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

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Editors’ note

This publication is the Feminist and Queer Collective’s sixth 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.
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.
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‘Disciplining, Normalizing and Containing It’:
The Surveillance and Containment of Mothers and their Bodies within Obesity Discourse

Rae Hutton
The purpose of this paper is to critically engage in the topic of motherhood within a Western, neoliberal context in which a dominant “obesity epidemic” discourse prevails. Specifically, this paper will analyze the deliberately gendered “responsibilization” (Kirkland 466) of mothers to ensure the health and “normative” weight of their children through practices of surveillance and discipline of mothers and their bodies. This will be analyzed through the acknowledgement that obesity discourse benefits through the continual social construction of women as naturally within the private sphere, easily establishing mothers as blame worthy. In addition, this paper will provide a discussion of state-imposed “biopedagogies” (McPhail, lecture, 7 October) with a clear insistence for mothers to “create” normative bodied children, specifically through providing “good” role models such as being “normatively” bodied and weighted themselves which in turn demonstrates to children how to avoid becoming fat. Subsequently, I will address the increasing control of pregnant women’s bodies through neoliberal frameworks and obesity discourse and how these bodies are contained in specific ways through biopedagogical teaching practices. A discussion will be formulated around the socially constructed dichotomy of “good” versus “bad” mothers, and I will analyze how this construction cannot be understood without considering the dominant discourses and social context that affect experiences and identities. This paper aims to engage in a critical analysis of the discipline and containment of mothers and their bodies to illustrate the blame and guilt that have become attached to these bodies through prevailing obesity discourse that situates mothers as solely responsible for making “proper” choices for themselves and their families.

In the current Western context, there is a predominant obsession with fat and the “obesity epidemic”; in particular, there is a moral panic occurring around the construction of “childhood obesity”. The dominant obesity discourse is largely influenced by medical and public health researchers and practitioners that define, regulate, and surveil bodies (Lupton 35). However, the regulation of children’s bodies is established through the surveillance and discipline of family settings, and more specifically, a surveillance of mothers to reinforce the insistence of their accountability over their family. Lupton explains that the family setting has “provided an integral site for governmental interventions into children and young people’s weight control” (44) and that institutional policies and promotional material “have regularly positioned parents, and specifically, mothers, as primarily responsible for monitoring and regulating their children’s body weight” (44). Influential to this understanding is an overriding suggestion present throughout western history that recognizes childhood as a time of innocence and vulnerability ("All the News" 91; Burrows 128). Children have predominantly been regarded as “becomings rather than beings” (Burrows 129) and as “not yet fully formed, nor capable of making rational decisions in their own best interests” (Burrows 129). Countless theorists acknowledge this understanding, including Norman, Raile, and Jette who explain that “in dominant Canadian discourse, children are not necessarily accorded the status of full citizenship and thus are not seen as fully self-responsible” (21). Instead, children are recognized as in a process of becoming future adult biocitizens (23). As children continue to be regarded as non-rational beings, mothers of children are expected to be responsible for children’s weight and health.

Within a Western neoliberal context there is an emphasis on personal responsibility for weight and health and, indeed, neoliberal governments “depend upon their citizens adopting their injunctions voluntarily” (Lupton 39). Citizens’ continued good health is required in order to productively contribute to the neoliberal market state and to avoid becoming an economic burden on the state through ill health (Lupton 39). Kirkland labels this as “responsibilization” (466) and informs readers that dominant approaches to “fighting obesity” engage in a “responsibilization” of individuals encouraging personal responsibility rather than “collectivism” (467). This, in turn, targets structural and institutional inequalities that contribute to intense social stigma and the blame of individuals. In the current context that constructs children as non-rational, the personal responsibility to make “proper” choices regarding weight and health is recognized as a mothers’ obligation. Women are constructed as belonging to the private sphere and naturally engage in reproductive work, such as making homemade meals for their family. Herndon explains that advice manuals on childhood obesity are typically directed at mothers, illustrating how the manuals begin using the neutral term “parents” but gradually begin to omit this term in favor of the gendered terms “mother” or “mom” (Herndon 334-335) and explains that “dad” is never used as a stand-in for the term “parents”, highlighting the gender advice manuals are targeted toward. Similarly, although fathers and very rarely same-sex partners are implicated in the discourse of blame relating to children’s “irrational” and “unhealthy” eating behaviors, these gender stereotypes often cast mothers as irresponsible parents and either “overweight” or “obese” (McNaughton 180). This dominant obesity discourse reinforces and is heavily influenced by a heteronormative construction of what “family” entails in a neoliberal view of contemporary Western society.

The social construction of women as naturally within the private sphere is significant in relation to the dominant obesity discourse that directs immense focus on women and mothers. The essentialist understanding in obesity discourse that women need to stay in the home and be more attentive to their families and children rather than engage in public work is more than simply about an “epidemic” of “childhood obesity” (Herndon 358). Herndon explains that there is an implicit motivation to enforce and reproduce a lifestyle that contains mothers in the home rather than at work (Herndon 337). This construction works in the interest of the obesity discourse as women’s association with children and nature “goes less to make women an easy and obvious target when culture is to blame for the obesity epidemic” ("All the News" 55). In neoliberal contexts individuals are blamed for “ill health”, including obesity, as this is recognized as individual failure to make “proper” choices regarding health and weight. Mothers recognized as responsible for “proper” choices regarding children’s health and weight are then blamed when their children are recognized as “different” (Herndon 339). The process of responsibilization on mothers rather than the state “creates a swath of new areas in which a citizen can fail to live up to expectations” (Kirkland 478). This responsibilization to ensure the “normative” weight and health of their children is especially instituted through state facilitated biopedagogical practices aimed at mothers.

1 The choice to use the term “fat” rather than “obese” or “overweight” in this context is to acknowledge the political nature associated with a reclaiming of the term “fat”, and to trouble the “normative and pathologizing connotations” (Lupton 6) attributed to these O-words. The word “fat” in this paper is used as a descriptor, not a discriminator (Lupton 6).
As discussed in class, the Foucauldian term “biopedagogy” is always used within a discussion of governmentalities and refers to state-implemented education projects to “teach” “good” and “proper” behavior regarding the body (McPhail, lecture, 7 October), and ultimately to make “responsible” choices relating to health. Biopedagogies are used to “teach” mothers “good” parenting practices to achieve the “ideal” family. However, the representation of “ideal” family and parenting practices are reflective of the state’s construction of “good” bodies and citizens; comprising middle class, white, normatively-weighted embodiments. State facilitated biopedagogical practices targeted toward mothers, and influenced by obesity discourse, “positions change within the private (and traditionally feminine) domain as opposed to within public and civic institutions and spaces” (Norman, Raile, and Jette 22-23).

There is a plethora of advice influenced by neoliberal health promotion campaigns and mass media representations regarding childhood obesity (Lupton 89) for mothers to “create” normative bodied children. The overabundance of state biopedagogies targeted toward mothers reinforces a context where “mothers may feel as if they are failures when the advice does not work for them and their children” (Herndon 359) as the biopedagogies work in moralizing and guilt inducing ways. Moreover, this mother-blame occurs, as Herndon suggests, in seemingly contradictory ways as mothers are constructed as the natural caretakers of children yet they are identified as in need of ample advice from “experts” to “properly” care for their children (Herndon 354). In addition, biopedagogies influenced by obesity discourse are implemented to teach mothers “proper” choices to make regarding their bodies and the bodies of their children beginning at, and arguably prior to, pregnancy.

In addition to the excessive advice targeted toward mothers in general, there is an increasing overload of “professional” advice for pregnant women informing them how to act “responsibly” and make responsible choices during pregnancy. The increase in this targeted advice is implicated in the increasing surveillance of mothers in general, and the rapidly increasing surveillance of pregnant women recognized as soon-to-be mothers. Herndon explains that along with previous admonitions toward pregnant women regarding drinking and smoking, the discourse evolving around the obesity epidemic has created new admonitions for women (Herndon 355) that work to surveil and discipline pregnant women and their bodies. The rapid increase of advice influenced by obesity and fat panic includes pregnant women carefully controlling caloric intake, consuming certain foods while pregnant, and “overweight” women losing weight before pregnancy (Warin et al 361). These actions are perceived to ensure minimal complications and to lessen “non-normative” outcomes of the fetus, such as childhood obesity transmitted to the fetus by the mother (Warin et al 361). This advice and surveillance is strategically distributed to ensure the self-governance of pregnant women and their bodies. The increased discipline for women to manage their body weight in preparation for conception and during pregnancy (Warin et al 360) has become increasingly prominent within obesity discourse. Warin et al explain, “the crime [for women] is to be overweight and pregnant” (368); assuming the excess weight will harm the unborn fetus. The practices of “good mothering” are now seen as beginning before conception (Warin et al 362) and include making responsible choices to avoid fatness in their bodies as well as their children's bodies (Warin et al 361). After childbirth, mothers are further expected to be responsible to ensure their children do not become fat, specifically through acting as “good” role models by engaging in practices to avoid becoming “overweight” (Lupton 45). Women and mothers who do not comply with ideals of “good motherhood” are often harshly judged and moralized by public institutions such as the media, which can result in strong feelings of guilt and shame for women and mothers “if they feel that they have not conformed sufficiently to these imperatives” (Lupton 45). This becomes apparent in relation to women’s fat pregnant bodies that are severely shamed by medical professionals. In the current “fat phobic” (Lupton 3) context, fatness is dominantly regarded as grotesque and repulsive. Fat is feminized as it is imagined as a reproductive matter (McPhail, lecture, 18 November); fatness is associated with the reproductive bodies of women. The positioning of blame and immorality on mothers and pregnant women's bodies due to their perceived fatness is worth considering in relation to abject theory.

In relation to the pregnant feminine body that develops into a “fatter” version of the pre-pregnant body, there is, arguably, recognition of abjection associated with this body, especially if the pre-pregnant female body was fat. While not directly connecting the pregnant body to abject theory, Bordo begins to touch on this theory stating, “...the body is the negative term, and if woman is the body, the women that are negativity, whatever it may be” (5). The pregnant body is simultaneously attractive and repulsive; it is recognizably ambivalent because it is repulsive yet, at the same time, is necessary and essential. In relation to the fat female body particularly, the fear attached to fatness “is a means of social control used against all women” (Saguay 62). Similarly, Lupton further advises, “in contemporary western societies the fat body has become a focus of stigmatizing discourses and practices aimed at disciplining, normalizing, and containing it” (5). An identifiable neoliberal approach that responds to the simultaneous reaction of repulsion and necessity is through containment of this body; this body can only exist in a contained way. The abject body of mothers and pregnant women are contained in specific ways, such as through biopedagogical teaching practices and advice manuals that tactically inform certain bodies on how to lose weight before pregnancy and how to be “good” mothers and role models for children.

The containment of the bodies of mothers contributes to the socially constructed dichotomy of “good” mothers: mothers that remain in the home and cook “healthy” homemade meals establishing “normal” body sizes in the family (Warin et al 366). This is juxtaposed with “bad” mothers who enter the workforce (Herndon 356) resulting in their perceived contribution to childhood obesity through failure to closely monitor children’s eating habits and a reliance on convenience foods for meals (“All the News” 31-52), ultimately contributing to the physical immobility of children. The acknowledgment of “good mothering” remains largely about the weight of their children (“Fat Kids, Working Moms” 113). The idealized mother figure “assumes a concept of ‘good motherhood’ which demands constant surveillance of oneself (as role model) and one’s children to ward off the threat of obesity” (Lupton 45). Additionally, within dominant obesity discourse “a failure to role model healthy citizenship and a failure to deliver on the recommended strategies for producing un-fat children effectively wipes out any other contribution to the upbringing of a well child that parent/s may have made” (Burrows 354) emphasizing a moral dimension that positions mothers as negligent, or “bad”, when regarded as not complying or conforming to neoliberal approaches to minimize obesity. Boone’s perception of this patriarchal and neoliberal mother-blame process should also be noted:
The cultural landscape is peppered with references to stereotypical ‘bad’ moms – working mothers, welfare moms, teenage mothers, queer moms, and single mothers to name but a few. What all of these stereotypes share is that they highlight the normative conception of good mothering that assumes that good mothers are heterosexual, white middle class, and do not work outside the home. (‘Fat Kids, Working Moms’ 114)

The construction of “good” or “bad” mothers and citizens are engrained in culture and informed by larger structural forces upheld by classist, racist, and sexist assumptions (McNaughton 181). The social construction of “good” or “bad” mother or citizen cannot be understood without considering the dominant discourses and social context that affect experiences and identities.

As dominant obesity discourse is heavily influenced by systems of oppression that construct bodies outside of the categories “white, heterosexual, middle to upper class” as “Other” or “deviant”, it is necessary to acknowledge the differences in everyday experiences that are negotiated in the context of an essentializing obesity discourse. As discussed in class, Merleau-Ponty’s concept of “phenomenology” suggests that identity categories come with particular embodiments, that are usually unconscious, which individuals cannot separate from the social context they are situated within (McPhail, lecture, 23 September). This is an important consideration when discussing the varying experiences of fat mothers’ embodiment that remain unacknowledged within dominant obesity discourse. Quoting Kiikla, Warin et al explain that “public discourse tends to focus on individual responsibility and displays of will power” (370), alluding to the degree to which this public discourse is engrained, making it impossible for individuals to separate their experiences from this discourse and social context. Furthermore, universalizing experiences and embodiments disemisses groups, such as constructed “risk populations”, that are unfairly targeted and seen as in need of surveillance and teaching through strict biopedagogies. As many fat theorists have noted, state-imposed regulations are imposed upon the most stigmatised groups including “women of colour, single mothers and women living in poverty who are most often identified as posing the greatest risk to their offspring and targeted for surveillance and discipline – further stigmatising those who are already marginalised and powerless” (Bell et al. qtd. in McNaughton 186). The social context that disproportionately targets mothers, especially “bad” mothers, perpetuates the discourse of “risky” groups, normalizing disconnect between embodiment and social context, subsequently reinforcing the idea that these experiences are “natural” and are not socially constructed. Within dominant obesity discourse and rhetoric this disconnect continues to be present, constructing embodiment and experiences of women and mothers as solely their responsibility; this reinforces moral discourse toward those who “fail” through individual and strategically gendered blame, ultimately disregarding any connection to structural inequalities.

This paper has engaged in a critical analysis of the discipline and containment of mothers and their bodies to illustrate the blame and guilt that have become attached to these bodies through prevailing obesity discourse, situating mothers as solely responsible for making “proper” choices for themselves and their families. Through emphasizing the deliberately gendered “responsibilization” (Kirkland 466) of mothers, and the surveillance and discipline of mothers, pregnant women, and their bodies through various biopedagogical practices, this paper has highlighted the continual social construction of women as naturally within the private sphere which results in blame and subsequent emotions of guilt that are attached to this. Additionally, this analysis has provided the space in which this construction, as well as the socially constructed dichotomy of “good” versus “bad” mother, can be understood as inherently influenced and embodied through dominant discourse and the social context that affect these experiences and identities. Furthermore, this has allowed an “opening up” (Guthman 181) of current discourse to address the limitations of the “obesity epidemic”. The continual conflation of mothers within the private sphere and the responsibilization of mothers ultimately works to place blame on mothers and their bodies for the perceived contribution and reinforcement of the “obesity epidemic” and “childhood obesity”; effectively creating more room for the surveillance and discipline of mother’s and their bodies, rather than focusing on structural inequalities.

Works Cited


How and Why Women in Canadian Cities Take Action Against Their Geography of Fear
The geography of fear speaks to a very real and on-going experience for women in Canadian cities. However, due to the gendered nature of public space, women's safety concerns are often not taken seriously. When their concerns over safety are dismissed, women in Canada must take their safety into their own hands, both on a collective and individual scale, to ensure safer cities for themselves and other women.

Ultimately, it is the gendered nature of public space that causes women to feel unsafe in cities. There is an apparent and strict demarcation between the purpose of public space and private space, and those who are supposed to use them. Women are expected "to be in residential zones" (Andrew 199) because that is the site of the home – the private sphere – and therefore part of the domain of women. Men, on the other hand, have the "freedom to roam without fear or accountability" (Domosh and Seager 118). They are free to traverse space of any nature, though "freedom to roam without fear or accountability" (Domosh and Seager 118). As a result of this, women are left on guard as a regular part of their lives. They cannot move as freely because they are aware of the fact that danger may be lurking around every corner. The very nature of cities adds to this fear by way of the fact that they are densely populated, and that most of these people are unknown to one another. This fear permeates women's experiences of cities in Canada, and negatively impacts their interaction with and in the city.

The geography of fear is a discourse that affects the way in which women interact with cities. It is a term that refers to how "women fear violence, particularly sexual violence, more than men" and notes that this "inhibits women's use of space" (Mehta and Bondi 67). This results in women being unable to utilize the benefits life in the city provides to the full extent that they may desire due to personal safety concerns. Different factors affect the amount of fear a woman feels in the city's public space, and this is related to "the association of male violence with certain environmental contexts" (Valentine 385). One of the most important factors is time of the day. Daylight is viewed as being safe because it is a time of day where "the behavior of those occupying the space is externally regulated ... so reducing the perceived opportunity for attack" (Valentine 387). However, nighttime is viewed as dangerous because it lacks this regulation. At night it is "particularly men who are visible," and because men are viewed as potential attackers, women "express a fear of all public space alone at night" (Valentine 388). Certain areas are also judged in regards to safety by way of the "preconceived images [one] holds about that area and its occupants, as well as from the cues [one] receives about social behavior from the actual physical surrounding" (Valentine 386). As a result of this, women are left on guard as a regular part of their lives. They cannot move as freely because they are aware of the fact that danger may be lurking around every corner. The very nature of cities adds to this fear by way of the fact that they are densely populated, and that most of these people are unknown to one another. This fear permeates women's experiences of cities in Canada, and negatively impacts their interaction with and in the city.

It is as a result of this spatial gendering that authorities often do not take women's safety concerns seriously. Since women are not viewed as belonging in public space, when they do go there and are harmed, they are told (whether it be explicitly or implicitly) that they should have known better. It is common to hear it implied from police, among others, that a woman is "to a certain degree responsible for her own fate by putting herself in such a situation" where she may be harmed, as was seen in the 1988 murder of Deborah Linsley (Valentine 385). Though police are meant to be trusted with citizen's safety and are responsible for providing them with justice when an attack occurs, they still perpetuate this cycle of victim-blaming. Meanwhile, the harmful and illegal behavior of a woman's (often male) attacker is excused or simply ignored. For example, a woman in Toronto's High Park was grabbed "by her neck" and "choked" by a man, who also "kicked her dog" (Whitzman 314). However, the police response was that it was a "common occurrence . . . and that it wasn't worth their time" (Whitzman 314). If this response is expected and normalized when women report being attacked, they will learn that there is no use in mentioning such attacks. In fact, this discrediting of women's safety concerns reinforces the idea that women should remain in the private sphere for fear of being attacked, by telling them that they truly have no place in the public realm.

This treatment of women's safety concerns then leads women to take their safety into their own hands. Women are taught that their safety in public space does not matter and that they are responsible if they get hurt, which then means that they must be careful of how they interact with and occupy public spaces. The major way in which women protect themselves on an individual scale is by being "constantly alert to their physical surroundings", especially in areas where they feel unsafe (Valentine 386). This allows them to spot potential danger and change their behavior accordingly, such as by adjusting "their pace and path" to avert those perceived dangers (Valentine 387). However, because of the contradictory messages sent to women about the danger they are in, this way of maneuvering through space is not so straightforward. Though they are told any assault is their fault, women are also told that they are "irrational to fear assault in safe public spaces" in the first place (Whitzman 306). It is deemed irrational partly because "fear is an 'emotion', and emotions have conventionally been treated as distinct from, and 'conceptually subordinate' to, cognition" (Cozadas, 1989, p. 37 qtd. in Mehta and Bondi 70). This can form a "need to control fear" and not allow it to dictate one's life (Mehta and Bondi 74). Thus, women's concern and experiences of fear are again denied and discredited, though this time it has become internalized. They are left struggling to feel secure in public space while grappling with the fact that their emotions are not seen as valid. Safety in public space then becomes not simply a matter of physical well-being, but that of psychological health and validation as well. This essentially creates a reprivatization discourse in which women are charged with the sole responsibility of their safety (Whitzman 308).

Therefore, though a culture is created in which women must take individual measures to be safe, their experience of the geography of fear is depoliticized when they take individual measures.
Another option for women, one which politicizes their fear in public space, is to take collective action. There are various ways through which women can do this. One is by conducting safety audits. Quite simply, safety audits allow women to “look at a place that bothers you and not problems” in how safe it makes one feel (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995 qtd. in Andrew 160). This allows women to gain the sense that they have “a right to the city and the unfettered use of urban space” (Andrew 161). Another method is through gatherings of women in public space. This has been seen in Take Back the Night marches across Canada, which aim to bring “issues such as sexual assault into public view” (Whitzman 300). Also, local residents in Toronto have organized “Howl’s in High Park” every summer, singing get-togethers, and most who attend are women (Whitzman 315). Such events allow women to take control of city spaces where they often do not feel comfortable, or at a time of day when they typically feel unsafe. It also politicizes women’s safety by showing them that they are not alone in their fear, and that this is a problem affecting more people than just them. Collective action allows for “bottoms-up mobilization” (Andrew 163), where women use their firsthand knowledge of safety concerns affecting themselves and other women to work together for change. This can provide a sense of agency and control that can aid in diminishing women’s fear of public space in the city. Though authority figures such as the police ignore many of the issues around women’s safety in public space, when they work together, women are able to validate their fears and begin making change on their own.

In conclusion, though women’s concern in public spaces is often ignored in Canada, there are still measures that women can and do take. They take on the challenge of ensuring their own safety even while balancing between discourses that attempt to discredit their lived experience. Women are able to further politicize their position by joining forces with other women to reclaim public space. Though the gendered nature of public space proves a challenge to maneuver, Canadian women show agency and a desire for change by taking measures to create a safer environment for themselves and other women.

Works Cited


Disclaimer:
Through reflecting upon our personal journeys, as well as interacting with other feminists, we developed this piece as a representation of our feminist evolution (from what/where we were to what we aspire to become). We by no means wish to generalize or diminish the experiences of others and/or variant evolutionary processes. We acknowledge that this is reflective of a small/specific group of feminists in a particular moment in time.

Stage I  The Awakening
The realization that, despite laws of equality and human rights, the world is not equal and systematically maintains hierarchies including:

White-Supremacist-Capitalist-Colonial-Hetero-Patriarchy: A series of functioning, institutionalized, and systemic ideologies that assist in the creation and maintenance of various (and interlocking) systems of oppression.

This stage may be characterized by feelings of desperation, anger, and sadness. You may begin to use “The Patriarchy” in regular conversation. You may also become known as the “Ranting Feminist”.

Caution: As a result of an overwhelming emotional, intellectual, political, and social awakening, this stage often generates feelings of “all righteousness”.

Stage II  Growing Pains
This stage is characterized by getting to know and love yourself and others around you. You will begin to connect with other feminists and crave (political) discussion about feminism.

You will have to take the necessary steps to educate yourself, as well as address your personal biases. This involves the acknowledgement of your own participation within the patriarchy and interlocking systems of oppression.

You may notice that, in this stage, you remain in a constant state of reflective self and social examination. You will learn to be open to being called out and begin to learn to call out others (in a constructive manner, of course). You will begin to educate friends and family about things such as systems of oppression, appropriate language, and self-love.

Stage III  The Pliable Plateau
This is a long, drawn out stage in which political and social maturity will develop. You will learn how to use your anger/sadness/guilt/frustration productively. You will discover the importance of self-care and maintenance (as to avoid burning out). You will acknowledge the value of self-directed education and understand that is it not the responsibility of others to educate you on their oppression. You will strive to influence those around you and work to incorporate your knowledge, experiences, and emotions into your own (budding) feminism.

Stage IV  C3 (Cool, Calm, Collected)
This stage is characterized by a sense of pragmatism. You will understand that change often happens slowly and at opportune moments in time. Your feminism will be integrated into your way of life and being. You will participate as a mentor and share your knowledge and experiences with others and continue to define/redefine feminism. You will know yourself and your boundaries; you will understand that if you need to say “no” that you are not letting down the movement but, instead, are taking care of yourself.
Why Choose Androgyny For Equality

Charlotte Corseault
Why do we have labels? Are they really necessary? Of course, they distinguish items and concepts in a generalized way, but as no two things are ever identical, this system becomes restricting and inaccurate. The use of labels is aimed at aiding comprehension and saving time. A simple word has the capacity to eliminate multiple phrases of vacillating description. For example, saying, “I’m bisexual” instead of, “I’m attracted to both men and women for sexual as well as platonic desires and purposes. I don’t have much on-hand experience with women but I imagine that I would like it and some days I prefer one gender over the other.” Labels also allow us to retain a certain degree of privacy, as they are generalized enough in terms of connotations to be easily applied to multiple reproducible situations. This provides ambiguity in details. Labels also have various connotations that are not always applicable to the situation presented. For example, a “hook-up” may indicate a platonic, monetary, or sexual connection for a favour. As a subcategory, it may indicate or allude to the actual act of sexual intercourse, the exchange of a series of kisses, or even just intimate contact.

Other than for reproductive purposes, why are we gender-labeled? In contemporary society, where ambition is so important, should life revolve around gender? With lessening sexual taboos, sex, often recognized as one of the base instincts, is put into value as the one thing we (as human beings) truly know how to do, something we can feel without putting into words. Sex is also the key to survival through reproduction and a source of pleasure. In terms of survival, what is the purpose of orgasm? Is it something our bodies evolved to incite sex for reproductive purposes, during the instinctive, uneducated, and ambition-less survival era? In this day and age of higher (more structured) education and technology, where survival is made simple through science and governmental systems, where ambition reigns, sex has become mainly an outlet for love and a source of pleasure.

We live in a gender-labeled society, yet we strive for equality amongst genders. It is widely acknowledged that both our traditionally recognized genders should have the same opportunities. Why then, with reproduction on the back burner, have humans not evolved to become androgynous? This would help to create gender equality. We often base actions off age-old stereotypes, such as the “facts” that “men are stronger” and “women are more sensitive.” These generalizations have been proven wrong time and again, as they are stereotypical assumptions.

It is highly unlikely that the human race will ever tire of sexual interactions; no matter the facilitation evolution brings to doing it alone. Pornography and sex toys have simply made it easier for people to understand their sexual selves, as they provide erotic experiences based on pleasure rather than on the traditional idea of mating. As a result, with total androgyny choosing a mate would become easier because we would not be limited by standards of reproduction, religion, or sexual orientation in our choices, this being subconscious or conscious, voluntary or not. Matriarchy, patriarchy, and misogynist behaviour would become thoroughly impossible, therefore eliminating all sorts of gender-disparaging tension. No one would have to deal with the stress of discovering their sexual identity. In fact, there would be no sexual identity, no sexual orientation; no compromise.

This change would revolutionize the language and literary domain, eliminating the need for masculine and feminine conjugation and terminology. These currently exist even for asexual objects, such as in languages other than English, for example, “la” chaise, and would need to be changed to reflect these egalitarian values. The androgynous pronoun, “ze”, would be used to designate each and every existing entity. Choosing to not have a gender goes against natural development, but with the evolution of intellect and rise in self-awareness and anxiety, as well as new scientific and psychological discoveries, it seems only natural that society would choose this path. This choice to adapt our bodies to create a more egalitarian community, as we are already trying to do with racial acceptance, is nothing new: as trans people are becoming more understood and accepted, it is not so unusual to change your body by means of science and medicine. This would be done with the help of communal knowledge, technology, and aptitudes. This choice would release society from being consumed and controlled by gender and sex-related stress, and result in social stability, happiness, and the survival of humanity. Additionally, widespread androgyny would reduce construction costs, as structures would be co-ed, eliminating the need for doubled facilities such as public washrooms.

Breaching the gender-gap has been a social dilemma observed by many sociologists for generations past. By eliminating the mere thought of “gender” and focusing instead on the individual, basic equality is ensured.
(More Than) Just Another Body

Artist: Carolyne Kroeker

Digital print on Somerset paper

30 x 15 inches

2014
(More Than) Just Another Body serves as a photographic response to the societal dismissal of female victims of assault. While we fixate on the aggressors, we forget the women who have survived or lost their lives to gendered violence. We must remember these women as more than just victims, more than just bodies.
Fortunate

Ella’s P.O.V.

8:16 PM FRIDAY, my clock read. I rolled over in my bed feeling groggy. An hour had passed since I had gone down for a nap after having dinner at a Chinese restaurant with my mom and my older brother Max. I crawled out of my bed to go to the bathroom, feeling strangely awkward as I moved, but not thinking much of it until I glanced at my bedroom mirror and let out an ear-piercing scream.

I ran across the hall to Max’s room, but before I had the chance to bang on his door, it flew open. We both gasped and jumped back upon seeing each other.

“Max?” I shrieked, covering my mouth in horror.

“What the —? Ella?” he stammered as he squinted at me in confusion. “Is that — Is that you? But why—?”

“What’s wrong with your face?” I wailed. “I mean — My face! I mean — WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE ME?”

He pointed a shaky finger at me. “W-Wait. Why do YOU look like ME?” Then he glanced down at his (my!) red painted finger nails and yelped. “WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?”

We both ran to the full-length mirror inside his room and stared at our reflections.

My jaw dropped. “Holy—”

“Shit,” he finished. A beat passed as we stared at ourselves in the mirror. We were the exact replicas of each other. The only things that remained the same were our eye and hair colour (dark hazel and black, respectively) and that was because we both shared those traits. Otherwise, everything else was each other’s. “Did we…?”

“Switch bodies?” I finished faintly and nodded.

“Well, geez, Ella, don’t say it like you’re about to faint,” he said, irritated. “It makes me sound like some weak teenage girl!”

I could not believe my ears. He was worried about sounding girly? At a time like THIS? I turned to glare at him. “I don’t know if you’ve noticed, Max, but you are a ‘weak teenage girl!’” I spat, air-quoting for emphasis. “YOU’RE IN MY GODDAMN BODY FOR PETE’S SAKE.” My heart was pounding in my chest. Were we dreaming? What the hell was going on?

He looked completely bewildered. “How did this even happen?” he asked. “I literally just saw you an hour ago and you were you! We got home from dinner and I took a nap and I woke up because I heard you screaming your head off—”

“You took a nap too?” I asked confusedly. “So did I.”

He looked at me skeptically. “What, are you saying we swapped bodies during our naps?”

“Hell if I know!” I cried.

He swore under his breath. “You don’t think it was the Chinese food, do you?”

I threw my arms into the air. “You really think Chinese food is what caused us to switch bodies?” I squawked. Although he was a good four years older than me, his stupidity never failed to make me question who the older sibling really was sometimes. “That’s the dumbest thing I have ever —” I stopped as a slip of paper with a wishy-washy fortune printed on it flashed through my mind. My eyes widened and I felt all the blood rush from my face. “Oh, my God.”
“What? What is it?” Max asked, startled by my sudden change in mood.

“My fortune,” I murmured, staring unblinkingly at the wall. “My fortune cookie... It said...”

“Huh? What are you talking —?”

I dashed out of his bedroom and into mine. After rummaging through the pile of clothes on my bed, I found the pair of jeans I had worn to dinner. I stuffed my hand into the back pocket and pulled out the folded slip of paper.

Max had followed me into my room and was now reading the fortune over my shoulder.

The future holds surprise reflected in another’s eyes
Once what you thought is cast aside, back to yourself you will reside

He frowned. “Wait a sec,” he said, patting his pockets before pulling out a slip of paper and handing it to me. “I think I got that same fortune in my cookie.”

I held both fortunes side-by-side. Identical. “Well, I guess that solves it. The cookies made us swap bodies. The future holds surprise reflected in another’s eyes,” I said. “But what surprise is it talking about, and what the heck does the second line mean?”

“Like I know,” he said impatiently, sitting down on the edge of my bed. “How long do you think ‘til this shit wears off? I’m not bailing on Anthony’s graduation celebration tonight. He’s my best bro.”

“I don’t know,” I said stubbornly, crossing my arms, “but I’m not ditching Madison on her 18th birthday tonight either. She’s my best friend!”

“So what are we going to do? Be each other for the night?” he scoffed.

“Well, we’re going to have to, aren’t we?” I sighed, not liking the idea myself.

There was a moment of silence as we both let that sink in. “Fuck.”

Max’s P.O.V.

The club was dim and music blared from all directions. The night was in full swing and all around us, people were dancing, drinking, and milling about. Ella was walking in front of me, parting the thick crowd as she went since she was the taller one now. We were looking for Anthony and Madison. Both of them had decided to throw their parties at the same club tonight.

I grabbed hold of Ella’s arm (technically, my arm) and she turned around looking annoyed. I was startled to see how severe my face looked. Is that really what I look like when I’m pissed?

I shivered involuntarily. Although two hours had passed since we had discovered that we had swapped bodies, seeing me in 3D was weird. It made me realize that I’ve only ever seen myself in reflections and photos.

Ella’s eyes darted around us to make sure no one we knew was nearby. When she deemed the coast clear, she hissed, “What?”

“Slow down,” I grumbled. “I don’t know how to walk in these damn things.” The high heels she had made me wear were about 6 inches high, confirming my childhood hunch that she wanted to kill me. She let out a sigh but slowed her pace and
led us to the far side of the bar which was fairly secluded. The bartenders, who were too busy tending to the people shouting out drinks, didn’t give us a single glance.

“Don’t sigh like that, it makes me look stupid,” I said. “And walk more like a guy, will you? Jesus, you’re making me look like I have a stick shoved up my ass.”

“How the hell do you ‘walk like a guy’?” she asked, completely baffled.

“Slouch,” I ordered.

“Well then, you need to stand up straighter,” she countered. “Girls are supposed to have good posture.”

I tugged down the hem of my — uh, Ella’s — dress. Guys had been eyeing me up and down ever since we had gotten here and it was freaking weird. I mean, I know we check out girls all the time, but shit, are we that obvious?

“Hey, that’s new!” Ella hissed when she saw me pulling at her dress. “Stop it!”

“Well, all these guys are checking me out and it’s freaking creepy.”

“Welcome to womanhood,” she said flatly. “But for us girls, it’s always creepy.”

“How is that creepy?” I asked, surprised. “If a guy checks out a girl, she should take it as a compliment ‘cause it means she’s hot.”

She gave me a disgusted look. “Ew, Max. What you just said could totally be considered incest.”

“Oh, shut up, you know what I meant.”

“Well, it’s not a compliment when you get grabbed or hollered at,” she said pointedly.

I frowned. “Wait, what? Guys grab you?” This was news to me.

“How come you never told me?”

She shrugged nonchalantly. “Happens all the time.”

I suddenly felt angry, and for once, it wasn’t directed towards Ella. My eyes drifted around the room, glaring at all the guys here. “Do you punch them out at least?”

She shrugged nonchalantly. “Happens all the time.”

I was mystified. “So, what, you just let guys grab you then?”

“Well, yeah,” she said, like it was the most obvious thing in the world. “What else am I supposed to do?”

I didn’t have the answer to this. Not that Ella was expecting one, apparently, because she was busy looking around the room. I guess the question was a rhetorical one, then... Which confused me even further. Man, this girl shit was complicated.

Just as I thought that, I got a weird sensation in my stomach, as if a knot was unravelling itself in there. Before I could give it much thought however, Ella ducked her head and whispered, “Oh, God, I think I see Anthony.”

I turned around to scan the crowd and my eyes immediately landed on my best bud. He was across the room in the V.I.P. section which was packed with people. When he caught us looking, he grinned and waved us over wildly.

I pivoted on the spot — almost snapping my ankle in the process (stupid shoes) — to see Ella looking suddenly anxious.

“Oh, okay,” I said firmly. “It’s game time. Don’t fuck up.” I wasn’t sure if I was talking to her or myself, but she gulped and nodded.

As we made our way over, we exchanged instructions in rapid fire.

“Square your shoulders a bit more — no, too much, yeah, there — and take bigger steps, I’m not a freaking ballerina —”

“Make sure to touch your hair a lot, like, fluff it out, and check yourself in every reflective thing you come across —”

“Don’t turn down any shots or drinks, you’ll look like a pussy, and if a girl asks you to buy her a drink, just do it, even if you don’t know her —”

Ella halted in her steps. We were standing along the side of the dance floor. “Wait, what? Even if I don’t know her?”

“Yeah,” I replied, pulling her aside to let a bus boy through. He nodded at us in thanks as he lifted a tray of empty drinks up onto his shoulder. “Why do you think I spend so much money whenever I go out?”

“But,” she interjected, “why buy someone a drink if you don’t know them? It’s like they’re using you, and you’re letting them.”

“I don’t know, chivalry maybe?” I shrugged awkwardly. “It’s just what guys are supposed to do, okay? So don’t question it, just do it when it happens. If you don’t, you’ll look like a cheap asshole.”

She opened her mouth to say something but thought better of it and shut her mouth. Then, her eyes widened as her gaze locked on something above my shoulder.

“Ell?” I asked. “Did you hear what I —”

“ELLllaaat!” a girl squealed into my ear as she engulfed me in a hug from behind, causing me to stiffen. “We’ve been looking aallll over for you! Oh, my God, I’m sooo drunk!”

I turned around to see that it was Madison. Surrounding us were a few of her other friends, all of whom were talking and laughing with each other.

“Oh, uh, hey,” I said, hugging her back, albeit a little awkwardly. Thankfully they were all too out of it to notice. “Uh, yeah, sorry I’m late! Looks like you’ve been having fun, though.”

“Now that you’re here, it’s going to be even fun-errrr!” Madison giggled, throwing an arm over my shoulders. I opened my mouth to comment that ‘fun-er’ was not a word, but was quickly cut off when Ella jabbed me in the back and stepped forward.
“Hey, I’m Max, Ella’s older brother,” she said gruffly. She ‘introduced’ herself to her own friends, each of whom did the same to her. I marvelled at Ella’s smoothness as I tried to get down as many names as possible.

“Well, I’m off to another party,” she said, pointing her thumb back towards the V.I.P. section. “You ladies have fun.” With one last wave, she turned around and ambled away, but not before shooting me a worried look.

When she was hardly out of earshot, one of the blondes (Rachel?) sidled up next to me. “Wow,” she said, linking her arm through mine. “Your brother is gorgeous.”


She shrugged and joined the chatter of the group. I tried to keep up with the conversation but gave up five minutes in. Finally, in the midst of all the talking and bantering, one of them shouted, “Drinks! Let’s go get drinks!”

* * *

We were standing at the bar, waiting on our drinks. I noticed a lot of guys eyeing us as we — well, all the girls but me — chatted noisily, not that you could hear shit over the loud music. I was standing at the end, pretending to listen to Madison and Rachel, when I felt a tap on my shoulder.

“Hey,” a guy with jet black hair said, shooting me a cocky grin. “Can I buy you a drink?” He looked to be in his early twenties, like me. What the hell was he doing, hitting up eighteen year old girls like my sister?

“No, I’m good, thanks,” I replied icily. He quirked an eyebrow and stepped closer. “Playing hard to get, huh? I like those kind of girls.”

“Uh, no, actually,” I responded angrily. “Just because I don’t want a drink doesn’t mean I’m trying to be ‘hard to get’.”

“You can buy me a drink!” Madison piped up.

“Maddy!” Rachel chided, but she was giggling too.

“Well, it is my birthday after all,” Madison boasted.

The guy looked interested. “Is it really?” he asked, looking from me, to Madison, to Rachel, and back again. “Well then, one shot for the birthday girl.”

We stood there for another half hour as we waited for the two of them to finish chatting. In that time, he had bought her four more shots. When we finally made an excuse that we had to use the bathroom, Madison was completely smashed.

She teeter-tottered dangerously in her high heels as we helped her to the bathroom. When we finally made it inside, she ran into a stall and puked.

“Hold her hair, I have to hold her purse,” Rachel said. Then she turned to Madison who was hanging over the toilet bowl and patted her on the back. “It’s okay, Maddy. Just let it all out.”

I held Madison’s thick, curly hair. “Uh, yeah, just let it all out, Madison. Better out than in, right?”

To distract myself, I surveyed the bathroom. While Madison hurled into the toilet bowl, I watched as girls waited in line for an empty stall, washed their hands, and checked their reflections. The same things guys did. I did not know what exactly I was expecting, but it sure wasn’t this. This was… normal.

Finally, after what felt like years, Madison finished puking her guts out. She looked dazed, but Rachel and I cleaned her up and managed to get her out of the club. As we walked her to her taxi, some guys that were hanging around outside the club hollered and wolf-whistled at us. Rachel, who was holding up Madison on the other side, quickened her pace.

“Slow down,” I said to Rachel. “Madison’s going to trip if we go too fast.”

“But those guys,” she whispered, her eyes darting back at them.

“Uh, that black one’s got a booty! Looks like she’s drunk as shit, though,” shouted one of the jackasses as we walked past a whole group of them. He was talking about Madison.

“What a ratchet,” another one said. A burst of laughter. I felt my blood rising. I wanted so badly to whip around and sock them but I knew I had to get Madison and Rachel to their cab.

“Where you ladies going?” they called.

“You can come home with me! I’ll take care of you!”

“Dibs on Big Booty!”

I shut the cab door on Madison and Rachel. I had learned earlier on in the night that both would be sleeping at Rachel’s place tonight. Rachel rolled down the window.

“Thanks for your help tonight, Ella,” she said gratefully.

“No problem,” I replied. “Get home safe.”

She glanced nervously at the guys who were all standing by the entrance of the club. “You going to be okay?”

I nodded reassuringly. “I’ll be fine. I’m meeting my, uh, older brother, in a few minutes.”

We said our last goodbyes and the cab drove off. I stood a good distance away from the douchegags as I waited for Ella. She only took five minutes, but the whole time, the guys would not stop catcalling and it was pissing me off. If this was how Ella’s nights out were, I did not want her going out ever again.

When she finally emerged from the club and made her way towards me, the idiots finally shut up.

“So,” she said as she motioned at a nearby cab. It came crawling up and we got in. “How was your night?”

“Is this seriously how it is everytime you go out?” I asked, fixing my gaze on her. “Cause that was hell.”

She shrugged. “It’s not too bad if you ignore the little bad parts.”
“You call jackasses calling you and your friends derogatory terms, ‘little bad parts’?” I said incredulously. “I was this close to knocking one of them out just now. And that’s only the half of it.”

“Well, my night wasn’t too bad. I think I pulled it off pretty well. I could never keep up with the drinking though. Maybe I’m just weak,” she joked.

I looked at Ella. She may be a brat, to the point where I sometimes just wanted to ship her off with FedEx, but she was my little sister. And she was not weak. She was strong. After tonight, I realized that. I had no idea she had to go through this shit everytime she stepped out of the house. It was mind-blowing to me. She didn’t deserve it. No one does. She should be treated like a human being, because she was one. An annoying human being, yes, but still a human being all the same.

Suddenly, I felt that unravelling feeling in my stomach again. Ella glanced at me with a panicked expression as she, too, held her stomach.

“Do you feel that?” she asked worriedly.

Before I could answer however, I felt a tight, squeezing sensation, as if my whole body was being forced into a rubber tube. My vision went blurry, so I could no longer see Ella who had been sitting right next to me. As quickly as the sensation came however, it was gone. I rubbed my eyes and opened them.

“Oh, my God!” we both yelled at the same time as we stared at each other. “We switched back! YES!”
Can You Queer Me Now?

If you weren’t aware of heteronormativity and its binary social norms, you are about to be.
Can You Queer Me Now?

As a QUEER person, I still need to participate in a Pride parade in 2014 because it is not acceptable in society to be QUEER. My QUEER friends and I get comments like “Ew, ughhhhhhh” followed by vomiting noises on the way to the parade. I want there to be a day where I don’t have to be viewed as part of a marginalised group and instead just as a HUMAN.

As a QUEER WOMAN, coming out meant losing friends and putting a stress on the friendships I maintain. Without having BOYS as the main topic of conversation, by addressing QUEER issues and FEMINISM instead, my social group became a lot smaller. Having FEMINISM and QUEER issues taught at a younger age would have saved me from the cultural imperialism I didn’t ask for.

As a QUEER WOMAN I shouldn’t feel powerless going to the doctor’s office. After the initial shock that one of her patients is GAY, I didn’t receive the information I needed. Homosexual relations should be taught in medical practices and practicing physicians should be knowledgeable on how to approach and understand it.

As a QUEER WOMAN I am not even believed to be QUEER and am told “I’m too pretty to be GAY!” Yes, because all my QUEER friends are as ugly as a bottom of a shoe. Heteronormativity has defined me by how I look. Can I just be HUMAN and love who I want? Why is that such a hard concept to understand?
As a QUEER WOMAN in a heteronormative society, I don’t appreciate the labels used to put me in a box. I don’t identify as a lesbian despite being in a lesbian relationship; I am attracted to people. As a straight person, you aren’t defined by your sexuality but as a QUEER I have to identify as something to be tolerated. I want to be seen for ME without having to be attached to a label.

As a QUEER WOMAN, coming out meant freeing myself but still having to lie to my family. At dinners, it is clear that heteronormativity is okay and homosexuality isn’t. Despite having my girlfriend’s amazing family, who love and accept me, I will never be able to have her as part of my family. I want homosexuality to not be a hindrance; I want it to be recognized by my family so I can bring my loved one home.

As a QUEER WOMAN I have to be afraid to openly say that I have a girlfriend because people will judge me and, in some situations, it can become life threatening. QUEER relationships need to be shown in a positive light so the STIGMA surrounding QUEER relationships can be abolished. If you don’t like it, fine, but don’t pass judgment on me.

As a QUEER WOMAN I get asked who the BOY is and who the GIRL is in my lesbian relationship. The definition of homosexuality is two people from the same sex being attracted and loving each other. We are both the GIRLS... That’s the point. I want to be recognized as a two GIRL relationship without heteronormativity STIGMATIZING it.
Can You Queer Me Now?

As a QUEER WOMAN I have to teach myself how not to let hate speech destroy my entire being. I have to learn how to deflect words like DYKE and SLUT because when I hold my girlfriends hand in public that's all I'm perceived as. It's thanks again to heteronormativity that I have to reconstruct those words. I want to be seen as a HUMAN in a loving relationship.

As a QUEER WOMAN I DO NOT APPRECIATE BEING APPROACHED BY A DRUNK WHITE CIS MAN AND BEING HARRASSED TO HAVE A THREESOME WITH HIM BECAUSE HE FINDS MY GIRLFRIEND AND I ATTRACTIVE.

As a QUEER WOMAN kissing my girlfriend goodbye should not be the initiation of a confrontation with a total stranger; a white cis MAN. Not only was he threatening to call the police on us, he called us DISGUSTING in front of a group of people who did and said nothing. Can I PLEASE kiss my girlfriend goodbye like the straight couples do?

As a QUEER WOMAN I WOULD APPRECIATE NOT HAVING TO FEEL OR HAVE FRIENDS FEEL SECOND HAND ANXIETY WHEN WE GO OUT BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF OPPRESSION SHOWING ITSELF IN THE FLESH.
I want to live in a world where limitations are not put on people based on heteronormativity. I want to be a person, be known as a person AND TREATED LIKE A PERSON.

AS A WOMAN. JUST A WOMAN. A HUMAN BEING. DO NOT CALL MY OPINIONS AND I AGGRESSIVE. I LIVE IN AN AGGRESSIVELY HARD WORLD THAT I NEED TO FIGHT IN EVERY DAY. I KNOW MY OPPRESSIONS AND PRIVILEGES. I KNOW WHO I AM. DO NOT DEFINE ME, DEGRADE ME, THREATEN ME, JUDGE ME AND DO NOT TELL ME TO BE SILENT.
It was a bright pink poster with tear away tabs that simply stated “Take What You Need” but I still felt selfish taking them. Who was I to need healing and freedom? Granted, I was going through a mental health crisis, but my struggles didn’t feel valid. I knew that there were so many worse things to go through, to experience. I thought, “Someone else probably needs them more.” This idea left me invalidating my own suffering in favour of valuing the hypothetical suffering of others. Was this thought a result of my gender socialization that dictated I place others needs above my own? Yes, but I cannot place the blame solely on my socialization. This thought was the result of a combination of other factors as well. However, I was able to ignore it and I took them anyway because somewhere I knew that I deserved these things too.

I look at these ripped pieces of paper now with understanding and self-compassion. My struggle was valid. It still is valid. I needed healing from my self-flagellation. I needed freedom from my catastrophizing, all consuming thoughts of incompetence. I am strong, and my experiences are valid. No one has the right to discount my experiences, especially myself. I am enough, I deserve healing and freedom. I took what I needed. I took what I deserved.
Need: Deserve

healing
freedom
Londa Schiebinger and Martina Schraudner’s essay “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Achieving Gendered Innovations in Science, Medicine and Engineering” talks about how gender innovations in science, medicine, and engineering spark creativity by offering new perspectives, posing new questions, and opening new areas to research. Innovation according to the authors is seen as a way to address major social problems as well as stimulate economic development (pg., 107). Schiebinger and Schraudner also point out that to better understand gender innovation, they must distinguish three different approaches necessary for gendered innovation taken by policy makers, institutional administrators, and scientists and engineers over the past decades.

The first approach focuses on the programmes designed to increase women’s participation in science, medicine, and engineering. According to the Schiebinger and Schraudner, the effort for women to participate within the science and engineering field began in the 1980s as national governments and international agencies began collecting sex disaggregated data to monitor women’s participation (pg, 101). This also includes supporting women’s education and careers. For instance, as Rosser (2008) mentions, in 1989, the United States National Science Foundation (NSF) established a task force on programmes for women’s careers in science and engineering by increasing women’s research funding, teaching women negotiation skills, setting up mentoring networks, and, more generally, making women more competitive in the scientific workplace (pg,101). In my opinion, I think this first approach is a brilliant idea because “achieving gender equality requires examining gendered division of labor in the society at large and in science in particular, as well as considering how research is conceptualized and carried out” (pg, 104). Also, with this new approach, it can benefit the female students who are very passionate about science and engineering by simply improving their scientific understanding and helping them achieve a degree that will lead them towards good paid work positions within the field.

The second approach that the authors focus on seeks to increase gender equality, especially women’s participation, by transforming research institutions. As Rosser (2008) mentions, in 1993, the United States National Science Foundation (NSF) implemented programmes designed to create positive and permanent changes in academic, social, and scientific climates: in classrooms, laboratories, departments, institutions, and organizations. In 2001, the National Science Foundation (NSF) robust ADVANCE programme made the United States a global leader in institutional transformation. This model programme assists institutions in implementing structural changes to improve women and underrepresented minorities’ success in science and engineering. In addition, the institutional reforms range from countering subtle gender and ethnic bias in hiring and promotion practices to restructuring work life balance by offering parental leaves, supporting dual careers as well as a child and elder care, and allowing for career breaks (pg, 105).

The European Commission in 2010 also moved to the institutional level by funding projects that encourage research organizations and universities to implement multi-year action plans to address institutional barriers, such as recruitment, promotion and retention policies and practices, management and research assessment.
out for me was the Medical Research: Cardiovascular Disease. The Sex and Gender Analysis also Benefits Men and Stem Cells: Analysis of gendered innovation. The five case studies includes: Technology important in overcoming the problem and producing a solution highlight a problem, a method of sex and gender analysis that are Schiebinger and Schraudner provide five different case studies that The project also demonstrates methods through case studies. It will also allow all faculty members within the scientific field to reach higher level of success.

The third approach focuses on overcoming gender bias in science and technology by designing gender analysis into all phases of basic and applied research; from setting priorities, to funding decisions, to establishing project objectives and methodologies, to data gathering, to evaluating results and transferring ideas to market. Like the authors point out, research has documented how gender inequalities that are built into society and research institutions have influenced science, medicine, and technology (pg, 102). Consequently, gender bias within research has limited scientific creativity, excellence and benefits to society. Therefore it is crucially important to identify gender bias and understand how it operates in science, medicine, and engineering. However, the analysis cannot stop there because focusing on bias is not a productive strategy.

Gender experts are now shifting emphasis away from critique towards a positive research programme that employs gender analysis as a resource to achieve excellence in science, medicine, and engineering (103). According to the authors, there is an urgent need for gender experts, natural scientists, and engineers to work together to develop international agreed upon methods of sex and gender analysis that can serve as a basis for understanding how gender functions in research. The reason for this urgent need is because gender analysis must become an integral part of the institutional management. It will also allow all faculty members within the scientific field to reach higher level of success.

The project also demonstrates methods through case studies. Schiebinger and Schraudner provide five different case studies that highlight a problem, a method of sex and gender analysis that are important in overcoming the problem and producing a solution or gendered innovation. The five case studies includes: Technology Design: Pregnant Crash Test Dummies, Civil Engineering to Secure Water Supplies, Medical research: Cardiovascular Disease, Osteoporosis: Sex and Gender Analysis also Benefits Men and Stem Cells: Analysis Sex (pg, 104-105). Out of these five case studies, the one that stood out for me was the Medical Research: Cardiovascular Disease. The problem for the disease is that, despite the fact that cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death for women in United States, Europe, and in many developing countries, it has long been defined as a male disease and the clinical standards and treatments have only been developed for men. Since women's symptoms do not match 'standard' male symptoms, women are often misdiagnosed and improperly treated.

Not knowing that the symptoms can differ between men and women is very harmful. It was analyzed that men typically experience pain in the chest and left arm. While women on the other hand, often experience chest pain along with series of less recognized pain in the right arm and back, fatigue, cold sweat, and dizziness (pg, 105). These symptoms clearly show that women suffer differently than men and for medical researchers not to notice this demonstrates how gender bias still exist within the medical field. With gendered innovation, it is suggested that including women as research subjects has led to the discovery of important sex differences in myocardial infarction symptoms, diagnostics testing, and preventative therapies. Further, analyzing covariates has led to the discovery that risk differs significantly by ethnicity and socioeconomic class (pg, 105). For instance, African –American women in the United States have 28 percent higher cardiovascular disease mortality compared to the overall female population (pg, 105). The reason why I absolutely support this third approach is because the inclusion of gendered innovation facilitates reference models and open new areas of research by considering disease such as the cardiovascular disease progression in both women and men, and by evaluating risk using sex-specific reference models.

Realizing the full potential of gendered innovation is just getting started. I agree with the authors about the recommendations for the gendered innovation in the next decade. It is very true that for the upcoming years gendered innovation within the scientific and engineering fields will require international cooperation to match the global reach of science and technology. Once the methods of sex and gender analysis are in place, there are still further steps that need to be made that involve both researchers and research institutions. These include training current researchers, holding senior management accountable for developing evaluation standards that take into account proper implementation of sex and gender analysis in research, and training the next generation in methods of sex and gender analysis.

Additionally, I support the fact that sex and gender analysis should be taught throughout the curriculum, including basic science, medicine, and engineering courses. It is important that research institutions support programmes in gender research where experts develop new knowledge concerning gender, science, medicine and technology. As well, future scientists and engineer students in technical fields should also be taught about gender analysis. This way, methods of sex and gender analysis will continuously progress throughout science, medicine, and engineering fields.

**Works Cited**

(RE)CLAIMING

By: 
FAQ Collective

Photography By: 
Brynn Hughes

As feminists we strive to push and deconstruct boundaries. In doing so, we work to address and understand the power relations they uphold. This piece is about the process of (re) claiming spaces, both literal and theoretical. We, as the Feminist and Queer Collective, thoughtfully compiled a series of images to assert our presence, contributions, and right to occupy these spaces.

It is important to note that the following photographs were taken on the University of Manitoba campus. Post-secondary institutions traditionally work to assert and maintain patriarchal values. However, in (re)claiming these spaces we sought to emphasize the campus as a creative space that both enables and supports revolutionary thought.
(Re)Claiming (Un)Safe Spaces

Due to the eminent threat of violence and assault, women are often made to feel unsafe when moving around in their daily lives. The underground tunnels on the University of Manitoba campus are an example of a space that triggers such concerns for women. The design of the tunnels—long stretches with few to no exits or windows, a space that (at certain times of the day or year) are used only by a limited amount of people—is one that privileges the travel of certain bodies over others. As a result, the movement of women and other marginalized groups on campus is restricted; they are forced to weigh the risks involved in the routes that they choose to take.

Here the Feminist and Queer collective reclaims the tunnels and other (un) safe spaces by asserting their physical presence as a group of women in solidarity with one another. As well, the use of lighting in the photo in combination with the secluded and closed off nature of the tunnels makes it impossible to ignore the sense of unease women may feel when using the tunnels (or occupying traditionally unsafe spaces).
(Re)Claiming Knowledge

Women’s knowledge is systemically devalued and silenced. We are written out of history, our contributions and experiences ignored. We are constructed as irrational, and emotions are denied their role as valid sources of knowing. When we do create, our work is often not listened to, pushed into a niche that only relates to women, while stories and understandings sourced from the hegemonically powerful are created as universal truths. We are discouraged from sharing our knowledge with one another, and when we do, it is often a private and secret affair. In this photo, we gather together in the library (a symbolic space of wisdom) to explore and share our knowledge and the knowledge of other marginalized people, whose voices are also often silenced. Here, we reclaim our right to know and be known.
(Re)Claiming the Night

As women, we acknowledge the threat and reality of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and (gendered) violence. As women, we have been socialized and taught to avoid certain spaces, places, and scenarios to decrease vulnerability. This method of socialization and violence prevention often enables and justifies victim-blaming by implying that it is the responsibility of women and other marginalized groups to avoid spaces/places that enhance vulnerability (rather than addressing the power relations that contribute to and allow violence).

As women, and as the Feminist and Queer Collective, we are (re)claiming the night. We are acknowledging that violence against women violates fundamental human rights, and we are saying NO to a society that appropriates victim-blaming. Our visual representation of reclamation not only seeks to enhance the visibility of women in the night and (un)safe spaces, but also works to emphasize solidarity. Although not seen in the image, the stars are created by and symbolize the presence of the other women and members of the Feminist and Queer Collective.
(Re)Claiming the Body
This (re)clamation of the body flies in the face of the male gaze and rape culture. It is a representation of the agency women seek over their bodies, specifically in public spaces. It is not the person’s responsibility to ensure that they are not sexualized; it is the responsibilities of others to not sexualize that person, no matter what they are wearing/not wearing. It is my body and I possess the agency to do with it what I wish. My body is not here to please the male gaze or to serve as a decoration and erase my humanity. Please stop telling me I would look prettier if I smiled, or cat-calling “hey baby” in the street, because I do not do what I do to please you.

It is important to acknowledge how women themselves participate in rape culture through slut-shaming and victim-blaming. As demonstrated in the photograph, the women are gathered around in solidarity and support. This works to illustrate the importance of supporting one another’s choices and not tearing each other down. As women, and as people, we have the right to be in public spaces how we choose, without fear of violence and judgment.
(Re)Claiming Academia: Women in Science

Historically, women were identified as emotional, nurturing, passive, and therefore best suited to exist within the domestic sphere. As a result, education for women was designed to reflect domestic and/or maternal values. This gendered stereotype reinforces the idea that women are not suited to successfully pursue careers in subject areas such as science and math: areas of study that have been and are still considered "masculine." Such social biases discourage the participation and advancement of women in the traditionally "masculine" fields. Women have been and still continue to be systemically excluded from or marginalized within the intellectual machinery of scientific and technological development and innovation. Even when women reach advanced levels of, for instance, scientific study, they receive less acknowledgment and support for their research. Female scientists typically receive less funding, lab space, office support, and grants for equipment and travel.

As a collective, we are (re)claiming academia to break down the stereotype about women in traditionally "masculine" fields. In doing so, we demand that female students have the freedom and confidence to pursue careers in any chosen field. We believe that education is a powerful instrument for changing women's position in society and that women are legally and morally entitled to equal educational opportunities.
(Re)Claiming (Radical) Feminism
The myth of post-feminism asserts the idea that feminism is no longer necessary and that we, as a society, have achieved equality. This relentlessly pervasive myth, along with the false notion that feminism aims to socially devalue the lives and experiences of men, contributes to the maintenance of feminist stereotypes. Popular misconceptions of feminism associate feminist values with aggression, misandry (man-hating), and ignorance (stereotypes that were traditionally associated with radical feminism). Feminism, in reality, aims to address the interlocking systems of oppression that constrain and restrict humanity and society as a whole.

We, as the Feminist and Queer Collective, believe in the multiplicity of meaning, thought, and existence and refuse to be limited or defined by misconstrued conceptions of what it means to be and identify as a feminist. It has become socially acceptable to maintain and practice feminist values, but to explicitly identify as a feminist is to seemingly identify and comply with the popular misconceptions and stereotypes; to be a feminist is to be inherently “radical.” As women, and as the Feminist and Queer Collective, we are proud feminists and are working to actively reclaim (radical) feminism.
Countering Imperialism in Transnational Feminist Praxis

Rebecca Quinn-Davis

Transnational feminist praxis often encounters difficulties in avoiding the reproduction of imperialist power relations, particularly when feminists from the West seek to engage in activism on behalf of and/or working with women from Third World countries. The important work of countering these hierarchical interactions continuously happens; two examples of this can be seen in the Ananya Dance Theatre in Minnesota, an Indian dance group composed exclusively of women of color, and the short documentary Interstitched, which focuses on migrant women laborers in Indonesia. Both the dance theatre and the filmmakers seek to subvert imperialist ideologies of the racial and transnational Other by using non-hierarchical, collaborative processes to create activist dance and film.

Kamaara, et al. (2012) cite Musa Dube’s definition of imperialism as the “structural imposition of a few standards [in our case, Western norms] on a universal scale” (brackets in original, p. 50). It is rooted in the history of Western colonization of Third World countries, which continues today in a myriad of ways. Imperialism constructs whiteness and dominant Western culture as “normal” and people of color and non-western cultural practices as Other, primitive, and exotic. This impacts transnational (as well as local) relationships and must be explicitly addressed to avoid replicating taken-for-granted imperialist power relations in things like planning and implementing activist efforts, as well as smaller scale interpersonal relations.

In Western imperialist discourse, people (especially women) of color get constructed as Others to normative whiteness. The idea is that white/Western cultures and people are “normal,” while racialized and Third World people are outsiders to civilization, primitive and in need of saving from themselves. The Ananya Dance Theatre resists this notion by creating a space within a white-supremacist society exclusively for women of color. One of the dancers explains a revelatory experience she had within the dance group: “…I saw then that when I thought of myself in relation to others, it was always a white other, a male other, or a non-adopted other” (Tinsely et al. 2010 p. 159). Here she discusses how the Ananya Dance Theatre helped her realize her own internalized sense of being an Other, shaped and reinforced by a racist, imperialist society. These women have flipped the script; by creating a space exclusively for women of color from the Third World, they have effectively Othered whiteness, even if only on a small scale, resisting the supposed hierarchy of being an Other. This also allows for a more healing and restorative experience in creating dance, and maintain a focus on transnationally marginalized women.

Likewise, Silvey (2010) explains her work on Interstitched as a “deliberately transnational project” that was “aimed at pushing viewers to challenge the fetishism of the ‘other’ as exotic and vulnerable laborer” (p. 195). This works to disrupt the idea of a homogenous and discretely “different” group of people, labourers in Indonesia. The Ananya Dance Theatre and the filmmakers, through their work, combat imperialism in particular when feminists from the West seek to engage in activism on behalf of and/or working with women from Third World countries. The important work of countering these hierarchical, collaborative processes to create activist dance and film.
The filmmakers of *Interstitched* also strived to create in a way that combated imperialism by working collaboratively and non-hierarchically with women in Indonesia. Kamaara et al. (2012) explain that “[a]t the very heart of imperialist ideologies is a one-sided monologue in which the colonizer seeks to convert and order the world toward his/her own identity” (p. 51). This has been the downfall of many Western feminist efforts to engage in transnational activism, as they fall into the colonizing role of the white savior seeking to change the world in accordance with their western vision of equality. A feminist film that resists that would therefore work in collaboration with those it represents and for whom it seeks to create change, so that it aligns with their vision of social justice as well. The makers of *Interstitched* sought to do this by having a “shared commitment to making the film production process itself as collaborative, reflexive, and equitable as possible” (Silvey 2010 p. 194). Similarly, the Ananya Dance Theatre worked collaboratively to produce and teach/learn dances, thereby resisting the replication of imperialist ways of creating in a space for women of color. Actively pursuing a collaborative approach with those being represented allows for self-representation of marginalized people, which resists the imperialist imposition of dominant white culture in transnational feminist activism.

In the end, the collaborative process often allows disagreements to arise, which ultimately makes it a more difficult route. Silvey (2010) particularly seemed to be left with more questions than answers upon reflection of the film and its production, which makes meaningful collaboration seem less desirable in many cases. However, the deconstruction of imperialist ideologies does not happen quickly or easily, and the work must be explicitly sought in order to counter the Othering of racialized people from Third World countries. Transnational feminist praxis is meaningless and harmful without this anti-imperialist work, and both the Ananya Dance Theatre and the filmmakers behind *Interstitched* are striving to counter imperialist practices.

**Works Cited**


CALM BEFORE / storm with no eye
PART 1:

I was last seen rowing a boat of complacency along the shore. But it was less of a shore and more of a taunting (and rather relentless) travel guide, that I had resorted to hereafter (mis)placing my compass. Sometimes I liked to anchor in shallow, still waters, where I could gaze over the edge, eyes low, and see nothing but sand. I had long since avoided the reflection(s) found in deeper waters.

“What are you looking for?”
“Nothing. But it could be anything. Something.”
“Why are you looking, if you don’t know what for?”
(I’ve been running from sunsets, trying my best to remember how to turn sand into glass)

The strange and endearing advantage of shallow water, is/was that retrieving my anchor never took too long.

PART 2:

I remember some things about you, like how you slept against the wall, and held my hand too tight, how, with proud indifference, you abandoned faith in moderation, and made only enough room on your plate for Sadness and Sorrow. In the end, or beginning, I was the first to feel the draft. The fog we named “Melancholy” crept between the bars, and soon (enough), it made our bed at night. Something like yin and yang, the fog tangled itself amongst my tombstones. It gave voice to eulogies, cradled wilted petals, and our fingertips grew to know nothing but each other’s weathered palms.

I guess we saw eye to eye, for as long as you could see through. How do you tell someone that your soul is a sinkhole and your mind is a graveyard? “I have a cemetery in my eyes, I do, I do, I do.” But I still remember how you slept against the wall, and the cold chills that kept me company.
Within Canadian society, beauty plays a large role in how sexuality is performed and developed. Be it ‘natural’ beauty or manufactured, beauty is seen as only skin deep. The influence of beauty is most commonly made through the sale and wearing of makeup and fashion products. The wearing of makeup and other fashion accessories adds to the idea that beauty is cosmetic, creating the illusion for the wearer that they can choose how beautiful they look, as long as they can afford it. How does beauty influence sexuality? Does makeup control one’s sexuality and change their sexual image? And does this ideal of beauty created by makeup and fashion change depending on the gender of the wearer? Corporations make mounds and heaps of money off of consumers by influencing our choices, but how is it they influence our decisions? The retail locations where makeup and other beauty/fashion accessories are sold is a great place to start this analysis.
Methodology

I chose to use a few different modes of how I would acquire my ethnographic research information. The first mode I chose was my workplace. I work directly with the sale of makeup along with the application of makeup to clients and teach clients tips and tricks of how to use beauty products at home with professional skills. I used one week of time observing at my place of work, plus some incidents from the past. I observed the clients within the store, used my experience with the clients, and our conversations. Along with client interaction, I observed the advertisements apparent within the store, on shelves, on products, and in the store windows. I used the observations of how I personally would apply my own makeup before work, how clients had applied their makeup, how clients asked to have their makeup applied, and how my fellow coworkers applied makeup. I also took note of any names of products that stood out as important. Some products even had interesting shapes that I found significant. From time to time we have brand representatives come to our location and educate us on their products, techniques, and different philosophies behind the brand; some of my experiences from these training sessions have been interestingly valuable to this research.

The second mode of research I chose was to observe the use of beauty products outside of the workplace. I observed my friends whilst preparing for a night out on the town, how they present themselves on a daily basis, how they dress and wear makeup (if any) at school, and what goals I assumed they were aiming to achieve. Along with friend observation, I took notice to how gay men and the LBGTQ+ community in particular used beauty products and how the difference of gender changes ideals of beauty.

The third mode took place in cyberspace, observing YouTube videos and browsing blogs, particularly Tumblr. I even took note of how beauty and products associated with it were used or frowned upon within gay male dating apps, such as Grindr and Growlr. Grindr is a generic dating app meant to encompass most of the gay male community, and Growlr, although anyone is allowed to join, is an app targeted towards a sub-community called the bear community, a community for men who like bears and cubs along with other sub-identities.

The methods I chose to use proved to be a smooth choice and didn’t interfere with my job or any other part of my daily life. Some of the findings were new and surprising to what I had already observed, and some information collected turned out to be facts and incidents that I had already experienced and known of. While at work, any break I got, I would jot down any new information acquired on my iPhone note app. This became a convenient and inconspicuous way of recording information, being that onlookers would assume that I was texting or social networking like any other youth. While acquiring information on my peers, this method again proved itself as simple and inconspicuous. And while online, I again used the same method, although with the application now on my laptop; it was all synchronized and kept both ends of the note app updated.

Findings

While at work, I paid close attention to any of the advertisements, names and shapes of products present. The majority of images present within my workplace depict women, with one exception: one brand sometimes uses men in drag as models. Most of the women are depicted as young (mid- to early 20’s), most white and blonde with blue eyes, although some of the ads did include women of visible minorities. I have noticed a trend since the time I started working at this workplace approximately two years ago: the advertisements have slowly become more inclusive in a sense, some including African-American women, a now large portion with Asian women, but almost no depiction of South Asian women or any other variety of socially constructed race. In regards to the advertisements within my workplace, many of them have subtly become quite lesbian-themed, with women looking sultrily in each other’s eyes, a picture of two women’s lips grazing one another, two or more women in a near naked embrace. Along with the majority of ads being of white women and now a large portion having lesbian undertones, all of the women depicted in the advertisements are skinny. Not one of the women, in the two years I have worked at this location, have been average weight or plus sized in any sense. Many of the products we sell have sex based names or may have sexually charged shapes or packaging. We carry blushes by the name of “Orgasm,” lipsticks called “Manhunt,” “Fire Down Below,” “NSA” (No Strings Attached), “Cat Fight,” eye shadows known as “NSFW” (Not Safe For Work), mascara titled “Better Than Sex,” liquid eyeliners named “Threeway;” the list goes on. Some of the packaging is even phallic shaped, from generic lipstick shapes, to ones when turned up actually look like the head of a penis (on purpose or not, to the right person it looks like genitalia).

Along with observing advertisements and products, I also took the time to observe fellow coworkers, clients and paid attention to myself, all in regards to how we used makeup and other beauty products. I noticed that most coworkers (including myself) wore more makeup than the average client, this mainly being due to the fact my place of work has sexist regulations in place to make sure women are presenting themselves in a best manner possible to promote the products. Women are required to wear mascara with at least two visible eye shadows or one shadow with a liner and mascara, some form of complexion product, blush and/or bronzer, and a lip colour; even though this policy does not affect me as a male-identified individual, I wore makeup in solidarity. The majority of us employees wore above average amounts of makeup. A small amount of employees chose not to for various reasons, some due to skin concerns, rebellious attitudes, and lack of skill. Within the recent months, several coworkers have played with the idea of plastic surgery, many considering or have planned breast augmentation, as well as lip enhancements. The steep views of the beauty industry have made huge impressions on my coworkers. Although the majority of clients wear small amounts of makeup and request minimal “natural” looks, some clients wear lots.

The conversations and observations from clients was one of the most entertaining parts of my research. Some common phrases I hear from clients are “I want to look like I’m not wearing makeup,”
I observed my peers and friends when we would get ready and apply our makeup or choose our outfits together. I noticed, depending on which friends and if they too were makeup artists, they would apply different amounts of makeup and many different styles, if any at all. One friend, who also works as a makeup artist, is a brave soul; she wore a blue lipstick, bright silver tights, a flowing black top, and a bowler hat with five-inch stilettos to a sports bar. On the other hand, a different friend wore just her jeans and t-shirt to a gay bar. I have noticed through a dramatic looks to simple “everyday” styles. Along with YouTube how-to videos and tutorials daily. They range from an array of cosmetic ingredients that do that are illegal in Canada, although hydroquinone, a controversial skin bleaching agent, is available in the U.S.A., or with foundation in a shade or two lighter. Some clients ask to learn how to contour (change the appearance of one’s face shape), be it classic contouring, which involves enhancing the look of cheek bones, or more advanced contouring where the nose bridge is enhanced or jaw line, etc. The idea of changing one’s face shape is an interesting topic. A brand rep once taught us how to modify seven of the eight face shapes (Oval, Heart, Triangle, Inverted Triangle, Square, Diamond, Round, Long) to resemble the most ideal, Oval. During this training, the representative used a coworker as a model and showed how to enhance her nose bridge. My coworker was of Chinese ancestry and had a small, shallow nose bridge; the rep chose her specifically because it is a common request amongst Asian clients to enhance their nose bridge to look “more white”. Sometimes clients, along with odd requests, are gender biased or prejudice when it comes to male or non-female gendered individuals applying makeup. I personally have experienced this prejudice with clients in the past. I approached them asking if they required assistance and they would reply ‘No, I would like one of the girls to help me.’ One client even accused me of not being capable to perform adequate service because of my apparent male gender performance. I have spoken with friends who are also in the beauty industry and they have experienced similar incidents.

The last place that I took time to record research was online. Within the mass world of YouTube and budding sphere of Tumblr, makeup artists, along with aspiring viewers, post how-to videos and tutorials daily. They range from an array of dramatic looks to simple ‘everyday’ styles. Along with YouTube and Tumblr, I observed online within a few apps on my iPhone. Grinder and Growlr provide an entertaining space to interact with other gay men, and provided an interesting space to observe how makeup and beauty products are used. Few men on these applications visibly used makeup; but if I looked closely it was possible to notice if an individual had their eyebrows plucked, if they trimmed their facial hair meticulously or if they might be wearing foundation or even blush. Some profiles even mention they trimmed their facial hair meticulously or if they might be seen in my workplace suggest that to be sexually attractive, one must be white, young, skinny, oval faced, sexually fluid (to please the male gaze) and sometimes ‘exotic’. The only way to become this sexual ideal is to wear the beauty products found in the brands which advertise this image. Many of the names of products suggest that sex is a popular and socially approved past time in contrast to some conservative and religious norms found outside of the beauty industry. This is possibly why many clients are resistant to wearing excessive amounts of makeup. The shape of products provide a public display of sex; a woman applying a lipstick (shaped like a phallus) gives a travelling theatre for the male gaze. Wearing this makeup gives the wearer a super charged and highly visible sexuality, exactly as the advertisements taunt.

The requests made by clients imply that some are uncomfortable appearing sexual. They are in a sense afraid to challenge the daily norm of hegemonic heterosexuality. A woman should be proper and well-poised, otherwise she will never be wed (or respected, regardless of marital status). But the subtle requests from clients to accent their cheek bones, change their face shape, or appear ‘more white’ tickle hegemonic heterosexuality at its roots; a woman must appear attractive to the male. The white clients who want to enhance their tan evoke the idea that darker skin distaste to men who wear makeup or perform in drag, blaming it on masculinity and the want for ‘Straight-Acting’ males or ‘Real Men.”

The main data that I took from each of these modes of data collection were:

• Within the workplace, advertisements featured people who were sexually charged, bisexual, young, oval faced, white (with the introduction of Asian models as exotic), and slim.

• Products were, as well, sexually charged: phallic shapes, provocative names.

• Clients requested tame and less sexual looks along with requested appearance-modifying products.

• Coworkers were trailblazers with their bold looks with the exception of a few who held back.

• Several coworkers have become entranced by the idea of plastic surgery.

• Friends varied in choice of makeup application, except when in attendance of school.

• Most gay men online expressed outward distaste for makeup, although still complying to cultural expectations in regards to grooming.

• YouTube and Tumblr provided an outlet for makeup artists.

Discussion of My Findings

Beauty products, especially cosmetics, play a huge part in how sexuality is consumed by Canadian society. The advertisements seen in my workplace suggest that to be sexually attractive, one must be white, young, skinny, oval faced, sexually fluid (to please the male gaze) and sometimes ‘exotic’. The only way to become this sexual ideal is to wear the beauty products found in the brands which advertise this image. Many of the names of products suggest that sex is a popular and socially approved past time in contrast to some conservative and religious norms found outside of the beauty industry. This is possibly why many clients are resistant to wearing excessive amounts of makeup. The shape of products provide a public display of sex; a woman applying a lipstick (shaped like a phallus) gives a travelling theatre for the male gaze. Wearing this makeup gives the wearer a super charged and highly visible sexuality, exactly as the advertisements taunt.

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is 'exotic' and 'other.' While darker skin is viewed as exotic, one must stay white passing and not venture too far, for hegemonic heterosexuality frowns upon interracial marriages.

My coworkers at times challenge the hegemonic heterosexuality by wearing above average amounts of makeup. Although my coworkers challenge hegemonic heterosexuality, they still often adhere to the consumer image of white, oval faced, slim, bisexual, etc. These unattainable expectations have caused further impressions upon my coworkers. Many have considered plastic surgery as alternatives to cosmetics, diet or exercise. I believe this is due to the pressure that is put upon us as role models for the industry of beauty. Plastic surgery does what cosmetics sometimes cannot and can increase one's sexual attraction.

Friends displayed their sexuality more carefully. When going out to the club, they dressed accordingly to convey a certain sexual orientation or sexual attraction. But when my friends attended school, they found extreme cosmetics an excess and toned their styles down. When cosmetics are noticeable to the onlooker at school, it is frowned upon because school is seen as a place of learning and not as a place where sexual display matters. Although this view on cosmetics at school applies to a large population of students, there still is a sizeable chunk of students (mostly heterosexual men and possibly some heterosexual women) that think it is acceptable and even sometimes preferred. The idea of cosmetics at school being preferred could be due to the factor of sexual attraction to non-hegemonic heterosexual males, or due to the idea of finding a sexual partner for heterosexual women. While hegemonic heterosexual males at times enjoy cosmetics on women, homosexual men can have a different view of cosmetics, especially when it becomes a factor of sexual attraction.

Online, many gay men frowned upon other men wearing makeup; I believe this is due to cultural expectations and norms. To be of the male gender and wear cosmetics is to break gender barriers. Breaking cultural norms is taboo and can be uncomfortable to individuals who were cultured to embody norms. This is why many gay men find it unattractive for other gay men to wear makeup, because it is feminine and "un-manly." To be feminine and "un-manly" is to reduce one's sexual attraction as a gay male within Canadian culture. Although it is seen to reduce a gay male's sexual attraction, many gay men still wear makeup and even create YouTube videos alongside Tumblr blogs, posting pictures, videos, and tutorials. With the rise of gay men as makeup artists on YouTube and Tumblr, it is becoming more and more visible to the heterosexual culture of their talent, and the sheer fact that makeup artists can be of any gender.

Which brings me to my last topic, how gender influences the ideas of makeup and sexuality. Many men dress in drag with large amounts of makeup and perform different forms of sexualities through gender expression. Makeup, although detrimental to a gay man's sexual attraction, can boost that of a drag queen, regardless if the queen is in fact a gay male. I believe this is because while in drag, one is perceived as a woman, where makeup wearing is acceptable. Gender can even hinder a makeup artist when it comes to assisting clients. Gender has a large influence on how cosmetics can change and control one's sexuality.

Conclusion

Cosmetics can enhance one's sexual attraction by making features more prominent, but if one wears too much cosmetics or their cosmetics are too noticeable, this can hinder one's hegemonic heterosexuality. The advertisements of cosmetic companies influence our choices of what is sexually attractive. Cosmetics can be used to enhance one's sexuality by making your skin tone lighter or darker, to create the illusion of exoticism or reduce it. Cosmetics can make an individual more attractive to the male gaze, but also has the power to do the opposite. Cosmetics have a hand in reducing a gay man's sexual attraction by making him appear more feminine, as femininity is deemed universally unattractive by western society. Sexuality is controlled by beauty, beauty is controlled by cosmetics, and cosmetics are controlled by the corporations that market and sell them. If we as Canadians buy into beauty as cosmetic, we are letting our sexuality be controlled by someone else.
Don’t Judge a Book By Its Cover

Tabitha Stephenson
I created this art piece to represent acceptance of LGBTQ+ people around the world. The book and the colour grey represent homophobia/transphobia/queerphobia and fear. The rainbow coming from the book means acceptance and respect for everyone in the LGBTQ+ communities, while the symbols I used are to acknowledge the diversity within LGBTQ+ communities. For me personally, I came out when I was in high school, but I didn’t feel accepted until I entered university and joined an LGBTQ+ group on campus. I had a hard time with labels and stereotypes not only because I am bisexual but also because I have an intellectual disability. Today, there are some areas and places where I experience more acceptance than others, and that acceptance is important to me as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.
Prevention is Key:

Women's Safety in Canadian Cities

Kari Cook
My essay will be on the importance of prevention and treatment of violence against women and girls at work, on the streets, and in public spaces in Canadian cities. Because women's safety is important whether it be in private or public, it is important to have a range of preventive approaches. Preventative approaches include health services, public education campaigns, skills training for employees and professionals, and school curriculum programmes. Many cities across Canada including Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo, and Edmonton have city-community based groups working towards analyzing, improving, and providing women's safety within their cities. They provide a range of services and programmes aimed at preventing violence against women. However, much of the time and money is given to treatment programmes while prevention programmes, although cost-effective, are given less attention. It is essential to women's safety that Canadian cities require violence protection, treatment policies and programs in addition to adequate violence prevention programmes.

According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme prosperous cities are cities that foster productivity, infrastructure development, quality of life, equality and social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. They are most commonly associated with increasing rates of economic growth and material wealth. For this essay I will draw specifically on quality of life. Quality of life “ensures the use of public spaces in order to increase community cohesion, civic identity, and guarantees the safety and security of lives and property” (6). Along with the definition of prosperous cities it is important to understand the meaning of violence and abuse. According to Ward and Belanger violence is defined as the intentional act of physically hurting another person (321). Abuse occurs when a person takes advantage of a less powerful person. It encompasses (but is not limited to) neglect, sexual and emotional abuse, and financial exploitation, as well as physical violence (321). Throughout this essay I will be focusing on specifically sexual and physical violence against women. Prevention is key in that it is “the action of stopping something from happening or arising” while treatment is “the manner in which someone behaves towards or deals with someone or something” (Oxford Dictionaries). Protection is another important concept; according to the Canadian Governments Constitution Act in section 15 of the Charter, every individual has equal protection and benefit of the law “without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical ability” (Government of Canada).

According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme the women most at risk for violence include young women, lone women, poor/low income women, elderly women, and women with disabilities (33). Adding to this list the Canadian Women's Foundation mentions that Indigenous, immigrant, and racialized women in Canada are at a greater risk for experiencing violence, due to the effects of colonialism, racism, and xenophobia (in addition to sexism). It is equally as important to understand why women are becoming victims. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme states that perpetrators (who are predominately men) may have witnessed violence as a child, experienced it themselves (child abuse), or have grown up with a rejecting or absent father. Gendered violence may be linked to alcohol and/or substance abuse. Men may also feel resentment or that their privilege is being threatened due to increasing employment rates among women across Canadian cities (33). According to the Canadian Women's Foundation there is an association between violence against women and gender inequality. Gender inequality creates humiliation, intimidation, control, abuse, and even murder.

Violence against women is costly to society, in addition to being a tragic life-altering event. Lana Wells states that violence against women is no longer a ‘private’ problem, but rather a ‘public’ and social problem because the whole of society pays monetarily. “Violence is not just an individual, private, or family matter, it is a pervasive and complex societal problem in Canada” (Wells). In fact, annual national costs in a 2011 study conducted by Varco et
also turn to the Canadian Women’s Foundation for violence (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2014). Women can action in the prevention of violence in their own communities allow women and girls to feel empowered and motivated to take to, and to know what resources are available. The project aims to the recognition of the early signs of violence, to know who to turn working to strengthen the criminal justice, housing, and health systems to respond to family violence. We also have the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Regulations that is a policy that works towards preventing violence within the work place (Government of Canada 2014). Throughout Canada the Canadian Red Cross provides many different outreach programmes and resources to help combat violence against women within the country. In particular, they have a programme called RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention programmes and services. This programme provides communities with educators that work with youth on various subjects related to violence such as bullying and harassment prevention, healthy youth dating relationships, and child abuse and neglect prevention. They also have Child- and-Youth-Serving Organizations that focus on providing the community with safer environments. As well, they carry the responsibility to prevent violence and have a legal responsibility and-Youth-Serving Organizations that focus on providing the resources to help combat violence against women within the country. In particular, they have a programme called RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention programmes and services. This programme provides communities with educators that work with youth on various subjects related to violence such as bullying and harassment prevention, healthy youth dating relationships, and child abuse and neglect prevention. They also have Child- and-Youth-Serving Organizations that focus on providing the community with safer environments. As well, they carry the responsibility to prevent violence and have a legal responsibility to make sure all participants are safe from harm. Finally they work to ensure that First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities are free from any forms of violence including abuse, exploitation, bullying, or harassment (Canadian Red Cross 2014). The Native Women’s Association of Canada provides an outreach specifically for Indigenous women, entitled the Violence Prevention Toolkit. The Toolkit was developed in 2007 to raise awareness of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls. The project enables the recognition of the early signs of violence, to know who to turn to, and to know what resources are available. The project aims to allow women and girls to feel empowered and motivated to take action in the prevention of violence in their own communities (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2014). Women can also turn to the Canadian Women’s Foundation for violence prevention resources such as tip sheets, webinars, and live chats that allow women access to online support.

Within Canada today there are various policies and programmes that aim to prevent and treat violence against women. Currently in place there are various initiatives to promote women friendly cities, including: crime prevention through environmental design, women’s safety audits, women’s organization with neighbourhoods, international agencies, cities and local authorities, and central governments (United Nations Human Settlements Programme 34-35). In Canada, we have the Public Health Agency of Canada that has a Family Violence Initiative (FVI). This initiative is responsible for promoting awareness of risks associated with family violence as well as working to strengthen the criminal justice, housing, and health systems to respond to family violence. We also have the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Regulations that is a policy that works towards preventing violence within the work place (Government of Canada 2014). Throughout Canada the Canadian Red Cross provides many different outreach programmes and resources to help combat violence against women within the country. In particular, they have a programme called RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention programmes and services. This programme provides communities with educators that work with youth on various subjects related to violence such as bullying and harassment prevention, healthy youth dating relationships, and child abuse and neglect prevention. They also have Child- and-Youth-Serving Organizations that focus on providing the community with safer environments. As well, they carry the responsibility to prevent violence and have a legal responsibility to make sure all participants are safe from harm. Finally they work to ensure that First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities are free from any forms of violence including abuse, exploitation, bullying, or harassment (Canadian Red Cross 2014). The Native Women’s Association of Canada provides an outreach specifically for Indigenous women, entitled the Violence Prevention Toolkit. The Toolkit was developed in 2007 to raise awareness of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls. The project enables the recognition of the early signs of violence, to know who to turn to, and to know what resources are available. The project aims to allow women and girls to feel empowered and motivated to take action in the prevention of violence in their own communities (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2014). Women can also turn to the Canadian Women’s Foundation for violence prevention resources such as tip sheets, webinars, and live chats that allow women access to online support.

An important and reoccurring question surrounding the prevention of violence among women in Canadian cities is whether or not these programs should be gender specific or gender inclusive. Female only spaces can provide women and girls the opportunity to explore and express their thoughts, issues, and concerns (something they may not be able to do in gender inclusive prevention programs). A safe space is defined as a space free of discrimination where participants can have their voices validated and heard (POWER Camp National 2006). These safe spaces are confidential places where women and girls can come together and address the cultural, political, social, economic, and personal issues in their lives that may leave them vulnerable to violence within the patriarchal world they live in. The safe spaces can serve as a space where women and girls can seek refuge from violence and abuse. Additionally, they work to support and strengthen women and girls while leaving them free of the concern of racism, homophobia, sexism, or any form of harassment. Creating gender-specific prevention programmes and spaces throughout Canada is an effective way to raise and spread awareness of violence against women.

It is evident that violence against women is linked to systemic and institutionalized sexism. Through the use of public education, violence prevention programmes, and a strong criminal justice response system, we can work towards a future that better supports, protects, and values the lives and experiences of women.

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This is a story about a lady I met
But I cannot say her name for you’ll know her I bet
Passionate, successful, and a soul so kind
No one would ever think: “Well, here’s a crazy mind”
She seems happy, content
Yet she said words I didn’t think she meant
The moment the drink hit her lips
Her secrets, her fears, out of her mouth it drips
"Let me out,” she cried
"My soul is locked and my hands are tied
Everyone looks up to me and my life with envy
For little do they know, me, the real me will never be,

When I was 17 I already knew
I had this vision I had already drew
The dream life I had desired
With all that I can I had tried and aspired
Fame was on to me
As I wanted it to be
I was pretty and I was skinny
My looks were what you’d ask for from a genie,
The day finally came I was in the limelight
Cameras started rolling and my future was so bright
For a big dreamer like me, an opportunity arose
So young, so naïve but this was the life I chose
For the next few years I lived a young girl’s dream
I didn’t see its consequences, as it would seem
After all, the rules never seemed wrong
Look sexy and smile and I was promised to belong,
The rules never changed as I fast forward to 24
Admirers await and projects still lined up at my door
I was the It Girl, face of perfection
Everything I did and wore caused a chain reaction
My body and beauty, still a dime
The glitz and glamour and the red carpet ball
Perfection was not easy to maintain
It empties your soul and makes you insane
Always poised, tall, and thin
Fruit diets only and donuts were a sin
No hair out of place, no blemish in sight
Couture dresses, fancy heels, and always be ready for the light
What I wore and how I looked was all that mattered
My identity was how society had it plastered”
Tears trickle down her eyes
And she says, “I couldn’t deny all these lies
Expectations instead of reality
How did I come to agree to this mentality?”

She continues and said this was her favourite part
When what now mattered was her heart,
“Through the years I’ve been with different men
Each breaking my heart again and again
They were men but certainly acted like pigs
The further they got, the more pain it digs”
I said, “Can you explain? I am a little confused”
And she cried but didn’t refuse
My hands quivered as for this she said
How she tried to end her life, wished she was dead
They sought after her, some sweet-talked, and some even used
Drugs to make her fall
But in the morning when she awoke and their name she’d call
She said, “No one would really stay for you
It was only for the publicity and my body that they wanted to do,

Tabloids blame me for standards too high
But with experiences like this how can I deny
I want to find someone who loves and respects me,
Not the money, not the body, but for someone who I may really be
They told me I am young and beautiful, don’t put that to waste
It seemed as though my brains weren’t up to society’s taste”
She sighs and looks out the window,
“Sometimes though, time passes and the past you have to let go
I held her hand and for her I teared
For someone like her I didn’t expect that this was what she feared
Surely time came up to speed
And with age, she learned all the lessons she’ll ever need
Wrinkles and all, she’s now mid-fifty
But to me, she’s as beautiful as she’ll ever be
From her teen years until she became a mistress
A stereotype was all she was in this business
In daylight the camera was her best friend
But she turned to drugs and alcohol for her soul to mend
It took many years, hard summers, and cold weather
But eventually she did take control for the better
Years of stress, the bags her eyes lug
I look, she notices and shrugs
She says, "Sometimes the rules you have to break
If your life and your happiness are what is at stake,

To my younger self I highly advise
Being different isn’t something to despise
You simply cannot live to please everyone
Or else one day you’ll come undone
Acceptance is what you should strive for
Everyone should love you from your looks to your core
Standing up to rape is never a shame
Asking for justice--now that’s changing the game
The fame and its perks surely are promising
Just remember your morals aren’t dismissing
Baby girl, don’t kill yourself striving for perfect
It’s just a myth, everyone has a defect
Society will come to love you for whatever you are
Remind yourself that you’re always a star!”

A Story about Perfection
Mae Jhelene Santos

Surely time came up to speed
And with age, she learned all the lessons she’ll ever need
Wrinkles and all, she’s now mid-fifty
But to me, she’s as beautiful as she’ll ever be
From her teen years until she became a mistress
A stereotype was all she was in this business
In daylight the camera was her best friend
But she turned to drugs and alcohol for her soul to mend
It took many years, hard summers, and cold weather
But eventually she did take control for the better
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Remind yourself that you’re always a star!”

A Story about Perfection
Boundaries & Borders:

Shared Anxieties for "(il)Legitimate" Gender Identities in Cross-Border Travel

This paper was presented at the Women's and Gender Studies Colloquium. The presentation summarized a small portion of an expansive topic that I based my undergraduate thesis on.
Theories of gender, gender presentation, and identity have been a longstanding interest of mine. This project emerged from my own personal experiences with airport workers questioning my gender identity and legal identity documentation. Whenever I am considering traveling, I have anxiety about how airport or border officials will question, judge or police my gender identity. This anxiety is at its peak when I’m in the space of an airport and know that I will be interacting with officials. Security checkpoints, customs, passport and boarding pass checks are often taken-for-granted occurrences for those who are not constantly questioned or surveilled in one way or another. I wanted to find out whether these predominant fears and anxieties I have in relation to travel were shared with other trans- and gender variant people, and to hear in general what kinds of experiences they have had while attempting to cross-border travel.

I want to begin by briefly discussing my choice of terminology I use throughout my paper and thesis as it is important to be aware of the language and labels being used when discussing varying gender identities. There have been a plethora of terms constructed by theorists within transgender and queer scholarship to address individuals who do not, or choose not to, identify with or conform to either category within the Western binary gender system, that of man or woman. The term “transgender” is a popular term used, however there has been much contention around defining this term and around which identities and bodies are included in this term. This encouraged me to explore other terms that authors have coined to use in replace of the term “transgender.” When speaking of the participant and researched subjects of this project, I use terms and identifications that they stated they most identify with and find most fitting to be addressed as. In a more generalized sense, when I am speaking of people who “transgress” gender binaries and boundaries, I have chosen to use two terms to include various gender identities while still remaining aware of the complications associated with categorizing gender: the first is the prefix “trans-,” and I chose to use this because of Nael Bhanji’s recognition of this term as a “spatial marker of possibility” that “does not just signify movement across or beyond a schism. It is a shared narrative in many of the experiences discussed is a feeling of general intolerance toward trans- and gender variant bodies and identities in the space of airports and at national borders. It has been established throughout feminist and trans-scholarship that persons who visibly transgress gender boundaries and borders are stigmatized, ostracized, and socially delegitimized (Gagné, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 480) for challenging the binary system of gender. Borders have been theorized as a space where those who “fit” are separated from those who do not. This definition can be taken in a literal sense as well as a symbolic sense when considering trans- and gender variant people who are perceived to be simultaneously crossing gendered borders while attempting to cross national borders. Imagined and constructed gender borders or binaries police what is regarded as “acceptable” or “legitimate” gender performances. In relation, the policing and surveillance of a more physical yet still imagined border, such as a national border, allows for a similar opportunity to designate who is considered an “acceptable” or “legitimate” body or identity. This surveillance is centered within and allocated by The Canada Border Services Agency, or the CBSA, who claim the possibility of identity rather than narrowing it. There is very little research in relation to trans- and gender variant people’s experiences with cross-border travel. However, there is increasing literature on the extreme disenfranchisement, discrimination, and violence experienced in the daily lives of many trans- and gender variant individuals by theorists such as Viviane Namaste, Kath Browne, Petra Doan, and Genny Beemyn and Susan Rankin to name a few. My research is an attempt to contribute to trans-scholarship that has not yet focused extensively on trans- and gender variant experiences of travel.

At the beginning of this project I had planned to conduct at least three or four interviews. However, I did not get as much of a response as I had hoped. I have conducted one interview for this project and, in addition to this, I draw upon cross-border travel experiences of trans- and gender variant people from two current media analyses, as well as two articles that are personal narratives and accounts written by trans- and gender variant authors. Throughout the final written portion of my thesis I draw upon the differing voices and experiences from these accounts. However, for the purpose of this paper I will only quote experiences from the interviewed participant due to the limited space of this paper, but more importantly because I feel it is important to represent this particular voice in this space as the other accounts I draw from have been given much media attention and are highly publicized. A shared narrative in many of the experiences discussed is a feeling of general intolerance toward trans- and gender variant people’s experiences of travel. However, there is increasing scholarship that has not yet focused extensively on trans- and gender variant people’s experiences with cross-border travel. However, there is increasing literature on the extreme disenfranchisement, discrimination, and violence experienced in the daily lives of many trans- and gender variant individuals by theorists such as Viviane Namaste, Kath Browne, Petra Doan, and Genny Beemyn and Susan Rankin to name a few. My research is an attempt to contribute to trans-scholarship that has not yet focused extensively on trans- and gender variant experiences of travel.

The Canada Border Services Agency, or the CBSA, who claim...
that their role is to manage the nation’s border and work to ensure the security of Canada, which includes the inspection, “interception, detention, and removal of persons who are perceived as posing a threat to Canada [...]” (“Visitors to Canada and other Temporary Residents”). Furthermore, the CBSA mandate states that the Agency is responsible for the facilitation and “free flow of legitimate persons and goods [...]” (“Our Service Commitment” emphasis mine), thereby declaring the ability to determine “legitimate” and “acceptable” bodies and identities that can cross-border travel. While the CBSA acknowledges their role in managing the national border, this agency fails to adequately address their understanding of bodies and identities they perceive as “posing a threat” or the calculated surveillance that has been attached to certain bodies and identities attempting to cross-border travel, such as particularly raced and gender transgressing bodies. Carmen, the one individual interviewed for this project, explained an experience occurring in 2013 that speaks to this calculated surveillance. Carmen was stopped twice at security checkpoints within one Canadian airport and was taken aside for what was called a “random search.” On the contrary, Carmen recalls how purposeful and calculated these searches seemed, stating:

This didn’t feel random to me, particularly because it happened twice in one day… one of the times that I was pulled aside I was told that I was required to submit to a physical search by an officer and the officer who was speaking to me looked at my passport and then started calling out to other officers in the security area […] that there needed to be a female officer present who would conduct a search. And this was something that I was not happy to be going through because I was, as I said, I’m often perceived as male however my passport states that I’m female. (Carmen)

Carmen’s experience highlights how this surveillance and power imbalance between officials and travelers arise in specific ways for people who challenge, or are perceived as challenging, hegemonic expectations for “appropriate” embodiments of gender (“Tyranny of Gender” 65). The CBSA informs travelers that “a) at any point during your interactions with our officers at a port of entry, you may be referred to our Secondary Services and Inspections area” (“What to Expect: Secondary Services and Inspections”). Additionally, theCBSA provides a list of why individuals may be referred for Secondary Services or Inspection explaining: “You may be referred for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to: verifying your [...] documentation, answering more in-depth questions about yourself [...] or undergoing a random inspection [...]” (“What to Expect: Secondary Services and Inspections”). All of these reasons pose a particular threat or target toward trans- and gender variant bodies. While the CBSA claims not to discriminate as to who they “randomly” search, the chances trans- and gender variant individuals face within this random system are perceived to be higher than for those who conform to normative gender presentations. Carmen initially believed they were pulled aside twice for “random searches” because of their race stating, “I felt that I was being targeted based on racial profiling, I’m sometimes perceived as a young male of color. I am actually not very young and I don’t identify as male, however I’m often perceived that way” (Carmen). The intersection of gender and race in this account are notable and relate to studies that show that trans- and gender variant people of color are more likely than white, trans- and gender variant people to experience harassment, discrimination, and violence (Beemyn and Rankin xiii, Spade 66), highlighting how race and gender identity contribute to heightened surveillance of certain bodies and identities in institutional spaces such as airports. Carmen indicates that they are most concerned with how airport officials perceive their gender more than their race but acknowledges the intersection of racial and gender profiling. In these moments, Carmen describes their anxieties about whether or not they may face any problems as a transgender person and how the anxieties associated with this might feed into racist incidents that may occur. Using Carmen’s experience as a base, then, I began to see a shared commonality of various anxieties for trans- and gender variant people attempting to cross-border travel. These anxieties are significantly centered around identity documentation and having to present this to border officials.

In instances where tangible identity documentation is necessary and demanded by border officials, the potential denial and disbelief associated with the legal identity documentation of trans- and gender variant people instigates anxiety and nervousness. Carmen indicated they are nervous about travel in general, however their anxiety and nervousness is most centered on showing identity documentation. Carmen effectively explains how presenting identity documents amplifies stigmatization and surveillance of trans- and gender variant bodies stating, “as soon as I think about travel that’s the first thing I think about – that I might have problems because of any perceived inconsistency between my appearance and my identity documents. Particularly about the gender” (Carmen). The physical crossing of a national border is challenging for bodies and identities that are perceived as transgressing gender in some way; this transgressive identity is verified and further regulated by officials through the mandatory presentation of these documents. For many trans- and gender variant people, there is often a disjunction between legal documents and visual appearance leading to individuals being perceived as committing fraud within institutions (“Visible Lives 242). Carmen acknowledges this potential when they state, “I suppose I could be refused travel within Canada if there was any suspicion about my identity documents, or I could be detained and accused of having fraudulent documents somehow or using somebody else’s documents” (Carmen). Based on the guidelines through which the CBSA functions, it’s clear that trans- and gender variant people are at a greater risk for being targeted for secondary searches, questioning, and detainment as there is an increased difficulty to “prove”, “convince”, or “satisfy” border officials of “legitimate” trans- and gender variant identities, especially with the complications of legal identity documentation. Although the CBSA classifies what identity documents are accepted as valid, this agency provides no information regarding what type of identity documentation or referral letters, for example, are needed for trans- and gender variant people attempting to cross the border. The CBSA explicitly states in their “Information for people detained under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act” pamphlet that persons can be detained if border officials are not “satisfied with your identity.”

4 The name Carmen is a pseudonym chosen by the interviewed participant to ensure confidentiality of identity and experiences shared within this research project.
type of regulation contributes to Namaste’s theory that trans- and gender variant people are strategically “disappeared from view” ("Genderbashing" 586) through the denial and rejection of identities that are perceived to be inconsistent from identity documentation. With the inclusion of gender on identity documents, this readily identifies bodies that are transgressing gender. For example, this is illustrated in Carmen’s explanation that they are often “perceived as male however my passport states that I’m female” (Carmen) when actually Carmen identifies with neither of these binary categories. In occurrences where disjuncture between identifiers on documents and visual appearance is apparent, this often forces individuals to “reveal” trans-, transgressive, or gender variant status to border officials. Being read as male and having identity documents state female identifies Carmen’s body as transgressing gender binaries and borders. The binary system of gender is enforced on legal identity documentation which literally makes bodies that transgress gender “appear in view” through this “reveal” in order for the surveillance and regulation of these bodies to happen, effectively working to “disappear” trans- and gender variant bodies from view within institutions.

It is necessary to begin to have a conversation around the implications of including gender on legal identity documents. When asked about how experiences Carmen has had at the airport or at national border crossings has shaped the construction of identity, they share how these experiences have contributed to their appeal to have gender entirely removed from identity documentation explaining:

I think that actually my experiences in border crossing as well as the anxiety that I have about it has shaped my current desire to have gender removed from my identity documents. There have been times where I’ve considered changing them from female to male gender markers on my documents. But first off I wasn’t necessarily convinced that it would be overall easier for me in terms of border crossing and other situations because I’m not necessarily going to be perceived by others as male more often than others perceive me as female. I also considered asking for some other designation and ultimately in reflecting on these experiences, as well as how to address the anxiety that I felt. I arrived at the decision to ask for it to be removed from my documents because I felt that that...would be more consistent with my identity, simply by not categorizing my identity. (Carmen)

Carmen makes a crucial point that must be considered in relation to understanding the constrictiveness of gender categories and regulation of identity documentation. Once Carmen claimed they would prefer to have the gender removed from these documents, they proposed that with the eradication of any gender marker on documentation it may result in a more flexible understanding of gender in general, allowing for more openness to a variety of differing gender identities in institutions such as the airport or border crossing. The consideration of removing gender from identity documentation is a necessary conversation that has the potential to contribute to the lessening of what Terre Thamlitz identifies as the “internalized fear that many transgendered people travel with” (177-178). It is not just about being able to legally change a gender on documentation, as this perpetuates a binary system and the continuation of surveillance and discrimination towards trans- and gender variant people. Although more research is required in this area, the experiences and accounts disclosed by the participant and researched subjects provide confirmation that experiences of anxiety and nervousness is a felt, lived, and embodied experience for many trans- and gender variant people attempting to cross-border travel while simultaneously crossing gendered borders.

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"Fit These Shapes"

Miranda Bergen
My project "Fit These Shapes" features five constructed photographs along with five poems. These pieces showcase individuals and the struggles they have faced based on the key concepts discussed in my Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies in the Humanities course. My photographs are that of individuals presented within a shape. Although it is clear that the people within the images do not fit within these shapes (square, circle, triangle, etc.), it presents a metaphor for the manner in which society tries to shape thinking (often distracting people from their own individual way of being).

Due to the symbolic and linguistic capacity of poetry, I chose to tell a story for each photograph in the form of a poem. As the audience can see, the poems are not placed beside their corresponding shape. This is done intentionally and to show that no one will fit into someone else's shape; that everyone has their own individual shape. However, this does not mean we cannot share our stories and try to be open-minded, allowing ourselves to view things from another's perspective.

My main focus with this project is to challenge social constructions and challenge my audience to think for themselves (rather than participate in the way society constructs and shapes our thinking). I want these images of real people to portray a reality that everyone lives and participates in on a daily basis. I want them to challenge people to look at one another differently and to put themselves in their shoes. I think too often people within modern society judge others quickly and too harshly as a by-product of socialization. Society tries to shape us into something more unified, into a shape that no one will ever fit. Embrace your shape, and respect other people's shapes as their own.
EX

ORAL PRESENTATION
GRADE EIGHT
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE?
A FEMINIST
CRAZY
IRRATIONAL
DEFINED
SHE FINDS HERSELF
A WOMAN
MALE
VALIDATION
SHE CALLS HIM OUT
NOT ANOTHER WORD
BUTTHURT
GENDER
MINORITIES
SHE'S SO SICK OF
REEVALUATE TRUE POWER
EQUALITY
CIRCLE

IMAGES
EVERYWHERE
SHE SEES THEM
SHE TRIES TO EMULATE
OVERWHELMED BY HER FLAWS
EMPHASIZING A LARGE PERSONALITY

"WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO DO THIS?"
"I'M DOING THIS FOR ME"
WHEN HE LOOKS AT HER
SHE MAKES EXCUSES
VERY AWARE
BODY
RECTANGLE

HE’S TWENTY-FIVE
BUT HIS SHADOW IS THIRTY
PRESSURE DWELLS WITHIN HIM
TO SUCCEED FURTHER

HE’S CONFIDENT
"SOCIETY DOESN’T SCARE ME"
HE SAYS
YET IT WEIGHS
HEAVY ON HIM
BUT THERE’S NO POINT
HE REMAINS
UNTouched

HE’S SAFE WITHIN
SURE OF HIMSELF
SOCIETY DOESN’T SCARE HIM
HE’S STILL SO YOUNG
HEXAGON

HIGH SCHOOL NORMS
GIRLS DATING GUYS
INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA
ONLY 13 SHE DRINKS AND SLEEPS AROUND
HAS A PROBLEM ACCEPTING
SHE’S GAY

SHE KNOWS ONE GUY
WHO CAME OUT OF THE CLOSET
HE WAS RIDICULED
BULLIED
DROPS SCHOOL
SHE’S STRAIGHT

WHO AT 16 WANTS TO GET OSTRACIZED
BY THEIR PEERS
DIAMOND

SHE’S 16
AT A FAMILY GATHERING
“GOT A BOYFRIEND?” THEY ASK
AUNTS AND UNCLEs
Cousins
“NO” SHE GIGGLES

SHE’S 20
ANOTHER FAMILY GATHERING
“GOT A BOYFRIEND YET?” THEY ASK
AUNTS AND UNCLEs
Cousins
“NO” SHE SAYS

SHE’S 25
AT A COUSINS WEDDING
“STILL DATING THAT GUY?” THEY ASK
AUNTS AND UNCLEs
Cousins
“NO” SHE SIGHS

SILENCE
PITY
NO MORE QUESTIONS
THEY HAVE LOST HOPE
SHE FEELS HER VALUE IS LESS
WITHOUT A MAN
WITHOUT CHILDREN
THAT IS HAPPINESS
IT’S TOO LATE NOW
Bill 219: Feminism Day Act

WHEREAS feminism is the movement that strives to create gender equality;
AND WHEREAS feminism seeks to eliminate sexism, exploitation and oppression;
AND WHEREAS society benefits from the feminist paradigm;
AND WHEREAS September 8 in each year is set aside as Feminism Day in order to increase awareness and education about the feminist movement;
THEREFORE HER MAJESTY, by and with the advice of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, enacts as follows:

Manitoba Feminism Day

1 In each year, September 8 is to be known as Feminism Day.

C.C.S.M. reference

2 This Act may be referred to as chapter K299 of the Continuing Consolidation of the Statutes of Manitoba.

3 This Act comes into force on the day it received royal assent.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Seine River, that Bill 219, The Feminism Day Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

It is an honour to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 219 because of its relevance to all Manitobans. The feminist paradigm deserves to be recognized provincially, if not internationally. As bell hooks, a famous feminist author, once said, “feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (hooks, 13). The feminist movement is deserving of recognition for its benefits and movement to establish equality for all human beings. The aim of Feminism Day is to remind us all of the various types of oppression that individuals face on a daily basis. Celebrating Feminism Day is about remembering to treat others how we would like to be treated. It recognizes the many human rights achievements that we as a society have made so that Manitobans can be proud of and freely able to express their identity.

While Feminism Day is meant to celebrate our successes, it also calls on us to recognize the social constructions that prevent us from achieving gender equality. When I refer to social constructions, I am discussing the meaning behind things and concepts determined by society (Thorpe, 2014). Issues such as the way in which sex, gender, masculinity, and femininity are defined are social constructions. There are many people living in this province who have been treated unfairly for not abiding by the social constructions and the status quo. Take for example eight-year old transgender Isabella Burgos who attends Joseph Teres School in Winnipeg and was bullied by the parents of a student for not using a gender-neutral washroom (Chittley).

“Our perceptions and interpretations of the body are mediated through language and, in our society, the biomedical sciences function as a major provider of this language” (Oudshoorn, 29). Why do we have to rely on doctors and scientists to determine our sex and gender for us? If we have the freedom of expression, why does society not accept a spectrum of expressions that we can change at our will? While there are many brave Manitobans who have expressed their identities despite the oppression and discrimination that they received, it is our responsibility as legislators to identify these situations as problematic and to take the necessary measures to prevent them from happening in the future. Take for example any incident where a person was bullied or treated differently for being gay, lesbian, queer, or two-spirited. Take for example any individual who has been ostracized for participating in any activity that is not traditional for their gender. Do we ever stop and think about the ways in which we may contribute to or spread society’s constructions? Do we ever stop and think that we could prevent a lot of hate and distress if we thought critically about the ideological products of our society? We all know someone who has been negatively affected by inequality or
negative social constructions. Feminism Day aims to acknowledge these unjust situations and influence change for the better.

Feminism aims to end oppression, and while there have been many success stories of individuals who have overcome it, there are even more stories about those who have not. When I refer to interlocking systems of oppression, I mean how one’s identity categories work together to keep them in a subservient position (Thorpe, 2014). Take for example the interlocking systems of race and gender. A highly relevant example in this province is the epidemic of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. While Phoenix Sinclair and Tina Fontaine are examples of names that almost all Manitobans know, it is not for reasons that we should be proud of. Phoenix and Tina are examples of young Aboriginal girls who we fell through the cracks of our Child and Family Services system and were murdered (Sanders & Owen). They are among the hundreds of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in the country. Aboriginal women are at a disadvantage in Canada, and particularly in this province. While members opposite may not agree, I think that it is necessary to perform an inquiry into this issue. Robin Kelley argued that “to combat racism, we need to identify and remedy social practices and institutional practices that advantage some groups at the expense of others” (Kelley, 80). While the Feminism Day Act would not start an inquiry or bring peace to the families of our missing and murdered Aboriginal women, it can change our attitudes toward these issues. This piece of legislation can be the trigger for the changes in social policies that multitudes of individuals and interest groups have been seeking for decades. By changing our minds and not allowing interlocking systems of oppression to hurt others, we can create a safer and more equitable province for Manitobans.

Many of you may ask how feminism is relevant and connected to human rights. Human rights are the rights that all individuals have simply because they are human beings. Human rights do not discriminate people based upon their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and various other factors. Since the feminist paradigm aims to promote equality and end oppression, it can be said that it also aims to uphold and defend human rights. If you believe in human rights, you can believe in feminism. If you believe in equality of the sexes, you uphold the underlying component of human rights.

While all members are familiar with the Constitution Act, I will reference a particular component of it that has a direct link to Bill 219. Canada’s Constitution Act has a section about rights and freedoms. The Charter is particularly well known for its section titled “Fundamental Freedoms” that outlines the Canadian freedoms of conscience, religion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, and many others. By expressing and respecting these fundamental human rights, you simultaneously recognize components of the feminist paradigm (Government of Canada). If you believe that people should be treated equally regardless of their sex, you are a feminist. If you believe in the elimination of sexism and oppression, you are a feminist. If you believe in a brighter future for all humans where there is no discrimination, you are a feminist.

National Feminism Day is set on the 8th of September because it comes six months after International Women’s Day (Status of Women Canada). While members opposite may argue against this resolution for its perceived bias towards a women’s agenda in politics, the concept of feminism is not only directed to women. Secondly, if there is anything that we could use more of, it is a political agenda that is less patriarchal. While efforts have been made on this side of the house to strike a gender-balanced political agenda, members opposite have voted against numerous motions regarding this aim. If we can be reminded on at least a bi-annual basis to remember to treat members of both genders equally, to prevent acts of oppression and sexism, and to take action against inequality, our province will have the potential to become a remarkably better place.

I strongly encourage that all members vote in favour of Bill 219: The Feminism Day Act, because of its potential to positively affect all Manitobans for the better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Works Cited


Francess Amara

Why Me??

The Black Girl Manifesto
Imagine living in a society where you have to fight for every ounce of your progress.
Do you ever feel exhausted with the weight of everyday life?
Have you ever felt underappreciated?
Have you ever felt frustrated? Have you ever felt annoyed?
Felt Over worked?
Felt Used?

Have you really?!

As a girl - a Black girl, I get labeled the "ANGRY BLACK girl" whenever I am in a gloomy mood. I get the saying, "don't be that girl; you don't want to be "the ANGRY BLACK girl."

Why am I the "ANGRY BLACK girl?"
Am I the only one to ROLL my NECK and EYES?
Or the only one to SNAP my FINGERS?
Am I the only one wearing FROWN?
Am I the only one with the MEAN MUG?
Am I the only girl that has been RUDE to you?
Am I the only LOUD girl?
...then why can't I be ANGRY?!
Why am I labeled the ANGRY BLACK girl?
Do you KNOW WHY I am ANGRY?
Did you ASK WHY I am ANGRY?

Why am I MISINTERPRETED as being VIOLENT? When all I have DONE is ASK a simple QUESTION?
Why do you feel my question is a THREAT?
Why can't I be DISAPPOINTED?
Why can't I feel TIRED?
Why can't I feel MISERABLE?

What about the HAPPY BLACK girl?
Does she exist?
Or how about the LIGHT SKINNED girl?
We don't say the ANGRY LIGHT SKINNED girl, do we?
Why do you feel the need to set ME apart?

Everyone gets DAMNED ANGRY!!!
Why do I have to SWALLOW my FEELINGS?

I have every RIGHT to be ANGRY!
Yet I am being SHAMED for being ANGRY.
Don't you know? That's BULLYING!

I am BULLIED into HIDING my own EMOTIONS.

I have every RIGHT to be ANGRY!

Don't make me feel bad about it.
Just because I am a BLACK girl DOESN'T mean that I am the ONLY one that gets ANGRY.

Where did you get the idea from?

The Media?
The negative images of BLACK women are often seen twice as frequently as positive images.

Have you ever wondered why Hollywood still only sees BLACK women in the light of being ANGRY and keeps reinforcing this image of the SASSY ANGRY SISTER?

Why are we seen and viewed as ONE DIMENTIONAL?
Why are we the USELESS ones?
Why are we viewed as the UNATTRACTIVE ones?
Why are we viewed as the STUPID ones?
Why are we viewed as the GOLD DIGGERS?
Why are we viewed as the BABY MAMAS?

Do you REALLY think that these are the IMAGES BLACK WOMEN want to represent?

We are SMART enough NOT to STAND in the line of FIRE.
We are VALUABLE
We are HAPPY
We are WISE
We are BEAUTIFUL
We are ATTRACTIVE
We are EDUCATED
You CANNOT use the ANGRY BLACK girl title to shut me up!
I listen and I STAND FIRM in who I AM.
Who I am is a GIRL; NOT AN ANGRY BLACK GIRL!
I am a HUMAN BEING!!!!!!
As I attempted to brainstorm for a piece to create for this publication, I turned to stock photography sites to generate ideas. For those unfamiliar with stock photography sites, they are websites in which people or companies go to find pictures of certain things, such as a classroom. They then buy or license this image for certain types of usage, instead of hiring a photographer to go out and create the image. These images are the commodification of the visual representation of feminism and are used as a revenue stream for the website and photographer, and therefore closely linked to capitalism. In my search, I used the term ‘feminism’ and specifically sought out images that had people in them. To my surprise, the majority of the images within the first few pages fell into three different categories or themes, the first and the second being recreated for this piece. My plan for this project shifted from creating an image(s) to represent an aspect of feminism to a full blown critique as to how problematic images representing feminism continue to be counter-productive to the movement and prop up inaccurate stereotypes.
The first theme was the professional woman vs the professional man. These images were incredibly adversarial and worked to maintain the women versus men dichotomy that feminism works to dismantle. It further instills the idea that for women to be successful, they must step on men, therefore presenting men as the enemy of the movement. In reality it is the systems of oppression that favour certain bodies, attitudes, and ideologies. There was also a great amount of physical violence within these professional woman vs professional man themed photos. The violence was usually depicted toward the professional man, through punching, stepping on him, or forcing him into a position of submission with his tie or a leash. This works to, again, falsely assert that for the advancement of women towards equality, the submission and subjugation of men is necessary.
The second theme is that of the hypersexualized women ‘doing masculine’ things, such as holding tools, murdering men, smoking cigars, and wearing boxing gloves. Some of these images portray feminism as inherently violent and reinforce the dichotomy of masculine vs feminine. These images seek to present an idea that women can only do masculine things if they are ‘sexy’ doing them, and the only images that sell of women performing masculinity are the ones containing hypersexualized women. There was also little representation of ‘strong’ women doing feminine things, which again works to delegitimize femininity as a valid state for ‘strong’ persons to exist in. The bodies favoured in both of these representations are primarily white and are of a similar body type required of a model.
Fortunately, the third theme focuses on renditions of Rosie the Riveter. Her name and image have been closely tied to feminism for decades. Within this theme there was much more diversity of body types and race. Many of the women were not hypersexualized and were wearing clothing reflective of the task of riveting. I did not include a recreation of this image, as I do not believe it lends itself to my critique of visual representations of feminism.

For insightful and productive representations of feminism, I encourage you to look throughout this publication. The art collected here does not seek to tear down men or objectify people. Some of them seek to create space for women and other marginalized people, break down barriers of identity, and dispel myths about feminism. I believe there is a large amount of productive visual representation of feminism, but the majority is not found for sale on stock photography websites.
The Wag of a Finger:
Taboos of Female Masturbation
My thesis question seeks to analyze current and past discourses on female masturbation in an attempt to determine if the topic still holds its taboo. I begin my paper with a brief introduction as to what my understanding of masturbation is, not assuming that it is a topic or word that is universal in definition. While many synonyms to the term are applied throughout my interviews, previous studies, and research, I continue to use the term masturbation predominantly throughout the paper as a way of both questioning its negative historical roots, and challenging the medicalization and continued disapproving assumptions surrounding the word. My paper then looks at my methodology, and the steps that were taken both in my research and topic development, as well as within my interviews and how participants and knowledge were sought. I want to ensure that readers are aware of my own assumptions around the topic, and how such assumptions have influenced the approaches I took and questions I asked.

For the purpose of this publication in FAQ, I will only be looking at the fifth section in my body of work, as an example of some of the research conducted during my thesis. The fifth section works to combine the history of fears around female sexuality with issues of privacy, guilt, and shame by looking at self-surveillance as a form of control on masturbation practices. Looking to Foucault’s Panopticon theory, this involves the ways that individuals structure their masturbation practices to avoid being caught, combined with the guilt and shame that can be experienced after masturbation. This provides an analysis of the ways that not talking about masturbation in a positive way can lead to assumptions of taboo around the topic. Overall issues of power, and the ways in which women’s bodies are continuously controlled, lead to themes of selfishness for individuals who take time for their own sexual pleasure outside of a framework that favors men’s pleasure first. It also argues that ignoring and refusing to acknowledge women as sexual beings becomes another way for women to be controlled within a patriarchal, male-dominated society.

Masturbation as a taboo subject, both in a sense of that which we do not talk about, and that which we ritualize, is an important topic to begin/continue discussions on. The need to open up discourse on the topic is demonstrated through the history of negative views that continue to both influence and dictate the structures that limit women’s sexuality and sexual freedom. To quote Jess Juffer, “in many respects, thus, learning about and claiming the body became the vehicle for the gender construction that would allow each woman to revel in her individuality – that would liberate her from the strictures of a patriarchal society.”

I believe that continued education and discourse on female masturbation can further women’s reclamation of sexual power over their bodies and lives, highlighting the importance and necessity of work around the topic.

Masturbation and Taboo

An important place to start is to determine just what I mean by masturbation. In looking at the definition of masturbation for his own research, Alfred Kinsey states that:

in much of the Freudian literature, and in still other studies, all tactile stimulation of one’s own body is interpreted as masturbation. This has been particularly true in reports on younger children, especially females [...] but the term masturbation has often been extended to include all activities which bring satisfaction through the rubbing, scratching, pressing, or stroking of the breasts, thighs, legs, or other parts of the body including even the nose and ears, thumb sucking, the biting of one’s fingernails, the chewing of gum, bed wetting, fast automobile driving, high diving, and still other activities.7

For the purposes of my paper, masturbation is being limited to the physical aspects of sexual stimulation that are generally attributed to masturbation; i.e., contact to the genitals or other sexual areas. However, Kinsey’s inclusion of other examples is interesting to keep in mind, as what individuals find arousing is often not limited to what occurs in the privacy of the home, so to speak. It is therefore essential to acknowledge other methods of masturbation, but for the purpose of my topic, necessary to centralize practices to the general discourse of masturbation. Stats around masturbation are varied, and dependent upon the location, time, questions asked, and comfort of individuals in responding to their masturbation practices. The most common statistics place men of college age as having an 80-100% chance of ever having masturbated, with women having a 45-80% chance of engaging in masturbation. While again, the stats vary amongst many studies, they often do show a divide between men and women’s practices and comfort on the topic. A few studies placed it as an anomaly for a man to have never masturbated, while it remains common in many studies for women to have no experience masturbating. In many cases, women who have masturbated have done so a limited amount of times, compared to the records identifying men as indulging in the practice often. Reasons for such gender disparity will be further analyzed throughout this paper.

Looking at masturbation as a taboo subject requires a definition and understanding of what it means for a topic to be taboo. Geert Hofstede states that, “taboos reveal what is sacred. Taboos are about ultimate values, values that are not open to argument. Religion and sexuality are the main areas in which societies maintain taboos.” I think taboo is important to my study for a variety of reasons. Perhaps most interesting, is the fact that while the word itself was something I had in mind throughout my research, it was not a question I had placed directly into my interviews. Yet many of the participants I spoke with, discussed taboo either directly or indirectly. And in many ways, female masturbation is the perfect example of the taboo. I sought out to find if the topic was one not often discussed, and if it still contained many of the negative aspects and perceptions historically given to it. While more positive views appear to be mainstreaming on masturbation, it retains its air of secrecy and
shame, with many individuals refraining from discussing the subject. But it is also a form of ritual, particularly within discourse around women's masturbation. Many discussions of the topic, either surrounding education of the topic or when women discuss their own practices, center on a need for privacy, time for oneself, and various rituals that women engage in. This can include baths, candles, wine, certain fantasies etc. As will be shown, female masturbation does hold its role of taboo within our society, which continues to have negative affects for women.

Methodology

In order to better understand my project, it is important to initially address my interest in the topic and how I came about deciding to focus on women's masturbation. When I was around eleven or twelve, I began asking my mom questions around body parts, sexuality, sex, puberty etc. Not feeling comfortable to discuss the topic with me, and lacking much of the knowledge I so desired, my mother proceeded to purchase a variety of books on the topics including such classics as Our Bodies Ourselves, as well as a comic book style education book aimed at young teens. The books were ones that I read through multiple times, satisfied with the answers I was finally being provided that had not been given to me by my Catholic school sex education classes. As I was sitting around reading one day while my mom folded laundry, I casually asked her if she ever masturbated. My mom tells this story to me, stating she was flustered and did not know how to respond, when the phone rang. Using the occasion to distract me, she talked on the phone for as long as she could before returning to the laundry, and me with my book. A few minutes passed before I stopped reading to look up and question, “Well, do you?” My mother’s response was along the lines of; masturbation is a normal thing many people do, but it is something private that you do not ask people about. Since starting my thesis, she likes to use this story when telling her friends about my topic, stating that I clearly did not listen to her, nor take her advice. What I found interesting in my interviews, was that two of the individuals I spoke with, recall asking questions and seeking answers around the ages of eleven or twelve. Clearly there is a need for knowledge as girls begin to enter the world of pre-teenage years and puberty, and as pleasures evolve into containing sexual connotations that many people appear to have on the topic of masturbation – many individuals appeared to have discussed, or did not talk about often, and yet it was something many were yearning to discuss. I decided what was important was to look into the source of the anxiety that many women felt when initially discussing masturbation, and to begin to formulate what could be done to make the topic more comfortable and open for women to discuss. My project draws on three main sources; studies already conducted on female masturbation; theoretical work around masturbation, sexuality, and sexual identity; and information gained from interviews with three University of Manitoba students.

Self-Surveillance, Privacy, and Power

Many studies around masturbation find that women often avoid masturbation out of shame, or that when they do masturbate, find themselves conflicted with feelings of elation over the orgasmic feeling, yet guilty of having participated in the act. I argue that theories of self-surveillance are related to these feelings of shame. Despite masturbation being an individual act generally done in privacy, it can be something that is avoided due to the intense stigma associated with it. In his theories of the panopticon as a form of discipline, Michel Foucault argues that:

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it. 1

Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 201.

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I believe the panopticon is an accurate description of the ways that guilt around masturbation are created and upheld. As an activity that generally has no viewers, feelings of guilt and shame are internalized by the individual versus being enacted upon them by outside forces, during the moment of the act at least. Kinsey adds that, "we may assert that we have recognized exceedingly few cases...in which either physical or mental damage had resulted from masturbatory activity." We have, on the other hand, recognized a tremendous amount of damage which has been the result of worry over masturbation, and/or attempts to abstain from such activity." Kinsey's finding is one that I think is extremely important to take into consideration when looking at continued fears of masturbation. If Foucault's panopticon view is indeed watching individuals while they masturbate, the worry that they are undergoing during the process, or while avoiding it, becomes what is now causing the harm. This idea challenges views of masturbation as dangerous, arguing instead that to abstain when desire arises is a much more harmful act upon oneself. Adding to the psychological damage caused by feelings of guilt, Hite states, "most women said they enjoyed masturbation physically (after all, it did lead to orgasm), but usually not psychologically. Psychologically, they felt lonely, guilty, unwanted, selfish, silly, and generally bad." Much of this also directly links to the history of masturbation, and the feelings of shame associated with excessive sexual desires of women in general. While terms and concepts around slut-shaming are usually associated with women who have sex with multiple partners, I argue that the term affects aspects of all sexual promiscuity and excessiveness, including masturbation. If women are raised to be sexually passive, that passivity is going to translate to all forms of sexual acts. The women who were interviewed in Hogarth and Ingham's study expressed shock at women touching their genitals, a body part the young women felt only male partners should access. This demonstrates the ways that continued assumptions surrounding male power and control affect women's sexualities, even in solo acts with no male presence.

Issues of privacy and space also affect a more direct linking of surveillance of masturbation. During my own research, I took for granted access to space and privacy, as the individuals I was talking to were all older university students whom I assumed lived alone or with a small amount of roommates or a partner, where having time alone could occur often. This does not take into account though the experiences of many young women in high school, or even in university, who do live at home with parents and siblings. Particularly for younger women where adults may try to be home more often so that children do not go unattended, access to privacy and space alone can be extremely limited. Foucault states that, "the more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being observed. The Panopticon is a marvelous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power." Do the family members, friends, or any other individuals we live with, take on the role of prisoner guard when in a shared space?

What is interesting is the added note of anticipation of masturbation when alone. With the need felt around maintaining secrecy, the young woman being interviewed appears to almost premeditate masturbation around times when she has a space to herself. While this could simply be times when others were sleeping and not likely to disrupt her, or when she had her home to herself, the influence of sharing space on masturbation practices becomes another set of structures to the already limited access to the activity.

Around surveillance, it is also important to look at not only feelings of guilt, but also of positions around selfishness while taking time to masturbate. One of the individuals that I was interviewing, was very adamant on this topic. They repeatedly stated the importance of masturbation as a way of taking time for oneself, but at one point went on to elaborate the reasons why it was so important for people, especially women, to take time for themselves. They made the claim that:

I think that it’s very empowering, because, I feel like it’s a way to experience your body...it’s a way to include yourself in your sexuality. As a way to love yourself. Because, especially with, you know, a lot of pressure for women to sacrifice themselves, for their partner, for their children, and where are they? You know, like who are they as a person? Do they matter? Well, this is a way that they can matter cause they’re taking, four minutes, twenty minutes. Maybe they have a bath, or they use the showerhead, or like whatever. It’s a way that they’re not just making babies. It’s a way that they don’t have to instruct anyone.

Looking at a hegemonic heterosexual framework, they explained how women are often expected to spend their life taking care of everyone else’s pleasures before and instead of their own. This includes things like ensuring everyone within the family household is well fed and properly clothed, to guaranteeing the husband’s sexual satisfaction. To take time for oneself as a woman is then seen as a defying act, where one is taking time solely for themselves. Diane Brashear adds that, "the concept that self-pleasure can of itself be acceptable and positive seems wanting. Giving to oneself is difficult for many individuals. We work so others can be proud, so others can appreciate, enjoy. Self-denial, self-discipline is a virtue." I feel that the guilt of masturbation can stem then, not only from a sense of the panopticon and feelings that the act itself is bad, but for women in particular, the guilt of taking time for oneself and temporarily ignoring the needs of others. The fear of women’s sexual pleasure is then a result of

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1Kinsey, Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, 167.
2Hite, The Hite Report, 62.
3Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 202.
4Hogarth and Ingham, Masturbation Amongst Young Women and Associations with Sexual Health, 564.
5Brashear, Honk! If you Masturbate!, 85.
male dominance that seeks to maintain women’s role as givers, not receivers. The connection of self-surveillance with the upbringing as caregiver, I believe provides women with an additional layer of guilt and anxiety around masturbation practices that many men do not experience.

Power and masturbation is an interesting theme that ties in with secrecy, guilt, and surveillance. In what ways does the control of emotions and masturbation affect women within a patriarchal society? Betty Dodson argues that:

Our cultural denial of masturbation sustains sexual repression. From childhood through adulthood, we feel guilt and shame over masturbation. Deprived of a sexual relationship with ourselves, we are easier to manipulate and more accepting of the status quo. I believe masturbation holds the key to reversing sexual repression, especially for women who think they’re ‘frigid’ or aren’t sure whether they’re having orgasms in partners.12

Dodson is arguing that the control of women’s masturbation practices — through the lack of education and apparent taboo of the topic — leads to, and is part of, the control of women’s bodies in general. This was argued by one of the interviewees I spoke with as well, who felt that a large portion of the silence around masturbation was based on power. They stated that, “control is a big thing. When you don’t feel comfortable, then you can be controlled, and women have been controlled a lot. And, I mean, even with men, it’s also control, because they’re supposed to just procreate, right?” The ability to control individuals is then influenced by the lack of knowledge that that person has about their own body. If women are given no outlet to pleasure outside of the heterosexual script that dictates their pleasure must come from men, then women are inherently dependent on men. Again, this is shown in the study where many of the young women being interviewed thought of their pleasure only in terms of the men they had slept with, and were reluctant at the thought of masturbating as a way of reaching orgasm. This comes up in many other studies as well, that examine how women first come to know their bodies and pleasure. Many women interviewed first learned about genital stimulation through male partners, not through their own experimentations or education. Robert Schultz’s work looks more at issues of the male gaze, and the male partners, not through their own experimentations or education. This view is more accepting of the status quo. I believe masturbation holds the key to reversing sexual repression, especially for women who think they’re ‘frigid’ or aren’t sure whether they’re having orgasms in partners.12

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