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:

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Editors’ note

This publication is the Feminist and Queer Collective’s seventh 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.

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Disclaimer:
The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the FAQ collective.
Imagine you are from another planet, the ideal planet where there is no such thing as sexism, racism, class inequality or any other “ism” you can think of. Let’s call this planet Equality. Every year, the citizens of planet Equality visit Earth to remind themselves why they live the way that they do. Each year there’s something new, whether it is County Clerks refusing to marry same-sex couples. College frat boys objectifying women, or scientists trying to prove the existence of the “gay gene”. This year, the interlocking systems of oppression that have been plaguing Earth for quite some time have expanded even further to include something called Gender Reveal Parties. As a citizen of planet Equality, I have provided a thorough examination as well as a critical analysis to sum up what a Gender Reveal Party is, why they are aiding in the perpetuation of gender binaries, and why they are yet another ridiculous Earthly ritual that should be abolished.

First of all, you may ask: “What is a Gender Reveal Party?” As a result of my research I have discovered that a Gender Reveal Party, most commonly found in Canada, is a seemingly harmless way to reveal the gender of an expecting couple’s baby to family and friends. You would think it would be enough for parents just to know that their baby is healthy, but no. The parents, grandparents, and often, close friends plan a party themed with pink and blue everything simply to celebrate the sex organs between their infant’s legs. At this party, guests are subjected to boxes of guessing and voting to figure out what the baby’s gender might be. There are also games played where guests wear either a pink bow or a mustache to represent which gender they are guessing. Games like these push gender identities into narrow boxes, suggesting that there are only two genders and only two ways that these genders can be represented. Once the gender is revealed there is a shower of either pink or blue balloons, and from then on an unborn baby’s future is shaped. Social organizations such as Gender Reveal Parties are one way in which Canadian culture has taken a step backwards in the journey towards a more accepting outlook. I believe that Gender Reveal Parties are aiding in the perpetuation of gender binaries, heteronormativity, and society’s expectations of gender. Unborn babies should not be put into a category before they have even had a chance to take their first breath, and parents should not be celebrating their child’s gender based on such closed-minded ideals.

Secondly, the fact that Gender Reveal Parties only revolve around the celebration of only two genders, man and woman, is proof that they aid in the perpetuation of gender binaries. It is a well-known fact, especially on planet Equality, that these are not the only two genders that make up society, but on Earth they are the genders that are seen as “predictable” and “manageable”. The exclusion of gender as fluid rather than binary removes any agency that an individual might feel that they have over their identity. The expectation that an individual is going to identify as either a man or woman has been invented by many societies on Earth. The fact that Gender Reveal Parties celebrate the birth of either a “boy” or “girl” is ridiculous, because gender identities are not the result of birth, they are simply the result of culture.

Moving forward, it is important to make the distinction between gender and sex. (I have broken this down in a language that I’m hoping you Earth dwellers understand). Sex refers to the biological characteristics of an individual, and the internal and external sex organs often define these characteristics. But in the case of gender, it is often much more complicated than that; gender refers to the thoughts, feelings, and actions that make an individual who they are. Unfortunately, Earth’s idea of gender often refers to “masculine” and “feminine” as being the only two options (which I think is atrocious). This is where gender binaries come in. What are gender binaries? They are a type of gender system in which it is believed that sex and gender can only be classified into two distinct categories. Gender Reveal Parties assume that whatever sex the baby is will coincide with their gender. Yes, male and female sex organs perpetuate the human species, but the idea that there is only room for “feminine” and “masculine” roles is the product of history and not based on any solid facts. Furthermore, Simone de Beauvoir, a well-known philosopher, political activist, and feminist writer, insists in her article “Biological Data”, that the idea that males have to behave one way, and females behave another was invented, and not written into our biological genes (2009). Hopefully using an Earth dwelling feminist’s ideas helps me to encourage those reading this that there is still room for positive change! If they can see through the historically constructed ideas of gender then maybe others can too.

In addition to Simone de Beauvoir’s blatant rejection of gender binaries, there is also the fact that not all infants on Earth are born with the “expected” sex organs, and these individuals are usually put under the label “intersex”, or “abnormal”. “Intersex is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male” (Intersex Society of North America, 2006). If Gender Reveal Parties do not celebrate ALL genders then they should not be celebrating at all because gender is far too complex to fit into a two-sex system. For example, Anne Fausto-Sterling (another Earth dwelling feminist), who is a leading expert in biology and gender development, suggested in 1993 that instead of having this “two-sex” system there should be a “five-sex” system instead (2008). This article generated much controversy amongst the people of Earth, some thought that it was ridiculous to have “five sexes” and others taking her idea and running with it. Since 1993, this “five-sex” system has evolved and become so diverse that the boundaries between masculinity and femininity are almost completely blurred. How can the people of planet Earth be so blind to such diversity? All they would have to do is look around. The people that throw Gender Reveal Parties have a blatant disregard for the evidence that is in plain sight. There are more than two genders, and throwing a party to celebrate a fraction of the identities that exist on Earth is absurd.
To dig a little deeper into the minds of those who participate in Gender Reveal Parties, the belief that encourages heterosexuality as the desired sexual orientation should be discussed: ‘The ideology that a baby wrapped in a pink blanket will be “feminine” and only ever be attracted to the babies wrapped in blue blankets is a concept called heteronormativity. But this ideology does not take into account that gender is (a) not fixed and (b) not based entirely on reproductive abilities. This idea is also based on something that Sara Ahmed, a British-Australian feminist, would call “objective happiness” (2010). This is the concept explaining that society on Earth has culturally constructed ideas of “happiness”, whether it is a first kiss, the “first time”, or the big wedding day. The fact that society often puts rules in place to make happiness an “object”, and in this case the “happiness object” is heteronormativity. This is ridiculous and is probably the reason that people are gathering to celebrate “gender”. When in reality, as Sara Ahmed made clear in her article, it is important that this objective happiness is questioned, and that the people of Earth should be killing (an individual that questions culturally constructed ideals) rather than just conforming to the expectations that this “objective happiness” encourages.

So why should Gender Reveal Parties stop? If you are still asking yourself this question, please refer to the above information for a reminder. Perhaps, if you need a little more convincing, the impact that the ideology behind these parties should be discussed. As innocent as they may seem, I have found that these parties are gendering the bodies of unborn babies. This means that the world outside of a mother’s womb is preparing to shape the body of the individual that will eventually be introduced to the world. This gendering of bodies also has consequences. Every body is a reflection of cultural surroundings, and applying specific standards to these unborn bodies (bodies) before they have had a chance to figure themselves out, can only result in confusion and contradictions. Everyday there are new rules and standards for beauty, and whether you are a boy or a girl, it is expected that this standard be met. What does this have to do with Gender Reveal Parties? Well, once a baby has been identified as a “boy” or “girl” they are automatically expected to meet the standards of the other gender. This is the reason that people are gathering to celebrate “gender”.

The citizens of planet Equality and I want to thank you for your time, and hope that the information presented was helpful in explaining why Gender Reveal Parties, though seemingly innocent, are not a healthy way to celebrate new life. An individual should be celebrated based on the choices that they make, not the choices that are made for them. Celebrating only two genders, and applying unrealistic ideals to these genders are only two ways that Gender Reveal Parties are perpetuating binaries and unrealistic societal expectations. In order to create a society that is accepting of all genders, the practices that restrict individual expression must be stopped, and the celebration of new life must begin!

Works Cited

When I was thirteen my beloved twenty-six-year-old sister sat me down and told me that because she cared about me she did not want me to be a victim of bullying as she had been. There were some things of which I needed to be aware. I needed to fall in step with some things relating to my impending womanhood. Until this point, beyond basic hygiene, my appearance was mostly irrelevant to me. At thirteen I was a somewhat scrappy, shapeless-looking being. I was my brother and sister’s hand-me-down clothes and had my hair cut with my dad at the local shop in town. Very little importance was placed on my appearance, and I spent all my hours outside with the misfit farm animals I had adopted as friends.

I spent a lot of time by myself living on a grain farm seven kilometres from a very traditional, rural community. In many ways I had been insulated from the pressures that seemed to be increasingly important to the other girls my age. I feel a connection with Dionne Brand’s description of the way she felt to be thrust into a world of assigned gender and sexuality in her short story, “job” (1994). I understand the feeling of losing bodily autonomy through a mysterious process. Why did I have to wax my facial hair? Why was I supposed to shave my legs? Who was I appealing and why did it matter? I was only a thirteen-year-old girl, and until that point I had felt completely comfortable in my own skin. I was bold. I was never afraid to express my opinion, and yes I admit. I punched the boys who were being aggressive. I never associated these traits as being masculine or threatening coming from a girl. I was just being myself.

That time was a catalyst of sorts in my life; eventually I began to conform. I learned to dress carefully with more emphasis on femininity. I grudgingly learned to apply makeup and style my hair. This time in my life is applicable to Jennifer Mather Saul’s explanation of the “norms of feminine appearance” and the signaling of subordination within the patriarch (2005). There were so many rules and norms I had never experienced before suddenly becoming such a significant part of my life. These norms I needed to fall in step with made me feel weaker. I was to take time to curl my thin, flat hair. I was to wear dresses and heels so I appeared thinner and taller and smear makeup on my face to ensure boys at school would think I was pretty. I began to be more accepted in my old-fashioned community after meeting these standards and caving under both external and internal pressures. It has become clear to me that this subtle invitation for acceptance from my community was a result of my decision to signal subordination through my appearance (Mather Saul, 2003). I was experiencing my introduction to a glass cell within Michel Foucault’s ideal prison, the Panoptican (Mather Saul, 2005).

Foucault’s Panoptican is a great, circular system of glass-walled cells with an opaque watchtower in the center. The cells are constructed of glass so that every prisoner may observe their fellow prisoners also contained within the Panoptican. Foucault carefully arranged the watchtower in the center, generating feelings of unending observation on the occupants. This constant monitoring generated by the glass cells and watchtower creates a rigid structure of self-policing within the Panoptican. Foucault further explained that after some time, watchtower guards would be no longer be necessary, as the prisoners would behave appropriately to avoid punishment and ridicule.

Elizabeth McInerney

Ununderneath my Mask

Underneath my Mask

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Today, doing gender and doing sexuality has become an unconscious part of my life that the exercise of identifying it here has been difficult. I realize now that when my sister confronted me, I had been pushing back against societal cues to submit to rigid ideas about femininity. My sister was trying to shield me from the material and ideological consequences of failure to conform (Herbert, 1998).

The connection between appearance and sexuality were illuminated in my life at about the same time. Comments from Mary, my best friend’s mother, now make sense. I remember her telling me I had become a negative influence on her daughter because my best friend had started dressing and acting like me. “Acting like me” was traditionally masculine and apparently completely inappropriate. Mary’s observations left me feeling ashamed and confused. I had done something wrong by being myself. I can see this event clearly after being exposed to Melissa Herbert’s ideas of how doing gender can be linked to doing sexuality (1998). Mary was expressing her homophobia based on assumptions she had made about my sexuality rooted in her interpretation of how I did gender. Mary had a deep-seated fear that my friendship may have influenced her daughter in ways she viewed as negative. This fear and this shame I felt was all so subtle and confusing. I lacked the sophistication to understand what was happening. These were the consequences my sister was trying to protect me from with her lip-waxing intervention. Mather Saul is dead on with her explanation that women in our lives can be prevalent sources of standards (2003).

The next woman to approach this subject was my mother who carefully explained that no matter whom I was attracted to, she would love me anyway and that I could tell her anything. It dawned on me during this intensely awkward conversation that my mother thought I was a lesbian and was trying desperately to communicate to me that it was okay. I told my mother that it did not bother me if people thought I was gay because I was raised to believe that all women in my life and change the way I present myself to others that I am a heterosexual woman. Underneath my mask, I remain unchanged. Though I have put on a face that makes me palatable to societal norms, I am still the same person I was when I was thirteen. A very wide, masculine streak runs through me. I like it, and I’m glad it is there. I have been told that it is one of the things that my family and my boyfriend love most about me. But do I hide it? Of course, my cell walls are glass and like every woman before me, I do not want to displease the people in the tower even though I understand that there may be no one there.

References
Selfie Theory through a Feminist Lens

Ashley Simms

Selfies can be a powerful tool for change in contemporary society considering social media has a great influence in how we communicate, think and ultimately behave. A selfie can be defined as a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically taken with a smartphone and shared on social media. In this piece, I compare and contrast how selfies have the potential to be feminist theory in action. My selfie piece aims to exemplify how feminist thought can manifest itself in selfie culture, and how to utilize selfies for feminist praxis.

The first selfie in this piece represents what society portrays as the norm, which focuses on appearance, looking attractive and feminine. The second selfie is taken through a feminist lens, which focuses on using the body to challenge normative expectations of oppressive societal binaries by using powerful words expressing a feminist statement. The second photo is also a tool in which I use my body as an outlet to shift the normative ideas behind the selfie towards one through a feminist lens.

It is important to consider the words chosen for this piece and keep them in mind when sharing selfies. Representation, identity, and gender performance are significant to a feminist selfie because the power of self-expression is entirely in the hands of the selfie taker. Empowering oneself on social media creates space for unique opportunities for individuality and diversity in contemporary culture. An intersectional feminist, it is important to be self-reflexive, especially when examining one’s own privilege. Selfies and social media are platforms that have the ability to raise consciousness towards intersectionality, privilege, and reflexivity. These are terms that are not necessarily associated with one’s schema of a selfie, but when considered in the selfie creation process can result in a powerful image.

The rising popularity of selfies has created a culture that has made space for anyone to define and represent themselves however they choose. However, selfies can also be problematic. Self-reflexivity is essential in taking a selfie through a feminist lens. Selfies are a tool for claiming and defining your own individual power, thus putting the control in your hands (literally and figuratively).1 They give the opportunity to represent one’s unique and complex identity, which creates a space to express oneself. Although selfies are an excellent outlet for self-representation, we must utilize selfies in a way which gives that representation justice. We have an opportunity to share ourselves with the world through selfies and social media. It is time we channel our inner feminist killjoy and take selfies for claiming and defining your own individual power, thus putting the control in your hands (literally and figuratively).2 We have the ability to share our own self-expression and diversity with a global population through selfies. Instead of conforming to Western standards of beauty, it is time we challenge the ways we ultimately behave. A selfie can be defined as a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically taken with a smartphone and shared on social media. In this piece, I compare and contrast how selfies have the potential to be feminist theory in action.

By challenging historical selfie standards as a Western culture, we can create space for accepting and embracing diversity as a means to strengthen our society. We have the ability to share our own self-expression and diversity with a global population through selfies. Instead of conforming to Western standards of beauty, it is time we challenge the ways we ultimately behave. A selfie can be defined as a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically taken with a smartphone and shared on social media. In this piece, I compare and contrast how selfies have the potential to be feminist theory in action.


Bibliography


As with other countries arising from colonization, Canadian history is riddled with ethical upheavals. Indigenous people experienced a wide range of social injustices during the era of colonization in Canada. European colonization oppressed Canadian Indigenous people, specifically women. Indigenous communities suffered from European culture in one important aspect. Indigenous women were allocated economic and political power while European women were not (Anderson, 2000). European regulatory norms around domesticity were based on the belief that patriarchy begets civility; this monopolized power in the hands of men (Perry, 2005). Such cultural differences between European and Indigenous people created flux during colonization around norms of domesticity. Perry (2005) states that, “domesticity was a regulative norm with particular resonance for women” (p. 114). Enforcing domesticity on Indigenous people became foundational to achieving Eurocentric law, religion, and ultimately civilization in Canada. (Perry, 2005).

Domestication was only possible by reducing the power of Indigenous women to a level that was similar to working-class European women (Perry, 2005). Therefore, domesticity was not a progressive movement towards civilization; domesticity was a regulative norm that oppressed all women and undermined Indigenous culture.

Millward (2005) defines nineteenth-century domesticity as the creation of a permanent living condition without the complete restriction of movement. Domesticity was marked by internally divided houses with separate rooms for separate functions. This was to ensure that both hygienic and moral cleanliness were maintained. Maintaining the house fell on the shoulders of women because their moral standing was judged according to the cleanliness of the home. Meanwhile, men laboured outside the home and had full authority of the economic and political spheres in the community (Millward, 2005). Domesticity was necessary for the introduction of Christianity and European law because it not only made Indigenous communities accessible to missionaries, but it also transferred power away from women (Perry, 2005). Maintaining the home and upholding Christian morals through lifelong marriage and single partner conjugality was conveyed as the essence of appropriate womanhood (Perry, 2005). From this standpoint, the domestication of women was an essential part of civilizing the Indigenous people.

Traditional Indigenous culture acknowledged the necessary inclusion of women in economic, political, and spiritual roles to create balance in community decision-making (Anderson, 2000). Although labour was diffused into male and female spheres, all work was seen as an important contribution to the functioning of the community (Anderson, 2000). Women were given economic power over the dispersal of food. Food was a valued resource for many Indigenous communities, this allowed women to engage in political trading tactics such as withholding food from community members who tried to initiate wars. Iroquois women would also cultivate the land and grow crops which served as a major economic contribution to community (Anderson, 2000). Indigenous women clearly had a large role in the political and economic spheres of their communities.

Indigenous women had the political authority to appoint and depose of chiefs (Anderson, 2000). Women would also negotiate treaties and could inherit chiefships in the Wild sweetu en nation (Anderson, 2000). Mothers and grandmothers were caregivers of children, this gave them the political autonomy to make decisions about family issues because of their investment in protecting the future generations (Anderson, 2000). The respect that Indigenous people had for women in economic and political roles can be traced back to the importance of women in spirituality.

In Indigenous creation stories, “creation is understood to be within the realm of the female because of the profound understanding that women bring forth life” (Anderson, 2000, p. 71). Women were capable of bringing life from the spirit world into the earthly world through childbirth, a dangerous and life-threatening task (Anderson, 2000). Women had a great source of spiritual power because they were the link between the spirit world and man (Anderson, 2000). Women were allotted a relative amount of authority in economic and political realms because they were spiritual intermediaries and givers of life. In contrast, European creation stories neglected the spiritual role of women, this naturalized the concept of female inferiority (Anderson, 2000).

European creation stories were male-centered which solidified systems of patriarchy (Anderson, 2000). Within this patriarchal context, the role of women was as the subservient caretaker of man (Perry, 2005). European Christianity displayed women who abided by domesticity as passive and pure, like the Virgin Mary, and women who rejected domesticity as manipulative and contaminating, similar to Eve (Anderson, 2000). Independent women were a mark of Indigenous barbarism that threatened the authority of men (Anderson, 2000). Domestication became a joint effort of the church and state to instill patriarchal civilization. Laws were created that banned Indigenous women from participating in political and economic decisions in an attempt to push women out of the public sphere and into the home. Oppression must first be defined before analyzing how domesticity acted as a regulative norm for Indigenous women. Oppression is the reduction, immobilization, and molding of a particular group of people through intersected regulatory structures (Frye, 2004). The intersection between European racism and patriarchy validated the inferior position of Indigenous women (Perry, 2005). Frye (2004) states that in most oppressive structures there is a double-bind at play. The double-bind limits an oppressed group’s choices to a select few, all of which leading to consequences. Domesticity acted as a double-bind situation that molded, immobilized, and reduced Indigenous women.

The Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869 and the Indian Act of 1876 took away the status of Indigenous women if they married non-Indigenous men, enforced patriarchal marriage, and stripped women of their economic and political power to own land and vote (Anderson, 2000). Those enforced systems of patriarchy left Indigenous women with fewer legal rights than Indigenous men (Anderson, 2000). The European church created school institutions to train women in the ways of domesticity. European nuns would shame Indigenous women and girls during menstruation which was traditionally seen as a source of spiritual power. This marked a dual effort to vilify Indigenous spiritually and exalt European values of religion, marriage, and domestication (Anderson, 2000). Training women into domesticity stripped Indigenous women and girls of their traditional culture that valued the role of women (Anderson, 2000).

The joint efforts of the church and state created a double-bind for Indigenous women. Women who
In our contemporary societal state, streen with patriarchy, capitalism and heteronormative beliefs, sex workers have come to symbolically encompass the idea of danger and deviance (Ferris, 2015). I was always acutely aware of this stigma that pertains to sex workers, but I never truly realized the ways in which this stigma was reinforced, especially in regards to the newspaper or media articles responding to the issue of missing and murdered women in Canada. As Dr. Shawna Ferris illustrates in her book "Street Sex Work and Contemporary Canadian Cities", sex workers are portrayed to be problematic and a dangerous threat to a "normal" and patriarchal society (2015). By generating this hegemonic belief that sex workers are a source of nuisance and criminal behavior, citizens in today’s society are able to demonize these women in this trade need to be controlled and regulated, with some anti-prostitution groups going so far as to try to eliminate this profession altogether (Ferris, 2015). This further adds to the constant uphill battle sex trade activists currently face in regards to the destigmatization of this trade in contemporary society.

During a university class lecture, we were instructed to analyze two media articles, both of which reported on missing and murdered women who were allegedly working in the sex trade. Although both articles were addressing a similar issue, the one entitled "Svekla trial for prostitute killings starts Tuesday" (CTV, 2008) was a disgusting portrayal of these victimized women and implied a sense of victim blaming, suggesting that since these women were active in the sex trade, living high risk lifestyles, they were ideal victims for abduction. This article was successful in transforming an image of two victimized and murdered women, and portraying them as criminal outcasts from society, a tactic which Dr. Shawna Ferris argues results in an altered public perspective of these women, therefore lessening the degree of sensitivity held towards this issue (2015). I have also come to realize that violence towards sex workers is never emphasized in media, and if sex work is brought to the spotlight, the primary focus is upon the male offender and his criminal career. To me, this is a pure reflection of patriarchal control in our society, and perfectly illustrates how sex workers are incorrectly assumed to be worthless and undeserving of integrity.

In addition to the unsettling title and collection of harmful and degrading thoughts authored throughout the article, two images were also included in the post (CTV, 2008). These mugshot-like photos portrayed the murdered women as lonely, deviant criminals, and therefore automatically results in lower levels of concern.

References


Inverness, Calif.: Chardon Press.
by the public body. These graphic images portrayed the women’s personal history as criminally aberrant, therefore distancing them from the normalness of society, resulting in their dehumanization by patriarchal control. Dr. Ferris illustrates two dominant portrayals of sex workers in the media; the “Missing Woman” archetype and the “Lone Streetwalker” (2015). The concept of the “Missing Woman” illustrates that these women are generally presented through photos similar to that of mugshots, and usually pictured alone or paired with commentary that suggests these women are “ungrievable” (Ferris, 2015), resulting in a lesser level of public concern or normalization of their endured violence. This is how these images portrayed the murdered women in this article (CTV, 2008), intending that the violence suffered by these women was to be expected and therefore normalized as they are members of a high risk and low socio-economic environment.

As discussed in lecture, we addressed the denotative meaning behind the language in these articles to mean the actual and literal meaning of the term, and then compared that with the connotative meaning, implying a hidden or second understanding to terms (Ferris, 2015). It is my understanding that the connotative meaning behind the slandering of sex workers in these media articles allows for the author to dehumanize these women, and provides justification to the overall ideology that sex workers live a high-risk lifestyle, and are to blame for their harm and endurance of violence (Ferris, 2015). This further aids in my understanding that a prominent theme in our dysfunctional society is to control and eliminate sex work so as to build a safer environment for “normal” and “regular” people (Ferris, 2015). The images representing sex workers go on to develop an automatic assumption that these women are criminals and therefore their disappearance helps aid in the “normalization” and protection of society, creating safer neighborhoods.

I have come to understand that media representations of sex workers helps to reinforce stigma and encourages the ideology that these women are criminals, and that based on their lifestyle decisions, they end up abused, missing, or worse, murdered. Media representations, like this aforementioned article, reinforces the silencing of sex trade workers and contributes to the ignorance of the violence they endure. I believe that this hegemonic ideology of women in the sex trade is a tool of patriarchal control, resulting in a lower level of public concern regarding the disappearance of a human being, while demonstrating the act of victim blaming and normalization of violence against women.

Works Cited


First Time
First Time talks about the idealized fantasy of what a gay man’s ‘first time’ should be. Looking at muscle-worship as well as the issue of racism that exists within the gay male community that is perpetuated through hook-up apps like Grindr as well as the pornography industry. In order to be considered desirable or ideal one needs to be muscular and white, as the two figures suggest. First Time focuses on the most ‘important’ parts of the male body, the muscular chest and the penis. The lack of heads, or any identifying features, to the mannequin-like male forms suggest the anonymity and impersonal interactions that come with apps like Grindr, where sex is the focus and who you are, as long as you’re ‘hot’, doesn’t really matter.

Artist Statement: James Turowski is a Winnipeg-based artist working mainly in ceramics as a student of the School of Art at the University of Manitoba. His work explores themes of sexuality, personal identity, and queer issues.
I open my eyes to a black so enveloping I immediately shut them again. My body is decorated with aches and pains and my insides feel pressurized, so much so that my limbs feel leaden and numb. There’s a dull throbbing ache from my forehead that radiates around my skull, making me wish I was asleep once more. Slowly, sounds begin to filter through my consciousness. A droning TV set. Beeping. Faint intermittent dripping. Breathing from somewhere close by.

I pry open my eyes, trying my sight. Things slowly come into focus. The TV in the corner of the room is on and the drab beige blinds are drawn. I become aware of an uncomfortable bed and crinkly bedclothes. There’s a pressure in my forearms emanating from a point in the crease of my elbows. My eye lazily roll downward to find an IV drip entering my bloodstream. A slow-blooming sense of panic begins to spread from my stomach and the beeping increases. I try to reach up to touch my head to investigate the pain, but I can’t seem to find the strength to lift my arm. Why can’t I move my arm?! A voice interrupts my rising panic.

"I’m going to call the nurse now, okay?" She reaches over to press the call button. She states at me with an expression I can’t read and cleans her throat before saying, “Can you say anything? Do you remember what happened? Do you - Are you okay?”

All I can do is stare at her. I remember it, Astrid. I’m scared.

With that thought comes glimpses of memory. Post-movie laughter, hands clasped tight. A shadowed alleyway, once so benign. The men, their sneers and slurs spat on saliva, only to discover blood when I opened my mouth. They enveloped us, choked us. Astrid falling, blood spurting on to the concrete with each fist, and my panic to save her. The limbs turned on me, pushed me down with surprising force. Wet with their cigarette-charged saliva, a symphony of cracking bones, pain so intense it was numbing. Choked on saliva, only to discover blood when I opened my mouth to cough. The final blow, metal belt buckle against skull, from the rope-veined hand.

Yes, Astrid. I remember. I remember it all.

Her breath hitches and a tear rolls down her face. She swipes it away impatiently and irritably. There’s a click of a door opening. I turn toward the sound as much as I am able to.

“Welcome back, dear,” the nurse is young and looks tired and overworked, but she seems friendly and energetic enough judging by her greeting. “Let’s see how you’re doing.”

She records my vitals, asking Astrid some questions as she does so. She has me follow her pen with my eyes and checks my reflexes and pain responses. Then she asks me to move my fingers, toes, and arms, followed by some basic questions similar to Astrid’s. I can’t help but notice the slight disappointment that crosses her face when I only stare blankly in response to most of her requests.

“she can’t move or speak,” Astrid states from the corner of the room, resembling a frightened animal. Her voice is tight. “What does that mean?”

The nurse looks at her. “This is perfectly normal. It takes time for the body to recover from being asleep for longer than it’s used to. Patience, dear.” She looks back at me and pats my arm. I try a smile, which I desperately wish shows. “So, she’ll get back to normal eventually?” Her voice sounds hopeful, pleading, but there’s an undertone of something else there I can’t quite identify.

The nurse sighs and gives her a small smile. “I’ll be back in a couple hours. Stay positive.”

When the nurse turns her back, Astrid grimaces at the nurse’s dodge of the question and-resumes her place in the chair with a grim, arms and legs crossing.

The days pass in a disoriented, morphine-dazed blur, in which keeping time was minimized to a dichotomy of asleep and not-asleep. The not-asleep periods were short-lived, merely the time in between shots of morphine. Ty’s, or other medications I couldn’t bother to keep track of. It might’ve been days or weeks after I awoke from my coma when, in a particularly coherent not-asleep period, I overhear Astrid’s side of a phone conversation with the officer in charge of our case.

“What do you mean they got away?” She struggles to keep her voice level. “Right, or if this isn’t the first time they’ve done this, why haven’t you caught them yet? There are so many eye witnesses who’ve described them and seen what they’ve done - including me. Isn’t that enough?” She shakes her head at whatever the officer says in response. “So, there’s nothing you can do?... Uh-huh, right. Okay, thanks for your time. Bye.”

“Fuck it!” She yells once she hangs up and bangs her fist on the back of a chair. Taking a deep breath, she leans her head against the wall.

I take a deep breath of my own and say: “What’s wrong?” My voice is raspy and quiet with lack of use and it takes a huge amount of effort, but it’s there. I can speak. Finally.

Astrid’s head swings around to look at me and she rushes to the bedside. “Do - Did you just say something?” She grabs my hand, her thumb rubbing painfully hopeful circles across my skin.

I gaze internally. Why is she making me repeat myself? "What’s wrong?” I have to pause in between each word for a breather, but I manage it.

Astrid’s smile drops and she looks down at our hands before answering. “I guess it’s time I get you up to speed.” She pulls the chair closer to the bed and leans against the mattress, her face closer to mine. “While you were - asleep, I called the police and told them what happened. A couple officers came here to ask me some questions and a sketch artist took my description of the men who... y’know,” a shaky sigh. The hand holding mine is turning cold. I squeeze her hand for reassurance. “Turns out, the hate crime officers recognized them, especially the dude who looked to be the leader of the whole mess. They’re well-known offenders against the LGBT community nation-wide, but have never been caught. The leader even has a hate blog with thousands of followers all about how we’re abstractions to humanity and should be exterminated or some shit,” her voice shakes and she pauses, wiping her eyes. “I always hear about stuff like this, but you never think it’ll happen to you, you know?” It’s a rhetorical question, but I still nod. “I know, it, I never thought it would happen to us either. And now, they tell me that they’ve lost him, he’s gone away, and the only thing they’re doing is putting out a stupid APB - and they’re not even bothering to look for his cronies!” she shakes her head. “I can’t believe they just let them fall between the cracks. Again. It’s like they don’t even care.”

“Well it’ll be okay,” barely a whisper escapes my cracked lips, but Astrid hears it, smirking a sad smile at me.

“Keep that hope, baby,” she says, “I won’t stop fighting for you,” she clears her throat. “Now get some rest. It’s been quite the day for you and tomorrow is your first day of rehab. Don’t want to be tired for that! She kisses my forehead and smooths my hair before leaning back in her chair. I don’t think she realizes I see her face fall into aFx. The days pass in a disoriented, morphine-dazed blur, in which keeping time was minimized to a dichotomy of asleep and not-asleep. The not-asleep periods were short-lived, merely the time in between shots of morphine. Ty’s, or other medications I couldn’t bother to keep track of. It might’ve been days or weeks after I awoke from my coma when, in a particularly coherent not-asleep period, I overhear Astrid’s side of a phone conversation with the officer in charge of our case.

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“Hello, this is Officer Bradley,” the officer in charge of our case. He hasn’t contacted us since he put out the APB. “Is this Lara? I heard you were doing well and that you’re back home now. Congratulations on the recovery.”

I think about my lack of freedom and the strain I’m putting on my relationships. This doesn’t feel like something I should be congratulated for.

“Uh, thank you,” I reply, rubbing the side of my head. Talking still gives me a headache. Too much thinking involved in something that should be second nature. “Do you have any updates? Have you found him?”

A heavy sigh on the other end. “Unfortunately not,” Officer Bradley states with a voice he tries to make sound respectful. “He’s completely vanished into thin air. We’re not involved in something that should be second nature. “Do that, Lara,” her voice rises with warning. “Could you look at me, please? This is important.”

I reluctantly look up. Her face is stern and her eyes are hard marbles.

“I love you, but I don’t think I can do this anymore,” a deep shaky breath. “If it was just taking care of you, I could do it. But not like this. Not when I know the reason you’re like this is still out there. I need justice – closure. And you’re just a reminder that I can’t have it,” she looks away and picks at old Polish garnishing her nails. “I’m scared to go out alone at night. And even if you were better, I don’t think I’d be able to go out with you alone. I wouldn’t be able to hold your hand. I mean, whenever I leave this house, I see them everywhere – I think being out with you would only make that worse. And that’s not fair to you. I’m scared of who I am and I’m scared of what we have. I-I just… I just can’t.”

And she walks out the door.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote the poem “Epistle from Mrs. [Y]onge to Her Husband” after a trial between the couple became public. William Yonge took his wife to trial for having an affair after their separation despite the fact that Mr. Yonge had made affairs during his marriage to Mary. Writing from the perspective of the wife, Montagu realizes her own female agency, which I understand to be the ability of a woman to act in accordance with her will, despite the limitations she may face in relation to another person, a group, or an institution. Montagu wrote her poem as an extended argument under the form of a complaint in order to sway the reader’s opinion. Montagu argues for the equal treatment of women by showing how male privilege is based in culture and how this privilege reflects poorly on a woman’s status in society, despite the masculine qualities needed by women to navigate a patriarchal society.

Montagu argues that male privilege is built from culture, which in turn is partly based off of ideas about nature and bodies. The idea that men’s bodies are valued more than women’s bodies, and points out how men are coerced into marriage, and points out how men will go to any length to impose marriage on a woman. Moreover, the author argues that laws are formed from culture and tradition, “To custom (though unjust) so much is due” (46). Here, Montagu explains that women’s basic human rights are unprotected by the law because the law was made based off of a culture where men’s bodies are valued more than women’s bodies. The author specifically brings up the topic of marriage laws to demonstrate how Mrs. Yonge (and other women) had probably not consented to marriage in the first place. Montagu writes, “If sighs have gained or force compelled our hand, / Deceived by art, or urged by stern command; / Whatever motive binds the fatal tie” (lines 11-13). She illustrates the ways in which women are coerced into marriage, and points out how men will go to any length to impose marriage on a woman. This demonstrates that non-consensual marriage is not morally just. Continuing with this argument, the author explains again that marriage binds women to men: “Too, too severely laws of honor bind, / The weak
Montagu also demonstrates the social pressures placed on women and how they are viewed as weak by society in general. First, she uses words and phrases about being a woman or a wife such as, “The judging world expects our constancy.” “For wives ill used no remedy remains” / To daily racks condemned, and to eternal chains. “trials so severe.” “This wretched outcast, this abandoned wife” (14, 23, 24, 36, 39). These portray the expectations placed upon women and wives, and how women feel about these pressures. Montagu uses negative language as well as words that reflect a kind of eternal misery. The exaggeration and metaphor of marriage as a jail in the second example demonstrates the depth to which Montagu is disgusted with societal expectations for the future of women. In addition, after Mrs. Yonge separates from her husband, she is further ostracized and unwanted. Montagu also depicts women the same way that men see and portray women in general. That is, as subordinate. Montagu writes, “The weak submissive sex of womankind.” “Our sex’s weakness,” “Yet from this weakness you suppose is due,” “I hide my frailty from the public view” (10, 32, 34, 44). The first example is a more general understanding of women, the second incorporates any female reader – “our” (52), the third is from the point of view of Mr. Yonge or men more broadly, and the fourth from Mrs. Yonge’s point of view. This is significant because Montagu has four different perspectives in society, some personal, some public, and they all incorporate this idea that women are lesser than men. In this way, Montagu establishes the sexism that permeates throughout society within her poem, and how it is not only men that contribute to this sexist culture, but women too reproduce sexist ideas about themselves. Montagu uses her own female agency to deconstruct this idea about women being weak and submissive by using each of these phrases ironically.

Earlier I spoke about women’s bodies in relation to nature and now I would like to think about how societal expectations placed on women cause them to learn traditional masculine qualities in order to navigate their world. Montagu maintains that women possess virtue in ways that men cannot comprehend due to their apparent shortcomings. “Yet from this weakness you suppose is due / Sublimere virtue than your Cato knew” (34-35). Montagu recognizes that women are expected to remain chaste to keep a good reputation in this society. This requires self-control, an emotion traditionally relegated to men, whereas women were seen as emotional and irrational. Women’s self-mastery is contrasted with an allusion to Cato, a Roman politician who was warring against Julius Caesar and chose to commit suicide over submitting to Caesar’s rule. Women are deemed by Montagu to be more virtuous than Cato, who remained fixed to his principles by refusing to submit to Caesar. In fact, in the article “Addison’s Cato and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu” by Robert Halband, he explains that Montagu had critiqued Addison’s play before the piece was seen on the stage (and later became the most popular play at the time) (1124). Montagu writes in the critique, “The last scene has something in it wonderfully touching, I could only wish the soliloquy of Cato had been longer, the subject affords many Beautiful Reflections” (as cited in Halband, 126). I think that the fact that Montagu used Cato as an example in her own poem later on demonstrates how deeply she felt about Cato’s suicide and self-sacrifice. Montagu felt that Cato’s choice was very virtuous in relation to his principles, and thought a lot about the actual act of suicide. Montagu’s complaint poem subtly indicates that women in comparison were emotionally strong and capable in order to move through a patriarchal society that already thought of them as weak and fragile.

Montagu wrote the poem “Epistle from Mrs. [Y]onge to Her Husband” from the point of view of Mary Yonge, giving the impression of a complaint letter to her husband. Montagu was instead trying to argue for the rights of women. She links eighteenth-century ideas about natural bodies to tradition, which in turn relates to the laws at the time of the poem. Specifically, marriage laws bound women to their husbands as if they were property. From this, Montagu explains that these traditions and laws privilege men in ways that allow them to remain unfree and uncaring towards women while pursuing their chosen activities. Montagu also speaks ironically about how society then views women based on their bodies and rules. That is, women are weak, submissive, and are therefore given work in domestic areas. Montagu also alludes to women as strong and virtuous by comparing these traits to those of the character Cato in Joseph Addison’s widely popular play, Cato. Like Lady Mary writes of Addison’s play, “I would have some stronger Lines on Liberty scatter’d [throughout], & I believe it would have a very good Effect on the Minds of the People” (as cited in Halband, 126).

Works Cited
What does it mean to be Black? Is it just a colour or a race? What has society turned being black into? When we hear the word Black, What do we think about? We often think about darkness or violence, Not because we want to think that, But it’s what first comes to mind.

Dark skinned or light skinned we are all beautiful, Why even name such as dark or light, Black is Black, Just like the color Black it has no substitute, Embrace each other.

It is so embarrassing, how Black boys and men discriminate too and criticize us, Instead of embracing us.

You have a preference talking about light skinned girls, Making the dark skinned feel pressured, Resulting to bleaching, Damaging their skin.

Media doesn’t even help, You rarely see a dark skinned girl, being used to promote products. It’s always the light one, Can’t I get compliments?

Because I am Black does not mean I am sassy, I went to the bank the other day with my natural hair out, and this woman goes you look so sassy.

Of course am fierce, I am confident, I am classy, I am educated, I am sophisticated.

I am who I am, I am Black, And I am just like every other person I breathe, I walk, I cry and I am human.

To the men out there, Because am Black does not mean I am gullible and vulnerable to your words, Do not take me for granted, Do not disrespect me.

Without us, you won’t be here, Being a Black lady is not about an hourglass body, Or being sexually objectified, Or being in your music videos, where you sing about hoe.

We want respect, Black does not mean violence or sex, I am a Black lady, I am strong and capable.

Trust us with respect, because in the end we are all one. Remember united we stand, divided we fall.
So One Isn’t Good Enough For You?

My experience with open relationships and polyamory

Christina Trachenko

I am a 20-year-old university student and I have been identifying as polyamorous for five months. I dove into this life head first and continue to be completely immersed in the polyamorous community. I have communicated with many monogamous and nonmonogamous people about their perceptions and experiences with polyamory. I am the furthest thing from an expert, but nevertheless I can share with you some of my experiences and what I have learned along the way.

What is polyamory? The roots of the word mean many loves. Polyamorous people engage in romantic and/or physical relationships with multiple people. I, like many others, did not always know about this concept. I will tell you about my path to how I achieved the state of polyamory. I am in now.

I got into my first serious relationship when I was 15, with a human name not HIP. The relationship lasted from May to December of 2012. The way they approached meeting new people, with intense admiration and curiosity for the individuals, taught me a lot for which I am very grateful.

One and remained open for its entirety. Right off the bat, it felt very normal and right for me – I did not feel I had any reason to try to withhold my partner from connecting with others, and they felt the same for me. I did not question its supposed abnormality. As far as I was concerned, it was my first relationship, and everything was right in the world. We did not even know the word polyamory, but we lived it wholly. If I chatted with friends or other casual dates, and they questioned, “is your partner okay with this?” My typical answer was that they were probably flirting it up with someone else as we spoke! This may sound very pie-in-the-sky, but it truly was our lives.

There is no standard polyamorous person or relationship. While it is a growing community, it is still not large enough to have a set of standard norms. You pave your own way in the poly life. As a result, the configurations of polyamorous relationships are wildly diverse. If you can think of a possible configuration of a relationship (e.g. a quad – 4 people in a relationship where each person may or may not be involved with any other person in the quad), it probably exists. It exists among people of all ages, all orientations, and can last entire lifetimes.

The month our relationship ended, I was in a place where I was still casually seeing 4 people, and maintained an openness to connecting with others. One of these individuals was Nando. Over the next several months, we spent a lot of time together. We showed a mutual interest in proclaiming our relationship as official. One obstacle, however, was that Nando was not comfortable with me seeing others during our relationship. We discussed my tendency to connect with multiple people, and I decided I would be okay with monogamy if an open relationship is something that would hurt him.

Our relationship was and is more than we could ever ask for. It has always been founded in honesty, communication, and understanding. He has taught me so much that I do not know if I ever could have learned otherwise, lessons that have brought me to be at peace with myself today.

However, throughout the relationship, there were a handful of heated arguments. Less than ten over the course of two and a half years. We would have some kind of disagreement, where I would completely overreact. I would stop speaking to him; I would make a call for harsh action. We had plans to spend all of our foreseeable future together, if not forever. When we had these arguments, all of a sudden I felt that I wanted to break up.

The thought was always in the back of my mind that I would have to break up with him someday. I loved him so much, it was hard to find any reason to. My heart felt constrained. I sought to share my love with more humans. Over the relationship, there were several instances where I would discuss my feelings about open love. I told him if he wanted to seek others, he was free to do so – I would be more than happy to support it. He expressed reservations about granting me the freedom. Our relationship was and is more than we could ever ask for.

I wash off my tears and composed myself. I proceeded with what I was doing, and went to Nando. I told him that I needed to talk to him, and he was prepared to listen with an open mind, as he always was. I told him that I was polyamorous and I felt I had so much more potential, so much more to learn, but I felt limited. I felt as though I had met him too early in my life, and that I did not want to lose him, but I did not know if I could handle monogamy anymore. We talked a lot that day, that week, and for the next few weeks. Early into this discussion, Nando expressed that he felt he may be polyamorous as well, and he was willing to give it a shot. He described to me that he was realizing how deeply he internalized our culture’s monogamous ideals.

We agreed we would try it our own pace. If it did not work, we were both still very interested in staying together, that was certain. It was a big leap, but off we went into a big wide world of possible opportunity, possible chaos, possibly both.

We did not really know where to start. So we began reading poly blogs online, seeking out relevant books. We did our research. We were doing our best to rise above. We have kept our minds open, and decided we would never learn if we did not try – so we accepted every opportunity for learning that came our way. Learning in the form of written word, or experience alike. We got into a number of relationships. Some of them went awry and we got hurt. We were mindful of ourselves, and decided that it was no fault of ours that they were taking advantage of our vulnerability. That’s a hard pill to swallow. Sometimes it was no one’s fault (e.g. in the case of mental illness). That’s a hard pill to swallow. We did our best to rise above. We have continued to start and perpetuate relationships as they present themselves naturally.

What else did we have to come to terms with? What else have we learned? Here are some crucial messages we have come to live by. Our Western culture is enormously monogamous. Monogamy is the foundation upon which
which people form their understanding of the world, upon which laws are built. It is the guideline people
internalize and allow to command arguably the most intimate facet of their lives, like their romantic
relationships. This guideline also bears the belief that any deviation from monogamy is immoral - sluts, 

hedonists, cheaters.

Our Western culture encourages jealousy. We value loyalty, but we also consider someone getting 

competitive over their mate as ‘endearing’ or ‘passionate.’ With some of them, such as rage, 

bloodlust, and irrational fear, their negative effects are widely known and widely discouraged. However, the

negative emotion of jealousy is often encouraged to dictate how we lead our lives.

What does our culture say the goal of romance is? Dating is often assumed to be part of the search for

‘that special one’. The goal of flirting, spending time with potential suitors, and going on dates, is all tied to the

assumption that one is looking for their life partner, to get married and have kids with.

What are the results of this simplified schema? Is it a problem at all? When you hear about things like

friends with benefits, it seems clear that a gray area exists between friendship and romance. Trying to fit

your relationships into a box can cause you to rush or withhold relationships in a way that is not right for you.

It can place an excess of pressure on you and your partner(s), to answer ambiguous questions of where the

relationship is going.

Say you form a relationship. My belief is that there are innumerable ways to connect with other humans. You

may engage in a brief polite exchange with someone – they hold the door open for you and you thank them. You

are related to each other in that you want to be kind to those around you, and possibly that you want to

avoid seeming rude. You may connect empathetically– you trust each other enough to

share your struggles and seek support from

other humans. Why shouldn’t we all give each other a chance? What do you lose by hearing someone out,

by observing what they have to offer the world? By opening our hearts in this way, and learned so much

about others. We have both had experiences that

have given us the greatest lessons we could never have learned otherwise. There is a lot more out there, more

than we could ever imagine. We both plan on being

polyamorous for the foreseeable future.

So what should you do? I would encourage anyone and everyone to question what you are taught, what

you are surrounded by, and make a more informed decision on what makes sense in your life. It may

involve some risks, but what you have to gain is a bounty of knowledge, and possibility a whole new world of beautiful, meaningful opportunity.

Yours truly, Christina Trachenko

Nando and I have traveled to San Francisco twice in the last year – a known poly-friendly city. We have chatted

with monogamous and nonmonogamous locals. It has given us some insight – fragments of poly-friendly

regions, which showed us what things might look like if polyamory was more well-known. It is not as scary as it

might sound. Every polyamorous individual has their own insecurities and fears, and learns from experience –

the same way as you or I.

I am not intending to take a stand against monogamy, or sell polyamory as the new ideal. For many people, 

monogamy works - many blissful, passionate, and fulfilling monogamous relationships play themselves out all around us. What I am intending is to get the word out. How can a person realize a polyamorous life is what will make them feel fulfilled, if they have not even heard of it? Nando in particular had to work to

overcome this roadblock.

Our life was very dynamic that September, and it has remained so until now and probably will continue as

such. We have discovered great personal truths about opening our hearts in this way, and learned so much

about others. We have both had experiences that

have given us the greatest lessons we could never have learned otherwise. There is a lot more out there, more

than we could ever imagine. We both plan on being

polyamorous for the foreseeable future.
White Lie

Edmund

I am that which scares you, that thing to be seen, silenced and feared.
I am that which you’ve branded violent, to whom creativity comes as a gift of your whip.
I am dark, disposable, dirt:
Undeserving of life, liberty or freedom.
I am that which you have said I am.
I am that obedient slave.

I am that which plagues you. That thing to be dismembered, ravaged, and robbed.
I am that which is in need of saving. To which your generosity will gladly provide.
I am unfaithful, barren, unkind:
Never knowing dignity, decorum or design.
I am that which you have said I am.
I am that dark continent.

I am that which arouses you. That object to amuse, violate then discard.
I am that which quenches your appetite, whose existence must be of your making.
I am yours to own, dissect then disown.
Never deserving passion, personality, or piety.
I am that which you said I am.
I am that negro body.

Over the past decade, Canada’s labour market has shifted in a significant way to rely increasingly on transnational migrant workers who hold precarious, temporary immigration status in Canada. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) in Canada for example, brings migrant workers to Canada on a short-term basis without pathways to permanent residence or citizenship.

The research question addressed in this paper with respect to the non-Canadian immigrant employment in Canada can be summarized as follows: How does the Canadian federal government respond to emerging issues relating to employment-related rights of Temporary Foreign Workers Program in Canada today?

This paper focuses on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in Canada, and its negative impact on the temporary immigrant workers. The paper argues that female temporary foreign workers (TFWs), due to their lack of employment mobility, are more likely to suffer from exploitation, abusive employer practices, and face more barriers to enforcing the rights they do have than female non-temporary foreign workers in Canada.

The TFWP came into existence in January 1973, and was initially targeted at specific groups of people with highly specialized skills, including academics, business executives and engineers. Employers, however, demanded workers to perform jobs requiring lower skill levels and prompted the federal government to introduce in 2002 the Pilot Project for Hiring Foreign Workers in Occupations that Require Lower Levels of Formal Training. The program was intended to ensure the recruitment of people from outside Canada for jobs for which there were insufficient Canadian citizens and permanent residents to perform.1

Between 2002 and 2007 was a period that saw a substantial easing of restrictions on temporary foreign workers. Women’s share of total number of temporary foreign workers increased from 33.0% to 40.5% suggesting that the flow of temporary foreign workers was becoming feminized.1 This amount not only increased, but was greater than the number of permanent immigrants in the “economic” class for most years in Canada. The TFWP, however, placed restrictions on workers admitted under it who were only entitled legally to stay in Canada for the duration of authorized employment. Not only was their access to Canada restricted, but once admitted, temporary foreign workers’ labour mobility is also restricted.2

The greatest proportionate growth of TFWPs has been among low-skill, low-wage migrant workers primarily from the global South who are employed in sectors such as caregiving, agriculture, hospitality, food services, construction and tourism.3 The problem with temporary foreign workers is not that they are “workers.” It is that they are “temporary” and “foreign,” tied to their employers like servants, and are constantly under threat of losing their right to work, and their right to remain in Canada, if they displease that employer. For example, TFWPs experience various social and economic barriers in Canada. These workers are inexperienced with the Canadian legal and social systems; and they have limited opportunities for permanent immigration, language barriers, misleading employer-provided information, and self-censorship to protect their jobs and threats of deportation, to name a few.4

In Canada, laws and policies such as the TFWP fundamentally shape the nature and quality of relationships and interactions between members of society. These laws and policies can, however, also operate to disempower segments of society in means that “substantially orchestrate, encourage and sustain” a violation of fundamental rights and “create conditions which in effect substantially interfere” with a group’s rights and its capacity to participate in society.5 The exploitation of TFWPs for example, is not isolated and anecdotal; it is endemic and systemic; and the depths of the violations are degrading.6

Fay Faraday in her article “Made In Canada: How the Law Constrains Migrant Workers’ Insecurity” argues that the vulnerability to exploitation that migrant workers experience is not inevitable; it is, instead, Made in Canada.7 For instance, when looking at TFWPs who work as live-in caregivers, during the years that they work with precarious temporary status, Faraday interviewed a female Uganda TFW who works in Toronto as a live-in caregiver. The interviewee reports that she was treated like “rubbish” and was working hard but she was not getting paid. Another interviewee from India also reports that she was promised $15 per hour plus time and a half for overtime; but she never got paid that; she was only paid $10 per hour and never got overtime pay. The interviewee also notes that she was promised paid flights to go back home for the holidays but did not get that either.8

Additionally, TFWPs have for years raised concerns that employers fail to provide them with appropriate health and safety training and/or fail to provide them with appropriate health and safety equipment.9 Faraday reports that workers who are injured on the job are promptly dismissed and repatriated to their country of origin. As a result, they are effectively denied access to workplace safety insurance benefits, treatment in Canada, and the opportunity to be accommodated in their jobs with modified duties as required under Canadian law.10 Some of the temporary foreign female live-in caregivers are sometimes forced to leave Canada once their work permit expires after four years and cannot come back for another four years.

Tess Agustin, in her article “Canada’s Shame: Mass Deportation of Temporary Foreign Workers” argues that the deportation of foreign workers is a stark reminder that, despite what females TFWs do for Canada, they merely serve as cheap, disposable labour, just like Vicky Venancio from Alberta.11 Venancio was a TFWF who is now a quadriplegic after a cycling accident and was forced by the Canadian government to go back to the Philippines because they claim that she has become a burden to Canada’s healthcare system.12 Agustin also argues that Canada ignores international agreements, which provide for the rights and protection of migrant workers. The unfortunate side of such unfair treatment, as mentioned above, is that female TFWPs have no power to fight for their rights. As Nakache mentions, TFWPs are less likely than other workers to file a complaint against their employers under the complaint-driven system, Standards Code.13 Furthermore, some of the code’s protections are of little value to such workers, who are restricted from finding immediate alternative employment or whose time in Canada is limited.14 Moreover, female migrant workers who are terminated are particularly vulnerable, especially because losing their job may also mean they are evicted from their employer’s property and become homeless. They do not have access to an effective forum to challenge their termination as unjust. Being almost entirely non-unionized, they lack access to grievance arbitration. They can in theory file a claim in court for wrongful dismissal, but this is virtually impossible in practice because they lack information about the Canadian justice system, lack resources, lack access to legal assistance, and have temporary immigration status.15

In terms of unemployment benefits such as employment insurance for TFWPs, while the federal government regulates the entry and stay of TFWPs, many of their protections, with the exception of employment insurance (EI), are covered by provincial laws. Given the shared federal-provincial jurisdiction of the TFWP, each of these players is somewhat restricted in its ability to resolve various challenges within the program.16 According to Nakache, TFWPs and their employers make payments into EI just like Canadian workers. There are several problems, however, with TFWPs trying to access EI. For example, the majority of the EI officers in provinces across Canada are still routinely refusing benefits to foreign workers in the belief that such workers simply cannot receive them. Unless the worker has been employed for the qualifying period, he or she is not entitled to benefits.17

Nakache also points out that TFWPs may not be entitled to receive EI because their “employer-specific” work permit restricts them from being available for work for other employers.18 Such a message, according to Nakache, puts female TFWPs in a legal and financial bind: on the one hand, they cannot get EI because they are not legally available for work; on the other, once they are legally available for work — having found new employment and having applied for changes to their work permit — they are no longer eligible for EI. Thus, according to the jurisprudence, TFWPs are entitled to the benefits, but only when they no longer need them.19

In 2009, according to Judy Fudge and Fiona MacPhail, when asked in the provincial legislative about the plight of the temporary foreign workers who were laid-off and who do not qualify for unemployment insurance, Alberta’s employment and immigration minister at the time, Hector Goudreau, responded that TFWPs “need to recognize that the word temporary is exactly what it says and if it is impossible for them to move into another occupation, then there is an expectation that they should go home.”20 This example also shows that TFWPs are tax-paying workers that Canadian industries and families rely upon for low wage, difficult, dangerous and precarious jobs that Canadians do not want.21 They pay...
taxes and contribute to programs such as Employment Insurance (EI), and other programs that most TFWs do not benefit from, and bar them from asserting their rights under Canadian labour laws as well.

Furthermore, female TFWs experience many of the same abuses shared by other lower skilled migrant workers who are temporary. For instance, abuses take places in all the different sections of the TFWP such as the seasonal agricultural workers program, and the caregivers’ program. According to Rylan Higgins, in his report on TFWP, he points out that since the early 1990s, reports of physical, sexual and verbal abuse have been far too common.30 In May 2013, an Ontario Human Rights Tribunal highlighted the vulnerability of female temporary foreign workers in a case where two women worked in a “sexually poisoned work environment.”31 The tribunal found that the women, who were sisters, were exposed to sexual solicitation, sexual harassment, discrimination in employment and a sexually-poisoned work environment.32 The women had their work permits revoked and were also sent back to Mexico after resisting the sexual overtures of their employer at Prestive Foods, a fish processor in Wheatley, Ontario. One woman was forced to perform sex acts under threat of being sent home and both were sexually harassed in other ways.33 The report also mentions that the female workers, who had limited understanding of English, were not informed of their right not to be sexually harassed by an employer. This essentially shows the failings of the provincial and federal governments to protect temporary foreign workers.

In sum, there is a deepening concern that Canada’s temporary labour migration programs are entrenching and normalizing a low-wage, low-rights “guest” workforce on terms that are incompatible with Canada’s fundamental Charter rights and freedoms, human rights, and labour rights.34 For instance, the significant increase in the number of TFWs has led to a growing concern about their employment-related rights. Faraday argues that it is time to take this problem seriously and act to protect fundamental rights and decent work.35 Female TFWs in Canada for example, are potentially in a more vulnerable position than other workers in the Canadian workplace. The actual exploitations and abuses of female temporary migrant workers undermine the legitimacy of the program both within and outside of Canada.36

The Canadian federal government has come to see protecting temporary workers as its responsibility. As the examples in this paper have shown, however, the mechanisms to protect the rights of migrant workers are neither well-developed nor effectively enforced. Nakache makes an important point regarding Canadian policy toward the treatment of TFWs: that Canada’s rules on the legal status of admittees for employment have been largely structured according to one policy model for “low-skilled” workers to discourage their integration, and to simultaneous policy models for “skilled” workers, to both “discourage” and “assist” their eventual integration. The jobs that migrant workers do are valuable and necessary parts of the local labour market. There is an enduring need for workers to care for children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. There is an enduring need for workers to work on farms, to process food, to clean office buildings and hotels, to staff restaurants, to engage in construction and do the many other jobs that migrant workers do. These jobs, by their nature, are local and cannot be moved offshore.37 As Canada’s population ages, retirements will affect labour needs at all skill levels, TFWP can be one way to solve this labour shortage. In order to solve this labour shortage, however, policy development affecting TFWs, especially the female workers, must develop in compliance with binding constitutional and human rights laws that establish fundamental legal guarantees.38 Another major recommendation, according to Faraday, is that temporary foreign migrant workers must have strong, effective and enforceable protections that are responsive to their real circumstances. This protection, according to Faraday, is needed for migrant workers who are currently in, for example, Ontario; and it is needed for TFWs who arrive in the future.39 Since TFWs lack effective voice, and lack adequate information about their rights and legal processes, Faraday recommends in her article that a publicly-funded independent agency – the Office of the Migrant Worker Advocate – should be established to provide information and advice to migrant workers free of charge, including information about: rights and how to enforce them, legal support in making claims to enforce rights, outreach to migrant worker communities, and coordination with community groups, advocates and legal clinics who are supporting TFWs. In addition, Faraday also recommends that, in order to reduce the power imbalance that exists between employers and TFWs, and to enable greater labour mobility amongst TFWs, provincial legislation must for example, be amended to guarantee that agricultural workers have effective rights to unionize and bargain collectively, and to guarantee that live-in caregivers also have effective means of collective representation and voice, for example, through sectoral representation.39

To conclude, this paper has focused on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in Canada, and its negative impact on the temporary immigrant workers. It has argued that female temporary foreign workers, due to their lack of employment mobility, are more likely to suffer from exploitation, abusive employer practices, and face tremendous barriers to enforcing the rights they do have, than female non-temporary foreign workers in Canada.

Bibliography


I am done with ambiguity. I am done with ‘you could say that’ and ‘I guess that’s me’. I am done with answering in silence. I made a promise the other day and just because it was a promise to myself doesn’t make it any less real, or valuable. I’m not going to dance around the word ‘girlfriend’ with suggestions of ‘partner’ and ‘someone.’ I won’t let you assume who should be holding my hand. You don’t decide who I take my clothes off for and who I don’t. I won’t avoid the question or change the subject. I’m done with lying by omission. I don’t need your stamp of approval that reads ‘normal,’ ‘acceptable’ or ‘tolerated,’ as if there is a specified limit on the amount of ink that can be used. As if you have the final say in what happens in my love life. I’m going to tell you about the woman in my life that makes my cheeks turn red, the woman who always has questions for all my seemingly straightforward answers. Because I’m sick of feeling as if there is a broken connection, of miscommunication, between my mind and my mouth. I want the two parts of me to reconect, and share together in the reality that my love life has the dignity and worth to be spoken about, repeatedly. I’m going to answer your questions, loudly, because I am not ashamed of whose ears catch my words. And as you going to answer your questions, loudly, because I am not ashamed of whose ears catch my words. And as you, “you don’t look like an asshole, but here we are.” I’ll let you know, firmly of course, that there is a separation, a large one, like the size of a canyon if you will, between the concept of gender and sex and sexuality and an ‘intolerable’ level of different. Until Google can only provide you with photos of lesbian grandmothers and religious gay hockey players and children with non-conforming genders. Until your computer screen displays grey haired women, fishing and shopping and painting and breast-feeding and in love. Army veteran soldiers, vegetarians, doctors, actors, members of government and bus drivers. Until lesbian is no longer an ‘intolerable’ level of different. Several episodes of the type of fetishization that women such as Saartjie Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus”, had been subjected to in European exhibitions. However, Nicki Minaj’s audience today is not the same audience of Saartjie Baartman. Although many racist ideas from the past are still pervasive today, Nicki Minaj has a fanbase that admires and even idolizes her. We are then left to ponder about why people love her so much and whether she is contributing to gender progress or pulling us back.

European have made the black female body an object of scrutiny and fascination for decades if not centuries. In the Greco-Roman culture blackness was seen as the antithesis of whiteness; whiteness being positively evaluated and blackness being associated with death and the underworld. Later in medieval times black people were viewed as wild, aggressive and sexually deviant. The black female was “represented as the seductress of ordinary men” (Defalco 2005:3). These pervasive ideas were used as a rationale for colonialism and slavery. The idea that black Africans and ‘others’ outside of Europe were savages that could then be civilized by European slave owners and colonists justified these atrocius acts of subordination as well as the blatant and flagrant objectification that resulted in the ethnographic exhibitions of the 19th and 20th centuries. Among these ethnographic exhibitions was the displaying of Saartjie Baartman, who was dubbed the “Hottentot Venus”. She, a woman from South Africa, was persuaded by a French ship doctor to leave Cape Town and travel across Europe where, because of her ‘unusually’ curvaceous body she could attract European crowds fascinated by the tales of “exotic, animalistic bodies” of African women (White 2013:612). During her performances, she was displayed partially nude, with a skin coloured loincloth as her only coverage (White 2013:612). This fascination surrounding the bodies of black women is still present today, and Nicki Minaj is an icon in today’s American pop culture. She is admired for her individuality, creativity and lyrical talent; being one of few female rappers to dominate the hip-hop scene. She has often been quoted encouraging feminist ideals in young women (Buzzfeed). Her new album “Pink Print”, shows some feminist themes (Vogue). Her lyrics, however, are often sexually charged and her videos explicit. It begs the questions whether she encourages female sexual liberation or if she performs to a white patriarchal culture that fetishises black female bodies as animalistic and sexually deviant (White 2013:612). Her record-breaking music video, “Anaconda” has implications of the type of fetishization that women such as Saartjie Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus”, had been subjected to in European exhibitions. However, Nicki Minaj’s audience today is not the same audience of Saartjie Baartman. Although many racist ideas from the past are still pervasive today, Nicki Minaj has a fanbase that admires and even idolizes her. We are then left to ponder about why people love her so much and whether she is contributing to gender progress or pulling us back.

Nicki Minaj and the Fetishization of the Black Female Body

Nicki Minaj is an icon in today’s American pop culture. She is admired for her individuality, creativity and lyrical talent; being one of few female rappers to dominate the hip-hop scene. She has often been quoted encouraging feminist ideals in young women (Buzzfeed). Her new album “Pink Print”, shows some feminist themes (Vogue). Her lyrics, however, are often sexually charged and her videos explicit. It begs the questions whether she encourages female sexual liberation or if she performs to a white patriarchal culture that fetishises black female bodies as animalistic and sexually deviant (White 2013:612). Her record-breaking music video, “Anaconda” has implications of the type of fetishization that women such as Saartjie Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus”, had been subjected to in European exhibitions. However, Nicki Minaj’s audience today is not the same audience of Saartjie Baartman. Although many racist ideas from the past are still pervasive today, Nicki Minaj has a fanbase that admires and even idolizes her. We are then left to ponder about why people love her so much and whether she is contributing to gender progress or pulling us back.

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who, in the 1920s, performed throughout Europe. Her
Minaj to Josephine Baker, an African American dancer
Perhaps it would be more suitable to compare Nicki
However, unlike Minaj, Dietrich could
early 20th century. Primitivism was a form of art that
begins to sing. Dietrich’s performance exemplifies the
spears. She removes the gorilla suit and then places
bodies as animalistic. Nicki Minaj’s Anaconda video
crawling reinforces the fetishization of black women’s
Minaj is partially nude or wearing mostly see-through
...assume the position of primitive sexual
enjoyed sexualization, the higher they would score on
herself). The degree of enjoyment of sexualization
songs tend to focus more on receiving sexualized male
whims of a man. The same can be said about enjoying
power that she did not utilize and other women could
gain power in the same way (Erchull and
Another study showed that self-objectification was
Feminists Who Flaunt It
Musée de l’Homme
Sarah Baartman, at Rest at
...define the self-objectification that lies under the guise
Perhaps the feminist themes that Vogue claimed to be
present in her most recent album: "Pink Print" are more
about the self-objectification that lies under the guise of
sexual liberation. Although she has been quoted
couraging young women not to be afraid to voice their
opinions, love their bodies and value education
(Buzzfeed) these messages are not very present in her
music. Yes, Nicki Minaj’s audience is very different from
that of Saartjie Baartman and Josephine Baker, but she
still exploits the same racist tropes that gained Baartman
and Baker so much fame. The unveiling of
Nicki Minaj’s wax figure, where she was portrayed as
posing on all fours, in Madame Tussaud’s wax museum,
was met with fans taking obscene and highly sexualized
photos with the figure. Yes the takers of the obscene
photos are completely to blame for their own vulgar
actions, but this example does illustrate that feeling
empowered and being empowered are not necessarily
the same thing. I feel that women talking about their
sexuality is only liberating if they are subjects in sexual
relations and not merely the objects of sexual desire.

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We, the FAQ Collective, felt that addressing self-care was crucial, and we chose to illustrate our individual self-care practices through the photos following. We define self-care as an activity someone practices to take care of themselves to maintain a healthy mental, physical, and spiritual state. As shown on the next few pages, some examples of self-care that collective members participate in are: music, journaling, running, reading, snowshoeing, spending time with pets, baking, and playing video games. The goal of self-care is to do an activity that you genuinely enjoy to help lessen feelings of distress, or prevent burnout as an activist. Many people are unfamiliar with the term self-care, yet actively take part in bettering themselves already. As a collective, we would like to acknowledge the significance in practicing self-care daily by expanding on forms of self-care for our readers, and why self-care is important on a societal level.

There are eight members in this collective, and so we only have a small number of examples of what self-care looks like. Any activity that makes one happier, less stressed, and healthier as a whole is a valid form of self-care, and while one of the activities mentioned above may constitute as self-care for one person, it may not for the next. Some other examples of self-care can be very basic, such as bathing, getting enough sleep, eating enough and eating healthy foods, while others can do things like meditating, counselling, seeing friends, working on a hobby, dancing, taking a break from technology, making art, and blogging. This list is not comprehensive, there are varying activities that count as self-care as long as it is intentionally for the betterment of one’s person. Which activity or activities work best is up to you, as self-care is individualized and personalized.

Political or social issues can often take a toll on our health, leaving us less effective at achieving the goals we may have set for social change. When self-care is done effectively, it helps individuals maintain healthy relationships with themselves, conversely, a healthy relationship with the self improves one’s personal altruistic capacity. However, self-care is not to be confused with selfishness or vanity. One might think that taking, or making time, for one’s needs and wants is unproductive or unnecessary. This is particularly common when one has a number of things to do, and might feel guilty for taking a moment to themselves. This is a result of our society’s value on productivity and work ethic, and we, in turn, have internalized the message that if we are not working, we are not doing a good job. If each of us never took care of ourselves, our relationships with others would deteriorate, and, as mentioned earlier, we would become less productive as a whole.

To give ourselves the respect and love we deserve is to ensure we give our fullest selves to political cause. Society actively creates and maintains situations whereby women are pitted against each other and feel bad about themselves. When we make sure that we are physically, mentally and emotionally capable to thrive, we take away preconceived expectations that limit our capabilities. As Audre Lorde said, “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”
Agent Carter is a spinoff of Marvel’s Captain America: The First Avenger, starring Hayley Atwell as Peggy Carter, a woman who works for the made-up Strategic Science Reserve (SSR). After World War II (the series takes place in 1946 New York) the SSR has her doing administrative work but she takes on a secret mission for her friend Howard Stark to clear his name when the government accuses him of treason. Agent Carter breaks a lot of tropes our society commonly associates with female leads, demonstrates clever and tasteful use of gender role reversal and critiques sexism in the workplace. The themes in this series are certainly progressive for the 1940s but are also applicable to women and media today.

Peggy’s relationships with men are a departure from classic sexist tropes. R.A. (2015) writes, "Agent Carter opens with a gender reversal of one of the genre’s most well-trod tropes: the fridging of a lover - in this case Steve Rodgers/Captain America - to perpetuate the hero’s story. As the Pilot kicks off, our protagonist Peggy Carter is by no means incapacitated by Steve’s all-but-dead state; however, he is at the forefront of her mind as she does her best to make herself relevant to her post-war employer, the Strategic Scientific Reserve (SSR)” (para. 1). Agent Carter manages to move beyond the confines of the fridging trope as well. Peggy misses Steve but her motivation to succeed in the SSR does not come from guilt over what happened to him. This is the job and the life she wants for herself.

Men are not the driving force behind her narrative and she is not focused on finding one anytime soon. The show does not set up Peggy and Edwin Jarvis,
Peggy takes on an active role. She is solving problems, deciding the course of the investigation, running, climbing and fighting. Though she has a traditionally masculine job she does not sacrifice her femininity for the sake of her job. She wears skirts, heels and lipstick and does not feel the need to try to be one of the guys. Peggy knows that being feminine and being powerful are not mutually exclusive. She also uses her femininity to her advantage and has no problem using her male co-workers’ chauvinism against them (“10 Things Agent Carter Did Right,” 2015). For example, in episode one, Peggy needs the day off of work to follow up a lead on Stark’s butler who helps her with her mission, to be approved. Her boss, although begrudgingly, does eventually give her the opportunity to go on a mission in this series. Her boss, although begrudgingly, does eventually give her the opportunity to go on a government sanctioned field mission. Not only can she hold her own but she also takes charge of the mission when the leader, agent Thompson, loses his nerve. She wants to prove her worth in the field but the recognition she gets for this is minimal. As well, Thompson takes over her investigation of the Stark conspiracy after she is found out and gets full credit for solving the case. When Jarvis asks her how she can just let them take that away from her she says, “I don’t need a congressional hearing. I don’t need Agent Thompson’s approval or the president’s. I know my value. Anyone else’s opinion doesn’t really matter” (D’Esposito, 2015). Throughout the series Peggy badly wants recognition from her fellow agents, which almost leads her to incriminate herself by revealing her role in the Stark conspiracy. In the season finale she is confident in her abilities. That is not to say that she was not confident before. The difference now is that she knows her self-worth is not contingent upon receiving the admiration of her co-workers.

Agent Carter has excellent feminist characterization. The series features a strong female protagonis who never sacrifices her femininity and is not sexualized. Both female and male characters step outside traditional gender roles. When writers treat gender atypical behaviour as legitimate character development, not as the setup for a joke, they are able to create multi-dimensional characters that are real and relatable for the audience.

Modern sexism is less overt than teaching people to be critical of gender roles and expectations in the work sphere and in their personal lives will only benefit them in the long term. Peggy’s career suffers a setback due to workplace sexism, but the series sends the message that women should reach as high as possible, and that to work at the president’s. I know my value. Anyone else’s opinion doesn’t really matter” (D’Esposito, 2015). Throughout the series Peggy badly wants recognition from her fellow agents, which almost leads her to incriminate herself by revealing her role in the Stark conspiracy. In the season finale she is confident in her abilities. That is not to say that she was not confident before. The difference now is that she knows her self-worth is not contingent upon receiving the admiration of her co-workers.

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Tapping into Feminism

Chloe Vickar

Tap is very special to me. It combines rhythm, sound and movement into something that is empowering and forceful. As a woman, it feels wonderful to be strong, make noise and be celebrated for it. There are few styles of (mainstream) dance that provide a feminist opportunity for women to take up space and make noise. Ballet is a beautiful and challenging art form, but is paradoxical for women. A ballerina must be strong, agile and have utmost control over her body. More often than not, ballerinas are thin, white and very young. This stereotype in ballet represents the ‘mythical norm’ (Lorde 116). According to Lorde, “the norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure” (116). Certainly there are talented dancers of varying ethnicities, body sizes and ages. Yet this art form reinforces an (unhealthy) stereotype and oppresses those who do not fall into these categories. The ‘ballet discourse’ is too limiting for women. In performance, ballerinas often will dance on their own or with other female dancers, but can only perform major lifts and assisted turns with the help of a male dancer. The ballerina no longer symbolizes strength and control, but becomes meek and subservient to her male counterpart who is that much stronger because he is able to lift her and gently return her to the stage.

Feet are integral to both ballet and tap. Ballerinas spend years perfecting their pointe, with the goal of balancing the weight of their whole body on only the surface area of their toes. The toe box of the pointe shoe is usually made of wood, making it very hard and it produces a loud sound when it hits the ground. A ballerina must make as little noise as possible, landing so softly it might seem she is wearing slippers. In contrast, tap dancers work hard to have strong ankles, feet and toes, but with a different goal in mind. The tap dancer wants to be able to create a variety of sounds, often incredibly loud, and sometimes extremely soft. Tap shoes are usually leather, with the metal tap on the bottom of the shoe (under the ball of the foot), and under the heel. The challenge lies in being able to make different types of sounds using different parts of the foot and having control to make both soft and loud sounds.

Second to making noise, tap is also feminist because there is not a restrictive ‘tap discourse’. There is no ideal body shape, size or colour of a tap dancer. Perhaps it is a combination of society not creating a mould for tap dancers, and tappers themselves rejecting the creation of a stereotype. In her piece, “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity”, Susan Bordo talks about using our bodies to reinforce and resist discourse (170). The absence of a tap discourse allows the dancer the opportunity to create their own “rules” and use their body as power, as Bordo and Foucault encourage (165).

A Video Commentary

Finding feminist tap music presented a great challenge for the creation of the video. Tap choreography is often upbeat and the search for a song with a fast tempo with lyrics that were remotely feminist was difficult. A quick Google search will show that most traditionally feminist music is folk music (not ideal for an upbeat tap dance). Current pop music offers a variety of wonderful tempos and sounds, but falls short with lyrics that are remotely feminist. I noticed that men typically love to sing about women’s bodies, yet women sing about being in love with men (or singing about anything other than their own bodies). Men have a public avenue to objectify women, however, women do not return the favour and objectify men.

The song I chose to dance to is “Superwoman”, by Alicia Keys, from her 2007 album, As I Am. The song talks about inequality, the challenges of motherhood, and (Alicia) finding inner strength by being her own “superwoman”. Before and after the dance portion in the video, I chose a portion of the Beyoncé song, “Flawless”. This spoken word segment is originally from a speech by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian novelist and short story author. This excerpt from her speech, “We should all be feminists” is so direct and (Alicia) finding inner strength by being her own “superwoman”. Before and after the dance portion in the video, I chose a portion of the Beyoncé song, “Flawless”. This spoken word segment is originally from a speech by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian novelist and short story author. This excerpt from her speech, “We should all be feminists” is so direct at pointing out the seemingly subtle ways in which socialization works to subordinate women. Adichie points out an important paradox: girls are raised to get married and boys are not held to that same standard. Simone de Beauvoir is of the belief that women are capable of more than marriage and reproduction, as she states, “Women’s enslavement to the species and the limits of her individual abilities are facts of extreme importance; the woman’s body is one of the essential elements of the situation she occupies in this world” (48-49). Our bodies are important to our experience as women, but they certainly do not define us. Unlike ballet, tap does not provide opportunity for some women to flourish and hold others back. In “Notes Toward a Politics of Location” Adrienne Rich expresses her hopes for equality and visibility of women, by “breaking down the male universal” (126). Tap dancing is not dominated by men, nor is it dominated by women. Perhaps in the bubble of the “tap world” feminist equality has already been achieved.

The video is viewable at: https://youtu.be/bTyugrkux8Y

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Deeply ingrained in Canadian society subsists white supremacist ideals, capitalist ethics, heteronormative morals, and patriarchal ideologies that have immigrated to Canada along with the first European settlers (Ferris, SOMM200: Introduction to Sex Work and Feminism, 2015). These ideologies summoned and propagated dominant ideals and values in Western settlements that severely affected Indigenous communities in a negative way. The mining discourse produced certain representations of Indigenous people in an effort to further subjugate them, stripping them of their agency and rights to respect and dignity. These representations were used to validate violence against Indigenous people in order to enforce their subordination; most importantly to Indigenous women, this would mean enduring a long and persisting history of sexualized violence perpetrated against them.

Historically the emergence of the “squaw” representation established by Euro-Canadians is often not deemed socially relevant (Ferris, Street Sex Work and Canadian Cities: Resisting a dangerous order, 2015). These ideologies summoned and propagated dominant ideals and values in Western settlements that severely affected Indigenous communities in a negative way. The mining discourse produced certain representations of Indigenous people in an effort to further subjugate them, stripping them of their agency and rights to respect and dignity. These representations were used to validate violence against Indigenous people in order to enforce their subordination; most importantly to Indigenous women, this would mean enduring a long and persisting history of sexualized violence perpetrated against them.

Sex Work, Representation and Violence

Ashley Pankiw

Cindy Gladue was an Aboriginal mother of three who supported her family financially through engaging in sex work (DiManno, 2015). Similar to the significant case of Pamela George, Cindy Gladue became a more recent victim to this interlocking system of white supremacy, capitalism, heteronormativity and patriarchy. Following Gladue’s demise, her pelvic area, along with her preserved vaginal tissue, was brought into the courtroom to be scrutinized. The jury, comprised of nine men and two women, had no medical or relevant training to assess the eleven-centimeter internal wound Gladue had suffered (DiManno, 2015).

It is unfortunately to conceptualize the corpse of a middle-class, white woman undergoing disemboweling merely to be inspected in a courtroom by a group of individuals with self-accredited greater moral authority based on the privilege ascribed to their own race, class and gender. Furthermore, hypothetically speaking, if a well-respected man such as the Prime Minister of Canada was discarded from a gunshot wound to his testical, it would be ludicrous to presume medical examiners would dissect his mangled manhood and display his genitals in a room devoted to the justice of civil liberties. A well-respected white male would be exempt from this public, dehumanizing display of inferiority. Why does the same respect and regard not apply to Cindy Gladue? The answer remains within Canada’s long history with the process of colonization and the systematic marginalization of Indigenous women it has reproduced.

It would be much more effective to show a courtroom of jurors how eleven centimeters on a ruler looks like rather than preserved tissue. With a jury made up mostly of men it is doubtful the wound could be interpreted with the same empathy and understanding female jurors could. On the contrary, perhaps showing the predominately male jury what an eleven-centimeter incision on a penis looks like would be more effective. Maybe then the jury could have comprehended that in no way could Gladue’s wound be assumed to be “menstrual blood” like the man on trial told the jury Gladue believed the blood to be (DiManno, 2015). If patriarchy were not so deeply ingrained in Canadian society the jury would be composed with equal numbers of men and women; women who would understand the astoundingly ignorant assumption that the blood lost Gladue suffered could be from menstruating.

Sadly, putting an Aboriginal woman’s intimate remains on display is nothing new. Smith examines the symbolic and literal control over Native peoples bodies through a testimony from the colonial period depicting a man etching a woman’s privates off and displaying them on a stick as a public humiliation technique flaunting his literal conquest of her (Smith, p. 55). Further examination of the Gladue court proceedings illustrates more dehumanizing tactics accompanying the indignity of having her remains disassembled. The jury found Gladue’s killer not guilty of first-degree murder because the rough sex that led to her death was presumed to be consensual (DiManno, 2015). Absurdly, many white women have consented to rough sex and lived to talk about it in Canada. This is almost certainly due to the discrepancy in levels of violence acceptable to be imposed on each ethnicity. Above all, Gladue’s blood alcohol level was four times above the legal limit making Gladue incapable of giving legal consent (DiManno, 2015). This would satisfy the criteria that her death occurred in the context of another crime (sexual assault), fulfilling a first-degree murder requirement in Canada. This factor was unquestionably irrelevant in Gladue’s trial attributable to Indigenous women being presumed to beorable, as are sex workers (Smith, p. 10). The representations inflicted on Gladue as an Aboriginal sex worker not only devalued her life and led to her death, but undoubtedly corrupted her murder trial.

Evidence of patriarchy and racism appear in all aspects of society, both present and in the past. The representations created by European discourses impose a dehumanizing effect on sex workers, Indigenous people and other marginalized communities making them susceptible to varying degrees and forms of violence. For Indigenous women, these discourses have inflicted years of sexualized violence upon them at the hands of their social dominants. Ultimately, the abolition of Indigenous women’s sexualized victimization can only be achieved by the social recognition of patriarchal values premised on capitalist ethics, and white supremacist ideals that continue to predominate in Canadian society. The abuse and irrelevance of Indigenous women in Canada can only be amended and subsequently eradicated following this critical acknowledgement of disillusion.

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Loricia Pacholko-Matheson is a 3rd year student attending the School of Art at the University of Manitoba. Her focus is in Ceramics but she is also taking courses dealing with Family Violence. Clay allows her to reinterpret her personal experiences. Her intention is to create a visual language that will inspire other individuals to break their silence.

This piece is titled October 6, 1990. The ceramic platter is made of Earthenware clay and is approximately 41 cm in diameter. The outside of the piece is covered in a lace pattern created from layers of painted black and white slip. The interior is the result of photo transfers. The images are from photos taken on her wedding day. The traditional ring photos have a dual meaning.

Her husband’s hand is distorted; stretched and elongated, implying dominance while making reference as the physical handles to the feminine form. Her hands act like hooks, in reference to the years of desperation required to hang on.

The inverted photo of the couple cutting the cake foreshadows a dark secret that the original photo was unable to predict. In hindsight, the cake in the photo was constructed of drywall plaster, plastic and styrofoam, furthering masquerading the shattered dreams that were to follow.
Hyperautomobility: What is it and How Does it Affect us?

Faith Gushulak

The forms of transportation have long been descending into a trend of seclusion and individuality through innovation and progress. From horse drawn carriage to coach and station wagon, the types of travel society uses have changed to suit a person’s specific goal of transport. Due to many factors other than the goal of mobility, there is also a direct link between marketing and planning that has led to a type of dependency on individualised transport with more range of movement. From this, researchers have termed the phrase hyperautomobility. What is it, how does it affect us and are there any solutions to this growing worldwide trend?

To understand what issues come with the term hyperautomobility, it must be understood what hyperautomobility means. Hyperautomobility refers to when an auto-centered transport system is implemented. It is characterized by a high level of individualized car use. In areas where hyperautomobility is occurring, transport is effected extensively, spreading across urbanized sprawl, and hyperautomobility is occurring, transport is effected extensively, spreading across urbanized sprawl, and hyperautomobility is occurring, transport is effected extensively, spreading across urbanized sprawl.

This is seen as a means to increase housing, business and more specifically, the car industry. Certain media techniques were used to place an emphasis on living in suburbs and through this push urban sprawl was more frequent. Sprawl is referred to as “[...] random, unplanned growth characterized by inadequate accessibility to essential land uses such as housing, jobs, and public services, including schools, parks, green space, and public transportation.” (Robert D. Bullard, 2004, p. 6).

By moving forward in time, the car became a primary form of transport with less people taking public transit like trains or buses. Women have begun to have more complex time-space commitments because women are generally more involved in managing domestic responsibilities (Jain, Line, & Lyons, 2010, p. 205). This means that if a family had any number of children and they had any number of activities that night, such as a school function or physical activity, it is more often than not the responsibility of the mother to pick the child up and take them to the next activity in a set amount of time. Women must include these domestic duties when planning their days, which is a problem because of the amount of sprawl cities face. If women, who make multiple stop trips, go farther distances, and must take their children from place to place, need to do all of this in one day, a second car would be needed as public transit does not always line up with stop times. This adds extra money on purchase, maintenance and servicing the second vehicle which can become very expensive on the family and environment.

Another problem would be the increase in the amount of cars on the road, which was one of the causes of hyperautomobility. The roads are more congested, with an increase from 31.6 million registered cars in 1944 to 64.1 million in 1960 in the United States alone (Walsh, 2010, p. 218). This statistic shows us how in under two decades the number of cars on the road almost tripled, which can only have grown since families now own more than one car. This increase in road congestion also puts a greater risk to vehicular accidents between both cars and pedestrians. Roughly 30 million people have died and 100 million were injured in the past decade alone, while in the year of 1998, there was 600 000 injuries by car in Canada (Andrey, 2000, p. 381). Even though pedestrians do not pose a threat to drivers, by walking they are at an alarming high rate of 556). By adding additional lighting, the fishbowl effect (Loukaitou-Sideris & Fink, 2009, p. 384) would be avoided and people would not feel so singled out by just one light by the stop. The fishbowl effect is when there is one light and the person sitting at the stop cannot properly see the area around them. The light then acts as a spotlight on the person underneath it (Loukaitou-Sideris & Fink, 2009, p. 399). This would help the health related issue if people could then walk to the stop and feel safe because it would be adding some physical activity to their day.

Another solution would be to create legislation that had a mandatory quota for women to sit on councils that reviewed city and transit planning. This would solve some problems of needing a car because one of the main issues with hyperautomobility is that people need cars to move effectively through sprawl. Women could place their input on where services should go in relation to other services, such as placing schools closer to neighbourhoods or placing grocery stores closer to large neighbourhoods. This would be the best solution because since women on average make more multi-stop trips, they could better design how public transit could allow them to make their trips in an effective way and feel safer. By having women and men on the councils you would also get different views and a wider range of solutions to each problem. For example, a study done on United States transit companies showed that many women prefer staffing to technological solutions, such as CCTV and automated services. Even though
women have taken part in safety audits and surveys in
the United Kingdom and Canada, (Loukaitou-Sideris
& Fink, 2009, p. 558) by having them on councils that
make the decisions, they would have an increased
chance of having their voices heard. This proposed
legislation would be provincial, municipal, and would
go to charter companies like Greyhound as the city is
responsible for public transit but provincially you could
see more use of coaches for trips from smaller, rural
towns into larger cities.

After looking at what hyperautomobility is and
some of its effects, it can be seen that it is a growing
concern around the world. While it is something not
many people recognize, there are ways of solving it.
Ultimately, the solution of public transit to combat
hyperautomobility would need to start by having
women’s voices heard.

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This piece was inspired by the true life
story of a lesbian black female who is
currently being helped by the Rainbow
Railroad to get to a safe country where
she can claim asylum.

“I remember the first day I saw her it still feels
like just yesterday. The bristles of her running
down from her head; freckles on her face which
she hated the most cos she thought it didn't
make her beautiful, but I always told her she
was perfect as she was. It was love at first sight,
I had never felt that way before. There wasn't a
word to describe this just I knew it was paradise.
It was unconventional love because I have never
felt this way before. I’m not good with people
because they've always mistreated me due to my
disabilities but she...she changed everything and
healed my scars. Two years into our love, she
moved in and we lived together. Waking up to
her smile every morning was the best thing ever.
It was all honey and laughter until...until they
found out. They took her away, I had to flee for
my life otherwise they could've taken me too. I
had been hiding in a building for two days and
then he came out of the darkness. I wanted to scream
but I knew they would take me away if they
found me. I was helpless as he took advantage
of me. Tears ran down my face as his hands ran
down my body, his legs rubbing against mine.
This was not the first time...and neither was he
the first man. I don't know who the first man was
but he left his marks on me, emotional and by
giving me HIV. I had almost birthed a child from
that experience, but there was a miscarriage. The
only difference between the first man and this
man is that I knew who this man was, he lived a
stone’s throw away. But they both raped me. I've
stayed in hiding here and I still am, but I don’t
know how the second man finds me, he's been
threatening to take my life...”
Understanding Feminism: Why Beyoncé’s Brand of Feminism is Important

Nicole Wilson

One day, during my grade twelve year, I stumbled upon an anonymous blog post essentially making fun of feminist women, deemed “crazy” for their extreme hatred of men. My idea of feminism was very skewed from this point forward and I believed the many misconceptions our society has with this term. The young author was very articulate and convincing in her narrow lens and few posts I read and the radical examples of feminist women, deemed “crazy” for their extreme hatred of men. My idea of feminism was very skewed with labeling yourself a feminist and it is perceived to be a very scary, dirty and extreme term today. Beyoncé has started a conversation around the controversial topic of feminism, which has been swept under the rug. Icons like Beyoncé are important for changing the negative discussion around feminism, as she communicates in a powerful, relatable and entertaining way.

There is no better way to engage with our generation than through media and pop culture. Beyoncé isn’t known as “Queen Bey” for no reason. She dominates the music industry, being the highest paid female music artist in 2014, after the success of her multi-platinum “BEYONCÉ” album. Her powerful feminist lyrics, music videos and on stage are endless possibilities for how we can demonstrate gender. Beyoncé’s lyrics feature an extremely moving speech titled “We Should All Be Feminists” delivered by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It highlights the central idea of equality in feminism, defining the term feminist as “a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes” (qtd. in Beyoncé “Flawless”). What is important about this definition is that it is simple and easy to understand. When we break down the true meaning of feminism, it becomes a relatable concept to many. I’m sure if I asked people on the street if they think women should be socially, politically and economically equal to men, most would be in agreement. By re-phrasing the question to “would you consider yourself a feminist?” I would hypothesize fewer people would answer yes. When we believe the misconceptions associated with feminism and fail to understand its basic meaning, this is when there is a tendency to withdraw and disassociate ourselves from this movement. In essence, avoiding feminism is counterproductive to the advancement of equality that many people, arguably, believe is worth pursuing.

Beyoncé is clearly not afraid to openly embrace the feminist label in interviews, performances, and in her lyrics. She inspires me to understand feminism on a more basic level and to avoid being hounded down with the rhetoric of compartmentalizing this label into its various categories and streams. For example, I am less apt to see myself as a queer or socialist feminist and rather see myself as a powerful, independent woman seeking equality for all individuals.

In an interview with Jo Ellison from Vogue UK, Beyoncé says “I guess I am a modern-day feminist. I do believe in equality... Why do you have to choose what type of woman you are? Why do you have to label yourself anything? I’m just a woman, and I love being a woman” (2014). There seems to be a negative stigma associated with labeling yourself a feminist and it is perceived to be a very scary, dirty and extreme term today. Beyoncé has started a conversation around the controversial topic of feminism, which has been swept under the rug. Icons like Beyoncé are important for changing the negative discussion around feminism, as she communicates in a powerful, relatable and entertaining way.

There is no better way to engage with our generation than through media and pop culture. Beyoncé isn’t the idyllic “Queen Bey” for no reason. She dominates the music industry, being the highest paid female music artist in 2014, after the success of her multi-platinum “BEYONCÉ” album. Her powerful feminist messages to her global audience bring a new and fresh understanding of feminism, which in turn has potential to create immense radical change for this movement. Her brand of feminism resonates with me to this day, ever since the release of her album in 2013.

Out of interest, I began researching other opinions about this album and was quite infuriated with the closed-minded perspectives I discovered. When powerful women like Beyoncé embrace the feminist label, this undoubtedly invites debate among the feminist community. Many critics such as Maggie Niemiec in “On Beyoncé and What It Means To Be A Feminist” question Beyoncé’s brand of female empowerment. Maggie expresses her disagreement with the dichotomous messages about “girl power” and the extreme display of femininity and sexuality in her lyrics, music videos and on stage. Critiques similar to Niemiec’s are readily available on the internet, and it is assumed that beauty practices and sexualizing the body in extreme ways only oppress women. I have a problem with this.

One important aspect of feminism that is often misunderstood is that you do not need to change who you are in order to identify as a feminist. Feminists come in all shapes and sizes with different personalities, interests, life experiences and opinions. For me, much like Beyoncé, looking physically attractive on the outside by wearing makeup and dressing in form fitting clothing makes me feel sexy, confident and good about myself. I feel empowered because I have the choice to express myself freely and embrace my individuality, Beyoncé’s choice to display an alternate version of beauty and sexuality has helped me understand the need to celebrate who I am as an individual, in order to be the confident feminist I am today.

Judith Butler in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” explains the social construction and performance of gender, which reinforces a gender binary in our society. Gender and performing masculinity and femininity seems to be natural, but there is essentially nothing natural about it. The way one performs gender changes throughout historical time, which means there are endless possibilities for how we can demonstrate gender. Our society socializes individuals to abide to the “acceptable” ways of being, creating limiting options for how we should behave as men or women. We can look at Beyoncé’s way of being a woman as one of the endless ways of performing femininity, instead of scrutinizing the way she chooses to sexualize and hyper-feminize her body. In fact, though she differs from what is expected of her, she is in no way performing her gender wrong, in terms of upholding the feminist label, while sexualizing and feminizing her body. We should realize the impact of Beyoncé’s femininity in conjunction with feminism because she is creating space for new ways to be a powerful woman. Further, she is opening up space in feminism for individuals to be able to embrace hyper-femininity and hyper-sexualization while still identifying as feminists. Instead of looking at the performance of our gender as a method of oppression and a way to differentiate individuals, let’s consider the power we can create with our bodies by choosing how
to perform femininity and further, creating space for a greater variety of acceptable ways of being. Beyoncé engages in excessive beauty regimes and sexualizes her body through dance and provocative clothing. Stereotypically, these practices are assumed to be agents to oppress women by many feminist theorists such as Mary Wollstonecraft in “The Changing Woman.” Wollstonecraft identified a problem with nurturing young women to value their physical appearance instead of focusing on more productive endeavours such as education. This was written over a hundred years ago, but this critique of modifying our body and focusing on our physical appearance is salient in the media and news today. A simple Google search offers hundreds of examples of the negative effects associated with using makeup and plastic surgery. This rhetoric is asking women to engage less with these modification processes because it is more harmful than not to our bodies. I myself love using makeup and wearing clothing to feel confident, but does this mean that I should change what I am doing because some feminists and the media are telling me this is oppressive? My current understanding of feminism centres around empowering women, and if I am finding power and confidence in beauty and my sexuality, why am I being criticized? I am studying gender relations at a university level and gaining a higher level of education but also choose to spend time beautifying my physical appearance. Why can’t I pursue both? It’s time we start looking at the use of female bodies to create power in a more positive light.

Being in complete control over our individual bodies is very important to empower women in the feminist movement. Using Beyoncé as an example, she rocks a physically strong and muscular form and more symbolically, she controls the version of a woman that she wants to be. This is quite powerful and as a feminist, this is extremely important. It shouldn’t be about the time we spend modifying our bodies or the amount of money we invest in makeup, clothing, surgeries etc. It is about convincing the popular media forms and feminists who oppose the freedom of expression of our bodies to acknowledge the importance of being in control and making choices over our body to feel empowered.

Along with Beyoncé, Eli Clare in “Body Shame, Body Pride” helped mold my understanding of femininity by teaching me the importance of controlling my body and embracing my individuality, which in turn gives me greater power as a woman. In his speech, he explains that whether or not trans people use surgery to medically change their gender is not the issue. Rather, having control over how their bodies are labelled after they identify as trans is what is problematic. For transgender people, he urges his audience to put an end to defining their bodies as medical conditions because this creates a negative stigma associated with their gender identity. This gives power to doctors who perform surgeries to reduce their “defectiveness,” then further oppresses these individuals by labelling their bodies as less than normal and unacceptable.

Once trans people confront the notion that they aren’t defective, perhaps this will invite a variety of acceptable ways to be trans, be it changing body parts through surgery or not. To reiterate, it isn’t the modification itself that is at issue. Instead, labelling oneself as defective and further modifying bodies to pursue what has been socially constructed as the acceptable way of being is very problematic and oppressive.

Judith Butler emphasizes this idea by arguing that individuals need to stop conforming to one way of being in order to be considered acceptable by society. It isn’t until we openly perform new ways of being that greater society will realize the potential for a variety of acceptable ways to perform masculinity, femininity, or trans-ness. This notion is applicable to the idea of practising femininity and what is acceptable in terms of how feminists can behave. From my understanding, there is room in feminisms for all who people who agree upon the central goal of pursuing equality. With saying this, needing to open up the possibilities for what is acceptable in terms of how we execute our gender is analogous to embracing more versions of feminism that are criticized for being unacceptable. Beyoncé is an amazing role model to promote the idea that there are a variety of acceptable ways to be a feminist. Her version happens to involve embracing one’s sexuality and beauty which gives her great confidence and power as a woman. Once we start embracing our individuality and originality, like Beyoncé, we can open up the possibilities for acceptable ways of performing gender and feminism. We can then focus less on modifying ourselves to abide by society’s strict boundaries for what is acceptable and use the power derived from controlling and embracing our individuality to create more productive social change.

The notion of feeling powerful as a feminist is very important as we pursue social change. Beyoncé has allowed me to understand that what is most important is finding power in what makes me me. As I reflect on what makes me feel powerful and confident, I can’t help but think of the phrase “when you look good, you feel good.” Needless to say, deriving confidence and strength from exterior attractiveness is my fuel for empowering the feminist I have become. Susan Bordo in “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity” suggests that women tend to focus on the self-modification of their bodies in the pursuit of an ideal female appearance. She claims that women’s bodies become docile to our patriarchal society when diet, makeup and dress become central to our lives. Further, she explains how contemporary femininity is constructed to be a nearly unattainable standardized visual image causing great harm to women. For example, she explains how bodies suffer when pursuing the hyper-slender ideal for females, often becoming anorexic. Her suggestion to avoid the oppressiveness of being preoccupied with our appearance is for feminists to develop a political discourse to combat the obsession with attractiveness. Although I don’t deny that, in some cases, women take performing femininity to an extreme, I argue against the notion that women’s bodies become docile when engaging in body modification practices.

Let’s consider how we can present our bodies in an empowering and “non-docile” way, using Beyoncé as an example. Her 2014 Super Bowl performance captivated hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide as she gyrated on stage in skimpy body suits. Singing “Who Run the World, Girls,” she demonstrated her place of power as a woman by hiring all female dancers and musicians on stage, nearly turning patriarchy on its head. Beyoncé clearly owned her sexual power by exuding confidence in provocative clothing and sexual dancing, while promoting a girl power anthem through her lyrics. Although many of us wish we could be Beyoncé with her fame and fortune, unfortunately, we can’t. Maybe in another life we will be re-incarnated to be “Queen Bey” but this doesn’t make her power image any less applicable to our average lives. The main lesson we can learn from her performance is that displaying a hyper-feminine persona doesn’t mean you are automatically submissive to the patriarchal society we live in. It is all in the interpretation of whether we understand the extreme performance of femininity as oppressive or powerful. My suggestion is to find power and confidence in what makes you feel good about yourself, independent of what we wear or do to beautify our bodies. At the end of the day, feminism is all about empowering women. The first step is to be ourselves and embrace what makes us who we are, in order to feel confident in our individual bodies.

Let’s be clear, I am not saying we should all valorize Beyoncé, or disregard feminist theory that finds beauty and expressing sexuality oppressive. What is important is being in control of your own body to achieve power as a woman. We must continue to challenge the status quo with healthy debate relating to the expression of beauty and sexuality. Most importantly, I think we should focus on educating ourselves on different perspectives to understand the true meaning of feminism and further abolish the acceptance of negative feminist stereotypes. We can then challenge what is assumed to be oppressive and establish feminist beliefs we are inspired by.

Feminism is an evolving idea and doesn’t require us to change who we are as people. Instead, we should think of it as a platform to address our ideas and issues in a supportive environment and promote change towards a more positive, equal and inclusive world. I hope to invite conversation and thought to reconsidering this idea as a simple and inclusive movement for men and women.

There are boundless possibilities for feminists and feminist activism. Feminism means a variety of things to different people, and you have the privilege to decide what it means to you. Some consider it a movement, worldview, theory, or an idea. Others define it as a recognition of potential for women or as a type of person. In Trichler and Kramarae’s article titled “Feminism” they offer a collection of definitions of feminism that demonstrates the vast interpretations of the word. My personal favorite definition is by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley. They believe feminism is:

“A method of analysis as well as a discovery of new material. It asks new questions as well as coming up with new answers. Its central concern is with the social distinction between men and women, with the fact of this distinction, with its meanings, and with its causes and consequences to solve the problems in society” (Trichler and Kramarae 7).

To me, the importance of feminism stems from the idea of asking new questions and challenging the status quo of the patriarchal society we live in. Simply seeking
equality of the sexes in political, economic, and social aspects of our lives isn't asking of a lot and is a simple goal that feminists commonly agree to pursue.

Bromley in "How Do I Know What I Know," addresses the importance of self-reflexivity and I ask my readers to do just this. When shaping our beliefs and ideas, we should consider the impact of what we encounter throughout our life, be it what we see on the internet or what we have been socialized to believe from an early age. When we discover new ideas, it is vital to think critically and be self-reflective of our past and present beliefs in order to embrace and reconsider feminism and its meaning. We don't need to unlearn what we've been made to believe of feminism, but instead we should educate ourselves of the different feminist theories and experiences of people in order to establish our own feminist perspective and identity. It is time to build our understanding on what we've already learned.

I believe that those who have a hard time identifying with feminism don't understand the most basic and important premises of this movement, which is simply seeking and believing in equality for women. Let's continue the conversation and develop our understanding!

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Self Portrait

Hannah Tyler
Abetting Rape Culture: The Dominant Rape Discourse & Omitting Consent in Sex-Ed Curriculums

Taylor Byrnes

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo. The Last House on the Left. Game of Thrones. Downton Abbey. The dominant media and film industry tend to paint all scenes of rape, with a man (or men) as the assaulter(s) and a woman as the injured party, with the same brush. The woman is almost always resisting the man or men to stop, and cries (rightly so) at some point or during the entire attack. Unfortunately, the same themes are often present when women disclose that they are a survivor of sexual assault to their loved ones or the police, who usually ask, “Why did you not push him off?”, or “Why of sexual assault to their loved ones or the police, who present when womyn disclose that they are a survivor. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped. In regards to the womyn choose not to inform the police or their loved ones that they have been raped.

Even though I was horrified after learning this, since we live in a rape culture, the omission of the word and teachings of consent in sex-education curriculums is really not all that surprising. Rape culture accepts, normalizes, and encourages male aggression and sexual violence, especially against womyn (Women Against Violence Against Women: Rape Crisis Centre, 2014, as seen in Buchwald, 1994). In order for rape culture to remain operative and intact, consent must never be mentioned, let alone fully understood by men or womyn, especially in an educational setting. Therefore, consent culture, which is “a culture in which asking for consent is normalized and condoned in popular culture... [and understands] that each person knows what is best for themselves” (Only with Consent, 2013) is the opposite of rape culture. In fact, the failure to promote consent culture, which of course is “not inclusive to sex or sexual activity” (Only with Consent, 2013) in Manitoban sex-ed curriculums is a direct manifestation of rape culture that mutually benefits from film and media perpetuating this dominant rape discourse. In many instances, these visual outlets put forth by mainstream film and media become the only “educational resources” that define consent, consensual sex, and rape between men and womyn.

Rape culture, through two of its many annexes – the dominant discourse of rape presented in popular film and media, along with the premeditated absence of consent in Manitoban sex-ed curriculums – is intentionally defining what rape “should look like.” Doing so vastly increases the likelihood of rapes that do not align with the dominant rape discourse to go unnoticed and unreported. The dominant discourse of rape combined with the intentional absence of consent in sex-ed curriculums is one of the most devious manifestations of rape culture. What better way to perpetuate rape culture and for men to get away with raping womyn, along with all of the other combinations of individuals who do not fit into the dominant and heteronormative rape discourse, than to make womyn believe that what they experienced was not actually rape? These devious annexes solidify and preserve rape culture, heteropatriarchy, and misogyny by portraying rape in black and white terms. According to this dichotomy, if one’s experiences do not completely align with the dominant rape discourse, then that person was not “actually raped.”

This dominant rape discourse is one of the most effective expressions of rape culture because this structure is maintained through the silence that results from creating a disconnect in what constitutes “real rape.” If womyn, or anyone else who does not fit into the dominant rape discourse do not know that they have been raped, then obviously they will not report it. If these individuals are unsure if what they experienced was rape, then they are less likely to seek help as a result of their own ambivalence. The dominant rape discourse frequently showcased in mainstream film and media combined with the lack of consent education in sex-ed curriculums, maintains rape culture by narrowly defining and perpetuating the systemic silence surrounding rape.

Bibliography


From my experience, and from the experiences of others, the Canadian workforce is far from perfect with regards to equality. Over the last hundred years there has been change, allowing for more diversity in different fields by integrating more women and minorities. But when I take a closer look it is clear to me that there are still a lot of changes in our society that need to happen. Those who do not happen to be white, heterosexual, men or “Others” (Pharr, 1988) still face many challenges when it comes to work and what is expected of them.

Many women still face challenges at work relating to sexuality. My best friend and some of her fellow female coworkers were being sexually harassed by a male coworker. When one of the girls finally spoke up about the harassment, her claim was not taken seriously by a male manager until three others, including my friend, spoke up as well. After the reports were finally noted by management the girls were punished by being sent to other departments or having their schedules changed, rather than being fired. Management the girls were punished by being sent to other departments or having their schedules changed, where they could not speak up when they felt unsafe and where they were not protected when it comes to work and what is expected of them.

While I was job hunting over the summer, how I could be sexualized was something I had to consider when making a choice to work. A few people suggested I work as a waitress because I would make good tips just from “guys thinking I am cute”. While I was considering the job, I found myself taking a closer look at the uniforms many women were expected to wear at bars and restaurants. I took note that the female serving staff at many of these places around my home town were lighter body more revealing clothes than the male servers. There was even a rumor that one of the new pubs in town was only hiring female servers as they were more attractive, and that would make male customers feel more comfortable. I even heard a rumor that one of the male servers at a bar was firing up a gas grill and a customer who was a female walked in and saw him fire up the grill. This demonstrates how women are dehumanized in many workplaces by sexualizing them and treating them as second-class citizens.

Women do not only experience challenges due to being sexualized, they also experience challenges from gender roles. Gender roles and stereotypes impact what is expected of people for both paid and unpaid labor. For example, when I worked at a clothing store, I worked with predominantly female staff. Whenever we were hiring, I would mention the position to friends that were looking for a job. I found that frequently my male friends would not take my suggestion to apply seriously. Many men would view the job as too feminine, and that if they applied, their sexuality would be questioned. They felt other men would mock them as the job falls outside of the “defined norm” (Pharr, 1988) of what jobs men are supposed to hold (Edwards, Jones, 2009). Traditional gender roles about domestic and unpaid labor were definitely clear to me from a young age. When I visited my father’s farm, I was expected to help my grandmother or step-mother with the domestic, unpaid work. My brother was expected to help with whatever farm work needed to be done that weekend, and would be paid for his work. My father’s girlfriend, when she lived with him, was expected to do all of the cooking and cleaning, but was also expected to have a paid job in town. I realized that I was never going to be the first choice to take over and manage the farm because I was a girl. If I wanted the farm, I would have to work twice as hard as my brother to prove to my family that I was able to do farm work. My grandmother is the one who really enforces the gender roles in the family. She assumes that domestic work is always a woman’s job. My brother is naturally thin, but my grandmother blames his girlfriend and my mother for “not giving him enough food”, even though he eats plenty and cooks for himself frequently. She has even walked into my brother’s home uninvited to accuse his girlfriend of this and demanded to know what she planned to feed him for the next meal.

Traditional ideas of domestic work are not only common to my family, they are common to a large portion of western society (Van Hoof, 2010). Race and ethnic background can also act as a “barrier” (Wayne, 2009) for people in the Canadian workforce. Looking back at some of my work experiences, it is clear to me now that I have experienced the benefit of racism in the workplace (Dr. L. Millward, personal communication, Oct. 16, 2015). At my first job, the grocery store appeared to be embracing a multicultural discourse, as there were people from a number of diverse cultures and regions working there. Now, when taking a closer look at the store, I realized that this was not the case. My coworkers that did not appear to be born in Canada had to work harder, and be more qualified than I did to do the same job, or earn the same respect. According to Wayne (2009) this is a common problem in Canada. Employers want to support multiculturalism, but when it is time to hire new employees, immigrants are expected to jump through more hoops than Canadian born citizens for the same job, and often need more qualifications to prove themselves (Wayne, 2009).

My family farm has been owned and worked on for generations. My grandmother is in charge of the farm and managing the work. For decades we had always had at least one hired hand to help with the workload. A few years ago, our last hired-hand quit to start his own farm so my grandfather had to find a new employee. In the end, he and my father decided not to hire anyone outside of the family, and instead hired my older brother full time. When I investigated the reason, I was told that because my family could not compete with oil field wages and that no one was applying. In reality, there were a few applicants with some related job experience, but they were immigrants mostly from Central and South America. My grandmother refused to give these men an interview. This is another excellent example of how Canadian employers discredit the experiences and training immigrants have (Wayne, 2009). My grandmother wanted to give the job and house for the hired-hand to a Canadian family, but did not consider these families Canadian despite their citizenship. Despite Multiculturalism policies the government has put in place, there is still a struggle between who counts as a genuine Canadian or not.

Are all legal Canadian citizens authentic Canadians no matter what their ethnic background, or are only those with a European background (more specifically French or English) a true “Canadian” (Maltanii, 2000)? Sadly, from my experiences and watching others struggle, I have seen that many Canadian employers only consider the latter to be genuine citizens that they want to employ. Certain people are still facing challenges and “barriers” (Wayne, 2009) in the workplace involving sexuality, gender, race, and ethnic background if they do not fit the ‘defined norm’ (Pharr, 1988).

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Deconstructing the Strong Black Woman Identity

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Contemporary black womanhood (in a North-American, western context) is commonly represented as an image of strength and independence, typically in middle-class, single, career-focused, and obviously black females (Ferris, 2015a; 2015b). The strong, black woman (SBW) is a well-established identity, specifically developed for black women who fit this standard. This identity is a desirable semblance of power and independence. However, the SBW identity is also a stereotyped image of black women who fit this standard, and it comes with negative implications for her identity and role in society.

Inherently, a SBW can turn pennies into meals, clothes, and school supplies for her children, she works multiple jobs to pay her bills on time and to support her dependents, and she certainly does not need to rely on anyone for support (Mwangi, n.d.). Conversely, other SBW can work long hours at upscale jobs in well-paid positions, while also having time to independently take care of a home and family, without reliance on anyone for support (Mwangi, n.d.). Unfortunately, the SBW is illustrated as having limitless power and independence. However, the SBW identity is a mask that belies the struggles black women face in reality.

Granted, both critics recognize strong black women and their laborious efforts in their roles. However, they also do not ignore the negative and stereotyped implications of this concept on black women's identity and well-being. I believe the concept of the SBW leads black women to hold too high expectations of the self, especially when they are expected to uphold this image at all times. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2000) believes the concept of strength in black women is used to "defend and maintain a stratified social order by obscuring black women's experiences of suffering, acts of desperation, and anger" (p. 4). Black women continuously encounter and combat experiences of racism and sexism, but their oppression becomes hidden as they attempt to uphold and present a desirable status both for themselves, and those around them in the greater society.

The positive undertones of SBW, including being recognized as career focused, respectable, middle class, single women who also support their parents and/or kids, suggest that this identity is what SBW are supposed to be. However, when black women do not fit these standards, what does this do their identities? Black women are rendered as weak, struggling, and dependent — typically on a man for finances or support - and demonstrates that black women are not as strong or as black as they should be (Ferris, 2015). When considering the discourse of the Angry Black Woman we can see how diverging from the SBW standard can compromise one's selfhood. When encountering a crisis, black women's true identity as strong is challenged. She is expected to counter this weakness by expressing anger, and a desire for revenge targeted at those who initially lead her astray (Ferris, 2015). Anger, specifically related to Beauboeuf-Lafontant's (2009) earlier statement, is certainly "obscured" (p. 1) in this context. The anger of black women is not publicized as emotional distress, but rather as retaliation against those who lead her to compromise her identity. Similarly, the concept of a SBW can also negatively affect black women's well-being. In the context of psychological well-being, Ramero (2000) noted that the high expectations of SBW may limit black women from seeking support when they need it. To illustrate, many black women do not seek support from a therapist when encountering a crisis. Many black women who do seek therapy terminate treatment before resolving the conflicts that brought them there initially (Romero, 2000), by virtue of intense feelings of “personal failure” and “shame” (p. 227) associated with the inability to handle their struggles on their own.

Overall, we can see that there are positive implications of the SBW identity. However, we cannot ignore the adverse effects of this concept on the lives and well-being of the black women who adhere to this standard. In doing so, we would also ignore the stereotypical expectations of what a black woman is supposed to be.

References


Media has a long history of misrepresenting women, and sex workers have been given continuously damaging and narrow forms of representation. Television, one of the most prevalent genres of U.S. prime-time television is the crime drama. Throughout the past few decades, one franchise in particular has had a profound impact on the television world. Law & Order has dominated the NBC primetime lineup since the 1990s. One of its successors, Special Victims Unit, focuses on "sexually based offenses" that are considered "especially heinous" (as it prefaces every episode followed by the iconic gavel sound). The episodes focus on sex crimes and the people involved, and as a result, deals with its fair share of sex workers. Several episodes have only perpetuated harmful images and subsequent disparaging attitudes regarding the profession as a whole, as well as those associated with it.

The main theme that is included with every episode since the beginning of the franchise, while iconic, shows quick images that generalize sex workers as well. One shot in particular shows three black women, one white woman, all dressed in little to no clothing in front of a wall with graffiti on it. This image implies the criminality of their crime and the people involved, and as a result, deals with its fair share of sex workers. Several episodes have only perpetuated harmful images and subsequent disparaging attitudes regarding the profession as a whole, as well as those associated with it.

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While some sex workers may need help in leaving their jobs, in the case of Jeannie, she is represented as content and repeatedly defends herself against judgements regarding her job. The fact that the resolution of this episode follows a long-time content sex worker giving up her job because of the people around her feeling it was inherently wrong presents a very narrow view of the profession as a whole. It implies that the only "appropriate" resolution for sex workers is to stop doing what they do, without attention to their individual experiences or attitudes. It undermines the identity and complexity of a person, who can be a "good" person while also being a sex worker. The episode started out as a refreshing take on a sex worker as someone other than a criminal or a victim, who was crucial to the story and had aspects of her life highlighted. However, the conclusion of the episode shows that all the problems Jeannie has in her life were attributed to her being a sex worker and that the only way to be loved and accepted back into her family’s lives, is to eliminate that part of her life. This conclusion seems to suggest that the only way for Jeannie to become a whole person again is to strip away any association of being a sex worker.

Another episode entitled “Hunting Ground” (Season 13, Episode 15) also shows the criminal case of a sex worker who goes on a date with a man named Brewster. The cliché ‘woman-being-chased-in-the-woods’ by stranger-danger’ is literally used to showcase the ongoing crime throughout the episode. While this can be used to evoke sympathy from viewers, the use of ongoing torture mainly serves as an entertaining tool to frighten the male audience. This tool is disproportionately used for female victims in order to maintain women in victim roles, subordinate to men. While crime against sex workers does happen and it can be horrific, media images of violence against sex workers and women as a whole, is treated far differently than others. Women tend to be stalked and tortured as opposed to being just killed for entertainment purposes, which continues to be a huge problem with real life implications.

Much research has showed a correlation between violence presented by media (both in fiction and non-fiction shows and video games) and the violence enacted in the real world. Parrott and Parrott (2015) discuss the same thing in their article “U.S. Televisions’s ‘Mean World’ for White Women.” Additionally, they note that images of sexual violence against women in television result in acceptance of rape myths in reality (Parrott & Parrott, 2015). These representations of violence against women reproduce the myth that suggests women should always be afraid because strangers will attack them in real life. Despite this discourse, women are much more likely to be attacked by someone they know and inside their home. Patriarchy uses the media to voice their ideals to a wider audience. Law and Order: SVU continuously to showcase the accepted discourse, thereby reinforcing fear among women who watch the show and continue this cycle of consuming and accepting what is being presented, and reproducing those ideas and attitudes in the real world.
In the episode “Saison” (Season 11, Episode 4), a religious judge is outraged at the sex worker’s testimony, calling her a “whore” and implying her actions are evil by associating her sex to “Satan’s penetration.” Episodes from shortly after the show premiered in 1999 titled “Hysteria” (Season 1, Episode 4), showed a scene in which one of the professors, “Munch,” has a telling conversation concerning a sex worker who happened to be a victim of rape, calling her simply “the dead whore.” When asked if he viewed all women as “whores,” Munch replies, “Don’t be ridiculous. I don’t know all the women in the world.” These interactions were meant to highlight the character’s bitterness towards women after a miserable marriage. However, the show uses sex work as the lowest form with which a woman can be identified. The line was meant to insult a woman in the character’s life and it comes across simply as being offensive towards sex workers and women more generally. The word “whore” being used by this character by a main protagonist in the series and a figure of law enforcement is particularly problematic. It presents the idea the sex worker’s and crimes surrounding them are not to be taken seriously.

The use of such language reinforces the idea that surrounds it; that sex workers are at the bottom of society’s totem pole and thus, are not worthy of achieving justice.

Women are often depicted as the victim and men are overwhelmingly portrayed as the perpetrator. This can have enormous implications in real life when it comes to assault and crimes of sex workers. Shows like SVU perpetuate ideas that are reinforcing damaging discourses surrounding femininity and masculinity. It shows women to be afraid and shows men to be abusive. This acceptance makes it more difficult for women to seek justice in sexual assault cases. Patriarchal control over these images result in victim-blaming, (Reid, 1995). The harmful depiction of sex workers and glamorizing of violence against women proves that people need to seek change in these forms of representation. It also must be done in an ongoing basis as programs keep changing throughout time. There must be continuous analyses and critiques of programming in order to change the potential violence portrayals may evoke (Scaife, 2015). These sexist and racist portrayals of sex workers result in real world views that are being shaped and continue to perpetuate harmful attitudes and actions. Once we change the way in which people are presented to us, we can change the dominant and damaging discourse.

References

When I was a little girl I would bring my mother home flowers, carrying them carefully in my small hands I would hand them over to her. Admiring them critically she would inform me they were not flowers, but instead weeds. However, she would take the glass vase out and put them on our kitchen table anyways. Growing up I couldn’t understand the difference between flowers and weeds. I had yet to discover that to society flowers seemed to symbolize beauty and prosperity. Whereas weeds suggested something unwanted and perhaps plain in design. So, as a young girl I began to conceptualize what one plant could have over another, that would make it any more desirable. I soon began to realize that flowers that do not have permission to grow are renamed ‘weeds.’ But flowers grown with intention are simply labeled ‘flowers’ and are encouraged to multiply and flourish. To achieve permission a flower must first obtain a certain standard of beauty, a standard set by society to define which flowers had earned the title and which could only be denoted as ‘weeds.’ Secondly, flowers must grow in an appropriate location for an appropriate amount of time. This, I found, is similar to society’s permission to beauty for people. Maybe that’s why in grade three Melissa made fun of my best friend for her glasses. Because her difference didn’t have society’s permission to be beautiful. Maybe society’s view of flowers can help to explain why some disabilities are looked down upon, and others are are glamourized. Maybe society’s desire for the perfect size, shape and colour of a flower can help to explain the unreasonable, idealistic image all people of society feel they must compete with on a daily basis. What’s truly odd is with flowers society often accepts a rare and unusual type of beautiful. Whereas with people, society craves the exact opposite, it desires uniformity and ignores the idea of diversity. Therein lies the problem, of course, a society that values sameness but searches for difference is impossible to please.

And so, when confronted with a society that doesn’t foster self-love one must begin to grow their own, no matter how diverse or how rare. You see, as a young girl beautiful was everything to me and I have not quite grasped the concept of exclusion. So everything that Mother Nature grows to decorate herself with, I will call beautiful. And I will appreciate each moment I am allowed to spend, here, on this earth, taking it all in. So one day, when my daughter brings me home flowers, denied the allowance of beauty by a society lacking acceptance, I will smile, and thank her. I’ll carefully place them on my kitchen table, and on every surface in my life that needs a little self-love. I’ll ask her where she found them, and if she could maybe show me I will get my shoes on and together we will go out into the world, searching for beauty disguised as difference.