestyle that becomes an integral part of bike messengers’ daily life (Kidder, 2006, p. 46) through the style, demeanor, and social activities of bike messengers. This paper will question whether or not engaging in the culture of bicycle messengering is one of choice or constraint. This paper will compare aspects of the culture of bike messengering to the car culture that dominates within North American contexts, considering the freedom, subjectivity, agency, and embodied sensibilities that both cultures emanate. This paper will analyze how the culture of bike messengering is masculine dominated, and that even within cultures or subcultures that distinguish and distance themselves from dominant culture, ideologies such as patriarchy continue to persist. Finally, the paper will begin to question whether or not the culture of bicycle messengering and bike messengers as a group are socially excluded from the “normal activities in the society in which they are residents” (Rajé, 2009, p. 6), and whether they also act as an exclusive culture. Overall, this paper will illustrate that the transportation method of bicycle messengering is incredibly complex and deserves a greater recognition in discussions of transportation.

Bicycle messengers work in downtown cores of major metropolitan areas, many of which were developed before the creation and influx of automobiles resulting in traffic congestion and insufficient parking (Kidder, 2009, p. 307). Kidder (2006) explains that the modern bike messenger “first appeared in New York during the late 1960s” and by the early 1980s bike messengers had become a natural element of the urban landscape in many American cities (p. 38). A straightforward way of explaining the job of bicycle messengers is that it involves picking up and delivering packages, parcels, and letters from
one place within a city to another. However, Kidder (2006) argues that some messengers strongly identify with the occupation, suggesting that being a courier is not simply a job but a lifestyle (p. 46). Bicycle messengering can be regarded as a lifestyle in relation to a messenger’s style and demeanor, forms of socializing for messengers, and choice rather than constraint to engage in bicycle messengering culture, which seem to encompass all aspects of a messenger’s life. Kidder (2006) refers to messengers as “lifestyle messengers” (p. 46), which also includes messengers who continue to race and attend messenger parties long after they have stopped couriering (p. 46). The combination of work and leisure within a messenger’s daily life is the essence of the messenger lifestyle; it is an embodied subjectivity that exposes a sense of self and a feeling of agency and the capacity to act (Millward, lecture, March 11). Messengers not distinguishing between ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ clothes, for example, illustrate this embodied subjectivity.

During his ethnographic research with bicycle messengers, Kidder (2006) explains how one woman he had a conversation with, similar to many messengers, “always dresses ‘like a courier’ – a cross between punk fashion and cycling gear – because she is a courier” (p. 48). The most common clothing and style for bicycle messengers, which works to inform and distinguish insiders and outsiders of the messenger lifestyle culture, is street clothes that are often cut off pants or rolled at the bottom, loose fitting, often with patches sewn on them, sometimes cycling shorts or pants in the winter, usually no helmets, and a messenger bag across their shoulder (Kidder, 2011, p. 161, 163). Kidder (2011) insists that style informs; wearing messenger clothes when one is not working is perhaps the best indicator of the lifestyle messenger, as it portrays a style that is neither purely work nor purely leisure (p. 163, 164). This can be further related to Butcher’s (2011) suggestion of Metro riders in Delhi that “…there is a link between the way we travel through the city and the way we perceive ourselves (and want others to perceive us)” (p. 245), which emphasizes bike messengers’ desire for individuals to recognize the way they travel through the city and how individuals should perceive them because of their transportation method. This is further relatable to messengers’ demeanor, as messengers purposely act rushed and want others to perceive them this way.

Kidder (2011) explains that acting rushed is a deeply symbolic act by messengers as it “separates messengers, in a specifically stylized way, from others, and messengers cherish this distinction” (p. 150). This intentional distinction can be recognized within forms of socializing that are intricately involved with the messenger culture, such as drinking after work and racing bicycles. The inclusion of drugs, alcohol, the party lifestyle (Fincham, 2007, p. 195) is also part of the messenger culture. Kidder (2011) explains how the recreational use of “alcohol, cigarettes, pot, harder drugs…” are “mainstays of any messenger gatherings” (p. 46). The main form of social event in the messenger culture is known as “alleycats”; events organized around the thrill of urban cycling that replicate the work day in the form of a racing competition (Kidder, 2006, p. 49). In relation to messengers intentionally distinguishing themselves from wider society, both “...alleycats and the parties that surround them function as rituals attaching messengers to the messenger lifestyle” (Kidder, 2006, p. 49), further emphasizing the attachment and embodiment of lifestyle messengers to this culture.

Recognizing the position that bike messengering can be viewed as a lifestyle rather than simply an occupation, there is a multitude of research regarding the reasons bicycle messengers’ work as couriers. This research leads one to question whether the decision to courier is a choice or a constraint. There are suggestions that “many messengers work as couriers because they lack other options” (Kidder, 2006, p. 46), or additionally, when asked directly “most messengers cite money as their motivation for working” (Kidder, 2011, p. 45). However, there is an interesting relation to messenger cyclists’ term, “urban cycling”, which can be characterized as a “combination of an ecologically minded view on alternative transportation and an aggressive assertion of one’s sense within traffic” (Kidder, 2011, p. 46), as a motivator of choosing to engage with messenger cycling culture, as it gives messengers an opportunity to cycle for a living in a sustainable way. Messengers’ ecological-minded view on alternative transportation is valuable to examine further. According to Hanson (2010), in order for transportation methods to meet sustainability, the integration of environment, economic, and social factors is necessary (p. 7). In relation, Butcher (2011) highlights that “road congestion has become a major problem as a burgeoning middle class purchase cars” (p. 238), which highlights the importance of sustainable transport methods such as bicycle messengering. With the continual increase of traffic congestion posed by dominant car culture, bike messengering provides sustainable solutions within congested cities. Fincham (2007) explains that with increasingly congested city centers, “bicycles are used as they are often the quickest way of navigating traffic” (p. 191). Kidder’s (2011) suggestion that the culture of bike messengering exists “because of the speed it can offer” (p. 32), has an underlying capitalist intention relating to profit for the businesses receiving or sending deliveries, the bike messenger company, and the actual bike messenger. However, although there is a capitalist implication related to bike messengering, this form of transportation allows for the economic aspect of sustainability as it incorporates environmental impacts of economic decisions (Hanson, 2010, p. 7). The recognition of bike messengering as providing the best solutions for the
current traffic congestions within North American contexts is also interesting to compare to dominant discourses relating to car culture.

Transportation options are dependent on context and the group of individuals being discussed. The idea that cars give an individual freedom is a North American phenomenon (Millward, lecture, March 15). However, bike messengers, underlining the fact that the type of transportation method that generates freedom is context specific, challenge this idea. The suggestion that cars equal freedom and the freedom to move one’s self that implies agency (Millward, lecture, March 13), is related to bike messenger culture that is attracted by “…not just the freedom, but a freedom tinged with danger and social disorganization” (Kidder, 2011, p. 40). Ideas around freedom are comparable as both cultures identify similar feelings of freedom in relation to different transportation methods. One major difference between the two cultures is that bike messengering is sustainable, yet automobiles and car culture largely dominate throughout North American contexts. In addition, as discussed in lecture, automobile subjectivity consists of “embodied sensibilities” (Millward, lecture, March 13) that relate to the capacity to feel emotions and sensory experiences while using an automobile through one’s body and through affect.

This can be compared to the subjectivity of bike messengers, as there are embodied sensibilities, emotions, and sensory experiences that are familiar to bike messengers, including the recognition that “after a while messengers become intimately familiar with the layout of the city and create mental maps of the quickest routes from place to place” (Fincham, 2007, p. 191). Although bike messengers experience these feelings, the culture of bicycle messengering continues to be stigmatized by dominant culture and perceived as ‘dirty’, dangerous, and immoral. The culture of bike messengering is often negatively portrayed in the media (Kidder, 2011, p. 61), which constructs messengers’ cycling as the problem, rather than critiquing the car culture that makes it increasingly dangerous for bike messengers. Kidder (2006) explains “taxi drivers…are known for making… turns without signaling or checking their mirrors for cyclists” (p. 40) and recounts that “…being ‘doored’ is the most common urban cycling accident” (p. 40), identifying the often dangerous and arbitrary environment bike messengers encounter within a car dominated context. Regardless, even though cars make it increasingly dangerous for bike messengers, safety risks and exciting adventurous encounters continue to be an integral part of the bike messengering culture.

Recognizing adventure and risk as fundamental to bike messengering culture, Kidder (2011) states that bike messengering is a masculine occupation as it not only is a job overwhelmingly performed by men, but that many of the required skills exemplify a certain kind of machoism (p. 65). While there are fewer women involved in bike messengering, women are prominent within the occupation and the subculture (Kidder, 2011, p. 65). Fincham’s (2007) research claims that in the medium-sized city of Cardiff, one in six messengers are women, and in the larger city of London, one in four messengers are women (p. 192). While taking into account that mobility patterns are context specific, one observation that can be made is that women bike messengers challenge Hanson’s (2010) suggestion that women have less mobile workplaces, and women have less extreme commuting (one-way commute of 90 minutes or more a day) (p. 12). Women bike messengers challenge these facts, as their workplace is their transportation method, which is also often incorporated in their leisure time, which leads to them being constantly mobile. Secondly, many women bike messengers struggle, especially initially, within the masculine dominated bike messenger culture as their sexuality and mobility is constantly policed by men. Kidder (2011) explains that because the culture of bike messengering is often stereotypically masculine, women have to adapt to be part of the subculture (p. 67). This was illustrated by Kidder’s (2011) interaction with a messenger who explained the constant inappropriate remarks made by men over radios, as well as women being targets for sexual advances, especially for new messengers, as they were regarded as “fresh meat” by male couriers (Kidder, 2011, p. 67). This is relatable to Porter’s (2011) analysis of rural women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa and the “…ways in which mobility intersects with patriarchal institutions, to help shape male efforts to control female sexuality and gender divisions of labor” (p. 65). This recognition allows for an understanding that even within cultures or subcultures that distinguish and distance themselves from dominant culture such as bicycle messengering, there continue to be dominant ideologies of patriarchy for example, that persist and dominate throughout such cultures.

Finally, it is interesting to consider whether or not bike messengers who engage in messenger culture are, as a group, socially excluded. Social exclusion is a process “which causes individuals or groups not to participate in the normal activities in the society in which they are residents” (Rajé, 2009, p. 6). The culture of bike messengering provides the opportunity for individuals to live a less conventional lifestyle, if they choose, and provides a community that persists outside of normative employment (Fincham, 2007, p. 200). Kidder (2011) explains how messengers’ freedom is constantly in negotiation with conventional society stating “messengers are continually thrust back and forth between feelings of freedom and conformity” (p. 148), referring to the fact that messengers come in contact and interact with delivery locations daily. Messengers’ freedom on their bicycle becomes limited when they enter conventional buildings for deliveries. Additionally, there is also an evident disgust from individuals that use bike messengers for their business deliveries in how they act towards
the messengers. This is illustrated in Kidder’s (2011) ethnographic research that explains how “…people stood clear of me in elevators…I grew accustomed to rudeness…I gave up making hopeful eyes at receptionists at agencies uptown…” (p. 41), which is directly relatable to the aspect of social exclusion that causes individuals to not participate in activities in society.

In addition, exclusionary acts are apparent in instances where it is clear that messengers are distrustful of outsiders entering into their culture. This is portrayed in messengers’ distinguishing themselves from other people, such as using the term ‘civilians’ to refer to all other people (Kidder, 2011, p. 152,153). Kidder (2011) explains that by labeling individuals outside of their culture as civilian and therefore denoting themselves as not civilian, messengers affirm that their strangeness is not confined to the workday (p. 153). In addition, at the popular social racing event “alleycats”, the presence of outsiders is viewed as problematic to the messenger subculture, which can be seen as perpetuating their subculture as exclusive.

This paper has examined the culture of bicycle messengering as a form of transportation, illustrating the intricate messenger lifestyle that many bike messengers embody. This paper has critically questioned dominant cultures continual denial and rejection of alternative and more sustainable cultures. However, this paper has also highlighted how ideologies such as patriarchy that force women to adapt within the alternative culture of bike messengering, revealing the hypocrisy of a subculture that actively attempts to distance themselves from such oppressive structures. Whether or not bike messengers see their job as a courier as a lifestyle or an occupation, it is clear that the culture of bicycle messengering is much more complex than it seems at first.

REFERENCES
Hanson, S. (2010). Gender and mobility: new approaches for informing sustainability. Gender, Place and Culture 17(1), 5-23.
SEX ESTEEM

This piece is a self portrait that looks at the acceptance of my sexuality, using the creative process as a therapeutic venue. It explores the importance of intimately knowing and loving ourselves, particularly our sexual expression regardless of sexual orientation.
What is the Definition of the Word “Home”?
The word “home” does not have a very specific definition. It can be defined in a variety of ways by different people based on their beliefs, cultural traditions and personal experiences. Neil Smith defines “home” as a “site of personal and familiar reproduction which includes routine acts such as sleeping, cleaning, child rearing etc.” Likewise, most people in general refer to the word “home” as a place where we live. Even though it is true, there is much more meaning to “home” than just the place where we live. According to Alison Blunt and Ann Varley, quoted in Johnston and Longhurst (2010) they defined “home” as “a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear” (p.41). In this paper, I will discuss and give examples to support Blunt and Varly’s claims that “home” is indeed a space where different acts takes place.

Belonging generally refers to the ability of an individual to fit in a specified place or environment. Every individual has their own unique perception of belonging. Likewise, “home” as a space of belonging and alienation can be different places to every individual based on their various experience. For instance, some people can identify “home” as a sense of belonging of shared experience, safety, and love. This includes connections to places such as an individual’s place in society: house, work, family members and for some people their native countries. In addition, these connections might influence whether the individual has a positive or negative perception of belonging or alienation. Alienation according to Monika Edgren (2011) “is the term that best denotes the meaning of loss. It describes the sense of being separated from one’s context, and it has its foundation in the existential conditions that contribute to creating a sense of losing oneself” (p. 506). “It involves a separation of humans, as self-conscious beings, from an initial situation” (Sean, Sayers, 2011, p.292).

From my understanding, the feelings of alienation influence so many of our activities, thoughts, and the way we shape our lives and the manners. Those who fall victim to alienation become the invisible and voiceless members. Alienation often goes unseen but it is always there. For instance, some individuals feel alienated when they are at home with their families because every member of the family is busy doing or dealing with their own personal matters. Such situations can cause isolation; family members will not notice the isolation because they are all caught up with their agenda. One main problem with alienation in the family is that we look to the elders for approval and appreciation when we participate or achieve goals, and when they do not respond like they used to, we feel that we do not fit in, which can lead to frustration and isolation. I can attest to this because there are days when I simply cannot connect with my family and everything I say feels forced. The same goes for friends and peers. There are times when one person can feel like they do not fit in anymore with their friends, because everyone in the group is different from what they used to be and no one really gets them.

In addition, belonging and alienation is also part of human experience. Without the experience of belonging and alienation, it will be hard for an individual to fully know where they stand in their lives. For example, some people feel the sense of belongingness and alienation whenever they travel to either their native countries, or to different countries. Some of these people travel to their native countries because they feel the sense of belongingness there. In the article “The VFR experience: ‘home’ away from home?” Amir Shani states that “It should be noted that occasionally the visit is an opportunity to get together with other friends and relatives who live elsewhere” (2011, p.4). Amir also states that, “the return visit allows the expatriates to observe the changes and transformations that have taken place in their native country” (2011, p.4).
Even though when an individual travels back to their native country they feel the sense of belonging, they can also feel the sense of alienation. For instance, when Africans who have lived abroad travel back, they are perceived as outsiders by the residents, because of the way they present themselves. Their way of dressing, tone of voice, and views on certain cultural rules and behaviors, are very different from the residents. It is very difficult for the returned residents, because their experience of alienation follows them wherever they go.

For one, these residents are never really acknowledged as a resident in their adopted countries abroad, because the people there see them as “the other” from different places around the world. So returning “home” to where the people feel that they belong only to find out they do not fit in anymore either is very sad. I can attest to this scenario because in 2011, when I want back to my home country Freetown Sierra Leone, the locals there considered me as an outsider instead of a returned resident. Despite the fact that I could speak the same local language, eat the same food and dress the same way, I still felt alienated because they all perceived me as a Canadian instead of a Sierra Leonian. Besides my family members, I did not have any one in my age group to talk to or even hangout with.

Furthermore, “home” can also be viewed as a space of intimacy and violence. Intimacy is generally described as the close bond formed between two people, who understand each other and have a deep connection with one another. These connections can be with families, friends, children and lovers. When one thinks of intimacy in the “home”, the first thing that comes to mind is the sexual practices that take place in the household. Johnston and Longhurst (2010) state that “the structure and layout of homes can be seen to reflect and reinforce notions of hegemonic heterosexuality, nuclear family, men’s, women’s and children’s gendered roles and relations” (p.43).

Robinsons (2004) states that “for most people, the home is the place where solo or mutual sexual activity most frequently takes place” (p.422). In the article, “‘Mapping’ and ‘doing’ critical geographies of home”, Katherine Brickell (2012) states that “the ideological scripting of home as intimate and safe makes violence against women difficult to see” (2012, p.234).

Violence is generally defined as an extreme form of aggression, such as assault, rape or murder. Most of these violent acts occur in the “home” and are referred to as domestic violence. Johnston and Longhurst (2010) state that “home, like many other spaces is not necessarily a haven or a private and secure space in which one can say and do exactly as one chooses” (p.44). Domestic violence in general is an abusive behavior conducted by either one or both partners involved in an intimate relationship. In addition, this violence can also occur within the family. “Family violence often occurs within the confines of the home and therefore tends to be considered as being outside of concerns of public bodies” (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010 p.46). These abuse includes wife or husband battering, child abuse and other abuse committed to harm family members. “Domestic violence continues to be understood as violence between intimate partners with both family and domestic violence recognizing the gendered nature of the violence. There is also an increasing concern about the impact of domestic and family violence on children” (Murray, Suellen. 2008, p.66).

Mayorga M Nóblega (2012) mentions that “according to women’s report—certain aggressor’s characteristics accompany violence, whereas women have less decisive role on it” (p. 3653). When one wonders why the victims still stay at these homes, Johnston and Longhurst (2010) observes that “it’s not always easy for women and children to find a place to escape from family violence and sexual abuse” (p.460). Murray (2008) also observes that “reasons why women might find it difficult to leave include their financial dependence on their partner, their lack of knowledge of or access to appropriate support services to assist them or their fear of what their partner may do to them if they did leave” (p.67). Murray (2008) also states that, “for some women, leaving was not an option, for the sake of the children, believing that the sense of belonging for the children, and their children’s relationship with their father, were more important than the violence in the home” (p.68).

Moreover, “home” as a space can also be of desire and fear. The meaning of desire can be different to every individual. From what I know, desire is an intense want. It is the motivation that lies behind every action a person make. These actions can be the feeling of love and belonging towards families, friends, children, lovers and the house itself where the person lives. Having these feeling of completeness whenever they are around such motivation is a main component that allows one to find such “home” space as desirable and a special place. Johnston and Longhurst (2010) state that “the desire to love is often translated into bounded sets of normative usually heterosexual relationships and spaces because love is often expressed, understood, felt and represented as natural, essential and compelling” (p.57).

Lauren Berlant (1998, 285-86) in Johnston and Longhurst (2010) Space, Place, and Sex: Geographies of Sexualities states that, “Intimacy is to appraise who we have been and how we live and how we might imagine our lives that make more sense than the ones so many are living” (p.52). One’s desire of belonging is also dependent on a strong connection to a person, community or place as it enriches the experience of belonging. Without this sense of belonging, a devastating impact may be left on an individual’s sense of self. For example, people have different experiences of belonging; some of these are positive and others are negative. As discussed by Johnston and Longhurst (2010), “the dominant
scripting of love has been in terms of long-term monogamous heterosexual paring, which legitimized in the form of marriage” (p.52). Looking at a heterosexual relationship, the desire of both partners is usually present because they feel freedom, safety, love, and connection through their communications and sexual practices. However, “love is an invention of patriarchy and marriage is the bedrock of patriarchal domination” (Johnston and Longhurst 2010, p.52). As a result, most of the partners fear the lack of freedom and the restrictions given to them by their other partner who is in charge of the “home,” who is usually a male.

Fear is a feeling that is created in response to a perceived danger. Feelings of fear and troublesome problems are mainly dealt with in the “home”. Some individuals feel protected from unknown things in the world because home is familiar to them. Others feel trapped because their rights are taken away from them by their parents, partners or authorities. For instance, looking at the violence that occurs in the house, the victims have the desire to stay in the relationship for the fear of what might happen when he or she leaves. As for children who live with their parents in the house, they have a lot of privileges that most children around the world do not have. For instance, some of them have loving parents who want to give them a roof over their heads and the desire to see their children out on their own as soon as they can. These parents take good care of them by the providing food, shelter, and clothes.

Also, for those children who work, they save up for their future because they do not pay many bills as compared to if they were living on their own. There is also the security and safety of being surrounded by everyone they have known all their lives. Despite these facts, children who live at “home” with their parents have to face the fear of getting kicked out of the house if they do not follow the rules and regulations made by their parents. There is also the fear of the lack of privacy in the house, because the parents still monitor their children on every move that they make.

All in all, when an individual has shared desired experiences with other individuals, it can lead to them feeling a strong connection with each other. However, if an individual experiences fear towards other individuals, there is always going to be a disconnection.

In this paper, I have discussed Blunt and Varley’s claims and given examples of “home” as a space can be a place of belonging and alienation. As well, “home” where we live with our loved ones can be viewed as a space of intimacy and violence, and a space of desire and fear.

REFERENCES


WHO CONTROLS MY BODY?

This paper is a reflexive response to a National Post news article regarding pro-life activism. As part of this paper, I will provide a summary of the news article, background and context of my reaction to the topic, articulation of my value base and how this coincides with both the CASW 2005 Code of Ethics and feminist principles. This paper will also provide a reflection of how this experience will influence my practice as a social worker.
THE ARTICLE
On May 23, 2013, National Post reporter Jen Gerson wrote an article called, "Anti-abortion group uses gruesome images to target ridings of MPs who voted against pro-life motion". The article features an activist who went door to door handing out pamphlets that featured a local MP and the bloody remains of an aborted 24-week fetus. The activist asserted that the pictures were legally acquired, and that the MP’s actions allow abortion which therefore makes her pamphleteering “fair”. It is noted in the article that the activist believes that rape, incest, and severe or fatal defects are no exception for choosing an abortion, and she states that abortion is immoral in all situations. In a justifying manner, the activist highlights lives of babies that were saved as a result of her group educating pregnant women. The National Post (2013) completes the article by quoting the activist as responding to negative feedback by saying “people who are effective are rarely liked and people who are liked are rarely effective”.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT
I feel that had this activist come to my home unexpectedly, I would have been quickly angered. My reaction to this topic is in part because I am a female, and as such, I have faced many instances of limiting patriarchal beliefs and ideas. As a result of this, I can sometimes become very passionate in situations where others express that they are in some way allowed to tell others how they should think, feel and act. Part of me is bothered by this because I can see how passionate the individual is about their “convictions”, yet they are ignorant to the fact that the opposition feels equally as passionate. I feel that this narrow-minded, egocentric and oblivious understanding of the world often misleads people into assuming that they are right and any alternative is wrong. This news article got me to think about several things. After my initial response passed, I evaluated my internal reaction and had the following thoughts and feelings: I never want to be so ignorant and stubborn that I lose objectivity, nor do I want to be so blinded by a “world revolves around me” mentality that I stop hearing others, and I do not want to be so narrow minded to assume there exists only one “absolute truth”. The activist in this article implies that people either support “pro-life” or they are, by default, in support of “murder”. I disagree with this tyrannical thinking and found myself very disturbed by some people’s desire to wield control over others in the name of self-interest.

VALUE ARTICULATION
My personal value base puts me in a place where, for several reasons, I do not agree with the method and ultimate goal of the activist in this news article. Of the seven core code of ethics Social Work values, the values that most align with my value base include the value of respect for inherent dignity and worth of persons, pursuit of social justice, and integrity of professional practice. In addition, my response reflected four of the seven feminist practice principles, which included deconstructing and sharing power, understanding privilege, reflexive practitioner, and sharing relevant information.

INTEGRITY OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE & REFLEXIVE PRACTITIONER
When I first started reading the article, I immediately thought about the idea of a home and how most people view their home as a “safe zone”. While reading, what I envisioned was a person or group of people that had decided to force their views into mailboxes and effectively violate the homes of others. In my opinion, an invited person coming to a person’s home to push values and offensive materials would feel intrusive to most people. Based on the reflexive practitioner feminist principle, I understand that safety is a need that I must be transparent with and, as such, I need to be aware of how this impacts my perceptions. My need to keep a safe and peaceful home had initially conflicted with one of the integrity of professional practice principles from the social work code of ethics. I found that my impartiality was compromised by my initial need for safety, but reflection allowed my anger towards the activist to subside.

SHARING RELEVANT INFORMATION
In bringing a political conflict to a person’s “safe place”, I feel that the pro-life activists are showing extreme disrespect for other people and families in general. In my opinion, a family’s choice to protect their children from premature exposure to graphic images should be respected. I do not prefer the “in your face” tactics that are used to get attention. I find these shock value tactics to be just as offensive as “sex sells” and “any attention is good attention” publicity stunts. Although, coinciding with the feminist practice principle of sharing relevant information, I very greatly value continuing education, information sharing and helping others. Therefore, beyond my disappointment for the method of delivery, I found myself even more disappointed that any valuable educational content to be shared by the pro-life group was at risk of being lost in the initial negative “knee jerk” response of some pamphlet recipients.

UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE & RESPECT FOR INHERENT DIGNITY AND WORTH OF PERSONS
As a woman in a patriarchal based society, I feel that what the activist and the affiliated pro-life group are fighting for goes against the human rights of women. My feelings on this aligns with the Code of Ethics principle of respect for inherent dignity and worth of persons, which places value on human rights, the client’s right to make choices and self-determination. Fighting for life is honorable, but with the main goal of the pro-life group being to abolish abortion, the right of women to choose what happens to their own bodies is denied. I fear the day that abortion is abolished as this would then be the day that my country tells me that others have more control over my body and my reproductive organs than I do. My opinion on this matter coincides with the feminist practice principle of...
understanding privilege. With privilege and oppression going hand in hand, it is easy to see how oppressive it is to assume control over women by slamming the door shut on the topic of abortion. Deconstructing the patriarchal privilege of men has been a daunting and continuous battle. Therefore, I feel that abolishing the right to choose abortion will only be counter-productive to the fight for equality, as a human right.

DECONSTRUCTING AND SHARING POWER & PURSUIT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

I agree that increased education on abortion would prevent some abortions and would mean more children born into this world. In contrast, I worry that it is possible that abolishing abortion may increase the suicide risk of rape or incest victims who, as a result, have become pregnant. This is a legitimate concern for any woman who feels that the pregnancy and child would be a constant reminder of the traumatic experience. My mixed respect for education and rights, feeds my belief that pro-choice and pro-life activists should work together in order to help a larger number of women. This emphasizes how my perspective coincides with the feminist practice principle of deconstructing and sharing power, since I don’t want power over activists or vice versa, but prefer power with the activist. In addition, the pursuit of social justice as a social work code of ethics value coincides with my personal belief that each person’s unique life journey should be free of oppression. In relation to unwanted pregnancy, I feel that it is fair to say that a woman who has been raped or molested may view the pregnancy differently than, say, a woman who had a condom break during sex with her husband. I feel it is fair to say that rape or molestation victims are indeed vulnerable and disadvantaged. As such, the principle of equal treatment and protection under the law coincides with my feeling that people need to challenge injustices that affect this vulnerable and disadvantaged population.

INFLUENCE ON MY PRACTICE AS A SOCIAL WORKER

This experience will influence me as a practitioner in that despite my first reaction, I will always strive to maintain a level of neutrality that acknowledges all sides of any situation, avoid egocentric thinking by using active listening, and always keep an open mind. As a result, the strategies, ideas, programs and tools that I use in practice will reflect this influence. With respect to the topic of abortion, my practice may take the form of an all-encompassing alliance with all perspectives in order to increase informed decision making. This would need to be done in a way that is respectful of individual privacy, human rights and ensures the use of a harm reduction approach. This approach would include such things as avoidance of needlessly graphic visual depictions and would incorporate diplomatic educational strategies.

Based on this experience, I would be most passionate about advocating for women victimized by rape, incest, and other forms of sexual assault. My main priority would be pro-choice over pro-life, which would ensure that women have the opportunity to keep their baby or elect, as a right, to have an abortion. The individuals that I feel will be the most difficult for me to be effective with are the clients or groups whom are not accepting of a pro-choice practice. Knowing that I will encounter this type of client means that I will need to be conscious of not being quick to judge such people as uneducated, ignorant, or overly controlling. Instead, as part of my commitment to the integrity of professional practice as a Social Worker; I will make it my number one goal to find the strengths in each person’s individuality.

REFERENCES

Surviving in Bright Li(v)es: GROWING IDENTITY

Riding, Walking, Running.
Weeping Willow Why do you cry?
The air is warm and the sun is high.
Do you see me ride with the horses?
They are alive like me.
See me walk across the earth and stone.
They guide me and chill me to the bone.
See me run through the forests, the trees.
Look how they tower and sway with the breeze.
I look to the sun.
I look to the moon,
How they shine bright and know
The past, present, and future.
They know the stories of my grandfathers,
Of my grandmothers.
My life.

Child, I see what will happen
To you, your children, and your children’s children.
I weep for you and all children.

Present Child
I look in the mirror and what
Do I see a child caught in the
Middle of yesterday and today.
I still have dreams, hopes of a future not yet lived.
I am a stepping into my womanhood
As I am cautious of what the world Will hold for me.
I am a daughter
A mother
A sister
Woman.

I am . . .
What you see, which is only the
Surface.
You see this dark colour.
Brown.
The colour of dirt.
You try to bring me down to live with
The worms, on your terms.
But I have my dreams as I yearn
To fly.
My wings have been clipped
by ignorance
And hatred.
You do not know me,
But you do not even try to.
You do not know me,
But I know who I am.

I am the heart of the
Warriors before me,
The hope for a new tomorrow,
The sun setting on a dark era.
My grandfathers taught me to
Love the earth
To respect living things.
I go hungry because you steal
What was meant for all.
The wild
Knowledge
Tradition
Land
I was left broken and discarded.
It is out of nothing I made something.
I kept it for my children.

My sisters were dolls.
Beauty became a curse.
You cut their long, black hair,
Took their innocence.
You forgot. Left them for dead.
The families had questions and
No answers.
Do not forget. I never will.
My brothers were pawns.
Families were broken.
My mother lost without her children.
My father never knew how to be.
Abuse plagued from all.

I govern my identity.

Today is it different.
Still I see ignorance, what others do not see.
Hatred.
It only teaches me to hate
If only I could let it.
As a child I learned from you
How to be.
I chose not to be like you.

Yes, we are all human.
I thank Great mother for her gifts.
Do you?
I thank you for giving me the
Courage to love myself against
All past generations of hate and neglect.

Now it is your turn
Or else you will teach children
How to be like you.
In the darker era
Full of hatred.
Then I am lost again in your cycle.
Lost again until I can be brave and face
Myself in the mirror.

I look to the future.
If only you could see what I see.
Many of Late Antiquity’s hagiographies describe stories of women casting off their feminine accoutrement and adopting the clothing and identity of a man, often as a reaction to some life altering incident which throws their future into question. These accounts present readers with an opportunity to explore and consider early Christian conceptions of sex, gender, and the human body, and perhaps enhance scholars’ understanding of the social climate in which these individuals lived. Clearly, it is difficult to know for certain how fluid or static notions of sex and gender were during this period however the existence of hagiographies which describe female transvestitism reveals the opportunity for the transgression of fixed roles. Viewing female transvestitism as a technique used to escape traditional obligations of womanhood or as an example of a monastic corpus wrestling with the problem of female sexuality are pragmatic approaches that both obfuscate and ignore the suggestion of the presence of an individual who identifies as neither male nor female. It is impossible to draw definite conclusions about the hagiographic cross-dressing saint’s intimate and complex conceptions of identity, and similarly so for the author of such a hagiography. However an examination that moves beyond the reification of sex and gender binaries of male and female is necessary in order to draw near to the motives of an author of such a work. Bearing this in mind, the hagiographies of cross-dressing saints Mary/Marina and Pelagia of Antioch present an ancient preoccupation with gender and the human body in relation to divinity and, perhaps, depict the transcendence of the gendered human body.

It is important from the outset to establish the meanings behind words that carry the heft that “sex” and “gender” do. For the purposes of this paper, the term sex will be used to denote the biological category the subject falls into by virtue of the anatomical reproductive organs they have. In contrast, gender is employed to denote the subject’s performance of or engagement in actions that are commonly thought to reflect biological sex. One’s gender is determined through behaviour rather than anatomy. Candace West and Don Zimmerman emphasize the difference between sex and gender, arguing that gender involves “a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures’” (126). This explanation reflects how slippery gender can be: where a particular behaviour may appear to manifest itself as the product of one’s sex, or nature, it is in actuality a response conditioned by societal expectations which ascribe how males and females are “supposed” to behave. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub take West and Zimmerman’s argument further and state that differences between male and female bodies are articulated by cultural politics onto a supposedly clear biological foundation, making systems of both sex and gender unstable (2). Here there is an unsetting of not only gender as a fixed entity, but sex as well, where the authors question how truly immutable biological sex actually is and argue that it is a social construct as much as gender is. This destabilizes the notion that there are two distinct categories of either male or female and presents the impossibility of attempting to group uniquely complex human beings into one of only two categories. Furthermore, Epstein and Straub imagine both sex and gender systems as historically and culturally specific appropriations of the human body which establish and justify dominant ideologies (3). Thus both Mary and Pelagia are examples of figures confronting and conforming to artificial or unnatural concepts of sex and gender ascribed to them by powerful ideologies of numerous entities in Late Antiquity, including the Christian church and the field of medicine. Although both terms will be used throughout this paper it is essential to bear in mind the assertion that these are unstable terms whose implications are influenced by a given era’s dominant ideologies.

Cross-dressing, or transvestitism, is a way of pressing up against categories of sex and gender and perhaps breaching their boundaries via, as the term implies, one’s attire. However, if the sex and gender categories of male and female are socially constructed on imagined biological certainty, as Epstein and Straub argue, then the process of crossing their boundaries would also be a social construction. Furthermore, a cross-dresser’s attire is often either intentionally or unintentionally fashioned to reflect especially gendered stereotypes of dress for a variety of reasons. Certainly, when Mary and Pelagia each adopt the clothing of a monk, they conform to a strict dress code that is imagined to be distinctly masculine. Harold Torger Vedeler asserts that cross-dressing enables the assumption of a “cross-gender identity” in which an individual maintains gendered subordinate and dominant identities (463). Utilizing this concept, it would seem that in the cases of Mary and Pelagia a male identity is adopted as dominant so that the subordinate becomes the female identity. Significantly, Vedeler cautions that this
“cross-gender identity” is reliant upon Western cultural ideas about gender roles (463). Taking this into consideration in combination with the assertion that such roles are ideologically ascribed social constructions, Mary and Pelagia are not necessarily assuming identities that are either male or female but that are unique iterations that do not fit into these rather restrictive categories. Further, contemporary scholars’ interest in the implications of Late Antiquity’s Christian women dressing as monks reveals less about the women themselves and more about contemporary anxieties over apparent resistance to gender roles. Thus imagining cross-dressing simply as a means of intentionally or unintentionally resisting sex and gender systems is a narrow approach that does not work to determine the subject’s – or the subject’s author’s – motivations, or the ramifications of this practice.

Christian hagiographies such as those of Mary and Pelagia are a literary genre consisting of the written lives of saints, holy people, and ascetics devoted to Jesus Christ. The legends recount and relate stories of miracles performed by holy people, numerous inspirational conversions of nonbelievers, and vivid and violent deaths of impassioned martyrs. Scholar Mary-Ann Stouck describes these works as an introduction to Christian civilization in early Europe and expounds on their value as the most longstanding and widely used genre of late antiquity, offering readers a perspective of the sensibilities and points of anxiety of diverse populations during this period (xvii). Repetitive themes and recurring narratives in hagiographies allude to contentious issues and larger societal concerns from which scholars may extract a commentary on daily life in late antiquity. Conversely, authors were driven by a desire to relate stories which praise god and venerate the saints, resulting in a hagiographical canon which describes the most exceptional characters in a most conventional way (Stouck xvii). This conventionality renders the texts predictable in a manner that is perhaps reflective of issues or concerns that early Christians frequently found themselves grappling with, while subtle deviations from formulaic plots may present a new tactic in addressing the question at hand. The legends act as entertaining instruction manuals describing desired behaviours and beliefs via a medium whose inherent familiarity resonated with its audience. Although without problems of credibility and reliability, hagiographical stories of saints such as those of Mary/Marina and Pelagia/Pelagios represent a resource to be opened up and mined for significant insights into common constructions of what constitutes appropriate moral behaviour, as well as descriptions of the means by which individuals may experience or connect with divinity.

Both the hagiographies of Mary/Marina and Pelagia/Pelagios are legends of women who embrace and take up ascetic lives of devotion to Jesus Christ and Christianity. The bodies of these saints figure largely in these stories, an example of what Patricia Cox Miller notes is the way in which hagiographical images encourage the reader to draw connections between the material and the spiritual, in order to provoke thoughts of spiritual transformation (12). Mary/Marina and Pelagia/Pelagios help the reader to imagine a transcendence of the corporeal in order that one may forge a connection with divinity. The physical body becomes a site of religious transformation as early Christians begin to use it as a tangible frame of selfhood, inviting readers of hagiographies to see holiness articulated on the bodies of saints and holy people (Miller 18). Thus the authors of the hagiographies of Mary/Marina and Pelagia/Pelagios manipulate and reinterpret the gendered bodies of these figures to address the issue of the human body in relation to divinity.

Where Pelagia/Pelagios’s hagiography represents a powerful conversion story, Mary’s is one which epitomizes a quietly determined faith. After having raised her on his own after her mother’s death, Mary is an adult when her father tells her that he wishes to pursue a monastic life and intends on entering a monastery (Stouck 129). Mary’s father’s decision to retreat from society into a life of ascetic devotion is a life-changing announcement for both of them. When she questions him about her future prospects, he responds: “What is there I can do for you? You are a woman . . . how can you be with us? for the devil will contend with you more readily, and with the servants of God” (Stouck 129). Mary’s father cites her identity as a woman as an obstacle which, in practical terms, prevents her from joining a monastery populated only by men, but he does not seem to directly suggest that being a woman precludes her ascetic potential. Thus, when Mary announces that indeed, she will not enter the monastery as a woman, but that she will shave her head and adopt the clothes of a man, her father does not object but assists her and cautions his daughter on appropriate behaviour in a space populated only by men (Stouck 129). Mary’s father’s response to this proposal is interesting for a number of reasons. First, there is no explicit evidence in the author’s representation of Mary or her father to suggest that a woman would be unable to fulfill monastic expectations in the same manner as any man. Further, any sexual urges on her part are not presented as a possible barrier for her but rather, she is told to be wary of advances on the part of the men. The author of Mary’s hagiography seems to be more concerned with emphasizing the restraint of male sexual urges than female. In addition, although by all outward appearances, Mary “becomes” a man by cutting her hair, donning male clothing, and assuming the name Marina, her father still treats her like a woman when he warns her to guard her chastity in the presence of the men she will be living with. This then does not reflect a total transformation of identity on the part of Mary/Marina and further, seems to intimate that she must restrain her feminine sexuality from tempting the men she will live with and alludes to an authorial preoccupation with the problem of both male and female bodies.

It is relevant to note that the author continues to make reference to Marina using feminine pronouns until later in the text when Marina is accused of impregnating an innkeeper’s daughter. In describing the saint’s life following the entrance
reaction that he cannot shake. Returning to his lodging, the
hers is a presence which notably engages all of Nonnos’
Pelagia for the first time is somewhat of a sensory overload;
and astonishment on his part (Brock and Harvey 42). Seeing
parades past him, her captivating beauty, intoxicating scent,
when she – clad in precious stones and expensive clothing –
catches the attention of the chaste and sober bishop Nonnos
Described as a prostitute and an entertainer, Pelagia first
respectable upbringing, Pelagia’s is surely a checkered past.
vastly different in various ways. Against Mary’s sound and
one’s sex and the adoption of the male gender, the two are
similarities with that of Mary/Marina in the disguise of
monastic audience, the author thus offers an interpretation of
example of the saint’s admirable endurance (Stouck 133). To a

Interestingly, the author’s use of masculine pronouns shifts
once again towards the end of the text when Marina’s death
results in the monks’ discovery of her true sex and she
experiences another transformation of her identity. Virginia
Burrus states that in hagiographies, god is encountered
not only in moments of life and death, but also in acts
of convertibility and metamorphosis (16). The saint’s
transformation from female to male and back again are divine
moments of transcendence of the human body. The revelation
of Marina’s sex is astonishing and initially met with confused
tears, though the monks eventually characterize it as an
example of the saint’s admirable endurance (Stouck 133). To a
monastic audience, the author thus offers an interpretation of
the soul’s mastery of the body through ascetic devotion, using
designations such as gendered pronouns to indicate moments
of transformation.

Though the hagiography of Pelagia/Pelagios shares some
similarities with that of Mary/Marina in the disguise of
one’s sex and the adoption of the male gender, the two are
vastly different in various ways. Against Mary’s sound and
respectable upbringings, Pelagia’s is surely a checkered past.

Described as a prostitute and an entertainer, Pelagia first
catches the attention of the chaste and sober bishop Nonnos
when she – clad in precious stones and expensive clothing –
parades past him, her captivating beauty, intoxicating scent,
and altogether shameless attire inspiring tears of wonder
and astonishment on his part (Brock and Harvey 42). Seeing
Pelagia for the first time is somewhat of a sensory overload;
hers is a presence which notably engages all of Nonnos’
senses – his whole body is racked by a deeply emotional
reaction that he cannot shake. Returning to his lodging, the

bishop throws himself to the floor and weeps at his failure
to adorn his soul for god as carefully and enthusiastically as
Pelagia embellishes her body for her public (Brock and Harvey
45). Nonnos becomes enmeshed in a sort of crisis of faith that
is inspired by the prostitute’s body and which overwhelms him
with a desire to devote such meticulous attention to his soul.

Given the common Christian perception of women’s bodies as
sources of sexual temptation as well as contamination, Nonnos’
reaction to Pelagia’s physicality is relevant because it presents
an alternative construction of the feminine form – shamelessly
attired though it may be. At his first sight of her, rather than
turn away from the prostitute “as if she was some sinful object”
as the other bishops do, Nonnos “carefully observed her in his
mind” (Brock and Harvey 43). The author describes the other
bishops’ view of Pelagia as a potential object of sin and depicts
Nonnos as observing her in his mind so that, despite the fact
that he is captivated by her, the bishop does not appear to
be leering at Pelagia. This maintains Nonnos’ reputation as a
chaste man of god while portraying her body as a source of
wonder and inspiration to him, rather than as a threat to his
virtuous faith. Notably, the author repeatedly reiterates Nonnos’
remarkable piety and his strict adherence to ascetic life, as if
to remind readers that he is a model Christian and unlikely to
compromise his vows. On the Sunday following his first sight
of Pelagia, Nonnos preaches before a congregation that is
reduced to tears by words so miraculously powerful that they
reach the mind and heart of the sinful prostitute (Brock and
Harvey 47). Where Pelagia has the ability to inspire Nonnos,
the bishop’s gripping prayers have a similarly rousing effect
on her. Within days of hearing his sermon, Pelagia becomes a
baptized convert filled with contrition for her sins and is taken
under the care of Nonnos and a deaconess of the archbishop
(Brock and Harvey 52). Nonnos’ preaching is the catalyst for
the prostitute’s conversion however what is notable here is that
even an individual as sinful as Pelagia can be received with
open arms by the church. This is a message of inclusion and
acceptance despite lascivious behaviour and past corruptions
of the flesh, making the converted prostitute’s hagiography a
powerful story of the transformation of not only Pelagia’s body
but also her soul.

When Pelagia is confronted with the obligation to remove her
baptismal robes on the Sunday following her baptism, the
emphasis on religious transformation becomes one of both
spiritual identity as well as bodily identity. After removing her
baptismal attire, Pelagia insists that Nonnos give her some of
his clothing and, dressed as a man, she secretly leaves the city
of Antioch and eventually takes up residence on the Mount
of Olives in Jerusalem (Brock and Harvey 58-59). Where
Mary’s initial adoption of male dress seemed to be depicted
as a necessary step in joining her father in the monastery,
Pelagia’s is presented following elaborate descriptions of her
sinful past, her feelings of contrition for corrupt behaviour, and
her baptism, all of which are expounded upon throughout the
story. Thus, the prostitute’s new identity seems to arise out of
an abrupt and massive overhaul of all aspects of her life, rather
than as a compromise that produces a gradual shift towards a monastic asceticism as it was in Mary’s case.

Interestingly, throughout the remainder of the hagiography the author alternates between referring to the saint as Pelagia and Pelagios, as well as between masculine and feminine pronouns. Describing his attempt to locate her cell on the Mount of Olives, he actually switches pronouns midsentence: “He was very well-known in the area and held in high honour. As I approached his cell, I saw it had no door to it . . . I knocked, and Pelagia, the handmaid of God, opened it. She was dressed in the habit of a venerable man” (Brock and Harvey 59). When he describes himself speaking to local residents in his attempt to locate Pelagios, the author uses the masculine pronoun and changes to the feminine when he locates the saint, regardless of the fact that at the time of the encounter the author did not realize it was Pelagia he was speaking to. This is perhaps partly to do with the fact that the story is shared by an author with the benefit of hindsight speaking to. This is perhaps partly to do with the fact that the story is shared by an author with the benefit of hindsight and an audience who has been told that Pelagios is Pelagia. However, this also seems to indicate that the saint occupies a sort of in-between space in which Pelagia/Pelagios is more a combination of both than being one or the other. This is not to necessarily suggest that a third gender is constructed, particularly since the author relies on traditional masculine and feminine pronouns rather than imagining a new one altogether. In the author’s subsequent description of the monk’s physical appearance, feminine pronouns are used and the emphasis is on what the author later realized were the changes to what was once a distinctly womanly body:

Her astounding beauty had all faded away, her laughing and bright face . . . had become ugly, her pretty eyes had become hollow and cavernous as the result of much fasting and the keeping of vigils. The joints of her holy bones, all fleshless, were visible beneath her skin through emaciation brought on by ascetic practices.

(Brock and Harvey 60)

The author describes the shift from a body of remarkable feminine beauty to one of stark asceticism, rendering the saint a sort of genderless eunuch in an image that appears to have transcended any hint of a gendered body. That Pelagios was well-respected in his new home in Jerusalem, a city of great religious significance, and physically bears considerable traces of an ascetic life in his physical appearance signals that he is a monk of the highest order, an achievement facilitated by the physical transformation of the womanly body. This is similar to Mary/Marina who, as described previously, pursues a life of asceticism by way of gender bending. The contrast between the two saints arises in Mary’s complete embodiment of Marina as a male, while Pelagia’s embodiment of Pelagios occurs via a total denial of a body that is gendered either male or female.

Undeniably, the hagiographies of Mary/Marina and Pelagia/Pelagios demonstrate a definite preoccupation with gender, the human body, and the ascetic desire to forge a connection with the divine. The common thread here is the body, its constructions, representations, and old as well as new ways of interpreting its significance in relation to religious pursuits. Conceptions of the body are greatly influenced by how the medical field describes and categorizes differences between male and female bodies. The work On Regimen, from the Hippocratic Corpus, is an example of a body of work which would have significantly influenced and reflected popular conceptions of the human body and the biological differences between males and females in Late Antiquity. Interestingly, in the description of fetal development and the determinants of an infant’s sex, On Regimen concludes that there is the potential that “three kinds of men” may be born, accurately called “men-women” or “hermaphrodites” (XXVIII). The ancient text’s description of the potential of a third sex that is conceptualized as a combination of male and female – or a hermaphrodite – suggests the existence of individuals who do not conform to the binary sex categories of male or female. Furthermore, On Regimen seems to describe the capacity for a kind of bodily transcendence: “Male and female have the power to fuse into one solid, both because both are nourished in both and also because soul is the same thing in all living creatures” (XXVIII). Although the text refers only to two sexes here, it seems to indicate that by virtue of their identical souls, males and females are able to fuse into one – in a sort of transcendence of the body that negates sex differences. On Regimen’s identification of subjects who do not “fit” in to the categories of either male or female due to their anatomical features may not directly apply to the practice of cross-dressing however it does indicate a certain awareness of bodily ambiguity and – as Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub argue – it casts doubt on the classification of humans according to dual sex categories as natural. Thus what is represented here is the indication of conceptions of sex and gender as mutable, as well as the suggestion of bodily subjugation under the influence of the soul.

On Regimen’s description reflects an ancient medical field that did not divorce matters of the soul from matters of the body. In fact, Michel Foucault states that during Late Antiquity there existed greater medical involvement in matters of the self, noting the common belief that “one had best correct the soul if one does not want the body to get the better of it, and rectify the body if one wants it to remain completely in control of itself” (56). This is based upon the belief that physical suffering is not a true illness while illness of the soul or the self is, thus emphasizing the prioritization of care of the soul in order to regulate the body. Foucault cites ascetic movements during this period that were characterized by a withdrawal from the larger society, “disqualifying the values of one’s private life” in order for focus on the relation of oneself to oneself (43). In joining a monastery, monks, including Marina and Pelagios, retreated from a society filled with expectations of sex and gender – or values of private life – and pursued knowledge of their souls through their devotion to god. Thus Foucault
describes a sort of denial of the body via the prioritization of care for the soul which is rooted in a medicalized concern that the body would interfere with the interests of the soul. This is attributed to Hellenistic and Roman thought which encouraged the recognition of “oneself as the subject of one's own actions, not through a system of signs denoting power over others, but through a relation that depends as little as possible on status . . . for this relation is fulfilled in the sovereignty one exercises over oneself” (Foucault 85-86). This explanation describes ascetic movements which encouraged adherents to resist values of private life – and its accompanying sex and gender systems – and recognize one's unique individual power over oneself, which seems especially relevant in the context of cross-dressing gender identities. The holy people of these cross-dressing saints represent the very act Foucault describes: Mary and Pelagia become the sovereign subjects of their own actions when they remove themselves from a larger society that positions individuals in a hierarchy of power and status, in order that as monks they may each seek a relationship with oneself. Interestingly, Virginia Burrus notes that although Christianity eventually evolved to include ideals of heterosexual Christian marriage and the sex and gender roles it implies, ancient Christian asceticism was persistent in its promotion of subversive anti-familial ideals (3). Foucault's description of a prioritization of the nurturing of one's soul and one's relationship with oneself is what Burrus identifies as inherent to early Christian ascetic movements' traditions and practices, whose tenets Mary and Pelagia embraced and adhered to. Burrus examines selected hagiographies with the intention that she will wrest what she calls a “transformative theology of eros” from the chokehold of the repressive morality of sexuality that eventually arose out of the religious institution of Christianity (3). As with Harold Torger Vedeler's assessment of examinations of ancient acts of cross-dressing as susceptible to the application of likely inaccurate Western cultural models and concepts, Burrus examines supposedly subversive hagiographies and attempts to locate the authentic transformative theology that has become obscured by later developments in the Christian movement. Thus it is possible that the act of cross-dressing on the parts of Mary and Pelagia has since been over-emphasized or has drawn attention away from the true message of their hagiographies, which may have been their transformative aspects.

The hagiographies of Mary/Marina and Pelagia/Pelagios reflect the transformative theology Burrus seeks. Theirs are not the only accounts of cross-dressing amongst holy people however it is important to note that representations are almost always of women assuming the gender identity of a man and not vice versa. Practical explanations for these representations are often proposed, including the common assertion that society in Late Antiquity offered few options for women and the adoption of male dress may have been viewed as an escape that held the possibility of education, travel, and, in some cases, positions of power. Not only does this suggestion rely on the perception that women’s lives exclusively held the prospect of being deeply unfulfilling while men’s lives were something to aspire to, this may be an inaccurate conclusion for such a drastic and certainly life changing decision. The authors of these hagiographies wrote with intention – John Anson indicates that these are stories by monks for monks and reveal more about the psychology of the author than that of the work’s protagonist (5). It seems unlikely that a monastic author would be concerned with presenting the option of cross-dressing as a means by which a discontented woman might pursue a different path, but rather, the representation of a woman masquerading as a monk may serve as an account of bodily and spiritual transformation. Patricia Cox Miller wonders whether scholarly assessments that imagine these women as either symbols of repentance and human salvation or as courtiers figures intended to remind monks of their capacity for sin are accurate, and instead suggests that they represent a monastic attempt at imagining female holiness (422-423). According to Miller, both possibilities involve a disregard for the cross-dressing monk as specifically female and imagine her only in terms of her relationship to monks who are not cross-dressers, so that there is little representation of a holy woman. Meanwhile, Stephen Davis considers ancient monasticism's struggle with female sexuality as an obstacle to salvation and argues that through depictions of women adopting male identities, monks offered an example of female sanctity which negated one's feminality (5). According to Davis and in opposition to Miller, the depiction of Mary and Pelagia discarding their feminine identities and taking up the lives of male monks represents a monastic conception of a transformation that addresses female sexuality. Miller's charge that they do not actually represent a holy woman is irrelevant given that the texts were likely never written with this intention nor were they directed at an audience seeking such a representation. Ultimately, these hagiographies represent monastic efforts at imagining unity with divinity through the transcendence of the human body and sexuality.

The accusation that the monk Marina impregnated an innkeeper's daughter reveals tensions concerning male sexuality and the vow of celibacy monks undoubtedly grapple with. Gillian Clark notes that Christian monks of this period often perceived male sexual desire to be unruly and persistent, as evidenced by involuntary erections and excretions of seminal fluid, frequent reminders of the body's fallen state (38). Meanwhile, Pelagia's overt sexuality and career path of entertainer and sex worker represent the usual unease monastic thinkers express over female sexuality. Davis argues that the authors of these types of hagiographies wrote to defeminize and fragmentize the bodies of their cross-dressing protagonists in order to create a representation of a sort of “female-man” (16). Certainly this is visible in the author's description of Pelagios in his cell: the once captivating and beautiful woman has become genderless, gaunt and emaciated, while the author's simultaneous use of masculine and feminine pronouns represents a fragmentation of the saint's gendered identity. Characters in these hagiographies
are often denied their identity as women through descriptions that erase it from memory, an intertextual fragmentation in which gendered identity is displaced and dislocated (Anson 17). For instance, when Marina faces the accusation of engaging in improprieties with a young woman, no reference is made to the monk’s female sex and the author doles out punishment as if there is every possibility Marina could have impregnated someone. Marina’s willingness to accept the punishment is that of a doubling process, one in which Mary fully embraces the identity of Marina and the male body, complete with weaknesses which would include sexual desire for innkeepers’ daughters. In contrast, Davis argues that Mary/Marina destabilizes conventional gender categories with a “double-voiced” confession to the sin of impregnating the innkeeper’s daughter, in that the monk is woman falsely confessing to a man’s sin (18). However in accepting the accusation and the subsequent punishment, as well as eventually taking on the role of the illegitimate child’s father, Marina is conforming rather stringently to the gendered ideals of a man who must take responsibility for his actions. Thus the monk does little to destabilize gender roles in his strict adherence to them. Davis’ assessment does not appear to consider why the author would shape the hagiography this way. It seems less likely that the author would be interested in destabilizing gender roles and more likely that the author wished to present Mary’s total embodiment of her identity as Marina the monk, in order to reinforce the occurrence of transformation.

Miller’s insistence at locating a holy woman in these hagiographies has the effect of denying Mary and Pelagios, the power they realize in their blurred gender identities of Marina and Pelagios. Marjorie Garber describes this as “looking through” the cross-dresser in an attempt to subsume the figure within one of two sexes or genders (9). It is important to bear in mind that while the other characters of the hagiography may not realize the monk is actually a cross-dressing female, the reader does. While their peers are fooled by the roles Mary and Pelagios play as Marina and Pelagios, the reader recognizes theirs as stories of transformation and transcendence gained as a direct result of blurred gender identity. Thus Marina and Pelagios occupy a unique space within the monastic consciousness. Having discarded their feminine identities, not merely in their dress, but also in their physical appearance, the saints deny their female-ness and no longer possess the troublesome problem of feminine sexuality. Although Mary and Pelagia project the outward embodiment of an ascetic monk, they are not entirely male, and therefore their piety and faith are not hampered by aspects of male sexuality that are difficult to control, such as involuntary erections and excretions. In this way, the saints overcome both the problem of female sexuality as well as male sexuality and essentially, the body’s fallen state. Marina and Pelagios are figures of ambiguity whose efforts at nurturing the soul are not troubled by bodily desires and therefore offer a representation of the transcendence of one’s body.

The authors in both hagiographies seem to address the problem posed by an ascetic’s human body in its devotion to the divine by offering a representation of figures who overcome this obstacle by manipulating and resisting prescribed roles. It is possible that this is conceivable because of long-held perceptions of sex and gender as negotiable and flexible, influenced by forces such as the field of ancient medicine. Additionally, medicalization of connections between the body and soul perhaps led to religious conceptions which prioritized care of the soul in order to regulate the body, thus granting individuals the opportunity to deny values of private life as Foucault describes. In adopting the male identity of a monk, female saints such as Mary and Pelagia refuse their feminine identity and sexuality. Furthermore, as the saints are not physically men, they occupy an ambiguous space in which they have overcome both male and female bodies. Thus cross-dressing saints serve as monastic ideals or representations of how one may transcend the human body through a transformative process such as that of Mary and Pelagia.

**Works Cited**


Language and Linguistics
Project Proposal
The goal of this pilot project is to study the voices of trans men, that is, individuals who were assigned a female gender at birth, but have since started to transition to male. Research on the voice of trans women in our society has been prolific as of late (Hancock & Lauren, 2012; Owen & Hancock, 2011). Research has also been done on the voices of gay men (Gaudio, 1994; Smyth et al., Zimman, 2010; Zwicky, 1997) and what it is that “sounds gay” in their voices. However, research on the voice of trans men is scarce. In my estimation, trans men are rarely encouraged to partake in vocal retraining, as trans women so often are, nor coached on how to speak in order to sound more “manly”.

The goal of my research is to help fill this gap in the literature by ascertaining how trans men use language, and how they themselves feel they use language. I have begun a comprehensive literature review, which I will present for discussion today. It was my hope to conduct research as well, but I did not receive ethics approval in time to do so. I will discuss, however, what that research will look like, when I carry it out.

My participants will consist of 6-12 female to male transsexuals varying in age from 25 to 40. They will also vary in ethnic background, and include men from Cree and Anishinaabe backgrounds, two of Manitoba’s First Nations populations, as well as Franco-Manitobans and possibly Metis. I believe this research will benefit the trans community by shedding light on the voices of trans men, which until recently, have been largely overlooked.

My focus has been on how trans men use language, and how they feel it compares to their previous language use, when identifying as female. Until recently, research on trans identified men has been almost non-existent. Save, of course, for that of Lal Zimman, Richard Adler, and John van Borsel, who have all been making headway in the field recently. It is my hope and intent to focus most of my research on how trans men compare lexically to cis-gendered men, as well as how they themselves feel they compare to cis-gendered men, and how they compare to their past selves. The current research on trans male voices is coming out of America. And while I do believe that we, as neighbours, have similarities in our speech patterns as well as our lexicon, I also believe that there are many differences at play, which I would like to focus on. Such as the lexical choices of Franco-Manitoban trans men of both Quebeccois and Metis heritage, as well as that of trans men and two-spirit of Anishinaabe and Cree heritage. I believe the lexical and dialectal differences that exist between these communities are one that deserves further research.

While it has been shown that trans men experience a drop in their voices due to hormone therapy, and that they rarely require “voice therapy for fundamental frequency modification” (Battin 1983; Spencer 1988; Colton et al. 1996), there has been little to no research done on the sociolinguistic side of “voice”. Why is it that trans women are expected to learn how to “speak like a woman”, even though Lakoff’s idea of there being a “woman’s language” has been disproved (Cameron et al., 1988), but it seems that learning how to speak like a man is not something trans men need to learn. In Lal’s work on FTM’s and gay sounding voices, it becomes apparent that listeners will most often identify the voice of a trans man as gay sounding (Zimman, 2010). And although the fundamental frequencies of most trans male voices do lower naturally, due to androgen therapy, I believe there are other factors involved as well in listener’s perceptions of FTM voices. In my research, I would like to record and transcribe audio conversations with not only a variety of trans identified men, but also cis-gendered men, to ascertain whether there is a higher usage of such “tentative language” (Leaper & Robnett, 2011) with trans men, than with cis-gendered. The current research of Lal Zimman on female to male transsexuals and gay sounding voices, as well as that of Adler and van Borsel, has focused largely on phonology. I hope to add to this groundbreaking research by focusing on lexical changes when transitioning. Because, although the idea of an inherently feminine way of speaking has been disproved, our society still says that, in order to be seen as truly feminine, one must learn how to “sound” like a woman. Or, at least, trans women are. In The Whole Woman: Sex and gender differences in variation, Penelope Eckert says “sociolinguists generally treat sex in terms of oppositional categories (male/female)”, and I think that we, as queer sociolinguists, must take strides to show that this is not the case. The lack of literature in the field that pertains to trans men could be for any multiple of reasons. The lack of men willing to be interviewed and/or recorded is...
one. While it is getting easier to come out in society today, this helps only with the recruitment of younger trans men, while older trans men may still be afraid, or unwilling, to speak about their transition, especially to researchers. In Peter Trudgill’s 1972 study on men and women in Norwich, he found that women tended to over report their use of prestige terms, and that men under reported (Trudgill, 1972). While the study is decades old, I believe it is still relevant today, and can be applied to the research on sociolinguistic differences in trans and cis-gendered men. What Trudgill shows is that although women’s use of such prestige language could be seen as their powerlessness in society, they in fact are using prestige language to improve their status in society, while men, who already enjoy a higher social status, are able to use language of less prestige. Socially, things have changed since Trudgill conducted his studies, but in the trans community, there is, I believe, a greater emphasis put on being seen as male or female enough. Would trans men report that they used more or less prestige language? In interviewing not only trans men, but also trans men of First Nations backgrounds, as well as Franco-Manitobans, who are already minorities in different ways, I also hope to shed light on different language use within the trans community of Winnipeg. Would the use of less prestigious language, including more vernacular terms, solidify their place in a predominantly cis-gendered society? As Eckert said, “Like age, sex is a biological category that serves as a fundamental basis for the differentiation of roles, norms, and expectations in all societies” (1989, p246), and it is these things that make what we see as gender, which is now widely known and accepted as a social construction. Eckert goes on to discuss the complexities of gender differences, and the fact that traditional gender roles have now been called in to question. As sociolinguists, we tend to “think of age and class as continua and gender as an opposition”, but that “variation based on gender may not always be adequately accounted for in terms of a binary opposition” (Eckert, 1989, p247). It is precisely because of this gender continuum that new research should be undertaken.

There is a definite lack of research that has been done in the field of trans male voices, and there is even less in the communities that I wish to study, being Canadian, Franco-Canadian, Anishinaabe, and Cree. I believe that this future research, along with the work that is currently happening, will go a long way in bringing trans men out of the shadows.

---


Zimmran, L. Perceived sexual orientation and gender normativity: What do gay men, nerds, and female-to-male transsexuals have in common?.

Sistah lit often takes place in a “racial vacuum” (Guerrero 100). Terry McMillan’s *Waiting to Exhale*, which follows the lives of four black women, is no exception. It is heralded as the founding novel of Sistah Lit, a genre targeted to African-American women (Guerrero 90), and which speaks to “the modern condition of being female, independent, single, and black” (Guerrero 89). McMillan’s characters navigate the ups and downs of their lives – from romance, to family and careers – with one another’s support. In this paper, I will explore possible reasons authors might choose to employ a racial vacuum within Sistah Lit. This technique helps represent a marginalized group and provides non-stereotypical roles for those group members. It also shows black women’s unique experiences and empowers them by resisting Western white supremacist patriarchal culture.

One reason authors may use a racial vacuum is for representation. Due to many factors, including racism and the West’s history of colonialism, novels published in North America featuring main characters of colour are still rare. At best these characters are given a supporting role, or appear as a token. The limited portrayal of characters of colour in North American novels is problematic because “social identity theory predicts that efforts to maintain or bolster one’s self-concept are dependent on the types of comparison that are made available” to them (Fryberg qtd. in Martins and Harrison, 343). If limited representations, or worse, none at all, are the only ones available to black women and additional women of colour, what are they meant to think of themselves and their value in the world? Since the representation is significantly lacking, for McMillan to have written
a book with an entire cast of complex black characters adds a lot to the amount of racial diversity in fiction. This allows African-American women the opportunity to see themselves represented in fiction.

The numerous characters contained in the racial vacuum within *Waiting to Exhale* also offer black women diverse possibilities as to who they can be. This is in sharp contrast to their often stereotypical depictions in other popular forms of media, such as television, movies, and music videos. Within the overarching Chick Lit genre, Sistah Lit portrays black women with agency and opportunity. Within this genre, black women are represented as educated and professional. These types of representations provide the opportunity for black women reading the books to realize the many possibilities for their lives than just the few options they are often told they have, in a strategically subtle manner. In this way, Sistah Lit is “a revolution for this new African-American womanhood” (Guerrero 90).

A racial vacuum in Sistah Lit is particularly important for black women because it allows them to see their own unique experiences reflected in popular culture. Guerrero points out that Sistah Lits’ readers are not just of one race and that black women will not feel that “a distance remains between their own realities and those of the black female protagonists” like white women might (Guerrero 91). Instead, they can relate to the characters along both the axes of gender and race. Therefore, if Sistah Lit reads just like “a conversation with our best girlfriends” (Guerrero 91), it is especially so for black women. The importance of the representation of women of colour in fiction should not be discounted. Black women “have been taught by society to believe in their disposability” (Guerrero 92), and having one’s own image permanently stamped onto popular culture can be a sign stating the opposite.

In addition, a racial vacuum can be empowering for African-American women. Modern day North America is a white supremacist society. Sistah Lit allows people of colour a reprieve from this white supremacist, patriarchal culture that influences all social institutions such as education and law. Alternatively, if or when the characters in Sistah Lit novels face sexism and racism, the reader experiences it from the perspective of a black woman, and gains a cultural critique from a marginalized voice. For example, at the point in *Waiting to Exhale* when Bernadine’s husband leaves her for a white woman, readers are able to see the relation to the continual valuing of white womanhood over black womanhood. For black readers, this provides vicarious empowerment as Bernadine overcomes this betrayal.

At first glance it may seem odd to find an entire genre containing characters of only one race. However, once one considers the many benefits that may arise for Sistah Lits’ readers, particularly for black women, it becomes easier to understand why the genre exists. The genre resists dominant Western ideologies that lead to the exclusion of people of colour from fiction. It expands on what roles black women are allowed to fill, and works to empower these women. Sistah Lit’s use of racial vacuums claims a space for a marginalized group, and has the potential to change North American culture.

**Works Cited**


This photo project describes the vulnerability of women with disabilities and the fight to keep their identity. Abuse can result in a loss of identity, spiritually and in sexuality. Women with disabilities tend to mask their feelings and identity, thus becoming both the predator and the victim, as represented in these photos. The artist’s self-portraits show two faces behind a mask that is symbolic of an identity that has to be hidden, or is hiding. With meditation, oneself can heal the victim identity and become less of the predator, and allow herself to reveal her true identity. With the rose, she may re-center herself and rediscover herself spiritually, with the dual identity falling away.
Harm Reduction and the Neoconservative Ideology

The transition from the Liberal government to the Conservative government has had a detrimental impact on harm reduction in Canada. With the current Conservative Harper government embodying the neoconservative ideology, harm reduction funding has been drastically cut and its presence erased from the current policy (Cavalieri & Riley, 2012). The National Anti-Drug Strategy replaced the long running Canadian Drug Strategy in 2007, with its renewal in 2012 (Carter & MacPherson, 2013). This new stance as being anti-drug and in favour of criminalization and enforcement creates a discourse where substance users are overly criminalized and support services to reduce the harm to themselves and society wither with lack of funding. With the favouritism towards criminalization and enforcement, an already marginalized population becomes further marginalized within the criminal justice system. This is a way of controlling the marginalized group by maintaining law and order and creating a very real barrier, such as a prison wall, between society and those who sit opposed to the neoconservatist construction of society.
Harm reduction is a key element in Canada's drug strategy, with its aim to reduce the harm created by using drugs and working towards making healthier communities. Harm reduction being one of the four pillars in the Canadian Drug Strategy, with a measure of success in areas such as Vancouver’s downtown eastside (DTES), it is difficult to fathom why harm reduction policy has begun to move back instead of forward (Marshall et. al, 2001). The primary goal of harm reduction has traditionally been to decrease the spread of blood-borne disease through safe injection practices and clean needle exchange, to reduce the amount of overdoses with supervised injection sites, and to provide access points for addiction treatment services (Cavalieri & Riley, 2012). Thus reducing the harm associated with substance use. This works to alleviate a very real strain on the Canadian health care system. Harm reduction programs are a positive window to other valuable services that these populations face barriers in accessing: such as healthcare, housing, addiction services, counseling, education and HIV testing (Carter & MacPherson, 2013). Harm reduction theory functions under a health-centered approach to drug policy instead of a justice centered approach that is being exemplified by the current National Anti-Drug Strategy.

Substance users often inhabit the fringes of society. The substance user becomes a criminal when engaging in such acts as using illegal substances, which can be coupled with several other forms of marginalization and oppression. People use drugs for several different reasons. The marginalization of substance users is recognized by their continued lack of participation in society by their continued incarceration and criminalization, and material deprivation, demonstrated by high rates of homelessness (Young, 1999; Krausz, 2009). Harm reduction works to afford substance users agency, to combat the powerlessness that is perpetuated by enforcement-centered policies. Harm reduction ideally would meet them where they are in their lives and have low barriers to accessing such services. There is a continued push to further integrate harm reduction programs with other services, such as mental health services and housing. Substance abuse and mental illness are tied in many cases and the separation of mental health and addiction services becomes detrimental to several clients seeking help, with research showing 50% of people seeking addictions services also suffer from some form of mental illness (Krausz, 2009). Substance use needs to be recognized as a result of systematic oppression and marginalization, with policy working to build a system that allows for maximum safety and minimum harm, and not the further marginalization of people.

Using John Lowman’s discourse of disposal about street level prostitution and extrapolating it to include substance abusers as another form of outlaw, a parallel can be drawn. The discourse of disposal establishes that social outlaws are unwanted and society is more likely to allow violence and ultimately the death of these individuals, because it is disposing of the “problematic” individuals (Lowman, 2000). Now, applying this to marginalized substance abusers, the regression of harm reduction policy and programming by the neoconservative government would increase drug overdoses and maintain their oppression, thus disposing of the outlawed individuals. Continuing in this vein, Cavalieri and Riley point out that “Canadian Aboriginals have very high rates of HIV and Hepatitis C, suicide and premature death, intense and unbearable poverty, and extreme levels of incarceration: the prison system is the new residential school” (Cavalieri & Riley, 2012). Using the marginalization of substance abusers with the intersectional oppression that Aboriginal people experience within the Canadian context, the strategy of working to reduce and eliminate harm reduction programs in favour of enforcement policy, could be constructed as forwarding the colonialisit agenda of the neoconservative government.

REFERENCES


Early in the semester, one of my professors asked our class to construct a definition of feminism. Having been raised by a self-proclaimed feminist mother (and an equally supportive father), I thought I had a pretty good idea of what feminism entailed. The lessons that my mother taught me were invaluable however it occurs to me now that I learned just a fraction of what there is to know about feminism and what it means to be a feminist. In fact, I frequently ask myself, ‘what does it mean to be a feminist?’

Growing up, I understood feminism to be about equality and the fair treatment of women, and had never critically analyzed the subject. I thought of myself as a feminist because I support the movement’s objective of equal and fair treatment of women. In just a few short months, I have come to realize that, though I have learned a great deal about feminism, I have a lot more to learn. I now consider myself to be a Feminist in Training.

In Feminist Thought, the working definition of feminism that we constructed as a class is “the commitment to end domination on various levels (such as sex, race, gender, sexuality, class, ability) and to reorganize ideas in line with that commitment.” After just a short exercise, the light bulb shone brightly in my head as I considered this new definition. I was correct in my thinking that feminism was largely based on the rejection of inequality, but I had neglected to connect other oppressed groups to the feminist movement. ‘Interlocking oppressions’ was an entirely new term and idea for me. I had never been instructed to think critically about oppression, or to attempt to connect various levels of oppression. Adrienne Rich might have argued that my upbringing in a white, middle-class family in Canada directly affected what I learned (or did not learn) about feminism and interlocking oppressions. A woman from another country whose culture and customs are different will experience unique interlocking forms of oppression that I will not be familiar with.
bell hooks states that feminism “encourages all of us to courageously examine our lives from the standpoint of gender, race, and class so that we can accurately understand our position within the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. For years many feminist women held to the misguided assumption that gender was the sole factor determining their status” (116). hooks is pointing out the exact flaw that I found within my own thinking; feminism is no longer just about women, but also involves other forms of oppression, including race, class, sexuality, and religion.

There is a particular issue that has been discussed in my Feminist Thought class that I have been focusing on, and have been trying to gain a better understanding of, as a Feminist in Training. This is the under-addressed issue of consent. Consent may seem like a very ‘black and white’ issue: if both sexual partners expressed a desire to engage in a sexual act together, we call it consensual. However, if one of the partners expressed a desire to NOT be in this sexual situation, we call it rape. In reality, consent can be lost along the way, can seem implied, or is not explicitly discussed and partners may end up going into “sexual autopilot”, without confirming that either partner wants to continue (Cho, 3.).

In the anthology Yes Means Yes, Jill Filipovic addresses the idea of stereotypical gender roles. More specifically, she examines the way American culture expects men and women to behave sexually. “Female sexuality is portrayed as passive, while male sexuality is aggressive” (Filipovic, 18). Filipovic discusses the idea that sex is often portrayed as “something that men do to women, instead of a mutual act between two equally powerful actors”(18). Because aggression and maleness are linked in our culture, there is often an expectation for men to be aggressive during sexual encounters, while women are expected to passively let it happen.

When Native Youth Sexual Health Network’s Jessica Danforth spoke at a seminar at the University of Manitoba, one of the most important topics she discussed was the fact that consent is not taught in Sexual Education in schools. In agreement with this argument, Filipovic remarks that “women are rarely taught how to say yes to sex, or how to act out their own desires. Rather, we are told that the rules of sexual engagement involve men pushing and women putting on the brakes” (20). In many cases, men may assume that a woman saying “no” to sex is “just part of the game” (Filipovic, 20).

While men and women are respectively depicted as aggressive and passive, feminism often carries its own stereotype. The word ‘feminist’ often holds a negative connotation and comes with the assumption that the person attached to this word is both a misandrist and a lesbian. There also seems to be an assumption that feminists do not wear make-up or groom their body hair. Personally, I have been in situations with peer who are less immersed in the world of feminism when, if the topic of feminism comes up, there is a visible withdrawal on their part. After just one or two statements that could qualify as within the realm of feminism, I’ve made others uncomfortable and turned myself into what Sara Ahmed calls a feminist killjoy.

So, I continue to ask myself, what does it mean, to me, to be a feminist? As a self-proclaiming Feminist in Training, what are my beliefs, and are they consistent with feminism as I understand it? I believe in equality, not simply between men and women, but equality on all fronts, for every race, class, sexuality, religion and ability, regardless of location in the world. I believe in choice and that a woman’s body is her own. I, like Filipovic, believe that men are not incapable of being respectful, understanding partners and that perhaps they too need to be given a chance to say yes or no to sex. I believe that consent is the single most important topic concerning sex, and that it should be taught in sexual education curricula.

Although we have discussed many issues pertaining to feminism, I find myself returning to the thought of equality. In terms of equality, we have made great strides for women, for different races and sexualities, for religions and classes. Of course, it only takes a small negative comment or injustice to remind us that we still have a long journey ahead of us. It is important for us, and all of humanity, to remain positive and celebrate the small victories. When times are difficult and equality seems to be further away than ever before, just remember: less than 100 years ago, women were not allowed to vote. Look how far we’ve come.

WORKS CITED
Ridiculous Woman

Credulous woman, take back discretion! Do not hurl yourself imprudently, into the arms of the crooked.... Flesh and fantasy; a passing elation, may quench your salacious greed, but what will come to be- afterwards, when the thrill has lost its affluence, and he is nowhere to be found?

Susceptible woman, take back awareness! Do not open yourself incautiously, to some man who does not respect you. Spoken endearment; a charming illusion, may appear to be unquestionable, but what will become of you-thereafter, when the golden dream has lost its brilliance, and he has forged ahead, leaving you behind?

Incompetent woman, take back strength! Do not squander your time impulsively, on those who will take you for granted. Though you swear up and down, to some magnetic allurement; what will supervene-thereon, when loneliness recommences, and he still hasn’t bothered to call?
Big Mouth Butch episode 1

Hey Blondie! Lookin' hot? I could sure have some fun with you, girl!

Ugh...

Oh, hell no!

You know, with some work, you'd be pretty hot too! Try showing off those tits a bit...

Oh, I'll show you tits alright.

You're afraid?

Really Audrey, it's not his fault he's a sexist pig...

It's all he's ever known!

Using her powers of supervoice, SuperGrrrl destroys discourses of patriarchal domination...

As I was saying... Women's bodies are complex entities that demand respect!

At this rate, you'll turn the entire university into a feminist army!

All in a day's work, Sara.
I STUDY WOMYN AND GENDER

I AM A FEMINIST
I was assigned to read four different readings that are related to women’s studies. Although I found all four of the assigned articles informational and interesting, Peggy McIntosh’s 1988 *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* and Marilyn Frye’s 1983 *Oppression* were the most captivating. In this paper, I will identify and summarize the key arguments of both readings, integrate course concepts, as well as give a reaction about the readings.

In Peggy McIntosh’s 1988 *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, she shows that racism is a part of everyday life and she provides an analysis of gender and racial privilege in America. In her introductory paragraph, McIntosh talks about the work she has previously done exploring male privileges, noting that she has “often noticed men’s unwillingness to grant that they are over privileged, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged” (McIntosh, p.10). Comparing the male privilege to the white privilege, McIntosh also states that, “white are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privileges” (McIntosh, p.10). In addition, *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* also looks into a typically unacknowledged aspect of racial society: cultural norms and practices that emphasize white privilege and minority disadvantage.

Despite all of society’s improvement toward racial equality, how does one equalize the advantages one group has had over another? The most obvious advantage today is that of wealth. White people for instance, have had greater opportunity from previous generations to build up and pass on wealth to their family members, whereas non-white individuals were historically denied the opportunity to do so. Specific cases include the enslavement of race as seen with Black people. McIntosh lists twenty-six situations in which white people have a privilege that is not easily thought of when one thinks about racism. For example, from her list of the situations, the eighteenth statement, is still at large. Not only is the typical “person in charge” pictured as someone “white” but a “white” male at that. The scenarios listed are all invisible, we cannot see it but we can definitely feel it. Most white people also ignore the injustices of the past as if they did not exist so they can feel better about themselves and at the same time, believe it is the best way to make things equal for all races to start anew. In the last few paragraphs, McIntosh noted that the first step to eliminate “unearned advantage” is acknowledgement of their “unseen dimensions” (McIntosh, p.12). The vast majority of these structural problems are unnoticed and unintentional from the white population. Therefore, it is important that this message becomes well-known, as without acknowledgement of the problem, it cannot be corrected.

In Marilyn Frye’s 1983 *Oppression*, she seeks to clarify the term “oppression” and how women can be said to be oppressed. Through her clarification, Frye states that “women are oppressed as women, and members of certain racial and or economic groups and classes, both the males and females are oppressed as members of those races and or class. But men are not oppressed as men” (Frye, p.16). In the opening paragraph, Frye talks about the generalized claims of oppression.
The word “oppression” according to Frye has become a meaningless term phrase for anyone undergoing any type of suffering. For example, Frye states that “human beings can be miserable without being oppressed” (Frye, p.2). The word oppress is much stronger than it is often treated and that one must think clearly when using the word.

In addition, Frye also argues that oppression means that the oppressed people’s options are reduced to a very few and “expose one to penalty” (Frye, p.3). Frye relates this in section one of the article about the difficulties women face in everyday life. For example, sexual activity is not okay because women could be considered a whore, and sexual inactivity is not okay either because it implies that there is a greater problem or the woman is a lesbian. The life of an oppressed person is therefore being forced to live because “one’s life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction” (Frye, p.4).

Furthermore, Frye uses the metaphor of a birdcage to describe oppression. She describes the birdcage with one wire which might show how restrictive or harmful it is for the bird to fly around that one barrier to freedom. Frye explains that, if we step back and view the whole cage, “it is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon” (Frye, p. 5). On this view, Frye helps us the readers to think clearly when using the word.

Frye also describes characteristic features of women’s oppression: first, women held positions that at once make them responsible yet powerless to effect decisions to carry out their responsibilities successfully. Second, women personalize their limitations and restrictions. Frye stated that “many of the restrictions and limitations we live with are more or less internalized and self –monitored, and are part of our adoptions to the requirements and expectation imposed by the needs and tastes and tyrannies of others” (Frye, p.14). For example, Frye compares the men’s restrictions to the women and noticed that even though men face social restrictions, they cannot fly in front of other men in public, their restrictions are a part of a system that oppresses women and privileges men.

After reading both arguments, both McIntosh and Frye’s articles inter-relate in terms of gender, race and oppression. The idea of individual and society can be looked upon in many different manners. There is the concept of gender, race and oppression and the consequences each term may have. These situations exist in which any member from these groups is limited by society and where Oppression is held in place by such systems. McIntosh raises an important issue before elaborating on white privilege, by first looking at the issue of gender: male privilege which like white privilege goes unacknowledged by men. According to her, while men believe that they work for the benefit of women, they do not like the idea of decreasing their power or privileges which is why they refuse to acknowledge that such privileges exists. The same applies to white privilege, people of color are held in places by white privilege. For example, McIntosh states that she can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of her white race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places she has chosen (Mcintosh, p.11).

Gender, race and oppression also relates to Frye’s article, what Frye points out is that, Oppression is a systemic issue, for example, she states that “for any woman of any race or economic class, being a woman is significantly attached to whatever disadvantages and deprivations she suffers being great or small” (Frye, p.16). When relating this quote to the birdcage metaphor, Frye shows that, oppression comes because people are in a cage with no escape. Sometimes, it is good to step back and look at the whole picture. All the multiple barriers together, not the individual wires of the cage. The wires do not make the cage; their systematic arrangement does.

From McIntosh’s readings, the one thing that really captivated my attention from the twenty-six situations was the example given about “flesh colored” band-aids. McIntosh stated that as a white privilege, she “can choose blemish cover or bandages in “flesh” color and have them more or less match her skin” (Mcintosh, p.11). Band-aids are something everyone uses from childhood. Whenever a person puts a band-aid on, they surely do not think anything of how it blends into their skin perfectly. It is such a small, but the way the world generalizes such things can be hurtful. Everyone who reads this article can relate to it regardless of race, and it is really eye opening to think of these simple privileges that whites get in everyday life that are not very recognizable. In Frye’s reading, the one thing that also captivated my attention was the birdcage explanation, which describes that in order to understand injustice in regard, to race and gender, one need to be able to see the birdcage.

In this paper, I have identified and summarized the key arguments, integrated course concepts, and provided a reaction about both Peggy McIntosh’s 1988 White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack and Marilyn Frye’s 1983 Oppression.

REFERENCES:

Reflexive Paper: Experience with Racism

Coming to Canada as a new immigrant, I had no knowledge of the history of colonization. It was during my post-secondary education that I began to learn about Canada's devastating history. Having an understanding of the history helped me become empathetic, and aware of the issues and barriers that are faced by many Aboriginal peoples today. Not having an understanding of Canada's history, leads us to believe the stereotypes, as we do not have any knowledge of the truth.

One particular incident that occurred over a year ago really stuck with me. The conversation impacted me negatively, as well as challenged my values and beliefs. The man that I met works at Headingley jail. As he was talking about his work, he began to make racist comments towards Indigenous peoples. Such as, “all Indians are lazy, criminals, dangerous, free loaders, stupid, addicts, and abusers of our system.” Without hesitation, I challenged him on some of his comments. I articulated to him the intergenerational trauma that colonization has created. I asked him to critically assess the policies that are set forth by the Canadian government; as it is evident that these policies continue to be discriminatory, as well as limiting the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. Discrimination, racism, and inequality continue to be imbedded in our society today. Before I knew it, his girlfriend interrupted me, and began making some awful comments along the lines of, “if I had a gun I would shoot their whole race.” I told her I have zero tolerance for racist comments and violence, and what she was saying was genocide. After she left, I was in shock and experienced different emotions. I was so angry to know that someone could make such a cruel and violent comment, I was sad to know that someone could have such rage towards a group of people without any knowledge of their experiences.

I reacted in the manner due to that fact that I have such respect for all individuals particularly for their gender, color, religion, culture, and ability. I was bothered by the racist comments, because it is these types of beliefs that create discrimination and racism, which leads to marginalization and oppression of different groups of people. Furthermore, the conversation made me realize the lack of knowledge individuals have regarding the history of colonization and the intergenerational trauma that it has created. The knowledge that some individuals do have is mostly stereotypes that are perpetuated in our society, mostly through the media.

It was my own experiences of oppression and my values that caused me to react to those comments. Being a visible minority, at a young age I was exposed to discrimination and racism. It was my earlier experiences that shaped my values as an adult today. Racism continues to be imbedded in our society. Yet, I learned from my professor, that race is a social construction, rather than a biological or a genetic descriptor. In the world, the concept of race and racial categories has significant social and political meaning, consequently creating a gulf between groups of people. Visible minority groups are often times deemed as inferior, and treated unequally in our society.

We are all human beings with emotions, dreams, and goals. Therefore, I value that each individual should have equal rights despite their backgrounds. Every human being should have the same rights and opportunities, in order to meet their goals, and be successful in their lives. No group should be exploited in order for another group to gain advances. Furthermore, each group of people should have the freedom to be able to express themselves without any other groups exposing their values on to them. I also value diversity and the richness that each culture brings to our society. Additionally, I believe groups of people who are marginalized should be given more opportunities. Thomas Jefferson once said, “There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people.” Lastly, I value the importance of self-awareness and becoming aware of my own experiences and assumptions before trying to understand the viewpoints of others and their experiences of oppression and privileges.

When critically assessing my own values, it is evident that the majority of my values coincide with Canadian Association of Social Work Code of Ethics. My values listed above are in line with the pursuit of social justice. This state, advocates for equal treatment, challenging injustice, and specially injustice that affect the vulnerable and disadvantage. Through my encounter, I was able to challenge some of the racist comments, and advocate on behalf of Aboriginal peoples, who are marginalized and vulnerable in our society. My values also correspond with the value of respect for inherent dignity and worth of person. Social workers should respect the unique worth and inherent dignity of all people and support human rights. As I have mentioned above, I value and respect uniqueness of each individual, as well as equal rights and opportunities.

When assessing the feminist practice principles and my own values, it is apparent that both are in line. Feminist practice principles help us to deconstruct and share power amongst all groups of people. One of the feminist practice principles are for practitioners to be aware of how one's position and
values impact their practice. I value this principle, and agree that self-awareness is very important. As a practitioner, I feel it is essential for me to have an understanding of my social location, strengths, and areas of development, challenges, privileges, values, and beliefs. Having an understanding of our values and position is important as it influences our practice and how we react under certain circumstances. If we as practitioners are not aware of our own social location, we may unconsciously use oppressive practices. Therefore, we must become aware of our own needs, and ensure that we do not oppress our clients.

Another feminist practice principle is seeking peoples lived experiences. I believe this principle is really important, especially when working with marginalized and oppressed groups. I see this principle come out in my practice when working with my clients. I value each and everyone’s experiences. We are all unique, with our own realities. Each event or circumstance will impact each individual differently. Therefore, it is important to listen attentively to the individual and see the world through their lenses. Having an understanding of their perspective will give us a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. Furthermore, by seeking people’s experiences, and allowing them to share their stories, we then begin to share power.

The conversation that took place with the man at my work had a tremendous influence on my professional and personal life. I work at Addiction Foundation of Manitoba (AFM), as well as Marymound. The majority of my clients that I work with are Indigenous. Through listening to their stories, I am able to build a therapeutic rapport. I have been very fortunate to have the opportunity to learn their culture, a few words in Ojibwa and Cree, and to be able to participate in some ceremonies such as sweat lodge, sharing circles, and smudging. Moreover, my clients have shared some of their experiences of racism and oppression. By having my clients teach me about their culture and way of life, essentially the power is given back to them.

At AFM, I developed an activity that not only created cultural awareness, but also encourage each client to re-connect with his or her own culture. I began the activity by talking about my own culture. For example, I would bring traditional clothing, talk about the language, different foods, and traditions. After, I would ask each client to think about their own culture. If they felt comfortable, the usually share their cultural activities with the rest of the group. I found the activity to be very successful. Clients were encouraged to research and learn about their own culture. They had a better perspective of their identities, and increased their sense of belonging. In addition, the activity also created an opportunity to learn about other cultures. It created inclusiveness amongst the members, as well as a respect for diversity. Also, it helped decreased stereotypes and discriminations that the members may have held towards another group.

Another influence that the conversation had on my professional life is to incorporate Canada’s history of colonization through my interactions with my clients and colleagues. As opportunities present themselves, I use them as teachable moments. I recently took one of my books called The Colonizer and the Colonized to work. Many of my clients were curious and wanted to know what the book entailed. I asked them if they knew what colonization was. Almost all of my clients had no previous knowledge of Canada’s colonization. I used the opportunity to explain what had happened in our history, and how it had a rippling effect on many Indigenous peoples lives, and the intergenerational impact it created. After the explanation, it was amazing to see my Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients have an “aha” moment. Having these open discussions created more opportunities for the clients to open up and talk further about their experiences of privileges and oppressions.

It is apparent that there is a gap in our school systems, when it comes to Canada’s history of colonization, residential schools, and 60’s scoop. The truth of our history needs to be taught to children and youth, as it creates a deeper understanding of racism, oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, and the barriers they face today as a result. In Val d’Or, an Aboriginal daycare has become a very popular program amongst non-Aboriginal parents. The daycare creates an environment where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children play and learn Aboriginal culture together. Parents feel it is important for their children to learn other cultures as it counteracts racism. I believe having these types of programs are important, and we need to incorporate more cultural diversity in Manitoba’s daycares and school systems.

In my personal life, I continue to advocate against oppression and inequality, and be cognizant of my actions that could be oppressive and discriminatory. I support Aboriginal peoples assertion for self-government and self-determination. I always try to learn about other cultures, through my conversation with colleagues, friends, and acquaintances. I also do love to travel and learn more about diverse cultures.
struggling and strife
strive to find
hard rock and porcelain
persons standing behind

catch a fall
good posture and rely
we are here for each other
we only fail sometimes

remains are scattered
decomposition in waves
don’t take me for granted
or expect never to change

clutching surfaces
grating all which ways
i know that she expects to feel pain
is it ok

heartbeat slows
wires fell from
machines set to monitor,
those leftover waters
streams of foam infuse
a ruin to a ruin
the life of never feeling
you’ll be displacing the tide

is he feeling inadequate
he too feels sad
how can it be patriarchy
the sources of this pain

your betrayal of the power
not in my focus
i don’t not want to hear it
what gives, takes

whose job to help you find it
here we are trying anyway
she thought I could be anything
then we slowly realised
that it wouldn’t be, it could not be
slowly still she loved me
surviving of the fittest
like you know
what that means
Throughout our Women’s and Genders Studies education, we have come across several theories within feminism. We chose to represent some as photographs/stereotypes. We would like to indicate that not all people fit into these neat little theories and that people create their own version of feminism and seek to perform it within the context of their own lives.
Ecofeminism seeks to connect the oppression of women with the exploitation of the earth. It works to link traditional ‘feminine’ traits, such as co-operation and nurturing, to humans’ relationship with Mother Nature and creating a world where these ‘feminine’ traits are valued. For example, comparisons are drawn between the medicalization of childbirth and the industrialization of plant reproduction (Mies & Shiva, 1993). Ecofeminists recognize how modern science seeks to control nature and women, and that modern science tends to be controlled predominately by men.
Liberal feminists work within the social system to diminish its discriminatory effects on women. They feel women should get equal pay and share the same level of duties, seeking change to society’s beliefs about gender inequality. They work hard to emphasize the equality of men and women by introducing equal pay for equal work, equality of opportunity in the workplace, equal rights for women in education, greater female representation in parliament and in the recognition of the unpaid labor of care of women, equal rights to credit, and resisting the ageism inherent in media representations of women. Changes can be made to existing social and political structures to make them equitable and fair, and liberal feminists believe there is still room for change. There have been many cultural and political changes due to the efforts of liberal feminists such as: many companies now offer maternity and paternity leave, some provide childcare for their employees, additionally many business and local governments have nondiscrimination policies based on sex or gender, and laws stating that women are the property of their husbands have largely been eliminated. The heart of feminism strives for equality and the liberal feminist belief system supports this basic, yet powerful notion of gender neutrality through sexual equality.
Radical feminism came into fruition during Second Wave feminism; calling for a passionate reordering of society with the deconstruction of gender relations. Radical feminists function under the belief that patriarchy favours dominance over women and other marginalized groups. The representation of a radical feminist as being a man-hating, bra-burning, hairy-legged lesbian tends to be used as a negative stereotype attached to all feminists, and used to conflate what people fear of feminism. It should be noted that the famous bra-burning incident that incited the stereotypical label of bra-burner, never actually happened (Berger & Radeloff, 2011).
Transmasculine feminism disrupts the all-to-often conflation between feminism and women. It is an attempt to highlight the importance of understanding that theories of gender, when interpreted through a feminist lens, allow people of all bodies to disrupt dominant systems of oppression. Gender can be a political statement as much as a representation of everyday embodied experiences. Similar to Kate Bornstein in *Gender Outlaw*, the transmasculine feminism within this photo is an attempt to subscribe to a dynamic of change outside any given dichotomy. Recognizing that many forms of feminism cannot be categorized, transmasculine feminism does not have a clear-cut definition, nor does it have to; it is in and of itself transgressive.
Conservative feminism as it is represented here is imagined to be aligned with anti-feminist feminism. Conservative feminists resist feminisms which, they assert, sell women short through the support of movements of the pro-choice and/or gay rights variety. Conservative feminism instead seeks to protect the bodies of mothers, the sanctity of marriage (heterosexual), and, by extension, the family and its traditional gender roles. This is a sort of Sarah Palin-esque feminism which values the preservation of traditional stereotypes of femininity, such as motherhood, wifehood, and the woman’s place in the domestic space of the home. Conservative feminism idealizes the figure of the mama-activist, who is a vocal agitator and keeper of moral purity and domestic harmony.
Rosie the Riveter: a propaganda tool used during World War II as a way to encourage women to join the workforce. With the push for factories to produce weapons and equipment for the war, and the lack of available working men due to their recruitment into service, there was a need for more women to leave home and start work. Rosie was represented as the ideal woman worker: loyal, efficient, patriotic, and pretty. After the war, the division of labor switched back as women were forced out of jobs that were given to men returning from the war. The shift of women’s roles during the war was temporary and superficial, but nonetheless provided women with a temporary position of importance and influence, proving that they could indeed take up the challenge and role of men’s positions in the workforce. Rosie the Riveter is now used mostly as an appropriated form, continuing to inspire and influence women and feminists. Her image has been replicated in many different versions to incorporate all women regardless of race, class, ability or sexuality.

REFERENCES:
Contemporary dominant Westernized societies view personal automobiles as typical forms of mobility. As stated by Walsh, “concurrent with the growth of two-car, if not three-car, household in the suburbs was the confirmation that commercial public transport (other than by air) was not a choice that middle-income Americans of either sex and of any ethnic or racial origins would willingly take” (2010, p 222). This “preference” for personal automobiles can be seen through the booming economy referred to as “car culture” that takes place within these societies, and how this culture has worked to structure and develop the cities it takes place within. Car culture has resulted in roadways that can lead individuals to nearly any destination they want within city limits. These roadways are built directly through communities; often impeding the flow of pedestrian traffic and making it dangerous for individuals to get around within communities due to both an influx of automobiles and an influx of automobile speeds throughout communities and cities. This car culture also gives meaning to different brands of vehicles; it depicts who is capable of or allowed to participate in automobile usage, and who is not. Car culture seemingly dominates contemporary Western societies. In doing so, how does car culture also work to reinforce social status amongst dominant groups and eliminate power from groups that are already marginalized? The remainder of this essay will look at how personal automobiles, with the help of “car culture”, work to maintain social differences of class and gender within Western societies.

Historically, personal vehicles were primarily purchased and driven by men as a means to distinguish a sense of power through both class and gender dynamics. “Advice literature on car purchase as well as on use and maintenance was targeted at a predominately middle-class or wealthy male audience…” (Walsh, 2010, p 211). Owning a vehicle produced an image of wealth. It was a commodity that clearly placed an individual upon a level of higher class. After Henry Ford integrated assembly line manufacturing techniques, the production cost for vehicles declined greatly, while the production quantity increased. The Model T was one of the first “economical” cars produced. It was manufactured by Ford Motor Company and marketed as being made for the “average” American. This led to a decrease in the over-all purchasing cost of personal vehicles, and thus to marketing schemes that created an image of affordability that produced ideals within the United States that anyone could, and therefore should,
purchase a personal vehicle. Clarsen discusses how American manufacturing led to a “special contribution” by means of their “conviction that automobile consumption was for everyone” (2008, p 66). Vehicles were marketed as a reinforcement of “deeply rooted values of individuality, privatism, free choice, and control over one’s life” (Purcell, quoted in Clarsen, 2008, p 67). Personal vehicles were seen as a means of gaining individual freedom and were associated with individuality and a vehicle or who make this choice not created Westernized societies that look to “anyone” can afford a vehicle and were non-car users/owners (Urry, 2012) shows how entrenched Western societies are within the culture and the ways that this dominant culture has resulted in a hierarchy that places emphasis and power on those that choose to afford and can afford to participate.

Further, instead of creating an affordable commodity that everyone can easily partake in purchasing, the creation of personal vehicles has led to a “car culture” that places buyers within hierarchies of wealth within the realm of purchasing a vehicle. Car culture has created the idea that specific brands of vehicles are “better” (such as BMW and Audi) and should therefore be more expensive. When individuals are driving around they distinguish wealth not simply by who owns a vehicle and who does not, but they distinguish who is even wealthier amongst car owners based on the brand, model, and year of the vehicle someone drives. Car culture has also created a “need” for aftermarket parts, expensive stereo systems, body modification kits, and other accessories that alter the vehicle from its manufactured state into a vehicle that appears to go faster, sound better, look more expensive, and is a better extension of the buyers “self”. These modifications cost money and, once again, distinguish a vehicle and its owner between different class levels.

Lastly, car culture has led to a segregation of class structures within the neighbourhoods and communities of Westernized societies. The ability to drive far distances in shorter time periods has resulted in people of higher social classes “have moved out along transport routes to new suburban areas, leaving behind poorer, older, more decayed neighbourhoods” (Power, 2012, p 39). Since people of higher class are now able to travel further to work, they can live in more rural or suburban areas. This has resulted in pockets of wealthy areas within the outer limits of cities and pockets of poorer communities within the inner areas and industrial areas of cities, where those who cannot afford personal vehicles must remain in order to be closer to the job force. Power (2012) discusses how these “poorer” neighbourhoods have become home to “many new immigrants from poorer countries” (p 39), resulting in an established ethnic/race differentiation between wealthier and poorer neighbourhoods. The moving of wealthier residents to suburban areas has also led to the eventual re-location of larger supermarkets, shopping outlets, schools, etc. into suburban areas and a lacking of these commodities/shops within the poorer neighbourhoods within cities (Larsen & Gilliland, 2008). Once again, there is a gap created between social class hierarchies, resulting directly from the ways that car culture has contributed to the growth and development of cities and the idea that everyone “should” partake, without any analysis or understanding as to the realities of why some people cannot (or choose not to) partake.

As mentioned previously, historically personal vehicles were purchased by men. Walsh (2010) states that, “In the pioneering years of motor vehicle development, male engineers, mechanics and drivers assumed that automobiles were machines manufactured for and used by men” (p. 211). Personal vehicles were viewed as masculine commodities because of their large presence, how difficult they were to drive/steer, how dirty they were, and because of the level of intelligence needed to operate and fix them (Walsh, 2010).

Car culture within dominant Westernized societies has maintained a notion of gender difference within automobile choices. Gendered power dynamics work to illustrate which vehicles should be driven by which sex based on gendered identities of masculine and feminine bodies. By this I mean that people are marketed towards specific
types and brands of vehicles (and vice versa), based on where their “body” falls on a scale between masculine and feminine. Howard (2010) discusses how “from the earliest days of the auto industry, automotive manufacturers had characterized specific vehicles as appropriate for women drivers” (p 143) and how this initial manufacturing and marketing scheme is still present in contemporary times. Feminine bodies are geared towards “family” vehicles, such as mini-vans, small SUVs and economy cars. Masculine bodies are better understood within dominant Westernized societies as better capable of driving, maintaining, and thus owning larger trucks and SUVs or fast and sporty cars.

These dynamics may seem superficial, but they do in fact play a larger role in how gendered divisions are portrayed in transportation and everyday life. For example, individuals that do not follow these divides are often seen as deviant, out of place and “wrong”, resulting in a removal of “meaningful choice” for those that may not want to be singled out as being different. Another issue that is produced from these dynamics is the ways in which marketing techniques often use language within their advertisements; language of power, such as toughness and strength for vehicles advertised to masculine/male bodies, and language of smallness and beauty, such as sleek and compact for vehicles “designed” for feminine/female bodies. These advertisements insinuate specific traits that are not only assigned to specific vehicles, but also to specific sexes, creating levels of superiority amongst masculine/male bodies.

Historical components of vehicle use as being a masculine endeavour have followed through to contemporary car culture. The ideas that vehicles are too mechanically difficult for women to understand, has resulted in a mechanical industry that is made up of a larger percentage of men than women (Ellis, Ratnasingam, & Wheeler, 2012). Contemporary Westernized societies have placed an onus on men to understand the inner workings of personal vehicles, so that they can come to the “rescue” of their female counterparts when needed. Vehicle usage is also deemed within contemporary Westernized societies as being masculine. This can be seen with sectors of the transportation industry; the positions of truck drivers, train conductors, taxi drivers, and pilots are predominately taken up by men, opposed to women.

Finally, statistics show that “women travel shorter distances, make less use of the car and use more public transit” (Hanson, 2010, p 15) and are more likely to walk to places they need to get to and work closer to home (Hanson, 2010), than men are, thus reducing their time spent driving. These “choices” could be due to an individual woman’s interest in sustainability or exercise, or could be a result of lack of funds and access to an automobile. Either way, these ideas suggest that women, overall, participate in car culture at a lesser rate than men do. As I have already discussed, individuals that do not participate (for any reason) are looked down on by dominant society and viewed as “other” within the realm of mobility. This shows that women are more often viewed as “lesser” then, in terms of mobility structures, than men are. This results in another gap between different genders.

In conclusion, although automobile usage has come a long way, from being manufactured and marketed specifically for wealthy (white) men to being produced for the masses, the reality is that not everyone is able to partake within the usage of personal automobiles. Car culture has dominated the transportation sector within dominant westernized societies, and has resulted in cities being designed and structured around the use of the automobile; resulting in other transportation cultures (such as walking, cycling and rollerblading) being deemed as inferior and unworthy of road space. These assumptions, combined with class and gender dynamics that make it difficult (if not impossible) for lower class individuals and women to partake in car culture, has resulted in social inequalities and divisions that still exist in today’s contemporary cities between the wealthy and the poor, as well as between men and women.

REFERENCE LIST


Hanson, S. (2010). Gender and mobility: New approaches for informing sustainability. Gender, Place and Culture, 17(1), 5-23.


Feminist Praxis in Vigils and Emotions

While we have studied various forms of feminist praxis and acknowledged that praxis can cover a variety of topics, actions, and practices, this paper will focus on two forms of feminist praxis that I participate in on a regular basis: the organizing of a vigil analyzing violence against women in Canada to commemorate those who have lost their lives to this violence, and the self-care and healing needed after events that create suffering within many of those who attend. The feminist praxis I have chosen to focus on is the vigil held December 6th in memory of the L’école Polytechnique murders in 1989, and in a current call for action on the Missing and Murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. In analyzing my feminist praxis, I think it is important to understand past experiences of unacknowledged privilege that have led to my focus on bringing attention and action to the ongoing misogyny and colonialism that has led to so many women going missing. I will then discuss the vigil I worked to organize for December 6th 2012, looking at the history of the date and the ongoing violence in Canada today. In reflecting on the vigil, the need for emotions as power, self-care as feminist praxis, and my role as a white woman in the fight for Aboriginal rights, will be analyzed. The last portion of this paper will look at the ways I can take what I learned from my reflection, and use it as strength for the continuing work I hope to do around this issue. My action is one of many that demand protection of women – especially women seen by society as disposable – but it has resulted in my own renewed energy towards this battle, as well as a strong awareness of the need for self-care and the power of allowing healing to take place.

A SHORT HERSTORY LESSON

My urgency in bringing attention to the acts of violence against Aboriginal women, especially in the wake of over 600 missing or murdered women in Canada, is a form of feminist action I have focused on since first taking Women’s and Gender Study courses. My need to challenge the apparent invisibility of so many missing women, stems partly out of my childhood and the unacknowledged privilege I grew up with as a white woman on the Highway of Tears. I grew up in Smithers, British Columbia, a small town of approximately 5000 people, nestled between the mountains. Smithers is located in the exact centre of the Highway of Tears, if you look at it as running from Prince George to Prince Rupert along Highway 16. I was raised with the knowledge that as a woman I was not to hitchhike, not to walk along the highway at night alone, and to use extreme caution when driving on the highway. What was never acknowledged, yet always known, was that I was somehow safer than the women who lived in the small towns and reserves outside of Smithers; that as a white woman I was somehow less of a target. Growing up in a small town that does not have a strong feminist presence, resulted in me not knowing about white privilege;
or perhaps subconsciously knowing, but not acknowledging the extent that it affected myself and those around me. When I began taking Women’s and Gender Studies courses in Winnipeg, I quickly came to realize the extent to which the geography of the Highway of Tears – the white privilege of Smithers in comparison to the predominantly Aboriginal population in the surrounding small towns and reserves – lends to it being an easy stretch of highway to target Aboriginal women on. As I learned more about the statistics of the women who have gone missing or murdered, and the way misogyny, racism, and colonialism aid the societal belief that Aboriginal women are disposable, I began to seek out events acknowledging this issue. This led me to many vigils, protests, books, articles, and lectures. Colonialism and its effects were not subjects I remember being provided information on while growing up and in school; part of bringing attention to the Missing and Murdered Women in Canada is, in my opinion, to ensure that people are aware of the violence being committed against women, and as a call for action.

Leela Fernandes states that, “in a world marked by violent ethnic, racial and religious conflict and deepening social and economic inequality, any possibility of social transformation also requires a spiritual revolution, one which transforms conventional understandings of power, identity, and justice (Fernandes, 11).” The idea of spirituality as a necessary form of revolution is something that I find I generally put a wall up against. My past experiences with exploring spirituality have not been positive ones, and have unfortunately been guided by people who, for a variety of reasons, have proven to not use spirituality as a positive transformation of self. Despite my hesitation to use the word spirituality, I feel that the journey and self-reflection I have gone through over the years in relation to issues of violence against women, has been a spiritual journey. It is one that I continue to learn and grow from as I continuously try to find strength inside myself, and inspiration from my learning.

**VIGILS, INJUSTICE, AND 600 TOO MANY STOLEN WOMEN**

The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women was started in 1991 by the Government of Canada in commemoration of the fourteen women murdered at L’Ecole Polytechnique on December 6th, 1989. Usually in the form of a vigil or memorial, groups that organize events on this day discuss the murders that occurred, and (depending on who is holding the vigil), often also look at current acts of violence against women. The Womyn’s Centre on campus has traditionally held the vigil in commemoration of the Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada. This event is often organized with the University of Manitoba Aboriginal Student’s Association (UMASA), with a tobacco offering to the university’s Elder-in-Residence, asking them to open our vigil with a prayer and speech. Going with tradition and my own involvement in honoring the women who have been stolen, I organized the event with the coordinator of UMASA; inviting the Elder-in-Residence, Florence Paynter, to do the opening prayer, as well as the Women’s Representative and Aboriginal Representative to speak. Looking at the facts that the Families of Sisters in Spirit (FSIS) provide in *Power of Youth*, off of the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) statistics, there are “higher rates of violence facing Indigenous women – eight times more likely to disappear and five times more likely to be murdered – and colonial hierarchies of race, gender and class that are deeply rooted in past and present Canadian society. (Tolley, 135).” The fact that there are still people who appear surprised when told that there are over 600 Missing or Murdered women in Canada shows the depths of colonization. To have such a large number of women missing, predominantly Aboriginal, that go unacknowledged because of their class, race, gender, and in some cases work, reveals the structures against Aboriginal women’s survival. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty analyzed the work of Andrea Smith in relation to white supremacy, colonial legacy, and sexual violence against Aboriginal women. Andrea Smith argues that, “[the logic of genocide] holds that indigenous peoples must disappear. In fact they must always be disappearing in order to allow non-indigenous peoples’ rightful claim over this land.” (Alexander, 39).” As funding in Canada is cut from the Sisters in Spirits campaign – as well as other feminist, women’s, and Aboriginal organizations – the value of these women’s lives is made evident. Paired with the slow response often made by police, as reported over and over by families who have had women stolen from them, the ideology of Aboriginal women as disposable is well known to people seeking ways to commit acts of violence against these women.

**WHITE PRIVILEGE AND AN ANALYSIS OF PAIN**

This past December 6th, I attended two vigils aside from the one I had helped to organize. The first was the “Sunrise Memorial” hosted by the Manitoba Women’s Advisory Council inside of the Legislature building at eight am. The second was in the University of Manitoba’s Engineering Atrium at eleven-thirty am, held by the University of Manitoba’s Engineering Atrium at eleven-thirty am, held by the University of Manitoba Engineering Society. An interesting repetition came up in a story during the first vigil, and by one of the presenters in the second vigil. One of the speakers at the first vigil told a story of her experience in 1989 when talking to a male friend who did not understand her pain after the murders. During the second vigil again, one of the male speakers discussed his experience of December 6th; like the man mentioned in the first story, he was unable to fully grasp the pain and fear that many of his female colleagues felt after the attack. When I think back to the first time I heard about Polytechnique, I still remember my initial fear as I thought of all the times I had dared to enter a space previously designated as “male public space”. The reality of the tragedy was, it was something that could just as easily happen to me; twenty-three years later, the misogyny that man felt
is still strong within others. And it is that realization of the closeness of that event to my life that causes me to still react strongly at the thought of it. That evening, after the vigil I had helped with, I thought about the stories that had been told during the half hour ceremony. A woman in the audience, near the end of the vigil, asked the other coordinator and I if it would be okay if she went up and said a few words, to which we both said yes. She spoke about her life as an Aboriginal woman raised in the foster child system, and finished with telling us that she should not be alive today; that statistically speaking, she should be dead. Her intense amount of pain when it came to talking about Aboriginal women’s experiences of violence, made me stop and take a serious look at my privilege as a white woman. For all the pain and fear I felt each time I saw another missing woman poster, each time the family of someone who had been stolen spoke about their grief, I realized that just as the men who had spoken earlier that day said, there was part of me that did not (nor could ever) fully understand the despair and experience that Aboriginal women deal with every time they learn of another missing woman’s death.

In the article discussing Families of Sisters in Spirit they discuss the role of allies within their movement. The authors discuss the importance of having everyone involved, as long as they respect the voices of those in the community. Talking about the need for Indigenous women to be at the centre of the decision making they state that, “this epidemic of violence(s) is not just an Indigenous issue or a women’s issue; Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, men, youth, and Elders must also be engaged in this struggle. Ending violence(s) requires a diversity of actions from a diversity of folks who work to uproot these interconnected systems of oppression on a continuous basis (Tolley, 137).” Reflecting on the event I collaborated with on, as small as it may have been in the context of vigils for Missing and Murdered women, my place in organizing it was something I was cautious of, and careful to analyze. The breaking down of binaries between theory and activism is important in this context, as the knowledge I have gained from studies and participating in events is something I consider vital in my activism. In the conclusion of Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis, Hui Niu Wilcox of Ananya Dance Theatre asks,

“Where does agency reside when collaboration takes place? Ideally, we would like that all parties involved exercise an equal degree of agency. But it is also important to acknowledge that agency is always constrained by the structures and institutions that we operate within. Discussion of the privilege of the white academics does not mean that their agency is not compromised; it just means that their agency is compromised in different ways (Swarr, 212).”

The agency and privileges I have in organizing events such as this are both things I am well aware of. Coordinating the centre, I have financial stability to put time and effort into organizing events that go beyond my work hours, as well as having funding through the university to provide such events. I find this quote interesting in its acknowledgement of intersectionalities of oppression, and the ways that this influences individual agency.

SELF-CARE, HEALING, AND A CONSIDERATION OF SPIRITUALITY

The hours following the vigil were difficult ones, where the heaviness of the despair felt by those present continued to follow me around. Earlier that day I had told a friend that vigils such as this one, were good places to heal; but I felt broken and hopeless after, and could no longer remember why I had thought such an optimistic thing could come out of an experience of such pain. On my way home I began to receive text messages from people who had helped me with the event, messages full of positive vibes, optimism, and love. I began to think of all the good that had come out of the vigil, how having the freedom to cry over a pain, over a loss, can sometimes help people heal, and allow space for new energy and creativity to enter. Fernandes talks about the power of a suffering that “involves reaching deep inside the pain and suffering within oneself and transforming that suffering into a source of empowerment and transformation (Fernandes, 72).” I would argue that the pain of vigils can be a form of self-care; a complicated self-care as it involves going through this suffering first, but nonetheless a powerful form of healing. From my experience, I am able to take the emptiness that is left inside me after hearing the stories of violence, after sharing my own fears, and fill it with determination and strength to continue on with this fight. With each vigil I attend, I am continuously filled with the hope of so many people who care, and I continuously learn new ways to help and support as an ally. Audre Lorde writes that “these places of possibility within ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong through that darkness. Within these deep places, each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling. The woman’s place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep (Lorde, 37).” I believe that these places of possibility that Lorde is writing about, can be found by individuals in a variety of different ways. For myself, I find that I often discover a vast amount of power when my emotions reach a point where they are so low I become convinced they no longer exist; only to discover they have curved the opposite way up and are suddenly filled with empowerment and creativity. Emotions are something I have historically tried to keep to myself and never expose to other people, which has lead to an internalization of dislike for emotions that I experience, particularly ones that do not stay consistent. As a result of this, I find I am continually surprised at the positive aspects and empowerment my emotions can create within me, making that place of possibility within myself, a place I deeply value each time I discover it.
WHAT TO DO NOW WITH THIS ANGER AND HOPE?

The Sangtin Writers state that, “the labor of activism, for us, is tightly interwoven with the labor of producing knowledge about processes of social change and struggles for social justice. It is only in and through the moments of critical reflection when we grapple with the meanings and effects of our own political actions that we strategize about the next steps in our journey (Sangtin, 126).” I feel that the place to end this essay is with a “what to do now” section. Not so much as a step-by-step process towards a solution, but as a reminder to myself on how to harness my energy and spirit to achieve the feelings of hope I experienced Thursday night, without having to undergo the suffering. While suffering is not always a negative thing, needing to suffer in order to create change is unproductive and mentally and emotionally exhausting. I spent December 6th analyzing a lot more things than I had originally thought I would have, and for a variety of reasons: to aid my preparation for helping organize the next event like this, for this paper, and to satisfy my need to critique similar events by acknowledging the spaces they left empty and working to fill them in my own event.

For example, the vigil held by Engineering – which lent a strange tone of privilege throughout the vigil, complete with everyone in suits and ties giving the group of us that showed up in our usual clothes a look of disapproval – had two of the main speeches given by white men who talked about the ways that the Engineering faculty had equal numbers of men and women, and that many women were currently in high positions within the faculty. All this was done without any acknowledgement of the extreme misogyny that led to the murders at L’Ecole Polytechnique, nor of the current sexism throughout the faculty. This is seen best in the Engineering students publication The Red Lion, which has historically been attacked by feminist groups, for going against the University’s views on respectful workplaces as a result of such articles as “how women can sexually please men.” The publication is completed with their logo of a lion with a very phallic looking axe at waist level. This situation reinforced my desire to acknowledge not only the reason we are holding this vigil on December 6th, but also the other forms of violence that are committed against women in Canada on a daily basis. The unfortunate truth of it is, even if fourteen women had not been murdered twenty-three years ago, there would still be a day of remembrance and action on violence against women in Canada; just perhaps on a different date, or started for a different murder.

While seeking ways to stay energized and emotionally healthy enough to continue with these struggles, I would like to finish with Audre Lorde and her discussion of the power of anger. Anger is an emotion that I find can also be filled with obstacles in seeking creativity, but when used in a positive and productive way, it is an emotion that can be harnessed to create a much needed burst of strength. Lorde writes that, “every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change. And when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives (Lorde, 127).”

Anger as a source of energy is something that I have found to be extremely destructive, but that I can see the potential in. The extraordinary happiness that such a statement of strength gives me, encourages me to want to find the way to control my own anger to use in a positive way. In her article looking at anger as strength, Lorde is writing about her anger at racism, and the ways we need to use our anger to speak and act out against racism. The inherent racism, sexism, and colonialism seen in Canadian society is evident in the over 600 Missing or Murdered Women that so many do not see. After the moment of silence in the vigil, I shared Audre Lorde’s quote on silence with those present, as it is still the quote that consistently remains in my thoughts every day; “my silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you (Lorde, 41).” I urged them to use their silence for commemorating acts of violence, but to go against the urge to be silent when faced with the hatred that breeds violence. I have come to the belief that refusing to be silent, is one of the strongest forms of feminist activism I can practice on a day-to-day basis.

WORKS CITED


Panel 1 - Teen Age/Onset of Menses:

Genetic science has allowed modern anthropologists to establish Africa as the cradle of all human life, and so my teenage woman (sunrise/spring) is represented as African. The target or bulls-eye pattern within the rising sun is Adinkrahene, the West African Adinkra symbol meaning leadership. The young woman is awakening to a new day; despite her vibrant potential, her face is turned away illustrating a lack of personal awareness (self and place).

Panel 2 – Reproductive Prime:

My preschool years were spent in a First Nation (reserve) community, and so I expressed the reproductive prime woman (midday sun/summer) within Canadian Indigenous terms. My early years shaped how I have raised my own children to be inclusive and tolerant, and they established my feelings of connection to Indigenous culture. The faces of the children in the green hills represent both my own children as well as the potential of all children, and a mother’s concern for their well-being. They also honour Indigenous children who were taken from their mothers’ care in Canada (Sixties Scoop adoptions and residential schools). The woman’s face is deliberately cut off, symbolizing the sexualized objectification of female bodies in their reproductive prime; particularly non-white bodies.

"Eternal She"
Female Landscape
“Eternal She” arose out of an “aha moment” I experienced after viewing artist, Shelly Niro’s short film, “Niagara.” Suddenly, I understood that we are all indigenous people – that each of us has come from some place, and that our movements in and through physical spaces are significant culturally, personally, and spiritually. Thus, as my final project for WOMN2540 Colonize/Decolonize: Race and Gender in Art and Visual Culture I created a female landscape made of four canvas panels accompanied by four small sculptures made of recycled plastic. The panels and sculptures were created as maquettes – that is, artist’s working models.

Combined with female landscape paintings, the organic-shaped sculptures represent growth, life and transformative power, through the use of glow-in-the-dark paints and candles. The landscape imagery represents a woman’s life and is divided into four parts: early womanhood/youth, child bearing years, middle age, and old age. Using the path of the sun across the sky – sunrise to sunset – the four directions, the four seasons and the four “races” I explored the elusive nature of my own indigeneity (European Diaspora). The recycled plastic material used for the sculptures and for the plastic petals applied to the canvas represent my positionality as a woman of mixed cultural heritage in a colonized Canadian context. Overall, I wanted to visually connect the person and personal experience to place, to environment and to time. The following is a brief description of the symbolism in each panel:

**Panel 3 – Middle Age:**
The middle aged woman and mother (afternoon sun/autumn) is shown as the “white woman.” This panel represents my present self, and my coming to terms with the labels others have placed on me; including “white.” The woman is falling through space, disconnected from the landscape, and leaves blow past her, including one vibrant red maple leaf, representing Canada. There are bright areas in the sky, but the sun is formless and colourless – shown as insubstantial spots of bright white light. We begin to see the woman’s face, but she is disconnected from the viewer as she struggles for self-definition.

**Panel 4 – Elder:**
The elderly woman (sunset/winter) represents the future – we cannot foretell the future, so the elder is an idealized vision. She is depicted as an Asian woman to complete the representation all four directions and “races,” but she also symbolizes my authentic personal connection with modern Taoist meditations. Confronting ageism and societal definitions of physical beauty, the elderly woman is self-assured – she looks directly at the viewer with warmth and wisdom, in harmony with the feminine landscape and in touch with her personal power.
In the absence of a defined indigenous space, I have embraced a broad vista of global womanhood to represent my spirit’s journey within a female body. The resulting feminine landscape has much personal significance, but also expresses broader external manifestations of woman: colourful, complex, interconnected, life giving and life-affirming. Through explorations of course themes, I came to understand that I am not alone in my feelings of displacement and unease. Although the paintings reference specific cultures, directions, seasons, times and ages to express themes of identity, to me the spirit has no colour, no age and no borders – it is limitless, undiluted life energy; it is freedom. I like to think of “Eternal She” as a static art grouping with self-sustaining properties – the day-glo paints gather power from daylight sources, and emit their stored beauty and energy into the night, repeating this sequence hereafter without my input. Having completed this project, I am eager to continue exploring themes of identity, land, representation, spirituality; asserting presence through art, creative writing, and music.

ETERNAL SHE

by Pam Hadder

No matter where I am
No matter how many moons come
And go
I measure all beauty by
The glory of
Her sunrise and sunset.
I know the scent of winter coming;
I dream of water music, lapping and roaring – lakes and streams;
The soft lullaby of the wind
Cradled in the dark woods.
The Northland calls to me
She knows me by name,
She ignites the place where “I” emerge –
No raging flame, no crackling blaze
Blue-white, insignificant, invisible
Here among concrete, steel, debris.
Transparent ripples run through
This body –
Invisible fire –
My woman’s body
Remembers,
Connects;
She belongs.
A CONVERSATION WITH THE HOMELESS

Stripped down,  
strapped and stomped on.  
My eyes are dull; glazed over  
and we are forgotten.  
Bruised back, sore ass;  
I can't sit right any more.  
A place to be taught the "right" way,  
there was no right way behind those doors.

Bound to a board, upright,  
waiting for a lash;  
my mind may have been elsewhere,  
back then, my body was all they had.

Through my tears, those long four years,  
and now you think I'm free?  
Let's wipe the slate clean,  
remove their chains,  
and offer an apology?

Not much from a stranger,  
few bucks for a beggar,  
is there something bigger? I don't know.  
Somehow I'm still smiling, and down this long  
road my friends have kept me warm.

If you want to know the strength of a man,  
look at my people and you'll see;  
out your back window, I'm your neighbor,  
not far from where you could have been.

You may not see us as winners,  
but we're here for the long standing,  
past the cruelty of our brothers,  
there is understanding.

We are the destitute,  
stripped down, and made to feel like nothing,  
back then they thought they knew it best,  
but little did they know,  
my mind was all they had.

They may have tried to break us down,  
through derogatory slang.  
I'm not a 'savage'; or a 'monster',  
just indoctrinated to be viewed that way.

And now all I have is my story,  
you may think I cling to the past;  
their deception has you blinded;  
to paint a picture of us that's bad.

And oh, to blame the victim,  
what a clever trick indeed,  
the way to rise to power,  
is to have a hold of the minority.

In the state I'm left in,  
I may appear completely damaged  
for it is true, they claimed my life,  
but my spirit, they'll never have it.
The People of the Kattawapiskak River

During the Native Women and Film Festival at the University of Manitoba, I attended the screening of *The People of The Kattawapiskak River*. Its main purpose was to depict the lives of people living at Attawapiskat- a reserve that is continually confronted with material deprivation of food, water and shelter through its creation by the Canadian state. The arbitrary removal of the first letter, “K,” mentioned by the filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin during the question period demonstrates the relationship of the Canadian state to Indigenous peoples as one-sided and imperial. The change to the name of the place - from Kattawapiskak to Attawapiskat, as well as the change to a more English identifiable end to the word- from a “k” to a “t,” reveals itself as a microscopic fragment of what Canadians and settlers collectively do not know about Kattawapiskak despite affecting it continually. The imperial altering and constructing of a reserve created to exterminate the peoples living there, describes not only the subsequent conditions created on the reserve depicted in the movie but also the movie’s ability to capture simultaneous tensions of a place marked by both suffering and love, and the destruction of community and relationships paired with the survival of relationships and community. Obomsawin ultimately achieves a complex portrayal and understanding necessary for Canadians to radically change not only how they conceive Aboriginal peoples, but also how they conceive themselves as settlers.

Maneuvering these emotions is integral to Women’s and Gender Studies. bell hooks speaks of the need to decolonize our minds as well as the simultaneous fog that clouds the truth of not only of how things are but also of how they came to be. hooks quotes *Night-Vision: Illuminating War and Class on the Neo-Colonial Terrain*, “To not understand neocolonialism is not fully live in the present” (hooks 46). The consequence of not realizing our relationships and connections means re-inscribing and sustaining our commitment to Western imperialism and transnational capitalism (hooks 44-46). There is work to be done, not at the expense of imagination but towards it. When dependencies are created, people suffer. The work however requires access to material necessities such as food, water and shelter. The filmmaker makes clear, that to be able to flourish material necessity are required, as is the ability to imagine and interact with culture and community.

**WORKS CITED**


Propositum, Aequalitas, Libertatum

Propositum, Aequalitas, Libertatum means “Purpose, Equality, Freedom”. These are terms that I associate with the Feminist movement. In this piece, I am depicting these diverse women, both as one entity united and as individual sisters working to achieve the goals of the Feminist movement.

ARTIST’S STATEMENT:
James Turowski is a Winnipeg-based artist focusing in the mediums of drawing, printmaking, and sculpture. He is currently a student at the School of Art at University of Manitoba.
WHERE HAVE I SEEN OPPRESSION?

“Keep your eyes wide open,” my mom told me over the phone after I told her about my new boyfriend, “He only wants you as a jewel for his collection.” Despite this nasty first encounter I decided that my parents should meet him face-to-face months later. Maybe then they would form a new opinion. But their attitude had not changed, “We just don’t know what to say. We’re shocked.” They were shocked!! Not as shocked as I was by their assessment of him. “Picture your future: you’ll be slaving away, struggling trying to look after 5 kids, and all the while he’ll be drunk sleeping underneath a mango tree. You got to end it now. It’ll only ever end in divorce.” The grand finale, “He’s shorter than you and he’s fat.” Throughout it all they never mentioned his race or his origin but I am certain that was the driving force of their reactions. Although his parents named him Tapiwanashe, translated from Shona to English as Gift from God, my black African boyfriend was not viewed as any sort gift to me or my family.

This is my story. I am a white Canadian who loves a black African. I’m rich and he’s poor. English is my first language, and I have a desired accent while English is his third or fourth language and he has an othered accent. Opportunities are constantly being handed to me and taken from him. At only 23 years of age I have taught English as an additional language at the University of Manitoba, run a large children’s program at one of the largest churches in Winnipeg, have been on cultural and language exchanges, and run my own small business. He’s done things too, just not as much in Canada. He’s lived in three countries for extended periods of time, is sensitive and knowledgeable about cultures and world religions, has worked on government sponsored HIV/AIDS teams, and has played high levels of rugby and cricket. While I value his international experiences, most Canadian employers do not. And so, while I currently work a fairly cushy job for a fairly cushy wage, he works 2 painful night shifts per week for just above minimum wage. The list of our differences could keep on going, but let’s end with the simple point that I am tall and he is shorter (than me). Let’s face it; on the outside this union just does not make a whole lot of sense.

I should not be any more upset at my parents’ reception of Tapiwa than Canadian society’s reception of him for both are perpetuating the same message: looks matter. I immediately reacted to this message because I think that people should actually get to know one another before they form opinions about one another and withhold opportunities from certain people. This seems like a fairly obvious and simple thing to do, and it is even something that it is a task that many individuals find difficult to do. In addition to that, I see how society is set up in such a manner so as to perpetuate this flawed message. Because society creates barriers for othered individuals, they are unable to participate fully in society. They are then judged by insiders as deficient and unworthy because they do not participate fully.

WHAT DO I VALUE AS A SOCIAL WORKER AND FEMINIST PRACTITIONER?

I believe that the values that caused me to react to my parents’ and my society’s reception of Tapiwa are largely in line with the Canadian Association of Social Work Code of Ethics and beginning feminist principles. First and foremost, I value people, and I believe that each of us was created equally. In my view, no one individual is higher or lower or better or worse than another. We have differences in looks, languages, customs, worldviews, etc. And, I believe that this diversity gives us strength. So, I respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person, no matter gender, sexual orientation, ability, bank balance or skin colour. I value diversity.

Next, I value reading a book before judging its cover. Instead of judging and labeling people I will give them space to get to know them personally. I believe that stereotypes are irrelevant, hurtful, restrictive and wrong. Instead, I value hearing people’s stories and seeking people’s lived experiences. While my parents have limited Tapiwa based on what they (think) they know about Africans, and my society has limited his participation and inclusion by privileging preferred members of society over inferior others, I choose to instead listen to his story and make my own decisions about him.

And, may I say that I am willing to act my beliefs and values out in my own life. I do not want to merely talk the talk, but I also want to walk the walk, or as Ghandi puts it, I want to “be the change I wish to see in the world.” In line with a key principle of critical theories, I believe that social change must start in my own backyard. In order to see greater inclusion of othered individuals I will start by being friends with them and simply getting to know them on a personal level. I will go to their parties, eat their food, listen to their music and visit their countries, and I will work to reduce stereotypes amongst my friends, family members and throughout my society.

I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to participate actively in society, and, despite my “pull up your
I am coming to understand individuals’ successes and challenges in a structural sense. That is, rather than blaming Tapiwa for not being able to get a good job and make enough money to pay all his bills, I understand that the society is set up in such a way as to make it extraordinarily difficult for him to do so. Instead of working on trying to change him to fit into my society, I see that my energy would be better spent working on changing society. So, I value the idea that people are doing the best they can with what they’ve been given.

However, having this attitude is not always easy for me. First of all, I grew up with a very naïve view of my society. I believed that if you worked hard you would succeed, people were judged on their merit, and that leaders were always honest and fair. Now I see that systems in my society are set up to privilege and advance only a select portion of the population. Though I know my society to be unfair, I often find myself reverting to my naïve way of thinking about it. Secondly, all of my life I have witnessed people helping others in a very traditional manner, that is, by attempting to mold them to fit into society. Unfortunately, I have found that it is very difficult to immediately wipe these years of countless examples from my way of thinking and to discount them.

So, while I know that Tapiwa faces many structural barriers in my society, I still find myself getting upset with him and attempting to change and blame him on occasion. He’s an African, and sometimes I want to make him into a white man because I think that life would be easier then. I get bogged down by the stresses of “minority” life—paying international tuition fees, dealing with some professors’ discrimination and low marks, and even shopping—and I let all the progress I think I’ve made go out the window, and I blame all of our struggles on him, “Tapiwa, the fees are exorbitant, you just need to work more. Tapiwa, your professors are professionals, if they gave you a C+ they have a legitimate reason to do so. Tapiwa, the shopkeeper was not following you suspiciously around the store. You’re imagining everything!” Because I have never personally experienced any discrimination I allow myself to think it does not exist. Selfishly I assume that everyone has the same experience that I do. This is the point when I need my mom to call me up and say, “open up your eyes!” So, while I am becoming aware, I still struggle with understanding the world in a systemic manner. Some days it is clear to me, and other days the waters are muddied. Years of one way of thinking are ingrained within me, and it is taking me time to open up and see clearly.

**HOW WILL MY EXPERIENCE IMPACT MY WORK AS A SOCIAL WORKER?**

As a high school student I read *Le Petit Prince* in my French class. In it Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote “on ne voit bien qu’avec le coeur… L’essential est invisible pour les yeux.” In English it translates to you can only see clearly with the heart … *The important stuff is invisible to the eyes.* This is a thought that I have held close to me since I first came across it. It is a truth that I always try to put into practice in every area of my life. It is a truth that will influence how I operate as a social worker.

As a result of what I have seen, learned and experienced with Tapiwa I am passionate to work with immigrants. I would like to work to build bridges between communities of immigrants to Canada with mainstream Canadians. I want to work to create a world where diversity is valued and respected, where there is sharing and understanding between groups, where stereotypes are gone, and where people are free to be themselves and express themselves in their own way. Rather than forcing individuals to operate in our Western way and stomping out their will to exist, I want to help them flourish in their own way of living while finding acceptance in society. Instead of labeling communal, dependent cultures as weak, and certain parenting styles as ineffective or even negligent, I want us to celebrate and respect our diversity. Besides, putting Western way of life as something to strive towards is racist.

Promoting awareness of racism is my next major goal as a practitioner. In my experience I have found that many other Canadians who have a similar social location as myself are unaware that Canadian systems are racist, and are in fact unaware of what racism really is. So, I think that I could be an important educator in this field. As a white, established Canadian I have an “in” with mainstream Canadian society, and I believe that I could influence my society in a powerful and meaningful way, if I choose to.

As a practitioner I may accomplish some of my goals by creating some sort of partnership program between members of minority and mainstream groups. This could work to create awareness between the members of each group. As individuals get to know one another and hear one another’s stories I believe that stereotypes can be removed. In addition to this, hosting seminars in workplaces, schools, churches, community groups, coffee shops, etc. is another way I could work towards educating the public about racism and encourage cultural acceptance. Perhaps what I am most passionate about doing would be to create and offer supports for international students during their 4-5 years of study abroad. Finally, I may one day consider policymaking and political involvement. I have spoken about wanting to see changes in my system. What better way to do so then from the inside?

Meeting Tapiwa, hearing his stories and living life alongside him for the last few years has been the most powerful and meaningful experience of my life. It has changed the way I see and think about people and my society. It has given me awareness and a desire to make a change. Tapiwanashe has been the greatest gift that my God could have ever given to me. I am grateful for the vision I have received and continue to receive through him.

My eyes have dried, and I have now finished sharing some of my greatest hopes, dreams, wishes and struggles with you. Now I ask you, please join me in opening up your eyes to what is happening in our society. Do not let stereotypes and ingrained values overpower you and cloud your vision. Instead, open up your heart and look with it.
Hi friends, this is a memo I jotted down on my phone one day when I recognized that I had been failing to check my privilege in a particular situation. I set it on a daily reminder for a few weeks afterwards until it was essentially a mantra. Thought it could be helpful to other white feminists out there. Didn’t bother putting it in a separate document as it is so short, so it’s just featured in the text below. Thanks for doing what you do!

-----

MEMO: Privilege

I pledge to seek the consciousness to understand the role my privilege has played in the construction of my identity, the decency to counter and deconstruct the elements of my identity founded in privilege, and the humility to be taught to recognize and deconstruct my privilege by ALL others.

a white feminist’s pledge.
A REFLECTION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS TOUR

The purpose of this paper is to critically reflect on the representations within the University of Manitoba campus tour, how the university markets itself in general, and how these representations reflect my experiences within the university setting. Through the use of examples from class, as well as drawing upon Audre Lorde’s writings, I will illustrate my perception of the university’s universalistic marketing approach and overall representation of students and their experiences. This will demonstrate how the university’s marketing does not reflect every student’s experiences, and how this universal marketing is problematic. I will also provide insight into how the university could be more conducive to learning and growth for everyone. In this paper I recognize that people experience space very differently, and that I can only present a perspective that represents and reflects upon my experiences that are shaped by my social location, which has the potential to overlook alternative representations within university space. Through an awareness of the lack of representation and marketing toward certain spaces that directly relate to my experiences, this paper aims to critically analyze the university’s marketing strategies and their attempt at representing a diverse student population. Through my reflection process of the campus tour, I can begin to question and critically consider how students can be misrepresented by and within the university.

The campus tour that was given by a university employee, who indicated that he gives university campus tours every week, the majority of the time to first year students often accompanied by their parents, allowed me to reflect and critically analyze what I perceived to be university marketing strategies prevalent during our tour. Taking notes while the tour guide was speaking allowed me to pick up on and recount the terms used as well as his ideas of what campus is like. Through this process I was better able to compare these ideas and spaces to my own experiences. One of the first details the tour guide stated about his position was that he is a “recruiter” for the university, to recruit specific groups such as Aboriginal students and students from rural spaces. It is interesting that the university seeks out specific sets of people, as this information presented seemed like a way for the university to claim a more “diverse” student population. I considered this to be a marketing strategy that portrays an element of “tokenism” (18 October, 2012), which can become problematic as politics of representation are very complicated and the university’s motives and intent for this representation are easy to question. Whether the university is legitimately interested in the well-being and success of groups such as Aboriginal people for example, or whether this claim of diversity is used as a way to improve the university’s overall image and reputation, is questionable. However, the use of individuals who are regarded by the university as “appealing to the diversity” (18 October, 2012) of the university setting is prevalent.

Throughout the tour, I continually noticed the tour guide making large generalizations of what students typically experience on campus. I found myself questioning the spaces on campus that were being regarded as important or legitimate student space to be discussed and presented on a tour, as many of these spaces did not reflect my experiences on campus. This made me aware of how generalizations of “typical” spaces on campus potentially hinder students’ abilities and agency to have the experiences they choose, as well as limits the knowledge of significant spaces on campus. One example of the oversimplification of certain spaces can be seen through the tour guide’s minor pointing in the direction of the “financial aid and awards” offices. Standing further down the hallway, the tour guide referred to this office as a space on campus he...
“usually points to”. The significance of this office is reflected through the reality that thousands of students will need to know where this office is in order to manage their huge amount of student loans and debt. They are potentially beginning to embark upon. A mere pointing in the direction of this office is not as beneficial to a student as walking past the office and explaining how it can help students with student loans. The oversimplification of this space implies a class assumption of students who did not make any suggestions to the financial aid and awards office is not relevant to most students, and obscures the reality of student loans and student debt. While reflecting on this part of the tour, I began to question whether the lack of discussion and marketing of the financial aid and awards office is intentional in that the university ultimately does not want first year students to recognize the large amount of student debt that many students obtain through their studies. In addition, this did not reflect my experiences as a student, as this office was one of the first places I needed to find on campus.

The generalizations about student life and experiences that were being made along the tour continued to lack any representation of my own experiences. As the tour approached the third floor of the university center, which is surrounded by coffee shops, a restaurant, and a pub, spaces on campus the tour guide referred to as “fun spots where you socialize and will probably come to hang out with friends” and a pub referred to as a “gathering place for students”, I began to question who the tour guide, working for the university, was marketing this tour toward. From my own experiences, I did not make any connections to these spaces as I have rarely spent time in the campus restaurant “Degrees” and have never been in the campus bar/pub space. The tour seemed like a marketing technique to inform students of what a typical student does, and should do, making a generalized assumption that these spaces and experiences the tour guide is referring to is exactly what the student experience is like at the University of Manitoba. A question that continues to surface is whether the examples being presented of experiences within the university are an intentional marketing strategy that attempts to portray a specific student experience. If so, who decides what are legitimate inclusions of a university experience, and what are the justifications for excluding certain student’s experiences?

To further the exploration of whether the inclusion and exclusion of certain experiences and spaces is intentional or not, I was frustrated when the tour guide did not mention or take our tour group to any of the student-run centres on campus. It was interesting that the small discussion that did arise about the student centres only occurred because someone in the group asked a question about a used bookstore, and through the directions provided to the bookstore the topic of the student centres was brought up. Once again, this related directly to my questioning of what the university wants students to know and what they do not want students to know, especially first year students. The inclusion of a tour around the student centres, and at the very least a discussion about the number of student run centres on campus where individuals, depending on their interests, can find other people to relate to and bond with, is incredibly necessary and important. To exclude this discussion from the tour, limits individuals’ awareness of these spaces; areas of campus that can sometimes be the only space where people feel comfortable. Finding groups that identify and relate to each other’s identities and interests, especially identities that do not identify with the white dominated, heterosexist, patriarchal culture of the university, such as the Rainbow Pride Mosaic, The Women’s Centre, and the University of Manitoba Aboriginal Students Association (UMASA), is important for students. This importance of connections that transpire through student centres relates to Lorde’s statement that, “as outsiders, we need each other for support and connection and all the other necessities of living on the borders” (69). The complete exclusion during the tour of student centres allowed me to consider Lorde’s suggestion that “institutionalized rejection of difference is an absolute necessity in a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people” (115), highlighting this reality within the university setting, and further suggesting that through the suppression of spaces such as student-run centres, the university can maintain the current dominant power relations and hierarchies that prevail within this environment.

Through the exclusion of student centers during the tour, I began to question whether the university strategically avoids these types of spaces in order to reduce the opportunity for students in these spaces to build communities and mobilize against oppressive systems within the university. If students are intentionally not informed about student-run centres, the university has the ability to control students within their exclusive and oppressive environments. Moreover, this control presents and markets to students the “master’s tools” (Lorde 112), which ultimately will not enable change. On the other hand, student-run centres could potentially encourage students to form their own tools and mobilizations that go against the oppressive structures within the university. Lorde recognizes that it is through “…learning how to stand alone; unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which all can flourish” (112), that individuals can generate genuine change within social relations of power and oppressive structures; structures which the university maintains with their marketing techniques. A question relating to feminist community organizing that is imperative in this discussion is how we can propose changes to the tours and marketing campaigns in and outside of the university that are more inclusive for everyone. This is a question where I find myself internally conflicted.
Through my reflection of this tour and the problematic and exclusive examples I have illustrated, I find myself conflicted when I consider how we could make the actual experience of the campus more conducive to learning and growth for everyone, including explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the university’s marketing techniques to the administration of the university. Through the university’s inclusion of certain spaces as well as their exclusion of certain people’s experiences as legitimate and the regulation of students knowledge of these intentionally excluded spaces, I am conflicted in how I could provide the university and their marketing strategies with more inclusive experiences and knowledge. In relation to this confliction, Lorde explains clearly how “oppressors always expect the oppressed to extend to them the understanding so lacking in themselves” (63). I often feel as though it is the responsibility of the oppressors, or the people or structure that are oppressing identities or experiences, to obtain the knowledge necessary regarding their problematic techniques and environments. However, at the same time I realize that if I do not share my experiences and define myself for myself (Lorde 45), my silence will perpetuate the continuation of the university, for example, inaccurately defining my identity and experiences, and will ultimately be used to my detriment.

In order to avoid my identity and experiences being defined by the university, it is necessary to provide some insight into how the university could be more conducive to learning and growth for everyone. It is apparent that the university attempts to market diversity and difference, however through examples such as the exclusion of a discussion of student centres, the university also seems to strategically market itself in a way that will maintain the dominant power relations. In order for every person to flourish in the university setting, the university must recognize “…difference as a dynamic human force, one which is enriching rather than threatening to the defined

self, when there are shared goals” (Lorde 45), and genuinely use this recognition as a basis for marketing, not as a basis to ensure the university’s image and reputation as diverse and representative of every student, as it currently is not. In order for individuals to recognize the university as legitimately recognizing difference as dynamic and beneficial to the university environment as a whole, marketing as well as the overall environment and hierarchical status of the university need to be improved. Improvements such as the inclusion of student centres where students can flourish, the inclusion of spaces such as the financial aid and award offices alongside the knowledge surrounding intersectional identities of students, as well as more knowledge to impart to students about the human rights offices on campus, are all areas that need improvement in order to regain students’ trust that the university legitimately believes that the celebration of difference is dynamic to their environment.

This paper has critically reflected upon representations throughout the campus tour and how the university markets itself in general. Using examples from my own student experiences, I have illustrated how the university’s universalistic marketing strategies and representation of students experiences, does not reflect every student’s experience. Through my reflection process of the campus tour, I have analyzed how students can be misrepresented by and within the university. The university could greatly benefit from recognition and reinforcement that difference within the university community is dynamic and flourishing to the overall environment. The university’s incorporation and understanding of difference being dynamic to the university setting will improve the university’s attempt at representing students and their experiences.

**WORKS CITED**


The goal of my art piece is to depict the concept of interlocking oppressions and to show the unified force that interlocking oppressions create. The piece was intended to be hopeful as well, as there are pieces of the chains that are wearing in certain areas, portraying a sense of empowerment. There are many ways to interrupt heteropatriarchy and the three pillars of white supremacy (to use Andrea Smith’s term). The art was meant to represent an acknowledgement of others’ oppressions (the holding of hands), how they differ from our own (the different appearance each hand withholds), and also how they strengthen the will for our common goal (the heart of humanity found within the center of hands), which is ultimately to free ourselves and each other from these oppressions.
Femicide is a term used to describe homicides involving women who are often killed because they are women (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). Dominant Canadian societies are steeped with patriarchal traditions that place women, and those considered effeminate, in a lower ranking to males and those considered masculine. This division based on gender (and gendered characteristics) have lead to circumstances within Canada that have resulted in a large number of missing and murdered women. According to the Native Women’s Association of Canada, there have been 520 known cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women (Johnson & Dawson, 2011) – this number has now reached more than 600. This number, if applied to the rest of the female population of Canada, would be equal to more then 18,000 missing and murdered women (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). 52 percent of solved femicides within Canada “involved offenders who were current or former partners” (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, 123). This large percentage is a primary reason why it is crucial to review intimate partner femicide cases, and attempt to determine risk factors that could be used to prevent such cases from occurring within the future.

The ability to predict whether a relationship will have a lethal ending could result in the proper resources being allocated to the woman in danger in order to get her out of the relationship.
and into a healthier lifestyle. Being able to assess the risk factors associated offers the potential to help with “increasing awareness about potential danger, improving communication and shared language among professionals, and helping to develop and implement victim safety plans” (Johnson & Dawson, 2011, 146).

Increasing awareness about danger is a crucial step in being able to prevent femicides from occurring, and to get women out of lethal situations. Awareness of danger is not only important for those within intimate relationships, but the information gathered through research and assessments of intimate partner femicides may also result in outsiders being able to spot risk factors in the relationships of family members, friends, and other acquaintances. We need to understand these senseless murders before we can work towards forming a world that exists without them.

Communication and shared language amongst professionals is important in order to properly share research that already exists. In order to cross analyze previously collected data to establish trends, or build on the data that already exists, there needs to be a cohesive language as well as an open dialogue amongst professionals from varying institutional and educational backgrounds. While discussing these topics within the classroom, it became evident to me that not everyone had the same idea about what “violence” was or what the result of different forms of violence could be. For instance, mental abuse such as name calling, or financial abuse, such as withholding funds, were often seen as less severe than physical violence. However, without adequate research in the different areas of violence, it is impossible to predict how one form of violence may lead into a new form of violence; or how violence as a whole may lead to lethal circumstances. The sharing of knowledge is crucial in understanding the topic as a whole.

Many women have no feasible means to escape the violent circumstances they are in. Developing and implementing victim safety plans are a critical step in equipping women with the necessities they need to build a life apart from their abuser. Research on intimate partner femicide is needed in order to showcase the vast numbers and to provide details of the circumstances surrounding these murders. Without the research and awareness surrounding femicide, governments and other funding companies will not provide the money necessary to set up safe houses, counseling, awareness seminars, and resource facilities that women need in order to escape.

Researching surrounding femicide risk within intimate partner relationships is important if we want to keep the women around us as safe as possible. Victim blaming occurs regularly within our Canadian societies. Statements like “she chooses to stay, so she deserves what she gets”, “she choose him, so there is nothing I can do”, “I can’t continue to see him hurt her, so I just stay out of it”, work to reinforce negative aspects of violence and femicide. If we want to lessen the occurrence of femicide (or eliminate it all together) we need to start by changing how individuals perceive violence. Such can only be accomplished by re-adjusting societal views on the topic through research, risk assessment, and awareness; and by providing the resources and developing safety plans to help the women in need.

**Reference List**

“I want to be remembered as the girl who always smiles even when her heart is broken and the one that could always brighten up your day even if she couldn’t brighten her own.”

–Unknown

Hello, my name is . . .

Not important. All I ask is that you hear me. As I see all the different faces, I wonder to myself what makes us different. What sets us apart? And I noticed how society has shaped our minds. There are restrictions. There are rules. Some people tend to think they are better than others and this hurts me. There is rich and poor, religion and none, and different ‘cultures.’ We are made to be afraid of what we do not know. We tend to feel and act differently when we do not know certain things. So it is human nature to be afraid or cruel to what is different. As poverty strikes, people look the other way, but it is everywhere. It is across the world and right in your backyard. It is just time until it stare you right in the face. It is just time until we all fall apart. We only have once chance. Are you going to waste yours?

BANG. BANG. SCREAM. CRASH!

BANG. Darkness masks me. I crawl through the hall, not making a sound. All there is, is me breathing. My heart caves in. Not again. Not again. My untidy shirt almost gets caught on a sharp thing sticking out of the floor. I quickly open the door with sparkle paper, and little people, and animals. Angela’s favourite is the tiger. Fierce and independent just like her. And there she is as I open the door, already awake, and looking like a fairy in the twilight glow. She is holding little Casey who is about three-quarters of her size, his feet kind of dangle from her. He only has one sock on. He almost starts to cry thinking of a nightmare. I take two large steps that equal four or five of Angela’s and picked him up.

I sing to him. “One day when I’m awfully low . . .”

He smiles and touches my face. Angela is already grabbing the small, turquoise, circular suitcase from underneath the bed. She opens it softly and with a click of the lock the top lifts up. She gives me one of Casey’s coats. She runs to her dresser to put a long sleeved shirt over her thin sleeveless one. She puts her unkempt hair in a ponytail. Something she never does except on nights like these.

Angela then says facing up towards me, “I am ready Dominik.”

Casey follows with, “I am retty Domik,” not really understanding the words.

As Angela puts on her coat and shoes and coat she exclaims, “Oh, where is Casey’s sock?”

She disappears under his tiny bed and comes out happily, “I found it, I found it!”

We crawl out the window and go to the playground close by. Angela runs to the swings right away. Casey would not let me put him down, but I understand so I hold him. I held him until he felt okay. I put him into the baby swing and rock them both. Angela screams with delight. She laughs. He laughs.

These are the times I know I will remember as I think about last night yesterday. I sent them to school this morning. I was not going to go to school; but I was not going to stay behind so I sit here in the city with people coming and going. I listen to them talk of old times and what they plan for.

I even hear a stranger ask a pretty girl, “Do you believe there is hope?”

I think of yesterday and of today. I was not going to listen to Mr. Pipney ask about my blueberry marks again, but I can still hear him say, “Tell me what is wrong . . . after class and me wanting to leave.

I spit out, “Nothing . . .”

This does not satisfy him, but I run away before he can say anything more.

I better go to my Home Sweet Home with my mother on the floor and my father nowhere to be found. I will put her in her room like I always do then pick up the pieces. I will wait for Angela and Casey. When she walks through the door holding Casey’s hand she asks, “Can we go to the park?”

I respond with, “Of course we can,” and a smile.

Here is a story called Not Broken:
But to look at my story one must know my past, which at times I could not even do. I have lived through many things in my young years.

Here I offer you a glimpse of my life and a response to it after; I had not acknowledged it before. I wrote it years before the Not Broken story.

**Broken Childhood**

As I wake up in the night hearing you guys yell,
My sister comes into the room to lay with me.
I can only do so much to protect her, to protect myself.
You have so much alcohol in you that you have changed.
You have changed into something so unfathomable to others
But so real to me.
You control her.
And you are worse when you are drunk.
I cannot do anything to stop you for I am just a child.
I cannot make her get rid of you because she is so in love
Or maybe she is just too scared.
Every time, every single time you drink you hurt her
And you hurt yourself.
You overpower her.
No one knows because no one sees the marks
But they are there.
I hear things crash and hit the floor.
This is normal to me.
I am so powerless.
And I am so afraid.
I try not to cry, I try to be brave
But I always get the best of me,
Just like you get the best of her.
I have grown into something more, into something good. Even after all I have been through I have managed to get by. I have managed to keep my head above the water, but at times I am close to drowning.

I am so tired. I have not thought of my past in so long. I realize I have forgotten it and I see why. I have turned out well minus all my moments of sadness and pain, but that was because of recent things.

People have said they wanted my strength, my style, my confidence, my ability to talk with anyone. Some have said that I taught them to be fearless, that I inspire them. Someone once said that I am nice even after all I have been through and that I should stay that way. But if they knew the truth they would be surprised. They do not want what I have been through to make me the person I have grown to be.

My life is a mess. My walls keep crashing down and I keep putting them back up, but sooner or later I will have no energy, the will to keep putting myself back together. There is only so much I can take. There is only so much in a person to go on.

My years have been plagued with cruel and tiresome events. I have seen and felt things no one should have to, and it could be worse. Someone once told me that I should think of my life and not someone else's. I have been told to live for me, not someone else. It is not easy for me, when it is all I have known. I have always thought of others and I have always put myself last.

I realize now why I hate alcohol. I have seen what it does to people. How it steals lives and hurts people. It is an addiction. It is a horrible cycle, one that is all too real. Its killed families, culture, and society. It makes people change for the worst. It fills people with poor judgement, anger, and regret. I have seen firsthand what it does to people, my family and my people. That is why I do not want to see it again. I do not want another life lost. If only they would understand, but when I try to tell them, blind them from it I come off as overbearing.

If only they knew, if all of you knew. They do not know and they may never know because you will never know me. If they knew and everyone else knew they would see me differently. I do not want to be under a magnifying glass, but I wish you could get to know me. It is a contradiction and ironic I know. I am scared of trusting anyone with myself. I am myself. I just have my moments that haunt me and new horrible things keep happening, adding to this legacy of pain. I need to get away. I need to be free, but free I will never be.

Domestic and alcohol abuse are problems in all communities. People are hurting others and themselves even dying. Our way of life is dying with these modern times.

I have a choice. I am in control of my life whenever I can be. I choose to get an education to give my family, our people a chance, a future. I want to be a guidance counsellor and a teacher among other things. It is a tough road when others make their choices but it motivates me all the more to work hard and continue what I am doing. I want to make a difference.

I give you an example of a family suffering from domestic and alcohol abuse. I share with you a piece of my past, dark moments within a history. However, within this past comes a new chapter that will plague me and repeat throughout this life . . . the death of my mother. I could not begin to tell you my thoughts, my history with all the missing pieces with her. It is a wound that will never truly heal. All you need to know is that I loved her and that I will for all my days.

I want to leave you with hope though that after all I have been through, I manage to keep staying strong. To another hurting human to another if I can live through this life then so can you, my dear.
When performing a preferred reading of the text, Dirty Girls Social Club by Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, the reader will find a novel progressively challenging stereotypes of Latina women. However, when a negotiated reading is carried out, the reader will find gaps in the author’s representation of lesbian women in western society. This novel illustrates the limited representations of women chick lit novels are widely criticized for having and inherently reinforces the homogenous characters and relationships we are accustomed to seeing in western chick lit novels. In the novel’s 308 pages, Elizabeth Cruz’s character has 3 chapters; 21 pages. Roughly 1/15 of the novel is told from the perspective of a lesbian woman while the other 14/15’s are told from a heterosexual viewpoint. This shows the author nodding towards the need of lesbian representation but she does not assume responsibility for executing a proper, fleshed out characterization of Elizabeth.

Chick lit is a genre of literature that is both highly stigmatized and commercially successful in western popular culture. The term “Chick lit” itself is demeaning to the body of writing that it represents; the usage of “chick” implies that these books are written by a fluffier, airier woman, and the shorting of literature to “lit” seems to imply these books are not real forms of written novels. Despite the stigma attached, intelligent and empowering narratives can be found within this genre; however, these texts should be examined carefully in order for western society to understand what they are absorbing.

There are 3 methods of examining and considering popular culture, characterized as “readings”; preferred, negotiated and resistant readings. These readings provide the reader with a mindset from which the content they are examining can be filtered through. A preferred reading understands the content alongside ideological codes it is meant to be interpreted by. A negotiated reading acknowledges the validity of a preferred reading but critiques the content based on “personal interests or circumstances”. Lastly, a resistant reading interprets content based off an entirely different set of codes and rejects the ideological codes it is meant to be read by (Ferris).

When performing a preferred reading, the struggle Elizabeth encounters when she is outed, depicts the existing struggle western popular culture has with accepting lesbian women. However, the content of Elizabeth’s story still falls short; it feels as though the author selected a cookie cutter labelled “lesbian struggle” and shaped the story from it, and only it. The reader hears endlessly about the other character’s thoughts, ideas, and struggles; they are presented as women with complex, multifaceted identities. Elizabeth’s
identity is presented as multifaceted but is not explored as complex. This perpetuates a cycle of how the label “lesbian” is used in pop culture: as a mask. This mask shows the struggles lesbian women face but does not reveal the intricacies of their personalities, experiences, and thoughts; therefore, this mask is disempowering to lesbian women.

When her coming out is publicized due to her celebrity status, Elizabeth is unwilling to be seen as an icon of bravery by the gay community. She is uncomfortable when a waiter is enthusiastic about her presence in his restaurant (Valdes-Rodriguez 231) and when support is shown for her outside her workplace (Valdes-Rodriguez 292). By noting her discomfort, Valdes-Rodriguez criticizes the idea that a person’s sexuality should be discussed by everyone. While Liz deserves her privacy, this criticism ends up having a negative effect on the novel. In today’s western popular culture we hear things like “love is love” all the time, implying that the love within heterosexual and homosexual relationships is the same. Does this mean homosexual stories should not be told in the lengthy, descriptive way heteronormative stories are told? Valdes-Rodriguez answered yes when Elizabeth was not afforded a more in-depth storyline, which in turn implied hetero and homosexual stories – moving past the coming out aspect – are the same. This is problematic because Elizabeth’s identity as a lesbian shapes her thoughts and experiences. Yet the complexities of her character are homogenized when she is only given 3 chapters to be heard, and those 3 chapters focus only on her coming out.

Elizabeth’s story ends with a passionate declaration that she will write (Valdes-Rodriguez 294-5). In this way, the author is stating that she cannot tell Liz’s story with the same authenticity as the other women, because only Liz (as a lesbian woman) can tell her story. While this acknowledges that one form of oppression does not represent all forms of oppression, I think this dually shows a weakness in Valdes-Rodriguez’s craft. She had the opportunity to break stereotypes across the board, but only half-heartedly took on the challenge. A well rounded chick lit novel could have illustrated Elizabeth’s love for Lauren and a proper conclusion of this storyline, as well as a more complex portrayal of her relationship with Selwyn, and/or could have delved deeper into her family life. Dirty Girls Social Club falls short of being a ground-breaking chick lit novel by not giving Elizabeth’s character any of these storylines in addition to her experience of coming out, thus presenting her character as homogenous.

WORDS CITED
It held impenetrable darkness like a blanket. Home to sunken treasures and forgotten ships wrecks. All the skeletal remains of what could have, should have, if only... With countless corners and walls of abrasive coral, crevices for thoughts and realities carefully kept hidden. Submerged.

This was the silence.

A regenerating cycle of predator and prey, balanced to sustain its maintenance and consequential self-indulgence. I could feel only the cold, unsettling force of its expanse, surrounding my existence, reaching as far as to graze, sometimes, the shores of lands I had never seen. Rippling currents of a winding, tumultuous, consuming silence.

(I always and all ways wondered how the sand felt)

So I speak, and

Still these wor(l)ds are never mine.

These storming syllables, to you, create me.

They g(r)asp for definition, bobbing

Just out of reach.

I drop.

Efforts like

Rain drops, drop.

(Still) Every meaning remains clouded with his.

I,

Drop.

I always and all ways wondered if silence could be washed

Away.

So I speak.
**ACCUMULATION**

2013
Embroidery hoop, canvas, cotton thread, acrylic.
24 inches round

**INCONSEQUENCE**

2013
Embroidery hoop, canvas, cotton thread, acrylic.
7 inches round.
ABORIGINALS AND THE MEDIA

The mainstream media, such as television shows, movies, radio and newspapers are all active contributors in giving meaning to issues and events in the public. They are the important sources of looking at the outside world in terms of a society's cultural and moral values in the society. In exploring the notion of media representations of Aboriginality, what the mainstream media does not say in terms of coverage and tone may be just as important as what they do say as the control over Aboriginal people's representation is rooted in the power of the mainstream media itself.

Despite the fact that Aboriginal people have their own media that provides a platform, for the opinions and perspectives of Aboriginal people, there is still a long way to go in order to correct the social representations that currently support the existence of the misrepresentation towards Canada's Aboriginal People. For example, in the representations made by the mainstream media, they are "socially constructed with the power to create, circulate and convince" the audience, and in the case of Aboriginal people, most of the audiences are non-Aboriginal people. The majority of the social issues, particularly in regards to violence, to the Canadian society and crimes are misrepresented in the media about Aboriginal people. "Media representations do not simply reflect some 'true' reality. Rather, by selectively promoting one version of reality to the exclusion of others".

As a result of the power by the media, it is easy to understand why a non-Aboriginal audience might come to the conclusion that Aboriginal people are troubled and controversial people. The reason for this problem is that the media does not simply mirror events about Aboriginal people, but rather they filter the actual information about Aboriginal people. In addition, the news media themselves are also loaded with assumptions that influence the framing of news stories. For example, the media has the influencing power of deciding what is being produced, what is in the news and what gets published for the audiences about the Aboriginal people. "The vast majority of Canadians are generally misinformed about the history, circumstances, issues and challenges that confront Aboriginal people." As a result, most of the audiences usually believe and think that all of the stories that they hear over the radio, watch in movies, and see on television shows about Aboriginal people are true, causing audiences to view Aboriginal people as a negative force.

Additionally, as a result of the media’s power over Aboriginal people, it also affects the young Aboriginal youths in their communities. Aboriginal youth are growing up with a biased revelation of what it means to be part of an Aboriginal Peoples society, with most news reports on Aboriginal people creating a negative image of Aboriginal people to the youths. They are always seeing the news that talks about Aboriginal people involved in robberies, fights, that usually leads to arrests. In addition, the impressions that the Aboriginal youths get from watching movies and television programs, about how Aboriginal people are treated or represented leads the youth to think of Aboriginal people as inferior and aggressive, who are not capable of being good role models that they the youths can look up to.

The mainstream media should learn to do what they are actually supposed to which is to report on the actual events without being biased. Also, reporters of mainstream media are not supposed to be biased, they are supposed to just deliver the news and leave it to the audiences to interpret the news as they wish.

1 Long, David and Dickason Patricia, Olive, Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues (Canada : Oxford University Press, 2011) pg. 207
2 Ibid, 192
3 Long, David and Dickason Patricia, Olive, pg. 194.
I ask myself what makes me a woman.
The fashionable clothes
I am supposed to wear?
The makeup I am supposed to put on
my face to enhance my beauty?
The amount of food I am
supposed to eat? (not much)
My silence.
But are these really what makes me
a woman? Or are these just forms of
women’s oppression?
So, again I ask myself what
makes me a woman.
Is it the invisible shackles around my
ankles holding me in my place?
The color of my skin that prevents
me from moving up, in this white
heteropatriarchy,
Is it the inequality I experience
on a daily basis?
The low wages
The expectation that I must do free
domestic labour out of love because
I am a woman?
So this time I ask myself, if these ideas
are what makes me a woman, then
how do I break free?
Can I change my own and others’ view
about what a woman truly is based on
my own wants?
I want to wear what I want
without judgement.
I want to be accepted for my
natural beauty.
I want to eat whatever I want and
however much I need to eat to feed
my hunger.
I want to speak loud and scream if
I have to.
I want the individual rights of people to
be equal and smash this two-sex gender
model that separates men and woman.
For the final time I asked myself what
kind of woman I am?
I am an Indigenous woman.
I am a mother.
I am a woman who hates
to wear makeup.
I am a woman who does not care for
fashion. I love to wear my comfy clothes.
I am a woman who has a voice
to be heard.
I am an independent woman.
I am no longer a woman with questions.
I am a woman with answers. I now
realize I set the standards for what
makes me a woman.
Home/Not Home

I wrote this paper in early 2013 for a course I was taking at the time about feminist geography. I chose to submit it to the FAQ publication because reflections of what home means to me have become increasingly present. It’s been almost a year since I’ve been back to my place of birth (Minneapolis) and this will be the longest I’ve been away since I left. I’ve found the dichotomy of home/not home to be less and less tangible as I become increasingly accountable to Winnipeg and the people here. My life has also shifted in a way that leaves me in spaces of domesticity more often, which lends itself to a consideration of what it means for women to travel in order to be in domestic spaces. In thinking about how common it is for women (particularly from third world countries) to travel to places like Canada in order to do very gendered domestic work (housecleaning, childcare, etc), I would probably reframe some of my thoughts in regards to travel in order to incorporate a less oblivious analysis of why and how people travel. That being said, I do think this piece has some useful things to say, which is why I’ve submitted it to this publication.

Someone in Winnipeg recently asked me where I live; I responded with the area of town, as I find that most people are satisfied with that. However, when pressed, I could not describe what landmarks were nearby, nor did I remember the name of a major bridge a few blocks away. Moments like these remind me that I am not from Winnipeg, that Winnipeg is not my “home”, despite the fact that I spend more of my time here than in Minneapolis, where I grew up. Why do I say, “I’m going back home” when referring to visiting my parents? Why, when asked to discuss home, do I not think of the house I currently live in, rather than the house in which I was raised? My conceptualization of “home” reflects the dominant ideology of home as solely a place for nuclear family and privacy; as well, my experiences of travelling outside this home (to areas where I feel “out of place”) can be critiqued through the lens of European masculine dominance as subversive and/or an exercise of my white privilege.

Since coming to Winnipeg, many things have illustrated to me that I am “out of place.” I did not know what a toque or a loonie was when I first arrived; in discussions of politics I sometimes do not understand the basic structure, much less recognize names; I never took French in school; and I often do not know any smaller Canadian towns. These are very personal feelings of being out of place. I use the word personal to mean that I feel them, but they are often invisible to others, because they are small and I am easily read as someone who does belong in Winnipeg. I’m white, English is my first language, and I speak with a standard North American accent. “Home” for me is a place that is not so culturally different from Winnipeg (but different enough for me to notice). Tim Cresswell asserts, “…expectations about behavior in place are important components in the construction, maintenance, and evolution of ideological values” (Cresswell 1996). My personal norms and behaviors align with the cultural norms and expectations here, so I can “pass” as a Canadian; I am not read as “out of place” despite those feelings at the personal level. This impacts my conceptualization of Winnipeg as “not home,” regardless of how I am perceived in this place.

When thinking about my home, the first thing that comes to mind is my parents’ house, the house in which I grew up. This is despite the fact that I have not lived there for years and do not plan on permanently living there ever again. Yet it remains a symbol of a sort of headquarters for my family, and the symbol becomes more important than the physical location or building. Johnston and Longhurst describe houses and their layout as “reflect[ing]
and reinforce[ing] notions of hegemonic heterosexuality, nuclear families, and men’s, women’s, and children’s gendered roles and relations” (Johnston and Longhurst 2010). My internalized ideologies of what a home is have shaped my conceptualization of my family house as “home.” My house in Winnipeg is not occupied by a nuclear family; the floor plan is less conducive to such a family, as it is much smaller, it does not have a dining room separate from the kitchen, nor a bedroom that would comfortably fit two people. Because the physical house in which I live in Winnipeg does not coincide with my internalized ideology of the home as a space of white, middle-class, heterosexual nuclear families, I often do not conceptualize it as home.

Because I have internalized these ideologies of home, I could speculate that my decision to leave the only house I had ever lived in could be based in a desire to subvert other internalized ideologies of a woman’s place in the home. Domosh and Seager mention that “the freedom to roam without fear or accountability has mostly been associated with masculinity” (Domosh & Seager 2001). I have always had the desire to travel (indeed, it was one of the major reasons I went to university, to study abroad), and this desire could be read as a reaction to the ideological pressure to stay home. In this way, it could be read as subversive.

On the other hand, the systems of privilege in which I participate are important here. I am sure that not many other people would read it as very subversive for a young, white, middle-class, able-bodied woman from the United States to travel. Indeed, I often find it uncomfortably easy to whip out my US passport and have no questions asked (especially in comparison to those not from the US or racialized people from western countries). I also have considered returning to Minneapolis to “settle down,” almost perfectly enacting the role of the white man who conquers new places before returning home (Domosh & Seager 2001). So perhaps my conception of Winnipeg as not home exists only to contrast what I understand as truly home, and my existence in places outside my home can be viewed as an exercise of privilege.

My current conception of Minneapolis and my parents’ house there as “home,” in contrast to Winnipeg and the house in which I currently live as “not home,” is based in the dominant North American imagination. However, the definition of home is never static, and is indeed reproduced and practiced every day. I find that the more time I live, work, make friends, and go to school in Winnipeg, the more connection I have to this place, and the closer it comes to being home. And maybe one day I’ll finally remember the name of that bridge down the street.

**REFERENCES**


TO AWAKEN

Inflated and grandiose,
Bruised and confused, my ego knows.
My ego knows that it not knows...
and yet it knows that the truth unfolds
when the doors are closed.

Large and small I feel so tall...
so tall then small a fun mirror room; distorted is all.
Perhaps when expectations cease...
And in the mind comparisons leave...
The voices settle, they dare not speak
and people wake from the game they seek.

Perhaps then the sheep won’t sleep,
The meek could speak, no muzzle to wear
and we can breathe
and come to life, to realize what we were born to realize,
without being denied from the inflated and grandiose.
CASE STUDY ONE: INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY.

I am demanding the extinction of barbed wire coils, white picket fences, cattle fences, wildlife corridors (as they are necessitated by The Fence and its horizontal sibling: The Highway), electric wire fences, electric netted fences, force fields, chicken wiring, one-tonne gates, razor wire coils, chain link fences, prison bars, and zoos.

I know this is manageable. Manitoba is supposed to have quite the history of extinction. Like, I hear there used to be prairie around. Real Prairie. Not a province but perennial life, topsoil mushed up and spit out by buffalo and their heavy hooves, the most gentle tillers, returning to a place at the perfect infrequency. And then lord selkirk brings in the displaced highlanders – ironically relocated to displace others – who farm, who domesticate, and who fence. A few fences through a great migration is really just annoying. But a lot of fences, a far way to go for anything but wheat stalk, is a tragedy. And white men in trains shoot buffalo for sport. We white settlers put up our fences to force domestication, to keep just as much in as out. We white settlers legally divorce indigenous sovereignty from the land it’s supposed to be indigenous to; move people and move them some more; and hold kids hostage in so-called “schools” — variably oriented to spring breaks, europian languages, and/or grave yards.

Fences in manitoba reinforce a historical injustice; protect the spoils of exploitation; manifest imaginary, white settler names and places (private property being an absurd notion analogous to ‘theft’); and maintain the illusionary barricade between us and the ‘wild’ and the bush.

Now when it creeps into our gardens on the gimiwej we call it a weed.

CASE STUDY TWO: THE PENAL/PENITENT SYSTEM IN CANADA

Cops, prisons, courthouses are the physical manifestation of all five faces of oppression. As such, feminists should be inherently opposed to their existence. This one place features

* Exploitation: for the hardest labour or most menial telephone conversations, physical
* Marginalization: from communities and chances for work

* Powerlessness: to the guards I might punch out too, to court expectations, conditions, non-associations, or to one’s house arrest.
* Cultural imperialism: as one is told repeatedly (and forcibly meditated for) how incurably sick one is – sinful at the core – how one’s being is criminal, experience is criminal, and much music is playing on the television non-stop. I heard a lawyer talker say once that, even though we might think of church as a most holy place, if we’re looking for God we’ll find Him in jail.

* THE PRISON/PENAL SYSTEM IN CANADA IS NOTHING BUT A VIOLENCE, an antiquated, expensive system for protecting and (pre)serving the interests of the state, for making who we are criminal or crazy, for maintaining white settler occupation in canada, and for suppressing any radical resistance from anyone who gets angry about it. It’s supported by a group of thugs with guns, spies, and lawyers who will not remember any of our names during any of our hearings. Now, try keeping jails without keeping perimeter fences, inches-thick plexiglass, or handcuffs. Go ahead. Give it a try.
CASE STUDY THREE: BEES

Fences are used as a substitution for consent. Instead of asking cattle to ‘heel’ (although we all know they would probably ask us to ‘follow’), we erect a fence to make our request final. Beekeeping, or beecharming, is different: bees can swarm at any moment. There is nothing about our shoddy boxes that works better than the smooth grooves of a dead tree. We have to make offerings, ask them to stay.

Fences are used as a substitution for safety. Instead of establishing positive relationships with members of our community, or sharing surplus so no one goes hungry, we keep really tall spikes around our place of residence so everyone we exploit can’t look in to see how much oatmeal little jonny just threw at the house-cat. I grew up in a city with fences eight feet high and two tonnes deep. one fell on my best friend’s sister once. and so it began: the sad start to my lonely abolitionist career.

Fences are used as a substitution for having to feel. Instead of feeling the way the line on this hill makes no difference between saskatchewan and manitoba; instead of addressing the parts of ourselves that hurt the most, the fences we erect between us and them, humans and not-humans, men and not-men and the marginalized galore, all making a terrible chain as each breezy neighbour follows suit, as fence meets fence meets fence; we put ‘em up.

WHAT “LOOKS LIKE A FENCE”?
AND WHO DECIDES?

(In the interest of world peace, mosquito netting will be an acceptable tool in a post-fence climate.) Objects of some contention, however, include knots, traplines, and walls.

* Firstly, keep trapping. We may set traps without setting traplines.

* Secondly, one knot does not a fence make. Marilyn Frye says it sharp and sure:

  “Consider a birdcage…if, one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird would have trouble going anywhere.”

  Because it wouldn’t. But:

  “It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one…and you will see why the bird does not go anywhere…It is perfectly obvious that bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight but which by their relation to each other are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.”

What will be prohibited in a post-fence future are the knots strung together, netted in a way as to prevent escape. That is a fence, by the way. A barrier, maybe wood or electron current or precariously balanced rocks, enclosing a place as to prevent escape.

* Finally, walls do not inherently create a space that prevents escape. Indeed, a home can be a way out, a sanctuary in itself. I do, however, suggest that we leave the doors unobstructed.
One way I like to abolish fences is by not putting them up. This is pretty basic. I also like to dismantle the fences I have abandoned in my own garden; I safely uproot chicken wiring, overturn palette barricades, or tweak rings of barbed wire into governable chunks. If one is left with a mess, I would suggest using retired fencing for fruit, beans, and squash. Fences do make such excellent trellising.

And then those tricky neighbours! What good is taking down our side of a fence when they seemingly won’t take down theirs? Here, I recommend we have a tremendous amount of fun in the backyard, like with a garden party and so many people partying together and stuff. It must be awfully boring standing on the wrong side of a fenced-off party — especially as you’re being welcomed over. I promise: the grass is definitely greener on our side.

In the unfortunate event that you actually never plan on giving up your privilege, we will do it for you. Fence-enthusiasts: beware! Abolitionists may de-fence your farm plans with only a sturdy set of tweezers, a persistent wind, or a pleasant stampede. So please stop wasting your time: fences simply do not work. It’s really a question of whether your fences rot now or later.

Love yourself so you can love other people. Meet all your relations! It’s ok to have a very long lost reunion. Becoming an abolitionist in defence of a postfence future means:

* getting off the fence!
* practicing (and it does take practice)
* inhaling and exhaling, sleeping and waking up
* recording any difficulties along the way.
* it means understanding the difference between an obstacle and an obstruction;
* understanding the difference between a fence and a boundary;
* avoiding fucked up stuff at our parties (lest they look like less fun);
* and being specific: y’know my mother gives people who use profanity dictionaries for their birthdays? watch your words. say what you mean.
* it means refusing the legitimacy of the injustice system;
* incidentally and intentionally resisting whatever fences are supposed to exist between every part and piece of ourselves;
* dismantling, with a whole heart, the oppression against those who we do not consider to be ‘persons’ or intelligibly tongued; by
* loving, with a whole heart, this place that we are in, and the stories it knows by heart too.

**LOVE:** sarah-marie c. and the collective best wishes of abolitionists in defence of a post-fence future.

**WORKS CITED**

