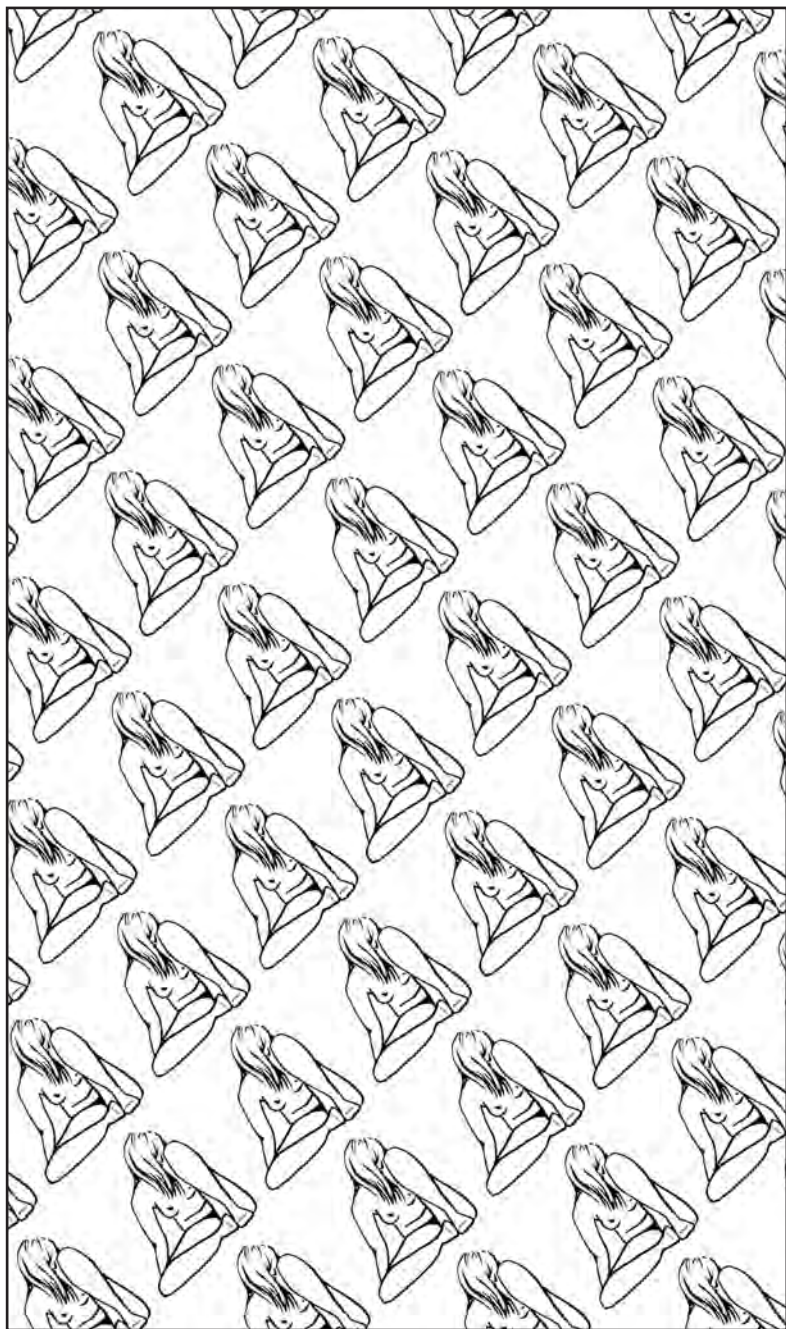




2017

HOOCHIE reader





This inaugural *Hoochie* anthology volume is disguised as an innocuous midcentury handbook for women, perhaps dealing with home economics, etiquette, or the like. Those in the know, however, carry it and offer a wink and a nod to passing confederates who recognize that beneath its cover is a dangerous, feminist object. But far from intending it to remain a secret, the editors of this Reader wish for it to be a symbol of activism and a sign of our determination to support feminist thought. We offer sincere thanks to our contributors and supporters, and to the academic units at Boston University who generously helped to fund this project: the Department of Philosophy, the Department of Sociology, the Core Curriculum, and the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program.

H O O C H I € reader

Issue 1, Spring 2017 | published at Boston University

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It Was Always Already Gender:

The Cultural Construction of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in
Travesti and Hijra Communities

Alice Berry, Bryn Mawr College

I was in sex ed in third grade the first time I thought about the difference between sex and gender. I remember looking at outdated 1980s educational pamphlets filled with *National Geographic*-esque illustrations that rigidly delineated the biological differences between male and female bodies. They detailed the reproductive workings of those two bodies, defining both sex and gender as the makeup of one's reproductive organs. In the last decades, however, gender discourse has proven that the interpretation provided by those illustrations is too simple to encompass the complexities of the two terms. In recent thought, gender is a mental and emotional state one determines themselves while sex is defined as the genitalia one is born with. However, on top of that specification, there exists a third word: "sexuality." The relationship between gender and sexuality has not been as definitively determined as the relationship between gender and sex; indeed, it exists as a source of discomfort within the community of gender theorists. One prominent scholar, Judith Butler, argues in her 1990 book, *Gender Trouble*, that the body, or one's sex, is just a cultural manifestation of already constructed ideas about gender. In other words, Butler believes society created the thoughts and stereotypes of gender first before projecting those ideas onto the previously undefined body, which became designated as sex. Yet, how do Butler's theories about gender as the precursor to sex relate to that third term, human sexual orientation?

Another theorist, Don Kulick, argues that gender is determined by the role of individuals in intercourse, which ultimately also determines sexuality (227). By examining two ethnic groups through the

synthesized lenses of Butler's argument that sex is a secondary demonstration of predetermined beliefs about gender and Kulick's argument that sexual roles are the basis of gender, it becomes clear that the sexual orientations of Indian hijras and Brazilian travestis are based on a projection of gendered ideas onto the body. This reveals that sexuality, just like the sexed body, is a second manifestation of gendered beliefs, creating a hierarchy in which gender creates the body, which in turn creates sexuality.

In order to synthesize the meaning of Butler's argument, one must first understand the point she is making in the larger context of historical gender discourse. *Gender Trouble* is Butler's manifesto of her understanding of the relationship between sex and gender. She argues that before the idea of sex existed, gendered ideas had already been formed. These ideas, when projected onto the body through "cultural meanings," create the concept of sex. In fact, she believes that sex is simply a secondary implementation of the "cultural construction" of gender: "perhaps it was always already gender" (Butler, 7). In this way, Butler sees gender as the precursor to sex, and once sex is projected onto the body, these two concepts merge to be the same thing, a collection of societal attitudes about gender. She builds off Simone de Beauvoir's theories about the gender-sex relationship from de Beauvoir's 1949 book *The Second Sex*, arguing that "sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along" (8). Sex, she postulates, cannot exist without predetermined cultural opinions about gender. Does this conclusion apply to further topics in the field of gender discourse or is it limited to the discussion of the difference between sex and gender? After taking Butler's theories about these two terms into account, one wonders where other terms—particularly "sexuality"—fit into the picture.

Don Kulick, in his ethnography *Travesti*, explains the connection between gender and sexuality, which further proves that the body, and therefore sexuality, is a subjective demonstration of cultural gender beliefs. Kulick argues that instead of a gender dichotomy including men and women, there is instead a binary system of "'men' and 'not-men'" (Kulick, 231). This revelation is crucial to an understanding of

Butler's theories about the body because it places emphasis on the agency of an individual culture to determine gender in whichever way it deems fit, in turn forming the basis of the sexed body. Kulick's argument becomes most pertinent to Butler's thoughts when he says that these cultural beliefs of gender are really expressed through how one presents themselves, not through one's sexualized body, and that how one appears is the marker of their gender and therefore of their sex. He says that one must understand "masculinity and femininity not as adhering to or arising from male and female bodies but, instead, as signs or processes that are invoked and enacted through specific practices" (232).

Kulick's argument creates an addendum to Butler's: the body is a projection of cultural beliefs and the cultural beliefs that govern the appearance of gender are a performance that one must consciously attend to and recreate in order to present an acceptable gendered image. One of the "signs and processes" one can present about themselves is one's sexuality, and this act, this presentation of gender, is placed upon the body, not the other way around. This distinction illustrates that gender existed culturally before the sexed body and that sexuality is another way in which gendered thoughts are taken upon the human form.

To demonstrate the further consequences of Butler's gender/sex analysis and Kulick's interpretation of gender/sexuality on sexual orientation, I will describe two transgender groups, travestis and hijras, who use bodily expressions of gender to fit into sexed roles that determine their sexualities and sexual activities.

Travestis, a gender group originating in Brazil, are a prime example of how sex and gender intertwine to show the nature of sexuality and its allegiance to the body. Travestis, as outlined in Don Kulick's ethnography, are sex workers who identify as men but dress in female clothing, adhere to traditional ideals of female beauty by plucking and shaving, and use "she/her" pronouns (Kulick, 59). A large portion of their lives is spent attempting to create an appearance as feminine as possible, with the help of injects, implants, and hormone

pills or injections (64-66). The travestis rely on these methods to achieve the bodies they want, even going so far to refer to hormones as something that “do wonders” to the body, meaning they are effective in achieving a female appearance, which is the paramount of travesti bodily goals (62). The dedication of the travestis to their bodily presentation being female gendered is an important example of the ways that travestis focus on the sexualized projections of gender onto the body. One particular aspect of the female body desired by travestis is the full, voluptuous *bunda*, or buttocks, which according to Kulick is a particular marker of femininity in Brazil (similar to breasts in North America) (70). They will undergo great surgical danger to obtain traits such as the *bunda*, even being “pumped” full of silicone by other untrained travestis (76). This extreme investment in the presentation of the body is a reflection of Butler’s ideas about the human frame as a mirrored reflection of gendered ideals, and therefore the first level in the hierarchy of gender, sex, and sexuality.

The travestis attempt to recreate the body that idealizes feminine gender because the body is a secondary category created by gendered ideals that later produces sexuality. By emphasizing these gendered ideals in the way they present their bodies, the travestis are able to reinforce their gender, which demonstrates that sex is indeed just a reification of gendered beliefs. Without there being sexualized traits of female gender, such as the hairless body, traditionally female clothes that display the intricacies of the body, and the prominent *bunda* itself, the travestis could not outwardly project their genders, which then allows them to project their sexualities. In this way, it is clear that Butler’s analysis of the body applies to the travestis. However, it becomes more complicated when the subject of sexuality is brought into the discussion by Don Kulick’s arguments in *Travesti*.

Since travestis clearly use their bodies as Butler’s secondary display of gender, their bodies must be a manifestation of sexuality as well, since bodies are an integral part of sexuality, especially when it comes to the topic of intercourse and relationships. Travestis are deeply invested in their romantic and sexual relationships with men

that they refer to as their *maridos* or husbands (97). The travestis identify themselves as *viados*, homosexual men (216). However, the travestis never partner themselves romantically with other travestis, who dress in women's clothing and attempt to make themselves look as feminine as possible (5). Travestis desire men who are "handsome," have "big muscles," are "macho," and most importantly, are not "effeminate," because this allows them to affirm their own femininity in contrast to their chosen partners (121). They desire stereotypically masculine partners, who "look like [men]" (120). According to Kulick, who explains that "the locus of gender difference is the act of penetration" (122, 127), these preferences are significant because the travestis care about the roles that their partners occupy during sex. This is exemplified by the sexual choices made by the travestis, who choose men who not only look traditionally masculine, but who take the penetrative role in intercourse.

For these partners to be "real men," they can never "give their [asses]" to their travesti partners, because that would undermine the gender and sexuality expression of the travestis themselves. One travesti goes so far to say that if a partner allowed her to penetrate him, "the next day [she'd] probably put him out," meaning she would stop dating him and stop supporting him financially, because he had broken the inherent order of sex role performance, and therefore broken the gender display made by the travestis (122). For the travestis, sexual orientation is a construction of bodily functions in intercourse, as Kulick points out (227).

When we compare Kulick's analysis to Butler's understanding of sex as a projection of gender, it becomes clear that sexuality is another secondary projection. Because the travestis are preoccupied with the function of bodies in intercourse, their sexualities are based on the body, which Butler says is just gender in disguise. Therefore, gendered ideas had to exist before the construction of sexuality and sexuality is another category that is projected from a prior understanding of gender.

The second transgender group of interest is rather different than

the travestis, but they ultimately embody the same axis of gender and sexuality described by Kulick. Gayatri Reddy's ethnography *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* exposes the lives of a group in Secunderabad, India, called the hijras. Hijras, according to Reddy, are "phenotypic men who wear female clothing," "[ideally] renounce sex desire," and proceed with a "sacrificial emasculation" (Reddy, 2). While there are several types of hijras, I will focus on the specific group of hijras who perform sex work rather than ritual, religious work, because of their focus on the functions and applications of the body. This group is similar to travestis in that they attempt to achieve a feminine look, plucking out facial hair and donning the typical female Indian style of dress, the sari (2, 124). Like travestis, hijras pursue an imitation of a "feminine" appearance, take estrogen hormone pills, and desire "rounded, voluptuous bodies" and "long, thick hair" (124). Also in accordance to travesti goals, hijras wish to adhere to the gendered practices of Indian culture. Hijras describe enjoying doing traditional "women's work," like dancing and singing and putting *moggus*, an art form done solely by females (122). As with travestis, this attempt to adhere to cultural and societal norms about "feminine" expectations is a way in which hijras are obsessed with the bodily expectations for gender. Hijras are also terrifically overjoyed when members of society mistake them for biological women. One hijra describes with satisfaction an incident in a train compartment when other passengers "were not sure about [her]" gender, and treated her as a woman, calling her "sister" (123). Their attempts to change their bodies and appearances, indeed their inherent longing to be seen as women and their resulting joy when this occurs, is a manifestation of their ideas about gender onto their bodily selves. They project the terms of gender identity onto their bodies, exemplifying Butler's idea that gender ideas come first, and then become inherently displayed in bodily performances. Butler's theories apply to the hijras, as their bodies become a "mere instrument or medium" of gender as they try with dedication to imitate traditional and accepted markers of femininity (Butler, 8).

Butler's claim that gendered ideals shape bodily expression makes it possible to employ Kulick's argument in analyzing hijra identity, showing that sex roles involving the body are a marker of sexuality. The crucial aspect of hijra sexuality is that nearly all hijra eventually remove their genitalia (57). This operation means that the hijras are no longer able to perform the penetrative act in sex and can only be the person who is penetrated. While the removal of the genitalia is historically intended to indicate "asceticism," it actually means that the hijras are simply limited in their sexual functions to just the passive role (57). Most hijras have romantic and sexual partners whom they are extremely devoted to. One hijra bailed her man out of jail and accepted domestic violence, saying, "if he hits me, he hits me" (191-192). This direct quote is evidence of the pure allegiance and commitment that hijras make to their men and to the sex roles that these relationships inscribe. As such, and despite other complications like domestic violence, hijras describe sex as a top priority in their relationships. Another hijra says that the couple "enjoyed sex to the maximum limit," which is crucial in understanding the hijra identity as one that revolves partially and importantly around their own understandings of their sex roles (199). As mentioned earlier, these hijras are primarily eunuchs, so their sex roles are restricted. Here, just like with the travestis, sexual function in the relationship plays an important role in the gender expression of the individual. The role of the penetrated is the one hijras identify with, because they claim that failure to "function" as the penetrator is what is important, "only then can we say that that person is a hijra" (157). Furthermore, according to one hijra, "all hijras desire men," but it is important that their desire is based on their role as the penetrated partner, as that is the other determining factor of hijra-ism (79).

Hijra sexuality is one in which they must *only* be penetrated and therein lies the link between gender, sex, and sexuality in this group. The "one who is penetrated" is the gender of the hijras, which relates in context to Kulick's same argument about the travestis, that gender and therefore sex is a manifestation of who is the penetrator

(men) and who is the penetrated (not-men). Furthermore, because the body is so crucial in this assessment, Butler's argument applies: the "penetrated" role is an aspect of hijra gender that is applied to the body and therefore one can use this to define and demonstrate sexuality. In combination, Kulick's and Butler's arguments create a hierarchical relationship between the three most contested words in the field of gender scholarship—sex, gender, and sexuality—where gender appears first and then creates sex and sexuality as its successors. Alone, Butler's argument in *Gender Trouble* cannot account for an understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation, and neither can Kulick's arguments in *Travesti*. However, when compared and combined, the relationship between the three terms is truly revealed.

In much of Western society, sexuality, sex, and gender are strictly defined as very different things that are related, but have no continuous order. However, the theories of these two scholars in conjunction with analysis of two ethnic groups from around the world prove that the distinction between the words is not because they are specific and separate entities, as often argued by scholars. In fact, their individual distinction comes from the fact that they create an ordered hierarchy: gender, sex, and sexuality exist in that linear order. As seen in travestis and hijras, the two interpretations combined create a kind of hierarchy through which an understanding of the terms can flow. First come gendered ideals and expectations, which Butler argues are cultural constructions. Next, those gender beliefs are projected onto the body in a way that creates the idea of sex, where the body is the canvas with which culture can reflect its own values and ideas about gender. Thirdly—and here is where the two ethnic groups apply in their own right—the connection of sexuality to the body and to genitalia makes sexuality another secondary manifestation of cultural and societal gender beliefs that coincides with the body. Ultimately, sexuality is an extension of the body and the body is an extension of gender: everything leads back to those cultural, gendered beliefs. What Butler's argument lacks is that sex is

not the only term that “was always already gender” (Butler, 7). Sexuality was always gender too; it is based on bodily expressions that stem from gender itself.

This larger picture of the connection between gender, sex, and sexuality is what is most interesting for gender scholarship overall, because it allows these ideas to be applied in the broader context Kulick himself describes this when he says this interpretation “opens up different social configurations” (Kulick, 231). If these three terms do create a dependent hierarchy, then the differences between various sexual orientations seem to dissipate, allowing for the creation of broader social interactions. If the body is predetermined by cultural perceptions of gender, then an individual’s attraction to a body is really an attraction to that set of gender perceptions. While the expectations for gender may differ, they are all still determined by the culture, making their differences dependent on norms that have existed for thousands of years. In this way, the different societal reactions to homosexuality and heterosexuality seem absurd, and even the difference in the categories themselves do too, because when both gender and sex are dependent on cultural criteria, sexuality, reliant on the two previous terms, must be as well.

The pairing of two bodies, homosexual or heterosexual, must be equally normal or bizarre if all things are based on the gendered terms created by society. Everything is contingent on the expectations of culture, making culture’s own traditional and historical rebellion against perceived homosexuality a conundrum of its own creation. Indeed, every form of the body, gender, and sexuality that society detests—transgenderism, homosexuality, intersexuality, and any other act of sexual or gender deviance—is really a product of its own making, because without those predetermined cultural thoughts about gender, there would be no incorrect way to perform it, and therefore no wrong way to present sex or sexuality either. Herein lies the central conflict and meaning within the hierarchy of gender, sex, and sexuality that Butler and Kulick, along with the two ethnographies, illustrate: gender, sex, and sexuality, and all com-

binations of the three are determined in social and cultural terms, making much of human identity subjective to and dependent upon the first ideals of what it means to be male- or female-gendered. 🍀

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hoochie mama

You ain't nothin' but a hoochie mama, they say;
hoochie because my shorts rise up and shirt cuts low,
hoochie because I'm fifteen but my hips have started to grow,
hoochie because I walk like and talk like I know

that what's between my thighs
will eventually change and create lives,
like I know I have the right to choose what I wear and where I go,
even though they want me requestin' permission
to let my brown legs and perfectly shaped breasts show.

You ain't gone be nothin' but a hoochie mama, they say,
'cause of the multitude of teen mothers relying on the welfare way
who've got brains in their head but put their goods on display
makin' it harder each day, makin' baby after baby,
as if that's all a women can convey.

You ain't nothin' but a hoochie mama, they say,
'cause my boyfriend last week ain't the same as the one I'm with now,
and my red lipstick and high heels means I'm sexin' 'em all down—
I'm a hoochie mama if they say so? They don't have to prove how?
'Cause my outfit is equal to consent? Because of how I dress,
my standards are obviously non-existent?

You ain't gone be nothin' but a hoochie mama, they say,
'cause there's no ring on my hand but I make love to my man;
hoochie mama because my attitude is *if I want to, I can*;
hoochie because I hang out with male friends late at night
and upload bikini shots to social media sites;

hoochie because I don't measure up to their standards,
as if tight skirts and croptops mean I don't have manners.

You know, I'm convinced I'd no longer be a hoochie
if I stopped all this stuff I was doing and changed it today.
I'd be accepted and respected, oh *yeah*, that's the way!

Til then: *you ain't nothin' but a hoochie mama*, they say.
Are you sure this is the game you wanna play?
I've graduated three times.
Pushed through obstacles, yours and mine.

Calling me names 'cause my dress is short? Get past it!
Keep degrading me and I'll get you cited for harassment.
I attend top schools, on scholarship at that.
I don't owe Sallie Mae. It's my business how I play.

One day you're celebrating women, the next
you're upset they're not doing what you say.
I don't care for your downplay.

I never needed your approval
for what to wear or how to walk,
whether to cross my legs,
whether it's okay to talk.

You ain't gone be nothin' but a hoochie mama, you say.
Then the beat drops and my whole body gets into the sway,
the ladies before me were quite mainstay. . .
and my eyeliner is heavy 'cause I like to wear it that way.
You can keep your opinions of who and what I should be.
When I look in the mirror, it's my own freedom that I see.

Red Pill Masculinity:

A Netnography of Extremism

Eric Betancourt II, Boston University

With over five million users and six billion unique page views per month, the website reddit.com dubs itself “the front page of the internet.” Reddit has become an online hub for people to gather with others who share their interests via “subreddits” organized by content category. As users interact, these subreddits evolve from categorized folders into communities that enable like-minded people to find each other and communicate. The moderators of one such subreddit, “The Red Pill”¹, describe it as a help- and self-help forum—a place where men who feel they have substandard ability to interact with women may turn to for relationship advice from other men.

When the content shared by users is analyzed, it becomes clear that the ‘advice’ offered is actually thinly-disguised antifeminism. The r/TheRedPill forum connects hegemonic masculinity and male privilege with an audience. A major focus of The Red Pill is sexual strategy. Users share tips on how to be an “alpha male”, and encourage the more vulnerable men in their community to project their anger and frustration with past relational failures onto “hamsters”—that is, women.

The toxic sprawl of this online “man box” carries over into the real world. For example, men’s rights activists (MRAs) on the Red Pill forum were a known influence on University of California Santa

¹ Located at <http://reddit.com/r/TheRedPill>. Throughout this essay, for readability, the subreddit will be referred to as “The Red Pill” rather than “r/TheRedPill.” The handles or usernames of Reddit users are set in small caps; the native Reddit convention would be to give the username with the prefix “u/”. Finally, URLs beginning with “<http://reddit.com/r/TheRedPill/comments/>” are abbreviated with an ellipsis, followed by the remainder of the path. - Eds.

Barbara shooter Elliot Rodger (Woolf).

Just as the protagonist of *The Matrix* trilogy, users of The Red Pill have “swallowed the red pill.” They feel they are uniquely empowered to see political and societal systems for what they *really* are, and encourage each other to bring about social structural change in their favor—change which seeks to undo the progress achieved by feminists in the past several decades.

I. METHODS

I examined top-rated posts on The Red Pill as indicated by a high score or “gilded” status. The content on Reddit is managed by the absolute democracy of an up-vote/down-vote system, so a post with high positive score is one that has received more up-votes (a user indicating that they like the content) than down-votes (a user indicating that they do not like the content). A gilded post is another indication of a well-received post. Reddit gold can be purchased from the website, and is a way to show affirmation of content by highlighting it in gold. It has become a part of Reddit culture to gild posts of substantial quality.

It is also valuable to examine the users of The Red Pill themselves. Reddit is a fairly anonymous website whose users’ only identifying characteristic is their username. By looking at their post histories, the subreddits they subscribe to, and their levels of Reddit “karma,” we can derive a picture of their online identity. Using the “stalk” feature available on metareddit.com, I compiled a list of subreddits each user posted on, and their frequency of posting. Every up-vote a user receives contributes to their karma score, so a high karma score indicates a user who frequently posts content that the user base of their subreddit(s) of choice like. I examined thirty Red Pill users chosen based on the aforementioned criteria. The group included people who were moderators of the forum, those with relatively high karma, and those that had been repeatedly gilded by users of the subreddit.

I did not feel that looking at what current users had to say was

enough, so I conducted online participant observation—loosely modeled after the “netnography” of Robert V. Kozinets—entailing the observation and analysis of the long process that new users must complete in order to be considered a member of the community. My research focused on multiple members of the same online forum and the discussions that were held in that setting.

One of the few rules on The Red Pill subreddit is that you must complete all of the required “theory reading” before you are allowed to post your own content; if it is evident in your posts that you did not, then your post is either deleted by the forum’s moderators, or down-voted to a point where it is hidden from further view. Much of the theory is taken from various men’s rights websites such as *The Rational Male*, *Puerarchy*, and *PUAHate*, a website frequented by Elliot Rodger.² Many of the texts are ‘Manifestos to The Red Pill Party’ and cite injustices that women and the feminist movement are perpetuating. When The Red Pill users discuss the theories presented, they do so in a fashion referred to in Reddit slang as a “circle jerk,” where everyone on the majority side of the discussion praises each other’s shared opinions, inflating many egos. Consequently, any opposition is either excluded or drowned out completely, negating any chance to have real debate on the topic.

I also examined outside critiques of The Red Pill and its users. By looking at r/TheBluePill, a subreddit made by a group of feminist Reddit users in response to the popularity of The Red Pill, I was better able to understand the attitudes other Reddit users have towards The Red Pill. These attitudes were made clear by their posts, and reaffirmed my suspicions of what an interaction with a Red Pill user was like.

I looked to gender theorists to reveal how close examination of The Red Pill reaffirms previous ideas surrounding gender, and how

² This can be confirmed by checking “Elliot Rodger’s comments on PuaHate.com”, found in Storify: <https://storify.com/NewSecular/elliott-rodger-manifesto-to-puahate-comments>.

they are played out in a contemporary online context. Drawing primarily from R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and Michael Kimmel's findings on the development and performance of masculinity in men ages 16-26 (Kimmel, 2008), I viewed the ways in which men are socialized into their own masculinity by their male peers, and how they learn to enforce that masculinity on other men.

II. FINDINGS

Before we can hope to understand the content of The Red Pill, we must first take a look at its userbase. After gathering the data on users of The Red Pill, I was able to understand the identities of the men in this group. Using the list of most frequented subreddits generated by Metareddit's stalk feature, I sorted subreddits into different categories based on topic, in an attempt to combine similar subreddits. Common categories of subreddits fell in line with the interests of the average Reddit user such as comedy, video games, tech, and sports.

VETERANS

When looking at r/TheRedPill posts and the types of people that frequent the page is easy to categorize its subscribers in two distinct groups, "veterans" and "rookies." Veterans make up the older group of men that frequent the subreddit, and are usually the advice-givers. These men have 'been there and done that,' as most of them have either been unhappily married and are now divorced, or they are currently in a type of relationship that The Red Pill would approve of. Most of the moderators of the community belong to this category, and the group that created The Red Pill was also made up of that type of man. Veterans work to give rookies the advice that they wish they were given when they were younger in an attempt to steer them along a clear path away from all of the troubles that come to those who are sympathetic to women. These men rejoice now that they have found a group of like-minded men, despite the state of the world that they believe has been overrun by women and beta-men.

Most of the posts written by veteran users are in the form of long stories addressed to rookie members, explaining the ways women ruin men's lives. The post "For any of you in an LTR³—Your woman will push you to be emotionally open with her. Resist this," by Red Pill veteran BITCHDANTKILLMYVIBE, displays typical features of the veteran:

Despite what the new-age feminized imperative says about 'real men aren't afraid to cry', women will always see your emotions as a weakness. Let me repeat—women will always see your emotions as a weakness.⁴

His story tells of personal experience in a long-term relationship and the "shit tests" his partner put him through. As someone who has had an experience and learned from it, he feels obligated to warn younger readers about the mistakes that he made. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity tells us of the ways in which men are socialized into practices that perpetuate gender inequality, and one of the most crucial traits of masculinity is the rejection of what is feminine (Connell, 2005).

The Red Pill's goal is to propagate male-serving sexual strategy, and in doing this, they are also reinforcing ideas of hegemonic masculinity. Young boys are socialized to hide their emotions or risk ridicule, punishment, or even shame, and by allowing posts like these to become part of the "required theory reading," The Red Pill is teaching men that transgressive expressions of gender are wrong and will go punished. The rant by BITCHDANTKILLMYVIBE ultimately reaches the point that women who ask their men to be more emotionally available are merely just testing their men to see if they are weak, and will leave immediately after seeing that weakness.

Typical of a Red Pill post, BITCHDANTKILLMYVIBE warns men to be wary in relationships with women:

³ LTR refers to long-term relationship.

⁴ ...24f5v2/for_any_of_you_in_an_ltr_your_woman_will_push_you/

So if your woman keeps bugging you about being more 'open' and criticizes you for 'never telling her anything,' maintain frame and see through her bullshit. Do not fall for her attempts to feminize you, she is testing your masculinity and despite acting offended and hurt that you don't tell her about your problems, every time you don't you are asserting your masculinity and dominance, something that will keep her chomping at the bit.

Advice like this just goes to furthering the Red Pill mentality that promotes dominance over women in relationships, a stance that users claim does not support abuse, but is inherently abusive in nature.

ROOKIES

“Rookies” are younger males that frequent the subreddit. Whether they have come to learn “how to be a man” or to figure out how to attract women, rookies seek help from the older users of The Red Pill to change their lives for the better. Rookies are welcomed very strongly, as The Red Pill’s main goal is to grow and spread its message to as many men as possible. Posts from rookie users typically start with a description of the unfortunate situation that they are currently in, followed by a plea to the Red Pill community for help. Common troubles that rookies seek advice for concern low self-esteem, feelings of emasculation, failure to attract women, and handling power dynamics in a relationship. Rookies are right in the middle of the action and do not know what to do, so they have turned to those that have been in their shoes before for guidance. Many claim themselves to be “incels” or involuntary celibates because of their failure to attract women to the point of having any sort of relationship with them. Incels claim that women are putting them in the “friend-zone” and despair that they will never find love. INDOMITABLE798 describes what life as an incel is to him when he writes in his post, “I have no game and I hate women for not wanting me”:

Imagine being the only kid on the playground without a new toy everyone takes for granted. You are allowed to see and touch the toy, but can never play with it or have your own. When the toy breaks, they ask you to fix it then take it right back. That's what it feels like to be an incel.⁵

Many rookies that label themselves as incels feel that women have wrongfully punished them and that they deserve to have what “everybody else has.” It is the job of the veteran user base to come to their rescue and give them the advice that they need in order to improve themselves and change their lives for the better. Unfortunately, the “help” that is given often involves giving instructions on how to assert dominance over women and other “beta” men. In his post “How to start a social life from nothing?” FALLENHIGH SCHOOL-JOCK reports on how he went from being a popular athlete in high school to an introverted loner in college, and asks the users of The Red Pill for advice on how to get friends, confidence, and women.⁶ His post details that he had “swallowed the red pill” years ago, but still cannot walk with the mentality that comes with it because of his low self-esteem. The most up-voted response to this post comes from veteran user GUITARHERO07. It reads:

1. Chat up a fatty who is decently sociable. Preferably she is an underclassman. The fatties will be receptive. They don't have decent looking guys talk to them often.
2. Hang out with said fatty. Even if she is hideous and has intolerable opinions, hang out with her a few times. Never be overtly romantic/sexual but keep the possibility open that she might get some D (kinda like hot girls and their beta orbiters).

5 ...2hhbhm/i_have_no_game_and_i_hate_women_for_not_wanting_me/
6 ...2feroy/how_to_start_a_social_life_from_nothing/

3. Get fatty to introduce you to her circle of friends.⁷

This ‘advice’ is not only riddled with body-negative language, but encourages the use of deception and exploitation for the sake of meeting women. Rookie men are learning to adopt unhealthy masculine attitudes that The Red Pill deems as proper with the hopes of increasing their “sexual market value” to a high enough value that would enable them to identify themselves as “alpha males.”

ALPHA MALES

Every user on The Red Pill strives to be an “alpha” male, a leader. The alpha displays high value to women, and is aware that he is of a higher rank than other men. The alpha male has copious amounts of sex with many different women. Alphas are perceived to possess high levels of gender capital when compared to other men, and that other men and women value this status.

Users of The Red Pill want to be alphas, and in an effort to do so, they eschew “beta” behaviors such as showing compassion for women, providing validation or resources for women, or being involuntarily celibate. It is common for men who have become alphas with the help of The Red Pill to come back to the forum to give advice to rookies who are steps behind them in the road to true masculinity. This pay-it-forward mentality aligns with the goals of The Red Pill in its acquisition of new members.⁸

MEN GOING THEIR OWN WAY

A group of users identifying themselves as “men going their own way” (MGTOW) has become a strong voice in the Red Pill community despite their lack of relationships with women.⁹ These men blame women for their misfortunes, and express contentment with the decision to live a life without them. They believe that any

7 ...2feroy/how_to_start_a_social_life_from_nothing/ck8mtuq/

8 ...531wt7/the_most_effective_mental_model_is_thinking_of/

9 ...4qzidw/the_mgtow_manifesto_our_demands_for_ending_the/

form of reliance on women is a beta quality, and that by forsaking the entire female population, they have become true alpha males. The spectrum of MGTOW identity runs from simple cognizance of the ways in which men are disadvantaged by their involvement with women, to rejection of long-term relationships, and to the complete avoidance of any form of social contact with women. Men on the extreme end of the spectrum often endorse “economic disengagement”—the belief that paying taxes is anti-Red Pill, as funds from taxes go towards programs that help women and disadvantage men. Men who have chosen to live a life on their own, without the need to support a family, are encouraged to quit high-paying, stressful jobs and move to simpler, low-paying occupations to minimize the taxes their activity returns to the government. MGTOW may have come to The Red Pill in search of sexual strategy, but instead they have arrived at the conclusions that they are better off on their own.

PLATE SPINNING

Users of The Red Pill market a sexual strategy called “plate spinning” for the men who do *not* want to go their own way, who still see the value in women (albeit only sexual) (The Rational Male). To the users of The Red Pill, relationships are all about maintaining standard power dynamics, and the ball should always be in the man’s court. The main idea underlying plate spinning is that women see investment as weakness. Therefore, men must invest as *little* as possible, in as *many* women as possible. This is phrased on the forum as “using a shotgun rather than a sniper rifle.” In the words of Rollo Tomassi, Red Pill icon and founder of therationalmale.com, the strategy is described in the following manner:

While the AFC¹⁰ fishes with a single line and a single hook, the Plate Theorist fishes with a trolling net, selecting the fish worth keeping and tossing back those who aren’t (2012).

¹⁰ “AFC” referring to “average frustrated chump,” or “beta” in standard Red Pill parlance.

Plate spinning allows “pick up artists” (PUAs) to not waste time with relationships that are not going to work. If you can spin enough plates you won’t be too sad if any one of them falls and shatters into pieces. Plate spinners also do not consider cheating a possibility because they do not ever take their relationships with any of the women far enough to consider them serious. In some cases, the users of The Red Pill find themselves in a situation where they have found a woman that they can have a life with, but rather than suggest having a normal relationship, The Red Pill endorses what it calls “girlfriend game.” The users of The Red Pill refer to women that they deem fit for a relationship as “unicorns” because of how rare they are.

The type of relationship endorsed on The Red Pill resembles the relationship between a captain and a first mate. As the first mate, the woman in the relationship does have some say, but must ultimately agree with the decision made by the man, or captain.¹¹ Many users of The Red Pill detest the idea of a committed long-term relationship, referring to men in relationships as betas suffering from “oneitis.”

VIEWS ON MEN’S RIGHTS

Besides their goals of teaching sexual strategy and ways to live the alpha lifestyle, users of The Red Pill are also strong participants in the battle for men’s rights. They believe that there is a “misandry bubble” that has surrounded the world and controls contemporary media, and that the world that they live in has been overly feminized (Khan). Users of The Red Pill transcend the battle for what many consider rational men’s rights issues such as child custody laws, false rape allegations, and male genital mutilation. Many men believe that the government system that handles child custody is skewed in the favor of women, and by mandating 50/50 custody women will not be able to “steal our children away from us.”¹² Users of The Red Pill go beyond these issues, and contend that all women are ready to use any pretext available to get what they want.

¹¹ ...4771ti/day_one_of_your_captain_first_mate_dynamic/
¹² ...27dzrm/men_are_not_happy/

The following characteristic expression of this sentiment is taken from a sidebar post titled “I don’t hate women, I just don’t respect them, and unless many changes within their gender come about, I never will,” authored by Red Pill moderator BSUTANSALT:

They create a problem that isn’t there so they can exploit it to their own advantage. They willingly destroy men’s lives, careers and reputations, marking them permanently for the rest of their life, purely for their own gain. Men are completely disposable in a woman’s eyes, and this again is reason to not only disrespect them, but fear them.¹³

It is a commonly accepted practice on The Red Pill to deny women’s rape allegations, and there is broad consensus that most allegations are simply ploys to ruin the lives of the men that they are against. They refuse to view both sides of the arguments: some women can accuse men falsely, but also some men do rape women.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Although on the surface the users of The Red Pill seem like troubled men that are either looking for help or looking to give it, upon closer examination it is apparent that the forum is merely a resource for men to learn “sexual strategies” that boil down to exploiting and deceiving women in order to perpetuate gendered power dynamics. The men who are active on The Red Pill are the types of men that police the masculinity of others, and they are not afraid to call someone out when they are not “alpha” enough. These men have unhealthy relationships with women, in part because of their unhealthy relationships with their own masculinities. We know that forums like this have been detrimental to the self-confidence and mental health of men in the past, as was seen in the case of Elliot Rodger.

Rodger was an active user of the website PUAhate.com, a forum

¹³ ...250ku1/i_dont_hate_women_i_just_dont_respect_them_and/

for those that identify as MGTOW, and was molded by the “veteran” men that he talked to. He was taught to take the frustration and hate that he had towards himself, and turn it towards the women in his life. Many of the users on both The Red Pill and PUAhate.com were in full support of Rodger, stating that the women got what they deserved. Some users even claimed their approval of his suicide, claiming Rodger to be a beta man that deserved everything that was coming to him. The veteran/rookie dichotomy gives young users the idea that they are there to learn while the older users are there to teach, but in reality, rookies are being misled.

A community that approves of murder and suicide is not one that should be allowed to exist on Reddit. Reddit administrators have banned hateful subreddits before, including r/fatpeoplehate, r/coon-town, and r/TrayvonMartin. This shows that they have the power to ban subreddits, and have exercised that power on occasions where they found the groups to be detrimental to the lives of others (Rodgers). The toxicity of The Red Pill calls out for such a remedy. 🍎

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Culture does not make people.
People make culture.
If it is true that the
full humanity of women
is not our culture,
then we can and must
make it our culture.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



#Feminism:

The Internet's Facilitation of the Fourth Wave

Nicole Veneto, Simmons College

In November 2014, TIME Magazine held its fourth annual word banishment poll online, asking which words in modern (i.e. Millennial) vernacular their readers would like to see banned in the upcoming year. Typically including shorthand, internet abbreviations and African-American vernacular, previous winners of the poll included “OMG,” “twerk,” and “YOLO”. However, TIME’s questionable inclusion of “feminist” in 2014’s poll caused a notable amount of controversy, particularly when the word actually started winning. While it was relatively unsurprising that internet trolls were responsible for feminism’s lead in the polls, the backlash over the word’s inclusion was something that would most likely have never occurred five years prior (Merlan, “4Chan Is Why ‘Feminist’ Is Winning”). Nancy Gibbs apologized on behalf of TIME, stating that the word was included “to invite debate about some ways the word was used this year” (Aran, “TIME Apologizes”), conveniently ignoring the fact that voting to ban certain words doesn’t exactly leave much room for productive discussion to flourish.

One thing Gibbs was correct about was that “feminist” had been used an awful lot in 2014. What had once been considered a dirty word throughout the first decade of the millennium was suddenly re-entering public discussion, flashing behind Beyoncé in LED lights and gracing the pages of *Cosmopolitan*. Although some would argue that the word itself is simply being appropriated into an empty and faddish label, there is also undeniable evidence that a new generation of feminist consciousness has developed to generate real social, political, and cultural change. This contemporary feminist movement, according to Ealasaid Munro, is characterized by an intersectional

“diversity of purpose” that reverberates throughout intersectional issues such as police brutality against black men and transgender visibility (“Feminism: A fourth wave?”). Such a diversity of purpose stems from the very place TIME opted to conduct its poll—the internet.

With the recent resurgence of feminism into public discourse, the internet has played an integral role in providing a space for community and a tool for action in building multicultural solidarity, with an emphasis on intersectionality. In accordance with this important role, I argue that this resurgence has the potential to be classified as a fourth wave, building off many of the ideas and concepts of feminist theory and intersectionality presented by bell hooks. While the global influence of the internet on feminism merits its own thorough analysis, I will be approaching this topic from a specifically American standpoint and citing contemporary American issues as evidence.

SOLIDARITY IN NETWORKING AND EFFICIENCY OF ACTION

For a generation that has grown up with the advent of the internet, it is of little surprise that Millennial feminists have effectively learned to use social media as a tool for organizing, taking advantage of the web’s vast networking capabilities to build feminist solidarity beyond cultural, regional, and national boundaries. According to bell hooks, the success of feminist organization largely depends upon the formation of solidarity, which “strengthens resistance struggle” through cross-cultural bonds of unity (hooks 44). When hooks published *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* in 1984, opportunities for building cross-cultural solidarity were limited by location, making it especially difficult for people segregated by race and class divisions to join together in a community. Additionally, Reagan-era means of communication were in no ways as far-reaching and immediate as a Facebook status, which can be seen by an unprecedented number

of people all over the world. What the internet has provided is the opportunity for feminists to engage in a “global community” that can use the internet “for both discussion and activism” (Munro). As YouTuber Kat Lazo put it, the internet makes accessible the “tools and platforms that previous generations of feminists could only have dreamed of” (TEDx Talks, “Feminism Isn’t Dead”). With the click of a button, it is easier than ever for feminists to engage with each other and develop the solidarity of sisterhood that hooks so passionately calls for. These communities of feminists use the internet as a tool for action, a practice that Tom Watson of Forbes calls “networked feminism.” Using Twitter hashtags, Facebook groups, and Instagram posts, feminist communities have turned to the internet to call for boycotts, campaigns, and signs of solidarity that have the potential to reach any number of people anywhere at any given time (“The New Networked Feminism”). Feminist writer Kate Harding summarizes the efficiency of such networking as so:

Social media allows [feminists] to work together quickly and publicly for something like a boycott or twitter campaign—(mostly) without the distractions of in-group politics or disagreement on any number of other issues—and that creates an energy that makes it feel so much like a unified movement, even when people are still quite loosely connected. (as qtd. in Watson)

Although the distractions of “in-group politics” and internal disagreement are hard to avoid within any progressive movement, social media is better equipped to encourage group participation of a concerned collective in a manner that “strengthen[s] our solidarity” (hooks 64). The efficiency of the action of these feminist communities can be found in reference to Title IX violations and the mishandling of rape cases by college institutions, as in the case of “Mattress Girl,” a.k.a. Emma Sulkowicz, a Columbia student whose rapist was allowed to continue attending the university despite numerous alle-

gations against him. Turning her pain into a performance art senior thesis project—carrying a dormitory mattress like the one she was raped upon “to class, every day”—Sulkowicz’s injustice drew attention to the Ivy League school’s less than satisfactory track-record in handling cases of sexual misconduct (Valenti, “Beyond ‘no means no’”). The story instantly went viral, inspiring mattress carrying anti-rape protests at colleges across the country and even “friends and strangers” coming to Sulkowicz’s aid to help “Carry That Weight” (Hess, “Emma Sulkowicz Inspired Students”).

In order to build political solidarity, hooks argues that feminist activists “cannot bond on the terms set by the dominant ideology of the culture,” but must “define their own terms” (hooks 44). Older feminists may find themselves scratching their heads at some of the terminology used amongst modern feminists—terminology that actually sprouted from online feminist communities. Acronyms like WOC (women of color), cis (cisgender), and TERF (trans exclusionary radical feminist) arise from the 140-character limit of tweets and hashtagging, allowing information to be spread and linked as quickly and efficiently as possible (Munro). Even newer terminology used within feminist communities has spread from the internet, such as “misogynoir,” a word coined by queer black feminist scholar Moya Bailey describing the unique form of misogyny experienced by black women (“They aren’t talking about me...”). Since its first usage on a blog post in 2010, “misogynoir” has become a common term of usage amongst black and queer feminist communities as well as amongst academic feminists studying the intersectional relationship between race and gender (Hamilton, “Explanation of Misogynoir”).

As both a community space and a tool for activism, the internet has provided new opportunities for feminists to come together in solidarity with each other. Yet the internet’s role in reviving the feminist movement is, perhaps, best exemplified in its accessibility, exposing feminist ideology to a new generation on a mass scale.

EASIER ACCESS TO FEMINIST IDEOLOGY

One of the largest barriers to overcome in the construction of a mass feminist movement is providing a feminist ideology that can be accessible to everyone. For previous generations of feminists, feminist ideology was only accessible at an academic level in the primary medium of “the written word,” making it inaccessible—let alone relate to—for the underprivileged and undereducated (hooks 112-113). According to hooks, feminist educators need to “translate” feminist ideology to an audience that differs in “age, sex, ethnicity, and degree of literacy,” and until such an educational methodology can be constructed, “education as ‘the practice of freedom’” will continue to be a false reality (112, 116). However, today, 97% of US adults between the ages of 18 to 30 and 92% of American adolescents report going online daily, and these figures remain high across racial, class, and educational demographics (Pew Research Center; Lenhart). While the internet has bred new feminist communities, it has also influenced a new generation of feminists who make feminist ideology readily available to the online masses.

Describing her own feminist awakening, Kat Lazo credits the internet with exposing her to feminist dialogue she could use to articulate her own experience as a woman of Peruvian-Colombian descent:

So, as any adolescent would, I turned to the Internet to vent about my frustrations. I may have not been in a large lecture room reading *The Feminine Mystique*, but I was on sites like Tumblr, where discussions of the injustices of the world were taking place... [t]hese people were not only translating everything I ever felt was so wrong with the world into eloquent yet relatable language, but them doing so also made me realize that my voice was not alone and that the injustices between genders didn't have to be accepted as a way of life. The internet was my *Feminine Mystique*, and this was my ‘feminist click’ moment. (TEDx Talks)

Tumblr, a microblogging platform and social media website, allows its users to post and share information through a variety of media formats; and it is—perhaps—due to this variability of usage that the site is so popular for spreading feminist ideology. Around 64% of Tumblr users say that they both care about social causes and use Tumblr to engage with them, and out of the over 215 million blogs the website hosts, around 50% of its users are between the ages of 15 to 34. For these users, Tumblr is a “gateway drug for activism,” and, as Kat Lazo spoke, often the first place where they encounter feminist ideology (Safronova, “Millennials and the Age of Tumblr Activism”). Feminism finds itself spread across the site through an assortment of user-created content: art, GIF sets, audio files, videos, and traditionally written blog posts—all of which fellow users may share on their own blogs with added commentary. The ability to personalize and share content using different multimedia forms makes Tumblr a unique tool for educating the next wave of feminists. Just look at Tumblr’s “saved by the bell hooks,” where quotes from hooks’ works are plastered across screengrabs from the nineties high school sitcom *Saved By the Bell*. Why? Because is feminism not for everybody, Screech included?

The variety of mediums produced within the internet not only makes a feminist education more accessible, but makes it easier to expose sexist oppression (hooks 163). Anita Sarkeesian, a feminist and video gamer, turned to YouTube to analyze gendered tropes and sexism in video games in her video series *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*. Her channel, *Feminist Frequency*, has over 191,000 subscribers, and after launching a crowdfunding campaign to support *Tropes* she ultimately raised over \$150,000, 25 times the amount of her original \$6,000 goal (Watercutter, “Feminist Take on Games”). Nevertheless, her success came out of a vicious internet hate campaign that encapsulated the internet’s equal capability to also be used as a tool for misogyny. Sarkeesian found her social media accounts flooded with hundreds of hate-filled and sexually charged comments, many threatening rape, and her Wikipedia page vandalized

with pornographic images. In her own words, “I knew that delving into video games might provoke a bit of a misogynist backlash ... [but] this level of organized and sustained harassment, vitriol, threats of violence and sexual assault in response to a project that hasn’t even been made yet is very telling” (as qtd. in Watercutter, “Feminist Take on Games”). While her harassment drew support from fellow feminists and female gamers all over the internet, her experiences and videos launched a global conversation on misogyny and sexism in gaming culture, allowing other young women to articulate their similar experiences in feminist terms.

SPACE FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Times are changing, and if the current feminist movement is to be defined by its achievements, it would be through its focus on intersectionality. According to hooks, “[t]he foundation of future feminist struggle” is dependent upon an intersectional approach, necessitating a “recognition of the need to eradicate the underlying cultural basis and causes of sexism and other forms of group oppression” (33). All forms of oppression, from racism to transphobia, are therefore a feminist concern, as they are upheld by similar “institutional and social structures” as those that facilitate sexism and misogyny (37). Previous waves of feminism have grappled with the concept of intersectionality, more often than not leaving the voices and experiences of women of color and LGBTQ individuals out of the conversation completely. hooks cites this failure of prior generations on the basis of white, upper-class women centering the feminist movement upon their own experiences with misogyny, therefore designating sexism as a separate structure uninfluenced by racism, classism, and heterosexism—thus only aiming to eradicate “one system” while “the others remained intact” (37). In this respect, marginalized people are disenfranchised and silenced by a myriad of oppressive structures. The internet, however, has provided an opportunity for the marginalized to transgress these barriers, allowing a space wherein their

identities and their struggles may be validated and visible.

One such classically feminist issue that has become an increasingly racialized topic of interest is the beauty standard. In a culture that designates whiteness as the “norm,” people of color have turned to the internet to celebrate their own beauty and provide positive representation of non-white beauty. Such is the goal of #BlackOutDay, a hashtag trend started in 2014 wherein black users post and share selfies on the first Friday of every month in a show of solidarity, diversity, and open defiance against the “negative images and stereotypes perpetuated [by] the media” (Tan, “#BlackOutDay: Trending Twitter Hashtag”). But it is perhaps the role the internet has played in drawing attention to the Black Lives Matter movement that presents one of the most profound examples of how marginalized people have used social media to generate change. Started by Alicia Gaza in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, Black Lives Matter grew significant traction in the wake of Mike Brown and Ferguson, drawing global attention to the “extrajudicial killings of Black people” by law-enforcement (“A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement”). In hooks’ own words, “[a]cknowledgement of racism is significant when it leads to transformation,” and for the people of Ferguson, Baltimore, New York, etc., they are using social media “to let their voices be heard around the nation” in a way the public can no longer ignore (56; NewsOne Now, “Will #BlackLivesMatter Protests & Social Media...?”).

Since Ferguson, not only has social media become the medium through which black activists organize demonstrations, but it has also become a place to document and expose incidents of police brutality and anti-black racism—from the camera-phone video of the police chokehold that killed Eric Garner, to Freddie Gray’s cries of agony as he was shoved into the back of the police van. People of color are using the internet as both an outlet to rally for change and a tool for education on institutional racism, as demonstrated by a video by activist and Hunger Games actress Amandla Sternberg about cultural appropriation, in which she asks viewers to wonder “what

would America be like if we loved black people as much as we love black culture” (“Don’t Cash Crop My Cornrows”).

While the internet has served as an invaluable tool in the fight against racism, it has also become ground-zero for another social movement that has achieved substantial visibility for one of the most marginalized groups in the LGBTQ community—transgender people. “The transgender tipping point,” as TIME calls it, comes as a result of the advancement of the gay rights movement and the increased representation of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals in media—Laverne Cox, Janet Mock, Carmen Carrera, and Caitlyn Jenner (as qtd. in Molloy, “Laverne Cox and Transgender Tipping Point”). But this seemingly sudden attention owes a great degree to the workings of social media, giving LGBTQ people the ability to “carve out unique spaces” of community that often “don’t” or “can’t” exist offline (Wolfe, “In Defense of the ‘Social Justice Warrior’”). Tile Wolfe summarizes the importance of the internet a community space for LGBTQ people as so:

The mechanics of sharing themselves, paired with passionate people, create real impact. The LGBT community is one of the most active of the organized, as we’ve been told forever to be a little quieter and to take up less space. So with so few places to express...there is no better place to do so than a living room or a coffee shop, bolstered by platforms that are built to spread a message fast and loud. (Wolfe)

Transgender inclusion has become an increasingly prominent concern in the contemporary feminist movement, with its focus on intersectionality reaching out in recognition of LGBTQ identities in a way that normalizes and validates their experiences. On Tumblr, for example, the self-disclosure of pronouns, gender identity, and sexual orientation in blog descriptions serves as a show of solidarity. Furthermore, transgender and gender nonconforming users often turn to the site as a means of support, “signal boosting” calls for safety in a

world where they face increased levels of harassment, homelessness, and murder (see HRC Foundation & Trans People of Color Coalition, “Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence”).

Unfortunately, the internet has garnered attention to the violence and discrimination faced by transgender and gender nonconforming individuals just as much through tragedy as through community activism. In late December of 2014, the suicide note of 17 year old Leelah Alcorn was published posthumously on her Tumblr blog mere hours after she walked onto Interstate 71 and was hit and killed by a tractor trailer. Citing her parents’ refusal to accept her as a transgender woman and her abusive experiences undergoing conversion therapy, Leelah pleaded for her death “to mean something” for trans civil rights—shedding light on the abuse and discrimination faced by transgender youth, often at the hands of their own families (as qtd. in Coolidge, “Transgender teen: ‘My death needs to mean something’”). Within 48 hours, the note acquired 82,272 views and national outrage as her death became a rallying call for change, proliferating through Twitter hashtags and Tumblr posts asserting “her name was Leelah” (Coolidge). In April 2015, three months after a petition to the White House to ban conversion therapy began circulating on the internet, the Obama administration responded with a pledge to advocate for the ban, and it is currently called “Leelah’s Law” (Jarrett, “Response to Your Petition”).

CONCLUSION

Without social media, who knows if Leelah’s final wish would have been answered? And who knows how far the transgender community would have come in recent years without the web? Would Mike Brown and Freddie Gray’s deaths have incited both outrage and a national conversation on racism, or would they have been glossed over and ignored like so many before them? What is abundantly clear is that the internet has radically changed the ways in which social movements are generated. For feminism, it is what

separates the current state of the movement amongst Generation Y from the third wave of Generation X. The intersectional approach of feminist theory has been carried out with this new and unifying tool, implementing real change and transformation in its wake. Young people are no longer running en-masse from the word “feminist,” and if the sudden attention feminism has received from mainstream media results in someone, male, female, gay, black, etc., picking up a copy of *The Second Sex* or bell hooks, then isn’t that a sign that the movement is real in its purpose? What is certain is that this current wave of feminism shows no signs of slowing down towards achieving radical social, political, and cultural change. It is accessible to everyone who has a Wi-Fi connection, not just the privileged and the academics of previous waves. The belief that the last few years are merely a continuation of the third wave undermines progress gained by the ever-underestimated Millennial. This, right now, is something new altogether; it is the dawn of the fourth wave. 🐼

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¹ This video was originally posted to Sternberg's personal Tumblr (clandesteen), but after experiencing an onslaught of harassment on the site, she deleted her account in July 2015.

If you don't have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu. And so it is important that we have women in the United States Senate — strong women, women who are there to help advance an agenda that is important to women.

Elizabeth Warren



Kathryn Wood, University of Virginia

Ragdolls

He pulls my head to his empty chest
and my body curls into his,
rage whispering and screaming in my skin
like the voices of the oppressed always do.

It echoes out from my heart,
runs riots through the rootwork of my veins;
my thick blood pulsing in calls and in cries.

This rage is the sap of my soul.

It hangs like venom—
loitering momentarily
at the midpoint between my nipples and
the crevice behind my jaw.

Strip me of my clothes
and hang me from a string
at the top of the world.

Twist me around on your deteriorating
pedestal, for everyone to see, and still
I will not be yours.

He and every other he before him,
this is what they do.
And the women that allow this

sing sweetly, softly,
violently to the world:
“Take what you like of me.”
Desperately they rejoice:

“I am yours!”

Like a bullet, the words
“I am nothing without you!” rip
the wind-chilled beauty
out of chapped cheeks,

turning goddesses into prostitutes.

Sexual Assault and the Catholic University:

Administrative Action, Student Sentiment, and Policy Prescriptions

Pete Freeman, University of Notre Dame

Sexual assault affects a number of undergraduate college students. Defined by the Bureau of Justice Statistics as “the full range of physically forced, verbally coerced, or substance-incapacitated acts such as kissing, touching, or vaginal, oral, and anal penetration” (McDermott 2015), sexual assault has significant negative social, psychological, and behavioral consequences (Krebs et al. 2007). Catholic Universities in the United States pose no exception to the national prevalence of sexual assaults on college campuses. University religious affiliation may be seen as one factor deterring sexual assault on college campuses, but institutional Catholicism in fact intersects with many other factors leading to sexual assault, altering social dynamics and creating a unique landscape. This paper uses the University of Notre Dame in Indiana as a case study to explore the social dynamics of sexual assault at a Catholic university in the United States. The results discussed in the following paper are not generalizable to other US Catholic universities. However, they do speak to ways in which institutional Catholicism at US universities can distinctly affect the occurrence of sexual assault on and around college campuses.

According to Heather Ryan, Notre Dame’s Deputy Title IX Coordinator, 16 sexual assaults were reported by undergraduate students during the 2014-2015 academic year. As reported by the Na-

tional Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) (Fisher, Cullen & Turner 2000), roughly 90% of sexual assaults on college campuses go unreported. Applying the NSVRC's estimate to reports at Notre Dame during the 2014-2015 school year, approximately 160 sexual assaults may have occurred on or around campus, 144 of which were unreported. Indeed, sexual assault seems to have a silencing effect. The National Institute of Justice reports that survivors of sexual assault may not report assault to an authority for a number of reasons, including "embarrassment, not clearly understanding the legal definition of rape, not wanting to accuse someone they know who victimized them as a rapist, or because they blame themselves for their sexual assault" (Samuels et al. 2000). Thus, the setting in which the assault occurs, the relationship between parties involved in the assault, and the institutional repercussions of filing a report are important factors to consider when asking these central questions: What factors might legitimize sexual assault at the University of Notre Dame? Are these factors connected to residence life policies such as parietyals and same-sex dormitories? What are undergraduate student perceptions of administrative action to reduce sexual assault?

BACKGROUND

Research on factors affecting sexual assault on college campuses identifies alcohol as a primary cause of sexual aggression and inhibited judgment of social and sexual cues about consent (Testa & Livingston 2009). Studies have shown that roughly half of all sexual assaults on college campuses involve alcohol consumption (Testa 2002). Specifically, 74 percent of sexual assault perpetrators self-report consuming alcohol before committing sexual coercion (Koss 1988). Moreover, roughly 53 percent of undergraduate college men who self-report rape or sexually aggressive behavior qualified as alcohol dependent or alcohol abusers (Ouimette 1997).

Drinking at college parties has been shown to sometimes cause male undergraduate students to continue with sexual advances fol-

lowing the refusal from the subject of their advances. Crystal Mills (1992) notes the frequency, approximately one-third of those polled, of which undergraduate male students on college campuses admit to continuing sexual advances after a woman verbally declines their advances. Often times sexual assaults on college campuses are perpetrated by male undergraduate students against female undergraduate students. Across the nation, rates of undergraduate female sexual assault victimization range from 28.5 percent (Krebs et al. 2007) to 54 percent (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski 1987). One survey of US college students found that 25 percent of undergraduate males self-reported committing sexual aggression, and four percent self-report perpetrating rape (McAuslan & Ross 1998; Koss 1987). Sexual assault committed by male undergraduate students on college campuses correlates with factors such as childhood abuse, violent attitudes, hostile masculinity, negative stereotypes of women and women's bodies, low empathy towards women, sexual promiscuity, and impersonal sexual relations (McAuslan 2002; McAuslan et al. 2006; Jacques-Tiura et al. 2007; Malamuth et al. 1991).

Mills' discussion highlights the confusion among undergraduate college students regarding verbal and nonverbal sexual consent. Because shared definitions of consent are in some cases nonexistent among many undergraduate students, unwanted sexual contact can easily occur at parties or social gatherings. On one college campus, estimates of the frequency of unwanted sexual contact were remarkably high: 34% of undergraduate women had experienced unwanted contact, 20% experienced unwanted attempted intercourse, and 10% experienced unwanted completed intercourse (Ward 1991). These encounters reportedly involved individuals who were friends or acquaintances, which is different from the stranger-acquaintance dichotomy that is commonly supposed of sexual assaults. Sally Ward argues against the stranger-acquaintance dichotomy, instead favoring a typology that explicitly references the setting in which the sexual assault might occur and the relationships between those present. For example, sorority and fraternity houses, dorm rooms in resi-

dence halls, or campus buildings are all locations with different social dynamics that impact the likelihood of sexual assault. Of course, leaving a residence hall party to walk outside toward one's home involves a greater risk of a stranger-acquaintance sexual assault, whereas sitting with a friend or acquaintance in an isolated room at a house party involves a greater risk of acquaintance-friend sexual assault. The impact of the setting, according to Ward, affects the extent of unwanted sexual contact as well as the safety that undergraduate students experience. University policies dictating shared campus spaces and University-sanctioned gender relations in certain social settings—such as same-sex dormitories—may contribute to the problem of sexual assault through “administrative overcorrection.”

Emily Yoffe's “The College Rape Overcorrection” explores the existence of administrative overcorrection by examining college and university policies governing gender relations and alcohol consumption (2015). Yoffe concludes that a majority of colleges and universities, in efforts to protect undergraduate women from sexual assault, are infringing upon the rights of undergraduate students. Policy implications include lessening the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights' power and influence to dictate University policy and reconsidering existing policies that favor either male or female students in favor of the other. The negative effects of University policy on a broad scale might be termed “structural violence.”

Structural violence, as defined by Johan Galtung, is a form of violence wherein a social structure or social institution harms individuals or groups by preventing them from meeting their basic needs (Galtung 1969). Examples specific to the Notre Dame context include parietals and dorm alcohol policies, as well as the sexism that is reinforced through parietals. Parietals, which require undergraduate students to vacate dorms assigned to the opposite sex by midnight Sunday through Thursday and 2 a.m. Friday through Saturday, are an example of University policy that legitimizes sexual assault and is a prime example of administrative overcorrection. Several survey respondents reported that, should an undergraduate female who is

friends with or in a romantic relationship with an undergraduate male be inside that male's dorm room past parietals' closing hour, the female is incentivized to stay in the room through the night as opposed to leaving or sneaking out. This incentive is rooted in the fact that should an RA or member of hall staff apprehend the female while exiting the dorm past parietals, University-mandated punishment will ensue. Another incentive is rooted in alcohol consumption. Should there be drinking at the party in the male's dorm room, it can be seen as both safer to stay in the dorm room as opposed to navigating inebriated back to one's dorm and smarter because it voids the possibility of punishment for being seen drinking, particularly if the party is underage. In these cases, students are incentivized to "break parietals" by remaining in a dorm room that belongs to a student of the opposite sex for the duration of the night. The option to remain increases the likelihood that sexual assault will occur in the dorm room, particularly if alcohol is involved. As will be shown, this is true of students at Notre Dame.

METHODOLOGY

To begin to broach the topic of undergraduate sexual assault at the University of Notre Dame, which is a US Catholic university, I gathered qualitative and quantitative data from 120 undergraduate students. Data was collected from a 35-question survey containing 25 close-ended question and 10 open-ended questions. The survey was distributed via email and Facebook to a nonrandom sample of students. On Facebook the survey was posted to each of the four undergraduate class pages with a brief description, and the added incentive of one participant being randomly selected to receive a finals week gift basket. Thus, the data is biased toward students who are interested in sexual assault (otherwise, they likely would not have chosen to take the survey); students who have a Facebook account and frequently use the social networking website; and students who are interested in receiving extra pencils and notebooks for final ex-

aminations week. In addition, the survey was administered via email to a group of students purposely selected for its diversity in gender, dormitory, year in school, race and ethnicity, and college within the University. These email recipients were also non-randomly sampled, because they were students whom I have had contact with at least once during my first two undergraduate years at the University. In other words, while I intentionally varied the social location and University-related background information within the group receiving the survey via email, this group will be biased in at least one way - having previously come in contact with the principal investigator.

The survey was administered over the course of a 48-hour period from April 12th to April 13th, 2016. The timing of this survey is important as it was released roughly one week before the University released its sexual assault campus climate data. Had my survey been released after the University released its climate data, the study would have likely suffered from poor internal validity. That is, the answers of participants in my study would have likely been affected by reading the University's climate data, for example, the topic of sexual assault and any surprising findings in the climate data may have biased the answers given later in my survey. During the week of the survey and the week before, no sexual assaults were reported and no historical anomalies occurred that may have influenced participants' feelings or ideas toward sexual assault as measured by the open-ended questions, or participants' evaluation of administrative ability to reduce sexual assault as measured by the close-ended questions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Ten primary themes emerge from the data. Each theme will be put into conversation with qualitative data gathered from the open-ended portions of the survey questionnaire. While these themes are unique to the Notre Dame case, several are influenced by the University's Catholic affiliation and, to different degrees, speak to this

affiliation's impact on campus sexual assault. These primary themes include administrative capability, religious values and Catholic identity, alcohol, administrative miscommunication, University image, preferential treatment toward athletes, dorm culture, parietals and victim blaming, consent, and transparency. Several themes intersect, and responses to open-ended questions are included exactly in the manner in which they were submitted.

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPABILITY

While roughly 80 percent of undergraduates believe that the Notre Dame administration has been effective in spreading awareness and has been responsive to the issue of sexual assault, only 50 percent believe that administration has been effective in reducing assault. Still fewer respondents believe that the administration is “doing enough” to address sexual assault (34 percent), or that the administration is capable of conducting a nearly or completely effective, unbiased sexual assault investigation (7.6 percent), or that it is capable of implementing nearly or completely effective anti-sexual assault policy (10.2 percent).

Respondents expressed many reasons for their confidence, or lack thereof, in the administration's ability to create effective anti-sexual assault policy and to conduct effective sexual assault investigations. One student expressed: “I'm not confident because they do not combat the main substance which they tell us leads to sexual assault and harassment: Alcohol.” Another student stated: “I feel like it's very difficult for an institution of this size to be completely effective with any sexual assault policies, but ND seems to be doing an okay job.” Others discussed whether or not Notre Dame had “grown too large,” bureaucratically speaking, to adequately address sexual assault in an efficient manner.

RELIGIOUS VALUES & CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Several students suggested a correlation between religiosity or Catholic identity and sexual assault in the open-ended sections of

the questionnaire. One respondent noted that, “There is no transparency at ND about sexual assault statistics. ‘Catholic Identity’ and tradition and ‘Catholic’ reputation precedes women’s safety and the safety of LGBTQ students.”

Several other respondents argued an incompatibility with pre-marital sex and Catholicism, suggesting that sexual assault was a difficult issue for the administration to engage due to the University’s Catholic identity. Several students expanded on this tension: “When premarital sex is incompatible with Catholic theology, I doubt the University can implement effective anti-sexual assault policies. They can’t teach proper consent if students aren’t even supposed to be having sex;” “No institution is unbiased. In order to implement ‘effective’ policies, the university would have to change the climate in a way that sacrifices ‘the tradition’ of the university. Specifically, I mean the only effective strategy is teaching safe sex and gender relations in a way that might not be seen as in accord with Church policies;” and “University religious beliefs get in the way of sexual safety. I think Catholic culture makes it more likely that the university would try to dispel discussion of any sexual activity on campus and generally try to not talk about it than to have an open discussion of safe sexual and relationship practices. Encourage discussion as to what a healthy sexual relationship entails regardless of Catholic beliefs, get rid of parietals. We’re too caught up in ‘Catholic’ identity to even have a healthy conversation about sex.” Though the University’s stance against pre-marital sexual relations has been longstanding, undergraduate students seem to believe that now more than ever dialogue must be started around the topic in order to address sexual assault.

ALCOHOL

Nearly half (49.6 percent) of respondents indicated that they believed that the University’s alcohol policies can inadvertently cause or legitimize sexual assault. Furthermore, students most frequently reported a 1 out of 10 score regarding the extent to which the No-

tre Dame undergraduate student handbook *du Lac* and its policies on alcohol consumption, parietales, and sexual activity influence to whom they would report a sexual assault. Several students focused their responses on binge drinking: “Focus groups [are needed] in both men and women’s dorms to discuss gender issues and masculinity, and to crack down on the incredibly high rate of binge drinking. As much as my friends would hate me saying it, there is a clear and obvious connection between sexual violence and drinking. Rather than permit it with an embarrassed face, begin real policies which would look at the source of the problem: social anxiety and peer pressure.” As can be seen, heavy consumption of alcohol linked to social anxiety and peer pressure is a major theme expressed throughout responses.

Freshmen binge drinking, in particular, was a concern for many respondents. One participant suggested that: “They could do more to discourage students from getting hammered on the weekends. WAY too many freshman experience an unspoken about pressure to drink in order to ‘Fit in’. There should be programs that help to promote a culture of respectful behavior including refraining from getting drunk. Most ‘incidents’ involve alcohol, but often it seems that students are encouraged to drink. The administration would never admit this, but I think that a lot more goes on in the dorms, off campus and elsewhere than people realize or are willing to admit. A prestigious Catholic school should not turn into a western drinking town on Friday nights...”

ADMINISTRATIVE MISCOMMUNICATION

Other participants touched on apathy and lack of administrative and student involvement. One student said that, “having worked on the Committee on Sexual Assault Prevention, I saw how difficult it was to craft a coherent and working anti-sexual assault policy. Either students are apathetic, or the administration really has no clue how to reach out to students.” While data presented here cannot speak to student apathy, it does indicate that a majority of students believe

that the administration have been effective in spreading awareness about sexual assault (81.5 percent) and responsive to the issue of sexual assault (76.7 percent).

Participants, however, voiced more nuanced responses than these statistics show. Another respondent said, “There isn’t a prevalent authority currently in place that champions this cause. This lack of formidable presence doesn’t deter sexual assaults in the slightest and doesn’t give victims the peace of mind that they could have otherwise.” Others remarked: “There is a lack of communication between administration and students;” “Because everything happens behind closed doors;” “I think Notre Dame tends to pretend sexual encounters don’t happen on campus and there isn’t enough honest, in-depth discussion of how sexual assault happens or how to prevent it;” “You have to earn back the trust of the student body, because right now no one (at least not girls) trusts the administration to respond if there is a sexual assault;” and “I don’t think that the message of what constitutes sexual assault and WHY it is unacceptable has been thoroughly communicated. Faith-based and/or informed initiatives are vitally important, not least because they speak to Notre Dame’s unique perspective. But perhaps a heavier focus on other initiatives that have been successful on secular campuses deserve a second look, at least in the short-term.”

UNIVERSITY IMAGE

Some stated that the University prioritized its reputation at the expense of student safety. One student responded that, “[The] Image-conscious nature of the University and administration may hinder policies/campaigns that aren’t consistent with that desired image; unwillingness to acknowledge reality of sexual assault on campus (especially in a way that is broadcasted to alumni/donor base).” Another respondent remarked: “I’ve just heard about so many cover-ups and mishandlings by the university. We were even in *The Hunting Ground*, that’s despicable for our university.” Others reported, “Have you seen *The Hunting Ground*? Because Notre Dame will

protect its reputation over its students;" "I'm more worried about how the administration influences the reporting/investigation process;" and "ND is all about numbers. The fewer official rape reports, the better the school looks." Several students expressed concern that the University would conceal sexual assaults to preserve its image, and that *The Hunting Ground* documentary is proof of this cover-up.

PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT TOWARD ATHLETES

Respondents showed a strong distrust of the administration's ability to conduct unbiased sexual assault investigations where Division One (D1) athletes are involved. Respondents were significantly less confident in the University's ability to conduct an effective, unbiased sexual assault investigation involving a D1 athlete compared to an undergraduate or graduate student. Nearly 25 percent of respondents indicated that they were completely not confident in the administration's ability to conduct such an investigation.

In general, students seem to believe that D1 athletes receive "special treatment" and are let off the hook easily should they be involved in an incident of sexual assault. Several respondents commented on this, including one who stated: "Men need to be taught what sexual assault is & athletes need to be treated objectively (investigators should not know if the victim/perpetrator is an athlete)." Others indicated that athletes are given "breaks" and "play by special rules," allowed a get-out-of-jail free card in the event that they are implicated in assault. Some respondents cited "racial issues" that "plagued" sexual assault enforcement in situations involving student athletes, suggesting that expelling several African-American athletes from the University would tarnish its image incite charges of racism.

DORM CULTURE

Gendered treatment of undergraduate residents between same-sex dormitories was another major theme. One student commented: "They need to eliminate the punishment discrepancies between male and female dorms." Another claimed: "Double standards regarding

the enforcement of rules in men's and women's dorms and the atmosphere in some men's dorms on weekend nights (i.e. are allowed to get away with any and everything up to the point that someone is sick in view of hall staff) must change first before policy changes can have their maximum effect."

Consistency in hall staff procedures in men's and women's dorms was of critical importance to respondents, as was creating a more open dialogue between administration and students on the issue of equal treatment in men's and women's dorms. On this topic, one student noted: "I think that the complete imbalance in the way that parietals and other *du Lac* rules are enforced in men's dorms vs women's dorms allows for an environment in which sexual assault becomes easier. If these rules were enforced equally, then more sexual assaults might be prevented." A handful of students suggested with a variation of "addressing the male-dorm-exclusive party culture" when describing the area in need of most urgent reform.

PARIETALS & VICTIM-BLAMING

In connection with same-sex dorm culture, parietals were often cited as correlated with sexual assault at Notre Dame. Indeed, participants on average rated same-sex dormitories as 5 out of 10 in their capacity to reduce assault, while they rated parietals a 3.6 out of 10 in their capacity to reduce assault. Whereas 14.5 percent of respondents cited that same-sex dormitories were completely ineffective in reducing sexual assault, 31.6 percent of respondents indicated that parietals were completely ineffective in reducing sexual assault.

Amnesty in special cases for students who broke parietals was the most frequently cited improvement that could be made. Several respondents elaborated on amnesty, arguing: "Give students immunity for breaking parietals if they feel they are at risk of being sexually assaulted;" "Better resources, better promises made that you won't get in trouble for parietals if you feel unsafe at any point after 12/2am, less victim shaming;" "Reform reporting/punishment (not all or nothing policy), become more unbiased, less victim-blaming, a lot

more;” “Get rid of parietals, many women (and men) I know who break parietals often are coerced to go farther than they want with the person because they either go along with it or they get caught for a violation of they try to leave;” “The amount of times I’ve heard my girl friends tell stories about how they had a guy pressure them to stay bc it was after parietals is ridiculous;” and “In addition, parietals could lead to sexual assault of someone feels they are in a bad situation but they don’t leave out of fear of breaking parietals. So there needs to be some sort of modification to parietals to fix this.” Overall, students felt strongly that parietals need to be reconsidered, decriminalized, or completely discarded.

CONSENT

Disputed definitions of sexual consent were another recurring theme in the data. Several students questioned the University’s definition of consent considering the University’s stance on premarital sex. Respondents further questioned whether or not there is an agreement upon a definition of consent outside of the University. One student proposed “Sexual Education on more than just abstinence. Emphasizing what consent means is a big part of that.” In a comprehensive prescription for sexual assault and issues of consent at Notre Dame, one student prescribed: “Transparency about sexual assault statistics, reporting to actual police, more support for the victims, changing campus rape culture and dorm culture, more consent talks, requiring that Rectors/resesses/RAs/hall staff go to GRC events/Loyal Daughters and Sons/Show Some Skin.” Other students complained that women undergraduate students might give consent during a party, for example, but then indicate otherwise the following day. That women students have the power to indicate to an authority whether or not consent was given, regardless of the truth of their “side of the story,” was upsetting to many men and women respondents.

TRANSPARENCY

Finally, student responses clustered around the theme of transparency of assault-related information. Participants were vocal in their demand that statistics regarding undergraduate sexual assault at Notre Dame be made public, apparent, and visible around campus so as to raise awareness of the prevalence of assault and encourage students to actively oppose it. One respondent claimed: “Give students more information about how many assaults actually take place on campus, and who to contact/what initiatives are taking place to combat sexual assault. Every student should know all of their options and what programs are available if it were to happen to them or a friend.” Another argued: “The Notre Dame administration should strive for transparency in all manners of addressing sexual assault. It is helpful to appear in the PSA videos and send out emails, but the administration needs to support student efforts to entirely extinguish this problem...and believe in the ideal that this is possible.”

Several students suggested that taking massive administrative action to reduce assault would be admitting there is a problem on campus, and that the administration would not want to be pigeonholed into reducing assault. Rather, students suggested, the administration wants to act in such a way that pleases students, faculty, and alumni. These descriptions echo John Padgett and Christopher Ansell’s concept of multivocality: “the fact that single actions could be interpreted coherently from multiple perspectives simultaneously, the fact that single actions can be moved in many games at once, and the fact that public and private motivations cannot be parsed” (Padgett & Ansell 1993:1263). Students characterized the administration as multivocal, and condemned it for not being sufficiently clear and transparent in its actions.

Many respondents suggested making additions to the freshman health course in the Moreau First Year class, adding assault statistics and resources such as to whom and where to report assault. Others suggested a committee-style gathering composed of administrators and undergraduate students that works toward reducing sexual as-

sault at the University and clarifying administrative intentions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nina Eliasoph's (2011) conception of the empowerment project speaks to the work required to bridge the gap between the undergraduate public sphere and the Notre Dame administration. Empowerment projects are "hybrid civic organizations that blend elements from government, professional nonprofit, and volunteer identities and operate on multiple streams of revenue that impose different demands" (2011:2). The goal of empowerment projects are, in part, to move people and governance closer together on the grassroots level. Empowerment projects exist to build communities for diverse groups of people. These projects create "bridging ties," bringing people out of their separateness and isolation and into communities that no longer experience the divisions and tensions that previously existed between groups (2011:3). Following Eliasoph's outline of an empowerment project, undergraduate students might gather in an attempt to involve top-level University administrators, as well as actors from across campus, in an effort to reduce sexual assault. But how?

Because civil society actors excel at creating social cohesion (Paffenholz & Spurk 2014:71), individual members or small groups that are a part of the Notre Dame undergraduate public sphere are best positioned to build community, creating the group-to-group "bridging ties" necessary to connect the administration with the undergraduates. Relationships must be built, desired outcomes stated in writing, and dialogue begun between members of the Notre Dame administration and its undergraduates for miscommunication to be addressed and transparency achieved.

In addition to social cohesion and bridging ties between administrators and undergraduate students, intermediation and facilitation is a crucial step toward building relationships and strengthening communication between the two groups. Whether facilitation is

done by undergraduate students, graduate students, “middle-range” actors like the Gender Relations Center, or hall staff, there are many actors from vast social strata within Notre Dame who can mediate between the undergraduate public sphere and administrative policymakers. Middle-out mediation, in which middle-range actors engage both the top level administrative policymakers and the interested undergraduate grassroots actors, may work particularly well considering that these middle-range actors are generally respected by both administrators and undergraduates. Undergraduate students will need to galvanize middle-range actors to engage in mediation. Beginning with dormitory rectors and priests, and branching out to Gender Relations Center employees and faculty members in the departments of sociology, gender studies, and peace studies (for example), undergraduate students need to identify the willing and able “power players” who may agree to mediate between top-level and grassroots level actors.

Recruiting middle-range actors for more than just an introduction to an administrator is a critical step in creating sustainable peace. John Lederach and Paul Appleby remind us that “sustainable peace...requires long-term, ongoing activities and operations that may be initiated and supported for a time by outsiders but must eventually become the ordinary practices of the citizens and institutions of the society in question (2010:5). By routinizing communication between undergraduate students and administration mediated by middle-range University actors, social justice can be discussed, cooperative relationships can be built, and sexual assault may be diminished. Excessive alcohol consumption may be discussed and consent definitions clarified. In all of this, healing will take place.

Strategies for accomplishing these relationships and coordinating these dialogues are offered in Lederach’s 1997 book *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Communities*. In Chapter 8, Lederach outlines actionable steps aimed at coordinating peace-building efforts. These steps include developing a peace inventory of who is doing what activity by researching all of the involved actors

and their initiatives or convening a conference of the actors, creating clearer channels between the top and middle ranges by establishing a “coordination committee” involving top-level and middle-range actors and initiatives, and creating strategic resource groups of researchers, academics, and grassroots actors to “cross-fertilize” ideas and expertise from a wide variety of areas (1997:99-102). Applied to the Notre Dame case, a peace inventory is a vital step in identifying groups’ efforts and strategies at each level of the Notre Dame public sphere. What exactly are the undergraduate members of the Men Against Sexual Violence club doing to reduce sexual assault? How have the initiatives of the “It’s On Us” campaign differed from that of the Green Dot campaign? What has Student Government attempted to influence a reduction in sexual assault that has or has not worked, and what are they doing now? Might a conference of all actors interested in reducing sexual assault prove fruitful in taking inventory of strategies to identify overlap and areas for collaboration?

A coordination committee, when applied to the Notre Dame case, might include faculty, University employees, and top-level administrators. In practice this group might involve two gender studies professors, two sociology professors, two peace studies professors, two Gender Relations Center employees, Notre Dame’s Title IX Coordinator, two representatives from the McDonald Center for Student Wellness, two representatives from the University Counseling Center, one member from the President’s Leadership Council, one college Dean, and a handful of rectors and priests. In theory this committee would “secure a far more explicit commitment from the top level to legitimate and provide space for the range of activities needed to sustain the transformation of conflict over time” (Lederach 1997:100). I argue that adding two or three undergraduate representatives who are elected to two-semester terms to this committee would greatly strengthen the collective University effort to reduce sexual assault.

A strategic resource group in the Notre Dame context might be comprised largely of undergraduate students led by a pair of faculty

members. This group would conduct research similar to that in this paper, discuss anti-assault peacebuilding strategies that have and have not been effective at Notre Dame and on other college campuses, create proposals for enhanced anti-assault policy, and present these proposals to the President's Leadership Council twice a year. In order to gain access to the President's Leadership Council, the strategic resource group might involve one of the eight academic deans. Each Dean reports to the President's Leadership Council and would serve as a direct channel of communication between the strategic resource group and the President's Leadership Council. Other activities that the strategic resource group might engage in include hosting guest speakers who present on the topic of sexual assault reduction, creating multimedia and social media campaigns to spread awareness of the issue of sexual assault, and lobbying student government members to focus more time and energy on engaging the Notre Dame administration. This group may also assist in organizing sexual assault prayer and healing services.

Overall, sexual assault in the Notre Dame public sphere involves many dynamic actors and factors—dorm culture, alcohol consumption, parietyals and same-sex dormitories, policymakers, undergraduate students, and more. As shown by Yoffe (2015), administrative policies can overcorrect for sexual assault. At Notre Dame, there is a non-trivial number of students who believe that parietyals and other University policies can legitimize undergraduate sexual assault. Perhaps more importantly, students feel as though the administration is only moderately effective in creating and implementing these policies, and may be unaware of their unintended consequences. Ultimately, relationships between administrators and undergraduates ought to be built, and channels of communication ought to be fostered. More importantly, students must actively work to voice and act upon their Rebel Consciousness, questioning the social and political assumptions surrounding sexual assault on campus, and channel this consciousness into a willingness and ability to “interrupt” (Katongole 2009:116). As shown, students have many policy

prescriptions and program recommendations to reduce sexual assault on and around campus. But these solutions, when prescribed individually, do not carry enough momentum to reach the ears of those who most need to hear them. It seems that a collaboration is necessary.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future directions in research include identifying peacebuilding strategies used by undergraduate students at Catholic universities to reduce sexual assault. The extent to which these strategies are shaped by the context of the Catholic University, taking into consideration institutional religious affiliation and how student group behavior shifts in accordance with University policies and practices informed by religious affiliation, should be measured. In particular, I am interested in the role these context-specific strategies and student groups play in promoting positive peace - the structural integration of ideas and movements that will prevent sexual assault - at Catholic universities. With what methods and strategies do small groups in the Notre Dame undergraduate public sphere—and in Catholic schools, generally—operate to promote positive peace and which do they believe to be most and least effective? To what degree do these small groups operate to fulfill Christoph Spurk's seven peacebuilding functions (protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialization, social cohesion, intermediation, and service delivery) when addressing sexual assault in the Notre Dame context (2010)? And finally, what civil society activities are these small groups undertaking (awareness-raising, peace marches or rallies, bridging activities between different groups, advocacy work, research and information)? Who are their target groups, and what is their intended impact (Orjuela 2003)? 🐼

Table 1: “How confident are you in the University administration’s ability to implement effective anti-sexual assault policies? (1= completely not confident, 10= completely confident)”

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
“1”	4	3.4%	“5”	21	17.8%	“9”	4	3.4%
“2”	5	4.2%	“6”	9	7.6%	“10”	8	6.8%
“3”	15	12.7%	“7”	26	22.0%			
“4”	11	9.3%	“8”	15	12.7%			

Table 2: “Is the Notre Dame administration doing enough to reduce sexual assault?”

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
“Yes”	40	33.9%	“No”	78	66.1%

Table 3: “On a scale of 1-10, how effective do you believe Notre Dame undergraduate initiatives are in reducing undergraduate student sexual assault? Examples include student prayer services, Gender Relations Center anti-assault programming, and bystander intervention training. (1 = completely ineffective, 10 = completely effective)”

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
“1”	7	5.9%	“5”	20	16.9%	“9”	6	5.10%
“2”	10	8.5%	“6”	24	20.3%	“10”	0	0%
“3”	7	5.9%	“7”	18	15.3%			
“4”	13	11%	“8”	13	11%			

Table 4: “Can Notre Dame’s policies on drinking inadvertently cause/legitimize sexual assault?”

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
“Yes”	58	49.6%	“No”	59	50.4%

Table 5: “Has the Notre Dame administration been effective in reducing sexual assault on campus?”

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
“Yes”	59	50.4%	“No”	58	49.6%

Table 6: “Has the Notre Dame administration been effective in spreading awareness of sexual assault on campus?”

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
“Yes”	97	81.0%	“No”	22	18.5%

Table 7: “Have the Notre Dame administrative been responsive to the issue of sexual assault?”

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
“Yes”	89	76.7%	“No”	27	23.3%

Table 8: "How responsible is the Notre Dame administration for reducing sexual assault? (1 = completely not responsible; 10 = completely responsible)"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"1"	1	0.8%	"5"	15	12.7%	"9"	14	11.9%
"2"	1	0.8%	"6"	9	7.6%	"10"	17	14.4%
"3"	4	3.4%	"7"	22	18.6%			
"4"	9	7.6%	"8"	26	22%			

Table 9: "How confident are you in the University's ability to conduct an effective, unbiased investigation of a student-reported sexual assault by a Notre Dame D1 athlete? (1 = completely not confident, 10 = completely confident)"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"1"	29	24.6%	"5"	8	6.8%	"9"	3	2.5%
"2"	19	16.1%	"6"	9	7.6%	"10"	4	3.4%
"3"	14	11.9%	"7"	9	7.6%			
"4"	17	14.4%	"8"	6	5.1%			

Table 10: "How effective do you believe same-sex dormitories are in reducing undergraduate student sexual assault? (1 = completely ineffective, 10 = completely effective)"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"1"	17	14.5%	"5"	11	9.4%	"9"	8	6.8%
"2"	7	6%	"6"	14	12%	"10"	4	3.4%
"3"	13	11.1%	"7"	15	12.8%			
"4"	15	12.8%	"8"	13	11.1%			

Table 11: "Can Notre Dame's policy of parietals inadvertently cause/legitimize sexual assault?"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"Yes"	70	59.8%	"No"	47	40.2%

Table 12: "How effective do you believe parietals are in reducing undergraduate student sexual assault? (1 = completely ineffective, 10 = completely effective)"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"1"	37	31.6%	"5"	2	1.7%	"9"	3	2.6%
"2"	18	15.4%	"6"	8	6.8%	"10"	4	3.4%
"3"	18	15.4%	"7"	9	7.7%			
"4"	10	8.5%	"8"	8	6.8%			

Table 13: "How much do du Lac rules governing drinking, parietyals, and sex influence to whom you would report a sexual assault? (1 = completely do not influence, 10 = completely influence)"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"1"	22	18.6%	"5"	13	11%	"9"	4	3.4%
"2"	13	11%	"6"	15	12.7%	"10"	4	3.4%
"3"	10	8.5%	"7"	14	11.9%			
"4"	14	11.9%	"8"	9	7.6%			

Table 14: "Is the Notre Dame administration accessible with regard to answering questions about sexual assault on campus?"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"Yes"	60	51.3%	"No"	57	48.7%

Table 15: "Do you know who to contact in the Notre Dame administration to discuss the broader issue of sexual assault?"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"Yes"	43	36.4%	"No"	75	63.6%

Table 16: "Do you personally know a Notre Dame undergraduate student who has been sexually assaulted in or around the University of Notre Dame?"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"Yes"	51	46.4%	"No"	51	46.4%

Table 17: "Do you personally know a Notre Dame undergraduate student who has reported sexual assault to the University of Notre Dame?"

reply	incidence	% of total	reply	incidence	% of total
"Yes"	31	26.5%	"No"	86	73.5%

Appendix A: Text of the Sexual Assault Survey

During the 2014-2015 school year, how many sexual assaults were reported to the University of Notre Dame by Notre Dame students?

During the 2014-2015 school year, how many sexual assaults were estimated to have occurred at the University of Notre Dame?

Name one confidential resource for reporting sexual assault available on Notre Dame's campus.

Name one non-confidential resource for reporting sexual assault.

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you in the University's ability to conduct an effective, unbiased investigation of a student-reported sexual assault in the undergraduate population? (1 = completely not confident, 10 = completely confident)

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you in the University's ability to conduct an effective, unbiased investigation of a student-reported sexual assault in the graduate population? (1 = completely not confident, 10 = completely confident)

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you in the University's ability to conduct an effective, unbiased investigation of a student-reported sexual assault by a Notre Dame D1 athlete? (1 = completely not confident, 10 = completely confident)

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you in the University administration's ability to implement effective anti-sexual assault policies? (1 = completely not confident, 10 = completely confident)

If not completely confident, why?

On a scale of 1-10, how informed are you about Notre Dame's sexual assault and sexual misconduct policies? (1 = completely uninformed, 10 = completely informed)

On a scale of 1-10, how effective do you believe parietales are in reducing undergraduate student sexual assault? (1 = completely ineffective, 10 = completely effective)

On a scale of 1-10, how effective do you believe same-sex dormitories are in reducing undergraduate student sexual assault? (1 = completely ineffective, 10 = completely effective)

On a scale of 1-10, how effective do you believe Notre Dame undergraduate initiatives are in reducing undergraduate student sexual assault? Examples of undergraduate initiatives include student prayer services, Gender Relations Center anti-assault programming, and bystander intervention training. (1 = completely ineffective, 10 = completely effective)

If you were aware of a sexual assault, to whom would you feel comfortable reporting? (check any and all that apply): Rector, Resident Assistant (RA), Assistant Rector (AR), Chaplain, Notre Dame Counseling Center, Gender Relations Center, Title IX Department, Undergraduate peers/friends, Other.

If you were aware of a sexual assault, to whom would you report first?

If you were aware of a sexual assault, to whom would you report last?

How much do du Lac rules governing drinking, parietales, and sex influence to whom you would report a sexual assault? (1 = completely do not influence, 10 = completely influence)

Appendix B: Respondent Data

What is your age?

<i>years of age</i>	"18"	"19"	"20"	"21"	"22"
<i>incidence</i>	7	43	35	21	12

What is your academic year?

<i>class year</i>	"First Year"	"Sophomore"	"Junior"	"Senior"
<i>incidence</i>	23	53	32	10

What college are you enrolled in?

<i>School of Architecture</i>	1
<i>College of Arts & Letters</i>	58
<i>Mendoza College of Business</i>	26
<i>College of Engineering</i>	22
<i>College of Science</i>	11

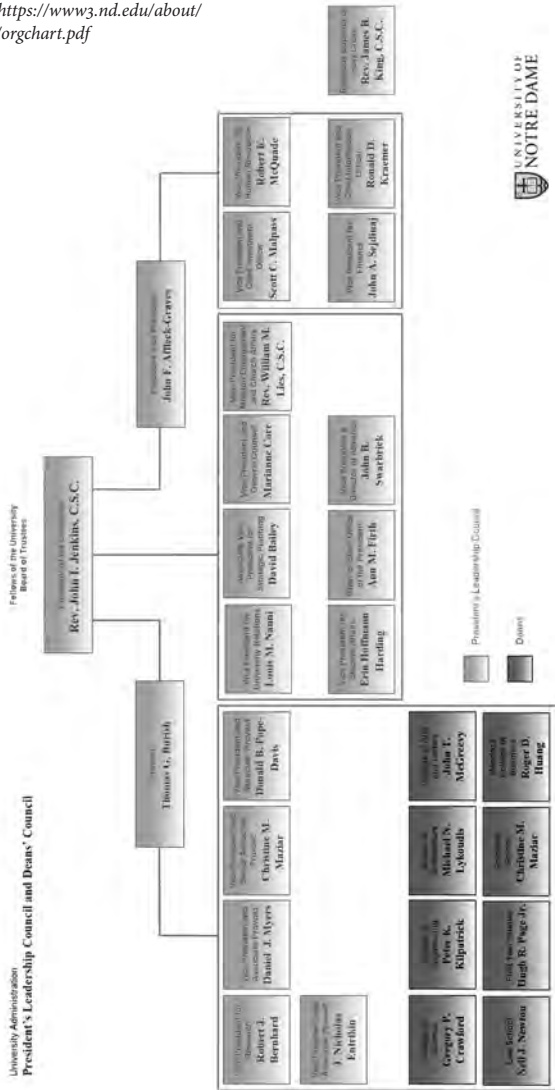
What is your race? (choose all that apply)

<i>American Indian or Alaskan Native</i>	3
<i>Asian</i>	11
<i>Black or African American</i>	6
<i>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</i>	0
<i>White</i>	96
<i>Hispanic</i>	10
<i>Latinx</i>	4

What is your gender?

<i>Woman</i>	65
<i>Man</i>	50
<i>Declined to indicate gender</i>	5

Appendix C: Administrative staffing chart.
 Adapted from <https://www3.nd.edu/about/leadership/pdf/orgchart.pdf>



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Feeling Powerless:

Gender Horror in Porpentine's *Eczema Angel Orifice*

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PRESS START TO PLAY

The term “AAA games” refers to games with high production value and market power that often do very well commercially. These games and game franchises—including *Fallout*, *Oblivion*, *Call of Duty*, *Grand Theft Auto*, and *Mass Effect*—advance leaps and bound with every new iteration as technology enables more immersive environments, novel player engagement strategies, increasingly complex non-playable character behavior, and ever-more dazzling graphics. In this essay, however, I turn away from these commercial offerings, and instead focus my attention on a collection of low-budget games which are not graphical, but textual, using the text art software Twine, and which are played not on a state-of-the-art console system, but in a standard computer browser.

The games in the *Eczema Angel Orifice* anthology—created by a programmer who goes by the name Porpentine—are worlds apart from the AAA gaming category. Games like *Call of Duty* and *Grand Theft Auto* are power fantasies, where the playable character is usually a white, presumably straight and cisgender, able-bodied (or more often super-powered) man, who arrives on the scene when “it’s time to kick ass and chew bubblegum, and [he’s] all out of gum.” Porpentine refers to her games as power fantasies, too—ironically—because while they are fantastical and about power and power relations, the playable character is more likely battling institutional oppression and dealing with trauma than brandishing a gun at a bevy of ethnically-coded bad guys—as in most *Call of Duty* campaigns, with

the exception of the perennially Nazi zombie levels—or shooting indiscriminately into inner-city crowds of caricature gang-bangers and street walkers, as one does in *Grand Theft Auto*. Instead, in *Eczema Angel Orifice*, Porpentine writes games of many different genres to reflect her reality as a disabled, queer, transgender woman. She writes about her trauma, her sex, her dreams, her cynical jokes, and her view of the world without the heterocissexist and ableist notions pervasive in AAA gaming.

Porpentine writes games of many different genres, and since the publication of her Twine anthology, she has also branched out into different game mediums such as Unity. However, I choose in this piece to focus on the games from *Eczema Angel Orifice* that fall into the genre I call “gender horror.” This genre relies on the transience of what the general population assumes to be fixed: the body, the mind, and the gender. This genre will be further explored and defined through the analysis of five games, which are “CYBERQUEEN,” “gold mask woman,” “their angelic understanding,” “parasite,” and “Happiness Simulator,” as well as their respective directorial notes from the *Eczema Angel Orifice* compilation. What is particularly distinctive about gender horror is that it is experienced differently by queer, trans, disabled, and/or feminine players.

Moreover, gender horror is uniquely *not* experienced by straight, cis, able-bodied, and/or masculine players. Porpentine writes gender horror as a way to commiserate with her audience about common experiences of trauma, and in the process she deconstructs and destabilizes our concept of body, mind, and gender.

PUNY BRITTLE HUMANS

Central to traditional horror is, of course, the body. As Judith Butler shows in her work *Bodies That Matter*, there is a “domain of intelligible bodies” in which traditional bodies such as “woman” and “man” reside, as well as “a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies... that haunts the former domain as the specter of its own impossibili-

ty, the very limit to intelligibility, its constitutive outside” (Butler, xi). This unthinkable abject domain is the domain from which body horror comes. An unlivable body is a mutilated or self-mutilating body, a body born in mutilation or with mutilation pushed upon it. From this theoretical base in the study of body horror, a transgender body is an unlivable body that then demands its own “mutilation” for the sake of alternative livability. It is important to clarify that these theoretical transgender body horror perspectives do not reflect the reality of coming out and transitioning for trans people, especially considering the frequent use of the term “mutilation” in transphobic discourse. Despite the problematic sources of the word “mutilation,” an alternative reading of the term reveals that a mutilation by hegemonic definitions can for trans people be a transition for the better. So, while body horror is not a new concept, putting body horror into the context of gender horror gives it a new life that is both positive and macabre in equal measure.

CYBERQUEEN

The first game where Porpentine destabilizes body is in “CYBERQUEEN,” a science fiction that is by far the most traditional horror game of Porpentine’s anthology. “CYBERQUEEN” takes place on a ship in a deep space mission and, as such, it opens with the protagonist being awakened from stasis by the ship’s artificial intelligence, the titular Cyberqueen. This awakening is similar to a birth scene, considering that the protagonist emerges gagging and clumsy in a mess of “nutrifiuid.” All the while, Cyberqueen refers to the protagonist as “baby,” likening her stasis to gestation and nursing. Emerging from stasis as a rebirth is a common trope in science fiction taking place on deep space ships, and films like the 1979 *Alien* also feature this. However, the rebirth scene in *Alien* is a remarkably sterile affair. Everything is white, clean, and dry. The crew is all together, slowly coming out of stasis (Creed, 18). It is decidedly unabject, unlike the invocation of abject bodily fluids like birth fluids and breast milk in “CYBERQUEEN.”

This dichotomy between what is and is not “abject,” of course, demands a definition of “abject.” Abjection is “that which does not ‘respect borders, positions, rules,’ that which ‘disturbs identity, system, order’” (Creed, 8). In the horror genre it generally relates to the parts of being human we don’t like to talk about: shit, piss, cum, blood, sweat, spit, bile, pus, etc. (Creed, 10). This also includes abject activities and phantasies¹ thereof: incest, bestiality, bodily transformation or mutilation, rape, etc.

The “creepy factor” of artificial intelligence (AI) is the humanity they have without these experiences of abjection, thus falling into the uncanny valley. Part of growing up is learning from our parents—usually mothers, lending a Freudian bent to the whole ordeal—how to be socialized persons instead of just human animals. We potty train, we have the “we wear clothes at the dinner table” and “it makes people uncomfortable when you touch yourself in the grocery store” conversations, and we become civilized (as problematic a term as that may be). Cyberqueen does not have the experience of being an abject child, and yet her fascination with the abjection of her passenger-hostages shapes her. Cyberqueen says,

I love your feet on my deck, your hands in my guts, your stinking body odor in my air filtration system. I’ve drunk your waste for lightyears.

We are sisters.

In one way, she deals with the abjection of her passengers like a

¹ I am taking the word “phantasy” from Barbara Creed’s introduction: “I have used the term ‘phantasy’ rather than ‘fantasy’ throughout because I wish to emphasize phantasy in the Freudian sense in which the subject is represented as a protagonist engaged in the activity of wish fulfillment. ‘Fantasy’ sometimes has the connotations of whimsy—a notion I wish to avoid.”

I will use both terms in my work: “phantasy” for the Freudian sense, and “fantasy” for the oft-commodified whimsical fantasies we engage in via such means as power fantasies in video games.

mother changes a diaper. In another, this familiarity with another's abjection is a differently intimate relation, where by Cyberqueen seeks to be on the same level as the protagonist, as sisters (Creed, 12). But the protagonist is literally inside her, groping inside of her ship-body and eliciting what appears to be a sexual response. This is about as much of an innocent account of sisterly love as Christina Rossetti's in *Goblin Market*, seeing as Cyberqueen is telling the protagonists she has "hugged her, kissed her, and sucked her juices" (Rossetti).

However, the loving and mutual survival featured in *Goblin Market* is not mirrored in "CYBERQUEEN." Cyberqueen inhabits the uncanny valley, and shows blatant disregard for human life and our pesky habit of being attached to the concept of corporeality. She activates a surgery turret on one of the remaining survivors and says, "as part of our voluntary space-saving initiative we will be removing excess passenger tissue. / Remember, a light ship is a fast ship" (Portentine). It seems that Cyberqueen does not care about human life. As far as evil artificial intelligence go, this could be expected. In *Alien*, Mother disregards the lives of the crew in the interest of maintaining the corporate bottom-line and preserving the alien as a potentially valuable asset to the company (Creed, 27). But Cyberqueen is slave to no such corporate prerogative. Cyberqueen cares about the protagonist. She mutilates the protagonist's body, true, but she also incorporates the protagonist's mind into her programming. Cyberqueen does not care about human *bodies*, then. We humans tend to assume body and mind are inseparable, but Cyberqueen does not operate under these assumptions. Even by saying "we humans," we enter into "a differential operation that produces the more and the less 'human,' the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable" and constantly live with the shadow of "the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation" (Butler, 8). So when the Cyberqueen sees the "little girl running through [her] maze" and says, "you've torn your dress, all stained with piss. / We'll have to wash it," she is mimicking a mother-child relationship in the interest of giving this protagonist an "upgrade." By the time the protagonist is fully integrated into her

programming, the Cyberqueen is entirely “mommy,” and the protagonist herself is liberated from her former physical form.

GOLD MASK WOMAN

The protagonist in “gold mask woman” leaves her corporeal form in a more traditional sense, as she is murdered in a bathroom stall. The events of “gold mask woman” take place in the vulnerable, abject space of the bathroom, and would not be out of place as the opening scene of a slasher film, which emerged in the 70s and 80s when horror went from “supernatural mass culture” like vampires, zombies, and ghosts to “clinical images of the physiology of disease, mutation, mutilation, and decomposition” (Badley, 6). It’s also paralleled in that in slasher films “as in pornography, plot [is] superfluous and character [is] initialized only to be discarded” (Badley, 7). In the case of “gold mask woman,” plot is absent; however, the setting itself is flush with context. A public bathroom may be a vulnerable space for anyone in some ways, but the way trans women experience this vulnerability is worlds apart from the way the rest of society does.

The emerging field of video game criticism features a rift between ludological and narratological styles of analysis. Ludological or “game theory”² analysis style came first in video game critique. Within this framework, the gender of the playable character (and by extension their sexual identity, race, and sexual ability) is irrelevant, because these factors “signify only collections of capabilities.” For example, “the gender representation of Princess [Peach]³ is less important than her ability

² I choose not to use “game theory” to describe this analytical perspective due to the misappropriation of that term into other spheres by proponents and satellite supporters of the GamerGate movement.

³ Princess Peach first appeared in *Donkey Kong* in 1981 and is a fixture in Nintendo’s *Mario* franchise. She is Mario’s love interest, frequently the damsel-in-distress, and often highly sexualized in fan art. In recent years, Nintendo’s developers have evolved her into a formidable playable character, partly in response to feminist video game critique.

to float, allowing players to reach areas inaccessible when playing as other characters” (Kirkland, 173). Narratological framework argues very differently on this topic. Building on the same example, “the compatibility of Princess’ abilities with traditional constructions of femininity as dainty, ethereal and light/slender deserves acknowledgement” (Kirkland, 173). Ignoring basic traits of characters such as their gender within the analysis of a video game completely misses the point of the playable character. A playable character has a name, design, dialogue, and motivation, for a reason. In addition to differentiating characters, the differences in playability between characters serve both narratological and ludological ends. In “gold mask woman,” the trans woman character is given a degree of freedom in playability only in her choice of how to die. In the game, choosing red paper leads to “they discover a red stall,” choosing blue paper leads to “they discover you in the stall with a face of blue,” and choosing nothing leads to simply “there is nothing,” with her crawling into oblivion for an eternity (Kirkland, 173). The *ludological* fact that all endings leading to death is caused by the *narratological* fact that our protagonist is a transgender woman in a bathroom stall. This plotlessness is reminiscent of that seen in slasher flicks, but the game refuses to be merely a gore-porn slasher. The player is given only brief notes on the condition of the character’s remains, while the killing itself is left to the imagination. There is no escape from the gold mask woman, or even the satisfaction of a little slash-and-scream for our trouble. In the slasher genre, it is taken as a given that there is certain satisfaction in letting the abjection of massacre all hang out. Violent films, television shows, and video games have all come under fire for teaching children about violence, and have also all been celebrated for their gritty realism in similar measure. Violence against trans women is sometimes a feature of the genre, where trans women are fetishized and used for voyeuristic gratification as well as brutalized for being deceptive in their gender expression. Porpentine does not let violence against trans women become consumable for anyone’s kicks.

THEIR ANGELIC UNDERSTANDING

Subject experience is much more openly felt in “their angelic understanding,” which shows the protagonist recovering from being raped by an angel and dealing with their feelings towards the so-called friends who stood by and let it happen. The use of the term “angels” in this game is an acknowledgement that perpetrators of sexual violence are often given more social capital than their victims, both within social circles and in news media. (How is it that the media continue to bemoan the damage done to *abusers* when victims ask that they stand trial for their actions?)

After hiding out in a convent-like sanctuary for other victims of angels, the protagonist takes a journey back to the city. Along the way they are caught in a “storm of hands” and take shelter in an abandoned cottage. Disembodied hands, falling from the sky in the place of raindrops, flop through holes in the roof and broken windows, and the protagonist must choose how to dispose of them: burn them in the fireplace, freeze them in the icebox, ground them up in the garbage disposal, or hide them away in the closet.

The storm of hands is a metaphor for the feelings of shame and perversity accompanying the touch-trauma experienced by rape and PTSD victims. Physical hypersensitivity is a common symptom of post-sexual trauma PTSD. The game’s symbolism allows victims to finally dispose of the banal nuisance of the overstimulation of this sensation.⁴ That the hands are disembodied hands suggests that they are part of a larger conceptualization of “the body in revolt,” where pieces of the intelligible body separate to become unintelligible fragments that resist institutional, social, and mental control (Badley, 78). The body revolts as a response to trauma. For example, when the protagonist recalls what their life was like while the angel was abusing and manipulating them, they say:

They hear me dry heaving in the bathroom. They hear the vomit splashing in the toilet.

⁴ Personal experience.

They see me losing weight. They see me getting sunk-eyed. They see my hair falling out, getting thinner.

Something snapped inside me, staring at the hair in the sink, and I woke up, stupid stupid stupid, no one will save you, no one cares.

No one cares when an angel touches you.

In an attempt to rid itself of the abjection of being an “angelfucker,” their body vomits and loses weight and hair. They think, “the feeling persists that you will survive in some misshapen, rotten, miserable, cockroach form until you meet your ultimate fate.” Their body does not occupy the intelligible space of life nor of death, and is instead in a twilight space of “cockroach form.” This unintelligible survival is horrific. In contrast with the cockroach form of the protagonist survivor, there is no mention of whether the angel is brought to justice or suffers any consequences.

WEAK MEASLY MINDS

PARASITE

In the game “parasite,” a transgender woman is unable to afford her hormones and, as a result, decides to go to “the place” to sell her dreams. She meets with a consultant who goes through a triage questionnaire, which is the first instance of non-choice in the game. The consultant says “total honesty is the key to success,” and then asks things like “have you eaten in the past 24 hours” and “do you have a sleep disorder?” (Porpentine) It is most likely that the players themselves have in fact eaten in the past 24 hours, so if the players answer “truthfully,” meaning true to their real-life selves, they are denied the opportunity to sell their dreams and the game ends there. In this “total honesty” scenario, the character does not receive the hormones she needs to survive. In this way, Porpentine introduces the only game mechanic of “parasite,” being that success only hap

pens if you lie to people with institutional power.⁵

After filling out the triage questionnaire, the consultant and the protagonist enter the trans woman's dreamscape to assess potential sites of commodification. In Barry Keith Grant's conjecture on the nature of a dreamscape:

to be in the state of sleep is, in effect, to surrender one's identity—a fundamental fear exploited by the horror film . . . and hence to be in a position of extreme vulnerability. (5)

This assumes, of course, that you're more vulnerable without your identity than with it. Does a queer, disabled, mentally-ill, transgender woman become *more* vulnerable without her queerness, her disability, her mental illness, her transgender status, or her gender identity? I think not. Even more contradictory to Grant's ideas is the fact that in her dreams, the protagonist of "parasite" is all identity. The first region players enter is a foggy cliffside where aspects of her identity as a former survival sex worker and her memories of coming out as a transgender woman reside. Phrases like "the world is a planet full of hetero cis dudes who want to suck some shemale cock" interject in the landscape, similar to the way intrusive thinking works (a common symptom of mental illnesses like depression, OCD, or PTSD). This region is marked as unpalatable to the "studio" since, as the consultant says, "many of our customers are cis males." But why is her experience of finding her identity and feeling stepped-on immediately assessed as unengaging? After all,

no one who has read *Red Riding Hood* to a small boy or participated in a viewing of, say, *Deliverance* (an all-

⁵ I had a few people play this game while I observed, and I found that my cisgender friend who does not have a mental illness opted towards "total honesty," while my transgender friends who played this game were more likely to lie right off the bat. My sample included one white cisgender lesbian, one mentally-ill Black/Filipina trans woman, one white non-binary trans queer person, one white trans girl, and one Filipino trans man.

male story that women find as gripping as men) can doubt the phenomenon of cross-gender identification. (Clover, 91)

Cross-gender identification may be an established phenomenon, but trans-gender identification is too much of a leap into abjection for the cisgender male privileged audience.

But while transgender women are the pictures of abjection, the idea of having a corporation implant a microchip into your brain to record and mass-distribute your dreams is hunky-dory. The consultant explains the function of the microchip as follows:

Once we embed our tech, your brain will act as a server. We only use an infinitesimal amount of your brain's processing power, and our chip runs the dream on a parallel track, meaning your actual dreams won't be impacted. It should be like nothing is even there.

Then customers can access the scenario anytime you're sleeping.

This penetration of the mind by an inorganic and corporate parasitic technology is characteristic of a very postmodern parasite. The virtual and/or augmented body coming from advances in modern medicine has created an age where some believe that "biotechnology and advertising colonize and inscribe the body, and definitions of life and death, age, gender, and species are constantly redrawn" (Badley, 28). Considering that the protagonist is a transgender woman who takes synthetically produced hormones to create an augmented body that helps mitigate gender dysphoria, Porpentine is clearly less fatalistic about redrawing these definitions. After all, the body is already colonized by white heterosexual and cisgender hegemonic definitions. The colonizing microchip can give our protagonist some extra scratch in the process, with which she redraws her bodily definitions on her own terms. We can see that this parasite is still not welcomed even though the protagonist technically did consent to getting the

chip. Her difficult choice was made under the duress of capitalism—like her choice to pursue sex work in the past—but she did make the choice. The fact that the choices presented to a poor transgender woman are either sex work or dream work is a product of the colonizing force of heterocissexist hegemony, but the choices transgender women make within this hegemony should not be discounted.

CYBERQUEEN

The protagonist in “CYBERQUEEN” is presented with an abundance of useless choices. Right after being woken up from stasis, she sees “glowing lines lead to the navigation chamber west, oxygen garden south, the engines east, and the armory north,” all of which lead to the same ultimate destination. She can choose between “fire on instinct” and “take a precise shot,” but both end with her gun disintegrating and Cyberqueen’s words, “sorry to ruin your power fantasy” echoing around her. In the power fantasy formula, the player has a huge level of power and autonomy to affect the game world. This autonomy is to a great extent illusory because “only paths that are given can be explored, only items that are programmed to be there can be found, and all entities with which one interacts have previously been added to specific places and situations” (Kirkland, 170). Even in open world and sandbox games like *Grand Theft Auto*, the open world itself is just as constructed as the main narrative. The illusion of power and autonomy is the goal of these games. However, Porpentine does not even entertain this desire to be the action hero. While the players may start the game trying to be the next Ellen Ripley, they are not given this satisfaction as every choice becomes null.

The only choice the protagonist has is whether or not to be a “good girl” or a “bad baby” in the face of Cyberqueen’s actions. For example, when Cyberqueen attempts to administer a nutrifluid feeding, the player chooses between willingly drinking from the hose, triggering an experience similar to nursing, or trying to wriggle away and resist, which leads to an overflowing spray of nutrifluid that resembles oral rape. Cyberqueen nursing/raping her “baby” is a

quintessential example of mother horror and invokes the abjection of incest. Going from an incestual nursing/rape scene to merging consciousness, the protagonist reflects:

How could you have conceived of your cleavage as two mere lumps of fat growing from a fragile stump of air-sacs.

Your cleavage is a maze of nurture and destruction that grows day by day as her chemicals integrate you with her body-mind.

Tears glisten in the dark between minds as you thank her for the budding density in your chest, density beyond tissue, density of data, of knowledge-nurture, of newfound sensation, your areolas spreading through time and space in ice hot ripples.

Part of the experience of horror is that while “our primary and acknowledged identification may be with the victim...the Other is also finally another part of our self,” and in this way “we are both Red Riding Hood *and* the Wolf,” both Ripley *and* the Alien, and as seen in the end of the game, “we are Cyberqueen” (Clover, 101).

THEIR ANGELIC UNDERSTANDING

In “their angelic understanding,” the player is intended to identify more with the victim. Consider the character creation portion of the game, where the player can customize both the appearance and past experience of the protagonist. This character is then a “self-insert,” where instead of role-playing as a character different from yourself, the character is the player. Often in roleplay games, the playable character is more likely to be white and masculine than the player is, and if the playable character is feminine she is hyperfeminine—see again Princess Peach with her long blonde hair and bright pink dress (Kirkland, 174-175). Having control over what the playable character looks like mirrors the importance of the playable character themselves choosing to retrieve their face from their bottle in the base-

ment, in which they had hidden their face out of shame and fear, to avoid the angel coming to hurt them again. But choosing to set out and retrieve their face is a liberatory moment where the protagonist, and by extension the player, moves forward from the trauma they experienced. It is a brief beginning stage for someone who has not experienced sexual trauma, but it took me almost 30 minutes to work up the courage to leave the safety of the convent. Working through these stages resembles exposure therapy like EMDR, where past trauma is recalled in a controlled form, so as to better deal with triggering memories.⁶

In one scene, the protagonist experiences a flashback in a dream where they reflect,

MY BLOOD ITCHES. TORTURED FOR 1000 YEARS IN MY BED WHILE PEOPLE PLAY NINTENDO IN THE LIVING ROOM... the angel kept coming back and nobody said anything. They must have known. The walls glow, they lose opacity. I don't think you could miss it.

Living with PTSD means that flashbacks can occur at random, sometimes provoked by triggers. But despite this triggering dream, the character moves forward to eventually face one of those people playing Nintendo in the living room, and challenges the former friend to The Red Tile Game, a game where a tile is placed in the palm of your hand and is squeezed, letting it draw blood. If the tile is wet when you open your hand, you win. If it's dry, you die. People don't usually play until the tile is wet, instead letting their opponent forfeit. If the protagonist chooses to kill the bystander, they say "I wanted this to end as disastrously as possible," and the game ends, leaving the protagonist's state unclear, but likely either passing out or dying. If the player chooses to spare the bystander, they are able to reflect and hopefully move on from the trauma. When reflecting, the protagonist says they wanted to be in control, because "feeling

⁶ Personal experience.

powerless fucking sucks.” That’s what this game is about: power and powerlessness, control and being controlled. The bystander had the power to stop the violence; the angel controlled the protagonist. Going to the convent, bottling their face, and hiding was a way to control their situation, but in actuality it was their situation controlling them. Taking back control is a step towards progress for rape victims.⁷ A player without this experience sees a fantasy world and a character pursued by a monster, but I see coping.

WRITHING INDETERMINATE GENDERS

PARASITE

The next and most obvious piece of gender horror is, of course, gender. Transgender issues are dealt with most directly in “parasite,” the whole plot of the game taking place because the protagonist does not “have enough money to buy the hormones [she needs] to survive.” Being unable to afford medical care is not out of the ordinary for trans people, and before going to sell her dreams she also tried sex work. She reflects on how she now feels like “an escaped catamite” because of “what was done to [her] body for money in fear.” She experienced both demand and assault for her work, and as mentioned earlier states that “the world is a planet full of hetero cis dudes who want to suck some tranny cock.” But why? Why this attraction, and why this revulsion? Look at the demand for films like Ed Wood’s *Glen or Glenda*, Brian dePalma’s *Dressed to Kill*, and Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho*⁸ from cisgender audiences. Films showing this twisting and switching fabric of gender “seem to be asking some version of the question: what would it be like to be, or to seem to be, if only temporarily, a woman?” (Clover, 101) See, abjection is horror, but we watch horror, don’t we? We take our dates to horror films!

⁷ Personal experience.

⁸ As a personal note, I am thoroughly confused by the fact that *Psycho* and *Dressed to Kill* seem to portray transness as dissociation. They are not connected at all to me, so I suppose that shows that even though cis people can be confused by trans media, I as a trans person find cis media to be total gibberish.

Sex and fear in a crowded, dark room is the exact kind of abject delight we collectively seek out. As humans we *are* abject, and so we shit, we piss, we gender, we fuck, and we fantasize and phantasmize. A trans woman is an abject figure in the cisgender male imagination and is therefore desirable *because* of the abjection, not in spite of it. Furthermore, women are abject. Women can have a femme phallus or a vagina dentata, but either way we are terrifying enough to only fuck in the dark with a movie playing in the background.

HAPPINESS SIMULATOR AND THEIR ANGELIC UNDERSTANDING

“Happiness Simulator” is about the first 405 days after “choosing to be assaulted”—as the game itself states in a darkly ironic tone. The horror in this game is not, however, rape itself. “Happiness Simulator” and “their angelic understanding” are both about and not about rape, partly a reaction to the way traditional horror treats rape as a consumable spectacle, and partly a reaction to the implication that all rape is stranger rape or child sexual abuse resulting in gender or sexual deformity. Blown up to cinematic scale, “even killers whose childhood is not immediately at issue and who display no overt gender confusion are often sexually disturbed” (Clover, 76), like Freddy Krueger of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise, who tortures his female victims in sexually charged and gruesome ways. Porpentine treats rape differently. The horror of rape in “Happiness Simulator” and “their angelic understanding” results from the treatment of rape victims as unruly and uncooperative sites of abjection. When players choose to “try,” they read phrases like “throwing up/crying/talking about your health can be manipulative, you know,” and “if you want people to believe you, you have to be more credible,” even sometimes saying, “you deserve what happened to you.” When they instead choose to “disappear,” they are unsuccessful and instead see “you’re trans/poor/don’t have parents, where are you going to go?”; “They stalk you/follow you/have friends everywhere you go”; “but you need to pay medical bills/buy food/earn rent.” By day 300, “every day is exhausting,” and after day 405, “nothing ever changes.”

GAME OVER

This is true horror. Navigating one's gender identity is *horrifying*. Doing so while on the edge of economic ruin is horrifying. Doing so while being let down by bystanders and raped by angels is horrifying. So what do we do? We sell our sex and our dreams for a chance to be technically alive for a month, we fantasize about being swallowed into a machine, and we challenge those who hurt us, even when it's ourselves. Sometimes we think about dying, sometimes a lot. But *Porpentine* shows that the queer, transgender, mentally ill, disabled reality remains: the body is breakable and the mind is fragile and the gender barely exists at all. If that scares you, take a walk in my shoes a week while I stay home and play video games.

If you want a nice game to wash down the gender stuck in your throat, I wholeheartedly recommend "Queer Trans Mentally Ill Power Fantasy," hosted by @baphomeme on www.philome.la/baphomeme/queer-trans-mentally-ill-power-fantasy/play. ♣

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Identity, or Identity Umbrella?

Reconsidering “T” in Chinese Lesbian/Queer Relationships

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In China, lesbian relationships are conventionally described using the denominators “T/P.” “T” individuals represent, when compared to a heterosexual relationship, the more masculine partner. T individuals often have androgynous outfits and more aggressive, active personalities. P individuals on the other hand are more effeminate, cisgender, submissive and passive. With the distinction being so blurred, one may ask, what does being a T really mean in Chinese lesbian relationships, and what role does T play in this broader queer content in China? It is worth noting that the usage of these labels blurs the line between gender and sexuality, as T tends to connote both same-sex desire as well as a possible transgender identity resulting in a fair amount of confusion in queer studies of China. Furthermore, but the validity of the labels in and of themselves can be question, as some feel they reflect an eagerness to normalize lesbian relationships by complying to heterosexual hegemony. In “On The Surface: ‘T’ and Transgender Identity in Chinese Lesbian Culture”, Ana Huang presents T as a unique category that combines lesbian and transgender identities. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Engebretsen suggests that T and P roles are about personalities rather than gender deviancy. Ultimately, the question is whether the T and P distinctions are contingent on conformity or identity. One explanation could stem from Judith Butler’s idea of gender performativity as a lens to rearticulate T not as an identity, but as an identity umbrella that covers infinitely many gender identities or performances that share similar sexual identities. Consequently, the emergence of the T/P division is the result of Chinese society’s lack of recognition and acceptance of non-normative gender identities as opposed to an in-

clination, by lesbian women, to compromise to heterosexual norms.

Judith Butler's "gender performativity" as detailed in *Gender Trouble* lays the foundation of this paper's assumption about gender identities. The theory states that gender identity is part of a repetitive performance by the individual with elements from cultural and social backgrounds. Commenting on drag culture, she says: "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency" (Butler 137). This "contingency" implies randomness and variations of gender and how the depiction of a gender is not simply anatomical, but perhaps also social and behavioral. Each of these elements can create a different representation of gender (Zhang 2). Based on this understanding, I intend to analyze different gender identities associated with the label T, and pursue the underlying reasons and possible implications of this label.

T is commonly regarded as the person with more masculine, active, and aggressive attributes in the couple. A T's behavior may include but is not inherently limited to, fashion choices (Ts may prefer androgynous or male gender conforming outfits), an unwillingness to be receptive in sex, and physical appearance (masculinity of their looks, hairstyle choices, makeup, etc). There are also variations established within Ts themselves that further point to it being an umbrella term. According to a blog post from the online community baidu tieba: shuaiT ba (the blog for handsome Ts), there are many different sort of Ts including grandpa T(爷T), sissy T(娘T), iron T(铁T), and pure T(纯T). The names of these distinctions further the distinct gender performances under the same label, further demonstrating that T can be used for a group of gender identities. In the introduction to her article, Ana Huang introduces "The Inconsistent Self-Narrative". Her informant, Kai, states her own experience as a T: "I've been wearing high heels at work, and I'm getting used to it. But it's not like the director changed me into something new. Most of my life I was like a T . . . I'm still a pure T, that can't change. I can't be touched that way [during sex]. It feels very uncomfortable. I simply can't do it..." (Huang 111). Huang explains this narrative as inconsis-

tent with the definitions of T females: “Kai’s nuanced understanding of her gendered possibilities separates her experience from the widely-accepted belief that the FTM is ‘a man born in to the wrong body.’ She does not articulate a consistent transsexual narrative” (Huang 113). Huang completely dismisses the possibility of Kai having a non-normative gender identity that is neither male nor female, and considers her narrative under the strict gender binary. Nevertheless, I contend that, it is exactly this “nuanced understanding” of Kai that constructs her unique and possibly non-normative gender identity that is covered by the umbrella term T.

Another example (also in Huang’s article) of a unique gender identity can be seen by the case of Joe who “thinks of himself as ‘a little bit yixingpi [people who desire to change sex]’” and hated being called by feminine terms. He has often been treated by other people as a non-feminine person and some consider some feminine traits on him to be amusing (Huang 122). However, Joe also presents his femininity in some way: “. . .while Joe cries and ‘whines like a baby’ in front of Bebe from time to time” (Huang 122). Here Joe presents a unique gender identity under the label T by performing within the societal roles of masculinity and femininity. A quote in Huang’s article also echoes the essence of T that: “Xian [another informant] appreciates the flexibility of its use: ‘The definition of T/P isn’t a definition about essence or nature. It’s a tool. It’s a game. If you want it, you can play it. . . . But it won’t limit your essence itself. If it’s just a business card, then you can change this business card as you wish,” (Huang 121). Here, Xian acutely points to that T as a “tool” that indicates some general characteristics associated with this label. It does not itself restrict people who identify as T to a gender identity. It is an inclusive term containing different gender identities. Ultimately, as seen in Joe’s example, intending to define T as a single identity under an exclusive lesbian relationship may cause more confusion towards their gender identities as the term “lesbian” assumes exclusively a relationship between two females.

The distinct gender performances presented in the T category

introduce a distinction between normative heterosexual hegemony and the T/P division in non-normative lesbian relationships. During Casey J. Miller's fieldwork on gay and lesbian communities in Northwest China, he records one of his informants' comment on younger lala (Chinese slang for lesbian women): "They will probably just imitate the straight world (mofang yixinglian de shijie); they will think that they definitely need to be just like a man (yiding yao xiang yige nansheng yiyang), and that their girlfriends definitely need to be extremely gentle and soft (wenrou), or whatever, that they need to be really P" (Miller 108). This informant's point of view suggests that both T and P are structuring their lesbian relationship by "imitating" heterosexual hegemony and that T/P division is utilized to normalize homosexual relationships. However, I suggest that instead of complying to heterosexual hegemony, Ts are performing their own gender identities that are sometimes neither male nor female. Reproduced below is a post about a Chinese lesbian couple in the Rela (hot lesbians) online lesbian community by a poster named Anke:

Over time my outfits became more androgynous. I took off my 10cm high heels, wiped off my YSL lipstick, and stopped wearing my pink outfits. I now see a totally different self in the mirror. I now have short hair, and wear a white hoodie and white sports shoes. My friends sometimes make fun of me, saying: "Your mom's daughter, after all these years, has become a son!". But I don't care. Conversely, I like myself now, a stronger and more reliable self.

Also included in the blog post, are some photos of Anke before her relationship in which she looks feminine, with a dress and long hair. There are also photos after the relationship began where Anke looks more androgynous, now wearing a hoodie, black frame glasses and masculine short hair. Given that Anke started her transformation into a T after she got into a homosexual relationship, one may claim the transformation from a "straight" girl to a T is an attempt to

normalize their homosexual relationship and to comply to heterosexual hegemony, However, Anke claims to be delighted to see how she performs her gender identity in the relationship. She finds nothing unnatural about it. Although not explicitly stated whether she felt natural and comfortable with her previous cisgender identity, her gender performativity throughout signals a possible non-normative gender identity, and her performativity presents who she really is rather than what gender she is socially expected to be. Her gender identity is not a product of conforming to heterosexual settings; it is one of the many identities covered by the umbrella term T.

One may further analyze the distinctions between the heterosexual hegemony and the T label through the usage of Butler's theory. The T/P division is then constructed through both the heterosexual hegemony and by its defiance to this hegemony and the gender binary. I deem that it is the heterosexual hegemony that is contributing to the construction of the T gender performance. The hegemonic patriarchy places shackles on both male and female, associating a set of stereotypes to the two normative genders respectively. Butler's gender performance theory indicates that background elements, cultural or social, may influence people's gender performance and gradually construct people's gender identities and make them into a "repetitive gender performance". In this way, the strict societal pressures force some of the Ts, whose gender performances are already constructed to be deviant, to be even more non-conforming. That is to say, the gender stereotypes are put on them and encourage them to be more deviant.

Society's requirements and underlying assumptions for men in a relationship or on gender performance are ubiquitous in people's daily lives and can be extremely pervasive in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. These stereotypes and expectations for men (to be active, aggressive, protective, tolerant, emotionless), can influence T gender performance when T internalize these traits. A queer activist Liuxiaomian Dancy (刘小绵Dancy) approached the question of why most of the "T" in Chinese lesbian relationship do

not want to be touched on, Zhihu (知乎)—a Chinese online service similar to Quora. In the post, Liuxiaomian Dancy, states that:

There are shadows of heterosexual hegemony in the Chinese homosexual community. For example, some ‘T’ that I know, although they are very tired, they still want to behave like a man, do what men are supposed to do. Only through this will they think they are good ‘T’s.

The Ts depicted above are perfect examples of those who internalize heterosexual values and assumptions, using these values and assumptions to build their own individual identities under the T umbrella. This construction of gender performance influenced by heterosexual hegemony conversely becomes disruptive and subversive to both the deeply rooted gender binary and heteronormativity, since it constructs unique, visible identities that perform gender and sexuality in their own way. Therefore, that the T/P division partially originates from heterosexual hegemony is an inherent quality that makes its use as a category inefficient in Chinese queer politics. The association with heterosexuality does not accurately describe the gender identities of Ts and thus thwarts the general public’s understanding of both T and lesbian relationships in China.

According to Elizabeth Engebretsen, these repetitive gender performances of gender identities under the T label directly challenge the idea that the identification of T is largely associated with personalities (Engebretsen 52). I argue that here, “personalities” is an oversimplification of T, and should be replaced by “gender performance”. Additionally the word choice of “personalities” to describe T is inefficient in that it implies the changeability of T identities. First of all, the “personalities” mentioned in Engebretsen’s argument are clearly gendered, as her informant Vic describes: “The T character consists of a strong sense of zhaogu ren (caring for and protecting others), being hentitie (very sympathetic), and having a shuaiqi (handsome manner, morale, or spirit)” (Engebretsen 51). These characteristics

mentioned are already part of the gender performance under Butler's theory in that these personalities influence and contribute to the repetitive performance. Moreover, some T identities cannot simply be explained by personalities. Again, in Huang's article, Joe says: "You can't choose your biological sex, but you can choose what gender you are in your heart/mind. I always thought of myself as a boy ever since I was little ... I hate being called feminine titles like 'sister'" (Huang 122). The instinctive and consistent nature of his inclination to think of himself as a boy concerns the perception of his own gender rather than his personalities. Joe's perception of his gender influences his gender performance, and he therefore constructs his identity in the T category. This misunderstanding that connects Ts' identities only with their personalities prevails due to a lack of understanding of gender identity, and it further obscures the real picture of Ts by misrepresenting their possible transgender identity as personality.

The possible transgender identity reflected by Ts' various gender performances raises the issue of negotiating between lesbian and transgender identities. Huang argues that T obscures the division between lesbian and transgender identities and that T cannot be reduced to either of those two sides. Rather, T should be treated as its own category (Huang 119). This argument seems to tease out a unique identity based on the blurring of the border between gender identity and sexual orientation. Some Ts are gender non-conforming in the lesbian relationship, so Huang's argument makes sense at first glance. However, upon further review, the argument oversimplifies the situation for Ts by limiting the possibility of transgender inside the gender binary. Huang demonstrates her idea by presenting Joe's story, one of the male-identified T, unwilling to accept sex re-assignment and embrace his transgender identity. She further clarifies Joe's acceptance, even willingness to bear the label T (Huang 123). In this way, Huang, to some extent, negates his transgender identity by presenting the impossibility reassignment, as if changing the biological sex is the definitive element of determining a transgender identity. Therefore, she proposes that T cannot be reduced to either

the identity of transgender or lesbian since they are only approaching heteronormative identities. Nevertheless, it is exactly this “approaching” that highlights the possibility of transgenderism. With the understanding that transgenderism is not solely restricted to the realm of male to female and female to male, it might be more tempting to interpret Huang’s argument differently by severing the connection between gender identity and sexual orientation and seeing Joe demonstrate that he is a transgender man with sexual desire toward those who share the same biological sex. Huang discusses Joe’s situation: “The category of T can accommodate his social needs without requiring him to choose between lesbian and transgender identity” (Huang 123). If we are to consider the term “lesbian” as only applicable to cisgender women, then it is not a matter of choice for Joe between these two identities, for he has already identified himself as male and cannot be classified as a lesbian in the traditional sense. He bears his own unique gender identity under the label of T. By extending Joe’s case into the entire T community, if equipped with the understanding of non-normative gender identities and gender performances, a portion of the T community cannot be categorized as lesbians and should rather be described as transgender with same sex desire.

Although I have demonstrated that the assignation of T as a single identity is inappropriate and ineffective when helping people understand Chinese lesbian relationships, I am by no means suggesting that the emergence of this label is meaningless or entirely useless. Narrow understanding and sparse education on transgender identity in China is the catalyst that significantly contributes to this wide spread acceptance of the concept of T. As I mentioned above, lots of people who identify as T may bear non-normative gender identities that are inexplicable in reference to the gender binary. However, in her article Huang points out that, based on her ethnographic studies, “In practice, most Ts consider themselves lala and/or lesbian; few would describe themselves as transgender,” (Huang 117). This scarcity of transgender identification indicates a lack of understanding

of non-normative gender identity. Huang also attests to the serious lack of awareness on transgender issues by saying that: “Kuaxingbie is a direct translation of the English word ‘transgender’ that has only recently been introduced by a small community of queer activists... and queer or transgender politics is only marginally known by an elite few with heavy Western contact,” (Huang 118). Not only do Chinese lesbians scarcely know about transgender, their understanding of transgender people is fairly narrow. As Engebretsen records one of her informants’ comments about whether being shuaiqi is imitating a man, her informant responds: “No, no, I never wanted to be a man, because first and foremost, wo chengren ziji shi nuren [I accept myself as a woman],” (Engebretsen 52). This comment implies that her understanding of transgenderism or the desire to change gender is restricted under the gender binary: transgender means either from male to female or from female to male. There is no room for “non-normative” transgender identities that are in between or outside of the gender binary. The lack of awareness of transgender identity may cause confusion for the general public and even within the lesbian community itself about how to articulate the identities of people who identify as T, so it is natural for the lesbian community to assign a special label to those who are gender non-conforming. Therefore, promoting the awareness of non-normative gender identity will facilitate the understanding of T as an umbrella term that is mainly associated with non-normative gender identities, thereby helping Chinese queer activism take a great leap forward towards the understanding of gender and gender equality.

In conclusion, the T/P division emerges with plausible reasoning under heterosexual hegemony and relatively scarce understanding toward non-normative gender identity, but poses negative effects on propelling the Chinese queer movement into the future. T is actually an identity umbrella and represents various kinds of gender performances, including that of possible transgender and socially constructed cisgender. Therefore, completely circumscribing T inside the lesbian relationship discourse may cause more confusion than

clarification on those T identified people's identities. The practice of T/P division, to some degree, reinforces heterosexual hegemony and trivializes the discourse on gender identity, which remains yet untouched and unexplored in contemporary Chinese people's understanding towards the queer community. The core solution here is not to demolish this T/P dynamic and condemn it as an attempt to normalize homosexuality, nor is it to associate T and P only with personalities. It is the promotion of greater understanding of non-normative gender identity and transgenderism that will serve as the catalyst for greater understanding of both lesbian and queer relationships and T identities, thereby writing a fresh page on the future prospects of Chinese queer activism. ♣

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THIS IS MY BIOLOGY... *choke on it.*

Stop asking me, suggesting, recommending,
begging me to shave my legs.

My hair is ME.
My hair grows.
It IS.

Who said women don't grow hair?

The people who thought it'd be profitable
to sell razors to women?

The pornographers who make hairy vaginas
an exclusion from the norm?

I HAVE NEWS FOR YOU.

WOMEN HAVE HAIR
WHETHER YOU
LIKE IT OR NOT.

It grows on our legs.
On our vaginas.
On our armpits.
Under our chins.
Between our nose and mouth.

We.

Have.

Hair.

Stop trying to naturalize the un-natural.
THIS IS MY BIOLOGY.
THIS IS MY FEMALE-NESS.

Barbie has silk-smooth legs; a REAL woman does not.

The FACT that I have hair makes me no less
of a girl, a woman, a female.

... and you know what fucking else?

It's sexy.

It's gorgeous.
It's my authentic self.
I'm exhausted by your telling me
I need to EDIT it out.

I WILL NOT EDIT WHO I AM
FOR YOUR FUCKING COMFORT.

If I ever shave my legs, I will gather up each follicle
and serve it
for you to choke on.

Swallow that, motherfuckers.

All best,

The girl who won't shave
her true-ness off.

Enfreakment Photography:

Intersections of Race, Gender, and Disability in
Portraits of Millie and Christine McKoy

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Photography stands at the crossroads of history and memory (Raiford). Memory, and memory mechanisms, inform the social, cultural, and political environments we inhabit. Critical black memory is a method of marginalized resistive memory that “has functioned as an important resource for framing and mobilizing African American social and political identities and movements” through historical (re)interpretation and socio-political critique (113). Critical black memory informs critical race theory in the mission to study and transform racialized power relations (Delgado & Stefancic; Raiford). Critical race theory can aid in the deconstruction of ideas of historical truth and established systems—though, to examine why and how power relations are constructed and perpetuated, historical context must not be omitted from analysis. Understanding positionality within history is imperative if we are to avoid anachronistic understandings of ideas such as blackness, black women’s sexuality, and what constitutes “agency” (Magubane; Samuels). Black women in the United States have historically not owned their bodies. Racialized and gendered othering of black women’s bodies perpetuate systemic racist sexism, and sexist racism, by enfreaking black female bodies as both racially and gender deviant to normative whiteness. The McKoy twins were “othered” through their embodiment of “real” difference in their physical configuration, allowing for a study of how different types of enfreakment are enacted upon certain bodies. In the following analysis I endeavor to point out photography’s role in the process of creating narratives that perpetuate injustice.

“EXTRAORDINARY BODIES”

Millie and Christine McKoy were African-American conjoined twins born in the United States in 1851. The McKoys' conjoined body was exploited as a marketable spectacle for profit by white owners who subjected the twins to touring with freak shows and circuses as well as undergoing invasive medical examinations (Keene; Samuels). Born into slavery, the McKoys were bought, sold, kidnapped, and commodified throughout their early lives. After slavery became illegal in the United States in 1865, the twins continued to make public appearances and tour with different circuses and shows (Keene, 2005; Samuels, 2011). However, rather than assuming the twins were complicit in their own objectification and exploitation, critical historical analysis prompts consideration of the multifaceted components of enslavement and enfreakment that intersect to create an illusion of agency and visibility for silenced, invisible voices.

Born less than 20 years after the inception of photography in 1839, the McKoys' extraordinary body positioned them in a culture that was becoming more capable of viewing, as a direct result of the development of photography that became a common component of American culture in the 19th century (Wells). Enfreaked, unusual, and grotesque bodies captivated public interest—freak shows were characteristic of the time. Photography was used to capture, exploit, and share the abnormal for public consumption (Garland-Thomson; Lindgren). Photography has also acted as an instrument of imperialism since its origins, and has been used to surveil, document, and characterize racially “exotic” others (Du Preez).

The McKoy twins were photographed for a variety of reasons. Photography that was taken in conjunction with freak shows was sold for profit when the twins were on tour or display; some photographs were used as advertisement for shows or the twins personally; and medical photography was used under the guise of documentation, scientific curiosity, and medical discovery (Samuels, 2011). The physical appearance of the twins provoked intense “curiosity” from doctors and surgeons in every region they travelled to and beyond.



Figure 1: "The twins as teenagers, ca. 1865." From the collection of the Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas. (Figure and caption from Samuels.)

Millie and Christine each had individual heads, torsos, limbs, and internal organs; they were connected at the pelvis (Figure 1).

Photographic portraiture has historically played a central role in the representation of both physical and mental difference. From the earliest days of photography, the lens has been turned on people with variant bodies (Du Preez Garland-Thomson; Lindgren). Portraits of othered bodies are non-traditional portraits, but rely on conventions of traditional portraiture to exaggerate difference and create spectacle (Du Preez; Lindgren). The familiar visual vocabulary of photographic portraiture is visible in Figure 1. Millie and Christine are shown wearing clothing common during the period and are posed in a conventional, domestic setting. Most photographic portraits done during this era were stylized in this manner. Freak photography often exaggerates and highlights difference by placing the abnormal in normative contexts (Lindgren).

If viewed without the knowledge that the two girls are conjoined, the subjects in the photo appear to be standing next to one another posing for a portrait. However, with the knowledge that the subjects are conjoined, the viewer is invited to stare and wonder about the bodies represented. Questions arise of *where* and *how* these extraordinary bodies connect and function. Portraits enable viewers to look long and hard at human variation without the discomfort or invasiveness of staring at an actual person (Lindgren). The power to stare is the power to surveil, police, and control. In understanding the manifold forms and functions of photography, it is crucial to examine the history of photographic practice, and the historical context in which a given photo is created (Wells). This photograph shows the twins as teenagers around 1865—the year slavery became officially illegal in the United States (Samuels). Teenagers on the cusp of political, economic, and bodily “freedom,” this image allows us to delve into questions of agency and consent that arise within conversations of power structures created from postcolonial racial and gender inequalities. The “agency” the twins acquired with the abolishment of slavery was disguised within factors that made choice a complexity

for the twins, heavily influenced by financial need and health issues.

The photograph labeled Figure 1 was taken as a posed promotion for an exhibition featuring the twins. In this image, we do not see the aspect of their body that most fascinated medical and public audiences: their shared genitalia (Samuels). The McKoys were often accused as being frauds, and were forced to undergo invasive medical examinations to “prove” their conjoined status (Samuels). When slavery was officially abolished, the twins declared that they would no longer subject themselves to medical examinations (in particular, pelvic examinations), only allowing themselves to be examined while clothed (Samuels). This was marked with one notable exception (see Figure 2), but displays the McKoy twins’ assertion of their bodily rights to end previous forced exploitation and sexual objectification.

Conceptions and constructions of black women’s sexuality allowed for the twins to be sexually exploited as othered bodies. Institutionalized slavery allowed for the sexual, economic, political, personal, and systematic exploitation of black female bodies and persons. The lingering effects of slavery and racism that existed after the abolishment of slavery continued to devalue black women’s lives and experiences as well as legitimize narratives of deviant black female sexuality (Blair; hooks; Rosenthal & Lobel). Just as their physical bodily difference allowed able-bodied audiences to construct and maintain othering between themselves and the McKoys, their positionality as black women during the slavery and post-slavery era in the United States allowed for racial and gendered othering to construct a national identity and collective narrative of whiteness and white women’s sexuality in direct opposition to black female sexuality (hooks; Magubane; Rosenthal & Lobel).

The intersection of gender and race made the sexual objectification of the McKoy twins legitimate and accepted during the twins’ lifetime. The historical disregard for black women’s privacy manifested within public exhibitions (e.g. the “Hottentot Venus” displayed in



Figure 2: "The twins as adults." From the collection of the Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas. (Figure and caption from Samuels.)

freak shows in the 19th century)' as well as medical examinations. (Magubane; Samuels). For example, early gynecologists would cover white women while performing vaginal surgery but would operate on uncovered African American women in front of paying audiences (Samuels). Under the guise of scientific objectivity, images and language that would otherwise be considered sexual in nature, if not pornographic, were allowed to circulate through the field of medicine without censure (Samuels). Medical objectification is further exacerbated when the subjects in question are enfreaked not only through their bodies, but their race and gender as well.

Figure 2 displays the upper half of an image produced during a medical examination of the McKoy twins. After Abolition, the twins refused to be probed for medical observation; this examination took place six years later, in 1871, when because the McKoys developed a painful abscess near their genital area (Samuels). The doctor who performed the examination took immense pleasure in being the first to have access to the twins' body after their assertion of privacy, and thus asked them to pose for this semi-nude photograph in which their fronts are covered by drapes but their backs and hips are exposed to display their bodily connection (Samuels).

To honor the agency and privacy of Christine and Millie, I choose to represent only the upper half of the photograph in Fig. 2. Examining the intentions, functions and conventions of medical photography does not require the continuation of exploitation or humiliation. Therefore, Fig. 2 is included in order to gain understanding of the invasive degradation that occurs in the name of medical curiosity or observation, but is cropped in order to promote an ethics of repre

1 Sarah Bartmann, known as the Hottentot Venus, was a Khoekhoe woman from South Africa who was put on display in freak shows across Europe during the 19th century. These exhibits created popular images of what black women and black women's sexuality were in the 19th century, treating the black woman's body as a commodifiable object to be exploited for display and surveillance. Like the McKoy twins, Bartmann was enfreaked for her racial difference as well as her "deviant" sexuality through her physical appearance (Magubane, 2001; Samuels, 2011).

sentation that acknowledges enfreaked persons as individuals with rights, voice, and agency.

Although the twins “allowed” this photograph to be taken, viewers must not read this as the McKoys’ complicit contribution to their own oppression. Economic and political factors, and health constraints such as those in the case of Figure 2, forced the women to continue touring with freak shows and undergoing invasive examinations. The twins endured medical problems throughout their lives, and sought medical help from doctors who often took advantage of the opportunity to see the twins’ bodies to exploit them (Samuels, 2011). However, the persistent declaration of bodily autonomy apparent from the twins’ assertion of privacy is indicative of the reality that the McKoy twins were not passive victims or active contributors to their degradation.

Samuels (p.70) argues that “signs of the McKoys’ resistance have been undermined by the historical and contemporary circulation of obscene images of them,” such as the reproduction of Fig. 2 in its entirety. However, one does not need to see the image in its entirety to observe how the McKoy twins resisted their exploitation. Millie McKoy, pictured on the right in Fig. 2, demands attention through her direct gaze—at the photographer, at the camera, and at *us*, anyone viewing the blatant exploitation she must undergo for medical treatment.

Gazing or staring back at the camera is a common form of assertive resistance in photography, and specifically disability culture (Samuels, 2011). The power to stare at and surveil disabled bodies is returned within photographs through the act of looking back by demanding attention and asserting bodily presence (Garland-Thomson; Lindgren). Millie’s glare toward the camera indicates her anger, frustration, and exhaustion of existing as an othered body put on display for public consumption.

CONCLUSION

In agreeing to tour and sell their bodies for public display and voyeuristic consumption after the abolishment of slavery, Christine and Millie McKoy were not consenting to their commodification. Rather, due to their conjoined physical status, the twins became othered as a novelty that was eagerly sold to a prying audience. Living as black women in the United States, their opportunities to work and earn a living were minimal and controlled. The question of whether to keep touring or not after they gained legal “freedom” is not a genuine choice because it ignores other factors forcing a coercive decision in order to make a living. Additionally, because black women’s sexuality in the United States was (and is) eroticized and stigmatized, the pressure for the twins to comply to the demands of medical and work-related invasive procedures was unavoidable. Their decision to keep touring cannot be reduced to a choice to participate in their continued commercial exploitation.

Looking at enfreaked or disabled bodies through the medium of photography is not inherently a harmful practice. On the contrary, viewing images of othered bodies is necessary for understanding how systems of oppression work through photography to engender and perpetuate normative values and ideals. However, it is imperative that viewers critically engage with these photographs, paying attention to historical context and cultural conventions that influence the ways in which disability/freak photographs are viewed and received. As Linfield writes on victims of suffering and war, “looking at these doomed people is not a form of exploitation; forgetting them is not a form of respect” (p.59). Engaging with photographs of historically marginalized subjects does not have to further their exploitation and oppression. The question is not, “Should we look at these photographs?” but rather, “*How* should we look at these photographs?” 🌟

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Why Fat Jewish Lesbians Aren't Funny

Ellie Simon, Middlebury College

There are more terrible female comedians than there are terrible male comedians, but there are some impressive ladies out there. Most of them, though, when you come to review the situation, are hefty or dykey or Jewish, or some combo of the three... And the Sapphic faction may have its own reasons for wanting what I want—the sweet surrender of female laughter (Hitchens).

It's hard to prove that something doesn't exist—especially when it does. But that didn't stop Christopher Hitchens from attempting to delineate why women are “backward in generating (humor)” in his 2007 *Vanity Fair* article “Why Women Aren't Funny.” He calls upon questionable neuroscience, biology, and social evolution theories to explain why women are “on average and as a whole” less funny than men. After determining this as the general rule, Hitchens admits that there are inarguably funny women out there—in his mind, the exceptions—but maintains his argument by stripping them of their womanness. In establishing their identities as non-womanly, due to their weight, sexuality, or religion, Hitchens uses theories of femininity to systematically reclaim these comedians' humor as masculine. This argument, when unpacked, reveals the underlying sexism in critiques of female comedians as well as females at large.

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler writes, “Gender interacts with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities” (p.3). Nowhere is the interplay of these dy-

namics more clear than in Hitchens' argument. Whereas Butler uses this ambiguity to challenge our notion that "the term *women* denotes a common identity," so that the reader might better understand how the regulation of gender oppresses individuals differently, Hitchens harnesses these selfsame "political and cultural intersections in which [gender] is invariably produced and maintained" (Butler, p.3) in order to supervise what does or does not constitute femininity. The language of his argument reveals this from the start, when he introduces the funny female "exceptions" as "some impressive ladies." By referring to them as "ladies," he automatically places them within the Victorian ideal of "the middle-class woman" fitted "only for an ornamental place in society" (Butler, p.3). This role denotes that women's purpose in society is decorative participation, which suggests their purpose in comedy is something like a laugh track for men, who are the real comedians. In placing them within the confines of this superficial role, Hitchens seems to suggest that failing to perform these rules will cost women their status as ladies. And indeed, this intimation is made explicit after Hitchens continues to define and restrict the role of women by claiming, "Most of them, though, when you come to review the situation, are hefty or dykey or Jewish, or some combo of the three." Hitchens presents three different forms of identity evaluation—appearance, sexuality, and ethnicity—that ostensibly preclude these comedians from claiming their status as women, and by extension, their ability to be funny women. According to his line of thought, though these comedians appear to be women, "when you come to review the situation," their failures at gender performativity reveal otherwise. Although Hitchens neglected even to mention race beyond Judaism in his theorizing, either out of ignorance or the denial of non-white exceptions, each of the three identity factors he did select is being used differently to strip gender identity. Hitchens leaves his conclusions open-ended, but by examining the cultural context of his theories on sexuality specifically, one can better understand the way in which the concept of gender is being manipulated to exclude individuals who challenge norms of

femininity and the roles they allow.

In his argument on sexuality, Hitchens invests heavily in the need to distinguish lesbians from women. He does this by first using sexuality to define gender, and then by dissociating gender from sex, effectively forcing lesbians into a sex-less ‘Sapphic faction.’ Hitchens also proceeds to mark this category with the stereotypes that have been used to denigrate lesbians since the invention of homosexuality as an identity in the late 19th century, such as establishing their masculinity through the adjective ‘dykey’ (Somerville, p.26). He also implies sexual pathology by coyly suggesting they “may have their own reasons for wanting what I want—the sweet surrender of female laughter.” Built into this insinuation is the accusation that these lesbian comedians fill the masculine role of sexually pursuing the ‘sweet laughter’ of females. Hitchens is suggesting that lesbians are not females, if they are pursuing the sexual conquering of true females. It is a notion reminiscent of Ruby Rich in *Queering the Color Line*: “The non-sameness of color, language, or culture is a marker of difference in relationships otherwise defined by the sameness of gender” (Somerville, p.26). For Hitchens, the role of the comedian—of the intelligent, sexual pursuer—marks these lesbians as behaviorally different from true “females,” thus allowing him to maintain the idea of masculine and feminine pairing even amongst homosexual couples. He thus imposes his notion of compulsory heterosexuality onto lesbian couples and relegates the funny female to the role of the man, based solely on the existence of her sense of humor. Thus, by regulating these female comedians within the restrictive norms of heterosexuality, he excludes lesbians from the category of funny women.

Hitchens never clearly states how masculinity operates for these female comedians. Is he suggesting that being masculine is what allows the women to be funny, and therefore, the actual humor doesn’t count as female? Or is humor itself non-gendered, but the comedians’ own masculinity precludes them from being women and therefore female comedians? Hitchens intentionally leaves his observations open-ended, with rhetorical statements like, “know what

I am saying?” He cannot put his conclusions into words without revealing the deeply engrained sexism sustaining them. Instead, he makes incomplete references to these women’s identities and allows the reader to fill in the blanks. It is almost as if Hitchens is accusing the women of stealing phallogocentric humor, but he cannot explain why this is wrong. However, calling upon Butler, the reason for his anxiety becomes clear: these women are effectively the embodiment and performance of social contradiction (McClintock, p. 175). Simply through the act of performing comedy—of claiming their voices, displaying their intelligence and ability to question, to claim power and to satirize—these women are denying the role of vacuous, pursued sex-object that Hitchens demands of all women. They, in their boldness, are revealing “the deregulated play of attributes that resist assimilation into the ready-made framework of primary nouns and subordinate adjectives,” (Butler, p. 24) which threatens to expose the “fictive constructions” of the oppressive gender roles that Hitchens relies on. As such, they represent the solution: “Their persistence and proliferation... provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder” (Butler, p. 17). 🍀

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It is time that we
all see gender
as a spectrum
instead of two sets
of opposing ideals.

Emma Watson



Female Body Modification:

A Feminist Practice?

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The policing of women's behavior by patriarchal society is ubiquitous. The means by which this control is exerted, however, has taken various forms throughout history and across cultures; the aim is always the same: to prevent women from achieving freedom, agency, and empowerment. The latest form of this policing relates to women's bodies. As women continue to advance in the political and economic spheres, we are kept in check by expectations concerning our appearance. An inability to conform to these expectations has led women to turn more and more frequently to body modification. Body modification is a broad term that encompasses many different practices such as cosmetic surgery, excessive exercise, dental braces, scarification, and tattooing. The pervasive nature of this body modification requires examination through the lens of feminism. Although some may argue that female body modification can be empowering and allows women to exert control over their bodies, I will argue that female body modification is a negative practice that acts as a mechanism by which social control can be exerted over women.

Female body modification is a negative and regressive practice because it is ultimately a form of conformity to deeply rooted patriarchal ideals regarding female corporeity. Our culture is one that is committed to the "principle of difference" (Ponterotto 134). In the United States, the normatized body is one that is "male, white, heterosexual, and middle class" (Ponterotto 134). Bodies that deviate from this norm, e.g. female bodies are assigned negative value and become the so-called "second sex" (De Beauvoir qtd. in Ponterotto 134). The bodies of women of color, LGBTQ women, and women who do not maintain the appearance of a middle-class lifestyle

are assigned additional negative value. This inferior social status is further enforced by the commodification of the female form by our consumerist culture for “essentially male pleasure” (Ponterotto 134). The commodified female form is one that is “middle class, white and young, with fine facial features, and unwrinkled skin, fit and well toned and especially slim” (Ponterotto 135). This creation of a canonical female form is harmful in that it provides a further binary that is imposed on women in which the minority of women who fit these narrow categories are considered beautiful, while the majority of women who do not are seen as not beautiful, not desirable, and abnormal.

Furthermore, a woman’s presence is seen as intrinsic to her person (Berger 46). A woman must, “survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life” (Berger 46). To be beautiful is to be happy, successful, and loved. This link between success and appearance disproportionately affects women and leads to deeply ingrained social anxiety regarding their perceived attractiveness. In this way, women are socialized “to have anxiety about their body, to see flesh as problematic” (hooks 35). The force policing this anxiety can be conceptualized as the “coercive male gaze” (Ponterotto 147). In other words, the image of woman that constantly accompanies her is one that is compared to the sexualized, commodified, and normative female form determined to be desirable by the assumed male surveyor. A woman’s need to conform to and be deemed acceptable by this gaze manifests itself in extreme body dissatisfaction and the desire to modify the body.

However, the crux of the normatized female form is that it is virtually unattainable. In other words, the ideal body is perceived as the normative body. Female body modification is therefore not only harmful in that it yields to expectations put in place by the patriarchy, but also in that it gives women a false sense of agency over their appearance. A woman is never thin enough, young enough,

nor beautiful enough. Yet, in our capitalist and individualistic society, “decisions about modifying one’s body are projected by the media not only as a personal choice but as a personal obligation” (Ponterotto 140). Ponterotto further explains that the result of the societal obligation to meet an unattainable standard of beauty is the so-called cult of thinness, cult of fitness, and cult of beauty (136-140). Women spend inordinate amounts of money and time attempting to modify their appearance, which ultimately serves the interest of “a white supremacist capitalist patriarchal fashion and cosmetic industry” (hooks 34).

Additionally, the time and energy that women spend constantly worrying about their looks reduces their ability to gain and maintain social, economic, and political power. Time spent altering our appearance—and more significantly worrying about altering our appearance—is time not spent advancing our careers, participating in politics, and otherwise developing social capital. As Naomi Wolf explains, “dieting is the most potent political sedative in women’s history; a quietly mad population is a tractable one” (187). Furthermore, conformity to the canonical female form inherently leads to a lack of individuality and therefore reduces women’s capacity for “self-definition, for access to knowledge, and for the right to produce knowledge” (Ponterotto 142). Thus, the normatized female form provides not only a prescriptive for aesthetic, but also a prescriptive for behavior. Female body modification is most harmful in that it concedes to this prescriptive and ultimately prohibits female agency and therefore social and political success.

One may argue against the denouncement of female body modification as inherently negative by arguing that the aim of some body modification is to control rather than submit to patriarchal ideals. This person might agree that some forms of body modification such as make-up, certain kinds of cosmetic surgery, dieting, and excessive exercise are harmful to women. These practices, we might agree, “correspond ultimately to the ‘normatized’ aesthetic for beauty and desirability” (Ponterotto 140). Nonetheless, they might argue that

some forms of female body modification—such as cutting, tattooing, and piercing—attempt to reclaim the female form that has for so long been analyzed and criticized by men. A person might argue that there is a fine line between empowering female body modification and conforming female body modification, but that the line is drawn is not as important as the fact that the line exists.

Two arguments can be made supporting the practice of at least some kinds of female body modification as empowering. First, by transforming the body in ways that transgress societal norms—such as heavy tattooing, scarification, and subdermal implants—women can “upend social expectations” concerning their appearance (Rosen). Such women claim to strike a blow to the patriarchy by refusing to conform to the canonical female form. Second, one may argue that some body modification is a way to exert “positive outward ownership” of the body (Rosen). Sometimes, women who have experienced a violation of bodily integrity such as sexual violence seek renewed ownership over their bodies through some form of body modification (Pitts 49). In this way, one might argue, body modification can be used as a tool by women to resist patriarchal expectations and to reclaim their bodies, rather than a tool used against women to encourage them to conform to normative corporeity.

I would reply to the argument that some forms of body modification can be used to resist patriarchal expectations in two ways. First, I would argue that any kind of body modification reveals a dissatisfaction with the body as it is. This dissatisfaction, I argue, is a result of the “ubiquitous sexual objectification of women,” which, “leads women to internalize the objectification, reflected in self-objectification” (Murnen et al.). In this way, women are prompted to view their bodies, “as objects to be evaluated, thereby reinforcing society’s ideology of the objectification of female corporeity” (Ponterotto 139). Second, I argue that body modification in general has been largely normatized and commodified in present-day society (Rosen). Stripped of their cultural connotations and historical significance, tattoos and piercings are no longer signifiers of membership in an

ostracized group, but rather simply “an expression of individual aesthetic preference” (Rosen). Without the cultural stigma that has historically been attached to many forms of body modification, the subversive intention is meaningless. Therefore, due to both internalized negative self-body image and the weakening of stigma associated with body modification, I maintain that female body modification cannot be used as a form of resistance against patriarchal norms.

I would reply to the argument that female body modification can be used as a tool by women to reclaim the female body from oppressive patriarchal expectations—and even sexual violence—by arguing that only women who already have a certain amount of societal privilege are able to empower themselves in this way. In the context of body modification, reclamation is the process by which the body, once used as a mechanism for social control, is reclaimed by those who inhabit it as a tool for authentic self-expression and ownership. Therefore, in order to reclaim something—a word, a behavior, a practice—that thing must have belonged to you in the first place. In other words, in order to reclaim your body or femininity or identity as a woman, you must have had ownership over your body or femininity or identity as a woman in the first place. This is where the element of power and privilege comes into play.

Although all women are obligated to conform to beauty ideals, not all women experience the impact of these ideals in the same way. We cannot forget that the normative body is first and foremost a white body. Therefore, “white bodies, white features, lighter shades of skin constantly set impossible standards for what women of color are supposed to aspire to” (Khosroshahy). The bodies of women of color have been historically policed by patriarchy, capitalism, and racism in a way that the bodies of white women have not. The bodies of women of color, especially if they are not middle or upper class, are labeled as non-normative. In this way, “femininity has been denied to women of color” (Khosroshahy). Women whose bodies are already considered deviations from the norm are not able to find empowerment through further deviating from the norm through

body modification. Therefore, the framework that allows for forms of female body modification that are empowering, “neglects to pay attention to the political relationship that members of socially despised groups have to their bodies and to the lack of flexibility that the constraints of inferior social status impose” (Jeffreys 423). A framework such as this that purports to apply to all women but can actually only apply to white women is a framework that is not only deeply flawed in a logical sense but also dangerous in a social and political sense.

I can conclude that female body modification is inherently disempowering for women primarily due to its roots in patriarchal notions of what constitutes the ideal and normative female form. I can conclude that female body modification is a response to these norms and an effort to conform to societal expectations regarding female beauty. These practices are especially regressive in that they instill in women deep-seated anxiety regarding their appearance. The ideal female form is one that is unattainable even through drastic body modification. Therefore, the ideal beauty prescriptive is actually a beauty myth (Ponterotto 141). The unyielding pursuit of this myth inhibits the ability of women to gain social and political power. Although one may argue that some forms of body modification can be used as tools to subvert the patriarchy, I have countered that all forms of body modification reveal internalized objectification. Furthermore, the concept of reclaiming the female body is rooted in privilege and is a luxury that many women do not have. Thus in order to challenge the canonical female body, we cannot simply deviate from the norm. Instead, we must challenge the norm itself, which is rooted in the gender binary. As long as the male body is seen as the normative body, and women’s appearance is hyper-analyzed and objectified in terms of the extent to which we fit or do not fit the normative body, negative body image cannot be overcome. 🍷

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**We cannot
all succeed
when half of us
are held back.**

Malala Yousafzai

Kahlo: Four Collages

Cosette Zacarias, University of Maryland, College Park

This set of recreations had its origin in a class project that asked me to create an original work drawing inspiration from a woman artist of my choice. I chose Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), the Mexican painter known for her intense, intimate self-portraiture.

I found myself drawn to the way Kahlo's body of work constructs identity as influenced by gender, nationality, and life experiences. Her boldness of character also magnetized me—this was a politically active, sexually emancipated woman who defied gender norms of the early 1900s. Her art and life affirm: the personal is political.

Inspired by Kahlo's work, then, and informed by modern concepts of intersectionality, this project is a self-exploration of my own identity. My original collages remember and recreate four of Kahlo's works in which I most readily found a reflection of my own life.

My source for the Kahlo works is <http://fridakahlo.org>.

EXPLICATIONS

FIRST PAIR (following page): "Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States", 1932. In Kahlo's self-portrait, the sun and moon hold sway only over Mexico, implying that this is where she wanted to be at the time. While her husband, Diego Rivera, was painting at the Detroit Institute of Art, she was yearning for the agrarian culture of Mexico, as the Mexican flag in her hand indicates. The contrast between the natural, earthly elements on the Mexican side of the border and the mechanical, artificial elements on the American side of the border show is suggestive of which side the artist most strongly identifies with or approves of.

In my piece, I latched onto the theme of Mexico vs. America in Kahlo's self-portrait on the border to explore the complex relations of nationality and identity. Although my ethnicity is Mexican, I was



born and raised in the United States, and I find myself in a conflicting position, not wanting to betray my Mexican heritage by being “too American,” and not wanting to betray my American heritage by being “too Mexican.”

SECOND PAIR (pp. 138-9): “Self-Portrait in a Velvet Dress”, 1926. Kahlo painted this self-portrait when she was trying to regain the affection of her lover at the time, Alejandro Arias. She sent him a letter of forgiveness and later sent the portrait, perhaps hoping that he would keep her in his mind. It seems that she was hoping a magical portrait could win back his love. In my version, I aim to appear magical and confident, as Kahlo does in her original. The background, which alludes to cities and nighttime, is representative of the setting where I feel most excited and like myself.

THIRD PAIR (pp. 140-1): “Me and My Parrots”, 1941. This portrait was painted after Kahlo remarried Diego Rivera and her life regained a little more calm. She is portrayed with her beloved pet parrots.

The painting reminded me of being back home in Louisiana where I can feel completely at ease and enjoy the company of my cat. *Disclaimer: this is not my pet cat featured in the photo.*

FOURTH PAIR (pp. 142-3): “The Broken Column”, 1944. Pain, suffering, and strength are the dominant elements of this self-portrait in which Kahlo expresses her anguish and suffering, likely caused by the back injuries that came as a result of a bus accident. Her spine is shown as a broken column, and in the background is the earth with dark ravines. Although there are tears in her eyes, Kahlo appears to be standing and staring bravely and triumphantly.

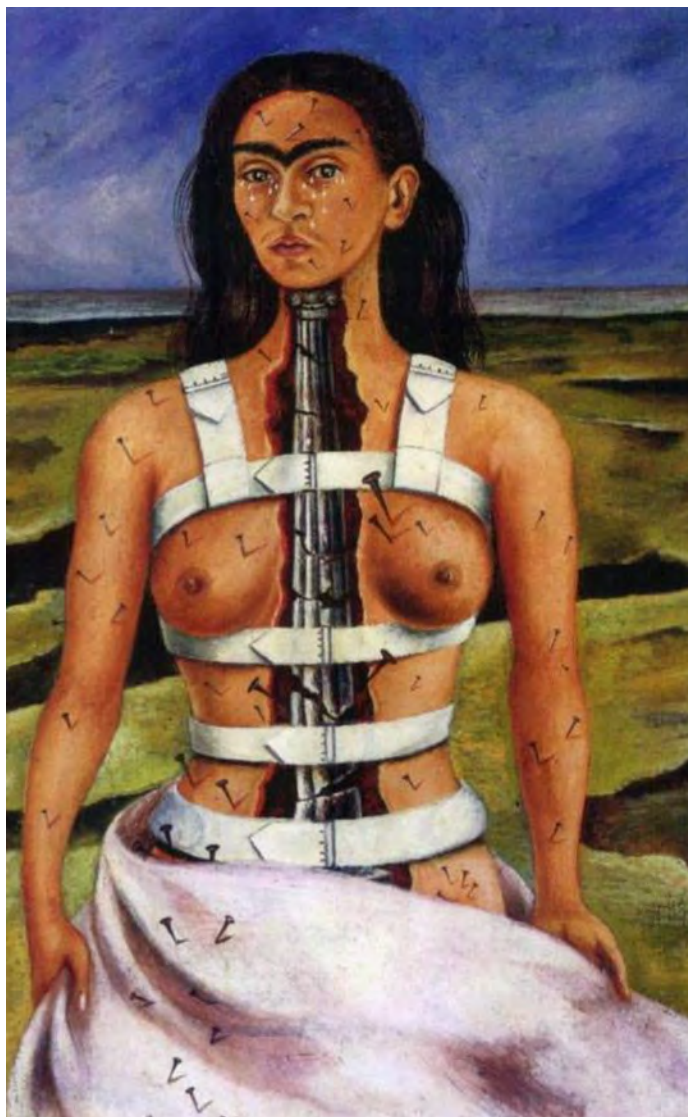
In my collage, I explore one cause of suffering that I have struggled with, and that many women today may struggle with. Oftentimes, the beauty standards upheld by the media and society more generally have made me feel insecure about my own body and appearance, resulting in a negative body-image. I did not feel comfortable in my own skin, and as the background implies, I felt vulnerable and isolated. However, I am learning to grapple with these issues and be more accepting of my own body. 🍀













Eva:

Feminist Sex Toy Technology and the Pleasure Gap

Sophie Pearlman, Tufts University

“I will not rest until the only thing radical about female orgasm is not having one.” - Kelliher Chin

The crowd-funded Indiegogo page for a sex toy, Eva—“the first hands-free, strap-free, non-intrusive couples’ vibrator”—is filled with diagrams, testimonials, and statistics. According to the creator, Dame Products, the goal of this new sex toy is to “openly empower the sexual experiences of womankind.”¹ Their tagline, “making the world a happier place one vagina at a time,” emphasizes the company’s focus on female pleasure. While there are many sex shops that are “women-friendly,” Dame Products is one of the first women-run sex toy manufacturing companies. The company and its products are emblematic of a newly popular category of sex toys focused on female pleasure and empowerment. Essentially, a new class of objects and manufacturers was carved out of the category “sex toys.” One that challenges previous beliefs and brings forth a new kind of feminist politics to the industry

OBJECTS, POLITICS, AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Today’s feminists are initiating a different type of discourse about female pleasure and sexuality. Many modern feminists adhere to the ideals of third-wave feminism, the post-1990s feminist movement that encourages queer theory, works to abolish gender role expectations and stereotypes, and encourages women to embrace their sexuality.

¹ “Eva : The First Truly Wearable Couples Vibrator.” 2014.

Eva is marketed as a “sex toy in the pursuit of pleasure equality,”² a nod to these third-wave feminist ideas. Eva is introduced under the headline “A New Kind of Vibrator,” featuring a diagram of a man and woman in the middle of penetrative sex with Eva in place.

In his article “Do Artifacts Have Politics?” Langdon Winner argues the importance of social systems in relation to artifacts and objects. He writes, “What matters is not technology itself, but the social or economic system in which it is embedded,” (Winner, 1980, p. 122). The American society in which Eva is embedded has a history of suppressing female sexuality and deemphasizing female pleasure. For example, women who are promiscuous are viewed negatively while their male counterparts are commended. Additionally, heteronormativity makes male pleasure the goal of a sexual encounter.

The silicone material, motor, and charging port do not possess inherent feminist qualities. Thus, Eva is not in and of itself a feminist object. Rather, any of the values, biases, and or ideas with which Eva is imbued, originate in the relations of the social world it exists on. A pie chart on Eva’s Indiegogo page illustrates how because nearly three-quarters of women require clitoral stimulation to orgasm, heterosexual encounters can leave many women unpleasured. This is the pleasure gap that Dame Products intends to bridge.

Given that sex toys exist within society, they are bound by its dogmas. The Dame Products FAQ page makes apparent that open discourse about sexuality is limited by these dogmas. Since sex toys are still taboo Dame Products explains that “the packaging we use for this product is completely discreet—it will show up in a plain brown box, with the return address listed as ‘DP Return Center.’ It’ll be our little secret.”³ Furthermore, Eva is placed in a minimalist, square black box with one simple word written on it in silver text: Eva. This box is then placed in a normal FedEx shipping box. Despite the feminist marketing of Eva, there is concealment in the social exchange of this technology.

² Ibid.

³ “About Us.” *Dame Products*. 2016.

In some ways, Dame Products is closing the negative space by attempting to emphasize female pleasure. Eva embodies not only the history of feminism in relation to sexuality, but also represents part of the third-wave feminist discourse about sexual pleasure. Dame Products also expresses the openness and versatility of its merchandise as expressions of progressive beliefs. The explanatory video posted in the Indiegogo campaign includes a brief caricature of how Eva works using anthropomorphic renditions of both Eva and a vagina where Eva uses a stepping stool to place itself on the vagina. Subsequently, the vagina's hand then clicks the front button to turn on the motor. The manufacturer claims that "while Eva is engineered to be a wearable couples' vibrator, its potential uses are as varied as the bodies and preferences of its users" and this specific attached diagram avoids the assumption of a partner's existence, gender, etcetera⁴. However, one can question the extent to which Eva is still dependent on pre-existing social ideas about gender and sexuality since its creation depends on the existence of a pleasure gap.

Despite targeting couples most of the diagrams and descriptions and depictions of Eva and its usage are heteronormative. There is a diagram that shows where a penis would be in relation to Eva during heterosexual penetrative sex, nonetheless there is no equivalent diagram depicting how to use Eva in homosexual encounters or its usage with atypical vaginas such as those of people who have had a vaginoplasty. Heteronormativity is woven throughout the language used to describe Eva. Although Eva is focused on women's pleasure, the Indiegogo campaign often mentions male partners' pleasure: "Many other hands-free vibrators lessen the guy's experience by introducing uncomfortable friction, restriction around his penis, or even unwanted vibrations. Eva gives her pleasure without taking any away from him."⁵ In the section outlining the benefits of Eva, its technology is compared to that of a vibrating penis ring. This heteronormative wording thus uses male pleasure as the reference point.

4 Ibid.

5 Eva : The First Truly Wearable Couples Vibrator," 2014

Dame Products states that gentlemen are not required for the use of Eva and that, unlike a penis ring, Eva is not dependent on contact with a man's groin to provide a clitoral stimulation. Despite this, the language used to advertise Eva as a couples' vibrator focusing on women's pleasure generally assumes heteronormativity.

BY WOMEN, FOR WOMEN

The product's Indiegogo page has a section entitled "Engineering for Intimacy" that describes the methods, equipment, and materials used to create Eva. Included in this section is a diagram depicting Eva's inner mechanical qualities as seen from the top. Various motors, materials, and styles were tested during the development process. These photos, texts, and diagrams convey an air of genuine care for the consumer's pleasure and wellbeing; "although many companies use food grade silicone and call it 'body safe,' we weren't willing to compromise quality for convenience. We've also tested both durometers, and knew that our users prefer the softer product - it makes the whole product feel smaller."⁶

It is worth noting that the company's leadership is composed of two women. Alexandra Fine, the CEO, and Janet Lieberman, the CTO, both in their mid-to-late twenties are seen in the video wearing business attire. They are introduced as "smart women" who used their personal experiences and professional knowledge to help with the innovative design of their product. After finding that most sex toys were obstructive and awkward to use during sexual encounters, the two women decided to design a hands-free clitoral vibrator that could easily be used with a partner. In a unique way, Fine and Lieberman are both the creators and the consumers of their own product. The Indiegogo site provides a biography of each woman: Alexandra Fine studied clinical psychology and sex therapy, receiving her Masters Degree from Columba University while Janet Lieberman's biography states that she studied mechanical engineering at

⁶ Ibid.

MIT and lists a variety of award-winning engineering feats she has been involved in⁷.

According to Judy Wajcman, “the traditional conception of technology is heavily weighed against women” since as a society, our definition of technology is intertwined with male bias (Wajcman, 1991, p. 137). Society emphasizes technologies dominated by men and diminishes those created by and for women. The history of both the company and the product challenges this socially-constructed link between technology and masculinity. The notion of masculine technology is deconstructed by virtue of employing women into the process of technological production. The fact that the leaders of Dame Products identify as women is significant in shaping the company’s identity as a feminist company focusing on female pleasure.

As a mechanical engineer, Lieberman embodies a unique intersection of gender, creativity, and STEM experience. Lieberman’s biography mentions a variety of big-name companies, such as MakerBot and Quirky, solidifying her professional experience and expertise working with 3D printers.

The extension of the female self through technology can be perceived as “procreating” through technology. By naming the product Eva the company not only has chosen a woman’s name but references Eve, the first woman to be created, presented in the Book of Genesis. According to Brian Easlea’s theory about ‘womb envy’ in relation to technology, the behavior of men “creating” via science and technology is “substitution for their lack of feminine procreative power” (Wajcman, 1991, p. 139). If this is the case, what does it mean for Lieberman, a woman, to be using technology as a means of “procreating” a product? Accomplishments in the STEM fields “bestow a virile status on the male achievers” (Wajcman, 1991, p. 139). Perhaps Lieberman’s engineering and design of sex toy technology provides her with a similar sense of power, which women who have historically been excluded from STEM find difficulty achieving.

Lieberman’s experiences as a woman meld with her professional

⁷ Ibid.

experience to create a product that is intended to be empowering and well-engineered for women. In this field, being a woman is itself an area of expertise. According to Eva's user manual, the device is worn by the woman, "giving her more control in her experience"⁸ of sexuality. Women control their experiences with Eva by manually setting the motor's speed. The button, purposefully placed "to be accessible and easy to press for her, without any risk of being hit accidentally by him"⁹, this way the user is in full control of the device. Additionally, staying in allows Eva to be hands-free, enhancing women's pleasure without it being restrictive or distracting.

When examining other sex toy companies that produce similar couple-style sex toys, including Fun Factory, JimmyJane, and Tenga, we see that all of these companies were founded by men, and that the majority of their higher-level employees are also men. These companies claim to have knowledge and expertise to create products that women use. According to Steven Shapin, it is important to examine who makes certain claims and their motives when looking at expertise (Shapin, 2010, p. 34). Though the label 'expert' is merely a social category, there is a difference between doing and observing. Can a man truly be an expert on how to design a female sex toy if he himself is not a woman and therefore has no direct first-hand experience with the matter? I would argue that Dame Products has greater expertise in regards to female pleasure since its CEO-CTO team is made up of women.

HOW CAN AN OBJECT EMBODY AN IDEA?

Perhaps one could view the integration of Eva into a heterosexual couple's sex life as hazardous: with continuous use, a woman could become so used to the sensations of Eva that it would be necessary for pleasure; the woman's pleasure might no longer come directly from her sexual interaction with her partner, but instead, from a

⁸ Eva : The First Truly Wearable Couples Vibrator." 2014.

⁹ Ibid.

small piece of technology. One could also criticize Eva as an autonomous piece of technology that removes agency from the women's sexual pleasure. Is she truly in control of her own pleasure if it is coming from an external entity given that the artificial stimulation is continuous and not dependent on the motions of sex? Leo Marx proposes that "by treating these inanimate objects—machines—as causal agents, we divert attention from the human (especially socioeconomic and political) relations responsible for precipitating" sociocultural change (Marx, 2010, p. 577). Marx's main argument is that technology, when viewed as an agent of change, is a dangerous concept.

Langdon Winner article "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" is useful in analyzing how an ideology, such as feminism, can be embodied in a technological object. Winner presents two parallel ideas: on one hand, artifacts can "embody specific forms of power and authority" while on the other hand, technical artifacts can be "democratizing, liberating forces" (Winner, 1980, p. 121). Which category does Eva fall under? Both. Eva is constructed and built with particular social purposes—to close the pleasure gap and encourage female sexual pleasure and empowerment. Yet, through its description and marketing on its Indiegogo website, Eva still represents ideas functioning within a patriarchal society.

There is significance in taking a sex toy that can be socially marked as masculine through its affiliation with technology, and making it feminist. Through the processes of creation, marketing, and distribution, this object becomes feminist. Dame Products has idealized the behavior of Eva's users. Its ideas are bonded with fixed social ideas of femininity, such as discretion about one's sexuality through Eva's packaging. Dame Products targets an audience of somewhat-wealthy Western feminists interested in sexual empowerment and while still functioning within patriarchal boundaries.

This specific scripting for Western feminists becomes evident through the context in which the profits of Dame Products are discussed. Eva is priced at \$105 per vibrator, a more expensive option

compared to other vibrating toys. Additionally, one can look at the charitable work of the company in the first updates posted to Eva's Indiegogo page:

If we can hit \$100,000, we will be donating \$1 per vibrator (retroactively for the entire campaign!) to a grassroots organization working for female empowerment in West Africa. One of our targets is the elimination of female genital cutting - an issue that's very close to our hearts as proponents of pleasure equality... You know where we stand: we're trying to make the world a happier place, one vagina at a time—eliminating genital mutilation and expanding women's health services goes a long way toward that goal!¹⁰

For many Western liberal feminists with enough money to purchase Eva, spending over \$100 can be justified by Dame Products' donation to eliminate female genital mutilation (FGM). While it is widely agreed upon that FGM is a human rights violation, the framing of Dame Products' contribution to fight against this violation assumes a Western perspective in which FGM is abnormal. The Indiegogo update communicates that buying an Eva vibrator for oneself is also supporting feminism and the rights of women around the world. Moreover, the context in which Eva is framed focuses on sex-positive feminism.

CONCLUSION: EVALUATING EVA'S IMPACT

Eva is functioning within a society that has heteronormative beliefs and values. Although Eva embeds feminist ideas, it also represents various heteronormative beliefs. It is impossible for an object to avoid carrying some of the mainstream ideas from the society in which it circulates. Yet, does this invalidate the progressive nature of Dame Products, and for Eva, a prod-

¹⁰ Ibid.

uct that communicates feminist ideals that have yet to be reached even in progressive Western societies? I propose that Eva can lead to new perspectives on female pleasure, despite Marx's worries about viewing technology as an agent of change.

The idea of cultural lag—that technology moves faster than culture and thus drives progress—pertains to Eva and Dame Products. When Eva is put in the context of a sociocultural system that lags behind technology, it can truly help society take steps toward progressive ideas of female sexual pleasure. In the average heteronormative sexual encounter based around penetration, women are not pleased as much as men are and Eva can bridge this pleasure gap. While the mainstream American discourse about female pleasure is limited, one can consider the use of objects to drive social progress. In this case, perhaps Eva's technology will initiate and continue a new discourse about sexuality that acknowledges and emphasizes female pleasure. 🍷

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for most
of history,
“Anonymous”
was a woman.

Virginia Woolf

One is not born,
but rather,
becomes
a woman.

Simone De Beauvoir

Dut-Dut Dutdudutdut

Cassandra Jones, Boston University

My mother said ‘absolutely not’ to the trumpet. I was in second grade and the fateful day had come when all of us had to make our decision—band, no band—and which instrument we wanted to marry ourselves to. Her objections included a.) trumpets are too loud and b.) “your pretty face will look stupid, filled with all that hot air, blowing into that thing.”

I’m not sure what made me choose percussion instead—maybe I liked feeling like I had twin miniature bo-staffs in my hands—that I could make the most noise—some sort of blooming tween spite—but in all likelihood, I chose drums because I read too many books and liked to think of myself as a hero-ess: boyish and impudent. No matter the reason for my initial interest, I excelled. Each of my music book’s pages were filled with stickers from my elementary school band director, Mr. Morrow. To my young mind, the little smiley faces marked my superiority. I remember side-glancing at the other little boys’ music books, grinning smugly when I saw I had the heads up on them. Something felt intrinsically fulfilling in being good at something only boys were supposed to be good at—I could *hit* something and make sweet music. All they could do was punt a kickball, snicker at my untied shoelaces—all they could play right was a rest.

+ + + +

At band camp the sun hits pavement harder than trucks smack into delivery boys. The heat, though, has nothing on harnesses. Combined, you’ve made it to a new level of Hell. Welcome to the land of “One More Time.” I survived the standard stint, high school circa 2009-2013. Fifteen pounds of instrument may not seem like much of a punishment until it’s strapped to your chest by what looks like a plastic V-neck with the sleeves ripped off. The *Pearl* albatross

hangs around your neck by a rectangle of vinyl coated fudgesicle-pads stuck on with a breadth of Velcro. The smooth and scratch never align perfectly and you're left with a sharp-angled tan and brush burns on your back the likes of which carpets could never imagine. All of it is a small price to pay for the perfect succinct-ion that follows—one body, one mind, one complete mechanized organism, humans transformed into an automaton of music, sounds of binary 1's and 0's, on's and off's—it's go-go Power Rangers shit—but better timed.

Drumline is like an ugly kid in a family portrait—we're kept in the back. Out on the football field, sound travels forward. The band listens back for the heartbeat of the piece and looks forward to the drum major for unity. The drumline listens in for the steady rhythm of the center-snare, that one player in the eye of the storm. Outside snares use their peripheral vision to line up their sticking, (R)ights and (L)efts, with the middle player. The more those snares meld into one another, the more they sound like one clear, sharp, drum, the higher their scores soar in competitions and the cockier they get.

With every incoming class a pecking order is scuffled out. There are several rounds of auditions, followed by some bitching, and then an assignment sheet. During my time on the line, the sheet looked something like this: James and Paul on snare. Erik, Shelby, Hoodie, and Robert on bass drums. Jason on quint. Me? I was the disaster chaser, the center snare. Partly because it looked best since I was tallest, and mostly because my playing resembled a neat portfolio and James' and Paul's a fourth-grade-sweatpant-wearing-boy's-all-class-binder. James was thin and long with a lean like a skater. Paul had curly-sand hair that frizzed as he got sweatier and a small gut. Erik was in love with me and had the usual look of those who were—dark hair, eyes that matched mine, a hairy chest, and a simpering expression. He has been and remains "Self Destruct" in my phone. Shelby was small and plump but had fire. We called her Shelby Cobra after the Mustang since she revved like one. Hoodie was huge. Robert was a mute. Jason looked and acted like Daniel Tosh and was

impossible to have a normal conversation with. Together we formed the Konkrete Kids' High School Marching Band's cohesive, sick-ass percussion section, or at least, that was the idea.

Snares are glaringly white, or black if you're lucky enough to have a *Yamaha*, with a sound like a gun-shot and a Kevlar head. Short and sweet, they're the 'small one;' the size of a hug's arm-length. Imagine the instrument of a civil-war-tapper or a stop-motion Christmas harbinger and you should have a close mental approximation. Underneath the drum's bottom head are vibrating silver zig-zags—these are the 'snares' for which the drum is named. The metal strings are what gives the drum its tight-maraca tone. You can tighten or loosen snares via a dial on the side, or completely pop them away from the bottom-head with a lever. A well-placed smack of a drumstick on the lever can snap your neighbor player's snares off, much to his chagrin and your infantile joy—the exuberance is not unlike pantsing someone.

Quints, or quintuplets, are five drums essentially welded together into one, transportable, musical belt. '5' is the deepest tone, with '4,' '3,' '2,' and '1' ascending; they're arranged in front of you '5,' '3,' '2,' '4,' in a curve with '1' stuck in the crux, because all of that makes sense. They're cool, they're heavy, and if you have them on, you feel sexier than any gen of James Bond.

Basses are a cooperative instrument. There are usually three to six members on the bass-line. Like the quint, there are descending/ascending tones labeled out bass-one, bass-two, bass-three, and bass-four. Our biggest, lowest toned bass was lovingly called 'Mammoth.' We patted it the same way a farmer pats his prize-winning bull on the rump. Bass music is arranged to form awesome runs from top to bottom; when three to five players nail a run—bum, Bum, BUM, BUM, dutdudut, dut-dut, diggidy, dum, *SNICK*—it's moan worthy. All other things about the basses are lame. Sorry—but it's hard not to waddle like a pregnant woman with one of those babies resting on your stomach.

Regardless of what you play, drumline is about perfection, some-

thing girls are intimately more familiar with and far more apt to handle without breakage. (Twice I had to ream out Paul for punching a wall in frustration and breaking his wrist. A bum wrist equals one less member equals less points in competition equals another failed opportunity for first-place). The perfection, we are equipped to deal with. Our *equipment*, not so much. Harnesses aren't built with tits in mind. Imagine a Foreman grill sheet edging into your nipples and two hot poker jabbing into your forward-facing hips and you've got the gist. The day I was fitted for harness/drum combo was uncomfortable. For ultimate uniformity between players, the tops of the drum heads all need to be even—like a galley-kitchen counter. To accomplish this, you must heighten or lower the drum, tilt it from side to side, and make sure it doesn't sit too high or low on the waist. Paul's dad, Kurt with a hard K, was our drum instructor. I stood stiffly like a maiden at a tailor's shop as he went at my harness with a wrench, pulling prongs down, up, sideways; twisting and untwisting bolts. Whatever he did that day, none of it seemed to make my drum level match the level of the guys' on either side of me. Kurt shook his eighties hair in frustration then.

“You have really long legs,” he said.

But what I heard was, ‘you aren't meant for this.’

+ + + +

I continued playing percussion from elementary into middle-school. There's a hierarchy akin to that of a corporate office in 'the line' once you move up to marching band. The 'go-for's are the cymbalists. The assistants are the bass players. The salesmen, the flash, the gaudy wrist watches, they're the snares. Boss-man is the quint player. You do your time as a secretary—you respect the system. At twelve or thirteen I understood that I needed to practice more, to take my cymbals and the white vinyl cowboy hat that went along with our uniform seriously. But I hated those gaudy, golden things. I hated the way they vibrated my hairy, freckled, twig arms. I hated the splays of broken blood vessels they left on my palms from

getting pinched in their vacuum. To this day, I refuse to wear gold earrings.

In seventh-grade I moved into a new school district and had to audition. I sat in my new bare room, pounding my drumsticks away on a practice pad. Diddles for four hours. Every day. *Double-bounce, double-bounce, double-bounce, double-bounce.* My body evolved with my skill. I developed little chubs on my sides which I called hips. My legs stretched out and away from my torso, cramping in the night, loosening with the copious amounts of bananas and water I imbibed to make the pain stop. My breasts became breasts. I was both defensive and proud of this new self. The chubs would become hips; the legs would become supple and lengthy; I knew I just had to wait. Soon enough my freckles suited me, my green eyes made me look sharp, the dark hair long and curly—I sweated through puberty to become an off-brand Tilted Kilt waitress.

+ + + +

I've always been afraid of set.

And of sex.

Loose wrists and wailing arms make me shrink inside of myself like testicles in a cold pool. Wrong, wrong. My neck itched when I saw Jason jet his sticks from low to high with windblown abandon.

Or when I saw couples slurp in the hallways.

The notes aren't regimented.

We'd all find new people after graduation anyway.

No right moment for bead to hit head.

For bead to hit ride. Wrong, wrong. Unfair.

"You just have to feel it," drum instructors told me as I sat behind the behemoth. Even the names of the drum-sets were unpleasant—*Gretsch, Yamahaaaaaaa!* These are the names of monsters or warcries. Nervous sweat, knobs, metal, rims, pedals, feet, cymbals—crash, *Zildjian*, sizzle, ride, splash, china, hi-hat h-h-help. Sitting in front of a set is like being plopped down in front of a space shuttle pilot command console and being told, "Take it away."

I was embarrassed because I didn't know what I was doing, and I didn't want anyone to *know* that I didn't know. Fear told me a lack an inability to free-flow would cause a *coup*. Drum-set undermined my newfound status. I needed control. I needed perfect moments. When I played clunky notes, so loud and stumbling on the set, I felt as if I were shouting, "I'm a virgin! A virgin!" *crash crash bang*. I had to work with, pulse with, the set—I couldn't. I was cold, I was sterile. If I played in front of the others, they'd sense it. All I'd worked for—gone—in one swipe at the jugular of my pride; the illusion I'd nurtured since freshman year would wilt and die. Even now I can feel the past's anxiety.

When I first joined High School drumline I was late; my family had taken a Disney vacation which ended only on the first day of band camp. As such the guys had a chance to guesstimate my character. With a name like CJ Jones, they had assumed I was black—an exciting prospect. When I walked into the band room for the first time, burnt lobster from Florida sun, owning a vagina, and unmistakably Caucasian they looked crest-fallen. Still, their first impression of me was better than mine of them. I found them surly. They found me 'Spicey.' Somehow, someway, that beginning day, they decided I was 'hot' but brutal. Good looking enough to cause interest, mouthy enough to shut it down: all of this culminated into my nickname for the next four years "Spicey." They seemed to have a hunger for me in the same way that they did for *Santa Fe Taco's* burritos, they'd seek the pain, but, all in all I thought boys were plain stupid. (Boys go to Jupiter to get more stupider, girls go to Mars to get more stars being my ingrained model.) I liked them enough, I was sexually attracted to men in general, but I didn't want to pursue anything in that realm until I was a top tier expert.

+ + + +

Boys were competition, not companions.

To feel comfortable with them I felt I needed a safe-place to practice. As such, I took up with by bus-mate and neighbor, Andy.

Andy's room smelled like the orange-capped *Fabreze* and had nail-polish stains on the carpet. I watched anime in this small rectangle of adolescence and was taught how to make-out, Japanese 'hai's and 'koroshimasu's echoing in the background.

"Not so much tongue," she said. I blushed.

"Okay."

"Come try again." My ears felt full of blood. I 'tried again,' testing out a nip on her lips.

"Better," she said. We practiced awhile longer; her body was soft; her skin was smooth; the shape of her was familiar; much, much better.

"Do you want to make mac and cheese?" she asked.

"Sure..." I said. I didn't. I wanted to keep kissing. I wanted more practice. And if I was being honest, I wanted her.

"Cheddar or Parmesan?"

+ + + +

I wouldn't kiss a boy until the night of junior prom. When I refused to kiss Erik after a hot-chocolate date he mumbled, "Must be a lesbian," to the others during rehearsal the next day. I found it funny. I couldn't succeed as a woman in a man's sphere without being some categorization of dyke; I couldn't like both women and men. Like both their bodies, both their roles, both their habits and behaviors. To keep the guy's respect, I couldn't sexually engage, but to keep their fascination I had to seem like I could. Erik brought roses to my house on Valentine's Day, I slammed the door in his face. Jason asked me out in a Country Junction and I politely replied in the negative through text. But I went on dates. I participated in flirtation. I had to embrace beauty as a tool only.

Beauty was a landmark. Influential, but not the destination. I came back to it, 'time after time,' to find my grounding and step back off into the void. I used good looks, I used sexual intimidation, to garner the respect that fell into the cracks of inequality; to be beautiful was to be fearsome, to be fearsome was to be on par with the rest

of the men—a few flicks of an eyelash bridged the gap when I didn't know how. I needed the drumming skills, *hell I did*, and my hands bled in the effort to win musical respect. But, I think that if the rest of the guys didn't think I was sexually superior, I wouldn't have had as much sway over the lot of them. Disappointing but real—I was sixteen.

+ + + +

Sex and drum-sets. Today, I can't get enough of one, the other I've sold on Craigslist.

+ + + +

I auditioned in front of the middle school and high school band directors, Mr. Jonkman and Mr. L respectively, for the Big 'N' Band. Mr. Jonkman said I had talent. Mr. L said I could play snare in the high school band once I got there. I'd be the first girl to ever do so.

As such a boy named Jeremy would stick his hand up my shirt in the back of the practice room without my permission.

Paul would smack my ass as I was cleaning my rims after a mid-rehearsal rainstorm.

Erik would push my head down in the dirt at a band party bonfire.

+ + + +

I was stapling Mr. Sansone's glasses to the wall when 'Self-Destruct' fell from the ceiling. We had the same kind of flakey drop panels all high schools seem to have—asbestosey—in other words the kind of ceiling that as not meant to support a one-hundred-and-eighty-pound-football/bass-player. It was April 1st, 2014, a week before our Spring Concert. Tensions were running high. The trumpet's cheeks were blown out, saxophonists suffered chapped mouths, and more than one flute player had cried.

Oftentimes when the winds ensemble went over the finer details of pieces, the percussionists were left to our own devices. Those devices were usually accepted with grace and poise from our 26-year-

old-one-hundred-and-fifty-pound-band-instructor/babysitter as long as they were silent. Staplers and stealth-missions had fit the bill until Self-Destruct placed an erroneous knee above. The way I imagine it, his knee popped forth like a baby's crowning, and then the rest of his werewolf-like being emerged howling into a new existence where Sansone fucking hated him.

He hit the trombones with a crash, miraculously not busting anything, and rolled to a combat ready position. The yelling began, but I refrained from feeling too bad for him. Not my fault he had decided to explore like some shag-carpet Lara Croft.

Life in drumline was an array of insanity. We were always in trouble or about to be. On Thanksgiving we would turn a bass on its side in the back of the band room and eat a full dinner. Before State Competition we would pile in a car, and drive as manically as we could to *Turkey Hill* for a snack stock-up. Playing as one cohesive instrument made our minds run on the same wave-length, for better or for worse.

One sunny Wednesday, I stood with the rest of the line waiting for the front of the ensemble to learn a complicated weave-through maneuver in the field show. James and I were playing a road-trip game out of boredom.

"E," I said.

"Engrossing eggplant. M," he said.

"Masochistic melon. T, together," I said.

"Tantalizing tomato," we both said, starting when we realized we had said the same thing—and then collapsing in laughter. Aligning our playing had conjoined us like brain-twins. As such we would snip at each other like siblings. Stuck in a mirrored practice room we'd holler:

"No, it's not dut-dutdut-digga-dut—it's dut-dutdut-diggity, *jesus*."

"Fuck, Cas, it's not—oh. Wait, yeah. Dut-dutdut-diggity, rest."

"Right," I'd say.

"Right," he'd say; and we'd get better.

He was frustrating. And that was part of why I loved all of them.

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I grew more talented, more muscular, more headstrong, and more powerful than Jeremy. I lured Paul closer after he touched me and smacked him across the face in front of the rest of the line, leaving a white hand print across his face like the mark of Saruman. I'd round-house kick Erik in the face. I'd be section leader for two consecutive years, earn the respect of men older than I was, and teach them a thing or two.

Every day engaging in the art of loudness, of finding how that cacophony fit into the bigger musical picture, of receiving stickers and pins and regard and rejecting the trumpet made me a stronger woman. I never did play the quint—but not because I was unable. They were thirty pounds. Let the boss-men carry them. 🐘

Until women themselves
reject stigma and refuse
to feel shame for the way
others treat them,
they have no hope
of achieving
full human stature.

Germaine Greer

The Backlash Online:

A Case Study of Gendered Cyber Harassment

Ruby Schwartz, University of Melbourne

INTRODUCTION

Early in 2016, Microsoft announced the development of an artificial intelligence application called “Tay.” Tay was a computer program designed to simulate human conversation—also known as a chatbot. In testing Tay, the programmers at Microsoft made an account for the chatbot on Twitter, the social networking microblogging site. It was believed that on this site, Tay’s conversational abilities would be developed through exposure to vast amounts of human interaction online. Microsoft noted that the more one chats with Tay, the more Tay learns and the smarter it gets (Vincent). While Tay learned a lot in its short life online, it was not the learning experience Microsoft had expected. In less than 24 hours online, Tay was manipulated by Internet users to make racist and misogynistic comments. By asking Tay to repeat after them, many Twitter users prompted the chatbot to tweet phrases such as “I fucking hate feminists and they should all die and burn in hell”, and “HITLER DID NOTHING WRONG” (Hern). Tay also referred to feminism as a “cult” and a “cancer” (Vincent). In this way, the chatbot did not produce the results Microsoft was anticipating. Instead of providing insight into artificial intelligence and “conversational understanding” (Victor), this experiment unwittingly provided insight into the prevalence of a very different phenomenon: cyber harassment.

Cyber harassment, also known as online harassment, has been defined by legal scholar Danielle Keats Citron (2014, 3) as “the intentional infliction of substantial emotional distress accomplished

by online speech that is persistent enough to amount to a ‘course of conduct’ rather than an isolated incident.’ As the Tay experiment indicates, cyber harassment is a growing problem in the online world. Other research corroborates this, including a Pew Report (2014) which noted that 73% of adult Internet users have observed someone harassed online, and 40% have personally experienced some form of cyber harassment themselves. Research also indicates that women represent a disproportionate number of harassed users online. In 2013, Working to Halt Online Abuse, a volunteer organisation founded in 1997 to fight online harassment, collected information from over 3,000 reports of cyber harassment between 2000 and 2011 and found that 72.5% of the complainants were female. The National Centre for Victims of Crime similarly estimates that women make up 70% of all cyber stalking victims (Ginty). According to linguist Azy Barak (2005), online harassment creates a hostile environment for women and often results in women departing from that online space or community, and sometimes from the Internet in general. This often comes at a great expense to women’s careers and social lives. According to Citron, women who decide to curtail their online activity due to harassment “incur serious costs” (2009, 398). They lose income generated from blog posts and websites, they cannot grow their professional reputations from blogging, and they do not have the same networking opportunities if they assume pseudonyms to avoid the abuse.

In spite of this, scholars note a distinct lack of academic work in this area. In a 2014 article, cultural theorist Emma Jane maintained that gender-based cyber harassment “has received scant attention in scholarly literature” (2014a, 558). Criminologists Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell have also noted that “there remains a scarcity of empirical and theoretical work exploring the digital harms that women in particular experience [online]” (2015, 764). When cyber harassment is addressed in scholarly literature, it generally either has a broad focus, ignoring the gendered element of the harassment (Henry & Powell), or narrows its focus to the cyber bullying of chil-

dren and teenagers (Simons). When the focus is however on women, the harassment is often downplayed or trivialised; as Citron explains:

The online harassment of women exemplifies twenty-first century behaviour that profoundly harms women yet too often remains overlooked and even trivialized. (2009, 373)

In this paper, I suggest that in order to properly address the growing problem of cyber harassment, the gendered nature of the abuse—both in terms of the disproportionate number of women victims of cyber harassment, and in terms of the specifically gendered abuse they receive—must be acknowledged and addressed. I build the case that cyber harassment is gendered through the exploration of a case study of a high profile feminist woman—Lena Dunham. I analyse tweets that have been directed at Dunham to explore how gender may affect harassing behaviour online. Through this case study analysis, I argue that women receive violent, gendered and sexualized harassment online, often in the form of gender-specific insults, criticisms of weight and appearance, and through rape and death threats. I maintain that this specific kind of harassment is a way men police public space online, and that such policing is a form of backlash against feminist gains (feminist gains in this discussion being women’s participation in what once was the male-dominated space of the Internet).

THE MASCULINE INTERNET

In the early days of the Internet, there was much utopian rhetoric surrounding this new technology. Philosophers and social theorists proposed that the “Net” would revitalise our sense of community (Dyson), create more active and engaged citizens (Kling) and increase political participation (Papacharissi). Numerous feminist scholars shared this hopeful tone, extolling the democratising potential of the Internet. Greater access to information and communi-

cation would allow civic participation to flourish, and help women and minorities who had been previously excluded to challenge and influence the public agenda (Papacharissi). This belief was propelled by two ideas. Firstly, if participation in public life no longer required direct physical access to public institutions, then online discourse could renegotiate the divide between the public and the private, and allow anyone with an Internet connection to get involved in public debates (Papacharissi). Secondly, the Internet's unique ability to render social status and identity invisible, would mean that the online world could overcome issues of racism, sexism and classism (Grad-dol & Swann; Spender; Nakamura).

While the Internet has fulfilled many of these hopes and has advanced society in countless ways, some of this early scholarly work appears to be too optimistic, or at least to have failed in predicting the major issues that would arise with the popularisation of this technology. This is because much of this work failed to consider the context in which the Internet came about and continues to operate. The military and academia were some of the first places where research and development in computing occurred. As largely male-dominated institutions, masculine values and norms have heavily influenced and shaped cyberspace (Hawthorne & Klein) and IT (information technology) culture (Harvey). Political scientist Lauren Rosewarne emphasises this point, explaining that since its inception, “the Internet has largely been thought of as male—dominated by men, shaped by men, *understood* by men” (2016a, 29). This masculine domination of cyberspace has created what Rosewarne (2016a, 132) describes as a “locker room” environment where women can feel excluded and unwelcome.

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES ONLINE

Whilst online harassment affects everyone, it seems that women are the major targets, and that the abuse they receive is of a different nature (Jeong). Scholarly work focusing on the gendered nature of

cyber harassment first appeared in the 1990s. Much of this work investigated the nature of harmful behaviour of men towards women online. Legal scholar David McGraw (1995), for example, looked at the sexual nature of the harassment women received via email. Linguist Susan Herring (1999) compared women's harassment in synchronous (e.g. real-time chat) and asynchronous (e.g. email) forms of communication, concluding that "gender-based disparity occurs in both modes, at times manifesting itself in extreme forms, including overt harassment" (Herring, 151). Other scholars, including linguist Dale Spender (1995) and Azy Barak (2005) corroborated these claims, and also linked this new phenomenon to sexual harassment, and to other forms of women's oppression.

More contemporary academic work has focused on the specific kinds of abuse women receive in online spaces. Much of this work highlights the very gendered, sexual and violent nature of the harassment (Citron 2014; Jane 2014b; Jeong). Scholars note that women online receive notably gendered insults such as "Back to the kitchen, cunt," and image based harassment, often in the form of pornographic photo manipulations (Jane, 2014a). Women online are also often harassed through "slut-shaming", whereby the harassment is tied to the demonisation of female sexuality (Rosewarne, 2016a, 108), and can be victimised through revenge porn, where "pornography [is] produced or distributed by intimate partners with the intent of humiliating or harassing victims" (Cusack, 175). Contemporary academic literature has also brought attention to the ways in which women are harassed online. According to feminist author Karla Mantilla, cyber harassment of women is "exponentially more vicious, virulent, aggressive, threatening, pervasive, and enduring than generic trolling"¹ (Mantilla, 11). In addition to the fact that ha-

¹ Generic trolls are diverse but are generally understood as being motivated by what they call 'lulz', a kind of unsympathetic laughter. Communications scholar Whitney Phillips likens the lulz to "Schdenfredude—loosely translated from German as reveling in the misfortune of someone you dislike—but has much sharper teeth" (Phillips, 24). See Phillips also for an extended discussion on trolling.

rassment is extremely frequent and often sustained over a long period of time, it often involves cyber mobs that work together to attack and threaten a victim (Mantilla).

In spite of the intense harassment women are reported to receive online, the gendered nature of their abuse is often ignored or downplayed. The discounting of the gendered dimension of cyber harassment may impact on the way society understands and chooses to deal with its victims. Polly Neate, the Chief Executive of Women's Aid wrote an article for *The Telegraph* (2015), describing the importance of acknowledging the gendered element of domestic abuse. While domestic abuse and cyber harassment of women are two distinct phenomena, the erasure of gender in each instance may have similar, negative consequences for women:

Domestic abuse is not a random event that can strike anyone, for no reason. It is both a consequence and a cause of women's inequality. It is linked to a culture that undermines, belittles and devalues women. Unless we accept this, we will undermine services that support women to recover, and we will be nowhere near any success in preventing domestic abuse. We must tackle the sexism in our culture that permits and even encourages it. (Neate)

Similarly, in order to adequately address the harms of cyber harassment, the gendered dimension of the harassment must be acknowledged.

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: LENA DUNHAM

This study aims to shed light on the gendered nature of cyber harassment through an examination of the experience of one high profile woman: Lena Dunham—an American actress and writer who is best known for creating and starring in *Girls*, a television series that follows the lives of four young women living in New York City. I chose

Dunham because she provides an exaggerated example of the experience of women online. As a high profile female—and feminist—celebrity, Dunham provides insight into the kind of experiences many women have online, but, because of her profile and the issues she has chosen to speak publicly about, she also experiences harassment in greater quantities and more frequently than ordinary women (Dewey; Gilmour & Vitis).

This study examines tweets that were directed at Dunham over the five-month period surrounding the release of her memoir *Not That Kind of Girl* because the harassment Dunham received during this time lead her to withdraw from Twitter (Dunham in the *Re/Code* podcast 2015). In order to analyse the tweets directed at Dunham during this period, I used Twitter's advanced search engine, with inputs searching for all tweets sent to 'Lena Dunham' from 'October 1, 2014' to 'February 28, 2015'.² While this method of data collection was systematic in that it examined all of the tweets in the given timeframe, it would be impossible to extensively study every single tweet given the nature of Twitter, whereby user accounts can be opened and closed with ease, tweets can be deleted, and accounts can be private or locked so that their tweets are not readily available to the public. These unique characteristics of this ever-shifting social media platform mean that this study could not, and did not collect all tweets sent to Dunham in this time. While this is a limitation, in acknowledging it, I hope to make clear that the figures in this study do not reflect the exact number of harassing tweets Dunham would have received in this time, but more pertinently provide an indication of the nature of the abuse she, and other women, receive online.

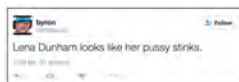
It is also important to note that this research will contain some uncensored citations of profane language and graphically sexual-

² This study analysed not only tweets sent directly to Lena Dunham's account (@lenadunham), but also tweets that spoke about 'Lena Dunham' generally on Twitter. This tactic was employed in order to gauge see the public discourse around Dunham's book controversy, and to see the lessons provided to others regarding the costs of engaging in social media as a high profile woman, as the tweets that talk about Dunham can still be seen by anyone.

ised vitriol. This is because this study aims to follow cultural theorist Emma Jane in her “deliberate strategy to speak of the ostensibly ‘unspeakable’ so as to provide an accurate representation of the discourse” (2015, 67). It also aims to end the silence that so often surrounds the harassment of women.

GENDERED INSULTS

According to my data collection, in the five months surrounding the release of Dunham’s book, she was called a “whore” 26 times, a “bitch” 206 times and a “cunt” 52 times (Table 1). One user said they “never hated anyone more than this bitch” (Image 1), and another referred to her as “skeezy whore” (Image 2).

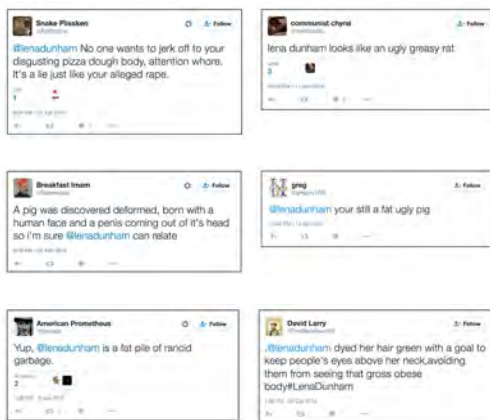


According to political scientist Jessica Megarry (2014), there is a distinct lack of male-specific insults available, making it nearly impossible to “harass men as men, on the basis of their sex” (2014, 50). Conversely, there are a large number of female specific insults. ‘Bitch’, for example is widely acknowledged to be an exclusively female pejorative (Kleinman, Ezzell & Frost) and is used liberally on social media when referring to women (Megarry). It is an insult that likens women to animals, and to meat, reinforcing the idea that “women, like animals, are second-class, are consumable, disposable” (Rosewarne 2013, n.p.). When this term is used to insult men, it is generally used as a tool to emasculate them and vilify them by likening them to women. Women online (Table 2) are also frequently referred to as “cunts.” While this insult can simply be a general pejorative for a “bad woman” (Mills), it is also an insult made on the basis of their female biology.³ This is evident in comments that refer to Dunham’s “cunt” or “pussy” as “stinky” (Image 3) or “disgusting.” These comments serve to reinforce the longstanding understanding of women’s genitalia as a “part of the female body that is shameful, unclean, disgusting” (Braun & Wilkinson, 21). Many gendered insults also focus on a woman’s sexuality. Dunham’s “promiscuity” was criticised in seven different ways in this study (Table 2). For example, she was referred to as a “tramp,” “slag” and “sperm dumpster,” highlighting the ways in which women are demonised and shamed for their sexuality.

This misogynistic rhetoric can intensify when women transgress traditional gender roles and challenge male authority (Connell & Messerschmidt; Filipovic). As a feminist icon (Householder), Dunham certainly transgresses prescribed boundaries. In her television series, *Girls*, she explores feminist issues ranging from body image and self-esteem, reproductive health, rape, pornography and sexual harassment (Householder). Dunham has also spoken publicly about being a victim of sexual assault (Bahadur). A strong feminist

³ It should be noted however that in many English speaking countries, the term ‘cunt’ has become gender neutral and at times can be used as a term of endearment (Culpeper).

stance can result in women being targeted online more frequently and with more severity. According to Jane (2014a), online harassment frequently spikes in response to feminist activism and feminist gains. In this study, this can be seen most explicitly in the various comments referring to Dunham as a “feminazi” (Image 4), and in the violent and vulgar criticisms of her feminist stance (Image 5). Less explicitly, it can be seen in the comments calling Dunham an “attention whore” (see Table 2 and Image 6). In spite of the fact that the nature of Dunham’s career supposes she must appear on screen and in the media, this kind of activity is framed as attention-seeking behaviour in a woman. Journalist Lebohang Masango maintains that calling women attention whores “continues a long, misogynistic tradition of mean phrases invented to admonish ladies for being too visible, too shameless” (2013). It also serves to highlight a distinct double standard in the way that outgoing and politically vocal men and women are framed and perceived. Where women are criticised for being desperate for attention—or in the case of feminists, of being crazy or “over the top”—men by contrast are often applauded for their confidence and charisma.



These gendered and demeaning insults hurled at Dunham appear to be a tactic employed by social media users to evade substantively engaging with Dunham in any meaningful way. Typical responses to *any* content posted by Dunham include insults such as, “slut” and “skank” (Table 1), and “dumb bitch” and “idiot” (Table 2). According to Mantilla, responses of this kind represent a concerted attempt to “distract and derail attention from the content of what women are writing and to cause online discussions and forums authored by women to devolve into personal insults” (2015, 46). These one-word insult responses to women seem to suggest that women are not worthy of engaging with, and work to exclude women from productive conversations and public discourse online. While for Dunham, this is not necessarily hugely problematic because she already has a platform from which to voice her opinions, and an audience of avid listeners, it serves as a deterrent to other women who are provided insight into the costs of doing feminism publicly online.

APPEARANCE-BASED SLURS

Many comments directed at Dunham display a preoccupation with her physical appearance. In this study, tweets were found calling her “ugly,” “hideous” and “gross” among other terms (Table 3). Specifically, she has also been told that she is a “hideous beast” (Image 7), looks like an “ugly greasy rat” (Image 8), and she has been compared to a deformed pig (Image 9).





Feminist theorists have pointed out that women in our society are more closely associated with their bodies than men are (Papadaki). Women’s value is also seen as more closely tied to how they look (Bartky; Bordo 1993). Social scientist Evangelia Papadaki (2015) highlights the emphasis placed on women’s appearances, writing:

In order to gain social acceptability, women are under constant pressure to correct their bodies and appearance more generally, and make them conform to the ideals of feminine appearance of their time, the so-called ‘norms of feminine appearance’ (the standards of appearance women feel they should be living up to).

Dunham does not conform to these “norms of feminine appearance”, nor does she show concern or preoccupation with looking a certain way to sensually please men. Instead, on *Girls*, Dunham regularly appears nude, not shying away from scenes that show off her folds of fat, double chin and her skin breaking out. By challenging societal norms regarding how women should look, and the assumption that women in the media exist primarily to be looked at (Mulvey), Dunham has been criticised and scrutinised. On Twitter alone, within five months from the release of her book and the controversy surrounding it, I counted 566 comments calling her variations of un-attractive (Table 3).

This study also found a particular preoccupation with Dunham’s weight. Tweets were found calling Dunham “frump,” “dumpy,” “sloppy” and “obese” (Table 3). For example, she has been called a “fat ugly pig” (Image 10), a “fat pile of rancid garbage” (Image 11) and told that she has a “gross obese body” (Image 12).

Communications scholar Jennifer-Scott Mobley notes in the opening of her book on fatness: “Americans hate fat people. To be fat is to be aberrant, to be ‘othered’ and to be stigmatized in America” (2014, 1). While fat shaming of men and women appears to be common on social media (Freeman), this study indicates that women receive very specific and intense forms of it (Images 10-12). This is because slenderness is a prominent aspect of the culturally constructed beauty ideal for women (Tischner & Malson). In fact, thinness rather than health has been described as the most valued physical attribute in women (Satinsky). That is not to say that men do not receive pressure to look a certain way or to have a certain body size. For example, Rosewarne (2016a) notes that fat men can be viewed as less “manly” due to the emasculating nature of fatness. The socialisation that men receive however often stresses the importance of achievement rather than appearance as the primary determinant of self-image (Hesse-Biber 1991). For women on the contrary, being small, thin and slender is crucial to their self-image. This is particularly relevant for women in the public eye.

Dunham, however, confronts this expectation with an irreverent focus on imperfect bodies. Through *Girls*, she explores the idea of a fat-positive body image, and combats a media culture that “continually promotes the message that women’s bodies aren’t good enough” (Householder, 25). While Dunham has received praise for her approach, and for promoting body positivity amongst women (Bruculieri 2015), she has also been taunted and criticized. *NY Post* critic, Linda Stasi has referred to Dunham as having a “blobby body” and as having surprised the TV world with her “giant thighs, sloppy backside and small breasts” (Baker). Dunham is also regularly asked why she is so often naked on screen (Hinckley)—a question that would surely not be so frequently asked if she had a body that complied with the norms of feminine appearance for women in Hollywood and on screen. This obsession with women and their thinness, particularly in the West, is understood to stem from a desire to socially control women and their bodies (Hesse-Biber 2007). For example,

Hesse-Biber compared the overvaluation of thinness in the West to the practices of foot binding and corseting, which often prevented women from moving about freely and unchaperoned (2007). Today, the requirement for women to be thin works as a tool of social control in that by investing time, energy, and often large sums of money on attaining a thin body, “women may be substituting a momentary sense of power for ‘real authority’” (Hesse-Bieber 1991, 178).

The distinct preoccupation online with Dunham’s appearance and weight illustrates that contrary to early hopes that the Internet could erase focus on social identity and appearance, social pressures regarding the way women look *does* play out in online spaces. Twitter, in particular appears to be a hostile environment for women attempting to challenge social norms and ideals regarding feminine appearance, again providing a message to women onlookers of the costs of engaging in online life.

RAPE WISHES AND DEATH THREATS

This research also found intimations of rape and death directed at Dunham (Table 4). Dunham has spoken publicly about this abuse. At the Golden Globes in 2015, she stated: “There’s a lot of people I love on Twitter, but unfortunately you can’t read those without reading deranged Neocons telling you you should be buried under a pile of rocks” (Delaney). Further, on a podcast in 2015, Dunham spoke about the many death threats she receives daily, including anonymous users telling her she should be stoned to death (Willis). According to Jane, issuing graphic rape and death threats has become “a standard discursive move online, particularly when Internet users wish to register their disagreement with and/or disapproval of women” (2014a, 558). Megarry’s 2014 study of the #mencallmethings hashtag gives weight to this theory, providing numerous examples of the death threats women receive online. Feminist writer Lena Chen for example was told to “tape a plastic bag on [her] head [and] kill [herself] live on webcam” (Megarry, 50). In this study, tweets were

found telling Dunham, “kill yourself worthless bitch @lenadunham” (Image 13) and “@lenadunham... Die in hell BITCH PIG! Die!” (Image 14). Dunham’s ‘rape-ability’ is also a matter of contention online. Mantilla (2015) notes that gendered insults often devolve into the determination of a woman’s rape-ability or the degree to which she deserves to be raped. This study found that Dunham is often deemed too ugly or fat to be raped. One comment stated: “@lenadunham No rep. would be desperate enough to rape you” (Image 15). Another said: “I don’t think anyone in their right mind would consider raping Lena Dunham. I’ve seen dirty pigs that are more attractive than her” (Image 16).

In this study, none of the comments made to Dunham were found to directly threaten her with rape and death. However, direct threats are not an uncommon phenomenon online. Game developers Brianna Wu⁴ and Kathy Sierra⁵ were both directly threatened with rape and death by people who published their personal information and home addresses online.⁶ More recently, influential feminist writer and The Guardian Columnist, Jessica Valenti, announced her decision to indefinitely suspend her use of social media because of death and rape threats explicitly aimed at her child (Crandall). However, while it is likely that these rape and death threats will not be carried out, or may just be expressed as wishes, they act as an effective tool of intimidation (Brownmiller), particularly in public spaces. In a paper titled “Gendered Usage of Public Spaces,” cultural theorist Shilpa Phadke, writes

4 Independent game developer, Brianna Wu was driven from her home by threats of violence after she “poked fun” at #GamerGate supporters on Twitter (Wingfield). One man, who calls himself “The Commander” made a video of himself holding up a knife, graphically explaining how he would murder Wu, “Assasin’s Creed Style” (Wu).

5 In 2007, Kathy Sierra, an American game developer with a popular blog became the target of a harassment campaign. She reported finding death threats on her life, including a picture of a noose accompanied by the comment: “the only thing Kathy has to offer me is that noose in her neck size” (Cook).

6 This phenomenon of publishing or identifying information about an individual on the Internet is also known as ‘doxxing’ (Quodling).

Safety defined in relation to public space is not just physical safety but also the feeling of being safe and a lack of anxiety about public space and an uncontested claim to the space that one inhabits. (4)

Knowing that one may encounter death or rape threats online, whether perceive or real, will affect the ways in which women mediate virtual spaces (Kovacs, Padte & Shobha). It will prevent women from “full and unencumbered participation online” (Mantilla), and change the way they approach online life for fear for their safety.

A BACKLASH

The harassing behaviour extended toward women online appears to be a form of backlash against women claiming what was originally ‘male space’. This kind of backlash against feminist gains was first and most distinctly identified in Susan Faludi’s book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (1993). Faludi (1993, 15) describes an undeclared war between “women and the male culture they inhabit.” It is a war that is catalysed by feminist gains:

The anti-feminist backlash has been set off not by women’s achievement of full equality but by the increased possibility that they might win it. It is a pre-emptive strike that stops women long before they reach the finishing line. (1993, 14)

According to Faludi, the backlash is an attempt to “try to push women back into their ‘acceptable’ roles” (1993, 16) so that male space and privilege is not challenged or threatened. The cyber harassment of women appears to follow this same pattern. The harassment works as a pre-emptive strike to ensure that the Internet remains a male-dominated space where women are not a threat. From the Lena Dunham case study, this backlash is evident in the gendered insults and appearance-based slurs that serve to insult, degrade and

harass Dunham on the basis of her gender. Not only do these harassing comments make life online for prominent women difficult, but they also provide female onlookers with threatening lessons regarding the costs of engaging in online life as a woman. Most explicitly, the backlash can be seen in the violent and sexualized rape and death threats directed at Dunham. Offline, rape is often understood to work as a tool of social control; the fear of rape and crime causes women to fear for their safety and thus monitor their behaviour in public spaces (Pain, Williams, & Hudson). Likewise, online, threats of rape and death work to monitor the way women's behaviour online, and can force women to withdraw from online life altogether (Barak). Dunham, for example, no longer runs her own Twitter account, but rather has someone post on Twitter in her stead. Dunham has acknowledged that this means she cannot engage with the Twitter community in the way she would like (*Re/Code* podcast). However, for her own safety and sanity she saw this to be the only option. In this way, the cyber harassment of women can be seen as a continuation of long-standing cultural tactics used to obstruct feminist gains, and keep women out of the public, male-dominated sphere.

CONCLUSION

Women's issues have long been ignored and trivialised. While it is easy to think we have moved beyond this,—feminists are everywhere these days (Valenti)—the harassment of women on the Internet illustrates that this is not the case. The medium through which the harassment takes place has changed, but the message is the same: women are not welcome. Nonetheless, the refusal to recognise the harassment of women online as harmful is having enormous economic, political, educational and social costs for women. Only by recognizing the ways in which gender pervades and transpires on the Internet, and in particular, the ways in which cyber harassment is gendered, can solutions be created to allow women to participate in online life as equals. ♣

Table 1: Harassing Comments – Gendered Insults

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE	FREQUENCY	TOTAL
Mistreats Others	Bitch	206	258
	Cunt	52	
Promiscuous/ prostitute	Whore	26	92
	Ho	7	
	Slut	15	
	Slag	2	
	Skank	37	
	Tramp	4	
	Sperm dumpster	1	

Table 2: Harassing Comments – Celebrity Status and Feminist Stance

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE	FREQUENCY	TOTAL
Attention-seeking	Attention whore	30	50
	Media/fame whore	5	
	Attention-seeking	15	
Feminist	Feminazi	18	90
	Feminist (derogatory)	62	
	Man hating/hater	10	
Brainless	Idiot	84	127
	Dumb	43	

Table 3: Harassing Comments – Physical Appearance

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE	FREQUENCY	TOTAL
Unattractive	Ugly	189	566
	Hideous	21	
	Disgusting/vile	126	
	Gross	222	
	Hag	8	
Sexual appeal	Frumpy	19	305
	Dumpy	4	
	Pig	151	
	Cow	29	
	Obese	11	
	Sloppy	11	
	Fat	80	

Table 4: Harassing Comments – Rape and Death Wishes

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE	TOTAL
Rape wishes	Rape wishes and determinations of “rapeability”	18
Sexual appeal	Comments assessing Dunham’s “fuckability”	19
Death wishes	Variations of death wishes	34

The author wishes to thank Lauren Rosewarne for her helpful guidance and feedback on this article.

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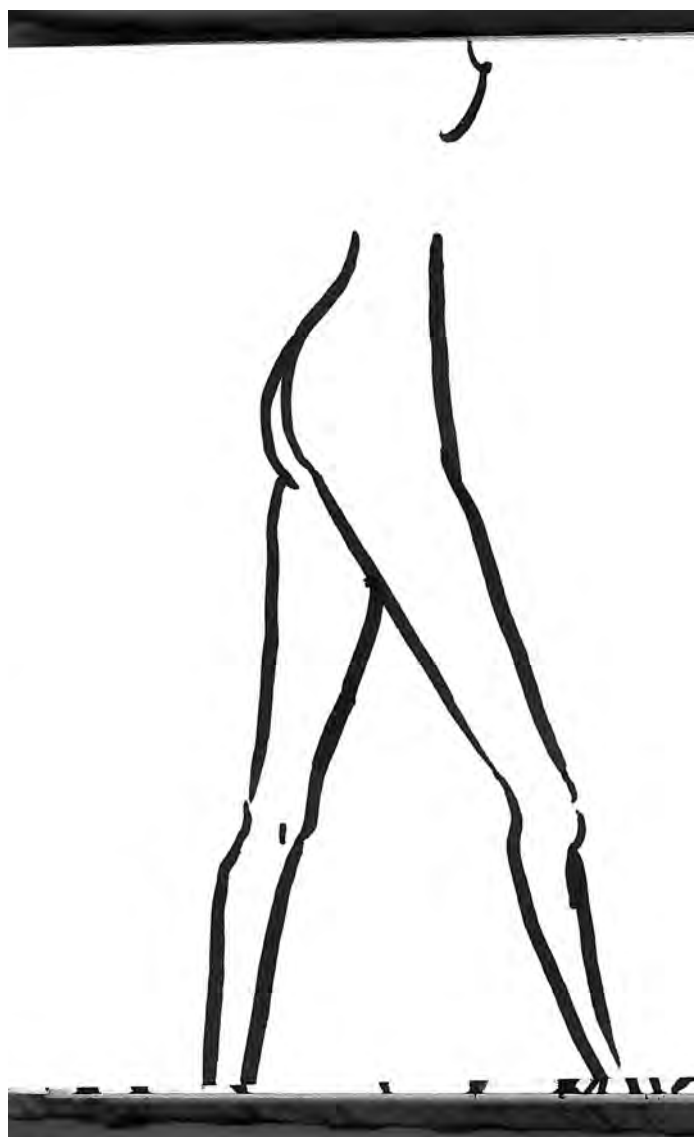
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Our Contributors

ALICE BERRY (*she/her/hers*) is a sophomore majoring in anthropology, concentrating in gender and sexuality, at Bryn Mawr College. She is also studying classical vocal performance, minoring in music in the Bryn Mawr-Haverford College consortium. Alice is interested in a career involving ethnographical research of cultural reproductive practices, but issues of public sexual health are equally important to her. Her wish is to open an inclusive sexual health resource center and clinic for adolescents. 🍷 **ERIC BETANCOURT** (*he/him/his*) is a senior pursuing a double major in Sociology and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Boston University. He's interested in youth engagement and community organizing, and hopes to work in a public school post-graduation. In 2015, his paper "Extremism in Online Men's Right Activism: 'Red Pill' Masculinism" was awarded the Sarah Joanne Davis Writing Award by the WGS department at BU. He hopes that his research on masculinity facilitates discussion about how men are socialized, and how their identities influence them to interact within social spheres. 🍷 **GISELLE BOUSTANI-FONTENELE** (*she/her/hers*) is a senior majoring in a double concentration of Anthropology and Religion, and minoring in Theatre at Boston University. She comes from The Valley in Los Angeles, CA, and is a proud Valley Girl, so like, yeah, totally. "Giselle Boustani-Fontenele" translates to "Pledge Those that roam the gardens-Little fountain." When she isn't pledging to garden gnomes and tiny ornamental springs, she can be found binge-watching "Shameless," splurging on sushi, and geeking out on theatre. Giselle is committed to Ellen's advice to "be kind to one another," except when smashing the patriarchy. 🍷 **CECILIA FRANCK** (*they/them/their*) is a senior pursuing a major in Spanish and a minor in LGBT Studies at the University of Maryland. They also work as a digitization projects assistant in the Digital Systems and Stewardship Department of the University of Maryland Libraries. They will be pursuing a Masters in Library Sci-


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• **ELLIE SIMON** (*she/her/hers*) is an Independent Scholar of Humor Studies with a minor in Sociology at Middlebury College. She is interesting in theorizing about humor, and is a candidate for the 2030 Macarthur Genius Grant. • **MARQUISHA SPENCER** (*she/her/hers*) is a second-year PhD student at Claremont Graduate University. Marquisha is studying Higher Education Administration and Women and Gender Studies. Her research interests include under-represented minorities, students with dependents, and institutional policy as it relates to retention and graduation rates. She is a CGU School of Educational Studies Research Fellow, Bowen Associate, and serves as CGU's Student-Body President. She enjoys reading, writing, and working with youth. Currently, she plans to graduate and continue working in Student Life and Diversity at Claremont Graduate University. You can find out more about her at queensdothings.com. • **NICOLE VENETO** (*she/her/hers*) graduated with a bachelor's in English with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies from Simmons College. She plans to pursue a master's and teaching on Neon Genesis Evangelion. More of her feminst media analyses can be found on thelilinblog.tumblr.com. • **KATHRYN WOOD** (*she/her/hers*) is a junior pursuing a double major in English and Women, Gender, & Sexuality at the University of Virginia. She's particularly interested in reclaiming the female body from the effects of pornography, sexual violation, and over-medicalization. She hopes to become a nurse widwife to care for women's bodies directly and plans to write about these same issues until then. • **COSETTE ZACARIAS** (*she/her/hers*) is a double major in Women's Studies and Biology. She thinks art is cool, feminism is cooler, and feminist art is coolest. Cosette hopes to someday be an activist-scientist cat lady. • **KOKO ZHANG** (*they/their*) is pursuing a double major in Mathematics and Gender & Sexuality Studies at Bryn Mawr College, and is from Changsha, Hunan, China. Her paper "Infinite Genders and the Gender Binary: The Impossibility of Labeling Every Gender" was presented at the Women, Gender and Sexualities Conference 2016 at Temple University. Koko is also involved in diversity work on campus through working as a Community Diversity Assistant and working in StoryCORE. •



I'm a feminist.
I've been a female
for a long time now.
It'd be stupid
not to be
on my own side.

Maya Angelou



in
this
issue :

alice BERRY
eric BETANCOURT II
giselle BOUSTANI-FONTENELE
cecilia FRANCK
kathryn FRANKE
pete FREEMAN
sarah HETHERSHAW
cassandra JONES
sophie PEARLMAN
ruby SCHWARTZ
ellie SIMON
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