

Editorial

Welcome to Volume 37.1 of *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice!*

This issue consists of three clusters. The first thematic cluster, edited and introduced by Suzanne Lenon (Women's and Gender Studies, University of Lethbridge), Susanne Luhmann (Women's and Gender Studies, University of Alberta), and Nathan Rambukkana (Communications Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University), focuses on the theme of **Intimacies/Affect**. The three articles featured in the cluster include: Caitlin Gladney-Hatcher, "Under the Fantasy of Sovereignty: Homonormativity, Relationality, and the Potentialities of Queer Sex"; Naomi de Szegheo-Lang, "Non-Sexual Spooning and Inanimate Affections: Diversifying Intimate Knowledge"; and Natalie Kouri-Towe, "Textured Activism: Affect Theory and Transformational Politics in Transnational Queer Palestine-Solidarity Activism."

The second cluster, edited and introduced by Jennifer L. Johnson (Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Thorneloe University) and Laura Parisi (Women's Studies, University of Victoria), features five articles that focus on the theme of **Transgressing Borders/Boundaries: Gendering Space and Place**. These include: Karen Keddy, "'Safety is just a thing men take for granted': Teaching a Spatial Vocabulary of Equality to Architecture Students"; Albert Casals and Joanna Riera, "'We Are Gunslinging Girls': Gender and Place in Playground Clapping Games"; Mark Anthony Castrodale and Laura Lane, "Finding One's Place to Be and Pee: Examining Intersections of Gender-Dis/ability in Washroom Signage"; Mehra Shirazi, Patti Duncan, and Kryn Freehling-Burton, "Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Representing Mothers and the Maternal in Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation*"; and Sarah Olutola, "Liberal Spaces: The Costs and Contradictions of Reproducing Hegemonic National Subjects in Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* and *Brokeback Mountain*."

The third cluster includes a series of open topic articles that cover a broad spectrum of themes and issues. The first two articles take readers into the world

of media representations. Corinne Mason's article, "The 'Kingston Mills Murder' and the Construction of 'Honour Killings' in Canadian News Media," examines the print media coverage of the murder of four members of the Shafia family near Kington, Ontario in 2009. She demonstrates how journalists as well as feminist and "gender experts" constructed the case in cultural terms—as "honour killings" and as a consequence of a "clash of civilizations." Drawing on the work of Sherene Razack, Chandra T. Mohanty, Inderpal Grewal, and others, she goes on to map an alternative feminist response to the "honour killings" narrative. In "The Challenge of Sustaining Critique across Time and Texts: 'I never said that' about *The Hunger Games*," Laura Lane, Nancy Taber, and Vera Woloshyn explore how and why a group of preadolescent girls (grades 5-7) responded differently to the gender representations featured in *The Hunger Games* novel and in the subsequent film adaptation. Based on their critical reading of novel-to-film adaptations and what unfolded in their group and individual conversations with the young girls, the authors conclude that it is critically important that all learners are provided "with spaces for critical discussion of popular culture texts."

The following three articles explore themes related to women's identities and lives, as well as one state initiative designed to combat gender-based violence. In "'Haram, she's obese!': Young Lebanese-Canadian Women's Discursive Constructions of 'Obesity,'" Zeina Abou-Rizk and Geneviève Rail examine twenty young Lebanese-Canadian women's understandings of "obesity" and how their conceptions, with few exceptions, tended to appropriate and reproduce the "dominant obesity discourse." By drawing on feminist postcolonial theory, the authors also explore the ways in which the young women's perceptions of body size were connected to their multiple positions as diasporic subjects, particularly in relation to "Canadian-ness," "Lebanese Canadian-ness," and "Lebanese-ness." Cheryl van Daalen-Smith, Brad Hagan, and Peter Breggin, in their

article, “Diminished: Canadian Women’s Experiences of Electroshock,” examine the stories of seven Canadian women who underwent electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) over the last forty years, with a particular focus on “the trajectory of their lives prior to, during, and after ECT” and how their lives were “diminished” as a result of undergoing these treatments. Given that the administration of ECT is increasing, especially among women and the elderly, the authors’ main purpose in presenting the women’s narratives is to “re-ignite feminist interest in women’s experiences of psychiatry in general and the damaging effects of electroshock in particular.” Susan M. Manning, in “The Potential of Government Intervention in Violence Against Women: Lessons from Newfoundland and Labrador,” engages in an assessment of the provincial government’s Purple Ribbon Campaign, which was launched in 2009. She argues that, even though the campaign has not escaped the influence of neoliberal priorities and ideologies,” which “has impeded the adoption of a deeper intersectional and structural feminist analysis of gender-based violence” in Newfoundland and Labrador, it has integrated “key elements of feminist analyses of violence, including explicitly gendered terminology, the lens of structural inequality, and a consideration of intersectionality, in its framework, message, and content.”

The final three articles engage with questions related to feminist theory, anti-oppressive pedagogies, and Women’s and Gender Studies as a discipline. In “*La Grande Sartreuse?: Re-citing Simone de Beauvoir in Feminist Theory*,” Kristin Rodier draws on Clare Hemmings’ work, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011) and applies the critical tools of feminist storytelling and heterocitation to Simone de Beauvoir, whose work has often been the subject of “dichotomous” readings. By doing so, she revisits and thinks through Beauvoir’s place in feminist scholarship and feminist theoretical storytelling. Kate M. Daley, in “Having, Being, and Doing Privilege: Three Lenses for Focusing on Goals in Feminist Classrooms,” tackles the question of privilege as it operates in Women’s and Gender Studies and feminist classrooms. She proposes “three lenses that educators can use to understand privilege—as something we have, something we are, and something we do” and applies them to various classroom contexts and goals. She illustrates how the three lenses of privilege “can broaden the questions we ask

about privilege in our teaching practice and refocus our attention on the choices we are making and the goals we have as educators.” Finally, in “The Paradox of Inter/Disciplinarity: A Rethinking of the Politics of Inter/Disciplinarity and ‘Women’s and Gender Studies’ for the Current Moment,” Karen McCallum, Felicia Rahman, and Haley Turnbull explore the interdisciplinarity and disciplinary debates as they relate to Women’s and Gender Studies (WGS) and argue that WGS “should be embraced and acknowledged as a discipline.” They further maintain that such discussions about “inter/disciplinarity are of particular relevance when considering the efficacy, purpose, and value of a WGS doctoral degree” and propose a Joint PhD program, which would address “questions related to disciplinary boundaries, the importance of disciplinary subjectivity, and the need for cross-disciplinary knowledge production and career training.”

The cover image is painted by William Montelpare, Margaret and Wallace McCain Chair in Human Development and Health at the University of Prince Edward Island. The painting is titled *PEI North Shore Sunset* (2013).

Enjoy the issue!

Annalee Lepp and Ann Braithwaite
Editors

Introduction

Intimacies/Affect

Cluster Editors

Suzanne Lenon is Associate Professor in the Department of Women and Gender Studies at the University of Lethbridge. Her research interests lie at the intersections of critical race feminisms and law, gender, and sexuality. Her work has appeared in *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*; *Journal of Intercultural Studies*; *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law*; *darkmatter*; and *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice*. She is also the co-editor (with OmiSoore H. Dryden) of *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging* (UBC Press) as well as co-editor (with Stacy Douglas) of a special issue of *Canadian Journal of Law & Society* on “Law and Decolonization.” You can follow her on twitter @kootenaydreams.

Susanne Luhmann is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Alberta. She is finishing a book manuscript entitled *Domesticating the Nazi Past: Gender, Generation and the Familial Turn in Contemporary German Cultural Memory*, which studies the public staging of familial legacies of Nazi Perpetration. Other current projects include (with Terri Tomsy) “Memory Economies,” “Prairie Sexualities” (with Marie Lovrod), and “Learning Elsewhere?,” a co-edited collection with Amber Dean and Jennifer Johnson on praxis learning in WGS (WLU Press). Susanne has published widely on queer and feminist pedagogy as well as on the institutional subject formation of WGS.

Nathan Rambukkana is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada. His work centres the study of discourse, politics, and identities, and his research addresses topics such as digital intimacies, hashtag publics, intimate privilege, and non/monogamy in the public sphere. His recent work has appeared in *Ada: A Journal of Gender,*

New Media, and Technology, *The Fibreculture Journal*, and *The Palgrave Handbook of the Psychology of Sexuality and Gender* (edited by Christina Richards and Meg John Barker). He is also the author of *Fraught Intimacies: Non/Monogamy in the Public Sphere* (UBC Press, 2015) and the editor of the collection *Hashtag Publics: The Power and Politics of Discursive Networks* (Peter Lang, 2015). Email: nrambukkana@wlu.ca Twitter: @n_rambukkana.

To intimate means to make known, to announce, but also to suggest something indirectly, to hint. *Intimate* also suggests familiarity and deep acquaintance, informality and the private, the innermost, the personal, the sexual. *To affect* means to have an influence or effect a change, to touch, to move; it also speaks to, or intersects with, feelings, emotions, tendencies, labour, privilege, and space. What both intimacy and affect share is the work of renegotiating the boundaries of what we have come to distinguish as “the public” and “the private.” Feminist thought and praxis has long played a foundational role in this renegotiation by insisting, often against much resistance, from second wave formulations onwards, that the “personal is political.” Works such as Arlie Hochschild’s (1983) research on emotional labor, Audre Lorde’s (1984) insistence on the “The Uses of Our Anger,” Elizabeth Spelman’s (1989) “Anger and Insubordination,” Alison Jaggar’s (1989) “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology,” and, more recently, Sara Ahmed’s (2010) *The Promise of Happiness*, to name a few, have made the case for the importance of the epistemologies and politics of intimacy and affect in understanding people’s worlds.

This (re)negotiation between “the public” and “the private” is furthered by Lauren Berlant’s (1997) coinage of “intimate public spheres,” and in her edited collection *Intimacy* (2000), which might be credited with instantiating more fully the interest in critical intimacy studies in current humanities and social science scholarship. In her introduction to the collection, Berlant suggests that “intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation. Its potential failure to stabilize closeness always haunts its persistent activity, making the very attachments deemed to buttress ‘a life’ seem in a state of constant if latent vulnerability” (2). Intimacy, to Berlant, refers to the intensities of multiple domains, simultaneously utopian, optimism sustaining versions of intimacy, and prone to the regulatory, normative, ideological aspects of intimacy’s organization of people’s worlds (3).

The range of scholarship on intimacies and affects has, largely in the last few decades, enabled a wide gamut of pursuits, from theoretical exploration to political contention, from the politics of solidarity and affinity, to the fraught realities of encounters between disparate flows in life and culture. The work coming

out of this confluence is frequently provocative, often —though not exclusively—feminist in nature, and has a rebellious tendency to draw its problematics from across or between traditional academic disciplines. In the process, scholars have produced a wide range of new vocabularies. For example, Eva Illouz (2007) coined the term “cold intimacies” in her exploration of the affective life in “emotional capitalism,” defined as “a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other, thus producing... a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behavior and in which emotional life - especially that of the middle classes - follows the logic of economic relations and exchange” (5). Sonja Mackenzie’s (2013) “structural intimacies” names the meeting of intimate lives and structural patterns that raise questions about intimate justice in her study of HIV/AIDS within Black communities. And Theresa Senft (2011) uses “strange intimacies” to refer to the way that, through various forms of social media, we are increasingly bound in relationships of uncanny “familiarity that arises from exchanging private information with people from whom we are otherwise remote” (7).

Such intellectual projects seek to connect acts and spheres of intimacy and affect to larger relations of power/structural patterns, including neoliberal capitalism, racialization, biopolitics, and social movements. Feminist and social justice work on both intimacies and affect brushes normativities against the grain, challenging the felt contours and linkages of everyday life. Reconsidering the organization and impacts of forms of closeness and mutual impact strikes at the heart of staid cultural forms, representations, and politics.

This thematic cluster sought contributions that considered the (re)productive work of intimacies and affect, that engaged with these two concepts (individually or together) as ways of challenging and renegotiating the boundaries of what has come to count as public and private, personal and political, sexual and non-sexual, local and global.

We asked contributors to consider some of the following questions: What does the theoretical and political turn towards affect and intimacies mean for transformative feminist and social justice thought and politics? What new vocabularies, visions, practices, and questions does this turn towards intimacies/affect give

rise to? How does this critical conjunction ask us to (re) consider what counts as intimate and affective (in)justices? What do these terms make im/possible that other terms do (do not)?

The three papers contained in this cluster represent a range of approaches and problematics that stem from engagements with, and encounters of, intimacies/affect. While all three papers address disparate matter, they are linked both materially and theoretically to what might be seen as one of the underlying processes that characterize critical studies of intimacy and affect: challenging the status quo, privilege, and oppressive normativities. For example, in her theoretical exploration of the linkages between notions of personal sovereignty and the radical potentials of queer sex, Caitlin Gladney-Hatcher challenges homonormativity and its complicity with a conventional, status quo hyper-individualism, noting that in its inherent and messy relationality, queer sex has the potential to pry us from our own obsessive self-regard and give us “a taste of and desire for social transformation.” In a similar challenge to status quo intimacies and “proper” affective attachments, Naomi de Szegheo-Lang reads two case studies—commodified snuggling and objectum sexuality—alongside each other to explore, in her words, how “[t]he claim that normative intimacy can be interrupted and refigured” enables us to question “how *intimacy* might offer a way in to think about possibilities for disrupting individualized domestinnormative models of existence. And, further, how ‘improper’ affective connections might productively interrupt...normative domestic models by offering expanded possibilities for intimate relating.” Finally, Natalie Kouri-Towe unpacks the sticky political realm of queer Palestine-solidarity activism. She considers how the felt texture of relationality might be rethought as more than just a means to an end, but also as a line of flight in itself. In considering the affective life of activism, Kouri-Towe highlights the “hidden dimensions of social change, whereby the space in-between grounds new language and new modes of being that open to other transformative possibilities during other moments of intensity, such as times of war.”

Together, these three engagements illuminate the range of problematics, connections, and insights that work on intimacies/affect can reach, as well as suggest how many other pathways to societal reflection and social change might be possible when academics,

activists and other practitioners of the social take up the lenses of intimacies and affect to look at the world anew, to pause—and consider.

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Under the Fantasy of Sovereignty: Homonormativity, Relationality and the Potentialities of Queer Sex

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Caitlin Gladney-Hatcher will begin the PhD program in Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies at York University in September 2015. She received an MA in Women and Gender Studies from the University of Toronto in 2013. Caitlin is interested in using queer, affect, and psychoanalytic theories to explore questions of human relationality and intimacy.
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Abstract

Working with queer, affect, and psychoanalytic theories, this paper conceptualizes sovereignty as an ideal that psychically structures interpersonal relationships as well as individuals' interactions with institutions. It explores the extent to which homonormativity upholds the ideal of sovereignty in ways that delimit possibilities for relationality and social transformation. It also examines how queerness and queer sex more specifically become sites of resistance which threaten to undo and expose the fantasy of the sovereign self.
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Résumé

À l'aide de la théorie queer, de la théorie des affects et de la théorie psychanalytique, cet article présente la souveraineté comme un idéal qui structure de façon psychique les relations interpersonnelles ainsi que les interactions des individus avec les institutions. Il explore la portée selon laquelle l'homonormativité maintient l'idéal de la souveraineté de façons qui délimitent les possibilités de relations et de transformations sociales. Il examine aussi comment l'état queer et la sexualité queer, plus spécifiquement, deviennent des sites de résistance qui menacent de défaire et d'exposer le fantasme du soi souverain.
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Notions of free will, freedom, and control over one's own life and immediate surroundings circulate around us in the current social moment. What does this desirable freedom that has been popularized throughout the West assume about the subject? What do subjects assume about themselves in their assertion of such freedom? What does this freedom grant those subjects who seek it? What, ultimately, is this freedom *about*? Freedom, as such, hints at the problem of sovereignty and the fantasmatic ideal of the sovereign self. In contemporary Western society, the sovereign self is a phenomenon that looms at every level of the social world—that is, in the very ways in which we interact with others, the state, and ourselves. In general, the fantasy of sovereignty guides macro-level interactions and dealings within the world, setting the stage for the ways in which humans live and understand their lives and themselves. As a powerful and structuring fiction, sovereignty warrants further attention and exploration, particularly in terms of its everyday impact both personally and politically. As an ideal, it is also significant for understanding the state of human relationality—interpersonal as well as intrapersonal—in our day-to-day realities.

In this paper, I examine sovereignty in terms of its affective and political weight in the context of both intimate and public modes of relationality. Drawing from a variety of theoretical texts, I engage with multiple conceptualizations of sovereignty in order to construct a framework for understanding the ways in which this fantasy manifests itself and gets taken up in the social world. I address the affective impact of sovereignty and the kind of environment that it sets up for individuals. I am also interested in the ways in which the fantasies of sovereignty and the sovereign self play out in interactions with others and institutions. In so doing, I seek to examine the extent to which contemporary LGBT politics and the reality of homonormativity (Duggan 2003) uphold the imaginaries of sovereignty and the sovereign self in ways that delimit potentialities for relationality

and social transformation. Finally, through an exploration of queerness and the erotic, I propose the kinds of possibilities that might be opened up, or made possible, in and through queer sex specifically.

The question of relationality is an important one especially in a world where borders, walls, and boundaries separate groups and individuals both physically and psychically. In her book, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Wendy Brown (2010) considers the phenomenon of sovereignty in its contemporary manifestation as a structuring, yet phantasmatic, aspect of the political and social world. Sovereignty is a conception that circulates widely; the ideals it upholds shape and inform, in various ways, some of the most powerful institutions such as capitalism, nationalism, war, and colonialism (8-30). Brown reflects on the contemporary social and political landscape wherein the world has become increasingly bounded and bordered by elaborate walling systems in the midst of weakening nation-state sovereignty (26). These latter processes have occurred at a historical moment when globalization and the discourses of liberalism have become hegemonic (8). While their implications are explicitly political and economic, Brown suggests that their effects are also social and therefore experienced at the individual level.

According to Brown, “[w]hile the same forces of globalization challenge the sovereignty of both subject and state, liberal discourse also links eroded state sovereignty with the endangered sovereignty of the subject” (78-79). The lived experience of a disappearing sense of sovereignty at the national and individual levels has resulted in both physical and psychic wall building and bordering around nation-states, individuals, or groups of individuals. Waning state sovereignty, particularly in Western democracies, gives rise to a subject who is “made vulnerable by the loss of horizons, order, and identity” and such a position has resulted in a compulsion toward wall building (107). Given that notions of sovereignty suggest that individuals are, or at least *should* be, self-sufficient and autonomous beings, walls respond to and supposedly satisfy the subject’s sense of vulnerability. If individuals and nation-states desire boundaries and separation from different (threatening) others, what potentialities might exist for imagining human relationality that extends *beyond* one’s boundaries? What possibilities, if any, open up when an encounter with another occurs?

In her book, *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant (2011a) considers sovereignty as *fantasy*, which fits with other psychoanalytic understandings of sovereignty and the sovereign self. According to Berlant, “sovereignty, after all, is a fantasy misrecognized as an objective state: an aspirational position of personal and institutional self-legitimizing performativity and an affective sense of control in relation to the fantasy of that position’s offer of security and efficacy” (97). Sovereignty is, therefore, an imaginary way of being in the world, even though individuals and institutions in Western society consider it to be valid and not a misleading fantasy. Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips (1998) highlights the impact of the fantasy of the sovereign self, which is misrecognized as reality, when he states that such beliefs endorse “the impossibility, and therefore the violence, of all forms of sovereignty” (88). While sovereignty is altogether impossible, it persists in the psyche of individuals as something (a state, a position, a way of living in the world) that *is* possible, real, and, for many, desirable. In writing about sovereignty in the context of ordinary life, Jean Bethke Elshtain (1994) argues that, “Sovereignty as task and tale—operating on many levels—invites a disdain for life itself” (76). The impossible fantasy of control and security that sovereignty produces in the social world and in the sovereign self, while considered attractive or desirable to individuals and nation-states alike, results in the disparagement of life—that of others and our own. Like Berlant (2011a), Phillips (1998), and Elshtain (1994), I contend that sovereignty is a fantasy, an impossibility, and, ultimately, a form of violence and oppression that constrains our capacities for relationality and social transformation.

While sovereignty is a powerful fiction that is both oppressive and dangerous to the social order, what are some of the ways in which the fantasies of sovereignty and the sovereign self inhibit relationality in general? The task and tale of sovereignty appears as a politics of boundaries both physically and, more importantly for my purposes here, psychically. In terms of the individual or the sovereign self, boundaries function in conjunction with illusions of security and control, as Berlant (2011a) argues. Elshtain (1994) characterizes the sovereign self in contemporary Western society “as a unified, sharply bounded phenomenon” (79). As such, boundaries are integral for the establishment and maintenance of the fantasy of sovereignty. The sover-

eign self also strives to present a cohesive and intelligible identity that requires such boundaries in order to maintain its unity and therefore its sense of sovereignty. Indeed, the fantasy of sovereignty involves a lot of performative work at both the physical and psychic levels.

In his work on sovereignty in the context of necropolitics, Achille Mbembe (2003) further underscores the extent to which sovereignty and boundaries are integral to this fantasy: "Sovereignty is therefore defined as a twofold process of *self-institution* and *self-limitation* (fixing one's own limits for oneself)" (13; emphasis in original). Insofar as the sovereign self is a sharply bounded way of being in the world, Mbembe indicates that, with respect to the fantasy of sovereignty, boundaries must be experienced and affirmed as having been established by oneself; in this way, the setting of limits (and boundaries) for the sovereign self functions as one practice in the "institutional self-legitimizing performativity" associated with the imaginary of sovereignty (Berlant 2011a, 97). The fantasy of sovereignty and self-legitimation serve to make individuals feel as though they are free from the restraints and impositions of others and free to establish boundaries around themselves on their own terms.

Boundaries, in all of their manifestations, serve to protect and safeguard that which is bound from the threat(s) of the outside, the other. Boundaries also defend the outside/other from the threat—whether real or imagined—of the inside, the bound. In the case of the sovereign self, these sharp boundaries are self-imposed for the supposed benefit and protection of the bounded self. Protection and defense are two closely linked ideas that are essential to this discussion of boundaries, sovereignty, security, and control (whether fantastical or not). Insofar as boundaries serve to protect and defend, they appear as defenses against the threat of the other and the outside world, against forces that have the potential to expose or undermine the fantasy of sovereignty. Fundamentally, the sovereign self requires boundaries in order to defend against the reality that sovereignty is a fantasy. We *need* others and we need many aspects of the outside world in order to survive or, more importantly, thrive.

With reference to this politics of boundaries that is part and parcel of the fantasy of sovereignty, Phillips (1998) offers further insight into the material risks and dangers of the sovereign fantasy and particularly their

detrimental impact on the potentiality for relationality among collectives and individuals. Writing from a psychoanalytic perspective on the development of the child who becomes a productive (social) being in the world, Phillips proposes that

ultimately the child needs to abrogate his omnipotence... Accepting his dependence, and bearing the fact of his parents' independence of him, he makes good his survival and his pleasure by relinquishing his fantasies of self-sufficiency (his omnipotent self-satisfyings) (2).

For Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysts alike, this fantasy of omnipotence—that is, "of all the ways a person can attack or refuse his need for other people" (3)—is closely tied to the notions of sovereignty and the sovereign self I am concerned with here. In order for a human being to become a *social* being, they must give up their innate feelings of omnipotence by acknowledging their dependence on others, while also conceding to the reality that all people are dependent on others; basically, they must realize that it is not all about themselves. Such feelings of invincibility and control are tied up with the notion of boundaries insofar as sovereignty requires one to relinquish and deny one's sense of dependence on others so as to maintain the fantasy of omnipotence. The fantasy requires self-legitimation and self-limitation, as noted by Berlant (2011a) and Mbembe (2003) respectively, which necessarily abrogates (however fantasmatic) dependence on others. If the sovereign individual is to experience "an affective sense of control," sharp boundaries must be established in order to maintain that ultimate fantasy of omnipotence (Berlant 2011a, 97). Indeed, it is difficult to feel in control when a person acknowledges all the ways in which they are, in reality, fundamentally and ultimately dependent on others. As such, sovereignty is necessarily a fantasy; however, violence and social alienation as well as many other ill effects are the byproducts of the performance of this impossible fantasy.

While violent and impossible (Phillips 1998), sovereignty has become an "aspirational" state or way of being in the contemporary Western world (Berlant 2011a, 97). What, in reality, is very much a risk to humanity and relationality has become a desired objective for the sovereignty-seeking self. In and through the enactment of this fantasy, boundaries are instituted and

renouncements of one's ultimate reliance ensue. This contemporary manifestation of the affective market of sovereignty produces fantasmatically sovereign individuals who strive to refute their need for others—physically and psychically. At the same time, they staunchly guard and bolster the boundaries they have established around themselves in order to ensure their omnipotence and sovereignty, thereby amplifying the fantasy of being a unified, cohesive, sharply boundaried individual. The performative work that sovereignty requires of individuals (and institutions) produces in them an illusory sense of power and control over their own lives, along with a sense of freedom from the ideals or desires of others. The sovereign fantasy, therefore, is indeed a politics of boundaries. It is also a politics of singularity tied intimately to homonormativity.

To what extent do contemporary LGBT politics and the reality of homonormativity uphold the imaginary of sovereignty and the sovereign self in ways that delimit potentialities for relationality and social transformation? According to Lisa Duggan (2003), in her book *The Twilight of Equality?*, homonormativity “is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (50). Of particular importance here are the ways in which sovereignty, identity politics, and rights collude to reinforce the fantasy of sovereignty for individuals and couples within the homonormative paradigm that, in some ways, defines the contemporary moment of LGBT “politics.”

The contemporary homonormative paradigm of LGBT politics is, in many respects, preoccupied with identity. Homonormative identity politics are tied to the fantasies of the sovereign self and sovereignty as conceptualized by Phillips (1998) and Elshtain (1994). In *Commonwealth*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009) also indicate the ways in which identity and, by extension, identity politics are ultimately about private property and ownership. In the final section of the book entitled “Revolution,” Hardt and Negri argue that “identity itself is based on property and sovereignty” (326). They further suggest that, “identity is property. Notions of the sovereign individual and possessive individualism, which constitute the seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century origins of bourgeois ideology, pose identity as property in a philosophical sense: ‘Every man has a *property*,’ writes John Locke, ‘of his own *person*’” (326; emphases in original). Within contemporary mainstream LGBT politics, the assertion of a particularly (though, perhaps unconscious) homonormative identity is tied closely to the assertion of a sovereign sense of self, a form of the “self-legitimizing performativity” that is part of the overall fantasy of sovereignty (Berlant 2011a, 97). What one must assert is an identity that is sovereign insofar as the individual must present themselves to the world in a way that conveys “a unified, sharply boundaried” identity (Elshtain 1994, 79). Within this context, homonormativity necessitates the maintenance of boundaries around one's identity and sense of self which, as Hardt and Negri (2009) demonstrate, is integral to the perpetuation of capitalism and privatization in that notions of identity are tied closely to property and sovereignty (326). If, as Duggan (2003) argues, homonormativity “promis[es] the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (50), the fantasy of sovereignty, with its central connections to identity and property, works in the service of establishing a privatized population and culture of gay citizens who ultimately uphold the oppressive and violent practices of capitalism and neoliberalism. Accordingly, privatization, property, and consumption become the means through which homonormative individuals assert and maintain a sovereign sense of self. They also become the sources and sites of oppression and violence against those individuals and groups who refuse, or else fail by virtue of their gendered, racialized, and/or classed situation, to conform to the ideals of homonormativity. To the extent that homonormativity necessitates an identity or way of being in the world that is sharply boundaried and wholly unified, it offers little room for those whose identities or ways of life do not conform to its particular ideals.

Homonormativity, at this particular historical moment, offers privileged individuals a new means through which to assert a unified, boundaried, and coherent identity to the “rest” of the social world. The aim of this assertion is the ability to access the rights and privileges that are granted through fantasmatically sovereign institutions, which (fantasmatically) bestow on and confirm a sense of sovereignty in the homonorma-

tive individual. The preoccupation with identity in the context of homonormativity leads to the fortification of sharp boundaries around individuals and particular groups of peoples, boundaries which serve to further support and enforce the fantasies of sovereignty and the sovereign self in the social world. With reference to Duggan's (2003) conceptualization of homonormativity, this incarnation of LGBT "politics" upholds the dominant institutions of heteronormativity, capitalism, and neoliberalism, institutions that are firmly grounded in processes of exclusion, violence, and oppression. Under homonormativity, the maintenance of an identity and way of living that is cohesive, coherent, and ultimately boundaried is emphasized, particularly against the threatening fluidity and instability presented in and through queerness.

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Muñoz (2009) defines queerness as "that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (1). Here, queerness serves as a performative way of being and feeling in the world that refutes the here and now—and particularly homonormativity. In the latter case, the fantasy of sovereignty is upheld insofar as the division between the self and society is maintained, and sexuality is privatized and channeled toward the maintenance of normative ideals that are in keeping with the white heteropatriarchal social order. Privatization works through monogamy and domesticity, which are instituted through marriage and consumption to uphold the nation-state as well as capitalism (Duggan 2003, 45-66). The reason for the promotion of homonormative identity politics, that necessitate the establishment and advancement of a boundaried and unified sense of self, is the desire to acquire individual rights, including the right to marriage and participation in institutions, such as the armed forces (60-66). As Elshtain (1994) points out, "rights have become to individuals in the modern West...marks of a sovereign self" (76). It is in the context of rights that an explicit correlation can be found between sovereignty and homonormativity.

Homonormativity can be comprehended as a means through which certain individuals who fit within, as well as defend, the sharp boundaries of homonormative ideals can gain access to rights conferred by the state that will impart and confirm a personal (yet fantasmatic) sense of sovereignty. Living one's life in a particular

way—as a unified and sharply boundaried homonormative individual—becomes the avenue through which privileged, liberal gay individuals can attain the fantasy of the sovereign self. Homonormative gays receive the approval of the state in their assertion of a coherent and stable identity; because such an identity appears stable and consistent, it is deemed to be less threatening to sovereign institutions to which these individuals appeal. This apparent stability and consistency is different than the supposed social threat posed by the instability, incoherence, and unboundedness of queerness. As the "marks of the sovereign self," rights give homonormative individuals access to the institutions which reinforce a sense of security and control over their own lives and thereby fortify the fantasy of personal sovereignty (Elshtain 1994, 76). While such individuals are, in reality, very much *dependent* on the state for these rights, receiving such rights nonetheless becomes the avenue through which these people come to feel free, in control, and secure. In this rather circular and self-perpetuating process (as is necessary in order to sustain such a widespread fantasy), boundaries are therefore validated and reinforced through the conferral of rights insofar as a coherent and boundaried identity is necessary in order to receive such rights in the first place. In short, homonormative individuals are compelled—through the fantasy of and desire for sovereignty—to live lives that are sharply boundaried and unified so that they might get what they want—rights—from the supposedly sovereign state. But what is at stake in conforming to homonormativity—and, concomitantly, rejecting the variability and fluidity of queerness—in order to establish and uphold the fantasy of the sovereign self?

Homonormativity is a form of violence which is instigated through appeals to the state for recognition and the extension of rights. These latter "marks of the sovereign self" (Elshtain 1994, 76) involve the oppression of queer, racialized, classed, disabled, and transgender lives and foreclose the potentiality and viability of other (non-homonormative) ways of life. In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler (2004) explores the devastating impact of the marriage debate in the US on political and sexual potentiality, and what is ultimately at stake in homonormativity and the quest for sovereignty: "the demand to be recognized, which is a very powerful political demand, can lead to new and invidious forms of social hierarchy, to a precipitous foreclosure of the sex-

ual field, and to new ways of supporting and extending state power” (115). In other words, the violences of state recognition are matched by the violences of the performance of sovereignty via assertions of a homonormative bounded identity. Queerness looms in the fantasy of sovereignty as a danger for both hetero- and homonormative individuals who are ensconced in the charade of sovereignty. I want to suggest that queerness threatens sovereignty and boundaries; it is the antithesis of the Western sovereign homonormative subject. Queerness threatens to *undo and expose* the fantasy of sovereign identity and subjectivity that is enacted through homonormativity.

As I am concerned with the ways in which the fantasy of the sovereign self delimits and inhibits the potential for relationality in the world, homonormativity as a means to a personal sense of sovereignty forecloses this potentiality, particularly in its relationship with, or, rather, repudiation of queerness. In this way, homonormativity “invites a disdain for life itself” (Elshtain 1994, 76). If we take queerness as allowing for a fluidity of expression as well as a way of living or existing that seeks to disrupt stability, it stands in contrast to homonormativity which desires to produce individuals whose identities and lives conform to normative standards and ideals that maintain the white heteropatriarchal social order. As such, homonormativity produces a repudiated other whose difference must be barred and who becomes the object of oppression and violence. Undeniably, sovereignty via homonormativity incites violence and disdain for life in general and difference in particular.

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Jasbir K. Puar (2007) addresses the violence of homonormativity, which operates in a way similar to the violence of sovereignty. Puar examines how homonormativity as a phenomenon and way of life reinforces sharp boundaries which foreclose the potential for relationality among people:

[n]ational recognition and inclusion...is contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary. At work in this dynamic is a form of sexual exceptionalism—the emergence of national homosexuality, what I term ‘homonationalism’—that corresponds with the coming out of the exceptionalism of American empire. Further, this brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of

normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects. (2)

Boundaries are very much at work in the logic of homonormativity, particularly in terms of the production of queer others against whom the homonormative subjects must guard themselves. Moreover, homonormativity, like sovereignty, regulates the lives of those who wish to uphold the fantasy such that homonormative individuals might protect themselves—through the construction of boundaries—against the variability and seeming volatility of queerness. Because queerness is fluid and unstable, boundaries are not clear nor are they even desired; therefore, the ability to maintain the fantasy of sovereignty becomes difficult, perhaps even altogether impossible. In the quest to become a sovereign individual, homonormative—and, in particular, homonational—identity politics foreclose the potential for relationality across difference, across boundaries.

With reference to relationality and its foreclosure, Phillips (1993) offers the following proposal: “We could wonder, for example, what we are starving ourselves of by being too concerned about ourselves” (30). The sovereign and homonormative self is one who is preoccupied with self, particularly the self-protective boundaries that have been established against the threat of the Other and in order to ensure a sense of security and control which is aided through the bestowal of rights from the apparently sovereign state (Elshtain 1994, 76). In this quest for a fantasy, we starve ourselves of human relationality and meaningful contact; we starve ourselves of the potentiality for social transformation. This “fantasy misrecognized as an objective state” (Berlant 2011a, 97) endorses violence against as well as exclusion and oppression of those whose lives do not conform to the self-legitimizing ideals of homonormativity as a way of attaining personal sovereignty. We also erect boundaries that maintain our own isolation.

Queerness persists as a menace in a society preoccupied with the fantasy of sovereignty. As “that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing” (Muñoz 2009, 1), queerness threatens to *undo and expose* the fantasy of the sovereign identity and subjectivity that gets enacted through homonormativity. If we understand queerness as a form of interdependency and connection to the other/others, it stands to reason that it threatens to undo the bound-

aried-ness necessitated by sovereignty and exposes the violence and oppression instantiated by this fantasy. The eroticized being-together that is queerness, which is enacted in the world through queer sex and pleasure (as well as anti-normative intimacies more broadly), offers the possibility of breaking down the boundaries that have been erected in order to protect the fantasy of sovereignty. Queerness and sex are therefore sites in which relationality and social transformation are potentially enacted.

Queerness and eros are about relationality and the recognition of our dependence on the other/others. Berlant (2011b) argues that “sex is not a thing, it’s a relation” (81). I would add that *queerness* is also not a thing, but rather a relation.¹ Therefore, as a relation and a doing (Muñoz 2009, 1), queerness and sex—and, more specifically, queer sex—have the potential to disrupt the fantasy of sovereignty and uphold the “fundamental sociality” for which Butler (2005) advocates (33). As a relation and a doing, queer sex becomes a site where our dependence and involvement with the other is acknowledged and upheld. Our interdependency on the other/others becomes apparent to the extent that pleasure is mutually constituted and enabled in an erotic encounter. Eros becomes one of the vital modes of relationality through which, as Muñoz (2009) writes, we might begin to “enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world” (1).

Queer sex challenges the ideals associated and necessitated in the fantasy of sovereignty: boundaried-ness, control, and security. Queer eros provides an opportunity to glimpse, taste, and feel “new worlds” (Muñoz 2009, 1) and social transformation becomes possible through the erotic. In “Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death,” Elizabeth Grosz (1995) argues that sexual encounters open up other worlds: “one is opened up, in spite of oneself, to the other...It is in this sense that we make love to worlds: the universe of an other is that which opens us up to and produces our own intensities” (200). This queer erotic encountering of bodies becomes a site where intensity, too-aliveness, and unknown potentialities emerge: “The point is that both a world and a body are opened up for redistribution, dis-organization, transformation” (200). Grosz, however, notes that these encounters should not be considered a means to an end, given that the ends, and perhaps even the means, cannot be predetermined (200). That said,

in the process of opening up to an other/others in the way that Grosz proposes, bodies disrupt the fallacy of impermeability, defensiveness, boundaries, and sovereignty. Being vulnerable and experiencing the pleasure of one’s own openness hold great potential for intimate and transformative relationality. In the introduction to her book, *The Better Story*, Dina Georgis (2013) discusses the ways in which eros and, more specifically, sex disrupts the fantasy of sovereignty. She writes:

Nonetheless, in sex we let ourselves forget about body image and modest conduct. We lose our self to our self and to the other. It becomes hard to keep things clean, bounded, and separated. Bodies leak, spill, and contaminate one another. The walls constitutive of social symbolic bonds dissolve for another kind of bond. In seeking pleasure and feeling hungry for it, *sex is a reminder of our forgotten dependency on the other*. Indeed, sex makes us aware of how vulnerable we are to the other and in this way stages what is at stake in all social relations. When sex feels queer, the residues of unsocialized sexual memory are recalled. That is because community is by-product of carnal love. (15-16; author’s emphasis)

Queer sex, then, occasions the recognition of our fundamental, yet forgotten, dependency on the other. Such encounters create possibilities for the creation of new relationalities as well as ways of being and doing in the present world and, most importantly, in new worlds. Understood in this way, sex opens up the potential for relationality within the context of queerness, in that such eroticized being-together enables us to revisit our vulnerability and dependency on the other/others and particularly the necessity and beauty of their difference.

In conclusion, I have discussed how (queer) sex disrupts sovereign subjectivity and fantasy. I have also hinted at the ways in which sex generates a taste of and desire for social transformation, and enables relationality and intimacy in a world structured by the fantasy of sovereignty. Audre Lorde (2007) emphasized the necessity and importance of eros for creating connections across differences: “the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference” (56). As a doing and relation, sex (the sharing of physical joy, in Lorde’s concep-

tion) allows for the dissolution of the boundaries between bodies and worlds. As Georgis (2013) maintains, our humanity “renders us vulnerable to the possibility of being undone by each other” (13). Queer sex elicits an undoing that is possible because of our differences as humans, because of the differences between and among humans. Queerness undoes the mythic and sovereign homonormative subject, and queer sex can undo each one of us if we make ourselves vulnerable to the relationality and openness it requires. In becoming undone, the defenses that keep us boundaried and isolated come down: relationality is possible and new and better worlds get created, worlds not as structured by violence and oppression as those imagined in the fantasy of sovereignty.

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Endnotes

¹ In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz (2009) similarly maintains that “queerness...is not simply a being but a *doing*” (1; author’s emphasis).

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Non-Sexual Spooning and Inanimate Affections: Diversifying Intimate Knowledge

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Abstract

This article considers forms of non-normative intimate connection, which have been widely covered by the popular press: stranger intimacies at *The Snuggery*, a NY business where clients purchase non-sexual cuddling time, as well as objectum-sexuals who are attracted to and/or form intimate relationships with objects. Each case study illuminates the potential in diversifying intimate knowledge, offering pathways to examine socio-cultural constructions of intimacy and drawing on the regulation of affect to challenge dominant modes of relation.
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Résumé

Cet article considère les formes de relations intimes non normatives, qui ont fait l'objet d'une grande couverture par la presse populaire, c'est-à-dire l'intimité avec des étrangers à *The Snuggery*, une entreprise basée à New York où les clients peuvent faire l'achat de câlins à caractère non sexuel, ainsi que les objectophiles, qui sont attirés par des objets ou qui forment des relations intimes avec des objets. Chaque cas illustre le potentiel de la diversification des connaissances intimes, en offrant des façons d'examiner les constructions socioculturelles de l'intimité et en misant sur la réglementation pour mettre au défi les modes de relation dominants.
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In July 2009, Lisa Duggan and José Muñoz published a friendly back-and-forth exchange to the *Bully Bloggers* blog, entitled "*Freedom to Marry Our Pets* or What's Wrong with the Gays Today?" In a cheeky critique of ongoing rights-based campaigns for same-sex marriage in the U.S., Duggan and Muñoz (2009) lamented the loss of a radical queer politic, which, rather than seeking state approval, actively resists state involvement in sex and private life. Despite their shared dissent, Muñoz suggested to Duggan, "Let's roll with the pro-marriage gays for a minute," before continuing, "If marriage is the way you can be sure that our bonds count in the world [sic] then I might as well be married to my princess of a bulldog Dulce." Duggan concurred, writing, "if we want the state to legitimate our deepest love and intimate relationships, I'm with you on *Freedom to Marry Our Pets! Love Makes a Family, José!*" (n.p.).

Hitting on major 'cultural flashpoints', such as the 'slippery-slope' rhetoric invoked by the conservative Right, *Bully Bloggers* then launched the *Freedom to Marry Our Pets Society Page* (*Bully Bloggers* 2009), which invites people to announce their wedding engagements to beloved animal companions. Ranging from long-term courtships to whirlwind love affairs, critical theorists on this webpage have come on board to fly in the face of so-called 'proper' (read: human-human, state- and socially-sanctioned) intimacies. *Freedom to Marry Our Pets* is comprised of same-sex, polyamorous, incestuous, cross-species, intergenerational, and multi-household relationships. It humorously interrupts the legal and social marginalization of non-normative intimacies, while putting them in conversation with broader concerns of social justice and critical queer activism.

Illuminating links between the sexual and legal regulation of formalized versus non-formalized relationships and the limits of so-called 'free' expressions of intimacy and desire, the exchanges on the *Freedom to Marry Our Pets* webpage challenges the widespread neoliberal structurings of romantic and sexual life. As

dominant relationship models continue to re-assert idealized notions of natural monogamy, insular couplehood, and domestic bliss, it would seem that the requirements for 'appropriately-livable' sexual lives have less to do with sex itself and more to do with maintaining proper expressions—or, at least, appearances—of intimacy. This article examines the constructions of intimacy at stake in normative media discourses and considers the ways that affect is harnessed, mobilized, and/or limited in the popular news reporting on *The Snuggery* and on objectum-sexuals. In so doing, I seek to shift the conversation from its current focus on legal rights-based discourses and notions of 'acceptance' to consideration of broader de-centralized, de-individualized, and multiplicitous intimate connections that can and do span a range of relational interactions.

While *Freedom to Marry Our Pets* stands as a strategy to invoke and provoke—political conversation, these pronouncements of interspecies affection hardly reflect intent for follow-through in legal or ceremonial realms. In this sense, the web-based project may stand as a poignant challenge to normative, and specifically homonormative, modes of relation. But ultimately, the project does little to model what it means to live actively and consistently outside of current socio-legal constructions of intimacy and desire. The question arises: what about those who occupy space outside of these dominant structures in a more sustained way, and those who challenge normative models through their lived experiences of intimate relations? What about those who fail to live out proper intimacies, whether by choice or by circumstance? And what might be productively learned from inhabiting, or even from thinking seriously about, these kinds of intimate alternatives?

It is my contention that fostering discursive and material space for non-dominant intimacies allows for models of possibility to emerge—possibility for living life differently, for being with each other differently, and for finding, creating, and/or maintaining intimate bonds that interrupt the existing stronghold of normative affects. With this in mind, I take up two distinct but equally-revealing examples of so-called 'improper intimacies' that have found their way into popular news media in recent years. First, I contemplate the deeply ambivalent news coverage of *The Snuggery*, a female-run business where clients purchase non-sexual cuddling time. I then examine public discourses around

objectum-sexuals; people who are attracted to, and/or form intimate relationships with, objects. The public discourses surrounding objectum-sexuality raises the question of whether human-inanimate object relations are legible, only to dismiss them as nothing more than comical fodder. The media narratives in each of these cases simultaneously afford potential for a diversity of intimate structures and reveal the ways in which fields of intimate possibility are continually locked down and managed in dominant realms. Popular media coverage of *The Snuggery* and of objectum-sexuality (OS) raises critical aspects of the normalization of intimacy. In constructing distinct narratives that illuminate the differing economic, social, and political stakes of each case, related media coverage points to discernable boundaries that reduce intimate relations to private familial kinships or romantic bonds between two human actors. The anxious media backlash against professional cuddling and objectum-sexuality, however, also reveals spaces of potential rupture within current hierarchies of intimacy.

Even though these two cases diverge in many respects, I suggest that reading them alongside each other for the ways in which each has been framed in popular news might draw out complex narrative links between intimacy, sexuality, and socio-cultural affective regulation. In order to frame the larger discussion in this article, I open with an examination of the current socio-political regulations of intimacy and discuss how contemporary queer cultural theorists have engaged with these regulations in recent years.

On the Regulation of Normative Intimacies

This article is strongly informed by queer affect and cultural studies frameworks. I draw on these in my discussion of intimate possibilities in order to shift theoretical attention to the circulation of affect. With this conceptual move, I am not conflating affect with intimacy; rather, I intend to read the two alongside and through one another in order to draw out some of their productive overlaps and resonances. Opening with a rehearsal of some key writings on the regulation of intimacy contextualizes my analysis of professional cuddling and objectum-sexuality in the remainder of this article.

In her introduction to the edited collection *Intimacy*, Lauren Berlant (2000) offers a critical meditation on the role of intimacy in structuring everyday life. She

writes that, “usually, this story is set within zones of familiarity and comfort: friendship, the couple, and the family form, animated by expressive and emancipating kinds of love” (1). For Berlant, “institutions of intimacy” and “zones of intimacy” play a large role in affective possibilities (or the lack thereof). While these sites do not control affective bonds in a simplistic uni-directional or linear way, they significantly impact the types of intimate connections that are understood to be valid, valuable, and possible. Socio-legal and policy-based analyses offer important insights into the regulation of intimacy, but they account for only part of the equation; the affective work of regulation must also be considered. Berlant offers a compelling reminder that intimacy can be found in specific sites of encounter, but it can also “be portable, unattached to a concrete space: a drive that creates spaces around it through practices” (4). She wonders about the potentials of considering the unboundedness of intimacy, moving beyond the realms of institutional and physical connections and asking what might be made possible with an attentive mind to “more mobile spaces of attachment” (4).

In Berlant’s (2000) framing, normative ideologies of intimacy occur “when certain ‘expressive’ relations are promoted across public and private domains—love, community, patriotism—while other relations, motivated, say, by the ‘appetites,’ are discredited or simply neglected” (5). This hierarchy speaks to one aspect of what Nathan Rambukkana (2010) has named “intimate privilege,” and what others have discussed under the rubric of the biopolitics of normative intimacy. Notably, Jasbir K. Puar (2007) has linked the privatized organization of intimacy to biopolitical and necropolitical practices, while David Eng (2010) draws out the racialization of intimacy through marked and unmarked structures of kinship.

In *Terrorist Assemblages*, Puar (2007) takes aim at the growing political conflation between private and public spheres and lays out how normative models of domesticity are bound up in the “private liberty of intimacy” (126). This, in turn, often appeals to the type of public (state) legitimation of private life challenged by Duggan and Muñoz (2009) with their *Freedom to Marry Our Pets* web project invoked earlier. In discussing *Lawrence-Garner v. Texas*—which decriminalized sodomy in the U.S., while simultaneously relegating queer sex to private realms—Puar (2007) challenges the very

basis of the ruling, asking who has access to the kinds of private spaces that are delineated as being ‘acceptable’ in the first place (124). She positions these kinds of unmarked consequences of the ruling as biopolitical technologies of control—ones that are heavily raced, classed, and gendered—and states that, “the private is a racialized and nationalized construct insofar as it is granted not only to heterosexuals but to certain citizens and withheld from many others and from noncitizens” (124-125). She continues: “the private is, therefore, offered as a gift of recognition to those invested in certain normative renditions of domesticity” (124).

David Eng (2010), too, articulates the configuration of privacy and kinship structures as deeply racialized. Attending to the narratives of ‘choice’ in *The Feeling of Kinship*, he argues that “the neoliberal language of choice now helps to reconfigure not just the domestic but indeed the global marketplace as an expanded public field in which private interests and prejudices are free to circulate with little governmental regulation or restriction” (9). In this sense, normative domesticity—or domestinormativity, as Puar (2007) would call it—extends from individuals and couples through transnational networks and back again. Eng urges a critical understanding of how neoliberal notions of choice work together with unmarked racialized constructions of domesticity in order to produce the racialization of intimacy.

These types of biopolitical formations inform and run throughout Mel Chen’s (2012) recent work, which includes extensive considerations of ‘animacy’ as an analytic category. Chen takes up “animacy hierarchies”—complex systems of meaning where matter is deemed to be somewhere on a scale ranging from ‘animate’ to ‘inanimate’ and where subsequent value is then attached to that matter. Where something falls on the animacy hierarchy informs how much agency, activity, and choice is attributed to it. Central to Chen’s discussion is a critical challenge to normative Western framings of ‘animate’ and ‘inanimate’ objects, so as to expose how these linguistic categories are racialized, sexualized, gendered, ability-based, and species-oriented. These deep-seated, hierarchically organized ideas about animacy are confronted when non-normative forms of intimate connection, such as objectum-sexuality, appear. As I argue, the aggressive de-valuing and trivialization of disobedient structures of intimacy, as in the case of objectum-sex-

uality, points to the affective boundary work that is animated when animacy is recognized in matter that is usually understood to be ‘inanimate.’

Berlant (2000) suggests that “desires for intimacy that bypass the couple or the life narrative it generates have no alternative plots, let alone few laws and stable spaces of culture in which to clarify and cultivate them” (5). This literal and figurative lack of space works to regulate and control the types of intimacies that are allowed to develop, flourish, and evolve within dominant spheres. It is not that these marginalized intimacies cease to exist without majoritarian validation or that the goal should necessarily be inclusion into the dominant ethos, but rather that, through current normative framings, the productive potentialities of non-dominant intimacies are cut short and made to be impossible. In order to recuperate some of the possibilities offered by alternate forms of intimacy, marginalized forms of affective connection must be re-valued and taken seriously, in theory and alongside praxis.

An analytic prioritization of affect and animacy is one way to practice this re-valuing, since, as Chen (2012) asserts, animacy has the ability to “rewrite conditions of intimacy” by allowing for a de-vesting in neoliberal individualisms and an opening of space for different forms of communal connections (3). Berlant (2000) suggests that, intimacy “poses a question of scale that links the instability of individual lives to the trajectories of the collective” (3). In revisiting biopolitical formulations and/or the ways in which they are theorized, normative intimacy can be, and is, interrupted and refigured to allow for a variety of affective connections across a range of ‘non-normative’ spaces.

The claim that normative intimacy can be interrupted and refigured takes us to the crux of this article, which considers the questions of how *intimacy* might offer a way to think about possibilities for disrupting individualized domestic/normative models of existence, and further, how ‘improper’ affective connections might productively interrupt these kinds of normative domestic models by offering expanded possibilities for intimate relating. In the following sections, I more thoroughly engage with these questions through specific examples, starting with the stranger intimacies produced through professional cuddling services at *The Snuggery* in upstate New York.

‘Profiting off Intimacy,’ ‘Monetizing Love,’ and Other Sensible Affronts

Jackie Samuel, founder of *The Snuggery* in Penfield, NY, has withstood public outrage and hostile accusations directed at her because she exchanges non-sexual touch for pay. Providing direct access to “the therapeutic power of touch” (Agomuoh 2012), *The Snuggery* offers hourly services with individual cuddlers for roughly a dollar a minute. The interactions offered through *The Snuggery* draw on ideas similar to those of other small-scale social actions (e.g., Cuddle Parties, people who offer Free Hugs to passersby who find themselves wanting), which all assert the human need for intimate, non-sexual physical contact. Samuel and *The Snuggery* have very clear and precise ways of framing their work. The website explains that, although non-sexual touch in North America is often discouraged, “the research is clear: humans need touch to thrive” (TheSnuggery.org). According to Samuel, scientific study supports the health benefits of affectionate touch, which include lowering blood pressure, reducing stress, and curbing anxiety. *The Snuggery*, by its very framing, makes connections between physical encounters, health, and bodily processes, and affective and emotional responses. Though *The Snuggery* is set up as a domestic space, in a private dwelling complete with couches, beds, and other ‘home-y’ aesthetics, it disrupts normative interactions that typically unfold within the realm of private spheres by charging money for an act usually deemed to be ‘naturally occurring’—i.e., affectionate touch.

While the explicitly therapeutic and healing rhetoric upon which Samuel founded her business has lent credibility to her work in the eyes of some, the ‘professional cuddler’ also has faced significant antagonistic, reactionary responses from neighbours and strangers alike. This backlash raises a series of questions: what happens when a price tag is put onto emotion work, which is expected to be free of charge and is presumed to be offered out of love, duty, and/or affection? What happens when relational economies are challenged through capitalizing on the gendered division of labour? And what happens when emotional encounters are offered, for pay, to a multitude of people, rather than to just a few intimates, and to people who are often strangers?

When looking to popular news coverage of Samuel’s work, the answers look bleak. Since *The Daily Mail* first interviewed Samuel in 2012 and drew attention to

her seemingly 'unusual' business, a series of online articles have cropped up with their own views on Samuel's venture. Though often accompanied by pejorative descriptors like "weird," "odd," and "bizarre," the published pieces tend to approach *The Snuggery* largely as a legitimate and respectable business, at least at a surface level. The fact that these intimate interactions belong to a specifically capitalist endeavour works, in this case, to legitimize the claim to the 'professionalism' of Samuel's cuddling. The *International Business Times*, for instance, opened its November 2012 story with the caption, "A Rochester woman has turned intimacy into a commodity by starting her own professional cuddling business" (Agomuoh 2012, n.p.). Presented as a matter of fact operation, professionalizing cuddling *makes sense* within contemporary forms of capitalism.

These stories also, however, tend to attribute Samuel with a relatively benign—sometimes verging on dismissively 'silly'—approach (see, for example, Grossman 2012; Stampler 2012; Villalva 2012). This downplaying and dismissiveness is accompanied by boundary-protecting invocations of 'pure' and 'natural' intimacy formations. Those who voice their disapproval of Samuel's work most frequently accuse her of 'selling intimacy' or of being an 'intimacy profiteer'. These reactions make clear that intimacy is somehow assumed to be 'sacred', (supposedly) 'untouchable', and, most of all, free of charge. This is especially true in relation to a woman circulating intimacy within privileged forms of social capital. Samuel has been quoted as saying, "Some have said I am worse than a prostitute because they think snuggling is more intimate than sex. I've been told I'm monetizing love" (Samuel quoted in Boyle 2012, n.p.). Such statements speak to how *intimacy* and *love* have been equated and naturalized, while denying the complex interactions between intimacy and sex or between sex and love. Even if the whorephobia in this reaction, "worse than a prostitute," can be temporarily bracketed off, the implicit hierarchy of relations it sets up cannot. According to dominant scripts, buying and/or selling sex can *occasionally* be 'justified' (e.g., out of desperation or as a matter of purely physical release). Indeed, the coverage of Samuel and *The Snuggery* implies quiet acceptance that sex is commodified, while, by contrast, intimacy is not (yet). Physical contact without sex is seen to be necessarily and inherently more intimate, which coincidentally makes it more threatening to the

dominant/normative order of things. Cuddling for pay is, therefore, coded as being "worse" on the social morality scale, thereby opening cuddling for pay to more vehement opposition.

This reading is both supported and contradicted by Samuel's personal position: having entered the business as a graduate student, Samuel reads as a white female. She is a mother of a young child and makes claims to having a 'natural proficiency' for snuggling. *The Daily Mail* cites Samuel as saying that, though she *hopes* it comes naturally to everybody, she feels that she was "born knowing how to snuggle" (Boyle 2012, n.p.). The racialized and intellectual privilege Samuel occupies inspires complex boundary work that reinforces the limits of intimate space. The vast majority of the articles published at the time of writing this article have been sure to distance Samuel's *non-sexual* economic exchanges from pretty much any and all forms of sex work, by continually foregrounding that, "Sexual activity—or any touching that is sexual in nature—is against the rules" (Grossman 2012, n.p.). These framings simultaneously invoke traditionalist, Victorian, and colonial notions of women's work as existing necessarily and exclusively within the domestic sphere and implicitly places Samuel's work firmly within the realm of emotional labour, while focusing on the gendered aspects of intimacy and care.

To clarify, my claim here is *not* that snuggling is an act necessarily void of intimacy. Samuel herself acknowledges a level of intimacy, or at least affection, in interpersonal touch. These types of intimacies created through the work-based connections of professional cuddling—often between strangers and rarely in sustained or ongoing relationships—push back against dominant scripts that prioritize sustained and ongoing monogamous connections. The prescriptive qualities of the attachments and assumptions repeatedly invoked in coverage of *The Snuggery* are crucial to this writing. Several misguided claims populate media narratives, such as the suggestion that sex is never intimate when paid for and that non-sexual acts of touch are always already intimate experiences. Potential intimacies forged at *The Snuggery* are not less impactful simply because they are part of an economic exchange nor are they inherently less affectively charged for those who may experience them. That said, intimate connections are also not a necessary or predictable part of the cuddling

interaction. Lines of thought that imply otherwise not only pre-empt and prescribe limited affective or emotive experiences of touch, but also reinstate strict regulations and narrow possibilities around the relationship between sex, sexuality, and intimacy—and, again, not incidentally, around interactions with racialization, gender, class markers, and other forms of social capital.

In order to destabilize these supposedly self-evident and coherent narratives, intimacy must be brought to the surface and rethought in attempts to resist normalizing imperatives. Being attentive to alternate sites and circulations of intimacy works to expand the horizons of intimate investments. As Berlant (2000) offers, “rethinking intimacy calls out not only for redescription but for transformative analyses of the rhetorical and material conditions that enable hegemonic fantasies to thrive in the minds and on the bodies of subjects.” Intimacy, she explains, typically comes with obligations to “remain unproblematic” and, when it fails to fulfill this fantastic relation, it evokes more hostile attempts at regulation and control (6-7). Such hostility organizes the logics of reporting on *The Snuggery*, wherein attempts to delegitimize or minimize the potential impact of these affective encounters remain journalistically paramount.

The Woman Who Married the Eiffel Tower, Redux

If Jackie Samuel’s professional relationships problematize the so-called “good life” of intimacy in one way, Erika Eiffel’s personal relationships present a challenge in another, as hers abrade the accepted limits of dominant and ‘appropriate’ models of intimate relations. Eiffel identifies as “objectum-sexual”—someone who forms significant attachments to, and has intimate relationships with, non-human, non-animal objects. The details of these relationships vary depending on the object and the person connecting with it. Object relations are sometimes experienced as sexual, sometimes as non-sexual but still romantic, and are almost always characterized as profoundly intimate. Objectum-sexuals, like a variety of other desiring subjects, may be either monogamous or non-monogamous and may structure their relationships in a myriad of different ways. Importantly, those who publicly identify with objectum-sexuality—sometimes taking on an identity of *objectophile*—frame their desires as expressions of their sexuality or sexual ‘orientation’, but are clear in distinguishing these desires from object-based fetishes or kinks.¹

According to personal accounts published through online sources like the Objectum-Sexuality (OS) Internationale website (objectum-sexuality.org), objectum-sexuals are trying to make sense of and live out their sexual and intimate lives within the same dominant human-human focused relationship models as everyone else. Though a liberal claim to normalcy is invoked in these narrations and though OS is not characterized by an explicit attempt to be subversive, the hostile and reactionary response to objectophilia and those who identify with objectum-sexuality clearly demarcate OS as another decidedly ‘improper’ intimacy, one most often rejected as invalid and upheld as categorically impossible. Similar to public reaction faced by Samuel, these frenzied reactions illuminate telling boundary work around the ‘proper’ role of intimacy in domestically normative, mononormative, human- and hetero-focused worlds. With Eiffel and other OS relationships, however, the challenges to normative understandings of intimacy go one step further: whereas Samuel’s professional cuddling services draw heavily on the language of *human* need and *human* nature, OS relationships tend to sidestep these framings altogether. I wonder what sense can be made of this discrepancy, especially given my task of reading both cases in the context of diversifying possibilities around intimate knowledge. Instead of centering an innate drive for interpersonal touch, OS relationships move away from human-focused claims and call for rethinking the very terms of so-called ‘healthy’ relations. The affective and emotional connections of human-object relationships call into question some of the most foundational assumptions of intimate normalcy, including that intimacy is formed between humans, or between humans and domesticated animals. Such questioning parallels other public narratives of objectum-sexuality, which focus on access to and inclusion in dominant spheres.

It would appear that the spokespeople for the recognition of OS have made some headway in terms of public visibility and their stories are slowly becoming more nuanced in the media. After appearing in a somewhat sensationalist UK ‘news-doc’ piece called *Strange Love: Married to the Eiffel Tower* (Piotrowska 2008), Erika Eiffel started a press tour to speak further about objectum-sexuality and the misconceptions and misinformation propagated by the film. She gave several interviews, appeared on prime time TV and in popular news

sources, and spoke publicly about her own experiences of intimacy in past and current relationships with an archery bow (with whom Eiffel collaborated for archery competitions), the Berlin Wall, and the Eiffel Tower (whom she married in an extra-legal commitment ceremony in 2007). Through these interviews, it becomes clear that Eiffel not only identifies as objectum-sexual, but also as an 'animist'—one who has “always felt everything around [her] possesses a sentience, possesses a soul or energy, a flow, a force” (Eiffel quoted in Spahic and Pick 2013, n.p.). This explicit invocation of animacy offers an invitation to think about objectum-sexuality further through Chen's (2012) work and encourages an examination of affective animacy through the in/animate affections present in OS relationships.

An 'animist' worldview, per Eiffel's description, clearly challenges dominant hierarchies of animacy that firmly demarcate bounds between human, non-human animal, and non-animal matter. This understanding of animism runs throughout Eiffel's romantic and sexual desires and calls for a re-description and re-visioning of intimate possibilities. The intimacies lived out by Eiffel and other objectum-sexuals model non-normative forms of affective connection, and they frequently invoke panicked affective responses from those encountering this type of unfamiliar, or 'strange', non-normativity. Both the modeling of possibility and the invocation of panic are equally, though differently, telling. Since, as Chen (2012) instructs, animacy hierarchies “conceptually arrange human life, disabled life, animal life, plant life, and forms of nonliving material in orders of value and priority” (13), they are central to world orderings. Where such hierarchies are re-organized in ways that destabilize the totalizing dominance of patriarchal hegemonic structures, a profound threat is registered. In response, almost without fail, the boundaries of hierarchical categories are again re-enforced. Being in love with the Eiffel Tower remains pathologized as emotionally limited and strange. In similar fashion, paying for cuddling services is re-scripted as indicative of a personal, intimate, and affective lack.

Non-dominant intimacies that act as models of possibility are consistently devalued, trivialized, or made to be impossible by publics at large. The idea of finding intimacy with inanimate objects is certainly no exception to this. Through online news stories and video interviews featuring Eiffel, it becomes clear that ob-

jectophilia is seen to be so impossible that it is (practically) unimaginable outside of the realm of joke or parody. Article after article posted to online news sources ridicule those who claim to have found love or significant relationship intimacy with objects. From stories titled “Woman With Objects Fetish Marries Eiffel Tower” (Simpson 2008) and “The Ride of Her Life: A Woman Marries a Roller Coaster” (Newsome n.d.), it is clear that objectum-sexuality has been almost gleefully misrecognized and misrepresented in the media and in general publics more broadly. Presenting OS through mockery attempts to reassert the dominant ordering of animacy—and the majoritarian understandings of where a human might find intimacy—confirming Chen's (2012) claim that, “the inanimate and animate are both subject to the biopolitical hand” (193). As part of this hierarchical boundary work, Eiffel has faced violent linguistic assaults for her outspokenness and media visibility. Still, she has continued to be a spokesperson and advocate for objectum-sexuals. In fact, *The Globe and Mail* published another story in August 2012, which features new interviews with Eiffel (Boesveld 2012), and she is a central figure in the 2013 documentary, *Animism: People Who Love Objects* (directed by Bill Spahic).

It seems that, slowly, the representation of objectum-sexuality may be diversifying. More recent publications and stories take a notably different tone from those published a few years ago. They are more accepting of objectum-sexuality as a legitimate orientation from the get-go and rely on objectum-sexuals themselves to provide the majority of the narrative about their sexual and intimate relations. What might this potential shift in discourse indicate? What, if anything, is it that is changing through more diverse representations and what purpose does the incorporation into dominant spheres serve? Perhaps expanding discussions of gay marriage and other non-heteronormative sexualities have led the way to a discursive legitimation of other marginalized relations and intimate structures of attachment—as long as they are marriage-like. If so, perhaps the 'slippery slope' scare-tactic rhetoric is not so foundationless after all, as leftist naysayers have claimed. Still, the reactions to accounts of OS continue to be dominated by scoffing, de-valuing, and denying the legitimacy of object-human relationships. Accordingly, any seeming shifts towards greater acceptance should be approached with justifiable caution.

I wonder how further analysis that is attentive to animacy hierarchies might consider OS as an anti-normative, non-dominant challenge to structures of intimacy, even as existing narratives of OS invoke, and sometimes appeal to, liberalist acceptance into the realm of normalcy. When considering that the open and visible parts of OS communities are still quite small in numbers, the 'who' of who is speaking matters. Who is granted authority to speak about objectum-sexuality and who is not? Certainly, there is an element of personal and political risk involved in 'going public' as an OS. This begs the important question of who can risk being visible as part of the OS community in the first place? Who is recognized as being an authority on the subject of their own experience and who is recognized as a speaking subject at all? These are some of the questions that run throughout the work of Berlant (2000), Eng (2010), Puar (2007), as well as others. The complex intertwining of racialization, biopolitics, and affective attachments relegates certain bodies to limited speaking roles, which, in turn, undoubtedly impacts who is able and willing to speak publicly about their private attachments.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to highlight similarities between the seemingly very different cases of Jackie Samuel and Erika Eiffel. I focused on the ways in which the anxieties and hostilities raised by such 'strange' or 'improper' intimacies illuminate various facets of normalization and their role in the regulation of affect. Though both women evoke similar responses from dominant publics, primarily trivialization, ridicule, and dismissal, there are specificities to each case that point to distinct elements of intimate regulation: who and what are acceptable objects of emotional and affective attention and how that attention can be appropriately articulated. These cases expose the ways that imagining diverse forms of intimacy is being limited, while also offering alternate possibilities for being and relating in the world. Not only are material conditions of intimacy regulated through discursive framings, legal rulings, and social mores, but the expressions of affective connection are also privileged and/or disavowed in line with dominant understandings. As I have drawn out, which affective connections are privileged and which are disavowed is informed by hierarchies of animacy, agency, freedom, and choice.

The narratives that can be articulated around affective bonds and intimate attachments are limited by the systemic devaluation of those whose bodies, whose work, whose desires, and whose intimacies somehow get it 'wrong'. Connections that are deemed to be 'improper' are pre-empted by and debased through a wide range of socio-cultural constructions of intimacy, affect, and desire. While the production of affect cannot be simply controlled, as Sara Ahmed (2004) reminds us, it can be, and is consistently, harnessed, mobilized, and/or invoked in ways that are informed by racialized hierarchies of animacy and agency, only to be further reinforced through structures of intimate privilege. Yet still, getting it 'wrong' may open up crucial and productive paths. In analyzing various sites of intimacy, my main interest lies in exploring what might be gained from taking seriously 'non-normative' intimate attachments (i.e., those formed outside of heterosexual, white, middle-class, couple-focused, reproductive, and human-human imperatives). I want to consider further how we might imagine these changes specifically outside of dominant institutions or socio-legal structures. Or, at least, how we might productively fail to live up to the imperatives they embody. After all, as J. Jack Halberstam (2011) asserts, failing to live up to oppressive and restrictive imperatives can be an important practice of resistance and a powerful statement of dissent. Perhaps the intimate knowledges that are forged within the moments of encounter in professional cuddling and within objectum-sexual relationships can be instructive for imagining ways for how we can all fail harder, fail better, and fail with more affective spark.

Endnotes

¹ The sources consulted for this article are restricted to narrative accounts of objectum-sexuality that circulate in public domains. These include the OS Internationale website, a variety of online articles and interviews, and the documentary films referenced. Thus, the views presented in this article may or may not be representative of larger communities of OS people. They do, however, reflect what has appeared in public venues to date at the time of this writing.

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Textured Activism: Affect Theory and Transformational Politics in Transnational Queer Palestine-Solidarity Activism

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Abstract

How do we conceptualize social and political transformation? What possibilities arise for our political imaginings when we examine the approaches and orientations of activist practice in the everyday? Using queer and affect theory, I examine dualistic thinking in social movement practices to propose a model for thinking about the ethics of solidarity in practice. I consider this model of solidarity through the texture of activism and by examining the everyday practices of solidarity in the queer Palestine movement.

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Résumé

De quelle façon concevons-nous la transformation sociale et politique? Quelles possibilités s'offrent à notre imagination politique lorsque nous examinons les approches et les orientations de l'activisme au quotidien? À l'aide de la théorie queer et de la théorie des affects, j'examine la pensée dualiste dans les pratiques des mouvements sociaux afin de proposer un modèle d'examen de l'éthique de la solidarité dans la pratique. Je considère ce modèle de solidarité selon la texture de l'activisme et en examinant les pratiques quotidiennes de la solidarité du mouvement queer palestinien.

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This paper considers our imaginings of social and political transformation through emergent social movements and theories of affect. Turning to the growing transnational queer Palestine-solidarity movement, I examine how affect theory can offer new considerations for transformational politics and solidarity activism. What possibilities arise from thinking about activism and transformation differently? What new approaches and orientations can we incorporate into both academic and activist work on contemporary movement building? Amidst a historical moment that is consumed with imagining change at the revolutionary, global, and mass movement level, I ask what it means to consider transformation as not simply a revolutionary process, but as a texture of life that structures our circulation through social and political fields.

In her book, *Touching Feeling*, Eve Sedgwick (2003) introduces the concept of *texture* as a technique for thinking about agency outside of dualistic thinking. Sedgwick's provocation to think differently about agency has far reaching implications, particularly if we use her work to reconsider how we interpret and narrate social movements. Extending Sedgwick's work on texture to my analysis of the transnational queer Palestine-solidarity movement (which I will refer to as "queer Palestine-solidarity" or "the queer Palestine movement" for brevity), I want to evaluate what a textured reading of queer activism contributes to our approaches to social movement building. To consider the texture of activism is to consider the ethics of solidarity in practice: its productive and transformative possibilities simultaneous to its limits. Far from simply celebrating queer activism as the vanguard for utopian futurities, I want to propose a turn to the queer peripheries of larger social movements, such as the queer emergences in the larger Palestine-solidarity movement, to reflect on how linear narratives of progress in social change are shaken through the transformative politics of a textured approach to activism.¹

Queer theory and affect studies, sibling fields emergent from feminist, psychoanalytic, phenomeno-

logical, and poststructural theorizing, are in the business of shaking critical theories of the social and political. As both fields trouble binaries, queer theory and affect studies are two intellectual orientations invested in suspending dualistic models of thinking. Yet despite the discomfort these fields might have with binaries, it remains difficult for us to think and talk about justice in the everyday practices of social movements and activism apart from them. If oppositional politics are predicated on logics of good and bad, is there a way of building transformative practices beyond the promise of liberation, revolution, or utopia through textured transformations? Such a model must be receptive to the complex ways that social movements are negotiated through the space in between binary opposites.

To consider the affective life of activism—to consider the texture of activist movements—is to look to the everyday of activism. This is work that is already occurring within social movements, but rarely examined as the site of activist accomplishment. In turning to the texture of activism, I hope to redirect our attention in transformational politics towards the everyday movements of activist practices. I begin by considering the problem of dualisms, looking at both queer theory and affect studies to examine how both fields intervene in tropes of binary thinking emblematic of social movements. Next, I turn to the queer Palestine movement to reflect on the possibilities emergent in rethinking transformation through a textured reading. I conclude by examining how affect can attend to transformation and propose some considerations for work on social movements.

Dualisms and Transformations

Dualistic narratives, such as good/bad, dominated/liberated, and oppressed/privileged, circulate throughout contemporary activist cultures and social movements. As a legacy of the predominance of dualism in Western thought, these narratives have, on the one hand, served oppositional politics well, offering clear sites for interventions into the structures of injustice; on the other hand, however, dualistic narratives have stalled our ability to envision transformation when opposition becomes entrenched in subjugated identities (Brown 1995). As our models for transformation remain embedded in the logics of binary thinking, social movements eventually get stuck on the categories mo-

bilized for articulating injustice and asymmetry, even if these categories cease to serve us well. What happens when asymmetry becomes more symmetrical? When the conditions of subjugation have been transformed? Or, when the terms of subjugation need to be transformed in order to alleviate injustice?

The problem of binary thinking is not simply an intellectual concern, but primarily a concern about how to mobilize transformational politics under the conditions of neoliberalism. The neoliberal period, shaped by the conditions of globalization and the normalization of liberal values of individual freedom, produces a new set of challenges to movement building beyond the parameters of state repression alone. For Lisa Duggan (2003), “*privatization and personal responsibility...define the central intersections between the culture of neoliberalism and its economic vision*” (12), which has shifted the terms of politics away from redistributive goals towards increasingly consumptive models of equality compatible with capitalism. The insidious effects of neoliberalism collapse the social onto the individual, where personal experience supplants radical critique (Mohanty 2013, 971). The slip into depoliticized individualism is made possible because our intimacies and affective lives fall easily into the very logics we may oppose, where “we become libidinally and erotically invested in the status quo of mass lockdown...reproducing the racialized and sexualized economies of benevolence and exploitation that fortify so much of conservative, liberal, and even radical praxis” (Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira 2008, 137).

If neoliberal co-options of oppositional politics rescript liberatory projects into the very folds of global capitalism, as Anna Agathangelou, Daniel Bassichis, and Tamara Spira (2008) have argued, then we need new tools for thinking about transformational politics. Although dualisms are not exclusive to neoliberalism, our conceptual reliance on dualistic thinking facilitates these slippages in the neoliberal period, since the translation of oppositional subjectivity into inclusion is made easier by binaries of inclusion and exclusion. Sedgwick (2003) suggests that our investment in dualistic frames of thought, such as repression and liberation, trap us in a discursive field that misses key ways of seeing and interpreting how agency functions (12). Sedgwick is concerned with our impulses towards essentializing anti-essentialist discourses, which she sees playing

out in approaches to deconstruction and gender theory. Drawing on the underlying contradiction in Foucault's work on the repressive hypothesis, she suggests that our attachments to repression and hegemony versus liberation narrow our ability to conceive of agency that is not reactive. Instead, Sedgwick argues that it is "the middle ranges of agency that offer space for effectual creativity and change" (13). Her proposal that we think through the middle ranges, rather than the extremities of the repression/liberation dichotomy, intervenes into tropes that both theorists and activists have relied on for articulating transformational politics.

Reflecting on the common critical perspectives that center on logics of being somehow outside of sites of critique—concepts such as "behind," "beyond," or "beneath"—Sedgwick (2003) argues that these approaches to critique continue to rely on dualistic logics, which are only capable of imagining possibility in fantasies of egalitarianism. Instead, she offers the analytic approach of *beside*, which "comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations" (8). As an alternative to a model that calls for our liberation through inclusion into the neoliberal order, Sedgwick's proposition invites us to articulate agency and change alongside the dominant order of neoliberalism. Coupled with the social position of the margins, Sedgwick's use of *beside* can be extended as a tool for both articulating injustice and reshaping the very borders of the inclusion/exclusion binary. This approach both roots transformational practices in the daily realities of neoliberalism's order and unhinges our imaginaries from those routines that keep us embedded in dualistic logics.

Sedgwick's (2003) proposal to think through the middle ranges of agency is not a simple dismissal of notions of difference, such as identity; instead, she suggests that we need to recognize how the discursive field of identity shapes reality and respond through nondualistic approaches to understanding subjectivity, agency, and change (12). She suggests that this nondualistic approach attends to the texture of daily life and to the affective processes through which we encounter the world (17). If we take cue from Sedgwick's work on the middle ranges, how might we deploy new models for imagining transformation that do not fall back on nar-

ratives that only chart the progress of activism through the singular and idealized transition from repression to liberation?

To think about oppositional politics alongside repression/liberation is especially difficult because the foundational narratives of social movements rely on the binary of subjugation versus liberation for articulating injustice. My suggestion here is not that we should abandon claims of subjugation or the call for liberation, but that we might reconsider these claims as points of encounter for engaging in transformative processes, rather than as conclusions, goals, or the sole destinations for social change. This may seem abstract—and, indeed, the thought experiment of thinking non-dualistically is a difficult abstraction—however, to think through the middle ranges is to turn our attention to the more mundane victories of social movements. I turn to queer theory coupled with affect theory to examine how these theories offer a flexibility to subjectivity and agency which open up to the middle range in concrete, rather than purely abstract terms.

Queer and affect theories employ logics that lend well to thinking alongside dualism, especially when read with theories of solidarity and transformational politics. Academic work on social movements and solidarity has largely been dominated by its disciplinary origins in sociology (Ruggiero and Montagna 2008), political economy (Mouffe 1995; Calhoun 2002; Hardt and Negri 2004; Spinner-Halev 2008), and philosophy (Scholz 2008; Pensky 2008). As fields on the margins outside of traditional disciplines, affect studies and queer theory offer new interpretative tools for thinking about social change. Queer theory and affect studies are fields that attend to both the individual and the collective, while neither reducing one to the other nor imagining them as discrete. For instance, queer theory approaches sexual subjectivity and desire through both psychoanalytic and social lenses; similarly, affect studies attends to the relationship between experience, emergence, and subjectivity through encounters across the self, the other, and spatial fields.

Ann Cvetkovich (2011) proposes that queer theory and affect studies are coextensive fields at the same time that they are heterogeneous (172). This heterogeneity is perhaps best highlighted as a relationship of ambivalence that emerges out of poststructural critique, but manifests as an investment in the multiple

frames that both fields invite. Queerness's legacy is that of disruption, discomfort, and the failure to properly fit (Halberstam 2011). Likewise, affect is so attractive a framework precisely because it cannot be attended to as a homogenous, coherent, or fixed approach (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). In each case, however, this ambivalence serves these frameworks well, speaking to the complexity of social life, rather than stabilizing our ability to "know" the field. Indeed, queer theory and affect studies are so appealing to contemporary critical scholars, such as Sedgwick, Cvetkovich, Heather Love (2011) and Jasbir Puar (2007), precisely because they offer us alternatives to the prescribed frameworks commonly used for making sense of the world.

Love (2011) argues that, "the semantic flexibility of queer—its weird ability to touch almost everything—is one of the most exciting things about it...the word still maintains its ability to move, to stay outside, and to object to the world as it is given" (182). Through the simultaneous attentiveness to the injuries of structural violences and the attending claims to justice, queer theory holds the capacity to suspend the binary logics that root and fix those claims into models of good and bad, liberation and repression. Further, Judith Butler (1993) argues that, "if the term 'queer' is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes" (19). The shared orientations and flexibility across queer theory broadly and Sedgwick's method of texture specifically, opens to different ways of imagining and articulating the practices of transformational movements beyond repression/liberation. Sedgwick's analytic approach of texture is oriented to queer's framework, one situated *beside* normative systems and *across* the middle ranges of agency. I turn now to an examination of the queer Palestine movement, a site that both reveals and troubles how we might re-imagine transformational politics in our contemporary moment through a textured approach to activism.

Transnational Queer Solidarity

The emergence of the queer Palestine movement over the last decade has marked a particularly compelling new frame for re-imagining transforma-

tional politics under the conditions of contemporary globalization and neoliberalism. Converging with Palestine-based queer and sexual rights organizations such as ASWAT, alQaws, Pinkwatching Israel, and PQBDS,² transnational queer solidarity groups have multiplied across North America and Europe, often (though not exclusively) under the name Queers Against Israeli Apartheid in groups based in Toronto, New York, Seattle, and Vancouver.³ Solidarity across these diverse groups, both in terms of geography and political ideology, is complex and I am unable to offer a survey of their work here. Instead, I focus on the discursive techniques of the transnational, rather than localized aspects of this movement, to foreground a textured approach to activism that uncouples the success of social movements, such as the queer Palestine movement, from the liberation of the subjects of solidarity. The transnational, as gestured to in the cross-bordered geography of the concept, lends itself conceptually to the middle range or in-between. Cutting across the borders of the nation, regional geography, and social identities, the transnational is a kind of middle range, anchored across multiple locations geographically and abstracted through the discursive field of solidarity politics, cultures of globalization, and transnational flows.⁴

In November 2012, I participated in the first gathering of the queer Palestine movement at the 2012 World Social Forum: Free Palestine. This gathering, called *Queer Visions at the World Social Forum*, joined transnational solidarity activists and Palestinian activists from across the Middle East, Europe, and North America for the first time. Drawing on the public documents produced during the meetings of the *Queer Visions* gathering, I argue that we should turn to these moments in social movement building as key sites for imagining transformational possibilities. My aim here is twofold: first, to highlight emergent practices of queer social movement building in a transnational context, which center on social change aside from the liberation of the subject; and second, to offer a textured interpretive lens for articulating transformational politics for social movements more generally in a neoliberal era. The generative possibilities of activism in the queer Palestine movement emerge in four ways: by side stepping the logics of inclusion; through a push towards the heterogeneity and multiplicity of struggles in movement building; by re-visioning transformation beyond the

structures of our current social order; and by negotiating identity ambivalently. I want to expand on each of these features to draw out some of the ways that a textured reading of the queer Palestine solidarity movement and its transnational forms of queer solidarity can reveal new considerations for transformational politics and solidarity activism.

First, by side stepping the logics of inclusion, queer Palestine-solidarity activism mobilizes a form of queer intervention that foregrounds critiques of colonialism, racism, and neoliberalism simultaneous to its queer politic (Organizing Committee of Queer Visions 2012). In her presentation at the World Social Forum, Haneen Maikey (2012) articulated the struggle for queer Palestinians in the solidarity movement outside of the terms of inclusion, by arguing that the political project for queer Palestinians is not about “gay rights or identity politics or struggle for acceptance. We don’t want anyone to accept us” (n.p.). Maikey’s refusal of the terms of inclusion, such as those based on calls for acceptance, does not preclude a queer intervention; rather, the refusal suggests that the queer intervention is an analytic, rather than subjective one—to include an analytic intervention in a political struggle, rather than a call for belonging.⁵ As an intervention, rather than an assertion of stable identity or belonging, this gesture unsettles the normative call for inclusion of sexual rights movements and turns us to the political stakes *beside* those of sexual liberation/repression.

The distinction in the language of queer intervention is key, since the terms for transformation are not directed towards the Israeli state’s inclusion of queer Palestinians nor the call for Palestinian civil society to accept queers. Instead, the queer intervention that side steps inclusion brings to the forefront the already active role “of Palestinian queers and people fighting against pinkwashing as part of the broader Palestine liberation and solidarity movement” (Queer Visions 2012b). The call for queer solidarity in this case is predicated differently from normative sexual rights discourses, which rely on a model that expands liberal rights to include those sexual subjects who have been expelled; what Lisa Duggan (2002) has described as the neoliberalization of gay rights movements emblematic of homonormativity (179). Instead, queer solidarity calls for a dismantling of the very systems of colonial and imperial intervention to achieve transformation, rather than a call for solidar-

ity based on sexual liberation and queer belonging. This does not mean that negotiations and claims to belonging and inclusion are irrelevant to queer Palestinian subjectivity; rather, it points to the strategic distinction in movement discourse that predicates the terms of transnational solidarity on the basis of analytic intervention through queer critique, rather than identification with the sexual subjectivities of queer Palestinians.

Second, through a push towards the heterogeneity and multiplicity of struggles in movement building, the queer intervention disrupts the homogenizing impulses of large social movements that flatten transformational politics and embed social movements in binary thinking. This flattening occurs when movements become over-determined by a single axis of transformation, such as the focus on decolonization in the absence of gender or sexual rights. Transnational feminist critique has offered one of the strongest bodies of work that examine the problems of homogenization in feminist movements, particularly through the marginalization of racialized women (hooks 2000; Mohanty 2003). In keeping with these forms of feminist critique, the queer Palestine movement intervenes by simultaneously investing in the decolonization struggle of the Palestine liberation movement and refusing the homogenization of the larger movement’s terms for justice. In the *Pinkwashing Statement* video (Queer Visions 2012a), which documents the declaration presented by *Queer Visions* at the World Social Forum general assembly, queer activists intervened in the larger movement by injecting a queer analysis into the statements made at the general assembly. This demonstrates that, rather than simply calling for the addition of queer representation in the Palestine movement, the queer emergence within the larger solidarity movement refuses the normalization of a homogenous struggle, by insisting that the World Social Forum recognize pinkwashing as a key strategy of Israeli state practices.⁶ This critique exemplifies a middle range intervention, which simultaneously contends with the project of liberation, while at the same time, suspending an investment in representational freedom for articulating political agency.

Third, queer interventions in the movement interrupt the nationalist and normative claims that are replicated in the larger Palestine-solidarity and liberation movements through patriarchal and heteronormative nationalisms that place burdens of reproductive fu-

turity onto the bodies of women. The queer movement thus has a substantive role in disrupting the normative claims of masculinist nationalisms, by challenging heteronormativity and patriarchy in anti-colonial movements and offering textured models of political intervention uncoupled from stable categories of nationalism and gender essentialism. Although a substantial portion of the queer Palestine movement's intervention relies on a queer critique of Israeli state pinkwashing practices, which use gay rights to draw attention away from state violence, the queer critique manifests through an explicit intervention into the "fight against racism, Islamophobia, and forms of sexual and bodily oppressions including patriarchy, sexism, homophobia and transphobia in all societies" (Queer Visions 2012b). In connecting state and bodily violence in the queer intervention, the *Queer Visions* statement pushes against the current social order to call for different forms of transformations beyond a single axis.

Lastly, I want to draw attention to the way that sexuality and sexual identity are deployed in the queer solidarity movement. In keeping with the refusal of inclusion discussed above, queer interventions resist the impulse to mobilize around claims of sexual identity as the primary way of conceptualizing transformation. Instead, the queerness of these sites of activism resides in the disruptions and tensions that queer activists interject into normative narratives of national belonging and subjectivity. Here, queer activism mobilizes against practices of homonormativity and homonationalism to challenge the dominant narratives that shape both hegemonic relations and dominant discourses in social movements.

Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism builds on Duggan's (2002) work on homonormativity, which describes the neoliberalization of sexual subjectivity. Homonationalism furthers Duggan's critique of the neoliberal shift in sexual subjectivity in the West, by coupling the idea of normative claims from homosexual subjects into state inclusion with mobilizations of liberal and normative queers as exceptional subjects of the state, in contrast to queer deviants (e.g., the terrorist) as threats to the state (Puar 2007, 38–39). Similarly, Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira (2008) highlight the idea of *affective economies*, a concept that is kin to Puar's homonationalism, but which foregrounds how the seduction into neoliberal subjecthood functions.

While Puar locates the homonationalist in the crux of economic mobility and civil recognition, Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira offer a more affective explanation of the homonationalist subject. For them,

the circulation and mobilization of feelings of desire, pleasure, fear, and repulsion utilized to seduce all of us into the fold of the state—the various ways in which we become invested emotionally, libidinally, and erotically in global capitalism's mirages of safety and inclusion. We refer to this as a process of seduction to violence that proceeds through false promises of an end to oppression and pain. It is precisely these affective economies that are playing out as gay and lesbian leaders celebrate their own newfound equality only through the naturalization of those who truly belong in the grasp of state captivity. (122)

For Puar and Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira, the key to understanding the power of hegemonic adaptability is to understand how subjectivity and identification emerge and are reconfigured through affective relations. How we belong, and how we desire to belong, are not fixed notions in space and time. Rather, belonging is textured: it is struggled for (such as in the sexual liberation and gay rights movements); it is seduced (in the case of the neoliberalization of sexuality); and it is contested (in the cases of queer resistance movements). The transnational queer Palestine solidarity movement highlights the tension across all three of the above processes, between the call for rights, the cooption into neoliberalism, and the disruption of both these claims in the realm of queer ambivalence.

As Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira (2008) have suggested, the impulse to be seduced into the fold of hegemonic systems is at play in sexual rights movements. Thus, a queer politics must attend to those affective ways that we desire to belong, at the same time that it attends to the complex workings of colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and other frames that structure normative life. In thinking about the texture of the emergent queer Palestine solidarity movement, I want to draw attention to the subtle practices that new forms of transnational queer activism employ in their transformational projects. In particular, I am interested in how queer ambivalence is teased out in the discursive practices of this social movement in ways that simultaneously attend to the pragmatics of move-

ment building and the flexibility of what Sedgwick (2003) calls the middle ranges—of desiring, twisting, attracting, warping. I turn next to a deeper reading of affect theory to consider how this coupling between queer activism and theories of affect can expand the terms of how we articulate transformative possibilities in social movements.

Affect, Transformation, and Movements

Turning to affect for thinking about social movements and transformational politics invites us to consider how we negotiate the conditions of injustice and the communities of belonging that we attach ourselves to and push against the limits of. Affects govern the realm of our encounters—encounters with the world, with ourselves—they structure how we are moved and move through the world. Affect theory raises questions about what roots us in belonging, at the same time that it constantly encounters the uncomfortable limits of belonging. That we can never fully belong and never accept non-belonging is the paradox intrinsic to social life, and it is the oscillation between these that the world of affect attends to. Being unsettled and disturbed by our encounters, engaging in confrontation and eliciting change are all mediations between our affective responses and the social world. Between each encounter, we shift, adapt, move, and transform in our negotiation through life.

When Sedgwick (2003) asks us to think non-dualistically, to look to the in-between of repression-vs-liberation to find the creative forms of agency that move us socially (12), she invites us to think about those moments, practices, and transformations that move us from one configuration of social relations to others. Similarly, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) suggest another model for the space of the in-between, through the concept of the plateau: “A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus” (21). In their turn to rhizomatic thinking, Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative framework for thinking, one that is not invested in the linearity of modernist notions of space, time, or progress. Instead, they build a narrative framework rooted in a *nomadic*⁷ approach to thought, attentive to multiplicity and heterogeneity. Affect theory is thus oriented towards the middle, to the in-between.

In social movement practices, the in-between constitutes both the intensified and mundane dimensions of transformational projects. For instance, in Toronto, controversy over the use of the term *Israeli apartheid* reveals the shifts and resonances of textured activist practices. Whereas a binary model would look at the attempts to ban the term and the ensuing victories thwarting these attempts as examples of repression and activist success, a textured approach considers what shifts and changes resonate between these moments of intensity. The resonance of conflict not only impacts victories and failures, but alters the very fabric of daily life—normalizing new orientations or discursive fields in the form of critique of Israeli state practices. These types of transformation are often the hidden dimensions of social change, whereby the space in-between grounds new language and new modes of being that open to other transformative possibilities during other moments of intensity, such as times of war.

As a theory that turns to the in-between, those moments and configurations post-encounter and pre-foreclosure, affect proposes a rethinking of the boundaries and limits of the subject and the social. According to Teresa Brennan (2004), “we are not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction between the ‘individual’ and the ‘environment’ ...affects are not received or registered in a vacuum” (6). If we are always circulating and being moved by our encounters to each other and the spaces we circulate in, it follows that our understanding of social movements must also consider the affective registers of transformational politics. To ask questions about how transformational subjectivities emerge and what these kinds of subjectivities produce becomes crucial for rethinking how we can engage in transformation.

Affect theory is generally articulated through two streams. First, affect is used in collaboration with emotion—the psychic and social circulation of feelings in response to encounters. Here, affects like hate, rage, anger, love, happiness, and other feelings become sites for understanding other social mechanisms at play. Sara Ahmed (2004) argues that affects are those qualities that circulate and stick to objects, imbuing them with meaning that elicits feeling in our encounters: “Objects become sticky, saturated with affects, as sites of personal and social tension” (126). Ahmed invites us to blur the line between affect and emotion to reveal the conditions

of feeling that shape our encounters within the neoliberal moment. Her recent work on happiness examines how feeling mediates belonging and structures of racialization, where the failure to let go of “bad” feelings attached to experiences of subjugation come to signify a failed integration into multiculturalism under the terms of liberal inclusion (2007, 132). Brennan (2004), on the other hand, distinguishes affects from feelings more explicitly. For Brennan, feelings are “sensations that have found the right match in words” (5), whereas affects are physiological. Thus, we might think of moods and sentiments as affective constellations, as these are bodily emergences that have not yet entered into language or the symbolic order. Like Ahmed, Brennan understands affect as a relational function of being within the world, a kind of evaluative orientation towards objects (5).

The second way affect is generally understood is as a concept of emergence and intensity. For Brian Massumi (1987), affect or “*l’affect* (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. *L’affection* (Spinoza’s *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body” (xvi). In Massumi’s account of affect, the relationship between encounters and interactions between bodies is structured through the emergence and circulation of bodily intensities, where sensations structure our movement through the world. Here, affects are functions of the body situated in a social world and in proximity to other bodies.

Although work on affect in the first sense—where affect is more clearly connected to emotion and feeling—is significant for thinking about the circulation of subjectivities and the production of objects and subjects, my interest in transformative processes makes the second approach to affect more interesting for my argument here. In its emergent quality, affect facilitates our ability to imagine life beyond dualism. Building on Deleuze and Guattari, Massumi (1987) suggests that life does not center on the binary opposition of mind and body, but through resonating levels (e.g., skin, cognition, happiness, activity, passivity), where “affect is their point of emergence,” the moment where the experience of intensities comes into con-

sciousness (33). In Massumi’s account of affect, it is *intensity*, rather than emotion, that reveals the mechanisms at play in our circulation through the world. Although emotion is itself a manifestation of intensities, “it is intensity owned and recognized,” whereas “affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable” (28). Affect is at the foundation of experiencing life and emotion is how we make sense of the intensities we recognize in the experience of life—the intensities we give language to. Thus, in Massumi’s account, emotion remains stuck to meaning structured by the symbolic order, whereas affect encounters the symbolic order, but is free from its structuring influence to name, define, and qualify.

Social movements are sites where we can trace the circulation of affects in encounter and transformation. For example, the Toronto-based queer Palestine-solidarity group, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA), reveals a rich site where affective intensities emerged in the negotiation of a queer public at Pride. In the controversy over QuAIA’s inclusion in the Toronto Pride parade and the use of the term *Israeli apartheid*, affects circulate and build through the encounters. Intensities emerged across the externalization of sensations (the panicked responses from supporters of Israel over the term *Israeli apartheid* or the outraged response emerging from the queer community at the attempts to censor the term *Israeli apartheid*), the internalization of these intensities through the circulation of affects in space and across bodies (the rise of collective responses; the feeling of heightened investment in contesting the terrain of the public), and the transformative outcomes of such encounters (disturbances and unsettlement in the Pride parade; new modes of attachment, belonging, identification in queer communities).

Affect provides an interesting starting point for thinking about social movements and transformation precisely because it conceptualizes subjectivity and belonging through the points of encounter. Moments of controversy, such as the attempt to ban *Israeli apartheid* in Toronto, are important sites to examine not simply because they mark the sign of change, but because they reveal the resonances of everyday registers of contestation in between repression and liberation. As Brennan (2004), Sedgwick (2003), and Massumi (1987) suggest in their works, affect attends to those moments of encounter, intensity, and transmission, which shape how

we experience ourselves through the world. In highlighting these moments of encounter, theories of affect draw our attention to the spaces of possibility—where change occurs, where we react, and where we begin to respond by producing new ways of being. Movement across the controversy over the term *apartheid* demonstrates how practices of discursive normalization enable new modes of daily life. The result of these conflicts in Toronto was not social fragmentation or censorship (as we might imagine would be the outcome of an attempt to ban the term), but the transformation of discursive public space where debate over the terms of Israeli state practices and conditions of apartheid became part of the quotidian narratives of public discourse, particularly around the annual Pride parade.

Affect offers an account of how we might begin to think through our encounters in the social and political as a relationship of resonance, rather than as a relationship of reaction-effect/polarity-opposition (Sedgwick 2003, 13). In doing so, thinking about affect invites us to attend to the individual beyond neoliberal models of individualism, by thinking about how we are each moved by our affective encounters with the world. Not only can we materially and psychically not live without others, but our very entry into and movement through the social world is structured through our encounters shaped by affective relations. Our violences, our resistances are always already implicit in the struggles of circulating through the materiality of affective living. Kristeva (2000) outlines this process when she argues that,

to abolish the feeling of exclusion, to be included at all costs, are the slogans and claims not only of religions but also of totalitarianisms and fundamentalisms. For this, the purifier wants to confront an authority (value or law), to revolt against it while also being included in it. The purifier is a complex subject: he [*sic*] recognizes authority, value, law, but he claims their power must be broadened, rebelling against a restricted power in order to include a greater number of the purified...Revolt against exclusion is resolved in the renewal of exclusion at the lower echelons of the social edifice. (23)

Kristeva's argument on the cyclical nature of revolt returns us to my central concern over the possibilities of transformation and the potential of social movement-building. Despite the risks of violent renewals,

of neoliberal co-options, of seductions into empire, we consistently return to the need for transformation. To attend to the complex mechanisms that structure our relations of belonging *and* exclusion/expulsion in a neoliberal moment requires a framework, such as affect, to think through how we are both seduced into hegemonic systems and resist those very systems. For Jasbir Puar and Ann Pellegrini (2009), "concepts like affect, emotion, and feelings aid in comprehending subject-formation and political oppositionality for an age when neoliberal capital has reduced possibilities for collective political praxis" (37). It is important here to flag that, although I am proposing that affect is useful for considering transformation, affects are neither always-ethical nor always-moral. As Clare Hemmings (2005) points out, affects are mobilized for both "good" and "bad" purposes, since there are "affective responses that strengthen rather than challenge a dominant social order" (551).

Far from being a problem for affect's deployment in theorizing transformational politics, I want to propose that it is precisely the unaffiliated status of affect (the potential for both "good" and "bad"), simultaneous to its role in the unconscious drives of daily life, that makes it so compelling for thinking outside of dualisms. Because affect obliges us to suspend our investments in properly grasping the good or bad, the turn to affect is a turn to process, rather than product. Affects are not necessarily attached to morality, although they can give weight to morality. As such, they cannot speak in isolation to the production of good or bad subjectivities; rather, they speak to how subjectivities are formed, how things become embedded with meaning, what we produce, how we move and circulate through the world via our affective processes and encounters. Thus, affect cannot free us of from subjugation, but it can help us attend to what happens in the process of subjugation, what is produced, and how we move through those experiences and encounters. As Kathleen Stewart (2007) puts it, the significance of affects

lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible. The question they beg is not what they might mean in an order of representations, or whether they are good or bad in an overarching scheme of things, but where they might go and what potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things are

already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance. (3)

Affect also offers us a language for thinking about how injustices are perpetrated and circulated, that do not simply dismiss these moments as “bad” or “evil,” but instead attends to how these kinds of intensities also lead to the production of privileged and hegemonic subjectivities. Thus, affect studies offers an account of human subjectivity, human belonging, and the construction of our social world that does not predict or quantify our behaviours, but instead offers a frame for understanding them beyond the tropes that reduce us to binary modes of good/bad, but still holds us accountable to our production of pain and injury and respects our capacity for love and acceptance. Indeed, activism is a project emerging from a refusal of injured life and as such, its affective function is to *move* others in the circulation of new modes of belonging, new intimacies. However, this does not make activism or social movements free from reproducing pain and injury; thus affect’s registers offer us a way to account for the simultaneous movements and transformations of activism that do both good and bad, that make life more bearable and simultaneously reenact trauma.

In the case of the queer Palestine movement, a textured reading of activism does not tell us that the *Queer Visions* declaration’s focus on pinkwashing at the World Social Forum was either good or bad. Rather, it asks us to consider how this strategy offers a point of encounter, a site of circulation of new resonances and new affinities that invites transformational possibilities. Instead of posing questions about the morality of gestures in social movements, an affect-driven orientation to thinking about transformative politics poses a new set of questions: Is this political tactic transformative? Has it been or will it be transformative in the past, present, and/or future? What new conditions are produced through the encounters with a queer intervention in the Palestine movement and the conditions that perpetuate subjugation? Do queer interventions ever stop being transformative and start becoming normative? These questions do not remove us from a world structured through binaries; however, they allow us to continue articulating injustice through terms like “good” and “bad” alongside a suspension of the need to reconcile those dualisms. Invoking a textured approach to social movements through affect theory involves attending to the

middle (Sedgwick’s middle range or Deleuze and Guattari’s plateau), prioritizing encounter and focusing on resonance and texture, rather than effect or conclusion.

Conclusion

How do the approaches to transformation that affect theory proposes translate pragmatically for social movements and for the queer Palestine movement more specifically? Affect shifts our focus on social movements from the goals and victories of activism through the language of liberation, to the everyday shifts and movements of transformative practices. Affect theory offers us a tool for re-reading disruptions, unsettlements, dissonance, new affinities, encounters, and movements as productive for the transformative projects of social movements. Thus, we might re-imagine the victories of social movements as those points of unsettling disruption in the status quo, rather than the achievement of some form of liberation. Shifting focus to transformative moments, rather than revolution, changes not only the scale of assessing social movements, but also opens new possibilities for movement building. What would it look like to cultivate our social movements by focusing on those encounters, resonances, dissonances, and twists of transformative potential instead of those victories, achievements, liberations, and utopias? Reading each resonance of affective encounter through its transformative possibility can shift the goals of the queer Palestine movement from envisioning its project as solely a liberation project, to a consideration of the pragmatics of change in the transforming conditions of injustice. It is this register that I propose is emblematic of the texture of activism and a significant direction for working on social movements.

Endnotes

¹ This approach draws on the methodology of the margins proposed by feminist intersectionality (Crenshaw 1992, hooks 2000), but diverges significantly in its focus on affect theory. Further, as an insider researcher, my methodology combines discursive reading and analysis of this social movement with my internal participation in the movement.

² Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

³ Early groups organizing around queer Palestine-solidarity include QUIT (Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism) and Black Laundry, which both formed in 2001.

⁴ Jenny Burman’s (2010) work on transnational yearning has in-

formed this reading of transnational social movements. She argues that, “yearning is manifest when people express critical desires for justice and change, and try to make the conditions of their involvement in a globalized socioeconomic setting more equitable” (8).

⁵ Feminist and anarcho-political frameworks of coalition and affinity politics similarly build collective projects around analytic, rather than identity-based frameworks. See Chela Sandoval (2000) on oppositional consciousness, Chandra Mohanty (2003, 2013) on feminist solidarity and coalition, and Richard Day (2001) on ethico-political affinity politics.

⁶ Pinkwashing is not exceptional in Israeli state practices; rather, it functions as part of an array of techniques used by the Israeli state as a mechanism of international coercion and expansion of its colonial project. alQaws (2014), the Palestinian organization for sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society, has argued that we cannot separate the blackmailing of queer Palestinians by the Israeli state from other coercive practices, such as blackmailing Palestinians seeking medical treatment.

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call their approach “nomad thought”: a way of approaching the world that artists, cultural producers, philosophers, and other thinkers might engage in by following the tangents produced rhizomatically in social, historical, and political encounters.

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Introduction

Transgressing Borders/Boundaries: Gendering Space and Place

Cluster Editors

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To what extent are topics common in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) actually questions of spatiality? Power is negotiated after all in and across space and place, whether that is in a 'home,' a courtroom, a public bathroom, or on the streets. Frequently, it is the transgression and maintenance of borders and boundaries that lend themselves to a feminist analytic, an approach which we seek to explore in this thematic cluster. Feminist geographies offer rich conceptual frameworks through which to understand how gendered relations of power are produced in and through sexuality, race, ethnicity, and citizenship, among many other positionalities. How does the recognition of relations of power as spatially dependent (at least in part) shift approaches to critical feminist inquiry? What does the use of key concepts like scale, topography, mapping/cartography, landscape/waterscape, counter/memories, spatial memory, spatial interconnection, imagined communities, diaspora, and space/time contribute to feminist knowledge production about borders, boundaries, and their transgressions?

The co-emergence and intermingling of the fields of feminist geography and WGS provide an opening to examine these relationships, and the articles in this special cluster make empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions that demonstrate how these fields enrich one another. The interconnections between feminist thought within geography and feminism more broadly have been previously articulated (Hanson 1992; Rose 1993), but in this cluster, we hope to bring attention to the ways in which these interconnections are currently developing through Women's and Gender Studies scholarship. For example, like the field of WGS, feminist geography has been absorbed with and transformed by questions of intersectionality. Researchers working in both these areas usually approach the production of identity and space through multi-dimensional understanding of relations of power, such as race and racism, sexuality and hetero/homonormativity, able-bodiedness and gender. In their exploration of

intersectional research, feminist geography and WGS invoke and challenge the production of identity in place. Thus, the articles in this special cluster are inspired by border and boundary regulation through topics, such as embodiment, (re)production, un/paid work, violence, cultural and visual practices, (re)membering, political action, nationalism, transnational migration, global economies, global governance, and (neo)colonialism, among other areas.

The first three papers in this cluster astutely reflect a range of current concerns in the intersections of feminist geography with WGS. All of the articles offer insights on how built environments impact social equalities. The authors offer empirical work on three different studies of public space including the architectural design of mixed-use spaces in a university town; girls' use of schoolyards and other sites of play in Catalonia, Spain; and single-sex public washrooms in North American and European airports.

In her paper, "Safety is just a thing men take for granted': Teaching a Spatial Vocabulary of Equality to Architecture Students," Karen Keddy takes on the practice of sensitizing future architects to equity and social justice in the design of built environments. As her pedagogical point of departure, Keddy draws on Gill Valentine's (1989) early analysis of women's fear in public places as well as case studies on downtown Toronto, Canada (METRAC 2015), Mumbai, India (Phadke 2012), Christchurch, New Zealand (Pawson and Banks 1993), which demonstrate how and why configurations of public spaces can be threatening to women or be perceived as such. Keddy demonstrates the value in having students conduct safety and security audits on campus as way to highlight the relationship between privilege, insecurity, social inequality, and public space. Students are also asked to think of potential solutions for the problem spots that they uncover. In so doing, architecture students learn that built environments are inherently political, rather than neutral spaces.

The second paper, "We are Gunslinging Girls': Gender and Place in Playground Clapping Games," Albert Casals and Joanna Riera turn to a very localized, but politically contextualized, geography of children's 'clapping games' in Catalonian playgrounds. Using Rice's (1987) classic ethnomusicological approach, which asks the question: "Historically, how has music been constructed, maintained socially and individual-

ly experienced by human beings?," the authors investigate both the predictable and curious ways in which girls (and some boys) define both spaces and gender identities through the use of music and clapping games. As the playground is understood as a site that is conditioned by historical, cultural, and political forces, they argue that the socio-cultural meaning of gender identity produced through clapping games changes over time. Yet, the paradox they uncover remains consistent; even though clapping games are viewed by Catalans as a highly gendered activity in which primarily school girls participate, the songs and games themselves can be transgressive in terms of challenging cultural norms around gender and sexuality.

Mark Castrodale and Laura Lane's "Finding One's Place to Be and Pee: Examining Intersections of Gender-Dis/ability in Washroom Signage," examines how the discursive production of the hegemonic cis-gendered, heteronormative, and able-bodied subject of washroom signage impacts the use of the physical space of washrooms. Through their analysis of washroom signage in select airports in North America and Europe, the authors show how the constructions of family, caregiving roles, and culture largely serve, produce, regulate, and exclude all those who are "mis-fitters" (Garland-Thompson 2011). Misfitting occurs when those who do not easily conform to the hegemonic subject encounter architectural barriers, such as washrooms, that produce a socio-spatial-bodily mismatch. The authors produce an effective spatial analysis of the symbolic regulation of public bathrooms through an intersectional approach that considers family/care-giver status, citizenship, gender, and dis/ability.

The final two papers in this cluster are indicative of the robust literature on spatiality and feminism from within visual and cultural studies, using the moving image as a key site of investigation. Through their analysis of films by Asghar Farhadi and Ang Lee, the authors explore how the representation of nationalism and globalization create and negate cultural and legal spaces of belonging. While processes globalization and nationalism often transverse borders, they can simultaneously reinforce boundaries with regards to gender, race, class, and sexuality.

In "Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Representing Mothers and the Maternal in Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation*," authors Mehra Shirazi, Patti Duncan, and

Kryn Freehling-Burton argue for renewed focus on national cinema as a site for transnational feminist inquiry. Following Naficy (2001) and Suner (2007), they use *A Separation* as a case study through which to examine themes of transnational migration, borders, belonging, and exile common to exilic/diasporic national cinema. Through the lenses of motherhood and maternalism, the authors explore how the representation of these gendered identities in modern day Iran serve as cultural and geographic boundary markers, whether it be in familial relationships or in the relationship with the state. By deploying a transnational feminist cinematic analysis on national cinema, the film can also be read as a critique of both Iranian fundamentalist nationalism, which demarcates borders and belonging, as well as neocolonial Western feminism which transverses them.

In her paper, "Liberal Spaces: The Costs and Contradictions of Reproducing Hegemonic National Subjects in Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* and *Brokeback Mountain*," Sarah Olutola brings contemporary theorization of homonationalism into conversation with queer visual production of landscape. Based on her analysis of these two very different films about queer acceptance, Olutola argues that the production of queer landscapes in the urban as well as the rural configure the nation as a space of liberalism for queers. Despite the insights of New Queer Cinema (Rich 2013) that segment the historical production and reception of these films, normative discourses of citizenship, equality, and rights complicate queer inclusion.

As co-editors of this thematic cluster, we would be remiss not to point readers to further sources through which to access this thriving intellectual community. We hope that readers will be able to use these essays as a set of diverse entry points to the study of the spatiality of gender. We suggest that readers begin with the ever-growing transnational and multi-lingual *Gender and Geography Bibliography* (2015) as just one example. The articles are a reflection of the evolution of a much deeper relationship than the disciplinary boundaries of either geography or the sometimes partial boundaries /interdisciplinarity of Women's and Gender Studies might suggest. In many ways, certain key debates in feminist geography over the past four decades have intersected with and, in some cases, transcended the boundaries of what issues are thought to be legitimately

within the purview of these fields; hence, the fluency with which these feminist scholars combine inquiry into diverse areas of study.

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“Safety is just a thing men take for granted”: Teaching a Spatial Vocabulary of Equality to Architecture Students

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Dr. Karen Keddy is an Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. She teaches the cultural and social issues courses in both the undergraduate and graduate programs in the department, which highlight social justice issues, universal design, and research methods of social analysis. She is currently writing a book proposal on pedagogical strategies for teaching environment-behavior and social justice issues to architecture students.
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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to present a method of teaching architecture students how to learn from conducting a socio-spatial analysis in order to design a safe and secure built environment. This paper illustrates the connections between the learning objectives of a multi-part assignment and issues of citizenship, inclusivity, and equity.
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Résumé

L'objet de cet article est de présenter une méthode visant à enseigner aux étudiants en architecture les façons d'apprendre d'une analyse socio-spatiale afin de concevoir un environnement bâti sûr. Cet article illustre les liens entre les objectifs d'apprentissage d'un travail à multiples volets et les enjeux de la citoyenneté, de l'inclusion et de l'équité.

Introduction

Space, like language, is socially constructed; and like the syntax of language, the spatial arrangements of our buildings and communities reflect and reinforce the nature of gender, race, and class relations in society. The uses of both language and space contribute to the power of some groups over others and the maintenance of human inequality.” (Kanes Weisman 1992, 2)

In the past twenty-five years, there has been a movement in architecture that focuses less on form and aesthetics and more on the issues of social justice and social responsibility in architecture. As the quote above by Kanes Weisman indicates, power relations and issues of human equity are embedded within the vocabulary of the built environment. However, architectural education is still primarily known for its aesthetic formalism and designs exercises structured around the deployment of formal geometries. Unfortunately, formal principles of architectural design are all too often presented in a manner that disassociates them from their historical, theoretical, and cultural development. “Principles, organizational systems, spatial relationships, and the like are showcased as ends in themselves, as value-free tools to be used at will regardless of culture, circumstance, context” (Dutton 1991, xix). In the early 1990s, Dutton (1991) made the observation that, “ironically, while architecture is widely assumed to reveal much about the character of a society, students learn little about their society beyond that which is necessary to function professionally” (xvii). His explanation was that architectural programs are mostly staffed by architects who see the practice of architecture as more important than its theories, civic roles, social responsibilities, and political consequences.

The goal of social justice educators outside of architecture is to help students identify and analyze dehumanizing sociopolitical processes and to reflect on the consequences of oppressive socialization in their lives

(Adams, Bell, and Griffin 2007, xvii). Social justice in architecture is a set of beliefs about issues of social equity as it relates to the design of the built environment. This approach aligns itself with critical pedagogy in architecture which values “social justice, democracy, equality, and emancipation” (Dutton 1996, 172). In 1995, Crysler provided a critique of the transmission model of education that dominated architectural education at that time. He criticized the tendency to portray students as “passive and homogenous professional subjects removed from social and political forces” (208). Crysler promoted an alternative model of educational practice influenced by theories of critical pedagogy that would provide for a more democratic learning environment informed by alternative histories and a range of political issues. Salama (2015) states that, “in essence, critical pedagogues identify and place emphasis on the influences of educational knowledge that establish an unjust situation in society...Instructors try to foster a critical capacity in learners or citizen groups to provide them with the tools and skills to resist the effects of unjust, biased, or illegitimate authority, dominance and power” (311-312). More simply put, Fisher (2008) believes that “the definition of architecture should be expanded to include the health, safety, and welfare of all people” (10).

In order for the profession of architecture to move towards being more equitable and inclusive, I believe that we must incorporate social justice ideals early in the students’ architectural education and teach students how to conduct socio-spatial analyses of the built environment from a critical standpoint. In the second year architecture design studio, students at Ball State University are challenged to design building types with multiple users, such as museums, craft training centers, green workforce centers, event spaces, libraries, veterinarian clinics, a visitor’s center, etc. Students are asked to consider prevailing salient topics, such as sustainability, green architecture, community revitalization, urban gardening, active living, and multi-modal transportation. However, while the relationship between women’s fear of crime and public space has been the focus of considerable research in many fields including criminology and geography, students of architecture do not typically receive any education in this area.

I believe that it is imperative that architecture students be exposed to the theory and research being

done about safety and security in the built environment. The focus of this paper is to present a method of teaching undergraduate students what role architects can play and how they can contribute to the design of a safe built environment. Using a hands-on assignment, in which students learn to analyze the safety implications of spaces that they are familiar with on campus, is an effective way of sensitizing future architects to gender-based actual threats to personal security as well as the impact of a perception of fear for users in different socio-spatial contexts. I discuss these learning objectives using an assignment that I designed to be a multi-part safety and security case study. Kanes Weisman (1992) maintains that a feminist analysis of the man-made environment as a form of social oppression or as an expression of social power is necessary. She asks the question: “How does built space contribute to human oppression?” (4). This is a question that I pose to my students when we explore a socio-spatial analysis of the built environment. Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) argue that it is best to “draw upon multiple pedagogies to help participants consider information about various forms of oppression in light of their own personal experiences in ways that we hope foster critique, self-assessment, and more conscious choices about the actions they take in the world” (xvii). In this case, those conscious choices would be how architects make design decisions.

In this paper, I first present the literature that discusses the connection between safety and the built environment, including the origins of the safety audit. This is followed by a detailed description of the six parts of the safety and security assignment. Next, the student’s research findings and student learning outcomes for the assignment are explained in terms of equity issues and the fear of being a victim of violence (gendered citizenship) within the context of the literature that supports these findings and outcomes. Recommendations are then provided in regards to informal surveillance and two types of interventions are discussed: design and programmatic interventions. The design interventions that afford informal surveillance are lighting and sightline issues together with entrapment spots. Programmatic interventions that afford informal surveillance are the provision of activity generators; designing for the legitimate presence of people; and designing for transparency between inside and outside. In the conclu-

sion, the benefits and disadvantages of the assignment are discussed.

Pedagogical Approaches

My critical pedagogical approach to this assignment highlights the gender dimensions of citizenship, equity issues, and human rights and acknowledges the multiple facets of 'gendered spaces.' Phadke (2012) uses this term to refer to "the socially constructed geographical and architectural arrangements around space which regulate and restrict women's access to those spaces which are connected to the production of power and privilege in any given context" (53). Dutton (1991) also highlights power relations when discussing the purposes of critical pedagogy when he claims that, "highlighting the politics of the everyday, critical pedagogy unravels and critiques the experiences of students and teachers as they find themselves in asymmetrical relations of power tempered by class, race, gender, ethnicity, and others" (xxiii). As Andrew (2000) indicates, there are boundaries that are defined by time, by space, and by social relations. As future producers of the built environment, what power relations should architecture students be made aware of? How can architects be critical about what is negotiated in public space? What role do architects have in the production of spatial inequalities? Are architects even aware of this inequity in the built environment? Instead of continuing to make assumptions about how people live, how people use space, and what people prefer, I advocate an evidence-based design approach. Feminist writer and educator hooks (2010) states that the "heartbeat of critical thinking is the longing to know—to understand how life works" (7). I strongly believe that we must utilize authentic ways of discovering what people need, what people want, and what people prefer. I believe that it is vital that students reflect on a number of sources, including short interviews with both males and females who use the space that is being studied. This will reinforce that safety is a significant issue for women as well as other vulnerable populations. Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) state that an approach to social justice education includes "a set of interactive, experiential pedagogical principles to help learners understand the meaning of social difference and oppression both in the social system and in their personal lives" (xvii).

The assignment discussed in this paper is assigned in a required second-year undergraduate course

called *Introduction to Social and Cultural Issues in Architecture* in the architecture program. Most semesters I teach two sections of the course that enroll a total of approximately 60 students. Typically the male to female ratio in the second year of the program is approximately 50/50. The average age of the second-year student is twenty years old. The university student body is 84.4 percent white, which is higher than the national average, 6 percent of students are African American, 2.9 percent are Hispanic American, 0.9 percent are Asian American, and 1.9 percent are international students from countries such as Turkey, South America, and Saudi Arabia. In the *Introduction to Social and Cultural Issues in Architecture* class discussed here, the student body was predominantly white, with the percentage of African-Americans at .01 percent, the international students were at .05 percent (below the university average), and there were no Asian American students. The percentage of Hispanic Americans (10 percent) in the class was higher than the university average.

Founded in 1918, Ball State University is located in a mid-sized Midwestern city of 70,000 people. There are over 21,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The campus has experienced a building boom in the past decade with the construction of several new state-of-the-art buildings, a bell tower, student residences, a center for making glass, and a recreation and wellness center. Extensive attention to landscaping makes it a very beautiful campus (Ball State University, 2014). The campus serves as an excellent case study for the students to use for the course assignment and it is very convenient for them to do the detailed nighttime study required for it. It provides an environment that the students think they know well and that they are familiar with at night. In the research that Boyle, Findlay, and Forsyth (2004) conducted on women's perception of fear and the design of the urban environment, they found that "the more familiar an environment is to an individual, the less closely they look at aspects of its design, instead drawing upon personal experience and opinions of spaces to reach a conclusion on how safe they perceive it to be" (6). Doing a detailed socio-spatial analysis of their assigned part of the campus allows the students to get past their preconceived ideas about the nature of safety issues for students on campus. Doing the assignment illustrates to the students that there are aspects of the campus built environment that they very

likely have not considered as having the potential to be problematic in terms of safety, especially in the dark.

Connection between Safety and the Built Environment

Many feminists believe that there is a valid connection between safety, perception of fear, the design of the built environment, and environmental factors such as informal surveillance (Jacobs 1961; Franck and Paxson 1989; Wekerle and Whitzman 1995; Andrew 2000; Koskela and Pain 2000; Listerborn 2002; Boyle, Findlay, and Forsyth 2004; Caiazza 2005; Tibaijuka 2008; Loukaitou-Sideris 2014). Listerborn (2002) believes that “to leave out the material dimension is not useful when talking about fear in public spaces” (40). Women’s fear of violence has been made visible by women’s grassroots groups and feminist researchers and, in the past three decades, social scientists, criminologists, urban designers, environment-behavior designers, and geographers have also been interested in women’s safety issues. For example, Jane Jacobs (1961), an author, editor, urban planning activist, and critic formulated the *natural surveillance* strategy based on her lived experiences and observations in New York’s Greenwich Village. Jacobs argued that if an area is open (clear sightlines) and well lit, people will naturally watch what is going on around them (natural surveillance) and that any architectural design that enhances the chance that a potential offender will be seen is also a form of natural surveillance. Jacobs’ publication, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), introduced sociological concepts to architects and planners, such as *eyes on the street*. Jacobs explained this important component of natural surveillance when she discussed the use of sidewalks in relation to safety and stated that “there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street” (35). Jacobs indicated that, in order to achieve this, buildings on a street must be oriented to the street and not have “blank sides on it” (35).

In the 1970s, the built environment became an important aspect of safety and crime prevention that involved a broad spectrum of crime-preventing agencies—planners, architects, community groups, and the police force (Listerborn 2002). Among the different approaches to controlling urban crime, the three main ones are law and order, root causes, and safe cities (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995). The law and order ap-

proach assumes that the best way to address crime is to improve the criminal justice system; the root cause approach takes a sociological perspective believing the best way to address crime is by dealing with poverty and marginality. The safe cities approach considers fear of crime to be as important as crime itself and, through partnerships between government and citizens, criminal behavior can be prevented through environmental design and education. This approach advocates the employment of a safety audit by the users of the area of the built environment that is being studied.

The conduction of a safety audit involves typical users of the space spending several hours after dark examining the space from the point of view of the users’ sense of safety. A safety audit links social issues with elements in the physical environment in the hopes of imagining a more accessible and livable city (Andrew 2000). As the safety audit process is based on the lived experience of the people whose space is being studied, Andrew (2000) maintains that it should be reflected in policy (164). She points out that in our society, expertise is usually seen as something held by experts, rather than the participants, and that we need to develop a more realistic conceptualization of expertise and the status of knowledge that can be gained through people’s lived experiences. Successful safety audits can result in more women participating in urban space and can encourage a wider range of women and other vulnerable groups to use the space (Andrew 2000).

For example, METRAC (Toronto’s Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children) was founded in 1984 as a reaction to a series of sexual assaults and rapes that occurred in Toronto parks (Loukaitou-Sideris et al. 2009). METRAC is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that works to prevent violence against women and youth. The root of the community safety program is to create safer public spaces for women, youth, and those at high risk for harassment and violence. METRAC produced the WISE (Women in Safe Environments) Report which documents the design features that contribute to women’s feeling unsafe in public places, such as poor lighting, not being visible to others, and having no access to help (Kanes Weisman 1992). One of its mottos is “safer for women, safer for everyone” (METRAC 2014). In 1985, METRAC developed a women-centered safety audit, which is a comprehensive method of analyz-

ing the built environment and identifying unsafe “hot spots” from the standpoint of female users, including best practices of CPTED.

The use of women’s safety audits has spread globally, as evidenced by the development and adoption of the women’s safety audit by UN-HABITAT in the cities of Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Dar es Salaam, Abidjan, Nairobi, and Warsaw (Tibaijuka 2008). However, Klodawsky (2013) points out that, even though big changes to increasing women’s self-sufficiency are being undertaken in cities around the world, women’s vulnerability to violence must also be mitigated, as acknowledged at the *Women in Cities International and Jogori* conference in 2010. Tibaijuka (2008) states that, in many cities, women and girls face violence in public spaces because of poor urban design and poor management of public spaces. She believes that one of the ways women can feel safer and fully benefit from the services and resources that cities offer is to address the design shortcomings of their physical environment. After the safety audit is completed, recommendations are made to a wide variety of public and private bodies: municipal governments, provincial governments, individual landlords, store-owners, schools (Andrew 2000). Tibaijuka (2008) claims that the safety audit has also been found to be an effective tool for building community safety because it enables a critical evaluation of the urban environment, while giving legitimacy to women’s concerns.

Being thoughtful about how we design the built environment in terms of safety is not only about trying to prevent crime through environmental design, but it is also about eliminating environmental factors that contribute to women’s fear. Design professionals, including architects, landscape architects, and urban designers, have much to contribute to mitigating this fear. As stated above, having participants use their lived experience of an environment is important when doing a safety audit and so the student teams in my class are assigned sites on the university campus. The students are both ‘users’ and ‘researchers’ studying users’ experiences. I employ several feminist approaches and sensibilities in my own approach to teaching and in the multiple parts of this safety and security assignment explained below.

Safety and Security Audit Assignment

Similar to objectives expressed by Salama (2012) in an assignment that he designed for his theory courses

in architecture and urbanism, the objectives of this assignment include developing students’ critical thinking abilities about the role of built form in regards to cultural behaviors and attitudes as well as enhancing students’ understanding of human-environment relations and how these concepts vary for different cultures and sub-cultures, such as gender (7). With an objective of having more knowledgeable designers in regards to gender issues in public space, aspects of this assignment achieve several of Franck’s (1989) women’s ways of knowing and a feminist approach to design: a responsibility to respond to the needs of others (ethic of care); acknowledgement of the value of everyday life and experience; and acceptance of subjectivity as a strategy for knowing and of feelings as part of knowing. Franck reminds us that Clare Cooper Marcus’ research focuses on the everyday lives and perceptions of residents and Delores Hayden’s work demonstrates a sensitivity to daily life, particularly “that of women and children and the elderly whose needs have long been ignored or misunderstood by planners and architects” (299). As Ahrentzen (1996) points out, “men control environmental decision making and often base this decision making on male-experience-as-norm” (73) and it continues to be a challenge to have women’s experiences in public space validated and designed for. This assignment brings women’s experiences and perceptions of the built environment at night to the foreground.

There are six parts to the assignment, and I provide a description of each below. As Salama (2015) and many other architectural educators advocate, one benefit of having architecture students do group, rather than individual, work is that the architecture and design professions are collaborative in practice (313). I have the students work in teams of four or five and each part of the assignment is done collaboratively except for the final reflection papers, which are done by students individually.

Safety and Security Readings

Each team reviews one of the three key readings assigned at the beginning of the safety and security assignment, answering a set of questions. One article is a theoretical presentation of safety audits (Andrew 2000), the second is a research study done in Scotland with a focus on familiarity and the presence of people (Boyle, Findlay, and Forsyth 2004), and the third is a

cultural and social study of safety issues for women in Mumbai (Sur 2014). After the students have completed this part of the assignment, we have a fishbowl discussion in class to discuss each group's answers to the questions posed, reviewing the different perspectives presented in each article. Each student has an opportunity to speak because for each of the four questions, a different member of the team will come into the 'fishbowl' to discuss that particular question as it relates to their team's assigned reading. During the fishbowl discussions, students are encouraged to voice their own personal opinions and experiences that are generated by the reading material. Leavitt (1991) argues that "the transformation of personal experiences into architectural education" (227). She maintains that different strands of feminist theory drew on the experiential aspect of consciousness-raising, and that the original consciousness-raising groups were the vehicle for transforming personal issues into political ones. I know that this is beneficial for architecture students as well, because they learn that these issues are not solely personal ones, but also political in that they are representative of larger issues about basic civil rights for women and other vulnerable populations.

Safety and Security Audit

Each team is assigned an area on campus that includes a building, a path, a public space, and parking. The students choose a time after dark to conduct their safety audit and to take their photos. The safety audit has about seven pages of Yes/No/NA questions as well as open-ended questions, including some for each gender to respond to. The questions are categorized under the spaces being studied that I mentioned above: the building, pedestrian sidewalks/footpaths, the public space, and parking. Within each category are sub-headings such as lighting, which has a list of Yes/No/NA questions to check off, such as "are light fixtures protected from breakage by some means such as wired glass?" and "are there pools of light and darkness?" An example of an open-ended question is: "what is the adjacent land use?" and "what is your instinctual feeling about your safety in the stairwell?" which is targeted to each gender. Salama (2013) states that the benefits of what he calls a systemic pedagogy, in contrast to a mechanistic pedagogy, is that "systemic pedagogy places emphasis

on learning by experience, learning by exploring and doing" (3). This part of the assignment employs this approach with the students getting hands-on experience conducting the audit.

Photo Panels

There are eight environmental factors and these include types of lighting (see Figure 1), sightlines, adjacent land use, entrapment spots (confined areas that are shielded on three sides by barriers; see Figure 2), movement predictors (a predictable or unchangeable route or path that offers no choice to pedestrians), informal surveillance (visibility by others), formal surveillance (CCTV, security, blue lights, police), and signage as it relates to safety (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995). The analysis of each environmental factor is represented on an 8.5 x 11 cardstock panel. The students must include the location of the photographs as well as provide both a definition and an explanation of the environmental factor that the photo illustrates. Additionally, the students must indicate the other environmental factors that are found to be problematic with each example.

SAFETY + SECURITY AUDIT

JO ANN GORA STUDENT RECREATION AND WELLNESS CENTER | ARCH 352: CULTURAL & SOCIAL ISSUES | ASSIGNMENT 1 | LIDIA A-WAN, ERIC ANDERSON, ELISE HOFF, EMMA MAPES, MEGAN STENFENAGEL | GROUP 10




LIGHTING

DEFINITION: The presence of light increases the visibility and safety of a site. Badly designed and poorly lit areas offer increased opportunities for crime and give the message that the area is uncared for. Improving lighting decreases the fear of crime and levels of interpersonal crime.

TOP PHOTO
LOCATION: The staircase to the main entrance of the South side of the Recreation Center.
EXPLANATION: This staircase offers a great example of adequate lighting at night. A light built into the staircase wall turns on at night, illuminating the path. Also, the interior of the Recreation Center offers additional lighting for exterior spaces by the use of windows. In addition, there is the informal surveillance of the users inside of the building, therefore creating a very safe entrance.

BOTTOM PHOTO
LOCATION: View looking North by Southeast corner of the Recreation Center, by Cardinal Creek.
EXPLANATION: This site provides adequate but minimal lighting. The street sidewalk is well lit, however paths beyond that, such as the right turn to cross the bridge over the creek, cannot even be distinguished at this view; there is a void of darkness in the middle of this photo. Also, the lack of people offers no sense of formal or informal surveillance.

Figure 1: Lighting. Used with permission.

SAFETY + SECURITY AUDIT

JO ANN GORA STUDENT RECREATION AND WELLNESS CENTER | ARCH 352: CULTURAL & SOCIAL ISSUES | ASSIGNMENT 1 | LIDIA A-WAN, ERIC ANDERSON, ELISE HOFF, EMMA MAPPE, MEGAN STENFENAGEL | GROUP 10



ENTRAPMENT SPOTS

DEFINITION: Entrapment spots are confined areas, near a well-traveled route, that is shielded on three sides by barriers such as walls or bushes.

TOP PHOTO

LOCATION: Ramp to enter the bottom floor of the Recreation Center, on South side
EXPLANATION: This is perhaps the worst example of an entrapment spot in the nearby area. A ramp, intended to help disabled users, has only caused a hindrance for safety by its barriers of three thick concrete walls. An assailant can easily chase a person into this spot, and that person, finding the door at the bottom locked, would have no means of escaping. In addition, there is little lighting and no sense of surveillance, creating a very dangerous area.

BOTTOM PHOTO

LOCATION: Dumpster area on East side of Recreation Center
EXPLANATION: While not as significant as the ramp, this photo also illustrates an example of an entrapment spot. Three tall masonry walls, meant to shield views of the dumpsters, also create barriers to limit access. An assailant can easily corner a victim in this unit, unwatched, and closed-in area.



Figure 2: Entrapment spots. Used with permission.

Interviews Analysis and Report

Based on the assigned readings and the impressions from an initial site visit, the team develops a research question and four interview questions that will provide findings to help answer the research question. Each student in the team conducts an interview with one male and one female student on campus. This provides the voice of their peers in relation to the other parts of the assignment and, as Crysler (1995) states, “democracy and citizenship are thus linked in theories of critical pedagogy to the notion of voice” (213). Since this is an assignment in which the students are learning how to do research methods, and it is not classified as conducting research, no Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission is required. The students are taught how to code their interview transcripts and to choose three to five basic themes. An interview report is written with the expectation that the thematic analysis will provide answers to the team’s research question.

Design and Programming Recommendations

Educator hooks (2010) provides a definition of critical thinking, which involves “the act of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it” (9). The students are required to make three types of recommendations that would help users feel safer in the space: architectural, landscaping, and people. The *architectural* recommendations could include altering recessed entrances, having good visual connections between the building lobbies and the outside, installing more lights at the back of the building, etc. The *landscaping* recommendations could include thinning the branches of trees that obstruct views, providing outdoor seating areas that are well lit, and including ground lighting within the denser foliage. The *people* recommendations could include formal surveillance such as CCTV, security personnel, and police patrols as well as programmatic recommendations that would provide informal surveillance by having cafés that are open at night in dark areas of the campus.

Reflection Paper

Each student in the team submits their own three page reflection paper. Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) argue that the core frameworks of social justice education are to “make conscious use of reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning” (15). The student is asked to explain how conducting the safety audit, producing the eight photo panels, reflecting on class lectures and discussions, conducting interviews and analyzing the responses, and doing the assignment readings has informed them about the architecture, landscaping, and people factors related to the safety and security issues on our campus. Students must provide supportive quotes from the required readings and are encouraged to reflect on both the theoretical and experiential aspects of the assignment.

Gendered Citizenship: Equity Issues and Fear of Being a Victim of Violence

When I was growing up, I knew that women shouldn’t go out alone at night and I knew that it was OK if I did. I just thought that was the way things were—that it was just normal. I never saw it as an equality issue, until now.
(Male architecture student)

This section will discuss student learning outcomes in the context of gendered citizenship by looking at it in terms of equity issues and the fear of being a victim of violence. From a feminist perspective, feeling safe in the built environment is a fundamental human rights and equal citizenship issue. "Assaults in urban public places, to a great degree, are crimes of opportunity. While the design of our physical surroundings does not cause sexual assault, it plays a significant part in creating opportunities for it. Those who are vulnerable—women, children, the disabled and elderly people—have the right to safe access to the cities in which they live. Preventing sexual assault against women by deliberate planning and assessment results in urban and architectural design that enhances everyone's safety" (Kanes Weisman 1992, 72).

In general, the students found that there are significant differences between how men and women perceive campus safety. This knowledge came from discussions in their assignment teams, the readings that were assigned, the class discussions, their experience of doing the safety audit, and from the interviews they conducted with both genders. Their interview findings confirmed what the students learned from the assignment readings and what we discussed in class about differences in perception of safety between men and women. A male student stated that, "safety is just a thing that many men take for granted." Based on the belief that women should have the right to use urban spaces at night and should feel comfortable doing so, Andrew (2000) claims that, "women do not now have full access to urban citizenship, but this right can be advanced by the use of safety audits, the right to structure urban space in a way that would create a more equitable access to citizenship" (163).

It is not surprising that women have a fear of gender-based violence when one considers the extent to which women experience sexual harassment all over the world when using public space and public transportation. In 1989, Franck and Paxson wrote about the frequency of sexual harassment that women experience in public space. Recent studies conducted indicate that between 80-90 percent of women have been harassed in public (Hollaback! 2015). The harassment ranges from friendly overtures to sexually explicit comments and actions to actual touching. May (2013) argues that public streets remain one of the final frontiers in ad-

ressing sexual harassment and affirming basic civil rights for women.

Many students claimed that they had never considered how the built environment contributes to a place being perceived as safe or unsafe. A male student stated that he had never been encouraged to look at architecture and design in a way that "promoted social justice and safety." One of the biggest obstacles to equality is women's fear of victimization and violence targeted at women. Kanes Weisman (1992) states that, "If the fear of sexual harassment on the street causes women stress, the fear of rape keeps women off the streets at night, away from public parks and 'dangerous' parts of town" (69). Most of the male students, almost all of whom were Caucasian, claimed in their reflection papers that they were very surprised to discover that there was such a difference between the sexes in regards to their perception of fear and crime on campus at night. Even a male student with considerable mobility limitations considered himself free from concerns for his safety on campus. An initial analysis of the lack of concern about one's vulnerability to attack, expressed by the predominantly Caucasian heterosexual males, seems to verify the existence of white male privilege on this campus.

Understanding issues of equity includes an examination of gendered differences in perception of fear and the different ways in which men and women negotiate space at night. Fear of victimization and crime is quite widespread among women and almost every fear of crime survey reports that they are much more fearful of crime than men (Loukaitou-Sideris et al. 2009). Wekerle and Whitzman (1995) emphasize that "fear of crime is viewed as important as crime levels, as it affects people's behavior and the general livability of the city" (13). Fear of crime limits women's access to resources and opportunities, such as employment at night or night classes. Several male students commented on how they never felt unsafe on campus and that they did not have to make the types of safety-related decisions that females did, such as choosing which path to take at night based on how well lit the path is.

Listerborn (2002) points out that, even though young men are more susceptible to violent crime, it is women, children, and the elderly who are the most fearful of being attacked. Nasar and Fisher (1993) further indicate that, "Although the subjective feeling of fear may not accurately reflect actual crime, it has significant harmful

effects on individuals and communities. It [the feeling of fear] has been found to limit activities and territory, heighten stress, make people feel like prisoners in their homes and neighborhoods, and disrupt neighborhood cohesion” (187). According to Gordon and Riger (1991), women use a wide range of what are called defensive behaviors to cope with fear of crime on a day-to-day basis. They state that women will drive, rather than take public transportation, despite being supportive of sustainability policies and objectives. Wekerle and Whitzman (1995) point out that “sometimes these behaviors are seen as irrational or self-indulgent by urban planners and designers, but they make perfect sense as a response to women’s fear of being sexually assaulted” (4).

Caiazza’s (2005) research findings support the hypothesis that a fear of violence influences women’s political and civic participation more than men’s. Fear affects women’s mobility whether travelling by bus, car, or subway. Women’s fear of transportation facilities such as parking structures, bus stops, and inside the bus or subway cars affects how women engage in travel, impacts their travel patterns, and hence, their participation in the built environment (Loukaitou-Sideris 2014). This denies women a basic right to the city when the ability to move from origin to destination is compromised by having to worry that a transit setting or time of travel could have consequences for their safety (Loukaitou-Sideris et al. 2009). A male student wrote, “I relate to the idea of ‘privilege’ that was discussed in our assigned reading. I guess I knew traveling in public alone was less safe for women, but I hadn’t taken the time to consider the implications.”

According to Caiazza (2005), “Violence and the fear of violence should be central to our understanding of the conditions that encourage democratic participation. Measures to ensure safety from violence should be understood not just as a way to establish order and decrease crime but also as a way to strengthen U.S. democracy and women’s access to it” (1627). She recommends that community leaders consider issues of safety when trying to increase women’s community involvement. She states that, “like the right to freedom of speech or to assembly, freedom from gender-based violence can help guarantee the existence of minimal conditions that would encourage democratic engagement among all citizens” (1609). Several students commented on the difference between being on campus at

night and during the day and how designers should be aware of how people experience space at night. A male student wrote, “most projects never show a rendering of what the space will look like at night or how people will inhabit the space at night.” He claims that the assignment gave him ideas for future projects on how to make a space more active both during the day and at night.

Design Interventions that Afford Informal Surveillance

In the literature, natural and informal surveillance have come to mean the same thing. However, I prefer the term ‘informal surveillance,’ which is used in the METRAC safety audits (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995; Andrew 2000; METRAC 2014), because I find it to be more descriptive in terms of how the surveillance is being carried out in a physical setting (Jacobs 1961; Newman 1973; Sorensen, Hayes, and Atlas 2008). Opportunities for informal surveillance can occur as a direct result of architectural design and programming. Wekerle and Whitzman (1995) discuss two types of environmental factors that have a direct connection to enabling informal surveillance: ‘visibility by others’ (*to be seen*) and ‘awareness of the environment’ (*to see*). ‘Visibility by others’ includes the ability to be seen through the reduction of isolation; improvements to land use mix; and strategic use of activity generators. In order for people to feel safe and be safe, it is vital that they know that there are people present who could come to their aid. A site is more likely to be avoided if no people are present, such as in the case of an empty parking lot at night. The second type of environmental factor is ‘awareness of the environment’ (*to see*). This includes the ability to see and understand the significance of the surrounding environment and what is up ahead. The assignment reveals to the students certain design interventions and programmatic opportunities that would provide informal surveillance. Informal surveillance then is used as a strategy to enhance the safety of the built environment, but it is also important to include design interventions, such as lighting considerations and clear sightlines.

Lighting Issues and Recommendations

Badly designed and poorly lit areas offer opportunities for crime to occur and send the message that the area is uncared for (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995). As a

crime prevention strategy, good lighting improves the appearance of the space, encourages people to use the space, contributes to a sense of personal security, and is often a low cost solution. Good lighting encourages the use of public space, while increasing informal surveillance. A group of researchers in Britain claimed that their research showed that “good lighting increases the risks that offenders may be recognized or increase the chances of someone coming to the aid of a victim who has been attacked” and that “it deserves more attention as a preventative strategy” (29). What is also important is consistent lighting, rather than pools of light and dark. The type of lighting is also significant; for example, it has been found in both North American and European cities that high-pressure sodium lighting dramatically improves lighting levels. Lighting should shine on pedestrian pathways and possible entrapment spaces, such as recessed doorways, alcoves, landscaping, and below-grade entrances. It is important that the light fixtures are protected from vandalism by using wired glass or wire cages in such places as parking garages and that they are well maintained by replacing light fixtures when they burn out. In their comparative study conducted in Edinburg and Helsinki, Koskela and Pain (2000) found that poor lighting would make women fearful of what they could not see and bright lighting would make them fearful that a potential attacker could see them as potential victims.

On our campus, the lights are programmed to respond to motion for a specific period of time; then, at some point, the lights will turn off, making the entire pathway dark. Several students recommended that lighting around the buildings should come on earlier than they are currently programmed to do. Adding more lights, regulating their timing when shutting down, and adding a variety of lighting types could remedy this. All student teams reported that a recurring theme in their interviews and safety audit findings was the uneasiness felt by students about the lack of well-lit outdoor spaces around campus, especially on walkways. Almost all of the female interviewees stated that they would feel significantly safer walking around on campus if there was much better lighting.

Sightline Issues together with Entrapment Spots and Recommendations

Designing spaces and pathways with good sightlines also means that people are visible to those who could come to their assistance (Wekerle and Whitzman 1995). Sightlines can be inside buildings or outside in natural or built environments. Users should be able to see where they are going in order to make route choices. The inability to see what is ahead on a route because of sharp corners, walls, earth berms, fences, bushes, or columns is a serious impediment to feeling safe and being safe. Also of concern are wide columns in a parking garage, tall privacy fences, and overgrown shrubbery. Design interventions such as low hedges, concrete planters, small trees, wrought-iron fences, transparent reinforced glass, permeable fences, low flower beds, and low benches all help with having good sightlines. Wekerle and Whitzman (1995) make the point that entrapment spots can also hinder good sightlines because these are spaces that are out of the line of vision. One of the student teams reported that, on their campus site, there were several tall walls near the loading dock that obstructed sightlines and created an entrapment area. Unfortunately, a bike rack is located there and the space has pools of light and dark which made it harder to see at night. This is a good example of how sightline issues, in combination with entrapment spots and inadequate lighting, work together to make a space appear to be unsafe. Also, as mentioned above, perceptions of a lack of safety among those who would consider riding their bike to campus at night or taking public transportation can influence a woman's choice to drive instead because of her safety concerns.

Programmatic Interventions that Afford Informal Surveillance

Programmatic interventions that contribute to informal surveillance are activity generators, designing for the legitimate presence of people, and designing for transparency between inside and outside.

Activity Generators and Recommendations

Active vital urban spaces that attract diverse groups of people are perceived as safe places. Empty and neglected space can further suffer from the “broken window” effect (Wilson and Kelling 1982). Loukaitou-Sideris (1999) explains that, “a broken window left

unrepaired sends a signal that social control is attenuated in the area. Sensing that no one is in control, potential criminals are apt to prey on the locality” (398). Abandoned commercial and industrial structures, boarded up doors and windows, and uncollected trash all give an impression that the area is a “no-man’s land” (398). Activity generators include moves, such as increasing recreational facilities in a park, placing housing in a commercial area, or adding an outdoor café to an office building. Architects can plan for different uses and users for the purpose of generating activity and this will add greatly to providing informal surveillance. Wekerle and Whitzman (1995) state that, “the purpose of activity generators is to add eyes to the street or open space; to make a place more secure by populating it” (46). One student team recommended that there be an evening café set up behind the Arts and Journalism building, so that there would be informal surveillance on the back of the building where there exists a long “cowpath,” which is the paved path that runs along the fence between the university campus and the residential area adjacent to the university.

Since women’s safety in the built environment is heavily dependent on temporal aspects, it is imperative to program the buildings and public spaces to provide for activities that will bring people to the site after dark. Can there be activities and events planned for ‘off-hours’ uses, such as using a parking lot as a farmers’ market on the weekends or blocking off downtown streets for street fairs or New Year’s Eve celebrations? When assessing safety issues in an area, it is important to know if the building is used at night, such as an architecture school where students are spending long hours in the design studio almost every night.

Design for the Legitimate Presence of People

Just the presence of people in certain areas of campus made students feel safer whether they were in a building during the evening or in a “nice outdoor space that had a friendly environment,” such as the outdoor seating area for the cafeteria. Boyle, Findlay, and Forsyth (2004) found in their research that the presence of people in a space, especially if their presence was considered legitimate or to be appropriate for them to be there, had a direct connection to respondents perceiving the space as safe or not. The students recommended that building more student accommodations

on campus and having more student activities on campus would create a greater sense of security in the space because of the presence of people. They also recommended that a coffee shop or activities in the university quad after dark would bring students and people to this uninhabited and dark space, thus enhancing informal surveillance. A male student wrote that, “things like sightlines, movement predictors, or informal surveillance hadn’t really ever been articulated in my mind. It makes sense, and makes me realize I definitely feel more secure when the population density is higher.” A female student wrote that, “places with lots of people walking around and driving around also make me feel safer. Isolated places are creepy and make me feel uneasy, especially if I am in them alone or for the first time.” Another female student wrote about the fine line between the need to have more people present in a space and the presence of too many people, making it feel less safe. She pointed out that these two extremes were very much based on the differences between times of day.

Design for Transparency between Inside and Outside

Another way for designers to afford opportunities for informal surveillance is to provide windows so that people can overlook spaces. Newman (1973) discussed the need for transparency in the early 1970s, when he pointed out that most crime in housing complexes occurred in the interior spaces of buildings that were isolated and out of sight. Newman stated that, “it is possible, through the relative juxtaposition of apartment windows with stairs and corridors, as well as with the outside, to ensure that all public and semi-public spaces and paths come under continual and natural observation by the project’s residents” (14). A female student stated that, if the entrance to the back of a building on her site had the same floor-to-ceiling glass, high ceilings, and open vestibule as the entrance to the front of the building, the feeling of safety would likely increase. A male student stated that, since the exit stairs in the building was in a concrete structure and the sides of the building facing the sidewalks were also opaque, more building transparency would create informal surveillance that would enhance the safety of the space. The ability to see people or see the activities inside a building would also help pedestrians outside feel safer. Of course, a disadvantage of transparency between

inside and outside is the possibility that people inside are being watched by people outside or the people on the inside feel uncomfortable because they suspect that they are under surveillance, especially at night when the lights are on inside. A female student wrote that, “a glass walkway may allow you to be observed without knowing who is observing you.” Lastly, a male student suggested that, if the spaces on the ground floor of the residence hall that his team studied could be transformed into a dining hall or a study space that had window walls, this would offer informal surveillance of the surrounding areas, including the moderately lit outdoor space between two of the residences on campus.

Conclusion

The advantages of this assignment are numerous. The assignment provides a public forum for discussion and the validation of perception of fear, women’s fear of violence in public space, as well as a vocabulary through which to discuss these issues. The assignment illustrates the connections between problematic findings and design solutions. The multiple method approach allows for a deep and rigorous analysis of a complex social justice issue. Students also learn the transferability of the issues to other populations who are vulnerable to acts of violence, including people who are homeless and victims of hate crimes such as sexual and religious minorities.

The value of using a safety audit as a tool for teaching male and female architecture students to design for inclusivity and equity has proven to be beneficial in terms of significant learning outcomes. For the most part, many of the students stated that they had never considered safety and security issues in their designs or thought about them as social justice issues. As stated above, many male students remarked that they did not even realize that there was a difference between men and women in terms of perception of fear on campus. The students became aware of the repercussions of not being inclusive of others’ perspectives when designing and the need to envision the space at night in the design process. The students also learned that simple environmental design moves in regards to lighting, sightlines, and programming activity generators can help or hinder the achievement of informal surveillance, which is a key factor in people feeling safe. Students realize that design interventions should be implemented from the beginning of the design process, while at the same time

realizing the benefit of valuing the lived experience of the people they are designing for. One female student wrote that, “architects should think about safety first and then begin their design, but only after conducting a safety audit.” Having informal surveillance in mind as a design strategy benefits many people other than women and works towards a livable city with equal citizenship for all members.

The data from the student research is important in how it encourages students to come up with design recommendations, making a direct connection between the problematic findings discovered through their site analysis and what can be altered in the built environment. The interview responses confirmed their safety audit findings as well as what they read in the required readings. Perhaps one of the most important realizations for the young male designers in the class was that they must think about the design of their buildings and public space from perspectives other than their own, especially if they have the intention of becoming “a more conscientious designer,” which several students claimed they aspire to be. Many of the students talked about wanting to make sure that they did not neglect these issues in future design projects. One of the older male students reflected: “I appreciate that as a designer of public space used by a diverse range of people, I need to take these factors into account if I want to be a responsible contributor to the communities in which I practice.”

Through this assignment, students have come to understand that there exists an integrated system of socially acquired values, beliefs, and rules of conduct that have implications for the design of the built environment and vice versa. A male student wrote that, “I can envision what a stereotypical area might look like where crime might happen, yet never made the connection back to architects. I never realized that the best way to design for a safe environment is to design for the most vulnerable. The most vulnerable, in most cases, being women.” Another male student wrote that architects need to “create solutions that attack the root of the system of oppression” and that this acknowledgment is “crucial for architects to embrace.” As Kanés Weisman (1992) states, “An awareness of how relations among human beings are shaped by built space can help all of us to comprehend more fully the experiences of our daily lives and the cultural assumptions in

which they are immersed. It is within the social context of built space that I believe feminist criticism and activism have a profoundly important role to play... and challenge and change the forms and values encoded in the man-made environment, thereby fostering the transformation of the sexist and racist conditions that define our lives" (2).

The disadvantages of this assignment are that young architects, once having done this assignment, may consider themselves to be the 'experts' and may not value the lived experiences of the people who inhabit the space. The 'experts' could make uninformed assumptions about people's experience in the built environment. Another disadvantage of an assignment of this nature is that it can reinforce negative stereotypes about women being weak, often anxious and afraid as well as paternalistic beliefs that women are in need of protection. Occasionally, when I have conducted this assignment, such as when the percentage of women in this required class was uncharacteristically low at 25 percent, I have seen female students adopt male-defined machismo expressions about being tough and fearless and they viewed women who have safety concerns as being weak. Also, the average age of the second-year students is twenty years old and many of them are very ill-informed about the lack of gender equity in the United States. This is indicated by naïve and unsupported statements made in reflection papers about how women are now equal to men and inequality is a thing of the past. However, the majority of students acknowledged the importance of considering multiple perspectives in design.

Hopefully, these future architects will always consider the consequences of design decisions in terms of safety and security concerns in the built environment and use their new skill set when working with vulnerable populations as well as teach others how to undertake such a study. The intent is that the students will utilize their increased awareness and appreciation for the gendered dimensions of citizenship as it relates to design. It can be transformative in moving towards a built environment in which the boundaries of time, space, and social relations will no longer play such a negative and restrictive role in women's experience of the built environment. New models of change in the built environment can provide for the health, safety, and welfare of all human beings.

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'We Are Gunslinging Girls:' Gender and Place in Playground Clapping Games

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Abstract

This article presents a qualitative study of clapping games in the playground, a space directly conditioned by its historical and socio-cultural context. Based on qualitative interviews and observations with adults and children in Catalonia, Spain, we argue that the repressive Francisco Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) and the emergence of Spanish feminist and other critical movements in the late 1960s have shaped the nature of clapping games in school playgrounds. Through a close analysis of their lyrics, we defend the idea that the study of clapping games is important for understanding the gendered geographies and culturally-specific moments of girlhood in Catalonia, and highlight the role of playgrounds as spaces where girls negotiate their roles and identities.

Résumé

Cet article présente une étude qualitative des jeux de main sur les terrains de jeux, des lieux qui sont directement conditionnés par leur contexte historique et socioculturel. Selon des observations et des entrevues qualitatives avec des adultes et des enfants en Catalogne, une région de l'Espagne, nous faisons valoir que la dictature répressive de Francisco Franco (1939-1975) et l'émergence du féminisme espagnol et d'autres mouvements critiques à la fin des années 1960 ont façonné la nature des jeux de main qui sont joués sur les terrains de jeux scolaires. Une analyse approfondie des paroles nous permet de défendre l'idée que l'étude des jeux de main est importante pour bien comprendre la géographie des genres et les moments propres à la culture des jeunes filles de la Catalogne, et elle met en évidence le rôle des terrains de jeux comme des lieux où les filles négocient leurs rôles et leurs identités.

In play we transform the world according to our desires, while in learning we transform ourselves better to conform to the structure of the world. (Bruner 1983:61)

One idea that has gradually gained ground in the academic discourses of the social sciences is that games provide a kind of testing ground and decisive preparation for life in society (Elkonin 1980; Thorne 1993; Blatchford 1998; Lobato 2005). Nonetheless, we agree with Pellegrini (2009), when he complains that there is still a lack of research on games and sexuality, both fundamental factors in the development of young children and adolescents. Perhaps for this reason, parents and teachers in Western society still often refer to playground games—and by extension children's songs and rhymes—as if they were innocent products transmitted vertically (from adults to children) and as if children, rather than being creative individuals with a certain critical eye, are like a great blank screen where anything adults want to project finds a place. In fact, clapping games supply a clear example of horizontal cultural transmission and social learning that occurs through messages repeated every day in school playgrounds.

Teachers and parents very often only perceive the absurdity and extravagance of some of the lyrics of clapping games and overlook the subversive value they frequently possess (Fernández Poncela 2011). The cultural practice of clapping games, usually occurring free of adult supervision, takes advantage of a presumably innocent framework—"they're just children's games"—to elude any responsibility for what is explained through their rhetoric. Themes of death, violence, murder, and sex coexist in children's games, testing the limits of social norms and offering alternatives to them. Among these different issues, the question of gender appears most often (Fernández Poncela 2006) and children's clapping games faithfully reinforce a hegemonic discourse, or transgress it, or even permit multiple discourses of gender to coexist within the same song. In fact, only by assuming that these singing games play a relevant social and cultural role can we explain their lasting presence, propagation, and survival in school playgrounds and other children's recreational areas around the world.

Clapping games are popular children's activities and, as such, are variable and adaptable to changing circumstances (Mascaró 2008). Thanks to their dynamism

and lack of standardization, they display a great ability as an oral tradition to introduce and reflect emerging social changes at a particular moment in time. In other words, on the premise that society is changing, children's subcultures modify the pattern of how they live on the streets, at home, and through the media.¹ Thus, while bearing in mind the features shared by most clapping games from all over the world, the researcher should take a local approach and include an analysis of the social, political, and cultural context in the specific community and time (Geertz 1983). With this in mind, this paper provides an initial exploration of the evolution of clapping games in Spain and Catalonia, while highlighting themes that invite further research.

This article presents the findings of research carried out in a small town in Catalonia, Spain, based on adult and child experiences of clapping games as former or current participants. It is an exploratory study, covering the evolution of clapping games from the 1920s until the present day. Our goal was to analyze the evolution of this cultural product, which is generally associated with the school playground, a place where children have historically reproduced, transgressed, and/or negotiated gender identities (Tomé and Ruiz 2002). In this study, the playground is seen as a space directly conditioned by the historical and socio-cultural contexts that exist beyond its boundaries. We argue that the repression experienced under Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) and the emergence of Spanish feminist and other critical movements in the late 1960s determine—partly but clearly—the nature of clapping games in school playgrounds. Therefore, we defend the idea that the study of clapping games is important for understanding the gendered geographies and culturally-specific moments of girlhood in Catalonia, both under Franco's regime and thereafter.

Clapping Games, Music Experience, and Gender in the School Playground

Numerous studies carried out in different fields show that music plays a special role in the task of building or negotiating narratives and discourses. Stokes (1994) states that "music is clearly very much a part of modern life and our understanding of it, articulating our knowledge of other peoples, places, times and things, and ourselves in relation to them" (4). Similarly, Fernández Poncela (2006) affirms that:

Song is a means to social enculturation in general, and this seems particularly clear in childhood, when children's minds are molded, when their socio-political culture is shaped and, among other things, the formation of politico-social ideas takes place. (3)

Others still, suggest that music helps individuals to understand and make sense of what is experienced, and to recognize themselves in the identities they conform to (Vila 1996; Viñuela and Viñuela 2008). We agree that music is dialectical and ranges from the acceptance of hegemonic discourses—and their associated power relations—to their negotiation and subversion. In fact, tradition and folklore historically play a twofold—conscious or unconscious—role of reinforcement and subversion of the establishment (Ackerley 2007; Bishop and Burn 2013). Popular culture creates moments of “chanting what cannot be said” (Ayats 2010, n.p.), or situations where, in the words of Minks (2008), “the performance frame enacts a metacommunicative message that says *this is play, it's not real*” (54), though performance does eventually have an impact on reality. Therefore, what is considered socially acceptable exists alongside what is considered socially wrong, with the latter actually being what attracts children most (Bauer and Bauer 2007).

Among those identities co-constructed from an early age, the ones associated with gender and sexuality have generated the most literature (Leal 1998; Butler 1999; Lobato 2005). Based on the idea that gender identity is not innate (Minks 2008), several authors highlight the importance of school and especially the school playground—this being a place less controlled by adults—as spaces where these identities are exhibited publicly and negotiated (Grugeon 1993; Thorne 1993; Bhana, Nzimakwe, and Nzimakwe 2011). The observation of a school playground very clearly reveals the existence of some spaces and activities more associated with boys and others more typical of girls (Bonal 1998; Willet 2013). While football and other team sports, or other activities requiring physical strength, are often the main way boys manifest their masculinity in accordance with hegemonic discourse (Swain 2000; Ridgers et al. 2011), various authors agree that singing games are crucial to the co-construction of female gender and sexuality (Opie and Opie 1985; Ackerley 2007; Minks 2008; Bhana, Nzimakwe, and Nzimakwe 2011).

One of the most popular types of singing games in playgrounds around the world is the clapping game:

the term used to describe those long-established practices based on motor-skill songs where two children stand opposite each other—or in a circle if there are more than two—and clap hands together, while sometimes inter-mingling other gestures. These songs are based on a kind of choreography repeated cyclically while they are sung, and they are performed in children's recreational areas, such as the school playground. This is a complex activity in the sense that many different elements are involved and demand analysis: melody, rhythm, the body, movement, space, interpersonal relations, and so on. Like most traditional and popular activities, clapping games are usually passed on through observation and imitation, with younger children learning from older children (Grugeon 1993). On a linguistic level, there is frequent use of meaningless words and phrases (Bauer and Bauer 2007), but also of topics considered taboo or politically incorrect with regard to gender roles, sex, and explicit violence (Fernández Poncela 2005; Ackerley 2007; Bhana, Nzimakwe, and Nzimakwe 2011).

Various authors have analyzed activities similar to clapping games. Particular mention should be made of the contributions of Janice Ackerley (2007), Laurie and Winifred Bauer (2007), and Amanda Minks (2008). Ackerley's (2007) study in New Zealand, which also includes many references to studies in other countries, reveals that “children, as a relatively powerless group in society, use rhymes to comment upon and experiment with the boundaries of their life experiences” (223). She continues by affirming that “the rhymes are often subversive and their meanings are not always immediately obvious to the casual observer” (223). This is an idea other authors also draw attention to, such as Bhana, Nzimakwe, and Nzimakwe (2011). However, Ackerley (2007) goes a step further and suggests a need to investigate whether the way adults interpret these songs is consistent with the interpretations and meanings children ascribe to them. Apart from containing messages that transgress adult understandings of power and gender roles, such as those held by teachers, the police, and parents, Ackerley highlights the fact that singing games help children to understand and manage power relations. The author also mentions that they are more typical of girls than boys, especially those that touch on issues of sexuality and the life stages. She underscores that the female figure plays an increasingly active part in rhymes, with lyrics that even include explicit acts of

violence against adults. With respect to age, she points out that this recreational repertoire is most popular during middle childhood, between the ages of eight and ten. Finally, it is worth noting that she always considers children as active subjects not only in regard to the activity itself, but also in terms of creativity:

[...] children are not only astute observers of adult social and cultural practices, but they also readily incorporate these observations into their folklore. (218)

With regard to creativity, Bauer and Bauer (2007) explain that many clapping games are the fruit of the combination of two previously existing songs or texts. They also affirm that this cultural product is constantly changing and adapting to the socio-cultural context and individual needs, with current fashions having a clear influence. Furthermore, other research, for example, by Arleo (2001), highlights the potential for dissemination of some of these songs in a wide variety of countries and languages, and ultimately, the possibility of studying the way this activity transcends the local environment (Marsh 2008). Finally, Minks (2008) analyzes two singing games and underscores the fact that the co-construction of gender identities resulting from the social interaction occurring there is very significant. Minks also states that it is important to remember that “the musical, poetic and kinetic aspects of the games make them pleasurable and memorable” (53).

Literature that refers directly to these singing games in Catalonia and Spain is scarce, possibly due to cultural tendencies that devalue oral traditions in Western cultures. We note that that this type of activity has not been classified by any of the leading twentieth-century folklorists (Riera 2013). Apart from studies by Ferré (1993) and Martín Escobar (2001), no other extensive research has been carried out on clapping games in Spain (Riera and Casals 2014). Martín Escobar (2001) situates the origin of these types of games in the context of the late 1960s, with a boom in popularity in the following decades. The same author underscores the fact that an important part of children’s repertoire—among which she includes clapping games—is created or re-created by the children themselves. Ferré (1993) highlights the high participation of girls and the role of clapping games in enculturation, inculcating certain values and ideas about the world. He identifies the ages

of eight to ten years as the point when they are most popular and speculates on the impact of the mass media on the creation or modification of this type of song. He also notes that the songs are always in Spanish, despite the fact that the mother tongue of many of the children in the study was Catalan and that the ban on this language in schools had been lifted over ten years earlier.² By way of an explanation, he suggests that an idealized format restricted to a specific space and time may be what permits this shift in linguistic register to Spanish during their performance. As mentioned above, though clapping games are an everyday schoolyard activity, they often invoke an out-of-the-ordinary space and moment in time. Clapping games only appear in some songbooks and in broader studies of folklore, oral traditions, and gender. Consequently, further discussion in Catalan and Spanish scientific literature about the relationship between these songs and the associated gender spaces and narratives can only be found in children’s geographies (Baylina, Ortiz, and Prats 2006), some contributions to papers that explore the messages and discourses of children’s songs generically (Fernández Poncela 2005), and some educational articles (Romero and Romero 2013).

Clapping Games down through Different Generations

With this shortfall in the study of clapping games in Spain, a preliminary study was initiated early in 2012. The research used Rice’s (1987) classic ethnomusicological approach, which asks the question: historically, how has music been constructed, maintained socially, and individually experienced by human beings? Understanding music as an action or activity (Small 1998), the question can be translated to an analysis of clapping games. It also implies both diachronic and synchronic perspectives,³ and simultaneously assumes the influence of the context (historical and social) and the importance of individual experience.

Using this general framework, a study was carried out in Cardedeu, a small town near Barcelona (17,000 inhabitants). With the aim of collecting the repertoire and the narratives of people from different generations, interviews were conducted with a stratified sample of individuals between the ages of twelve and ninety-nine who lived in the target town. The sample, which was not intended to be representative, was select-

ed on grounds of accessibility and with the aim of meeting informants of different ages. Specifically, eight people in each age group of twelve to twenty-nine, thirty to sixty-nine, and over seventy were interviewed. Group interviews (of between two and four people) were conducted with participants from the first two age cohorts, while individual interviews were preferred in the case of the oldest participants. With regard to gender, many more women than men were interviewed, the latter constituting only twenty percent of the sample. All the interviews were recorded for later in-depth analysis.

The interviews were semi-structured and always conducted by the same researcher. In these guided conversations, the interviewees were prompted to explain and discuss their experience with this type of singing game and the characteristics of the activity (location, duration, participants, movements, most popular songs, socio-cultural context, and so on.). They were also asked to sing and act out the gestures of the various clapping games they remembered and then discuss the lyrics and their interpretation of each of the songs.

The interviews by age cohort were complemented by observations made during eight school days in a pre- and primary school playground (children aged from three to twelve) in the same town. The data gathered from these observations and also a series of brief informal interviews conducted with children and teachers were logged in the researcher's field notes. As with the interviews described above, this field work was also recorded on video for later analysis.

Data analysis brought to light forty-one different clapping games, many with numerous variations. They constitute a sample of the repertoire existing in playgrounds from 1920 to 2015 (see Annex) and provide interesting data on roles, stereotypes, and gender construction. All data collected has been translated by the authors from Spanish to English. Some of the findings are described below.

Clapping Games in the Playgrounds of Catalonia

The characteristics and functions of clapping games in Catalonia—and by extension in Spain—are much the same as what was described initially about this type of singing game in other cultural contexts. However, certain aspects of the socio-cultural context do condition and set them apart. The collected testimo-

nies provide an explanation of salient historical points leading up to their adoption as the playground game par excellence of girls.

Historical Background of Clapping Games in Catalonia and Spain

Clapping games underwent an important change in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Catalonia and Spain. We argue that the decline of Spanish nationalism and the effervescence of the feminist and progressive movements generated a social transformation and that clapping games reflected this new context. Finally, the emergence of mixed schools and the relaxation of gender roles (in the late 1970s and early 1980s) consolidated the changes in clapping games.

Twentieth-century Spain was decisively marked by the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Apart from the tragedy itself, Francisco Franco's victory marked the beginning of a fascist dictatorship that lasted almost forty years. Ideologically, the Civil War resulted in the victory of the most conservative factions (including the army, Catholic Church, and the aristocracy) over the progressive governments that had ruled during the first half of the 1930s. Among other measures, the Franco regime took great pains to impose a traditional family model in which the role of women was relegated to housework and private childcare, in contrast to the figure of the father, who was the breadwinner and moved primarily in the public sphere. This meant that women were dependent on men and had to play a subordinate role in order to be socially accepted. In this context, the feminine stereotype was placed in opposition to the masculine one. According to feminist and sociological literature (see Bosch, Ferrer, and Navarro 2006), some of the terms used to describe the women of that time were: emotional, fearful, lacking initiative or decision-making capacity, compliant, generous, and caring. This socially hegemonic discourse was justified by assumed biological differences and, consequently, any attempt to change the situation was labeled as unnatural. Then, in the late 1960s, owing to the influence of international feminist movements and a certain weakening of the dictatorship, new assertive voices and discourses demanding a change of model began to make themselves heard (Bosch, Ferrer, and Navarro 2006).

The repertoire of clapping games collected in this study indicates that this type of singing game did

not become a specific genre distinguishable from other types of playground games and songs until the 1960s, when the decline of the Franco regime was beginning. In other words, a particular song could be used interchangeably, for example, in a clapping game, while skipping or when singing in a circle, as Concepció indicates:

'I'm the queen of the seas; you'll soon see that; throw the handkerchief on the ground and pick it back up!' That's a song you could dance to, clap along to or do anything with. The thing about those songs is that...we would do anything to have a bit of fun! (Concepció, a woman born in 1926)

During the Franco era (1939-1975), most public and private schools were single gender and so girls and boys did not play together in the school recreational area (the playground or a central corridor, or a street or town square in other cases). As one participant recalled:

In those days, boys and girls were separated at different schools, and even in the play areas because the boys went to a square in the village and girls to a street called 'la Avenida'; at the far end there was a grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes and we used to play there. We never saw each other and I remember that a lot of the songs in the playground were religious. (Rosa, a woman born in 1927)

On the other hand, those interviewees who were educated during the Franco era and who went to mixed schools—which were usually very small state schools—claim that boys' participation in singing games was more common before the 1960s:

It was a little school, with the girls and boys sharing just one classroom...and sometimes we used to sing songs together. (Teresa, a woman born in 1952)

The fact that girls and boys participated together does not mean there were no other socializing agents marking out gender differences or that there were no differences in the dynamics of the game:

Did the boys use to play these singing games with you during break time?

Yes, we did it all together. Although there were some songs that were embarrassing...for example when the cra-

zy woman has a fig in her arse [she sings] and we used to prance about like this to make the point. Some of us used to feel embarrassed and say...look at the disgusting pig! (Dialogue between the researcher and Asun, a woman born 1944)

As a general rule, however, these songs often featured religious references or mentioned everyday activities that respected the roles marked out by the dictatorship. The narrative content of the lyrics and the descriptive movements of the body had no obscene content during this period:

The lyrics were not generally obscene, though there was some silliness sometimes. Like in the song 'desde pequeñita' where we used to sing: 'thwack, thwack, I'm going to give you a kick'. But I remember the lyrics as being quite innocent. (Catalina, a woman born in 1930)

Some interviewees also explained how lyrics were sometimes made up to denounce a real situation where the social norms had broken down:

There was a song about a girl who got pregnant at sixteen. At the time this was a terrible thing to happen and, of course, the whole school made up a song about her. (Asun, a woman born in 1944)

This example shows how the lyrics easily provided a way of reinforcing a particular view of young girls' sexuality. The stories they tell could then be maintained or modified by their performers.

It should be remembered that during the Franco era, playground activities, including lyrical content of songs, were strictly controlled by the teachers in most schools. Furthermore, the social context was heavily conditioned by religion and, ultimately, Catholic morality:

The teachers used to control and keep tabs on us during break time...those were other times. And one thing for sure, we weren't allowed to tell jokes...When we finished [the break time] we used to say prayers and recite the Lord's Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes. (Rosa, a woman born in 1927)

On the other hand, there was less control in some smaller schools:

We didn't have a playground; the school was in an apartment. We used to go outside during break time, with nobody watching because there were so few of us. (Concepción, a woman born in 1927)

In the early 1960s, the use of many playground songs gradually became restricted to clapping games. This phenomenon was consolidated in the 1970s and, very importantly, changes in the lyrics of these songs may also be observed as compared to other types of singing games. Taboo subjects, such as death, murder, and sex, figured more often, transgressing social norms and confronting the established order. The roles given to women in the songs became more active, sometimes performing activities not considered feminine, while the male role might be indistinctly active or passive. There was more frequent use of parody, the absurd, exaggeration of situations, and hypersexualized images of some female characters (see Box 1 for an example).

<i>Somos chicas pistoleras</i>	We are gunslinging girls
<i>Somos chicas pistoleras rubias y morenas del noventa y tres, noventa y tres.</i>	We are gunslinging girls blondes and brunettes from ninety-three, ninety-three.
<i>Usamos medias amarillas zapatos con hebilla y hablamos en inglés.</i>	We use yellow stockings with buckled shoes and speak in English.
<i>Somos chicas pistoleras rubias y morenas, de la capital, llevamos poquita ropa y nos la quitamos con facilidad.</i>	We are gunslinging girls blondes and brunettes, from the capital, We wear scanty clothing and like to take it off.

Box 1: A version of “Somos chicas pistoleras” provided by informants born in the 1970s.

It is not by chance that this song was sung to the tune of the Can-Can, one of the symbols of the French Moulin Rouge.⁴ It provides a clear example of a sexually explicit protagonist, possessing powers of decision and wanting to identify with a “modern” or “liberated” type of woman (the song dates from 1970s). We argue that

hypersexuality often served as a defense against the imposition of the roles of mother and housewife. A similar phenomenon occurred in Spain with the boom in adult comics (1967-1986), where the traditional female role was challenged and increasingly replaced with the other extreme: a hypersexual, adventurous, childless, beautiful, intelligent, and erotic girl (Clúa 2008).

Moreover, speaking English and being “gunslinging girls” are allusions to the United States (USA) and, along with the aforementioned French reference, allowed the singers to identify with a foreign model of femininity. In the context in question, countries such as the USA and France were seen as advanced Western societies where women had long abandoned conservative femininity. The masculine symbol of the gun seems to suggest a female figure who was publicly active and dominant. In contrast to the sexual norms ascribed to being a mother or wife, she felt free to show off her body. However, it is worth noting that the reference to the Moulin Rouge Can-Can also suggested the idea that feminine sexual transgression served as male entertainment.

Spanish society in the 1960s and 1970s was conditioned by a changing socio-political context that ultimately resulted in its transition from a dictatorship to a democracy. This transition involved the opening up of Catalan and Spanish society to Europe and the world, as well as important changes in relation to women and family ideals (Moreno 2004). It was a time when new, free-thinking movements provided women the opportunity to occupy public space, discrediting the sexist pigeonholing they had endured and offering a challenge to the dominant patriarchal system (Bosch, Ferrer, and Navarro 2006). The proliferation of new versions of clapping games or lyrics in sympathy with this political and social upheaval was symptomatic and, as we argue, contributed to the construction of gender identity in partial response to the developments explained above.

At the end of the 1970s, mixed gender schools—and mixed gender playgrounds—became widespread (Subirats 2010). This shift to shared play areas clearly had a decisive impact on the development and significance of these games. Here is an example of the dichotomy that existed between boys’ and girls’ games:

Conchita: No, no way, it was a girls’ game, they [the boys] weren’t interested.

Anton: We used to play football. I don't recall any of my friends playing those games. There might have been someone...

Conchita: Me neither, not on your life. If they did...it was in secret. They were games for girls! (Group interview: Conchita, a woman born in 1964; and Anton, a man born in 1966)

Thanks to these songs, girls could articulate publicly—or at least with boys nearby physically—their own critical discourse on gender and sexuality as well as the boundaries of their own spatial organization of gender-based play. In some ways, we see here a parallel with—or an extension of—the gender conflicts that emerged in Catalan and Spanish society with the disappearance of the heavily dichotomized private and public roles existing during Franco's dictatorship (Bosch, Ferrer, and Navarro 2006). In fact, girls who engaged in clapping games swapped the gender-monitoring not only of teachers in playgrounds, but also of Spanish society for their own predominantly in-group monitoring of gender roles in shared-gender spaces.

According to our data, clapping games took on an increasingly prominent role during the following decades, to the detriment of other types of singing games, until they become a first choice for girls in the late 1980s. This situation has remained unchanged until the present day, though with some discontinuities.

Gender and Participation in the Contemporary Context

All of the interviewees and researchers' observations confirmed that clapping games are now a predominantly female activity in school playgrounds. This means that they are often derided or caricatured by boys who do not participate:

They [clapping songs] are really weird, I don't like them at all. Because doing like this is really freaky [he mimics the gestures, exaggerating the feminine part]. (Aitor, a boy born in 2001)

Nonetheless, the data collected in the school playground shows that there are boys who do join in and some who even take an active role in the transmission of singing games:

In my case, a boy called Pol showed them [clapping games]

to me, so we've always been good friends...Sometimes I found them hard to learn, but...he really is a very nice boy. (Berta, a girl born in 2001)

For the most part, however, we found that boys tend to participate at earlier ages (five and six years old). The reason may well lay in the fact that gender roles are not as marked as at older ages. The boys who play often adopt positions or convey messages considered by older children and adults as feminine, but they are still not experienced as such at this age. For example, as indicated in the song included in Box 2, the characters are female and the boys would have to perform actions conceptualized as effeminate—and sensual as well: brushing their imaginary long hair, when singing “so pretty!” and saucily raising and playing with their skirts.

<i>En la calle redonda</i> ⁵	In the round, round street
<i>En la calle redonda, redonda, hay una zapatería, ia, ia donde van las chicas guapas, ¡guapas! ¡guapas! a tomarse las medidas: cuarenta y seis! Se levantan la faldilla, ¡olé! ¡olé! un poquito más arriba, ¡olé! ¡olé! Se les ve la pichurrilla, ¡socorro! ¡socorro! y el pobre zapatero, ¡dinero! ¡dinero! se ha caído de la silla. ¡Ahhhhhh! pan con mantequilla.</i>	In the round, round street there is a shoe shop, op, op, where all the pretty girls go, So pretty! So pretty! To take their size: Forty-six! They lift their skirts, hey, wow! Just a little bit more, hey, wow! You can see their willies, help, help! and the poor shoemaker, money, money! He's fallen off his chair. Ahhhhhh! Bread and butter.

Box 2: A version of “En la calle redonda” provided by informants born in the 1960s.

The lyrics of this song suggest multiple readings, from the actions of a child abuser to the seduction of an attractive shoemaker. The first interpretation is based on the fact that the shoemaker, instead of worrying about the girls' shoe size, takes other measurements.

In this regard, it should be noted that the gestures that accompany the song at this point are very clear and indicate that forty-six refers to a body measurement. In the contrary interpretation, it is the girls who provoke the situation on their own initiative. In any case, the cobbler—as a male figure and adult—ends up being ridiculed.

Returning to the question of participation, among children over eight years old in particular, gender preferences become much more pronounced and many boys stop being players to become, at best, observers. One exception are songs sung in a circle, such as *El conejo de la suerte* and *Don Macarrón chistero*, through which boys and girls explore their likes and preferences in a group, as well as their crushes and friendships. According to a group of girls aged ten and eleven, it is all right for boys to sing these songs; however, the ones they refer to as “for clapping and that’s it” are considered to be almost exclusively for girls.

Despite this differentiation between girls’ and boys’ activities in the playground, our findings show that there are boys who continue to participate, subject to the rules and practices established by the girls. Given this circumstance, girls adopt two attitudes. Sometimes, boys are not readily accepted; they are seen as intruders and the girls snub them, pull faces, and ignore them when picking partners. Other times, if they think a boy is showing genuine interest, they praise him and value it as a positive aspect of his personality. However, as indicated by Ridgers et al. (2011), it seems that the boy has to demonstrate certain aptitudes to be accepted into a game associated with the opposite sex. This was confirmed in one of the group interviews with nine-year-old girls:

Why do you think the boys don’t join in [in clapping games]?

I’m not sure...maybe they don’t like them.

Ok...but if there was some boy who liked playing, I bet he would do it really well.

And would you let him join in?

If he did it well, yes. (Conversation between the researcher and a group of nine-year-old girls)

This relatively open approach taken by preadolescent girls to boys’ participation was not corroborated by the interviews with teenagers and adults. They offer

a much more dichotomized image of the participants:

The fact is, there were two different worlds! I don’t see them playing together. Do you know what I mean? The boys went straight off to play football, as a dynamic...In the playground everyone had their place...as if they had a role. Everyone did their own thing. (Núria, a girl born in 1984)

Even those who had quite recently stopped playing singing games insisted on this separation, relating it to peer pressure, the phenomena of power and marginalization, and, ultimately, socially dominant discourse:

I wouldn’t stigmatize them now, but...if you meet a boy and you find out what he did (whether he played or didn’t played clapping games)...well, it’s like if you aren’t a crack football player and don’t go out with the girls and don’t have spiky hair, then you aren’t worth a piece of shit... (Laia, a girl born in 1992)

The quote illustrates the way in which heteronormative masculinity features in the discourses not only of boys, but of girls as well. It indicates the deep presence of these ideas in the context under study and suggests that any modification of this discourse is an extremely challenging task.

Reproduction and Subversion of Gender Identities

Clapping games present an opportunity to create new gender alternatives and transgress canonical boundaries. To do so, they use a forceful and very effective mechanism: repetition. Time and time again, children repeat the same song, the same words and ideas about possible gender identities. But who made up these transgressive lyrics, passed down by children from one generation to the next?

When adults reflected on their own experience with clapping games as children, it is surprising to note that they perceived children to be incapable of creating songs with sexualized or violent content. The interviews show that adults did not conceptualize children as the active creators of these songs and were surprised by the brutality of some songs about violence against women, such as this one:

<i>Don Federico</i>	<i>Mr Federico</i>
<i>Don Federico mató a su mujer, la hizo picadillo y la puso en la sartén. La gente que pasaba olía a carne asada, era la mujer de Don Federico</i>	Mr Federico murdered his wife, made her into mincemeat and put her in the pan. People passing by smelled the fried meat, that was the wife of Mr Federico.

Box 3: A version of “Don Federico” provided by informants born in the 1960s.

In short, they underestimated children’s capacity for analysis, transgression, and creativity; i.e. the processes of observing and integrating messages and situations from their environment into their habitual repertoire. Children, however, take advantage of this space to give voice to taboo subjects, those subjects that their elders try to hide from them because they are only considered suitable for adults: death, murder, sex, gender violence, and so on. Take, for example, this song about a parricide:

<i>Doña Margarita</i>	<i>Miss Margarita</i>
<i>Doña Margarita hija de un rey moro, que mató a su padre con cuchillo de oro. No era ni de plata ni de plata fina, era un cuchillito de pelar patatas. ¡Ding Dong! llaman a la puerta ¡Ding Dong! es la policía ¡Ding Dong! vienen a por tí!</i>	Miss Margarita daughter of a Moorish king, killed her father with a gold knife. It wasn’t made of silver or fine silver, it was a potato knife! Ding Dong! A knock on the door Ding Dong! It’s the police Ding Dong! They’re coming for you!

Box 4: A version of “Doña Margarita” provided by informants born in the 1970s.

For many decades, some issues were hushed up in the presence of adults:

So some were saucier?
The thing is, the saucier ones weren’t allowed, not even by the teacher. Some we played on the sly so that the teachers and parents wouldn’t punish us! (Conversation between the researcher and Asun, a woman born in 1944).

And, in fact, in a conversation with primary school girls about the song *Amarillo* (Box 5), one of the participants confirmed that she knew exactly what that particular song was about.

<i>Amarillo</i> ⁶	<i>Yellow</i>
<i>Yo conocí a un profesor que en matemáticas me puso un dos. En inglés me puso un tres, y en historia, me suspendió. Amarillo se puso mi papa cuando le enseñé las notas de este mes. Colorada me puse yo también, cuando me enseñó su nuevo cinturón. Me pegó, me castigó, me tiró por el balcón. Suerte que había un colchón, esa fue mi bendición. Subí por el ascensor me encontré al profesor, le pegué, le castigué le tiré por el balcón. Suerte que no había colchón. Esa fue su maldición.</i>	I had a teacher In maths he gave me a two. In English he gave me a three, and in history, he failed me. My dad went livid when I showed him my grades. And I went pale when he showed me his new belt. He thrashed me, he punished me, He threw off the balcony. Lucky there was a mattress, that saved me. I went up in the elevator I found the teacher, I thrashed him, I punished him I threw him off the balcony. Lucky there was no mattress. That finished him.

Box 5: Song with explicitly violent messages. A version of “Amarillo” provided by informants born in the 1970s.

And even though they saw it as something unreal, like an imaginary story, the young girls’ comments could be this brutal:

I think it's ok [that the teacher was thrown off the balcony] because if a teacher gives you low grades it's normal to throw him off the balcony, and what's really cool is that there was no mattress. (Maria, a girl born in 2002)

In contrast, several of the adults interviewed found songs like this disturbing and tried to rationalize or minimize them by citing the age of the participants as an excuse:

You hear some bad language. It's a laugh—it makes you feel more grown-up and all that—but, really, you don't stop to look for the real meaning of the song. (Laila, a girl born in 1992)

Let's see, when you're small, logically...you don't think about what you're saying. I think they are songs sung more out of routine, out of habit, and because you've heard them, you repeat them like you repeat any other story. (Montse, a woman born in 1967)

The above opinion is very illustrative because it reveals the strength of the mechanism of repetition as way of fostering the intangible transmission of cultural meanings. Much to the adults' surprise, the motivation of the game prompts the participants to repeat the songs for weeks, to the point of extenuation:

You think they've forgotten all about it...and suddenly one day they all start up again. They all know them and they go on for weeks [playing the clapping games] without stopping. (Schoolteacher, a woman born in 1969)

This repetition establishes and maintains the rules governing identity as proclaimed by the dominant culture (Butler 1999). For this reason, it is important to remember that the subject of this study is a singing game. In all cases, this is a *language game* that would be very hard to play without the power of the *musical game*, which makes the act invisible through the adoption of collective accountability where everybody takes part and nobody is to blame. The participants found clapping games funny and inoffensive. The musical facet, in their case, provides a way of controlling the time (beginning and end) and the narrative in each piece, which also aids in their repetition:

We often sing these songs, almost every day; we sing them anywhere in the playground and we have a lot of fun, and the time goes by really quickly. (Andrea, a girl aged 10)

On the other hand, with the benefit of hindsight, some adults discovered the spirit of subversion:

It's fun to sing, easy, in pairs or small groups and everyone likes to be with someone! What's more, they were different from the songs in the classroom, which were more boring, and that's probably why they talk about murder and death. Being rebellious about what you were taught in a class, rebelling against the establishment...they used to teach me Christmas carols in class!

Right, it was about doing what we liked. (Group interview, conversation between two women born in the 1960s)

An examination of the song lyrics and which ones the interviewees found more meaningful when they were children revealed that those referring to gender roles or stereotypes made up a significant part of the corpus collected during the research (63.4 percent of the clapping games). In general, these clapping games play with the meaning of gender identity, although in some cases they are also used to announce certain individual characteristics of the participants (for example, age or romantic feelings). It is also common to use the names of famous people (favorite singers, television presenters, and so on), although they are not indispensable. However, the most important point is that whether they are well known or not, the girls often identify with the characters.

Clapping games also contain mixed messages (see Box 6). The stories tend to be parodies of activities considered feminine or masculine. They may support or exaggerate the canons (gender roles and stereotypes) imposed by the dominant hegemonic culture or subvert them through caricature and by offering alternatives to established gender models. Moreover, these two techniques may feature in a single song, usually starting with the dominant norm and then transgressing it through subversion.

In the first example in Box 6, femininity is associated with "being a doll"—pretty and subject to someone's power. The second example is paradoxical; titled

Barbie—after the doll of the same name, the quintessential Western stereotype of the feminine woman as beautiful—this is a song advocating a completely contrary model of femininity (active, violent, and sexual):

Barbie can do anything! She can drive a car, roller-skate... you can see that in the ad! [She sings the song from the advertisement and some of her classmates are heard to agree].

I do karate [making movements from this sport] and I know much more than a lot of the boys here! [pointing to the football pitch]. (conversation between two girls aged 10)

Combination of the canon and its subversion	
<i>Teresa quería ser</i>	Teresa wanted to be
<i>Teresa quería ser enfermera de primera,</i>	Teresa wanted to be a top nurse,
<i>Teresa quería ser enfermera de primera.</i>	Teresa wanted to be a top nurse.
<i>Pinchazo, vacuna, el niño está en la cuna bautizado por el cura.</i>	Jabs and vaccines, the child is in the cot baptized by the priest.
<i>El niño a la basura, ¡caradura!</i>	The child in the trash, cheeky brat!

Box 6: Examples of songs with diverse types of messages related to the socially predominant gender stereotypes.

One of the most stereotypical ideas about women is their supposed interest in looking after other people, but not themselves. The last example in Box 6, *Teresa quería ser*, draws on the stereotype of women as care-givers, illustrated by the desire to become a nurse. The song surprises us by transgressing this social norm: “the child in the trash, cheeky brat!” Finally, it should be noted that the phrase “baptized by the priest” in this context is not accidental, but rather reinforces the idea of respecting established social rules. Thus, in this example, we are able to observe the workings of the canon and its subversion.

Conclusion

Clapping games are developed and transmitted orally from older to younger children in a recreational space specific to girls with little or no adult supervision. This trend often leads to a naturalization of the differentiation between the two genders (Bonal 1998). Girls play at mimicking the established gender roles, while testing their limits and the alternatives as a necessary step towards adulthood (Grugeon 1993). In line with authors, such as Tomé and Ruiz (2002), it should also be pointed out that the process of co-construction of gender identities takes place precisely in a space where female recreational activity has to compete with the activities and often excessive occupation of the space by boys. In this respect, we disagree with the view of some

Preservation of the canon	
<i>Las vocales</i>	The vowels
<i>Con la a, a, biribiri ba tengo una muñeca de cristal.</i>	Give me an a, a, diddly da I've got a doll made of glass
<i>Con la e, e, biribiri be tengo una muñeca de papel.</i>	Give me an e, e, diddly de I've got a doll made of crêpe
<i>Con la i, i, biribiri bi tengo una muñeca de marfil.</i>	Give me an i, i, diddly di I've got a doll made of ivory
<i>Con la o, o, biribiri bo tengo una muñeca de cartón.</i>	Give me an o, o, diddly do I've got a doll made of wood
<i>Con la u, u, biribiri bu tengo una muñeca como tú</i>	Give me a u, u, diddly du I've got a doll like you
Subversion of the canon	
<i>Barbie</i>	Barbie
<i>En la calle veinticuatro hay un grupo de mujeres que les enseñan a los hombres karate, boxeo y un poco de chochorreo.</i>	On twenty-fourth street There's a bunch of women who teach men karate, boxing and a bit of hanky-panky.
<i>Azúcar, limón, cámaras y acción.</i>	Sugar, lemon, cameras and action.
<i>Abiertas, cerradas, para los lados.</i>	Open, closed, from the sides.
<i>¡Y yo me quedó así!</i>	And I want to be like that!

authors, for example Bonal (1998), who describe female attitudes solely as a demonstration of passivity and conformity. Rather, we argue that the way actively participating girls, and also some boys, defend their place in the playground is analogous to defending their place in society outside the classroom context.

Additionally, the findings of this research suggest there is a relationship between the discourses of the feminist social movements of the 1960s and 1970s that sought to subvert the *status quo* (Bosch, Ferrer, and Navarro 2006) and the evolution of clapping games until they became an essential girls' game. In contrast to Martín Escobar's (2001) conclusions, the results indicate that clapping games appeared well before the 1960s, but they became gender specific and took on more relevance during that decade. This process was linked to the emergence of a series of new concerns and those related to gender identities stand out in particular. Tensions over hegemonic gender roles and stereotypes and greater freedom of expression all had and have an impact on children's lives. In the same way that the lyrics of the singing games are open to the introduction of popular personalities or TV content (Minks 2008), they also incorporate or hint at messages that subvert the established gender models. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Bauer and Bauer (2007) and Fernández Poncela (2011), these coexist alongside messages that reiterate the hegemonic discourses of dichotomous gender roles, sexuality, and indeed even the ascendancy of Spanish over Catalan, the local mother tongue. While adults have already often categorized their practices, children insist on trying to develop and negotiate what is determined by adults. In this process, games, music, and the constant repetition of messages are powerful weapons passed down from one generation of girls to the next.

Annex

Table 1: List of existing repertoire according to the data provided by the informants

Informants' dates of birth and historical period	New songs collected	Songs no longer mentioned
1914-1935 Before the Spanish Civil War	Cocherito leré Desde pequeña Anton Carolina (or Anton Calabaina) Baixant de la Font del gat Chocolate amarillo El señor Don Gato En el fondo del mar En Joan petit quan balla Platerets test test Soy la reina de los mares	
1936-1959 Spanish Civil War and early years of Francoism (repression and dictatorship)	Chincha rabiña Tarara sí, tarara no Soy la farolera El patio de mi casa Chocolate molinillo	Baixant de la Font del gat El fondo del mar El señor Don Gato En Joan petit quan balla Platerets test test El cocherito leré Chincha rabiña
1960-1976 2nd phase of Francoism (certain opening-up of the regime)	Eram Sam Sam En la calle redonda En la calle 24 Don Federico Miliquituli Santa Teresita (or Doña Margarita) Soy el chino capuchino Amarillo Conejo de la suerte Estar quijar Don Macarrón Horóscopo Los esqueletos Pato Donald Petit chéri, leré Pata palo Popeye Somos chicas pistoleras Doña Margarita Teresa quería ser Un vampiro soy Andu du plandu	Tarara sí, tarara no El patio de mi casa Chocolate molinillo Chocolate amarillo Soy la reina de los mares Anton carolina Desde pequeña Santa Teresita
1977-1990 Democratic transition	Charleston Dr Jano Dan dan dero Choco choco la la Calipo	Estar quijar Petit chéri leré Somos chicas pistoleras Un vampiro soy Andu du plandu
1991-2006 Consolidation of democracy	Las Vocales Debajo de la mesa Barbie Colorín, colorado Lecherita	Charleston Los esqueletos Teresa quería ser Miliquituli Pata palo Popeye

Endnotes

¹ For further information on the modern-day and very interesting subject of the impact of the media on children, we recommend consulting the *Handbook of Children and the Media* (Singer and Singer 2011).

² Following the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Spain became a totalitarian state ruled by Francisco Franco (d. 1975) for almost forty years. During the dictatorship, Catalan became an unofficial language and it was forbidden to teach it. In the 1980s, Catalan became the co-official language of Catalonia, together with Spanish. Within this reality, it is interesting to note that, although clapping games serve as a way of rebelling against certain impositions such as gender roles, this does not occur in the language. Thus, Catalan-speaking pupils also sing songs in Spanish. This may be due to the fact that they take for granted that Spanish is the 'normal' language used in schools and, therefore, have little awareness of linguistic repression. However, we think that factors, such as the fact that the vast majority of models - even before the Franco dictatorship - were Spanish, may have had an influence. To sum up, like Ferré (1993), apart from venturing some hypotheses, we would not dare to come to any definite conclusion.

³ Diachronic perspective refers to a historical perspective, which relates to the development of a phenomenon through time. Synchronic perspective refers to a contemporary perspective, concerned with the events of a specific period and ignoring historical antecedents.

⁴ The melody comes from the end of the opera *Orpheus in Hell* (1858) by the composer Jacques Offenbach. It takes the form of the Can-Can, which is a fast dance with a scandalous reputation, where the dancers make provocative movements, such as kicking their legs high in the air and lifting their skirts.

⁵ Regarding the word *pichurrilla* (willy), which rather surprisingly appears in the collected version, it should be pointed out that in other versions the word used is *pantorrilla* (calf). We believe that the original word was *pantorrilla*, but the coincidence of the two rhyming words in Spanish led to this change. It is, therefore, one of the many examples of transformations of this type of popular repertoire. This is what leads to absurd lyrics and, in this case, the appearance of even more provocative messages. Finally, "pan con mantequilla" (bread and butter) refers to the movement used to choose who goes inside the circle, apparently unrelated to the meaning and content of the song.

⁶ The melody of this song is directly influenced by the Beatles song "Yellow Submarine." It is interesting to note that the appropriation of the melody has given the song its title, but the theme has absolutely nothing to do with the title.

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Finding One's Place to Be and Pee: Examining Intersections of Gender-Dis/ability in Washroom Signage

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Abstract

In this article, we explore power relations in space by examining how the intersections of gender and disability are discursively represented in washroom signage. To do so, we analyze various washroom signs found in public spaces and airports that the authors encountered in their travels in North America, Hawaii, and Europe and how they depict bodies in spaces, times, and contexts. We discuss dominant discursive representations of gender and disability in relation to constructions of family, caregiving roles, and cultural location. We argue that washroom signs constitute gendered and disabled subjects and mediate their subjectivities. Furthermore, they function to regulate bodies in space, influencing notions of who belongs, who belongs where, and how different bodies are de(valued).

Résumé

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Dans cet article, nous explorons les rapports de pouvoir dans différents lieux en examinant la façon dont les intersections du genre et du handicap sont représentées dans l'affichage des salles de toilette. Pour ce faire, nous analysons l'affichage des salles de toilette dans différents endroits publics et dans les aéroports que les auteurs ont remarqué pendant leurs déplacements en Amérique du Nord, à Hawaï et en Europe, et la façon dont les corps des gens sont représentés dans différents lieux, contextes et périodes. Nous discutons des représentations dominantes du genre et des handicaps relativement à la construction des familles, des rôles de soignant et de l'emplacement culturel. Nous faisons valoir que l'affichage des salles de toilette représente des personnes d'un certain genre et ayant certains handicaps, et nous discutons de leur subjectivité. De plus, l'affichage vise à réglementer les corps dans différents lieux, et influence les notions déterminant le sentiment d'appartenance des gens, à quel endroit ils appartiennent et la façon dont les différents corps sont (dé)valorisés.

Introduction

Spaces are sites of ongoing political contestation where individuals are perpetually engaged in struggles against oppression. They are also dynamic and constructed arenas for social and spatial justice as “space is filled with politics and privileges...justice and injustice, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation” (Soja 2010, 105). People navigate and negotiate built spaces that constrain and enable thoughts and actions; they are shaped by and shape their socio-cultural lived geographies. In other words, we are “enmeshed in efforts to shape the spaces in which we live while at the same time these established and evolving spaces are shaping our lives” (71). Furthermore, spaces may be organized in ways that reproduce processes of exclusion (Claes, DeSchauwer, and Van Hove 2013). According to Henri Lefebvre (1991), space and the socio-political organization of space reveal social relationships, but these relationships are also mediated and shaped through spaces. Social spaces and society are, therefore, engaged in an ongoing dynamic relationship.

Symbols and signs discursively and directly mediate specific types of behaviours and movements in social spaces (Abel 1999; Boswell 1999). At the same time, social actors also have agency to perpetually make complex meanings of such discursive imagery. Washroom signs are examples of the inevitable messiness of space where representations of disability and gender speak beyond movement in space and into conceptualizations of identities and relationships, such as ‘family’, and ‘caregiver’ roles. Washrooms represent socio-spatial sites where people undertake bodily acts and functions extending beyond excretion of waste, bodily fluids, and materials, including such actions as changing clothes, adjusting contact lenses, blowing noses, brushing teeth, conversing, among others. People use washrooms to attend to various needs and search for such viable spaces by interpreting signage. “Misfitting” (Garland-Thompson 2011) demonstrates a socio-spatial-bodily mismatch where nonconforming gendered and disabled subjects encounter architectural barriers (592). These barriers subjugate gendered and disabled subjects’ knowledges and embodied lived realities by limiting their ability to fit in certain lived spaces (Garland-Thompson 2011).

In this paper, we explore the power relations within space by analyzing discourses of gender and dis-

ability in washroom signage. To do so, we examine photographs of washroom signs that we collected in public spaces in major cities in North America, Hawaii, and Europe. In analyzing the washroom signage, we critically trouble their constitutive effects in relation to the intersections of gender and disability. Growing out of a conceptual understanding that space is socially produced, where society and space are dialectically and mutually constitutive (Lefebvre 1991), the central research questions that guided our inquiry are: How are discourses of gender and dis/ability represented through washroom signage? And, how are gendered and disabled subjects socio-spatially constituted through washroom signs and dominant washroom signage imagery?

In exploring these research questions, we first discuss intersections between gender, disability, and space as discussed in current literature and theory. We then detail our methodology, which draws on the work of visual image theorist Sandra Weber (2008). Next, we discuss our use of discourse analysis (Lazar 2005; Gee 2011), which we use to analyze key repetitive washroom signage. We conclude by arguing for sustained critique of signage and space, with a particular emphasis on continued analysis of the intersections between gender, disability, and space. In doing so, this paper reveals ways in which symbols of access connect with social practices, dominant ableist-heteronormative discourses, and systemic exclusion.

Gender, Disability, and Space

With shifts towards post-structuralist conceptualizations of gender identity and binaries, debates over washroom use and selection have emerged (Cavanagh 2010; Molotch and Norén 2010). However, little research has been conducted on the intersections of disability and gender in washroom signage. While some studies have examined disability and public washrooms as they pertain to issues of access (Kitchin and Law 2001; Titchkosky 2011), symbolic representations of disability in relation to other intersectional identity markers and their configured assemblages need further examination.

The disciplinary fields of Gender Studies and Critical Disability Studies allow for a deeper intersectional examination of gender-dis/ability in relation to privilege, knowledge-power relations, heteronormativity, and ableism among countless other salient issues. Gender Studies (Butler 1993, 1999; Shildrick and Price

1999; Cranny-Francis et al. 2003; St. Pierre 2000) and Critical Disability Studies scholars (Wendell 1996; Garland-Thompson 1997, 2005, 2006; Titchkosky 2003; McRuer 2006, 2010; Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009; Tremain 2013) explore the ways that gender and ability are socially and discursively constructed. Critical Disability Studies theorists examine power-knowledge relations, which problematically uphold able-bodiedness as a socially constructed and fictitious idealized way of thinking, acting, and being in the world (McRuer 2010; Titchkosky 2011; Goodley 2014). Non-normative movement, communication, observation, thought, and appearance may be the bases for othering and exclusion (Goodley 2014).

Importantly, non-conforming gendered and disabled subjects both share a biomedically pathologized past, where various institutions have attempted to fix or alter those considered deviant so that they better adhere to gendered, heteronormative, and able-bodied social norms (Foucault 1995; McRuer 2010). Those that do not adhere to dominant or privileged representations of gender and ability are often “portrayed as helpless, dependent, weak, vulnerable, and incapable bodies” (Garland-Thompson 2002, 8). Cis-gendered, heteronormative, and able-bodied subjects are often viewed as ideal human beings (McRuer 2006, 2010). Thus, disabled subjects, for example, may be constituted as deviant by washroom signage directed at nondisabled subjects. This relates to Michel Foucault’s (1995, 1999) notions of categorization, pathologization, dividing practices, and spatial partitioning, which are sustained through dominant discourses that sort and move individuals in particular social spaces. However, far from being docile, individuals have agency and often resist reductionist and alienating rules of conduct, social norms, and limiting values (Foucault 1995, 1999, 2007). As such, people perpetually struggle with mediated freedom and agency to interpret, think, and act critically and self-reflexively, while considering discursive meanings inscribed in washroom signs.

Geographies of Disability and Gender in Washroom Signage

Dis/ability and gender norms are upheld through socio-spatial interactions and collective understandings (social attitudes) and are further reinforced through built environments (physical spaces) (Kitchin

and Law 2001; Imrie and Edwards 2007; Doan 2010; Titchkosky 2011). Disability geographers (Castrodale and Crooks 2010) have argued that accessibility/inaccessibility in the design of built environments significantly mediates who is and is not considered disabled in various socio-spatial realms. Furthermore, disability and gender are represented in social spaces and such representations shape how space is dynamically understood. Representations of gender and disability in washroom signs emerge as part of a broader discursive constitutive apparatus inscribed in space, while mediating socio-spatial relations. Thus, washroom signs represent an extension of other normalizing regimes (Foucault 1994, 1995, 1999, 2003) reinforced by what Robert McRuer (2010) terms “compulsory able-bodiedness” (383), heteronormativity, and gender binaries where disability, queerness, and gender nonconformity are often represented as deviant subjectivities.

Access to built environments is often a question of equity and social justice that raises questions about who, what, where, when, and why certain bodies are privileged in their use of public spaces (Imrie and Edwards 2007; Soja 2010). Rob Kitchin and Robin Law (2001) note that “space is socially produced in ways that deny disabled people the same levels of access as non-disabled people” (287). Furthermore, the demarcation of social spaces indicates who and how certain persons are to move and act in these specific physical spaces (Kitchin and Law 2001). Thus, while “a space may be *physically* accessible...[it may also] be *experienced* as oppressive” (Freund 2001, 697; italics in original). The paradoxical visible and invisible absence of disabled persons¹ in social spaces may attest to their exclusion in various social realms. Furthermore, as Anne Cranny-Francis et al. (2003) argue, “the gendering of categories of bodies is matched by a gendering of the spaces they are allowed or forbidden to enter and occupy” (213). Feminist geographers (Nash and Bain 2007; Valentine 2008; Berg and Longhurst 2010; Doan 2010; Longhurst 2010) have explored the ways in which space is explicitly and implicitly gendered through social norms that denote which sex and gender representation belongs in certain physical spaces. Furthermore, “repeated practices and behaviours in particular spaces... constitute identities in ways that make the availability of space a necessity for the possibility of the creation of new identities and/or the continuation of others”

(Nash and Bain 2007, 50). Thus, accessibility and the struggle for access (Titchkosky 2011) relate to gender and dis/ability norms, behaviours, codes of conduct, and subjectivities in socio-spatial realms. Disability and gender are not isolated to an individual's body, but extend into socio-spatial relations and are often regulated by symbols, such as washroom signage (Abel 1999; Browne 2004).

The racialization of public spaces offers an important example of how the regulation of bodies is directly linked to public institutions. In addition to washrooms being explicitly gendered and abled, they also have a long history of being racialized through Jim Crow signage; in the latter case, signs oppressively separated and restricted Black people and limited their social participation and access, while granting privileges to white individuals in parts of the Southern U.S. Under regulative disciplinary Jim Crow laws, racial segregation was mandated in public places, schools, washrooms, and drinking fountains (Abel 1999). As such, who belongs and what actions are accepted in washroom spaces as indicated through signs are connected with broader systems of physical and social exclusion (Prince 2009; Doan 2010). Despite the introduction of human rights codes aimed at promoting equal access to public spaces, forms of discrimination in this realm remain entrenched. Washroom signs thus play a disciplinary and regulatory role (Foucault 1995) in shaping how people are constituted and positioned in society in relation to such identity vectors as race, class, sex, gender, and dis/ability.

When needing to use the washroom, one must choose between "one of two doors with different labels" (Doan 2010, 643). These signs indicate who is permitted and who is not permitted to enter the washroom space. Sheila Cavanagh (2010) argues that "nowhere are the signifiers of gender more painfully acute and subject to surveillance than in sex-segregated washrooms" (1), even though there are few differences (apart from urinals) between the physical layouts of men's and women's washrooms. Instead, the policing of such spaces is contingent on signage and the social expectations of what such signage represents (Cavanagh 2010). As such, users may shift their self-identification to adhere to gendered norms.

In addition to upholding gender binaries, washroom signage may exclude disabled users and gender

variant individuals. Washroom signs may be spatially and conceptually linked to ideas of dependency, exclusion, and marginalization for disabled users (Kitchin and Law 2001; Serlin 2010). Furthermore, those who do not neatly adhere to gender binaries may sometimes identify or become identified as temporarily disabled in order to access certain regulated socio-spatial realms (Doan 2010). For example, Petra L. Doan (2010), who identifies as a transgendered woman, documented how she felt she did not belong in either the women's or men's washroom and was directed by her employer to use the disabled washrooms. A consideration of the intersections of gender and disability reveal how nonconforming gendered and dis/abled subjects may encounter discrimination and a sense of non-belonging through "misfitting" (Garland-Thompson 2011) and being coded out of place (Hansen and Philo 2007; Doan 2010; McRuer 2010). Refusing to obey washroom signs and thus entering forbidden spaces represents an act of transgression against normative standards, which suggest people need to be categorized, labeled, sorted and separated. Importantly, socio-spatial designs impose mediating parameters on people's identities, experiences, and desires in social landscapes (Cavanagh 2010); they shape and delimit subjectivities in socio-spatial, material, and embodied ways. As Cavanagh (2011) attests, "you are where you urinate" (18) and washroom signage may play an intimate constitutive role in the (re)creation of gendered and dis/abled subjectivities.

Importantly, "discourse around public toilets has never been gender- or sex-neutral but is inflected through and through with gendered prescriptions for autonomy and self-reliance, as well as, of course, with rights and privilege" (Serlin 2010, 180). Dominant discourses of gender and dis/ability are inscribed in societal values and norms, and are supported by biomedical knowledge-power relations that objectify, pathologize, subjugate, and cast nonconforming gendered and disabled subjects as abnormal (Foucault 1995, 1999). Thus, dominant discourses of gender and ability are connected with autonomy, individuality, and hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Woloshyn, Taber, and Lane 2013; Goodley 2014). They devalue individuals who require help or assistance, given that qualities associated with entrepreneurial, independent, able-bodied neoliberal subjects are prized (Goodley 2014).

Methodology

In our analysis of washroom signage, we seek to problematize everyday washroom signs and their taken-for-grantedness using a feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar 2005) and a critical discourse analysis of visual images (Gee 2011). In connecting images to language, symbols found on washroom signage can support or disrupt dominant discourses associated with gender and dis/ability. We thus analyze images found on washroom signage in relation to normative representations of family, caregiving roles, and cultural location, with a focus on how the images are constructed and what the images are doing (Lazar 2005; Gee 2011). As Weber (2008) argues, “images can simultaneously generate multiple interpretations, and can call attention to the everyday by making it strange or casting it in a new light” (50). In conducting our analysis, we consciously reconsidered washroom signage in an effort to make the familiar strange. As such, we look at “language in use” (Gee 2011, 11).

Our qualitative research involved taking photographic images of washroom signage in various physical locations. Over the course of three years (2011–2013), we randomly took approximately fifty photos at airports and other public spaces in North American (Toronto, Ottawa, Los Angeles), Hawaiian (Waikiki), and European (Paris, London, Brussels, Bruges, Amsterdam, Rome) cities. We took photos of washroom signage that reflected our desire to unpack the discursive imagery of able-bodied gender norms (Titchkosky 2003; Serlin 2010) using gender and dis/ability as “anchor points” (Christensen and Jensen 2012, 112); the signs needed to depict (1) gender and/or dis/ability and had to (2) reflect thematic notions of family, caregiving roles, and cultural location. As such, our criteria for taking photos considered signage that upheld or challenged dominant notions of gender through the ways in which signage represented gender binaries and roles (Butler 1999; Cranny-Francis et al. 2003), dis/ability through the ways in which the signage constituted disabled and non-disabled subjects (Titchkosky 2011; Goodley 2014), and the intersections between both gender and dis/ability (Garland-Thompson 2005, 2006; McRuer 2006, 2010). All photos taken were analyzed and those that best reflected themes related to gender and dis/ability are examined in this paper.

Findings

In our analysis of the photographs collected, we found that washroom signage can be categorized into three main themes. First, we discuss the common symbolism found in the signage, unpacking the International Symbol of Access (ISA) along with common symbols for gender identifiers, which were prevalent in the majority of washroom signage we encountered. Next, we explore depictions of family imagery in washroom signage and associated caregiving roles by unpacking varying configurations, placements, sizes, and absences of gendered-dis/abled subjects and dynamic constituted subjectivities. Last, we discuss cultural location and questions of access, by analyzing signage that, in addition to common symbols, included culturally-specific contextualized images.

The Common Symbolism

In the case of washrooms, social relations are represented through signage. As opposed to signifying washrooms as “toilets” or “lavatories,” they are often marked by masculinized and feminized images of bodies. As such, the binaries of masculinity and femininity are associated with binaries of male and female, thus synonymizing masculine with male and feminine with female. The masculine male is typically represented as a standing body with a head, two arms, and two legs, presumably wearing pants, while a feminine female is signified as a standing body with a head, two arms, and a triangular lower body, presumably wearing a dress. While these are the standard images for washrooms, other images may be included to signify alternate washroom options, such as the presence of an infant changing table or a space for disabled people. Spaces for infant changing tables are represented by a significantly smaller body with a head, two arms, and two legs, often positioned on the women’s washroom sign. Accessible spaces for disabled people are represented by a wheelchair user with a head and a single line representing the body attached to the wheels of the chair, without any physical characteristics of sex and often positioned next to a gendered able-bodied figure.

The predominant symbol used to “indicate access in North America” is the “wheelchair stick figure” (Titchkosky 2009, 79; see also Ben-Moshe and Powell, 2007). According to Chelsea Jones (2013), the International Symbol of Access (ISA) conveys a “semiot-

ic imposition of otherness” (68). While the symbol of disability is non-gendered without common gender referents aside from its placement on signs relative to an able-bodied gendered symbol, the male and female figures are depicted as wearing gendered clothing. Additionally, the female washrooms are often the only washrooms that indicate the presence of infant change tables and thus associate caregiving responsibilities predominantly with women and de-familiarize men as parents/caregivers. Notably, men are not expected to fulfill these roles even if a change table existed in a male washroom (Malacrida 2009).

In addition to reproducing gender binaries and roles, washroom signage also reproduces notions of disability as other and asexual (McRuer 2006, 2010). The gender of disabled subjects is frequently reflected through close proximity to an able-bodied gendered figure. Unfortunately, such discursive imagery is often socially reproduced whereby disabled persons experience “invisibility as gendered beings” (Malacrida 2009, 114). Socially, hegemonic masculinity as represented by “strength, courageousness, and self reliance may be (re) negotiated, relied upon, or resisted by disabled men” (Gibson et al. 2013, 97), whereas notions of femininity are often closely tied with disabling discourses that characterize both women and disabled subjects as fragile, weak, and dependent (Scott 2015). However, in addition to these discourses, disabled women are also viewed as “unattractive, asexual and ‘too burdensome’ to be of interest to men” (Malacrida 2009, 104). They may also be considered too fragile, weak, and dependent to satisfy expected gender roles such as caregiving (Malacrida 2009). While the male/female images designate washrooms spaces, disability may or may not be represented and, if it is, it is notably marginalized in its size and location. These images pervade configurations of washroom signage and further inscribe dominant discursive representations of gender and ability, or gender-ability.

Family Washrooms and Caregiving Roles

Washroom signs indicate nuclear heteronormative familial configurations of able-bodied characters. Gender roles pervade the symbolism, tying able-bodied women to caregiving and nurturing roles through female images being represented alongside children’s change tables and family washrooms. In the images of



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

washroom signage above, disability is either othered on a different sign or separated within a sign. Disabled persons are thus distanced from infant/child caregiving roles and perhaps infantilized, through the ISA wheelchair user disabled figure, in size and stature.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 represent heteronormative able-bodied families through different placements of gender, ability, and child symbols. In Figures 1 and 3, a child is positioned between the male and female figures, creating a heteronormative family structure. In both images, the child is reaching up to hold the male and female figures' hands. Notably, size also matters (Butler 1993) in that the size of the images has meaning and connects to the material constitution of gendered and disabled subjects. In Figure 3, the female figure is slightly smaller (less tall in stature) than the male figure. In both images, the disabled figure, as represented by a wheelchair access symbol, is included in the family depiction, but is smaller than both the male and female figures. It is positioned as equal to the child figure and is facing outward away from the family. In both figures 1 and 2, the ISA is also small in stature and size, pictorially represented at approximately the same size as a child and infant. Somewhat differently, in Figure 2, the male and female symbols are on a separate sign from the child and disabled subject, further aligning the child and the disabled subject. Not only is the disabled subject othered from the larger male and female subjects, but is placed beside the child image in a position of devalued dependency.



Figure 4

Such devaluation is evident in Figure 4, which infantilizes the disabled figure as the ISA and the symbol of an infant (depicted as the same size) are paired beside the label of the “baby care room.”

Reflective of broader social realities, these wash-room symbols seem to reproduce dominant perspectives on family: caregivers are able-bodied male and female figures and dependents are children and disabled persons (Malacrida 2009; Goodley 2014). Disability exists apart from the able-bodied heteronormative family. Thus, these images reinforce the exclusion of disabled subjects from ‘normal’ family life (Barnes, Mercer, and Shakespeare 1999). Bodies touching also reveal contact, closeness, proximity, and affinity. In these washroom access signs, disabled bodies rarely make contact with others. Additionally, the ISA figures (in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4), as represented by a wheelchair user, are turned sideways, which suggests that they are perpetually subject to an external watching gaze and unable to return the gaze of others.

Extending the associations between disability, gender, and caregiving roles, washroom symbols present who is the caregiver and who is the cared-for, through the placement of gender and disability symbols. Intended to denote accessibility, the ISA and the image of an infant appears on a segregated washroom door. Thus, the functions of infant changing and disabled access are separated from those individuals who can use able-bodied washrooms. Presumably, able-bodied persons may access and enter all washroom spaces.

While disabled subjects appear to be denied the possibilities of undertaking caregiving roles, women are undeniably tied to such responsibilities (Woloshyn, Taber, and Lane 2013; Cranny-Frances et al. 2003). Despite claiming to be a family restroom in Figure 5, the image painted on the wall suggests that able-bodied women are intended to be the caregiver of children in these spaces; not men or disabled persons. This image placement is further reproduced in Figures 6 and 7.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

These images of caregiving in the form of changing an infant's diaper not only support able-bodied caregiver discourses, but maintain caregiving as women's (public) domestic labour. Such signage also has profound implications for disabled mothers who "face challenges in assuring the public of their appropriateness as parents and their capacity to mother adequately" (Malacrida 2009, 102). Signs equating disabled subjects with children reinforce notions of "the upside down family" (102), a social myth that "presumes that disabled mothers not only fall short of ideal mothering, but that they depend on their *children* for care and services" (102; italics in original).

Notably, we did not encounter an image of a solitary male in a caregiving role and likewise did not see a male caring for a child in male-indicated washrooms. The absence of child change stations that use a male figure supports the idea that normative gender roles are not to be transgressed in public spaces. While some washrooms may be beginning to represent gender roles in socially transgressive ways, such as featuring male caregiving images and introducing gender neutral washrooms, binary and normative male/female gender representations predominate in current signage and

perceptions of gender. Queering spaces, sharing spaces, creating dynamic spaces, and opening washroom sites to new possibilities, uses, and users is an ongoing struggle to (re)imagine nuanced gendered-dis/abled subjectivities in space.

While washrooms, such as the family washroom in Figure 5, may support a number of different roles, functions, and persons in a single washroom space, the placement of the images that represent such family inclusivity still maintain heteronormative able-bodied family expectations. Additionally, having a single space for all persons may downplay or erase the need for disabled or women only washrooms. While discursive images may shape understandings of gender and ability, dominant heteronormative "cultural values dictate the need for sex-segregated spaces" (Ingrey 2012, 814). Thus, cultural norms might also shape washroom signage.

Cultural Location and Access

Access images also represent cultural aspects of disability and gender and various complex notions of citizenship (Prince 2009). Importantly, as Michael J. Prince (2009) notes,

enabling citizenship entails deconstructing the dominant image of the 'disabled person' as someone with a visible, long-term physical impairment; pluralizing the image with the realities of diverse forms of disablements; and connecting the differences in relation to power relations and systems of inequalities. (48-49)

Prince stresses the need for cultural work in understanding disability issues and asks: "For persons with disabilities, what images and identities does society mirror back to them?" (32).

Societal meanings attached to gender and disability are perpetually (re)made in socio-cultural-spatial interactions between various social actors. According to Tanya Titchkosky (2009), disability is perceived through cultural assumptions and is "made between people, in our imaginations," and "steeped in the cultural act of interpretation" (78). Moreover, disabled persons are often devalued and dehumanized subjects (Prince 2009; Goodley 2014). In the following examples, culture is represented by additional symbols specific to the location of the washroom signs. We explore

the examples of Jasper, British Columbia, Canada and Waikiki, Hawaii by focusing on how the additional cultural symbols interact with the washroom symbols.



Figure 8

In Figure 8, the dominant access image is suspended over a Jasper-inspired rock-mountainous terrain. The image floats above the mountains, not touching or making contact with their jagged rough surfaces. The image also features the wording “baby change station,” indicating the multiple uses of this particular washroom space. It is intended for disabled users and as a baby change space for anyone. The Jasper image of a wheelchair user on a mountainous, jagged terrain raises questions about whether or not the wheelchair user is truly symbolically welcome in this space. Or perhaps the image could be read subversively as disabled persons having agency to traverse rugged terrain and engage in outdoor physical activity. Nevertheless, this may represent an earnest effort to suggest that, irrespective of the rugged mountainous environment and an individual’s mobility, *all* persons are welcome.

Notions of culture are also tied to dress and attire in that how one dresses not only indicates adherence to notions of gender (Butler 1999), but also extends to values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Barnes, Mercer, and Shakespeare 1999) embedded in localized societal relations. In popular culture, contemporary iconic attire in Hawaii may be represented through a Hawaiian floral lei and colourful floral Hawaiian shirts.

In Figure 9, the woman (Wahine) symbolized wears a bright yellow Hawaiian dress, a flower in their hair, and lei around their neck. In Figure 10, the man (Kāne) depicted wears a yellow shirt patterned with green and red flower like designs. Both figures are no-

tably depicted as white subjects. In both Figures 9 and 10, the International Symbol of Access (ISA) remains unchanged, unembellished, unadorned with culturally-specific flowered flourishes. If iconic (albeit troubling and colonial) clothing and accessories are signs of contemporary Hawaiian culture, the unadorned ISA Hawaiian wheelchair-user is excluded or alienated as a full participant.



Figure 9



Figure 10

According to Titchkosky (2009), images of disability may reproduce normality (75). She further notes that, “inhabited by culture, however, means that whenever and however disability appears, we have a chance to examine the normatively grounded cultural meanings from which these images, our images, of disabili-

ity arise" (78). Here, normality is reproduced through gendering and disabling images. Cultural attire genders able-bodied citizens in that women wear Hawaiian leis, dresses, and flowers in their hair, while pant-less men wear Hawaiian floral shirts. The untouched, unchanged, universal, and somewhat sacred ISA wheelchair user ISA wears no such attire and thus disabled persons are not represented as being part of hegemonic colonial culture and gender regimes. Disabled individuals may thus experience "unequal citizenship" (Pothier and Devlin 2006, 1).

Concluding Discussion

The ways that symbols of access connect with social practices "often leave us morally complicit with harm and injustice unless we attempt to transform them" (Gee 2011, 12). While we recognize that images have multiple meanings, we argue that they are often connected to broader ableist, gendered, and heteronormative discourses. Images powerfully depict possible subjectivities and subject positions. Through depictions, configurations, and arrangements of gendered and dis/abled subjects, washroom signs represent difference and mark out societally ascribed subject roles. Poking and prying at these images, teasing them apart, and comparing and contrasting them illuminates their socio-cultural-political significance.

In this study, we drew from a selected sample of washroom signs that articulated discourses of gender and disability. Importantly, we did not encounter any washroom signage that directly disrupted discourses of heteronormativity or able-bodiedness. That is, we did not encounter gender neutral washroom signage or an alternative representation to the ISA for disability. Our intent here is to pose questions rather than provide definitive solutions. To question disability and gender is to trouble the neat ways washroom signs demarcate and code particular public social spaces. This is important as:

thinking about the intersections of social differences in public spaces...is essential for gaining an understanding of how everyday embodied experiences are managed by discourses regarding competition for scarce resources, hetero-normative expectations, colonizing powers, and neo-liberal demands. (Titchkosky 2011, 72-73)

The perpetual meaning making of disabled and gendered access signs occurs between people who interact in these socio-spatial realms.

In a Foucauldian (1995) sense, signs thus represent disciplinary technologies, which function to sort, constitute, and regulate movements of gendered and disabled subjects in particular spaces. As such, when we need to use the washroom in a public space, we do not just need to find the toilet, we must also decide if we are going to use the "ladies' room," "men's room," or a third space if that option exists; our access to these spaces is contingent on our gender-ability. In reading the washroom signs, we are also examining the purposeful organization of social space (Soja 1989, 81).

This research has implications for the creation of gender neutral washrooms and how gender neutrality is represented. When considering such signage, it is also important to understand the ways that "sexed spaces come to exist through the continual maintenance and enforcement of gendered norms" (Browne 2004, 343). As such, people are not strictly regulated by signage, but enact agency to influence and (re)interpret ways in which signage comes to represent particular bodies. Furthermore, if disability "both intensifies and attenuates the cultural scripts of femininity" (Garland-Thomson 2002, 17), it is then important for disability and gender theory to work together in efforts to re-signify and reconstitute notions of family, caregiving, and cultural representation. Such resignification and reconstitution can begin through challenging prevailing social discourses, such as those represented through washroom signage. Notions of gender implicate particular attributes associated with ability, movement, capacity, and bodily aesthetic forms and functions; thus gender and disability are intersectionally connected to a sustained gender-ability identity politics.

It is our hope that in probing at the margins of gender and dis/ability representations in washroom images, new spaces may be opened to think about equality, human rights, and access for *all* persons. Although we critically examined washroom signage in this paper, our findings can be extended to consider various access symbols. Further research needs to incorporate the often subjugated views, voices, and knowledges of gendered-disabled subjects in ways that critically examine washroom images *in situ* in various localized spaces. There is a need to critically explore washroom sign im-

ages and posit other viable, hopefully non-reductionist, options—thereby opening up new spaces and subjectivities to be and pee.

Endnotes

¹ We prefer identity-specific language and reject defining disability as an individual deficit informed by a biomedical conceptual framework and categorizing label (Tremain 2008). Disability may be an inherent marker and part of people's identities. For extended discussions, see Titchkosky 2001; Brown 2011a; Brown 2011b where disabled persons advocate for this terminology and trouble the use of "person-first disability language, which separates disability as an identity vector from their personhood. Disability may also be a source of pride and a positive and nuanced identity which connects the disabled community. We would not say people with gayness, persons with womanliness, persons with whiteness, or persons with blackness. Similarly, disabled persons' personhood is not in question; disability connotes identity, complex socio-cultural subjectivities, and how people may experience the world as disabling. We draw on a social model of disability (Titchkosky 2001; Tremain 2008; Goodley 2014) to indicate that oppressive institutional structures, negative social attitudes, and barriers in built environments disable individuals. Moreover, "people-first language has not led to a greater understanding of disability and subsequent reduced levels of discrimination, nor to reduced levels of planned exclusions" (Titchkosky 2001, 132). People are disabled by an ableist society, which excludes them.

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Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Representing Mothers and the Maternal in Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation*

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Abstract

In this article, we explore an understanding of gender and motherhood in Asghar Farhadi's 2011 Oscar winning film, *Jodāyie Nader az Simin/A Separation*, as a contested site where the discourses of gender and nation are constantly being negotiated. We suggest that the film's unique cinematic language represents a significant contrast to stereotypical portrayals of motherhood in films. Also, by using transnational feminist cinema as a framework, we demonstrate the ways in which Farhadi engages with the relationship between gender and national belonging through a focus on borders, space, and place in contemporary Iran, offering a critique of both fundamentalist nationalist politics and neocolonial Western feminist assumptions.
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Résumé

Dans cet article, nous explorons la compréhension du genre et de la maternité dans le film d'Asghar Farhadi, primé aux Oscars de 2011, *Jodāyie Nader az Simin/A Separation*, comme un lieu contesté où les discours

sur le genre et la nation sont en constante négociation. Nous suggérons que le langage cinématographique unique du film est un contraste considérable aux représentations stéréotypées de la maternité dans les films. De plus, dans le cadre du cinéma féministe transnational, nous démontrons les façons dont Farhadi explore la relation entre le genre et l'identité nationale en mettant l'accent sur les frontières, l'espace et le lieu en Iran contemporain, offrant une critique des politiques nationalistes fondamentales et des suppositions féministes occidentales néocoloniales.

...the bodies and their problem in Iranian society are completely interrelated. If the father is sick and frail, then the son is completely involved, as is the daughter. If the general conception in the West is that women in Iran are badly treated, then this also affects men as sons, fathers, and husbands. This situation in Iran puts both women and men under a great deal of pressure. (Asghar Farhadi in an interview with Rahul Hamid)

Introduction

In this article, we explore questions of gender and motherhood in relation to national belonging in Asghar Farhadi's acclaimed 2011 film, *A Separation*. We situate the film within Asuman Suner's (2007) proposed category of transnational feminist cinema as one potential framework, due to the questions the film raises regarding gender and nation through both its narrative structure and visual form, and because of its preoccupation with themes of space and place. As the above quotation by director Farhadi indicates (from an interview about the film), questions about gender and embodiment, and constructions of masculinity and femininity are central to *A Separation*. Likewise, Farhadi is critical of Western assumptions regarding women's status in Iran, particularly in relation to patriarchy, motherhood, and families. We explore these themes, suggesting that the film's depiction of family relations, especially motherhood/mothering, represents a significant contrast to the proliferation of one-dimensional, stereotypical portrayals of motherhood in many films. Also, by situating the film within a larger body of transnational feminist cinema, we demonstrate the ways in which Farhadi engages with the relationship between gender and national belonging through a focus on borders, space, and place in contemporary Iran, offering a substantive critique of both fundamentalist nationalist politics and neocolonial Western feminist assumptions.

"National cinemas" are worthy of transnational feminist attention as they engage with questions of diaspora, mobility, displacement, and the postcolonial condition. Hamid Naficy (2001) suggests that exilic/diasporic cinema is marked by narratives of transnational migration, borders, and the myriad of losses associated with exile. However, a recent focus on exilic and/or diasporic cinema has detracted from what might be learned from national cinemas. Asuman Suner (2007), in her discussion of transnational women's filmmaking

in Iran and Turkey, suggests that much of contemporary world cinema shares certain characteristics with exilic/diasporic cinema, highlighting the ways national cinemas increasingly address issues of gender, race, citizenship, and national belonging. Her analysis of films by Yesim Ustaoglu and Samira Makhmalbaf reveals that they pose critiques of both the official nationalist ideologies of their home countries and the Eurocentric, neo-colonial (white, Western) conceptualizations of gender and womanhood. For example, she writes, "[T]he gender politics of these films is subversive to the extent that they frustrate the Western desire to reveal the 'truth' of the Middle Eastern woman, lifting her veil and liberating her. Instead of reproducing stereotyped representations of Middle Eastern women, they offer new ways of seeing and thinking about relations of belonging and identity (including gender identity) in specific social and historical contexts as well as in the contemporary globalized world" (68). Thus, Suner proposes a transnational gender politics—and a transnational *feminist* cinema—capable of problematizing the presumptions of hegemonic Western feminism about Middle Eastern women and engaging with questions about gender through both local and global perspectives.

A Separation, set in contemporary Tehran, depicts a progressive middle-class heterosexual couple, Simin (Leila Hatami) and Nader (Peyman Moaadi), who seek a divorce because Simin wants to leave Iran with their eleven-year-old daughter, Termeh, but Nader feels compelled to stay to take care of his father who has Alzheimer's disease. When Simin moves out of their home, Nader hires a caregiver, Razieh (Sareh Bayat), a devout working-class woman who is also the mother of a young daughter. When Razieh realizes that the physical labor is heavy and that she will be required to change the old man's clothing after he soils himself, she attempts to have her husband, Hodjat (Shahab Hosseini), replace her. In a complicated twist of events, Hodjat is arrested due to his inability to pay a creditor, so Razieh must return to care for Nader's father. Nader and Razieh then have a conflict based on several misunderstandings, resulting in a series of appearances before a court, which highlights questions surrounding motherhood, religion, and class differences in Iran. This film has been praised by multiple critics and has won numerous awards both in the United States and globally, including the Academy

Award for Best Foreign Language Film—the first Iranian film to ever win this award.

Contextualizing Women and Gender in Iran

The discourses around modernity, nation, and religion have consistently shaped discussions about gender in Iran. In *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards*, which focuses on gender and sexual anxieties associated with Iranian modernity, Afsaneh Najmabadi (2005) provides insight into structures of hierarchy and power, and the organization of politics and social life using gender as an analytic category. According to Najmabadi, the Iranian encounter with modernity in the nineteenth century was formed in the re-articulation of concepts like nation (*millat*) and homeland (*vatan*). These re-articulations relied strongly on the notion of gender. She writes:

Until the first decade of the twentieth century, when women began to claim their place as sisters-in-the-nation, nation was largely conceived and visualized as a brotherhood, and homeland as female, a beloved, and a mother. Closely linked to the maleness of the nation and the femaleness of the homeland was the concept of *namus* (honor)...Its meaning embrac[ing] the idea of a woman's purity (*'ismat*) and the integrity of the nation, *namus* was constituted as subject to male possession and protection in both domains; gender honor and national honor intimately informed each other. (1-2)

Both Najmabadi (2005) and Fakhredin Azimi (2008) argue that the project of modernity in Iran has never entailed a total negation of tradition, but has tended to always negotiate and contextualize it. However, Eurocentric narratives of modernity, which have informed discourses of nation, gender, and Islam in Iran, have managed to construct tradition and modernity as dichotomous. At the heart of the drive for modernization was gender reform and a focus on the practice of veiling. In Iranian cinema generally, veiling can represent a variety of meanings, depending on the time and location in which a film takes place. In *A Separation* specifically, veiling as costume conveys information about each character's class and her connection to modernization, and therefore the ways she is heard and believed. Because historically, the veil has long been argued to be a marker of (Muslim) identity, we briefly examine how

the history of the veil and its various social meanings are central to Iran's political history and the modernization process and how, through imposed unveiling and re-veiling, regimes have constructed their own image of the ideal "Iranian woman" as well as Iran as a modern or Islamic country (Paidar 1997).

For example, in the late 1930s, Reza Shah Pahlavi abolished the women's veil or *chador*, and his modernization efforts entailed the use of police to impose new disciplinary practices on women's (and men's) bodies.¹ As a result of Reza Pahlavi's action, "women's bodies became sites of political and cultural struggle, complicated further by the subjection of unveiled women to an intense public gaze and sexual harassment" (Afary 2009, 9); this created many tensions particularly at the intersection of gender, Islam, and class. Educational reforms included the establishment of schools that enrolled both girls and boys, and the addition of female teachers contributed to the economic infrastructure and supported the state's Westernization policies in the 1930s and 1940s (Sedghi 2007). At the same time, this period saw a sharp decline in support for polygamy and tolerance for same sex relations, both common practices in the era, and heterosexual monogamy became the new norm.

From 1941 to 1953, after Reza Shah Pahlavi was ousted by the Allies in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the country experienced a period of relative political freedom. The end of the 1940s saw the successful movement for the nationalization of oil, led by Prime Minister Mohammad Mossaddeq and the National Front. The 1953 Anglo-American coup interfered with this democratic movement and brought Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had earlier fled the country, back to power. After his reinstatement, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi put an end to the political freedom of earlier years. However, he still continued to support gender modernization, as he believed educating women and keeping them in the labor force was economically advantageous and contributed to the modern image of the country.

The imposed unveiling of Iranian women in the 1930s, intended as a means to modernize the nation, resulted in the construction of the hijab as an expression of resistance. During revolutionary marches, women from various ideological backgrounds wore the hijab as a demonstration of their opposition to the regime. Cen-

tral to the discourses of modernity, nation, and religion, the veil functioned as the most obvious visual signifier of change in Iranian women's lives (Azimi 2008; Mirsepassi 2000). As such, discourses are articulated and they compete with the female body as a signifier of the meanings they seek to create. But the veil debate is by no means a post-revolutionary phenomenon.

The late 1970s saw a backlash against the gender reforms of the more modernized sectors of society. The revolution of 1979 also brought about a cultural revolution designed to replace the old value system under the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) with an Islamic form. This reversed most of the pre-revolutionary legal reforms. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic and as the new government began to talk about the imposition of veiling, urban middle-class women once again took to the streets in March 1979 to protest. As veiling became compulsory in 1983, various forms of under-veiling came to signify resistance to the Islamic regime. While a roosari (headscarf) and manto (long coat) came to signify the status of their wearers as secular/moderate, a full chador came to designate its wearer as conservative, traditional, or even a hardliner. In addition to compulsory veiling, the changes in state politics, ideology of the state, party politics, value systems, and asset distribution did not work for women, and by resorting to Islamic shari'ah, the new government successfully implemented a policy of unequal treatment of Iranian women under the law (Azimi 2008).

As noted above, different types of hijab are frequently drawn upon to convey ideas of social class in Iranian cinema. The significance of these divisions, and their cinematic representations, are addressed in *A Separation*. In the film, class differences function as a key point in the narrative. A signifier of this class tension, at least for the domestic viewer, is the female characters' hijab, where it functions as a clear marker of class. While the working-class woman, Razieh, wears a chador and calls religious authorities to ask for advice, the middle-class English teacher, Simin, wears a headscarf and a long coat, wants to leave the country, and seeks divorce. The main conflicts in the film's story surround these two mothers, their relationships with family members, and their engagement with the larger social institutions of school, employment, religion, judicial system, and care work. *A Separation* complicates the narratives around gender, religion, class, and negotiations of modernity

in Iran. The film brings socioeconomic divisions to the forefront and openly engages with local power relations in a society where urban poverty is endemic. Speaking to the audience, Farhadi describes how the two families in the film intentionally represent tensions between classes on either side of a socioeconomic divide. Within the context of the nation, they represent the economic realities of many Iranians today and the sense of uncertainty they feel about the future.

Meanwhile, the popularity of this film both in Iran and internationally has to do with its ability to masterfully depict the pressures of social life and complex human interactions, while delivering an incredible sense of intimacy. It is also a subtle reminder to Western audiences that Iranian women are not all the same; the depiction of three-dimensional women and mothers challenges all viewers to contemplate the specificity of an individual's place in the development of an identity and therefore, the development of a character.

Visual Separations: Markers of Space and Place

The opening scene of *A Separation* depicts documents on a copy machine—travel papers, we learn soon enough, for the central characters, Simin, Nader, and their daughter, Termeh, to leave the country. These documents suggest the crossing of borders both geographic and metaphorical, highlighting both the desire to leave and the privilege, associated with class status, to enjoy such mobility. In the next scene, however, Nader and Simin are positioned in front of the camera and we learn that Simin seeks a divorce because Nader refuses to leave the country, despite the months she has spent preparing for the family to go abroad. Nader's father, who lives with them, has Alzheimer's, and Nader refuses to leave him. Simin says to him, "He doesn't know you are his son," to which Nader responds: "But I know he's my father." They are equally stubborn and neither will budge. So they present themselves to the judge, requesting a divorce. The angle of the camera effectively positions viewers in the role of judge, complicit in the surveillance of this family, while also being "called upon to give our verdict on their motives and actions" (Bell 2011, 38).

When Simin states that she does not want to raise their daughter in Iran, "because of the conditions [here]," the judge asks, "What conditions?" Simin is unable to respond. As Godfrey Cheshire (2012) points out,

the rest of the film represents an attempt to answer this question. However, “Iranian audiences don’t need to be told the manifold reasons an educated, affluent woman would want to move abroad, and indeed would want to so badly that she would split up her family” (79). And Richard Alleva (2012) suggests that, even while Farhadi cannot permit his character to respond, “...he’s counting on us to know what the highly educated Simin’s unspoken yearnings are. All through the legal and domestic wrangling, this quiet political chord continues to reverberate” (20).

The film’s title specifically references the marital separation of Simin and Nader. As we have suggested, however, this is not a film about a singular separation. Viewers also witness the separation of Simin from her daughter, Termeh; between religious practices; between classes and communities; between a man and his father; the separation of a man from his memory; the separation of a woman from her fetus; the separation of individuals from justice; and the separation of truths from experiences. In addition, representations of Iranian femininity and womanhood (and Iranian masculinity and manhood) are made specific—and separated—according to class and religion, as evidenced by the hijab. These multiple, intangible separations are visibly represented on screen in provocative ways. Through the use of camera angles, the filmmaker captures the myriad of separations in the story by framing characters through doorways, windows, and mirrors, often splitting the screen with a wall or window between two characters.

When we witness Simin packing her bag to move out of the family home toward the beginning of the film, the camera operators are in constant motion. This extended scene follows Simin around the apartment, always capturing her in another room, through a pane of glass, and even through a window—across a courtyard—and through another window. Separation as viewed through transparent glass becomes a metaphor for the ways that separation can physically distance someone from another even while they remain connected. As Roshanak Taghavi (2012) suggests, “Iran’s unrelenting social, economic, and religious constrictions are aptly portrayed in *A Separation*, whose characters peer into one another’s lives through see-through partitions, transparent shades, and glass windows” (2). Alternately, this practice illuminates the ways in which two char-

acters in close physical proximity may experience distance from one another.

In the film, middle-class Simin and Nader, progressive, educated, and secular, are juxtaposed against Razieh and Hodjat, portrayed as working class and extremely religious. On the issue of class differences, Cheshire (2012) notes “a common theme in Iranian films, one that often implies a lingering disappointment over the failure of Iran’s revolution to produce a truly egalitarian society” (79). This juxtaposition is highly resonant for local audiences. Yet, in the film, no class or religious position is situated as morally superior or inferior. Rather, each of the main characters, at some point, misleads another character, and each of the misunderstandings—structured around gender, class, and religious values—creates and sustains another separation in the narrative.

Representations of Mothering and the Maternal

Acts of mothering occur in the midst of all the film’s separations. Adrienne Rich (1986) makes the distinction between motherhood as an oppressive institution and the actual engaged practice and relationship of mothering. The separation between the two mothers’ classes, education levels, and religious expressions is heightened by their relationships with their daughters. Razieh’s daughter is exposed to the troubles of her mother’s marriage, the debt of her family, and the mistrust and accusation of Razieh’s employer. In several scenes, we see them walk and wait for the bus, framed from the back by the bus stop windows; they spend many hours traveling to and from this job caring for Simin’s father-in-law. Simin’s daughter is exposed to her mother’s dissatisfaction with opportunities in Iran, the decline of her grandfather and the stress of providing care for him, and the increasingly violent confrontations between her family and Razieh’s family.

The two daughters’ experiences are shaped by their mothers’ particular places in society and the ways that their acts of mothering appear on film differ significantly. Both girls are visible in many scenes, but they rarely speak. Simin and her daughter are framed multiple times by their car windows and schoolrooms with large windows where the daughter attends and her mother teaches. Both the car and the schools represent affluence and mobility for Simin’s family. Simin wants desperately to give her daughter more opportunities by

moving out of Iran. But we see little of Simin and her daughter actually interacting. Termeh is depicted as caught in the middle between her parents and is unwilling/unable to choose between them. We witness Razieh perform many more small acts of mothering with her daughter in the film—getting her water, adjusting her scarf, having her daughter near her as she performs the carework for Simin’s father-in-law. This young daughter spends many hours in the justice halls, crowded with people, while her parents and Simin and Nader debate before the judge. Simin, on the other hand, works to separate her daughter from this judicial process and Simin’s mothering is imagined in the intangible desire for more/better opportunities for her daughter, rather than the day-to-day interactions between mother and daughter.

Sarah Ruddick (1989) suggests using the term maternal rather than mother/ing to capture the possibility and reality that women are not the only ones who practice acts of mothering. Nader, a loving son and father, tenderly cares for his father. Indeed, this father is the reason he will not leave Iran or consent to allow his daughter to leave. The cultural expectation is that a son will provide this care for his father and it is with great nurturing and love that we see him dress, walk with, and bathe his father. We also witness tender moments featuring Simin with her father-in-law and Termeh with her grandfather. Balancing these expected feminine maternal acts with the maternal acts performed by Nader challenges an audience’s idea of who may, can, and should be involved in the care of elders and, by extension, children. In particular, this representation challenges Western assumptions about Middle Eastern masculinities, long associated with violence and hypersexual misogyny (Amar 2011). In opposition to such depictions, Termeh’s reticence about her mother wanting them to leave Iran is wrapped up in her love and tender relationship with her father; Termeh becomes the embodiment of the effects of separation.

Nader “mothers” his daughter as he teaches Termeh to stand up for herself. For example, in an early scene in the film, he observes Termeh through the rear-view window of his car, a fractured representation often suggestive of male voyeurism and indicating what Laura Mulvey (1990) called “the male gaze” (28-40). But rather than an objectifying or sexualizing gaze, the reflected representation captures Termeh pumping gas at a busy

gas station in Tehran—an act normally performed by men. When she returns to the car, she nervously observes, “Everybody’s staring,” suggesting her own awareness of gendered looking relations. But Nader responds, “Let them stare.” He then chastises her for “tipping” the gas station attendant, when she herself pumped the gas, and insists that she return to demand the change she is owed. Termeh is hesitant, but does as she is asked. This scene, notable in its simplicity, highlights the close relationship between father and daughter, and subverts the male gaze in two significant ways - through the camera’s positioning and in Nader’s watchful insistence on Termeh’s ability to stand up for herself.

The film builds depictions of mothers and fathers as complex individuals who have hopes, dreams, and secrets that must be tended. Unlike the “unrepentant mothers” of Kathleen Rowe Karlyn’s (2011) study of mothers and daughters in film, Simin and Razieh are three-dimensional characters, even when nearly silent (Razieh) or absent during parts of the film (Simin during the first half of the film). The maternal is present in the ways both families negotiate purpose and meaning in their lives. Mothers are expected to provide the best lives and options for their children, and Simin believes she cannot do this in Iran and this belief motivates the obvious separation of the film. Razieh seeks work outside the home, even though she must hide it from Hodjat because he would suggest it goes against their religious beliefs. The ways both mothers act to care for their daughters, though they differ significantly, connect the two families in the midst of tragedy, mistruths, and misunderstanding, while emphasizing the separations between their lived experiences. Though the setting is largely in Simin’s part of Tehran, borders—real and figurative—play prominently in the ways that these mothers negotiate caring for their families, especially their daughters, and how they engage in employed work in two families and communities in contemporary Iran.

Crossing Borders: Between “Here” and “There”

Chandra Mohanty’s (2003) work reminds us of the “micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle and the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes” that are present in all women’s/mother’s lives (223). The separations of this film are grounded in characters’ experiences of the historical legacy in Iran and the mothers’ individual social lo-

cations. Like mothers in real life, these characters are always more than we actually see depicted on screen. Both mothers in *A Separation* experience the double space of the oppressive institution of motherhood and the potentially empowering act of mothering apparent in transnational feminist films and in daily lived realities. *A Separation* demonstrates the ways in which transnational motherhood itself is structured by movement across place and time, often involving physical separation and border crossings.

Razieh's relative silence, while caring for an elder in another social class so that his family members can continue their own lives and employment, speaks to this reproduction of social class and religious differences, at the same time that Simin attempts to break this cycle and resist the separations between classes, cultures, and nations. Especially for women, the transnational processes Lindsay Palmer (2011) discusses often entail "precarious journeys between a 'here' that has never belonged to them and a 'there' that has always belonged to someone else" (114). Such "exilic journeying" is suggestive not only of actual physical movement, but also "identity shifts, linguistic traversing, bodily transformations, symbolic reconfigurations of one's 'I'" (114; citing Marciniak 2006, 34). These crossings and transgressions are evident in *A Separation*, suggestive of a changing society, particularly in terms of gender relations, constructions of femininity and masculinity, class, religion, and family structure. As an audience, we "interrogate oppressive representations of mothers while also daring to imagine reproduction as the act of remaking rather than merely copying existing structures of belonging" (Palmer 2011, 115-16). This tension heightens our viewing experience by providing complex views of both mothers, not just the upwardly mobile Simin.

The meanings of windows, mirrors, frames, and glass grow in significance as the film reaches its climax. After leaving a contentious meeting between the families to reach a monetary settlement, Simin and Termeh are framed outside their car windshield that has been shattered, presumably by a rock. This is the first time we see a broken window in the film. As the story spirals toward its conclusion, this broken representation of separation shows the irrevocable loss that each of the characters experience. In the final scene of the film, we see Simin and Nader sitting in the same hallway outside the judge's chambers, but on opposite sides of the hall and

on either side of a window that is cracked. As the credits roll, we watch them sit in their physical and emotional separation, while in another room, their daughter, Termeh, shares with the judge her decision about whom she wants to live with. This ambiguous ending is common to Iranian cinema and serves to leave the audience to draw its own conclusions. Indeed, Cheshire (2012) points out that, "Farhadi scrupulously avoids playing favorites; it's a mark of his humanism that we are finally invited not to judge the characters but to understand them in a way that transfers our concern from the individuals themselves to the entire society" (79). Both the mothers and fathers are flawed, and both exhibit pain and love. It is this balanced perspective that allows the mother characters and the maternal acts of many of the characters to emerge from the shadows they often inhabit in society and in film.

Complicating Gender and Nation

Our reading of *A Separation* attempts to situate the film within transnational feminist cinema, suggesting its engagement not only with representations of national belonging, mobility, and diaspora, but also gender and motherhood. The film highlights ideas about freedom, citizenship, and collective memory, as well as different conceptualizations of truth and justice. Loss of memory—or a kind of national forgetting—occurs through representations of women's bodies and practices of motherhood. When Razieh abandons Nader's father to see an obstetrician (later we learn of the emergency that prompted this visit), she ties the father to the bed to keep him from leaving the apartment. Nader returns to find his elderly father on the floor, unconscious, and still tied to the bed. Outraged, he also notices that some money is missing from the bedroom. When Razieh returns, he pushes her out of the apartment in front of her young daughter, Somayeh. Later, we find that Razieh suffered a miscarriage. She blames Nader, who is accused of murder under Iranian law. He then accuses her of abusing his father.

The film, in Rahul Hamid's (2011) words, "is a meditation on what it means to be free. In Farhadi's view, freedom is fraught with agonizing choices that pit a person's sentiments and needs against the state, religion, and the needs and feelings of others" (41). Roshanak Taghavi (2012) suggests that the failing marriage at the heart of the film also functions as a meta-

phor for the greater divisions within Iran, “particularly between the lower-income, often more pious citizens and the more wealthy urban classes” (1). Taghavi discusses Iranians’ “yearning for their homeland even as they seek to leave it” (2), a sentiment captured beautifully by Simin. As Taghavi points out, “the symbolism is palpable. Nader, Simin, and Termeh’s US visas require them to leave within 40 days, a period which in Iranian tradition marks the mourning period after a loved one’s death” (2). Indeed, at the film’s conclusion, Simin, Nader, and Termeh appear in court dressed in black, signifying the death of Nader’s father and the further fracturing of their family. Eleven-year-old Termeh is required to make a choice—will she leave with Simin or remain in Iran with Nader? In an interview, Farhadi states, “Termeh represents the future generation of Iran, which will eventually attain freedom. But in Iran, we think democracy means comfort, when in fact freedom means having to bear responsibility, which is difficult. Thus Termeh is experiencing freedom: but it is painful” (Taghavi 2012, 3).

There are multiple losses that structure the narrative, and the two daughters’ lives are shaped by their mothers’ losses, including the loss of the marriage, the loss of jobs and income, loss of home and family, the loss of the grandfather’s memory, signaling the greater collective loss of historical memory and cultural expectations—symbolically a kind of national forgetting. And then of course, at the center, the loss of Razieh’s pregnancy, underscoring the significance of reproductive labor and motherhood within the context of the film.

Recognizing that specific historical, political, and cultural contexts must be taken into account to enable a better understanding of women’s lives worldwide, it is critical that narratives around women and modernity in Iran are not separated from those of men, the family, and the wider society, or that of a larger global and transnational context. *A Separation* challenges this tendency of dividing people into strict gendered categories by contextualizing women’s and mothers’ lives alongside their husbands, families, and the various communities in which they live, work, and love. Without such context, an Orientalist discourse is reinforced, similar to the discourse of the veil as a signifier of Islam’s oppression of women that continues to function as the primary logic through which most Westerners came to understand Iran and Iranians. Within such a discourse,

Islam was transformed into an Orientalist trope and the veil a manifestation of Orientalism, in which “Islam was inherently and immutably oppressive to women, that the veil and segregation epitomized that oppression, and that these customs were the fundamental reasons for the general and comprehensive backwardness of Islamic societies” (Ahmed 1992, 151). *A Separation* defies this reductive view.

Fatima Mernissi (1991) argues that, discussing Muslim women only in relation to Western women, leads to “senseless comparisons and unfounded conclusions,” which often limit the issue to “who is more civilized than whom” (7). She suggests that the underlying reason for such Orientalist narratives is the “application of the notion of woman as a homogeneous category” (351) without taking specific contexts into account, particularly in relation to global power differences. In this regard, the aesthetics of veiling as a social practice is a dynamic practice in which both men and women are implicated (Naficy 2001). Hamid Naficy (2001) highlights how, by utilizing different veiling practices, women represent themselves differently to the gaze of others, “involving body language, eye contact, types of veil worn, clothing worn underneath the veil, and the manner in which the veil itself is fanned open or closed at strategic moments to lure or to mask, to reveal or to conceal the face, the body, or the clothing underneath” (36). Shahla Haeri (1989) also notes the relationship between the veil and looking relations: “Not only does the veil deny the penetrating male gaze, it enables women to use their own judiciously. Because men and women are forbidden to socialize with each other, or to come into contact, their gazes find new dimensions in Muslim Iran. Not easily controllable, or subject to religious curfew, glances become one of the most intricate and locally meaningful means of communication between the genders” (229). By utilizing the camera lens, Farhadi expands beyond merely situating an individual woman in the context of her veiling and what that might indicate about her class, religious practice, or relationship to family. The literal framing of characters and scenes through windows, mirrors, and doorframes reminds the audience that we, too, are complicit in such looking relations. The audience becomes the judge in the film’s beginning court scene, when the couple makes their case directly into the camera. The end of the film returns to this courtroom with Termeh looking directly into the

camera, returning the gaze to the audience-judge. In these powerful scenes, the glass of objectifying and othering Iranian women (and men) is shattered.

As we have discussed, understandings of gender represent a contested site where discourses of modernity, nation, and Islam have constantly been negotiated within Iranian society and in which the fundamental concept of class cannot be ignored. *A Separation* undermines and subverts any attempt to stereotype Iranian/Muslim women, and/or to frame Muslim women as always already oppressed and in need of liberation. Within its realistic aesthetic, *A Separation* complicates intersections of nation, Islam, gender, and modernity, demonstrating how the different representations of hijab can function as markers of class. The film avoids the popular trope of generating binaries between man/woman, religious/secular, and tradition/modernity and, in its focus on gender and class, allows for the representation of complex differences among both men and women within Iranian society.

It is here where we hope our work intervenes into multiple discourses and representations of mothers and motherhood, and where we suggest the significance of contextual specificity in analyses of mothering processes and in representations of gender and nation. In emphasizing the distinct ways mothers are represented also as citizens of nation-states, whose stories may represent other larger stories, as we have noted, audiences should consider both the local and global implications of gendered looking relations. *A Separation* illustrates the ways in which “national cinemas” engage the transnational, highlighting questions of diaspora and national belonging.

Endnotes

¹ Reza Shah Pahlavi (15 March 1878 – 26 July 1944) was Shah of Iran from December 1925 until September 1941. His son, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, took his place as Shah, when the British forced his abdication. Mohammed Reza served as Shah from 1941 to 1979, when he was overthrown in the Islamic Revolution.

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Liberal Spaces: The Costs and Contradictions of Reproducing Hegemonic National Subjects in Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* and *Brokeback Mountain*

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Abstract

Focusing on director Ang Lee's films *The Wedding Banquet* and *Brokeback Mountain*, this paper explores the ways in which Lee's articulation of queer intimacy in liberal spaces reproduces the regulatory functions of patriarchal, late-capitalist Eurocentric discourses of modernity.
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Résumé

Cet article est basé sur les films *The Wedding Banquet* et *Brokeback Mountain*, du réalisateur Ang Lee, et il explore les façons dont l'intimité homosexuelle représentée par Lee dans des lieux libéraux reproduit les fonctions réglementaires des discours patriarcaux et eurocentriques de la fin du capitalisme au sujet de la modernité.

Introduction

In his analysis of French queer cinema, theorist Florian Grandena (2009) notes that, since the mid 1980s, "there has been an increasing number of gay-themed/queer TV production and feature films...that have entered into mainstream culture" (75). Borrowing from Julianna Pidduck, he argues that this proliferation of diverse representations of queer sexuality is part of a crucial moment of 'hypervisibility' in the West. This condition of 'hypervisibility' has been celebrated in theoretical circles (Grandena 2008; Rich 2013). "Queer sexuality," Claire Boyle (2012) writes, "[or] so the argument goes, is no longer confined to the shadowy underground spaces: it is out in the open...across the western world, it is considered that a 'normalization process' is underway that would logically culminate in 'the end of homosexuality' as a marked category of otherness" (54). While one cannot deny the potential positive impact of the proliferation of queer visual content, recent decades have also seen theoretical debates over the possibilities and limitations of queer representations 'allowed' into the mainstream.

I am using 'queerness' here as Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin (2006) do, "to describe the vast array of human sexualities that actually exist outside of monogamous heterosexual procreative intercourse" (6). The acceptance of non-normative sexualities by a hostile mainstream visual culture constituted one of the key concerns of the American gay liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s, which continuously battled the negative queer representations in Hollywood produced by post-World War II anxieties towards communism and radical leftism. For decades, such anxieties hardened the American public and Hollywood against storylines and characters that did not "[conform] to a white, middle-class, heterosexual, jingoistic American norm" (86). And yet, while the gay liberation movement advocated for more positive representations of queer sexuality in the mainstream, the independent film-making of New Queer Cinema, arising in the 1990s and drawing

from the radical work of post-modern queer theorists such as Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler, resisted this preoccupation with portraying queer identity 'positively' (Rees-Roberts 2008, 6). According to Jackie Stacey and Sarah Street (2007), "new queer cinema seemed to offer a challenging voice from the margins...that was not asking to be allowed into the mainstream...but which asserted its difference with a proud defiance" (5).

Against the backdrop of these ongoing political debates surrounding queer visibility, Ang Lee, a heterosexual director with no explicit ties to queer political work, managed to produce two queer-themed films that received critical acclaim. I am referring to *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), which he also wrote, and the mainstream hit *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), which he adapted from Annie Proulx's 1997 eponymous short story. Though both are Oscar-nominated films, some theorists regard *The Wedding Banquet*, perhaps due to it being Lee's second film and a light, romantic comedy, as being less sophisticated than the intense *Brokeback Mountain* in terms of its queer content despite its positive portrayals of queer lives (Dhawa 2014, 85). Indeed, theorist B. Ruby Rich (2013), the originator of the term New Queer Cinema, has openly celebrated *Brokeback Mountain* as evolving the transgressive philosophies of the genre: "[e]very once in a while," she writes, "a film comes along that alters our perceptions so thoroughly that cinema history thereafter has to arrange itself around it...[E]ven for audiences educated by a decade of the New Queer Cinema phenomenon, it's a shift in scope and tenor so profound as to signal a new era" (185).

There is a sense, here, that *Brokeback Mountain* achieved what *The Wedding Banquet* could not. In Rich's (2013) estimation, by "tak[ing] the most sacred of all American genres, the western, and queer[ing] it," *Brokeback* managed to demolish the borders between large-scale, multiplex mainstream movie production and small-budget, politically radical independent film-making (186). However, despite the film's accomplishment of bringing a complex, gay love story to a mainstream audience, I question the notion that Lee's two queer films greatly differ in terms of how they honour the aggressive work of the post-modern queer theorists of the 1990s and the anti-imperial queer activism of the late 1960s. I argue here that both films expose an understanding of queer identity and sex-

ual equality that is, in fact, less aligned with the radical movements on the margins and more aligned with mainstream liberal discourses of citizenship, equality, and rights, which draw their internal logic from problematic dominant social ideologies. At stake here are the sociopolitical conditions of queer inclusion into the mainstream. My analysis focuses on *Brokeback Mountain*'s "queering," as Rich (2013) would say, of the American West (187) and how its representational politics construct the U.S. as a nation. I also consider the ways in which *The Wedding Banquet* can be read as retroactively taking up these politics through its depiction of New York as a liberal safe haven of sorts for interracial queer relationships. Reading these films alongside each other reveals their problematic ideological work; indeed, despite perceptions of their differing levels of transgressive queer content, in actuality, both Lee's films play a role in narrativizing queer sexuality in a way that implicitly reinforces the regulatory practices employed by the U.S. within liberal spaces to reproduce and maintain white heteronormative nationalism in an era of capitalist modernity.

Queer Repression and Hegemonic Longing in *Brokeback Mountain*

The idea that films can help to 'construct' a nation or, in other words, reinforce an ideological definition of a nation is key to my discussion. As Susan Hayward (2005), referencing Benedict Anderson and Fredric Jameson, famously argues in *French National Cinema*, given that the nation is an 'imagined community', a country's filmic narratives "[call] upon the available discourses and myths of its own culture" and therefore "work to construct a specific way of perceiving the nation" (15). Considering that films can act as a reflection of the nation, we must ask, as Hayward does, "what myths does a national cinema put in place and what are the consequences" (15)? At first glance, it seems that *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) counters the constructions of the U.S. as celebrated by post-World War II Hollywood narratives. To interrogate the film's framing of the U.S. as a cultural space, we must take into account not only the narrative's setting, but also how this setting is positioned in relation to Mexico.

This positioning vis-à-vis Mexico is illustrated during the final climactic confrontation between Ennis (Heath Ledger) and his lover Jack (Jake Gyllenhaal), the

two male leads of *Brokeback Mountain*. “Have you been in Mexico, Jack Twist?” Ennis asks Jack in an accusatory tone. “Cause I hear what they got in Mexico for boys like you.” The phrase “boys like you” is Ennis’ attempt to discursively distance himself from Jack and veil his identification with Jack’s queerness. Interestingly, Ennis’ need to deny his own sexual identity relates to his—and the film’s—positioning of Mexico. Jack’s earlier scene in Mexico provides a conceptual framework through which we can interrogate this denial. Earlier in the film, after being spurned by Ennis, Jack drives, devastated, to Juarez, Mexico. Once there, the camera pans across the town to reveal a dark alleyway lined with male prostitutes. When one approaches him, Jack nods and together they disappear into the darkness, presumably to engage in sexual intercourse. As Jean Mitry (2000) writes in *Semiotics and the Analysis of Film*, “the camera has an undoubted effect on what it shows. As well as the framing, angle of shot and lighting, its simple photographic quality is already an interpretation” (34). The reality we see on screen is always mediated. It is a representation created through the structuring of “the elements captured by the lens” (92). In other words, “the representation...is already itself a sort of connotation” (92). By showing Jack disappearing into the literal and figurative darkness of the alleyway, Mexico is constructed by the film as a space in which Jack’s lust, demonized as dark and perverse by his society, is realized. More importantly, Mexico becomes the only cultural space in which his sexual desires *can* be realized.

Ennis’ unwillingness to commit to a romantic relationship with Jack can be read as being a consequence of the longstanding practices of sexual regulation mobilized by the U.S. in order to reproduce and maintain its identity as a masculine, heterosexual nation. In this sense, the nation becomes “an agent of terrorizing brutality,” if only through the material and psychic costs that manifest in its queer inhabitants as a result of its sexual policing (Morgensen 2010, 105). We can see disciplinary techniques mobilized throughout the film. Though the eponymous mountain is the only space in the film in which Jack and Ennis can pursue their romance, it does not exist outside regulation. Here, I draw on Michel Foucault’s articulation of biopolitics. According to Foucault (1978/1990), the power exercised by modern political states depends largely on the self-regulation of its citizens. Citizens are taught,

through various sociopolitical institutions, what ‘normal’ is and looks like, how it behaves and doesn’t behave, “guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony” (141). Within this system, citizens are encouraged to regulate themselves according to these societal ideals, out of fear of non-conformity; indeed, citizens themselves act as part of the disciplinary apparatus by policing each other. Foucault speaks of the panoptic ‘gaze’, the ever-present societal mechanism of surveillance in which we watch and judge each other, thus enforcing self-regulation (141). We see this at work in one scene early in the film when Joe Aguirre (Randy Quaid), the man who initially hired Jack and Ennis to herd his sheep, catches them frolicking shirtless in a supposedly secluded field.

The shot of Jack and Ennis’ romantic play situates itself far enough away to suggest the presence of an intrusive gaze, but remains fixed on the lovers. When the camera switches to show a close up of Joe spying through a pair of binoculars, which he then lowers to show his disgusted expression, the implication is clear: the intimate undertones of their play have not gone unnoticed. This is confirmed by the vitriolic response Joe later gives Jack when the latter asks to be rehired: “You boys sure found a way to make the time pass up there. Twist, you guys wasn’t gettin’ paid to leave the dogs to baby-sit the sheep while you stemmed the rose. Now get the hell out of my trailer.” This inspecting gaze also functions by shaming bodies into regulation. Through this kind of method, the modern political state can exercise power directly upon bodies, which are accordingly categorized, criminalized, and punished (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 97). When the camera angle pans out from Joe’s disgruntled face watching the two men play, to a low-angled shot of him standing on the mountain, the low angle suggests his dominance. Joe becomes, in that moment, the symbolic representation of the domineering, oppressive societal gaze. Thus, when Jack tells Ennis during their final confrontation that they “coulda had a good life together, a fuckin’ real good life” and “had...a place of [their] own,” the film suggests that for them, the possibility of carrying out their romance was impossible from the start, so long as they decided to stay under the omnipresent disciplinary gaze of mainstream U.S. society. The film hints that Jack may be fully aware of this when, in an earlier scene, he asks Ennis to come to Mexico with him.

It is important to note, however, that *Brokeback Mountain* takes place in the rural West. Rich (2013) is right in commending Lee for “reimagin[ing] America as shaped by queer experience and memory” (190). However, Rich’s lamentation that “[a]las, it cannot be a sunny picture, not in Wyoming, not in the early 1960s” (190) points to a key element in my argument: through its use of generic conventions and its aligning of biopolitical oppression with conservative eras and cultural spaces, the film suggests that Ennis and Jack’s inability to carry out their romance is because of the ‘backwards’ and ‘old-fashioned’ heterosexist ideologies circulating specifically in conservative cultural spaces such as the American Heartland.

The American gay liberation movement began in the late 1960’s in California and was led by anti-imperial political queer communities in San Francisco (Hobson 2009, 1-2). However, during this period (and for many decades following), the American Heartland maintained its strict heteronormative regulation, making such movements scarce. This makes Wyoming a curious case; with its sparse, predominantly working-class population, Wyoming became the first state to grant female suffrage (Kowal 2000; Handley 2005). And yet, this early display of progressiveness did not extend to its queer communities, which remained largely invisible and unaccepted. It took the brutal, homophobic murder of gay university student Matthew Shepard in 1998 for queer rights activism in Wyoming to advance. However, despite this, by the time *Brokeback Mountain* opened in theatres, Wyoming still lacked social services, programs, and community spaces to support its queer community and combat homophobic sentiments (Connolly and Leedy 2008, 19-31). As Dwight A. McBride (2007) argues, *Brokeback Mountain*’s mainstream appeal can be attributed to its adherence to generic conventions; in particular, it is structured as a traditional star-crossed romance. Star-crossed romances provide a way to critique the social norms keeping the two protagonists from fulfilling their love (96). Thus, we can read the film as critiquing the repressive, heteronormativity of its setting: a conservative space in a conservative time. The film follows Hollywood formulas and generic conventions that have long conditioned audiences to feel sympathy towards the protagonists of this kind of story, whether it succeeds or not. In encouraging contemporary audiences to sympathize with its star-crossed lov-

ers, the film also implicitly encourages the audience to identify conservative spaces as problematic and unjust. We can further analyze the ideological investments of the film by applying Greimas’ square as a semiotic tool of analysis. The semiotic square is a graphic representation of the semiotic system of meaning, bringing together ideological oppositions and contradictions in order to draw meaning from (usually literary) narratives (Corso 2014, 69-70).

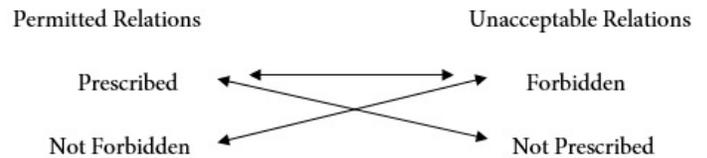


Figure 1: A model of the Greimas’ Square applied to describe a narrative’s semiotic production

Source: Armstrong, Nancy. 1977. “Character, Closure and Impressionist Fiction.” *Criticism* 19 (4): 321.

Indeed, the film’s narrative seems to present binary oppositions. It represents a world with specific rules as to what is prescribed versus forbidden, desired versus feared, profitable versus unprofitable. These systems of semiotic meaning determine which actions, behaviours, identities, and relationships are considered acceptable in the represented world of the narrative. Greimas uses the word ‘epistemy’ to describe particular semiotic social hierarchies, including those depicted in texts (Armstrong 1977, 322). In *Brokeback Mountain*, the heterosexual epistemy limits any sexual relationships (particularly that of Jack and Ennis) that, according to Greimas’ semiotic square, are on the axis of the forbidden, the feared, and the unacceptable. The fact that Jack and Ennis’ inability to be together is framed by the text as a ‘tragedy’ not only suggests the power of the setting’s dominant heteronormative epistemy, but also highlights its cultural values as negative. This agenda is furthered through the construction of characters like Joe, through the filmic techniques discussed above that demonize the repressive codes of behaviour he symbolizes.

By aligning this repression with the conservative past, the film constructs ‘America-as-it-was.’ The cultural space of 1960s Wyoming, foreshadowing the

murder of Matthew Shepard, becomes symbolic of an America that, according to liberal discourses, has failed to uphold the very ideals it was supposedly founded upon: “freedom in democracy” and “the ideals of the Constitution” meant to be a “reality for all” (Cone quoted in hooks 1992, 11). By tying these failures to the past, the film suggests that such conservative spaces and ideologies are dangerously ‘behind-the-times’; they are in direct contestation with America-as-it-should-be in the modern era within this liberal discursive framework—an America in which two handsome, gay white men can pursue a monogamous relationship in peace. This film almost anticipates this America, encouraging a modern movie-going audience, through its sympathetic portrayal of Jack and Ennis, to see 1960s Wyoming as an early stage of the U.S.’s socio-political evolution.

At this point, it is important to examine more deeply the America that *Brokeback Mountain* anticipates: America-as-it-should-be. Obviously, this America would have to be one that allows Jack and Ennis’ love to flourish, a country that upholds its own national ideals of liberty and equality. The recent, historic Supreme Court decision to legalize same-sex marriage is perhaps a step towards this progressive vision, though it would not, in and of itself, be enough to erase homophobia or prevent conservative backlash. However, it is important to note here that this film, written, adapted, and directed during an era when Eurocentric, heteronormative global capitalist ideologies abound, seems to already suggest what liberty and equality means and whom it is for. According to McBride (2007), the film’s financial success is commonly said to be due to its popularity among (white, heterosexual) American women who consumed the narrative as the star-crossed love story Lee intended it to be (95). Ennis and Jack are white, “straight-acting” (95), rugged romance heroes whose tragic love story follows the generic conventions of the romantic melodrama (Osterweil 2007, 38). Audiences are meant to root for the two lovers to leave their ‘unsuitable’ partners and pursue an exclusive relationship with each other. Considering that the love stories at the center of the Hollywood moviemaking formula are always implicitly and conventionally white and heterosexual, *Brokeback Mountain* does not seem to deviate from this, beyond the fact that both protagonists are gay men and their ‘unsuitable’ partners are female (McBride 2007, 96). That the characters are both played by actors

who publicly perform as heterosexual lends to these characters’ alignment with white heterosexual convention, facilitating the intended audience’s consumption of the narrative. The preoccupation of the film with the relationship between two white men seems to mirror contemporary mainstream discourses of sexual equality. Scholars like Trinity A. Ordon (2012) and Jasbir Kaur Puar (2001) have discussed the privileging of white gay males in contemporary mainstream calls for sexual equality. Considering this, one can read Lee’s film as inevitably affirming the white, heteronormative directives that its content appears to challenge. The U.S. it anticipates, then, most likely affirms the same.

Queer Liberation and Hegemonic Fulfillment in *The Wedding Banquet*

Ang Lee’s earlier film, *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), represents a kind of corrective to Ennis and Jack’s tragic love story. Set in New York in the 1990s, the film presents its audience with a different articulation of the social and cultural boundaries regulating queer bodies in the U.S. This film imagines it not as a conservative biopolitical nation that “institutes heterosexuality as a key disciplinary regime” (Gopinath 2005), but as a cultural space in which the love of two gay men can be fully realized. *The Wedding Banquet*’s main character, Wai-Tung (Winston Chao), is a successful Taiwanese businessman living with his white male partner, Simon (Mitchell Lichtenstein) in an upscale apartment in Manhattan. In stark contrast to the star-crossed Jack and Ennis, Wai-Tung and Simon have a functional relationship. The primary threat to this relationship comes from Wai-Tung’s parents in Taiwan who, unaware of his queerness, continuously pressure him to enter into a heteronormative reproductive union. Once they cross borders into the U.S. to visit him, Wai-Tung and Simon manage this threat by employing Wai-Tung’s female tenant, Wei-Wei (May Chin), who pretends to be his wife for as long as his parents are visiting.

Brokeback Mountain enables a retrospective analysis of *The Wedding Banquet* and its construction of the U.S. nation. Despite a few interesting moments of homophobia and racism (or, possibly, because of those moments), the film presents modern-day America as a space of late-capitalist modernity and thus a haven of equality and possibility for its diverse, multicultural inhabitants. By being able to secure a private space where

they can live comfortably and happily, despite being an interracial queer couple, Simon and Wai-Tung act as a symbol of the supposed progressiveness of the U.S in the modern era.

I am hesitant to scrutinize the inclusion of a happy, gay interracial couple in mainstream cinema, particularly because, as Siobhan Somerville (2005) has argued, queer interracial relationships in America have been subjected to intense and, at times, brutal levels of scrutiny (345-6). Positive examples of queer and interracial relationships are undoubtedly needed in Western cinema, which is still dominated by white, hegemonic representations of romantic coupling and kinship models. At the same time, these relationships, including Simon and Wai-Tung's, cannot be separated from America's history of power and brutality. Other films have addressed this explicitly, such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*, a film that, as Gayatri Gopinath (2005) suggests, "speaks to how the queer racialized body becomes a historical archive for both individuals and communities, one that is excavated through the very act of desiring the racial other" (1). Screenwriter Hanif Kureishi addresses Britain's past history of racial oppression and its contemporary material and psychic costs, even as he crafts his love story between South Asian Omar and white British Johnny. It is from this perspective that I unpack the construction of Simon and Wai-Tung's relationship. As I believe that, despite its attempts to present a utopic space, the film's representation of their relationship ultimately cannot be extricated from racist histories and contemporary strategies of racial management. Indeed, it is embedded within the larger racial, neoliberal, sexual, and gendered relations of power underscoring the liberal space *Brokeback Mountain* implicitly longs for.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) notes that, in this present era of globalization and the mass migrations that come with it, "diasporic public spheres...are part of the cultural dynamic of urban life" (10). Urban, metropolitan spaces like New York in particular "constitute a new sense of global as modern and the modern as global" (10). Accordingly, *The Wedding Banquet* uses Manhattan and New York to symbolize America-as-it-should-be in the global era, representing it as a liberal, cosmopolitan space. In the film's representation of Manhattan, Simon and Wai-Tung's relationship flourishes, despite conservative moments of panic. In fact, the film stra-

tegically uses moments of conservative panic in order to help present the cultural space in which Wai-Tung and Simon occupy as liberal. In one scene, for example, Simon walks out of his apartment to take out of the trash only to be met with the seemingly derogatory jeers of a young man, Steve (Neal Huff). "Hey, you homo," comes the voice off-screen. "What are you doing in this neighbourhood?" The camera then pans to show Steve riding towards Simon aggressively on his bike. The lens follows Steve's relentless pace, generating a sense of terror, only for Steve to hop off his bike and give Simon a kiss on the cheek. The subversion of the expectation generated through the camera work not only establishes the relationship between the two as being friendly, but also subverts the aggressive act and words, divesting them of their oppressive power and allowing the two gay men to reclaim them as expressions of ironic affection.

Just as with Ennis and Jack, Simon and Steve's homosocial friendship is shown to be under surveillance by disciplinary conservative forces. In the next shot, the camera shows a middle-aged couple, the Witchells, watching the pair with disdain. Yet, in contrast to the analogous portrayal in *Brokeback Mountain*, the film does not allow this conservative scrutiny to carry any significant weight even as it acknowledges its existence. The direction quickly divests the couple, along with the repression they represent, of their regulatory power by having Simon and Steve dismiss the couple in the very next shot: "cute," says Steve, referring to the Witchells' attempt to shame them, and they continue on with their conversation. At the end of the scene, as Steve rides away on his bike, the camera once more shows the Witchells' disapproving gaze. However, the audience is clearly meant to identify with Steve. The camera shows us the glaring Witchells through Steve's perspective; they move out of the frame as Steve rides his bike. The direction then ultimately gives Steve final word. As he rides away on his bike, he jokingly waves 'goodbye' to the couple. The direction privileges this mocking gesture by allowing it to close the scene, thus making clear that despite the Witchells' attempts, neither Simon nor Steve are shamed into self-regulation.

By injecting these moments of discrimination, the film acknowledges power relations in the U.S., but by disempowering them, it creates an environment in which discrimination, though present, cannot outright hinder same-sex interracial relationships from both

forming and flourishing. To return to Greimas' square, gay men and gay male relationships are not quite framed as desired or prescribed by society; however, they are, regardless of race, allowed to exist on the interstitial axis of the square: they are, at least, not-forbidden and not-unacceptable. This is all to construct New York as a particular kind of space. Martin F. Manalansan's (2003) ethnographic study of Filipino men in New York troubles this narrative, offering a more complex view of Asian queer life in the city. As he writes, "it has increasingly become apparent that even the gayest global spaces such as New York City are rife with cultural fissures and divides between various queer communities" (viii). Indeed, Filipino gay men constantly negotiate their intersectional identity to claim a space for themselves within a mainstream white gay culture "suffused with class demarcations, which, in turn, hide racial boundaries" (69). At the same time, they must navigate queer and non-queer spaces in which they may become targets of economic, queer, and racial violence (70). These complexities can become lost amidst celebrations of modernity. As Appadurai (1996) argues, the diversity that characterizes metropolitan spaces in the U.S. reinforces notions of democracy, equality, and prosperity in American social consciousness; this plurality of identities that characterizes the modern U.S. is tied together by the notion of a quintessential Americanness, which, according to rather idealistic liberal discourses, hypothetically all Americans can ascribe to equally (171). It is this particular configuration of equality that constitutes mainstream understandings of sexual and racial equality in the modern era.

In the 1980s and 1990s, as gays and lesbians became more visible in the American mainstream and increasingly lobbied for rights and fair representation, the fulfillment of their demands came to depend on their assimilation into the nation. Queer concerns became framed by a rights discourse dependent on essentialist sexual and gender identity categories. Members of the LGBTQ community were consequently encouraged to perform these identities in order to fully participate in and reap the benefits of rights activism (Mertus 2007, 1062-4). The U.S.'s championing of LGBTQ rights is thus entirely conditional, dependent on queer individuals becoming "an 'acceptable' kind of queer citizen" (Puar 2007, 2). Within this framework, the 'acceptable queer' is one whose perception of rights and freedoms

align with the heteronormative ideals of consumerism and property ownership, family and marriage. As David Eng (2003) writes, in the late twentieth century, "U.S.-based gay and lesbian activist movements have culminated in demands for legal rights to same-sex marriage" - demands, in other words, for inclusion into the heteronormative mainstream (5). Different from the radical and transgressive politics of more marginal liberation activism and theory, current mainstream queer activism, in Eng's estimation, is channelled through dominant political discourses, governed by "the rhetorics of equal opportunity and multicultural inclusion," into the sphere of global capitalism (5).

In *The Wedding Banquet*, this rhetoric underlies the film. The film depicts Wai-Tung and Simon as citizens largely (though still not perfectly) included into the nation not only because of their citizenship, but also because of their ability to participate in consumer capitalism. Wai-Tung's job involves the restructuring and renting out of old buildings. It is a lucrative business, made clear to the audience when Wai-Tung tells Simon early on in the film: "If they let me convert the Hudson building, I'll make millions." Though they are certainly not a part of Manhattan's elite economic class, the film still establishes their level of affluence by setting an early scene inside Wai-Tung and Simon's apartment. During this scene, Wai-Tung and Simon have dinner. The establishing shot shows Wai-Tung's hands placing his food onto an expensive-looking plate flanked by two lit candles (framed in glass candlewicks). As Mitry (2000) explains, techniques of design can help to present a particular interpretation of the world represented by the lens (8). In accordance with the design elements of the set that signify the couple's conspicuous consumption, the dialogue suggests the couple's economic privilege. Simon and Wai-Tung spend their dinner discussing vacation options. In fact, the mood of the scene is initially sombre with Simon unhappy with Wai Tung postponing their travelling: "What's the point of being able to afford a vacation if you won't even take time off to have one," he laments. However, the conflict in the scene quickly vanishes when Wai-Tung promises to "take [him] to Paris" for his birthday and Simon ends the scene with his satisfied smile. In the film, Wai-Tung's lucrative work is only a problem in so far as it has limited their private time. Being able to participate in New York's global capitalist modernity, being able to live happily as

an interracial gay couple with economic privilege seems to attest to the progressiveness of New York and other such cosmopolitan areas.

The film promotes this framing through its depiction of Taiwan. In particular, it uses Taiwan to construct America, comparatively, as a space of modernity, liberty, and equality and, in doing so, it reveals the violent dimensions of its supposedly liberal politics. Simon and Wai-Tung are not simply a symbol of progress, but more specifically a symbol of progression away from the nationalist, conservative logic of Taiwan, which is presented as a space characterized by restrictive traditions. It is important to consider, for example, that the very first voice heard in the film is Wai-Tung's mother, Mrs. Gao (Ya-lei Kuei), who in a voice over expresses her desire to see her son marry. "When will you marry? You know, Pa came from China to Taiwan by himself and you're his only precious son. So don't be such a snob." This voice works to thematically frame the film. Here, she appeals to his sense of familial duty as a way to pressure him into marrying, dismissing his disinterest in heterosexual marriage as a character deficiency (he's a 'snob'). Mrs. Gao is the driving force behind Wai-Tung's arranged dates, enrolling him against his will into a Taipei singles club to meet a (female) match. His parents' preoccupation with heteronormative reproduction is humorously displayed in one scene in which Mr. Gao (Sihung Lung) and Mrs. Gao meet Wei-Wei, who Wai-Tung has deceptively introduced as his 'wife'. Mr. Gao expresses his approval by telling his wife, while looking at Wei-Wei's figure from behind: "She'll make a lot of babies."

Indeed, the narrative frames Taiwan's conservative culture as infiltrating the 'liberal' space of Manhattan. The film makes this subtext obvious during a montage in which Wai-Tung, Simon, and Wei-Wei prepare their home for Mrs. and Mr. Gao's arrival. The camera focuses largely on their hands, rapidly replacing references to Wai-Tung and Simon's relationship with more heteronormative iconography. For example, a full-bodied photo of a naked and smiling Wai-Tung is replaced by a yearbook-like photo of Wai-Tung in military garb. Here, a potential reference to queerness is hurriedly tidied away. In its wake, we get what the film suggests is a representation of Wai-Tung more palatable to Taiwanese gender codes; stone-faced in his uniform, the second picture of Wai-Tung represents a more accept-

able serious and disciplined heterosexual male identity. In addition to this, Wai-Tung and Wei-Wei hang scrolls of Taiwanese calligraphy on the walls in order to, as the film suggests, placate Wai-Tung's parents through the performance of a 'traditional', intra-racial, and heteronormative kinship model. Indeed, there is an emphasis not only on pairing Wai-Tung with a woman, but also on pairing him with someone of the same ethnicity. Mrs. Gao, after all, does not appeal for Wai-Tung to find a woman in America, but enrolls him in a match-making club operating out of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. The film thus suggests that the threat arising from his parents' continual efforts to pressure Wai-Tung into marriage has as much to do with the imposition of culture and tradition as it does with heteronormativity.

Constructing Taiwan as a repressive force of both heteronormativity and culture certainly emphasizes the U.S. as a liberal nation. At the same time, this articulation seems complicit with Orientalist, imperial discourses that have historically positioned Asia in binary opposition to Europe, its 'strangeness' becoming a source of European fear and fantasy used to justify Europe's ongoing construction of the East as a 'threat' (Said 1978, 60). Further, the film's depiction of Taiwan reinforces those liberal discourses invested in downplaying histories of discrimination, as well as its contemporary material costs. Sara Ahmed (2010) speaks of dominant discourses of multiculturalism, for example, as a way to manage racial inequality, while maintaining the privilege of whiteness in Western settler nations. As she writes, multicultural inhabitants of such nations are expected to be 'happy', and so the discourse of multiculturalism cannot abide those who remain dissatisfied with unequal power structures and for whom this inequality has manifested psychically. According to this discourse, the "truth behind the [melancholic] migrant's suffering," Ahmed states, is simply that they "suffer because [they] do not play the game, where not playing is read as self-exclusion" (142).

If happiness has come to be tied, according to Ahmed's (2010) historical, linguistic, and social analysis of term, to what gives us "pleasure or pain" (22), and if what we consider to be sources of this 'pleasure or pain' involves an intentional and affective "orientation toward the objects we come into contact with" (24), then 'happiness' is simply a form of cultural hegemonic coercion; to be happy is to follow the 'script',

to desire the same 'things', to derive pleasure from the same objects, all of which is regulated by dominant hegemonic frameworks. To be happy, to be a true citizen, is to 'fit'. The unhappiness of the excluded, therefore, is due to their own unwillingness to shed the difference responsible for their exclusion and their insistence on "reading their exclusion as a sign of the ongoing nature of racism" (143). This insistence, of course, necessarily involves re-politicizing racism and reimagining it not as a personal problem that one must 'get over' in order to find happiness, but as an institutionally supported and historically-derived social reality that continues to maintain the conditions of systemic inequality. Racial politics in America make this a difficult task for minorities who find themselves differentially positioned in relation not only to whites, but also to each other. Asian Americans in particular, as coalition activist Andrea Smith (2006) argues, are privileged over other minorities, such as Native Americans and African Americans (68). They are encouraged to take up a 'model minority' identity model, which, in turn, encourages Asians to embrace these privileges and take them as a sign of superiority over other minorities; it deceptively promises assimilation. This phenomenon surely affects, whether the film is 'aware' or not, the happily multicultural relationship between Simon and Wai-Tung, the latter performing this model minority identity through his assimilatory practices. And yet, as Smith continues, despite their privilege, Asians "are still cast as inferior... [t]heir privilege is not a signal that they will be assimilated, but that they will be marked as perpetual foreign threats to the US world order" (69).

As Ahmed (2010) states, to be conscious of racism is to be painfully aware of being "out of place in a world oriented around whiteness" (86). In supposedly liberal nations, the path to happiness is thus discursively dependent on consciously or unconsciously accepting certain hegemonic norms. Queer subjects are also encouraged to mimic the logics of heterosexuality within the heteronormative space of the nation in order to be happy. Heather Love (2007) suggests this, when she asserts that the "fantasies of future happiness" offered by the institutionalization of monogamy and marriage work to delegitimize the "full erotic and affective expressions" that "alternative forms of intimacy offer us" (53). Yet, according to Eng (2003), it is not simply the white heteronormativity of the U.S. nation that, if un-

challenged, can dictate the parameters of modern queer identity. We must also consider interracial queer relationships as they are expressed through and produced by the Eurocentric formation of late-capitalism. As Eng writes, "prior historical efforts to defy state oppression have, to a striking extent, given way to the desire for state legitimacy and inclusion" and the "[move] from wage labor to particular modes of consumer capitalism" (5) has in many ways provided the conditions for certain queer individuals to fulfill this desire (5). Globalization tends to organize and normalize individuals around the interests of capital—in Ahmed's terms, we can say that capital becomes an object of 'happiness' around which individuals can orient themselves to achieve a kind of sameness and be included in the nation. Differences of race, sexuality, and ethnicity become subsumed under the obligation to accumulate capital goods. "This neoliberal portrait," however, "is based on a privileged form of market-generated individualism that operates on ideas of universalism and similitude established at the expense of economic and racial inequalities" (Manalansan 2007, 100). Indeed, Simon and Wai-Tung, despite being gay, occupy an economically privileged position in society. Living in Manhattan, an economically affluent area of New York, Wai-Tung owns many buildings, including Wei-Wei's. His work signifies power, particularly when one considers that the seizing, restructuring, and re-selling of space has often been used to displace marginalized individuals, communities, and populations. In the film's narrative, this work materially shifts the balance of power in his favour when it comes to Wei-Wei, whose gender, ethnicity, and economic status puts her in a much more vulnerable position.

Wei-Wei's lack of security in the U.S. is the result of being an immigrant without a green card. Her precariousness is further intensified by the fact that she cannot pay her rent: "I'm not like you," she tells Wai-Tung, "rich American citizen." One might say that Wei-Wei can be, at the start of the film, counted as 'wastes of modernity' (Bauman 2004, 27). As Zygmunt Bauman (2004) writes, "[w]aste is the dark, shameful secret of all production. Preferably, it would remain a secret. Captains of industry would rather not mention it at all—they need to be pressed hard to admit it" (27). The refugees, "unacknowledged lovers, illegal immigrants, indentured laborers" that are "consigned to outcast status and confined to the edges of globalization" inevitably ghost those able

to reap the benefits, able to be secure in the civil rights and economic profit to be gained (Eng 2003, 8). Importantly, it is only because of Wai-Tung's choice not to press her for rent (instead taking a painting of hers as payment) that Wei-Wei can stay in her studio. Wei-Wei herself articulates her own vulnerability as well as her relative powerlessness when she tells Wai-Tung just before he leaves: "Simon's lucky to have a handsome and rich boyfriend. Ask him to get me one too, then I'll pay the rent." Inevitably, Wai-Tung's capital and Wei-Wei's economic vulnerability places her in a position where her labour can be used and exploited in exchange for security in the form of money and a green card. The very same processes of globalization that gave Simon and Wai-Tung a chance at (neo)liberal 'happiness' also produced the conditions for her precariousness, which she could only solve through her labour. After she and Wai-Tung have sex while inebriated, her resultant pregnancy does inevitably give her a way to stay in America, since at the time, US immigration policy stipulated that, "[l]egally, U.S citizenship [could be] granted on the basis of either birthplace (jus soli) or descent" (Eng 2003, 8). Thus, for Wei-Wei, having a child who is an American citizen would potentially confer on her certain (though not complete) legal protections as the mother (Koshy 2004, 10). However, in order to gain these protections, Wei-Wei must bear the burden of reproductive labour as well as that of motherhood, a fact that remains to be true despite the apparent alleviation of her initial distress at the end of the film. That this is required of her is itself a testament to the ways in which globalization, a result of imperial projects, has transformed racialized female bodies in particular into, as Foucault would say, "a dense transfer point for relations of power" (Härting 2008, 66). The exploitation of Wei-Wei's labour, the coercing of her reproductive labor, and her commodification for First World consumption all seem inextricably linked to the Western logic of capitalist modernity.

Conclusion

The Wedding Banquet's representation of its interracial gay couple thus reproduces Eurocentric, heteronormative discourses of capitalist modernity, but this representation depends on the construction of those (often racialized and gendered) bodies it pathologizes. That Wei-Wei's pregnancy, for example, is treated as a potential threat to Simon and Wai-Tung's monoga-

mous relationship echoes "the history of Asian women's exclusion from the U.S." (Koshy 2004, 10). Their sexuality signifies the ability of ethnic communities to reproduce themselves and challenge the ideological (racial) meaning of the nation. Their framing as a threat thus facilitates their exclusion. Likewise, Wai-Tung's ability to participate in the space of American citizenship implicitly requires the marginalization of certain bodies against which his inclusion can be measured and valued. In other words, his status as citizen can only be realized through its construction against those deemed unfit for the category of 'us' and placed among those who constitute 'them.' Thus, despite the film's progressive inclusion of gay protagonists, the U.S. constructed by the film's privileging of mainstream liberal logics and the implicitly longed-for (by *Brokeback Mountain's* tragic narrative) is, in actuality, both a reassertion of heterosexuality and a "call for whiteness that reproduces the white episteme of queerness at the nation's boundaries" (Puar 2001, 172). Just as Wei-Wei and Wai-Tung's parents ghost *The Wedding Banquet's* celebration of queerness, so too do the bodies of the Hispanic, male prostitutes in Mexico who draw Jack into their lustful, pathological 'darkness,' away from an 'ideal' performance of queerness that can be realized with Ennis.

Both films encourage an acknowledgement of only certain kinds of queer citizens and, when taken together, they craft a teleological history of modernity; a narrative that assumes the inevitability of social progress and promotes the notion that the conservative past should and will always give way to a more progressive future. However, neither film takes into account the ways in which queer liberalism is part of a more complex and messy terrain of hierarchy and domination at work in the present. Here, we must consider, as Eng (2003) does, intersections of race, sexuality, and gender. The existence of oppressed, racialized, and gendered bodies has and continues to support the socioeconomic conditions that make possible the liberation of those in the queer community willing and able to participate in the dominant structures of citizenship (8-10). Only by teasing out these complex entanglements of power can a transformative queer politics be achieved.

These films and their role in proliferating mainstream queer representations can indeed be celebrated. However, we cannot dismiss the fact that they, along with their perceptions of the socio-political and eco-

conomic conditions of sexual equality, are always already entangled in the unequal relations of power underlying the neoliberal American body politic. We must, therefore, take into account the boundaries and limitations of the socioeconomic and cultural possibilities promised by America's liberal multiethnic landscapes if we are to nuance discussions of queer hypervisibility in American mainstream media.

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The “Kingston Mills Murder” and the Construction of “Honour Killings” in Canadian News Media

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Abstract

In this article, I examine print media coverage of the 2009 “Kingston Mills Murder” case and how this enactment of patriarchal violence was interpreted through a cultural lens as “honour killings.” I also focus on how feminist and gender “experts,” in statements to the news media, interpreted the murders as the consequence of a “clash of civilizations.” Drawing on the work of Chandra T. Mohanty (2003), I argue that it is essential that Western feminisms decolonize discursive constructions of the “Other” in order to create and sustain “communities of resistance” to patriarchal violence. By investigating this case, I also seek to provide a road map for imagining an alternative feminist response to “honour killings” based on Sherene Razack’s (1998) interlocking analysis.

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Résumé

Dans cet article, j’examine la couverture dans la presse écrite du cas des meurtres de « Kingston Mills » en 2009, et la façon dont cet acte de violence patriarcale a été interprété d’un point de vue culturel comme un « crime d’honneur ». Je mets aussi l’accent sur la façon dont les « experts » en matière de féminisme et de genre, dans leurs entrevues avec les médias, ont interprété les meurtres comme étant des conséquences du « choc

des civilisations ». Misant sur le travail de Chandra T. Mohanty (2003), je fais valoir qu’il est essentiel pour les féministes occidentaux de décoloniser les constructions discursives de « l’autre » afin de créer et de maintenir des « communautés de résistance » à la violence patriarcale. En faisant enquête sur ce cas, je cherche également à fournir une carte routière permettant d’imaginer une intervention féministe différente par rapport aux « crimes d’honneur », basée sur l’analyse intersectionnelle de Sherene Razack (1998).

On 30 June 2009, four women were discovered inside a car submerged in a Rideau Canal lock near Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The incident was confusing to the public and police alike. With no witnesses to the tragedy, investigators suspected that the women were involved in a driving accident. Around the same time as the car was discovered, an Afghan family in Quebec reported missing family members to the Kingston Police (Tripp and Woods 2009). According to the family, they had driven in two separate cars back from a vacation in Niagara Falls. After stopping to stay overnight in a small motel in the area, they awoke to find the car and sisters Zainab (19), Sahar (17), and Geeti (13) Shafia along with their father's first wife Rona Amir Mohammed (39) gone. They suspected that the four women had driven home without them and had headed back to Quebec (Tripp and Woods 2009). After the father, his second wife, and their oldest brother were arrested and charged with murder in July 2009, the incident was widely described as an "honour killing" in the Canadian media.

According to transnational feminist scholar Inderpal Grewal (2013), much has been written on the violence of "honour killings" and yet there is little research on the production, maintenance, and structures of meaning associated with the concept. Claiming that patriarchy has been "outsourced" to "Other" spaces, Grewal suggests that more feminist attention needs to be paid to the ways in which concepts, such as "honour killings," work in the mainstream media to mark and secure boundaries between modern nations/communities and those assumed to be anachronistic zones. Answering this call, this article examines the utilization, repetition, and circulation of discursive devices and representations of what is now ubiquitously referred to as "the Kingston Mills Murder" in order to uncover the ways in which assumed knowledge about "honour killings" creates racial logics and sets of 'knowledge' about a supposed misogynist Muslim/Arab culture in Canada. In particular, this article is concerned with the way in which a cultural explanation was used to explain the "Kingston Mills Murder." The use of the term "honour killing" allows for colonial representations and essentialisms of the "Other" to be produced, circulated, and consumed in a "post-9/11" context.¹ Through a feminist media analysis of two daily Canadian newspapers—*The Montreal Gazette* and the *Kingston Whig-Standard*—

between the months of July and August 2009, I examine how the murders were covered in the press and the ways in which feminist and gender "experts" relied on cultural explanations of the "honour killings." I argue that it is necessary for Western feminisms to decolonize discursive constructions of the "Other" in order to create and sustain "communities of resistance" to patriarchal violence.² By investigating this case, I also provide a road map for imagining an alternative feminist response to "honour killings" in Canada based on an interlocking analysis.

Methodology

In considering how the "Kingston Mills Murder" case was represented in the Canadian media, I focused on two daily newspapers: *The Montreal Gazette* and the *Kingston Whig-Standard*. Since moving to Canada, the Shafia³ family had resided in a neighbourhood called Saint Leonard in Montreal, Quebec. Thus, the *Montreal Gazette* published a significant number of articles on the incident. Since the murder took place in Kingston, Ontario, the local daily newspaper covered the story quite extensively. I chose to concentrate my analysis on the initial two months of media coverage after the bodies of the four women at the Kingston Mills lock were discovered on 30 June 2009. Rather than map discursive changes over an extended period of time, my interest was to examine what I consider to be knee-jerk or "reactionary" responses produced in the media. Such "reactionary" responses, I argue, reflect what Yasmin Jiwani (2006) refers to as "common sense stock of knowledge" about the "Other" in Canada in a post-9/11 context. In building my analysis, I first explore the media's explanation of the violent incident as an "honour killing." I then focus specifically on news articles that centered the perspectives of those who emerged as experts on "honour killings" in order to demonstrate how those who were heard by the news media used "common sense stock of knowledge" to describe the crime (Jiwani 2006, 4).

In *Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender and Violence*, Jiwani (2006) draws on cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall to theorize representational practices. She argues that institutional practices, routinized behaviours, and normative values work in collaboration to shape the way in which media institutions interpret and tell stories (30). Jiwani further maintains that the

media constitutes a central site to investigate representations and discursive devices that are used to communicate a “common sense stock of knowledge” (31). In other words, the news media often borrows from a historical inventory of storytelling practices. In defining the issues, framing debates, and providing readers with categories of language, news stories generally adhere to, rather than disrupt, dominant modes of knowing (37). Significantly, news media helps to produce a symbolic image of the nation. Groups that are underrepresented, or represented in stereotypical ways, in the media shape conceptions of who belongs and who does not. Those who do not fit normative ideals of white, heterosexual, and/or able-bodied citizenship are “Othered” in dominant representational practices. Jiwani concludes that investigating mainstream and powerful media sources is essential to understanding representational discourses of race and racism.

Building on Jiwani’s work, I would suggest that “race thinking,”⁴ which is masked in discourses of culture, perpetuates hierarchies of power by producing “common sense stock of knowledge” of difference (Razack 2008). My analysis seeks to explore the ways in which “common sense stock of knowledge” of Muslim “Otherness,” or cultural difference, was used to explain the “Kingston Mills Murder.” It is not my intention to engage in popular and academic debates about whether this case was or was not an “honour killing.” Rather, I aim to uncover the way in which “common sense stock of knowledge” about “Others” was used to explain this heinous crime.

“Honour Killing” in the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and *Montreal Gazette*

In the first two months after the murders, both the *Kingston-Whig Standard* and the *Montreal Gazette* published twenty news articles and columns regarding the incident. Although this number may not seem significant, the *Kingston Whig-Standard* did not report on the case between 10 and 23 July, and the *Montreal Gazette* did not do so between 4 and 23 July. During this period, the Kingston police were in the midst of their investigation and did not actively speak to media sources. It was not until the arrests of the father Mohammad Shafia, second wife Tooba Mohammad Yahya, and oldest son Hamed Shafia for the murder of the four women that the media received new information to cover. Thus,

in a short period of time, a significant number of articles were printed about the “Kingston Mills Murder.” Immediately after the arrests, both media outlets sparked a debate about “honour killings.” After 23 July, the term “honour killing” appeared in ten *Kingston Whig-Standard* articles and in thirteen *Montreal Gazette* articles. This language thus framed more than 50 per cent of the discourse on the case in both Canadian daily newspapers and over 70 per cent after the Shafia family members were arrested. The term “honour killing” circulated pervasively, often without a definition or description, and rarely with an explanation of its immediate use to describe the murders in news media coverage.

Honour and Shame

“Honour killings” in the West are popularly defined as a crime perpetrated against women in order to restore “appropriate” gender behaviours and sexual norms (Coomarawamy 2005, x). Radhika Coomaraswamy (2005) argues that ideals of masculinity in some cultures are underpinned by the notion of “honour” and are fundamentally connected to the regulation of women’s bodies. When women transgress these strict boundaries, “shame” is brought upon individual men, families, and communities. Violence against women, in this case, is seen as regulating women’s transgressions, which might include extramarital affairs, choosing partners against family wishes, or seeking divorce (xi). The term “honour killings” is a highly contested one among feminists; some see no “honour” in such crimes, while others believe the term is too often utilized to describe “Other” violence.⁵

The discourse of “honour and shame” emerged in the news media articles on the Kingston Mills “honour killing” specifically because it constituted “common sense stock of knowledge.” The popularity of this descriptor in explaining the case was contingent on the fact that the phrase “honour and shame” was not new and was already circulating in the media. In fact, “honour and shame” is too often invoked in the media to describe a supposedly homogenous Muslim culture that spans the Middle East regardless of nation or context. Narratives of “honour” and “shame” as inherent to certain racialized masculinities have circulated widely since the events of 11 September 2001 or 9/11. For example, at Abu Ghraib, U.S. guards forced Iraqi prisoners to stage homosexual sex. Many activist groups decried

such acts of torture, based on the idea that, for a Muslim man, this was the worst type of suffering, given that being naked and (homo)sexualized in this manner was a violation of Muslim masculinity (Puar 2007). Jasbir Puar (2007) claims that “honour and shame” was, to the point of nausea, “the most cited sound-bite in the media spectacle” (138).

With the torture at Abu Ghraib a less than distant memory, I argue that the concepts of “honour” and “shame” have particular currency in the existing stock of knowledge about Muslim men and masculinity in the Canadian social imaginary. Paying little attention to the particularities of individual Muslim men and women’s identities, the use of the “honour” and “shame” explanation in the “Kingston Mills Murder” case perpetuated the image of Muslim culture as hyper-patriarchal and zealously religious in stark contrast to Western secularity and equality. While it may be the case that women’s cultural transgressions are a source of shame for families, such assumptions reproduce the notion that Muslim men and women are preoccupied with honour and shame.

In 2012, the CBC announced that Mohammad Shafia, his wife Tooba Yahya, and their son Hamed were convicted of first-degree murder. The judge called the murders “despicable,” “heinous,” and motivated by “a completely twisted concept of honour” (Dalton 2012). Like the reports of the torture at Abu Ghraib, the terms “shame” and “honour” predominated in the media coverage. While little was written about the second wife’s or the eldest son’s involvement in the murder, Mr. Shafia was described in both the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and the *Montreal Gazette* as particularly evil. The news media speculated that Mohammad Shafia, in particular, had orchestrated the four women’s murders. In the case of this supposed “honour killing,” “shame” was said to have been brought on by the four women’s transgressions and he took it upon himself to reinstate his family’s “honour” (Proudfoot 2009).

Polygamy and Immigration

As the story unfolded, it was revealed that Mr. Shafia had tried to conceal his relationship with his first wife by telling both the police and neighbours that she was his cousin and the aunt of his children (Tripp and Woods 2009; Cherry 2009a). According to family members living in Europe who contacted the Kingston

police, Mr. Shafia had made death threats against his first wife for shaming the family in Canada. One family member, identified as Masoomi, wrote an email to the *Kingston Whig-Standard*, which stated:

My sister told me that she heard Shafi, her husband, say to second wife and his oldest son Hamed, that he was going to travel to Afghanistan and Dubai to sell some land and goods and then he would kill Zainab, and his second wife added: ‘and the other?’ So my sister understood that they were talking about her. (Tripp 2009b, A1)

These accusations of prior death threats prompted a strong response from media outlets. The *Kingston Whig-Standard*, among many other news sources, printed a large picture of Mohammad Shafia and Rona Amir Mohammed’s wedding thirty years prior to the murder. It was assumed that Mr. Shafia had taken a second wife when his first did not give birth to children. He then had seven children with his second wife, while his first stayed with the family and helped to take care of them. The *Kingston Whig-Standard* further reported that Mr. Shafia no longer wanted Rona Amir Mohammed in Canada because of her Westernized values and close relationship with Mr. Shafia’s rebellious daughters (Tripp and Woods 2009, A1).

The initial confusion over Rona Amir Mohammed’s status in the family as either an aunt or a cousin sparked a debate about polygamy in Canada. In articles published in both newspapers, polygamy was normalized as part of Afghani culture and contrasted to Canadian hetero-nuclear families. In constructing Shafia as an abusive patriarch who dominated two wives, the importance of cultural difference became very evident in the telling of the story. In the *Montreal Gazette*, Linda Gyulai (2009) argued that, because polygamy was a criminal offence in Canada, Mr. Shafia should be tried for that crime in addition to first-degree murder.

Allegations about the Shafia family’s recent immigration to Canada and their lack of assimilation became integral to the media spectacle. Rather than constructing the murder as connected to the prevalence of violence committed against women in Canada, it was the Shafia’s cultural background that became the basis of the analysis. In twelve articles featured in the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and eight published in the *Montreal Gazette*, Canadian readers were reminded of the

family's recent immigration to Canada. Although the family spent fifteen years in Dubai before immigrating to Canada, it was their Afghan heritage together with "common sense stock of knowledge" about the prevalence of honour killings in the Middle East that became central to the explanation of the murders. One *Montreal Gazette* columnist, Leonard Stern (2009) went so far as to conflate "honour killings" with Afghan Islamic terrorism. Borrowing from the "common sense stock of knowledge" about Arabs and Muslims being terrorists, or at least members of suspicious nations, he argued that Canadians should not ignore the cultural and religious factors that played into the perpetration of "honour killings." He defended the legitimacy of the term "Islamic terrorism," given that Al-Qa'ida terrorists were all Muslim and saw themselves as holy warriors. When it came to other crimes, however, it was trickier to explore the relevance of culture, race, religion, and national origin. He maintained that it was essential that all criminals' cultural backgrounds be explicitly named, since "a young Muslim in Mississauga is more likely to encounter images of militant Islam than his Italian Canada counterpart living around Dufferin Street." While Toronto, Canada is known for being the multicultural capital of Canada, Stern pointed to the Mississauga suburbs as a specifically Islamic or Arab neighbourhood, and thus more fanatical in comparison to the cultural mosaic of the downtown core. He concluded that it was "politically convenient for multiculturalists to de-Islamicize *honour killings*, but it sure won't do much toward actually stopping them" (A11, emphasis original). Such examples of "race-thinking," which emphasized Arab and Muslim Canadians' potential for criminality and terrorism, promotes intensified surveillance and stigmatization of Arab and Muslim Canadians on the basis of their skin and dress and entrenches their positioning in opposition to white Canadians as ideal citizens.

Western Freedoms, Eastern Oppressions

Exploring the gendered constructions of the four women, in particular the three daughters, slain in the "Kingston Mills Murder," is crucial for understanding how the media represented the incident as an "honour killing." Reporters used statements from the Shafias' neighbours who described the women as polite, reserved, and shy (Tripp 2009a, A3). One neighbour was

quoted as saying: "They were angels those girls. They were so sweet. To end their lives like that [is awful]" (Schliesmann 2009a, A6). Although described as submissive and modest, the women were also characterized as rebellious against their father's conservatism and traditional religiosity. Zainab, the eldest daughter, had apparently run away from home a few months before the incident because her father did not approve of her relationship with a Pakistani man (Cherry 2009b, A4). It was further noted that, "Contrary to cultural tradition to show obedience," Zainab married the young man in May 2009 (Tripp 2009b, A1). Paul Cherry (2009b) of the *Montreal Gazette* also reported that Mr. Shafia strongly disapproved of Zainab's desire to work or pursue an education, even though the *Kingston Whig-Standard* quoted him as saying: "We came here for the children...because in Afghanistan it had become dangerous. I wanted them to be able to go to school and work" (Turbide 2009, A8). It was also reported that Mr. Shafia became furious with his daughters for not wearing veils in public, wearing pants (instead of skirts) and short sleeve tops, and taking pictures of themselves and laughing (Tripp 2009b, A1).

Reports of the women's demeanour as both submissive, yet desiring "Western freedoms," borrow from, reproduce, and circulate "common sense stock of knowledge" about Muslim women. Despite being rooted in vastly different political, economic, and historical contexts, Muslim women are imagined, particularly in the West, as a homogenous group. With Canadian troops in Afghanistan partaking in the "war on terror," I would argue that many Canadians imagine Afghan women, and Muslim women more generally, as oppressed by kinship structures and religious ideologies (Mohanty 2003, 28-29). The "common sense stock of knowledge" among Canadians in particular is riddled with visions of Muslim women throwing off their burqas as troops storm Afghanistan and infiltrate the Taliban's regime. Many of the same Muslim women rescue narratives were reproduced in the news coverage of the "Kingston Mills Murder."

While informant interviews with neighbours, family, and friends helped to paint a picture of the "Kingston Mills Murder" as an "honour killing," white Western feminists emerged as experts on culture-based violence against women and strongly shaped the discourse.

Theorizing Feminist Responses to Honour Killings

In the case of “honour killings,” Western information retrieval is filtered and edited through meta-narratives of Canadian superiority in human rights practices, especially with regard to violence against women, and through strident Islamophobia that is both constructed and circulated by “war on terror” discourses. In *Cast-ing Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*, Sherene Razack (2008) examines the culturalization of racism in contemporary Western society. She first examined the concept of culturalized racism in her work, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (1998), in which she argued that previous notions of “Others” as biologically inferior had been replaced with ideas that “Others” are culturally inferior and overly patriarchal. Post-9/11, Razack (2008) noticed that the discourses of culturalized racism disproportionately targeted Muslims based on the notion that this group posed a fundamental threat to the West (174). This concept is useful for analyzing how white Western feminists talked about the “Kingston Mills Murder” in the Canadian media. In taking either a “colonial stance” (Narayan 1997) or using a “cultural difference” approach (Razack 2008), many feminists invoked ideas consistent with the “clash of civilizations” discourse, which has gained currency in “common sense stock of knowledge” since the events of 9/11 (Jiwani 2006). Many of the statements made by feminists or gender experts that appeared in both the *Montreal Gazette* and *Kingston Whig-Standard* relied on “race-thinking” by suggesting Muslim cultural inferiority (Razack 2008, 175).⁶

I have chosen to center the media statements of feminists and gender experts because they emerged as voices of “authority” on the murders. While not all of the journalists and researchers I discuss were self-identified feminists and many of them were not gender experts, these voices came to stand in for specialists in the field of violence against women. In other cases, self-identified feminists were used in the media coverage to legitimize certain voices over others. While many feminist and gender experts were quoted liberally in both Canadian dailies, I have chosen to analyse the statements made by individuals that focused on culturalist explanations of the murders that were already circulating in the news media. My aim is not to criticize these individuals, but rather to examine the ways in which they came to be

the definitive voices on both “honour killings” and other patriarchal violences in Canada. As Razack (2008) has argued, when feminists invoke ideas about cultural difference when discussing violence against “Other” women, “contemporary political conditions ensure that their words will not be taken lightly” (85).

Honour Killings and Canadian Patriarchal Violence: Distinguishing Cultural Difference

On 24 July 2009, Shannon Proudfoot wrote an article called “Western freedoms a source of family conflict” for the *Montreal Gazette*. She reported that as many as 5,000 women around the world lose their lives at the hands of their family members in “honour killings” every year. She further claimed that, in the last decade, twelve women in Canada had been murdered in “honour killings.” In the midst of the debate over whether the murders should be defined as an “honour killing” or as “domestic violence,” Dr. Amin Muhammed from Memorial University was quoted as saying that those who believed the term “honour killing” should not be used to describe the “Kingston Mills Murder” had bought into a myth propagated by the Western media about political correctness and tolerance, and had fallen into the cultural sensitivity trap (as cited by Proudfoot 2009, A3). In contrast, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women warned (on multiple days and in both newspapers) that the use of the term “honour killing” obscured other forms of patriarchal violence in Canada by exoticizing the practice, and would add to widespread Islamophobia across the nation. However, both Canadian dailies continued to report that “honour killings” were a distinct form of violence that was brought into Canada by immigrants. Journalist Marian Scott (2009) reported in the *Montreal Gazette* that, although many people in Pakistan and Afghanistan did not agree with the cultural practice, immigration officials should be trained to “screen out immigrants whose attitudes toward women put them at risk of committing honour killings” (A4).

In this political climate, the “war on terror” is being fought abroad and at home. As Razack (2008) has argued, to be considered “Canadian,” even if not possessing “Canadian skin,” one must hold Canadian values (3). Immigrants are constructed as guests who must remain under tight surveillance since their race alone presents a threat to the Canadian social imaginary.

Arguably, the construction of immigrants as threats to the nation is dependent on imagining Canada as white. Such a meta-narrative necessarily ignores Canada's colonial past and present. Racialized immigrants who flee their "backwards" countries and manipulate Canada's multiculturalist policies are said to bring the worst aspects of their culture with them. It is their "cultural difference" and our racism that links culture to a chain of other associations about "Others" (the veil, terrorism, and criminality, for example), which ultimately threatens the cohesion of the nation (Razack 2008, 84). Such a meta-narrative of the nation, as being infiltrated by undeserving "Others," disallows a connection to be made between the war in both Afghanistan and Iraq and the increasing emigration of people from those countries due to decreasing standards of living. Finally, imagining the Canadian nation in this way relies on narratives that claim that Canada has had success in the "war on terror," by saving Afghan women from their men and the men from their "primitive culture."

In the same *Montreal Gazette* article, Dr. Amin Muhammad argued that "honour killings" were rooted in patriarchal values, while domestic violence generally was not the symptom of an overarching misogynist culture (Scott 2009, A4). In claiming that the "Kingston Mills Murder" had no connection to systemic patriarchy in Canada, "honour killings" were exoticized, culturalized, and deemed "Other." Dr. Amir Muhammad further suggested that patriarchal violence in Canada was not systemic, but committed by individual men for various reasons. While the singular story of "honour killings" as culturally systemic in Muslim communities was readily accepted in the Canadian news media, violence against women in Canada required a more nuanced, albeit individualized or "bad apples," analysis (Razack 2004, 6).

Quick Facts and Crossing Borders

In *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*, Uma Narayan (1997) argues against "ahistorical and apolitical Western feminist understandings of 'Third World traditions'" (43). She suggests that Western feminism has framed patriarchal violence that occurs in the Third World in ways that foreclose nuanced and contextual analysis. Although it is dangerous to conflate her analysis of sati and dowry-murders with "honour killings," Narayan's critique of

cultural essentialisms is useful for understanding how the West has come to conceptualize "Other" patriarchal violence as distinctly different and unconnected to what is commonly understood to be Western domestic violence. She argues that the discourse on sati, dowry-murders, and American domestic violence has not only been shaped by the American and Indian women's movements and their respective conceptualization of these issues, but also by the way that information travels across borders. In North America, second wave feminists worked tirelessly to make patriarchal violence visible, to destabilize the notion that women were victims without agency, and to foreground and support women and children survivors of abuse; as a result, feminists were less likely to conceptualize violence against women in the West as having fatal consequences. In India, the women's movement focused on various forms of patriarchal violence, but dowry-murders often received the most media attention because of the public's relative unfamiliarity with the practice combined with its predominant occurrence in middle-class families. While mobilizing for women's shelters was feasible in the West, given the economic circumstances in India, Indian women's groups took to the streets and publicly protested dowry-murders. What Narayan (1997) calls the "asymmetries" of feminist issues in different national contexts is erased in Western conceptions of "Other" violence against women (95). Similarly, in the case of "honour killings," the complex historical, economic, and political context of this practice and importantly, the resistance to it by groups such as the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan, is decontextualized and the practice becomes highly exoticized. In Western conceptions of "honour killings," it is the brutal fatality of the practice and its connection to Islam and Middle Eastern culture that distinguishes it from our "common sense stock of knowledge" of what is considered to be North American domestic violence.

Narayan (1997) also argues that Westerners retrieve information about "Others" across borders by picking out quick facts—a practice that has created an easy digestible category of "dowry-murders." When one "world-travels" in this way, information is edited and filtered often adhering to, rather than disrupting, assumed knowledge about the "Other" (85). The "Indianness" of dowry-murders, with the fires, burning, and rituals, is often assumed to have something to do with

“Indian culture” (101-02). With regard to Western consumption of knowledge on dowry-murders, Narayan wrote:

The presence of references to Indian culture can provide for a swift and convenient ‘explanation’ for what they do not understand. The reference to ‘culture’ in these reports can combine with more ‘free floating’ ideas about ‘Third World backwardness’ and the tendency to think of the Third World as realms of ‘Very Other Cultures’ to make ‘foreign phenomenon’ seem comfortably intelligible while preserving their ‘foreignness.’ (104)

Similarly, the Canadian news media used quick facts and easily retrievable information that foreclosed the possibility of a more nuanced representation of the practice of “honour killings.” Like sati and dowry-murders, quick facts about the practice made “honour killings” a palatable category. References to the “Muslimness” of “honour killings,” in combination with more free floating ideas about Arab “backwardness” and “barbarism,” widespread human rights atrocities perpetrated against women in the Middle East, and discourses of primitive masculinity based on “honour” and “shame,” made the practice intelligible because such associations are part of Canadians’ “common sense stock of knowledge.” Importantly, quick facts about “honour killings” and its association with popular representations of Muslim/Arabs reinforced the idea that this practice was distinct from Canadian patriarchal violence.

In both the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Kingston Whig-Standard*, American feminist Phyllis Chesler emerged as an expert on “honour killings” and she was quoted as making a clear distinction between “honour killings” and North American domestic violence. Citing an article Phyllis Chesler published in the Spring 2009 issue of the *Middle Eastern Quarterly*, Marian Scott (2009) of the *Montreal Gazette* reported that, unlike patriarchal violence understood to be “Canadian,” “honour killings” were “committed by Muslims against Muslim women and children; are committed mainly by fathers against young women in their 20s; are carefully planned; can be perpetrated by multiple family members; and are committed because the victim has dishonoured her family” (A4). Similarly, a *Kingston Whig-Standard* column written by Mindelle Jacobs (2009), entitled “Culture Clashes sometimes

prove deadly,” quoted Chesler at length in order to distinguish “honour killings” from other forms of patriarchal violence. According to Chesler, in instances of “ordinary domestic violence,” it is rare for brothers to kill sisters, for male cousins to kill female cousins, and for fathers to kill teenage daughters. In *extraordinary* “honour killings,” women are killed for showing their hair or acting independently. Jacobs concluded that Canadians must educate immigrants that there is “no justifiable homicide” (A4).

As suggested by these news articles, cultural essentialisms replaced more in depth analyses, and Western information gatherers, such as feminist researchers and journalists, rarely considered the ways in which narratives “cross borders” and take on new meaning. “Quick facts” about “honour killings,” as represented in the news coverage on the “Kingston Mills Murder,” consistently relied on a culturalist approach, produced a particular understanding of Canadian domestic violence as individualized acts, and ultimately communicated to readers who and what was and was not Canadian.

Culture Clashes

Another example of a colonial stance taken by feminists was a statement made by Joanne Young, the Executive Director of the Kingston Interval House. As the only explicitly feminist women’s shelter in the area, the Interval House director was often contacted by the news media to comment on the “Kingston Mills Murder” case. She was quoted in the *Kingston Whig-Standard* as saying that, as an expert in the anti-violence field, she was immediately suspicious when she heard about the murders. Although Young emphasized that “all violence against women was criminal,” she nonetheless suggested that these murders were motivated by a clash between “Eastern culture” and “Western freedoms.” Young stated:

This is a family that is very new to Western culture. In my experience over the years working in shelters, culture sometimes does precipitate violence. Women come here and see freedom. They speak out. At times it just causes frustration within the family, as in, ‘We’re losing our cultural identity.’ (cited in Schliesmann 2009b, A7)

Razack (2008) argues that, in a post-9/11 context, Muslim women’s bodies have become a yardstick

with which to measure a society's place inside or outside modernity (96). In contrast to the Muslim women as the "Other" (read pre-modern, tribal, and non-democratic), Western women are conceptualized as the "Self" (read modern, civil, and democratic) (84). She further maintains that Western women's subjectivity is premised on the imperialist insistence that they are "the same as, but culturally different from, Muslim women" (104). In particular, Western women lay claim to such superior liberal freedoms as autonomy from family, tradition, and community, which their "sisters" are denied. Razack goes on to assert that, in the current political climate, feminist responses to the "Other" are harnessed for the project of empire. The "clash of civilizations" argument as an explanation for the murders, as presented by feminists and gender experts in both the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and the *Montreal Gazette*, was quickly translated into expert statements on gender equality and the universality of liberal human rights. Such comments, regardless of intention, served to shore up justifications for the war in Afghanistan and surveillance of Muslims within Canadian borders.

There were, of course, feminists who presented an alternative analysis of the "Kingston Mills Murder." In a radio interview on *CBC Radio: The Current*, Razack (2009) argued against the use of the term "honour killing" since, like "dowry-murders" or "sati," it had become a palatable explanatory category in its border crossing and, through "race-thinking," had become associated with various "Muslim" characteristics. Pulling from the historical inventory of "common sense stock of knowledge" of Muslim/Arabs, the term "honour killing," as it circulated in the Canadian social imaginary, pointed to Muslim "backwardness," the hyper-misogynist traditions of the Arab world, so-called dangerous Muslim men, and imperilled Muslim women (Razack 2008). In response to the use of the term "honour killing" to describe the murder at Kingston Mills lock, Razack (2009) asserted:

At this historical moment there is a quite a highly organized and extensive response to Muslims and Arabs and so this is part of what is a media spectacle...really about marking a particular group as unusually patriarchal, deeply violent so on...and once you have this kind of thing in full swing—which you do every day, and not just about violence—then that is why we have jumped so quickly onto

this bandwagon...it gives Canadians who are not Muslim a warm fuzzy feeling of being superior.

Despite Razack's intervention, her interview did not disrupt dominant interpretations of the murders.

At a press conference on 12 July 2009, the Kingston police held a moment of silence for the four women killed in the "Kingston Mills Murder." The Kingston Police Chief Stephen Tanner also mentioned the newly unveiled monument that was meant to memorialize the women and children affected by patriarchal violence in the Kingston community. With reference to the former murder victims, he stated:

The four victims in this case, three of which were young teenage girls, *all shared the rights within our great country to live without fear, to enjoy safety and security, and the exercise freedom of choice and expression, and yet had their lives cut short by their own family.* (Cherry 2009a, A1)

This moment demonstrates the media spectacle that Razack (2009) so aptly points to in her interview quoted above. Chief Tanner's reference to this new monument at a press conference about the "Kingston Mills Murder" framed the murders as a product of "Muslim familial culture" and "backwardness," which had been brought into the country by "Others." The fact that this monument was meant to memorialize women and girls who had been killed precisely *because* they did not live in a city that ensured their safety and security was obscured by pin-pointing the "Kingston Mills Murder" as an exceptional example of "Other" kinds of violence.

The journalists writing for both the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and the *Montreal Gazette* sought to tell a story about the "Kingston Mills Murder" that the Canadian public could "hear" (Razack 1998). Even though various women, including representatives of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, attempted to challenge the culturalist analysis of the "Kingston Mills Murder," the Canadian news media continued to describe the murders as "possible honour killings." Voices that supported this interpretation emerged as experts on violence against women, while those who rejected it were excluded or ignored. In *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Back*, bell hooks (1989) argues that the workings of white supremacy in American academic institutions has served to position white feminists as

the “authoritative” voice on experiences of “Others,” has excluded or marginalized women of colour, and silenced their experiences and knowledge (45). In the case of the “Kingston Mills Murder,” the news media, as a white-dominated institution, did take cultural differences into account in its analysis of the murders, but did not address racism. By beginning with culture and not racism and with difference and not dominance, the “class of civilizations” argument became the story that the media told about the murders and the one that was heard by Canadians (Razack 2004, 136). As Razack (2004) argues, “when cultural difference [becomes] the focus of what [is] needed to be understood about the encounter, it discourages a more self-critical, historical approach and it [limits] accountability” (135).

Imagining an Alternative Feminist Responses to “Honour Killings” as Violence Against Women

As an alternative to the culturalist analysis used to explain the “Kingston Mills Murder” in the news media, I propose an interlocking analysis as a reparative framework. In *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*, Razack (1998) argues for an interlocking approach to storytelling. She proposes a framework that depends on a historicized and contextualised account of oppressions. She further insists that feminists should focus on how hierarchies of power intersect and interlock to produce women’s subjectivities, rather than attempt to manage “cultural difference.” An interlocking explanatory approach to the “Kingston Mills Murder” would have revealed hierarchies and intersections of gender, race, religion, and nationality as scattered, yet interconnected, systems of power. As Razack further maintains, “interlocking systems need one another, and in tracing the complex way in which they help to secure one another, we learn how women are produced into positions that exist symbiotically but hierarchically” (13).

An interlocking analysis places both the teller and listener in a counter-stance, as proposed by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), where both subjects are the oppressor and the oppressed simultaneously. Such an approach posits multiple intersections of power relations and moves beyond binary thinking about oppression. As Razack (1998) insists, “no one is off the hook” (47). She suggests that the use of “storytelling for social change” requires a politics of accountability (70). Rec-

ognizing complicity in stories of oppression is essential to being accountable to privilege and to being able to “hear” properly. “Hearing” stories of domination and power, rather than merely listening to “Other” women’s issues, is essential to constructing “communities of resistance” against patriarchal violence (Mohanty 2003). In contrast to the culturalist analysis provided by many feminists and gender experts in the Canadian news media in response to the “Kingston Mills Murder,” an interlocking analysis would disallow Western claims of superiority and with it, rescue narratives in favour of a solidarity approach.

Ella Shohat (2002), in her article “Area Studies, Gender Studies and the Cartographies of Knowledge,” offers a roadmap for interlocking analysis. She argues that, in the post-9/11 context, a transnational or multiculturalist feminist critique of culturalist frameworks is essential. Although she focuses her critique on the production of knowledge within academia, her insights are applicable to the production of knowledge in other institutions like the news media. She maintains that to begin to speak about “Muslim women”- a fictive unity- “one has to begin from the premise that genders, sexualities, races, nations and even continents exist not as hermetically sealed entities but rather as part of permeable interwoven relationality” (68). Instead of making essentialist claims about the cultural differences between women, Shohat insists that we must look at women’s different positioning vis-a-vis histories of power; histories that are mutually constitutive (75). In writing about transnational and multicultural feminism in relation to scholarship on women’s oppression in the “Middle East,” she focuses on “cartographies of knowledge” and “kaleidoscope frameworks” that create “relational maps of knowledge [that] would help illuminate the negotiation of gender and sexuality as understood in diverse contexts but with an emphasis on the linked historical experiences and discursive networks across borders” (Shohat 2002, 70).

For Shohat (2002), such a framework examines women’s oppressions in their local and national contexts. It opposes Western cultural superiority, challenges rescue narratives, and rejects Eurocentric feminist arguments that favour assimilation as a means to address “cultural” oppressions; it challenges women’s presumed passivity to capitalist globalization and patriarchy and makes resistance to oppression within com-

munities visible. It also examines the social practices whereby women's bodies become the symbolic site for preserving tradition in the context of worsening social conditions due to destructive globalization policies, war and IMF-generated poverty. And finally, it recognizes and subverts the ways in which Western discourses recycle colonial tropes of Third World women trapped in "backward" and brutal societies (74).

An Alternative Feminist Response

When feminists respond to "honour killings," it is essential that an interlocking analysis or "kaleidoscope" framework be used. In this way, women's contextualized experiences and interests across borders can be identified in order to create "communities of resistance" (Mohanty 2003). In identifying the asymmetrical webs of power that place all women in specific relationality to one another, political links can be made among and between struggles to resist the diverse, yet connected, manifestation of "capitalist white supremacist patriarchy" (Mohanty 2003, 46; hooks 2000). As Mohanty (2003) argues, practicing solidarity begins with decolonizing Western constructions of Third World women. It necessitates that feminists tell different stories and remain accountable to them (Razack 1998).

In 2009, at the Ottawa vigil to commemorate the women murdered at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec, the names of the women who had been murdered were read aloud. The names Zainab, Sahar, and Geeti Shafia and Rona Amir Mohammed were also read out loud: "Zainab Shafia found dead submerged in a car near Kingston, Ontario. Her brother, father and his wife are accused of first degree murder." A member of the Native Women's Association of Canada spoke of deep structural inequality stemming from colonization and the invisible missing and murdered Aboriginal women who, unlike the "Kingston Mills Murder" victims, rarely gain the attention of the media. While the reading of the murder victims' names at the memorial was a necessary step to address the exoticization and culturalization of the murders, what was really needed was the telling of an alternative story of "honour killings."

An alternative feminist response to the "honour killing" would, as Razack (2009) has pointed out, begin with an analysis of the currency of the term "honour killing" in the current political climate. Grewal (2013) maintains that, "there is little doubt that 'honour' is

an overdetermined concept" and colonial history, racial logics, as well as anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant hostilities contribute to the circulation of the concept in the media (15). Understanding the "Kingston Mills Murder" would require attention to the history of war and Western intervention in Afghanistan and Canada's role in the "war on terror," while simultaneously resisting social practices that inflict violence against women everywhere. It would refuse Western feminist claims to superiority and would reject narratives of "culturally backward Others" in need of rescue. While the Canadian state joined the "war of terror" using veiled women's bodies as a geopolitical strategy, it continued to ignore the over 500 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. The privileged and hyper-visible narrative of Canadian culture is that it is peaceful, benevolent, and tolerant of "Others"; hence, the ways in which the nation fails in gender and racial equality is rendered invisible. Importantly, an alternative response to the construction of the "Kingston Mills Murder" as an "honour killing" would question Canada's most recent immigration guidebook, which claims that "barbaric" cultural practices such as "honour killings" will not be tolerated, as surveillance measures are tightened and take aim at racialized "Others" who threaten to infiltrate the nation (CBC 2009).

To tell an alternative story, one must make visible and analyze multiple systems of power that collide, overlap, and interlock to produce women's subjectivities. It is essential that Western feminists, when speaking to the media, take a nuanced, contextual, and historical approach that includes a politics of accountability, especially given that they are upheld as experts on a variety of gender issues at home and abroad. When the news media borrows from, re-produces, and circulates "common sense stock of knowledge," feminists must disrupt and resist what is "known" about the "Other." If feminists had chosen racism rather than cultural difference as their starting point, a very different story of the "Kingston Mills Murder" would have been told.

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Endnotes

¹ I use the term “post-9/11” here following Jasbir Puar’s (2007) discussion of event-ness to denote the way in which the pre- and post-9/11 period are discursively demarcated and imagined as separated by the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the US. Using “post-9/11” troubles this imagining and calls for a contextual account of simultaneously linked and disjunctive systems of power present along a historical continuum of the pre- and post-9/11 period.

² bell hooks (2000) defines patriarchal violence as power which an individual holds over others through coercive force in the context of families or within the home. Unlike “domestic violence,” the term “patriarchal violence” points to the connection between violence in the home and systemic sexism. She argues that “domestic violence” has too often been used as a “soft” term to describe violence as less threatening and brutal than violence perpetrated in public spaces. Also, patriarchal violence extends the conception of violence within the home to include violence against children and violence in same-sex partnerships (62).

³ On 24 July 2009, the *Montreal Gazette* reported that there was much confusion regarding the spelling of Shafia. While the *Kings-ton Whig-Standard* almost consistently spelt the name Shafi, the *Gazette* noted that the family name was spelt “Shafia” on their permanent resident card and other legal documents. However, in interviews, Mohammad Shafia gave multiple spellings of his name. I have chosen to use Shafia for consistency in this paper.

⁴ Sherene Razack (2008) argues that Muslims are racialized through “race-thinking,” which “divides up the world between the deserving and the undeserving, according to descent.” Muslims are represented as Arab, bearded, veiled, and brown skinned which exacerbates their surveillance and stigmatization. She indicates that by marking Muslims as racially different and culturally inferior, they are cast out of the nation. She further suggests that the “colour line” that divides humanity is essential to Canadians’ conception of Western superiority and it justifies taking away people’s rights as citizens (6-7).

⁵ For the purpose of this paper, I use the term “honour killing” not only to denote the popular circulation of the term in the news media, but also as a term to distinguish this crime from “Canadian patriarchal violence.” In this paper, I refer to Canadian patriarchal violence as a comparative language of reference to explain the way in which “honour killings” are seen as distinctly different. Although the “Kingston Mills Murder” was perpetrated by residents of Canada, their recent immigration as well as their racialized and religious minority status all worked to push the violent act outside the boundaries of the imagined nation.

⁶ I distinguish between gender experts and feminists because not all

those who were consulted on the murder in the media were identified as feminists or self-identified as such. However, in all cases, the “experts” were scholars or activists who promoted gender equality in their work or scholarship.

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The Challenge of Sustaining Critique across Time and Texts:

“I never said that” about *The Hunger Games*

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Abstract: This article analyzes how a group of pre-adolescent girls responded to the novel and film, *The Hunger Games* (2008; 2012) as explored throughout a series of discussion group sessions. While providing more nuanced interpretations of gender as represented in the novel, the girls were more accepting of normalized heteronormative gender performances in the film adaptation. We argue that these texts simultaneously challenge and reproduce dominant gendered and heteronormative ideas and for the importance of providing all learners with spaces for critical discussion of popular culture texts.
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Résumé

Cet article analyse la façon dont un groupe de pré-ad-

olescentes ont réagi au roman et au film *The Hunger Games* (2008-2012) par une série de discussions en groupe. Bien qu’elles aient des interprétations plus nuancées du genre représenté dans le roman, les jeunes filles acceptaient plus facilement les performances hétéronormatives normalisées selon le genre dans l’adaptation cinématographique. Nous faisons valoir que ces textes remettent en question et reproduisent, simultanément, les idées dominantes hétéronormatives basées sur le genre, ainsi que l’importance d’offrir à tous les apprenants un endroit où ils peuvent discuter de façon critique les textes de la culture populaire.

Introduction

Popular culture and its artifacts can be powerful influences on individuals, including youth's, conceptions of self, others, and society (Giroux 1994; Giroux and Pollock 2010; Tisdell 2007, 2008), particularly with respect to gender (Brunner 2010; Feasey 2012; hooks 1994/2008, 1996/2009; Petersen 2012). Publishing houses often commodify young adult fiction (Zipes 2002), profiting from book sales, movie tie-ins, and associated merchandise. *The Hunger Games* has joined the ranks of media sensations *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* as a highly popular series of novels turned into blockbuster film adaptations (Taylor 2012). Both the novels and films document the experiences of Katniss Everdeen during the annual Hunger Games where she must fight to the death in order to survive. In both cases, Katniss can be read as a strong female protagonist, but upon critical examination, she also can be interpreted as constrained by heteronormative social expectations.

This article explores how a group of preadolescent girls responded to *The Hunger Games* novel (Collins 2008) and film (Jacobson, Kilik, and Ross 2012) in a series of group discussions. To frame this examination, we first discuss the literature that examines gender and popular culture, detail our case study methodology, and provide an analysis of *The Hunger Games* novel and film. In the latter case, we suggest that these texts simultaneously challenge and reproduce dominant gendered and heteronormative ideas and that both mediums provide rich forums for discussion of gendered representations. We then discuss the responses of a small group of preadolescent girls to the novel and film adaptation, framing the participants' responses in context of our own critique. We found that the participants experienced difficulty in critiquing some issues related to gender in the novel and film adaptation, with this being especially poignant with respect to the latter. In other words, the girls seemed to be more accepting (or less critical) of normalized heteronormative gender performances when viewing the film adaptation than when reading the text. We conclude by emphasizing the importance of providing all learners with spaces for critical discussion of popular culture texts and gendered representations.

Gender and Popular Culture

Popular culture artifacts are often produced in alignment with dominant ideologies and can be cri-

tiqued for reproducing cultural norms. That is, the popular media can serve as a site to sustain and reproduce norms that maintain cultural standardization (Adorno 1997). Feminist media scholars have argued that this process can result in the reproduction of highly normative gender ideologies (see Brunner 2010; Feasey 2012; Peterson 2012). The medium through which narratives are conveyed also impact their translations and presentations (Stam 2000). Novel-film adaptations often result in women being portrayed as "what they *should* be like" as opposed to as they are (Gillis and Hollows 2009, 1; emphasis in original). This is especially true for Hollywood blockbusters where positive reception from audiences is critical for offsetting high production costs (Bielby and Bielby 2013). Mainstream films that target broad audiences often rely "on classical narrative conventions (whether of plot, of characterization, or of cinematic techniques)" (Citron 2013, 171). As a consequence, patriarchal representations of gender in film and sexist valuing of audience demographics are perpetuated (Meehan 2013).

While cultural standardization can be reflected and transmitted through the media, it is also influenced by audience media engagement. As Adorno (1997) argues, processes of cultural reproduction in the media "impede the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves" (48). While Adorno emphasizes that the media influences audience understanding and interpretation of culture, other theorists, such as Fiske (2011), argue that audiences are agent consumers in capitalist societies. Dominant cultural representations that are reflected and reproduced in the mass media are often designed to satisfy a majority of audience members. In considering what representations are produced, the mass media often neglects female audiences, seeks to appeal to male audiences, and tends to reproduce patriarchal representations of gender (Strinati 2012).

Normative gender representations are not unique to film adaptations, but are also often found in novels (Zipes 2002). Women and girls are often portrayed in children's and young adult literature in ways that reinforce gendered stereotypes, with their roles often secondary to those of male characters. For instance, female characters are likely to express concern over their physical appearance (Taber and Woloshyn 2011a; Younger 2003) and desire male attention (Taber and

Woloshyn 2011a; McNally 2008). They are also less likely to engage in adventure relative to their male counterparts (Diekman and Murnen 2004; McCabe et al. 2011) and do so only in response to an urgent need to provide for their families and in absence of a more capable adult (usually the father) (Taber and Woloshyn 2011b). Finally, females' adventures are conditional on their return to domestic or traditional roles (Dominguez-Rue 2010). Female characters who act outside these normative scripts are at risk of being cast as unfeminine "outsiders" (Valverde 2009, 264). Male characters, in contrast, are typically presented as strong, determined, and fearless individuals who eagerly participate in calls for adventure without restriction or penalty (Diekman and Murnen 2004; Taber and Woloshyn 2011b). In these ways, then, representations of women in popular culture, including in text and film, "seek to re-establish gendered certainties," despite re-inscriptions to the contrary (Taylor 2012, 32). For example, post-feminist conceptions of female success conditionally allow young women to compete in masculine work contexts only if they comply with feminine beauty ideals and heteronormative relationships (McRobbie 2007).

Despite the prevalence of normative gendered representations, alternative gendered depictions do exist in popular culture. However, they are often framed in stereotypical ways. Therefore, it is important to deconstruct norms in the media that marginalize alternative gendered performances. For instance, Marsh (2009) explores how Madonna's video, "What It Feels Like For a Girl," "provok[ed] controversy and debate concerning hegemonic ideas about women's roles in society and in popular culture" (115). Similarly, Petersen (2012) views popular media artifacts, such as *Twilight*, as problematic, while simultaneously having potential for "teaching moment[s]" (65). (See also Click, Stevens, and Behm-Morawitz 2010 for a discussion of the complexity of the *Twilight* franchise and its reception by audiences). Such teachable moments may be especially important in novel-to-film adaptations where readers/viewers can be encouraged to question notions associated with gender and heteronormativity within and across mediums.

Methodology: A Sociological Case Study

This research, conducted in 2011-2012, used a sociological interpretive case study methodology

(Merriam 1998) to explore the experiences of four girls (grades 5-7) in a book club for students identified as struggling readers (decoding scores two-to-three years below grade level). The girls were Caucasian and from lower middle-class or middle-class families. Outside of school, the girls enjoyed participating in sports and dramatic activities as well as spending time with siblings, parents, and extended family. We believed that facilitating a book club for girls in the junior grades who experience reading difficulties was important, as these students are often overlooked (Graff 2009; Sprague and Keeling 2009). They also tend to have limited access to some learning supports (Osler 2006), in contrast to ongoing educational initiatives that focus on the needs of boys, based on the perception that they have been left behind (Baskwell, Church, and Swain 2009). Book club discussions can assist girls (as well as women) to improve their comprehension of texts, while simultaneously examining social issues through fiction (Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane 2012; Polleck 2010; Twomey 2007).

With respect to specifically examining *The Hunger Games*, the book club members participated in two phases: the first concentrated on the novel (Collins 2008) and the second on the movie (Jacobson, Kilik, and Ross 2012). *The Hunger Games* book club sessions consisted of four, two-hour small group discussions held over eight weeks. The girls were provided with the published audio recording of the text and were tasked with reading sections of it independently. The book club sessions were designed to promote critical discussion of sociocultural gender issues, with the girls being encouraged to consider how the representations of the primary characters corresponded to societal notions of femininity and masculinity. They were also prompted to consider how individuals gained and maintained power and control over others. The book club sessions were audio recorded and the girls also completed individual exit interviews.

Upon the release of the film a year after the completion of phase one, we contacted the girls to determine their interest in viewing the movie. Three of the four girls (Aryton: Grade 6, Madison: Grade 7, Bridget: Grade 8) agreed to participate. As one of these girls had since moved to a different province, she participated in the project via FaceTime. The researchers watched *The Hunger Games* film independently prior to viewing it with the girls in order to generate guiding questions for

the interviews and small group sessions. We then interviewed the girls individually prior to the screening to get a sense of their continued interpretation of the novel and their predictions in the regard to the film. After viewing the film together, we facilitated a small-group discussion and, one-to-two days later, conducted individual interviews to gather the girls' analysis of the primary characters, perspectives on gender, and overall responses to the film. We audio recorded and transcribed the individual interviews and small group sessions for subsequent analysis. The analysis in this article focuses mainly on the second phase of the research, which built on the girls' interpretive responses during the first (Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane 2013).

Gendered Representations in *The Hunger Games* Novel and Film Adaptation

The Hunger Games novel and film are set in a dystopian future where a wealthy Capitol governs thirteen districts. They chronicle Katniss Everdeen's survival in the annual televised Hunger Games, which serve to punish the districts for a lost rebellion, reinforce the power of the Capitol, entertain its citizens, and involve tributes in a fight to the death. The novel and film focus on Katniss' emerging relationship with her co-tribute, Peeta, and the resulting tensions that arise with her long-time friend, Gale. During the games, Peeta and Katniss must decide whether they will harm others either directly or indirectly (e.g., sabotaging resources, setting traps, or manipulating information). Katniss is a skilled hunter who can protect herself and others and who volunteers as tribute in order to save her sister from the games. In connection to Connell's (1987, 2005, 2012; see also Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) work on hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity, and marginalized masculinities, Katniss engages in actions that are often associated with hegemonic masculinity. However, she is also insecure and reticent to harm others directly, traits that are associated with emphasized femininity. Peeta refuses to harm others, unless it is necessary (a form of marginalized masculinity) or to save Katniss (consistent with hegemonic masculinity). While consistent in plot, the novel differs from the film in that it is narrated through a first-person viewpoint (Katniss) as opposed to a third-person omniscient perspective. Through the first-person narration in the novel, the reader is privy to Katniss' internal monologues

that often center on her resistance to the violence in the games, the use of her relationship with Peeta as a game strategy, and negotiating her feelings for Gale. Without Katniss' narration, the film features visible emotional responses, such as Katniss crying uncontrollably after Rue's death and her frantically searching for Peeta when the game makers announce that the game may have two victors. This difference in narration, in part, accounts for the central characters' different gendered portrayals in the novel and film. In addition, the withholding of certain events and details and the addition or alteration of others are also critical aspects of this novel-to-film adaptation. In the film adaptation, Katniss' rational logic is notably absent. Instead, her gender performance begins to border on "sex-role stereotyping [that] encourages [the] audience to engage in such stereotyping" (Tuchman 2013, 53). More importantly, we read the novel-to-film adaptation as a recasting of Katniss as more feminine and Peeta as more masculine, a process that simplifies their gender performances.

Katniss is presented in the novel and film as a strong and independent young woman who is capable of hunting and providing for her mother and sister. However, her role as caregiver and nurturer tends to be emphasized more in the film than in the novel. Katniss is also more prone to express emotion in the film adaptation than in the novel. These nurturing and emotional characteristics are consistent with feminine norms. As such, Connell's (2005) argument about the ways in which acts of "feminine nurturance are made normative by the dominant media story-lines" (252) is more applicable to the movie than the novel. Peeta is portrayed as an equally skilled and highly physical competitor in the film, while the opposite is the case in the novel. Peeta's display of strength and power in the film in comparison to the novel constitutes a reassertion of his masculinity particularly in relation to Katniss.

Participants' Book Club Responses to the Novel

In this section, we discuss the girls' responses to *The Hunger Games* novel in order to establish the foundation for our exploration of the novel-to-film adaptation. In their reading of the novel (see Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane 2013 for an extended analysis of the participants' experiences in the book club sessions, which focused solely on the novel), the girls were able to identify the primary characters that, in some ways, defied tra-

ditional masculine and feminine scripts (Butler 1999; Connell 2005, 2012). They particularly admired Katniss as a strong and independent young woman who was a competent hunter. As Taylor stated:

She's more like a guy because she hunts and does a lot of...stuff that guys do. I think it's really interesting. She like hunts and stuff she doesn't just like stay at home with her sister and...do more household stuff. She goes more outdoors and does physical stuff. (Individual Interview, April 4, 2011)

The girls were divided on the Capitol's imposed makeover of Katniss when she entered the games. They argued that, to some extent, it was typical and justifiable for girls to be concerned about their physical appearance. In the end, they tended to agree that girls should be able to exercise choice in regard to attending to their physical appearance. As Bridget maintained, "They can wear makeup if they want to. They shouldn't have to but if they want to" (Individual Interview, April 6, 2011). The girls were somewhat critical of Katniss' need to enter into a relationship with Peeta as his girlfriend in the context of the games, noting that this was not an expectation for males. For instance, Bridget asked: "have you seen a man that had to find a woman?" (Discussion Group, March 17, 2011)

The girls were critical of Peeta's character for not being sufficiently masculine. In their view, he could not fight, hunt, and protect Katniss physically. They also faulted him for his over attention to his appearance, his lack of proclivity to violence, and his public proclamations of affection for Katniss. At the same time, they positively recognized his more feminine qualities. As Madison suggested:

He's kind of like one of those cuddly teddy bears you can buy at a market...you know those really big ones? That's because he doesn't want to kill anyone...He doesn't want to be in the game, he wants to help people instead of hurting them. (Individual Interview, April 4, 2011)

Overall, the girls concluded that Peeta was more of a liability than an asset to Katniss and hindered her chances of survival, despite his scheme to present them as *star-crossed* lovers. They believed that Katniss would need to "save" Peeta and that he did little to facilitate

her survival in the games. As Aryton and Madison commented, Peeta "makes Katniss do everything... she always had to look out for him" (Individual Interview, April 6, 2011) and "She thinks that she can win it by herself. She doesn't need Peeta's help" (Discussion Group, March 17, 2011).

The girls, however, appeared to be most comfortable when the characters were aligned with heteronormative gendered expectations and most perplexed when the characters deviated from them. As Taylor stated, "I get Katniss and Peeta mixed up sometimes" (Discussion Group, March 8, 2011). Although they valued Katniss' strength and abilities, they thought it was inconsistent with her being a young woman; they were also critical of Peeta for his lack of survival skills.

Osgerby (2004) argues that the popular media supports gender as a series of performative actions. As such, popular media may also be a space for performing gender in ways that challenge social norms and support gender identity as unstable. Audiences are not merely passive consumers, but instead negotiate meaning through their acceptance or criticism of texts and the social norms represented in them (Storey 2009). While the book club sessions on *The Hunger Games* gave our participants an opportunity to engage in a critical discussion of gender representations in the novel, they found it difficult to accept some alternative gendered portrayals. The next question was how they would read the novel-to-film adaptation.

Participants' Responses to the Film Adaptation

While the girls demonstrated differing levels of awareness about how gender was performed in the novel and film, they appeared to be more accepting of Katniss and Peeta's portrayals in the film, as the characters conformed more closely to heteronormative gender expectations by embodying notions of emphasized femininity and hegemonic masculinity respectively (Connell 1987, 2005, 2012; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In this section, we discuss the girls' responses to the film relative to the novel, highlighting a number of critical differences.

Prior to viewing the film and engaging in the discussion group, the girls had developed expectations related to the film, based on their independent viewing of the film trailer and discussion with their peers. When asked how many times she had watched the trailer,

Bridget responded by saying “about 20” times, both “on the phone with my friend” and multiple times on “youtube.” She further emphasized that, “all my friends like a love *The Hunger Games* so all we talk about at recess is *The Hunger Games*” (Individual Interview, March 19, 2012). Aryton developed expectations in relation to the subsequent books, in part through input from peers: “a friend told me” (Individual Interview, March 19, 2012). Madison also described her experiences watching the trailers and discussing the books with friends. She stated that,

we’ll just be—like oh my gosh—I just saw this brand new trailer and just be like talking on and on about it and I’m just like—oh no—I really, I really think they’re going to do this part of it, no I want to see this part and stuff like that. Girl talk. (Individual Interview, March 21, 2012)

When asked about how the characters were represented, Aryton indicated that her visualization of the characters when reading the novel differed from the film’s representations and her conception shifted significantly after viewing the film: “now I realize that it’s the opposite” (Individual Interview, March 19, 2012). Bridget suggested that she had a similar experience; she visualized Katniss with “curly hair,” but deferred to the film’s depiction of the characters (Individual Interview, March 19, 2012). Madison expressed excitement about seeing the film, given that, in her view, the trailers suggested that it would be an accurate representation of the book: “I think it’s going to be better because with the trailers, it shows it really looks like the book and the book was awesome” (Individual Interview, March 21, 2012).

After viewing the film, the girls identified Katniss’ character as one that defied traditional notions of femininity, describing her as “strong” (Bridget), “a hunter” (Aryton), and “confident” (Madison) (Discussion Group, March 24, 2012). As Bridget stated, “She’s a hunter and well mostly boys hunt so sometimes she acts like a boy, sometimes she acts like a girl” (Discussion Group, March 24, 2012). At the same time, unlike their reading of the novel, the girls also associated Katniss’ character with traits that were consistent with emphasized femininity. For instance, they cited her maternal and emotional responses to the much-younger tribute Rue:

And she had major feelings for Rue, she was just like really upset when she died. [She was then] more of a girl at that point...Like in the movie, it showed that she was crying because she was scared or freaked out. (Madison, Discussion Group, March 24, 2012)

[Katniss acted more like a girl in the movie when] she was more sensitive with the Rue thing. In the book, it doesn’t say that she was crying or anything...[And] when she was getting nervous about Peeta...She went over [to find him, in the book], but in the movie she was kind of screaming his name and stuff...I thought she wouldn’t be screaming out his name because that could kill her. (Aryton, Individual Interview, March 26, 2012)

The girls’ perceptions of Peeta were also altered. When reading the book, they saw him as “an artsy-craftsy kind of person” (Madison, Individual Interview, March 21, 2012), a trait associated more with marginalized masculinities (Connell 2005, 2012). After viewing the film, they read him as a much more masculine character: “Well he’s a boy, so he had to act like a boy” (Bridget, Individual Interview, March 26, 2012). They appeared to be more enamored with his character as depicted in the film and seemed less annoyed with his affection for Katniss. They described him as “sensitive” (Madison), “strong” (Aryton), and “in love” (Bridget) (Discussion Group, March 24, 2012). As Madison elaborated, Peeta’s character took on the role of a protector, rather than simply being a young man with a silly crush as portrayed in the novel:

[In the film], he’s got like the muscular side to him but he really is sensitive, like really sensitive like Katniss and stuff. Well, a muscle example, he was like fighting off Cato and he’s like doing all that type of stuff, like throwing the giant metal thing. [He acted more like a girl in the book] with the cakes and stuff and with Katniss, he’s always had a thing where in a way he’s doing like a little giggle and a smile and stuff. (Individual Interview, March 28, 2012)

In contrast to their reading of the novel, the girls now viewed Peeta as integral to Katniss’ survival in the games and less of a hindrance:

I think it was more [in the film] Peeta that saved Katniss because if they kept trying to kill her, they probably would have got her eventually. And if he didn’t say let’s wait, she

wouldn't have time to figure out a way to get out. And then she wouldn't be there. (Madison, Group Discussion, March 24, 2012)

[Peeta held Katniss back] more in the book. Yeah, because he doesn't threaten that he's going to go walking and yelling [through the woods] in the games [after injuring his leg] in the movie. (Aryton, Individual Interview, March 26, 2012)

As Bridget indicated, "They save each other" (Group Discussion, March 24, 2012).

The girls also rejected the idea that, when reading the novel, they had perceived Peeta's character as not sufficiently masculine. Instead, they insisted that their perceptions of Peeta in the text and the film were consistent and in line with notions of hegemonic masculinity, as the following exchange demonstrates:

Bridget: I thought he acted like a boy before we saw the movie.

Madison: I think he acted the same way that he did in the book.

Researcher: Do you remember, you [Aryton] said you thought he acted in different ways because he was kind of like a friend of yours who liked to dance, but you said most boys didn't like to dance?

Aryton: I never said that (Group Discussion, March 24, 2012).

From these responses, it would appear that the film version of *The Hunger Games* did indeed reassert gendered norms and altered the girls' initial and more nuanced interpretations of gender representations in the novel. Even though they seemed to be somewhat uncomfortable with their gender interpretations of the novel, the discussion provided them with opportunities for dialogue and critique. After viewing of the film, their perceptions seemed to narrow. As Bridget indicated, boys and girls were expected to perform narrowly defined gender traits and this especially applied to Peeta: "Yeah [they acted like boys and girls] what are they supposed to act like? Dogs and cats? Girls acted like girls, boys acted like boys" (Individual Interview, March 26, 2012). Thus, when Katniss and Peeta's characters were more aligned with gendered expectations, the girls appeared to be more accepting of them. Indeed, after viewing the movie, they abandoned their original eval-

uations of the ways in which gender was performed in the novel.

Implications

We began this study curious about how the gender representations in a novel, like *The Hunger Games*, would be translated into a film for mass consumption. We also wondered how young preadolescent girls who had initially engaged in a fairly nuanced discussion of gender as portrayed in the novel would respond to the film version. During our book club sessions, we were encouraged by the girls' emerging abilities to problematize elements of the novel that supported stereotypical gendered representations; in this context, they referred to the characters as "girly boys" and "boyey girls." We expected that this same level of analysis would extend to discussions of the film.

Upon viewing the film, however, the girls seemed to be drawn to the gendered simplicity and Hollywood spectacle of the film (Fiske 2011). As a result, they were more attracted to the film versions of Katniss and Peeta and the ways in which they conformed to the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1999) - where sex, gender, and desire map onto each other in heteronormative ways - than they were to the more complex gender performances found in the novel. They viewed Peeta as a "boy" and Katniss as an acceptable "girl" who sometimes "acted like a boy" (Bridget, Individual Interview, March 26, 2012) and, as such, they classified the characters according to the gender binary using analogies such as "dogs and cats." They tended to subscribe to the idea that men should singularly embrace hegemonic masculinity and that women could adopt and benefit from adopting masculine qualities and roles as a means of survival without seriously compromising their femininity. Furthermore, they no longer questioned whether Katniss and Peeta should be in a relationship. Instead they expected a more detailed account of this romance and more emphasis on heterosexual "desire." As Madison argued,

I thought it was a little rushed in certain parts. Like um when they were in the cave...the relationship [between] Katniss and Peeta...had a little bit more of time together in the games. The movie only showed them only for a short time. (Group Discussion, March 24, 2012)

Despite our attempt to stimulate a more nuanced gendered reading, the girls seemed to defer to the more normalized gendered representations found in the film, a response that relates to Adorno's notion of cultural reproduction. While the mass media in general often reproduce normative representations of gender, audiences also come to expect them.

Scholars who have examined Hollywood films have argued that they often rely on normative gender conventions that are well received by audiences (Meehan 2013; Tuchman 2013). The shift in the girls' interpretive perceptions of gender from *The Hunger Games* novel to Hollywood film highlights the importance of providing all learners with spaces for critical discussion of popular culture texts. In particular, students who struggle with the reading process often doubt their abilities to process texts and may be more inclined to accept the viewpoints of others (Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane 2013; Woloshyn, Lane, and Taber 2012; deFur and Runnells 2014; Klassen 2010). After the initial discussion of the novel in the book club, the girls in our study seemed to defer to the commentaries of their peers prior to viewing the film and to the visual representations contained in the film. The shift in their reading of gender from novel to film might also have been due to the time that lapsed between the facilitated book club sessions and the more independent film discussions. Given that the heterosexual matrix of sex, gender, and desire shapes representations in popular culture as well as social and audience understandings of them, it is essential, in our estimation, to engage youth in critical discussions of all forms of popular culture, so that they can become more aware of gender and heteronormative representations and develop into critical audience members.

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“Haram, she’s obese!” Young Lebanese-Canadian Women’s Discursive Constructions of “Obesity”

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Abstract

Using feminist poststructuralist and postcolonial lenses, we explore how young Lebanese-Canadian women construct “obesity” within the context of the current and dramatic hype about “obesity” and its impacts on the health of individuals and populations. Participant-centered conversations were held with twenty young Lebanese-Canadian women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. In examining what discourses the participants adopted, negotiated, and/or resisted when discussing “obesity,” we found that the young women constructed it as a problematic health issue and a disease, as a matter of lack of discipline, and as an “abnormal” physical attribute. They also expressed feelings of disgust and/or pity toward “obese” women by using the Arabic term “haram” (what a shame or poor her). While the participants emphasized that Lebanese and Lebanese-Canadian cultures prize physical appearance and “not being fat,” they also attempted to dissociate themselves from “Lebanese” ways of thinking and, in doing so, reproduced a num-

ber of stereotypes about Lebanese, Lebanese-Canadian, and Canadian women.
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Résumé

Selon un point de vue féministe poststructural et postcolonial, nous explorons comment les jeunes femmes libano-canadiennes perçoivent l’obésité dans le contexte du battage médiatique actuel et dramatique à ce sujet et de son impact sur la santé des gens et des populations. Des conversations axées sur les participantes ont eu lieu avec vingt jeunes femmes libano-canadiennes âgées de dix-huit à vingt-cinq ans. En examinant les discours que les participantes ont adoptés, négociés ou évités pendant les discussions sur l’obésité, nous avons conclu que les jeunes femmes perçoivent l’obésité comme un problème de santé et une maladie, un manque de discipline et une caractéristique physique « anormale ». Elles ont aussi exprimé des sentiments de dégoût ou de pitié envers les femmes « obèses » en utilisant le terme arabe « haram » (qui signifie « quelle honte » ou « pauvre elle »). Bien qu’elles aient insisté sur le fait que la culture libanaise ou libano-canadienne valorise l’apparence physique « non obèse », elles ont aussi tenté de s’éloigner des points de vue « libanais » et, ce faisant, ont reproduit certains stéréotypes au sujet des femmes libanaises, libano-canadiennes et canadiennes.

Introduction

The tremendous increase in media attention on “obesity” as well as the growing attempts to eradicate this so-called “disease” mirror the “moral panic” (Boero 2009) about fatness that has emerged in the last few years. Despite the problems associated with the pathologization and medicalization of fatness (Murray 2007; Oliver 2006), a considerable number of epidemiological studies have focused on “obesity” rates around the world (see an overview in Gard 2010). Much discussed in the media and among educators, health and fitness practitioners, and public health officials, these findings have sparked growing anxieties about “obesity” (Boero 2007; Gard 2009; Saguy and Almeling 2008) and the production of what some scholars have identified as a dominant obesity discourse (Campos 2004; Gard and Wright 2005; Evans et al. 2008; Oliver 2005; Rail 2012). Critical obesity scholars have challenged the use of the term “epidemic” (Boero 2007; Campos et al. 2006; Gard 2004), the notion of “obesity” as a disease (Gaesser 2003a; Jutel 2009; Oliver 2006; Murray 2009), the health problems attributed to “obesity” (Gaesser 2003b, 2003c; Mark 2005), the attribution of deaths to “obesity” (Farrell et al. 2002; Mark 2005), and the identification of “obesity” as a public health priority (Campos et al. 2006; Gard 2007, 2010). Other researchers have disputed the conventional methods used to diagnose, measure, and treat “obesity” (Herrick 2007; Holm 2007; Jutel 2009) and have challenged the pathologization and medicalization of “obese” bodies (Jutel 2009; Murray 2007, 2009; Oliver 2006). In much of this work, scholars maintain that the dominant obesity discourse offers a mechanistic view of the body and focuses on the assumed relationship between inactivity, poor diet, “obesity,” and health; in the same breath, it frames “obesity” in moral and economic terms. “Obese” and “at-risk” bodies are constructed as lazy and expensive bodies that must be controlled and subjected to expert intervention (Rail 2012). Finally, the dominant obesity discourse insists that individuals are primarily responsible for the regulation of their weight and health through the adoption of “good” lifestyle habits (Aphramor and Gingras 2008; Coveney 2006; Gard and Wright 2005; Murray 2009; Whitehead and Kurz 2008), which does not take into account structural and environmental determinants of weight and health.

While there is a burgeoning literature critical of the dominant obesity discourse, the ways in which this discourse is taken up by “ordinary” young women (i.e., of varying weights and shapes and from a variety of sociocultural locations) is still unknown. What we do know is that sexist, heterosexist, classist, and racist assumptions structure this discourse. While young adult women are increasingly being identified as an “at-risk” population in relation to “obesity” (WHO 2015), they also continue to suffer disproportionately from eating disorders (see a review in Grogan 2008). In particular, studies that have examined the “effects” of the dominant obesity discourse on body-related issues among anorexic women (Evans 2006; Rich and Evans 2005a; Malson 2008) have suggested that this discourse promotes a thin body ideal, which sometimes results in young women adopting unhealthy and disordered eating and exercise patterns. Empirical studies of women labelled as “overweight” or “obese” (Annis, Cash, and Hrabosky 2004; Darby et al. 2007; Friedman et al. 2005) have reported that they experience body dissatisfaction and weight preoccupation as well as increased binge eating, lower self-esteem, fewer social networks, less social capital, and less satisfaction with life. As such, women with diverse body sizes continue to be targeted by the intertwined discourses of thinness, beauty, femininity, and fatness, which as various feminist scholars have argued, contribute to the internalization of bodily pressures and the adoption of self-disciplining practices (Bartky 1990; Orbach 1988; Bordo 1993). Susan Bordo (1993), for example, has argued that the disciplining and normalization of the female body constitutes a strategy of social control and gender oppression designed to counter-attack shifts in power relations between men and women:

...preoccupation with fat, diet, and slenderness are not abnormal. Indeed, such preoccupation may function as one of the most powerful normalizing mechanisms of the century, insuring the production of self-monitoring and self-disciplining ‘docile bodies’ sensitive to any departure from social norms and habituated to self-improvement and self-transformation in the service of those norms. (186)

It is not surprising, then, that fat bodies are constructed as lazy, unproductive, and indicative of a lack of control and discipline. Fat is, in other words, constructed as the enemy that should be destroyed and eliminated

with diet aids, extensive exercise, and cosmetic surgery (Bordo 1993).

With respect to class, a number of studies indicate that low-income individuals are at a higher risk of “obesity” (Braunschweig et al. 2005; Gibson 2003; Mobley et al. 2006) due to multiple factors, such as “obesogenic environments” (Boehmer et al. 2006; Brownell and Horgen 2003; Dalton 2004; Nestle 2002; Tartamella, Herscher, and Woolston 2005). However, given that the dominant obesity discourse portrays the maintenance of body weight as a personal responsibility, low-income individuals are blamed for their excess weight. Some studies also suggest that ethnic minorities are more susceptible to excess weight and “obesity” (Kumanyika 2008; McDonald and Kennedy 2005). Laura Azzarito (2009), however, argues that the dominant obesity discourse idealizes white bodies and constructs non-white ones as fatter, less fit, and in need of more surveillance and intervention. Margery Fee (2006) further maintains that racialized notions of “obesity” and diabetes disproportionately focus on their prevalence among Indigenous populations, which results in “race” often being constructed as a biological determinant of health. Furthermore, the dominant obesity discourse, along with traditional discourses of femininity, construct the ideal woman as white; as such, these discourses reinforce the marginalization of and discrimination against non-white populations, especially non-white women.

It is clear that intersections between gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, as well as other structural factors must be taken into account in any discussions of “obesity.” However, the critical literature on “obesity” in Canada is still in its infancy and there has been little empirical research conducted on how “obesity” is constructed and understood by young women from ethnic minorities in Canada. In addition, the field of fat studies has tended to focus on Western perspectives on body size (Cooper 2009). Jenny Lloyd (2006) has argued for a “trans-sizing” (i.e., across all sizes) approach in order to broaden and deepen understandings of “obesity” and fatness. This approach seeks to create spaces in which people from non-Western backgrounds who embody diverse shapes and sizes can share their perceptions of fatness. In our own study, we adopt such a “trans-sizing” lens. Using a qualitative methodology that is informed by feminist poststructuralism and postcolonial theories,

we explore how the intersections of gender, culture, migration experiences, and geographical locations shaped twenty young Lebanese-Canadian women’s discursive constructions of “obesity.” By doing so, we aim to address some of the gaps in the current obesity literature.

Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

In 2008 and 2009, the first author conducted participant-centered conversations on issues related to fatness with twenty Lebanese-Canadian women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five years. This group of participants was relatively homogenous, as the majority of them were able-bodied, heterosexual, middle class, predominantly Christian, and not particularly fat. We chose to interview women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five years, as we felt that, in contrast to younger women, they would have developed more independent perspectives on the body and had more experience negotiating both “cultural” and Western discourses related to obesity. With regard to religion, we decided to exclude Muslim women from participation in our study, as we suspected that Arab-Muslim culture would be a significant factor in shaping young women’s understandings of health, “obesity,” and the body; as a consequence, a separate study was conducted with them (see Tlili and Rail 2012).

Our analysis of the conversation transcripts involved two consecutive methods. First, a thematic analysis was conducted using the Nudist NVivo 8 software: text fragments were regrouped according to themes based on semantic affinity. Following a “horizontal” analysis (one conversation after another), we looked “transversally” or comparatively between participants. Second, a feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (Denzin 1994; Weedon 1987; Rail 2009; Wright and Burrows 2004) was conducted. With its focus on the relationships between discourse, power, knowledge, and subjectivity as well as multiple socially-constructed and context-dependent “truths” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005), this theoretical method enabled us to examine more deeply how the participants, as subjects, positioned and constructed themselves within dominant or alternative/resistant discourses, particularly with regard to “obesity.” Our analysis also draws on postcolonial and feminist postcolonial theory (Bhabha 1994; hooks 1981; Spivak 1988; Anderson et al. 2003; Said 1978), which allows for an examination of the ways in

which cultural identity and diasporic spaces inform young Lebanese-Canadian women's understandings of "obesity." No doubt, the participants' discursive constructions of "obesity" were articulated in the context of recorded conversations. The interviewer's identity (as a university-educated, heterosexual, Christian, Lebanese-Canadian woman) and her notions of health, obesity, and the body may have influenced the content of the conversations. Had the second author (an atheist, white, queer *Québécoise*) interviewed the participants, they might well have constructed their ideas about body size and Lebanese-Canadian identity in slightly different ways. Furthermore, it is also possible that had the interviewer been "obese" or "overweight," the conversations with the participants (most of whom were not fat) might too have unfolded differently.

Results and Discussion: Discursive Constructions of Obesity

Our conversations with the young Lebanese-Canadian women involved a discussion of what "obesity" meant to them. Listed in order of frequency in the conversational texts, the participants constructed obesity as: (1) something unhealthy; (2) a disease causing other diseases; (3) something related to bad eating habits and inactivity; (4) a problem resulting from a lack of control; and (5) an extremely high body mass index (BMI). Interestingly, the participants mostly invoked individual-level factors to discursively construct "obesity." Only a few discussed "obesity" in relation to structural or social issues (e.g., "fast food restaurants") or to other elements that are beyond the control of "obese" persons (e.g., "genetics," "early childhood experiences"); however, even when doing so, they often tied these issues back to the realm of personal responsibility. In what follows, we elaborate on the results of the thematic analysis with a particular focus on the above themes and the numerous sub-themes that surfaced in the conversations. We also discuss how the young Lebanese-Canadian women (pseudonyms are used here), as subjects, positioned themselves within the dominant obesity discourse as well as in relation to neoliberal and/or alternative discourses.

"Obesity and health do not work together"

All the participants constructed obesity as "unhealthy" and some of them even viewed obesity as a

"life-threatening" disease that causes other potentially dangerous health problems such as cardiovascular disease, cholesterol, diabetes, and cancer. Nora, Jessica, and Rania, for example, stated the following:

- Nora: If you're obese, that means you're very overweight, and if you're very overweight, that means your BMI is very high and that means your levels of cholesterol and diabetes are going to be high too. Many obese people even come to a point where they might die.
- Jessica: 'Obesity' and 'healthy' don't really work together. It is scientific. When you're overweight, your heart arteries will be clogged.
- Rania: Being twice the size of what you should be has to be followed by other problems. It is very rare that an obese person won't have other medical issues such as heart problems and diabetes. Actually, there will be malfunction in the whole system in your body.

Like Nora, Jessica and Rania and consistent with the dominant obesity discourse (Campos et al. 2006; Gard and Wright 2005), all the participants considered "obesity" to be a serious health problem. Most also invoked biomedical notions associated with perceived "scientific facts." Despite the ongoing debates between "mainstream" and "critical" obesity researchers about the conclusions of epidemiological studies, it seems that the participants, like most Canadians, accepted mainstream "scientific" information on "obesity."

The participants' understanding of "obesity" were also positioned in relation to what they referred to as "traditional" and "modern" "Lebanese" ideas about body size. They explained that, while "traditional" grandparents tended to value "plumpness" as an indicator of good health and as a strong shield against disease, the younger generations of "modern" Lebanese and Lebanese-Canadians, like themselves, did not share such views. They also indicated that more "modern" Lebanese and Lebanese-Canadian ideas about body size were influenced by Western ideals, but carried them to the so-called "extreme," given the value attached to extreme slenderness. This group of young Lebanese-Canadian women, then, constructed their notions of "obesity" within a diasporic space that is neither traditionally "Lebanese" nor "Canadian."

While they adopted “modern” Lebanese and Lebanese-Canadian views on “obesity,” the participants also resisted them in a number of ways. Suzie, for example, indicated that her “modern” Lebanese-Canadian parents characterized obesity as a brutal “disease:”

Zeina: How do you think your parents perceive obesity?

Suzie: I think they automatically perceive it as an illness. Like, when they look at a girl or a guy who’s obese, they say: ‘this person is sick.’ They will say: ‘she is “*sakhneh*.” They make assumptions, because that person eats too much, she’s either just sick or mentally sick.

Zeina: Do all Lebanese-Canadians think this way?

Suzie: I don’t know if everybody sees it that way, not everybody obviously, but a lot of Lebanese-Canadians think that way, you know. They pity the person as if they have cancer or something, do you know what I mean? I’m not saying there is no reason to pity them, but what if this person is completely happy?

Similarly, other participants observed that their parents referred to “obese” bodies as “*sakhneh*” (a word which, in Arabic, means “sick,” but refers to females—“*sakhen*” is used for males), a term that points to an intolerance of “obese” women in Lebanese and Lebanese-Canadian cultures. While Suzie and others expressed some resistance to such discriminatory attitudes, they simultaneously portrayed “obese” people as sick creatures in need of pity and as personally responsible for their weight and “health.”

“I would never let myself get to that point”

The neoliberal notion of individual responsibility figured predominantly in the participants’ discussions of “obesity” and its relationship to health. Most of the young women emphasized that each person had a duty to prevent “obesity” or to “cure” it via proper individual-level solutions. Consistent with the dominant obesity discourse (Gard and Wright 2005; Murray 2008; Rail 2012), they associated “obesity” with a set of bad choices (i.e., “eating too much junk food,” having “low levels of physical activity”) and negative character traits (i.e., “lack of control,” “techno-dependency,” “laziness,” “love of food”). They portrayed the body in a mechanistic fashion, circulating the idea that maintaining a thin

body is simply a question of balance between energy intake and energy output. For them, “overweight” and “obese” bodies indicated a failure to adopt appropriate disciplinary practices, while the thin body was equated with self-control, virtue, and success (Evans, Rich, and Davies 2004; Rich and Evans 2005b; Whitehead and Kurz 2008).

While the young Lebanese-Canadian women did, in part, attribute “obesity” to inactivity, they focused primarily on the overconsumption of fat- and sugar-laden foods. Referring to her cousin, Christina stated that, “She is literally addicted to junk food like McDonalds, chips, greasy food, desserts, poutine, OMG poutine!” Similarly, Catherine condemned “obese” people who overindulged in “bad” foods. She mentioned: “I see these people twice my size, even sometimes three times my size with a massive plate of poutine in their face and then they go on to some other dessert and what else can I think other than ‘what the hell is the person doing to him or herself?’” The participants’ discussion of overconsumption was also gendered. For instance, they pointed to “obese” women’s “emotional eating,” hormonal imbalances, and biological tendencies that propelled them to consume food in large quantities. While essentialist notions about women were identified as contributing factors, this did not diminish the focus on individual responsibility. Notably, the Western culture of consumption was not mentioned. As such, the participants’ narratives were silent on the social contradiction between excess and consumption on the one hand (Cummins and MacIntyre 2005; LeBesco 2004), and self-control and containment of bodily desires on the other.

Even in instances when participants mentioned non-lifestyle factors as potential causes of “obesity,” the notions of individual (or family) responsibility and self-discipline remained paramount. For example, Lea blamed her parents for her sister’s situation: “My sister is overweight and it’s not her fault actually. I blame my parents for that. If you don’t control the kid from her early start, she’s not going to be able to control herself later on.” Some participants also identified “genetics” and/or “low metabolism” as factors that rendered bodies susceptible to gaining excessive weight. However, as indicated by the conversation with Raina, these conditions required more rigorous monitoring, self-con-

trol, and disciplinary practices for the sake of health:

Rania: Sometimes obesity is like a health problem with the system. It could be genetic or hormonal or related to your metabolism. If you have a sweet tooth and you have a low metabolism, then you gain fat as soon as you eat a lot. I know a girl, she's half my size, she can eat five chocolate bars in five minutes and she eats food with lots of carbs and fat and she doesn't gain any weight. She has a very high metabolism. Her sisters are like that too. Other people eat quarter of what they eat and still gain weight.

Zeina: So are obese people always guilty for their weight problems?

Rania: Um, yes and no. For example, I know if I eat a lot, I will gain weight cause I have a low metabolism so I should be able to control it more. It is related to genetics, but it is also in your head, you can control it. I am not saying 'starve yourself,' but if you already know you have a tendency to gain weight, then just eat in moderation, eat a balance of everything, eat a bit of sweets but a lot more veggies and control what you eat. But the problem is that a lot of overweight people have a low metabolism and still eat a lot and in that case it's their fault, their responsibility.

Rania's simultaneous use of the terms "yes" and "no" points to the ambivalent subject-position she occupies within the discourse of personal responsibility for "obesity" and health. This was the case among many of the participants. Whereas, at first glance, their appropriation of the "fat gene" discourse (Aphramor 2005) seemed to remove individual blame, the discourse in fact medicalizes and pathologizes the fat body, while discounting the broader social determinants of fatness and health.

Most participants, then, tended to construct "obesity" as an individual failure or, in a few cases, as the consequence of inadequate parenting. Some, like Christina, also suggested that "obese" bodies were a burden on the Canadian healthcare system: "Our medical and healthcare system spends money on unhealthy people. If you are too obese to wash yourself or to walk around, we have to pay for your problems and that, I don't agree with... Yes, I guess, I feel like they're a bur-

den but personally, I always think, I would never let myself get to that point." At the same time, a few participants expressed feelings of pity toward "obese" individuals. When referring to "obese" women, for example, they used the word "*haram*" (which means "poor her" in Arabic). Some also insisted that one should not judge "obese" individuals, when they alluded to factors that went beyond individual lifestyle (i.e., "childhood experiences," "certain medications," "gland problems," and "fast food restaurants"). With the exception of identifying the lure of fast food restaurants, however, they did not mention other potential environmental factors, such as the cost of and distance to recreational facilities, the lack of safety when engaging in outdoor physical activities in the neighbourhood, the availability of walking trails, the cost and availability of fresh foods, and the culture of consumption and over-consumption. Social and economic issues were also absent from the young Lebanese-Canadian women's discussions of "obesity." Despite the numerous studies on such factors (Boero 2007; Braunschweig et al. 2005; Gibson 2003; Mobley et al. 2006), they generally remain outside of dominant understandings of "obesity," which focus on individual self-control and discipline.

Obesity, Femininity, and Lebanese-Canadian Culture

Another theme that emerged in the conversations with the young Lebanese-Canadian women was the notion that "obesity" constituted an extreme transgression of body norms, especially in the case of women. For example, despite numerous studies that challenge the BMI as an appropriate tool to measure "obesity" (Burkhauser and Cawley 2008; Gard and Wright 2005; Kragelund and Omland 2005; Monaghan 2007), participants referred to it to differentiate between "normal," "overweight," and "obese" people and used terms like "extreme BMI." They also compared themselves to "obese" persons (e.g., "she's twice or three times my size") and/or, in a few cases, described "obese" bodies as "ugly," "unpleasant," or "disgusting." Some participants, like Nicole, however, provided a more nuanced analysis, highlighting the extent to which "Lebanese" standards of femininity and beauty are highly gendered. Her use of the term "they" seemed to signal her efforts to distance herself from certain discriminatory attitudes about women:

Obesity is different for men and women. An obese man is an obese man, maybe women don't find that attractive but there are obese men who are funny and people won't say 'he's obese'; they'll say 'he's funny.' But an obese woman is not acceptable, oh my God! Lebanese people will say: 'she gained even more weight? She's huge. Poor thing.' They don't leave her in peace. When I see an obese woman, I'll say '*haram*,' thinking, 'it's hard to live with all that weight, to take the stairs, to walk, etc.' But Lebanese women will say '*haram*' with another intention: they mean 'poor her, she's ugly'!

Nicole's narrative points to the gendered forms of discrimination that "obese" individuals face. Such trends have been analyzed by feminists (e.g., Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Orbach 1988) and critical obesity researchers (e.g., Braziel and Lebesco 2001; Murray 2008) who have critiqued dominant feminine ideals. Emma Rich and John Evans (2009) have gone farther and linked the dominant obesity discourse to classed and racialized constructions of the feminine body: "The racialized, classed, and gendered specificities of these discourses are tied to the ways in which the promotion of the ideal feminine body as disciplined, normalised and slender, has been historically rooted to a middle class femininity that is specifically tied to whiteness" (170). In the end, Nicole's discussion of the discrimination that "obese" Lebanese women suffer indicated a degree of resistance to a prevailing discourse that blames women for their weight.

Other participants also mentioned that there was an over-emphasis on women's physical appearance as a central element of what they understood to be the "Lebanese" and "Lebanese-Canadian" "cultures." In the following excerpt, for instance, Catherine used the term "us" to dissociate herself from Lebanese women ("them"), but also used the "us/them" trope to distance herself from those she understood to be "Canadian" women (i.e., in her view, white Euro-Canadian women):

[The Lebanese-Canadian community perceives obesity] very badly, I think. As a Lebanese woman, you have to be perfectly beautiful. Perfect size, no extra belly fat, no cellulite, no wrinkles, picture perfect: as if they draw you and you walk out of the page, nothing wrong with you. Lebanese people have such extreme standards for women. If you gain a pound, I don't know how many people will

tell you: 'you gained a pound!' [Lebanese standards are] different. I find Canadians are more lenient, more... They do not really judge as much. They're more open-minded than Lebanese and also Lebanese-Canadians. [Canadians] live in their own world and they don't really care about the other person: they're not as judgmental about a girl's weight or physical appearance in general... Lebanese-Canadians are less extreme than the Lebanese in Lebanon. Well, actually, it depends on how long they've been here and on their surroundings also... I find that people who lived here long enough, who have been surrounded by different cultures, will tend to have less extreme views... I definitely don't agree with the extreme views of Lebanese people, but I don't find big women attractive either, like some Canadians do. Umm, but it depends. I find very thin women in Lebanon disgusting as well. I think I mix and match from the Lebanese, Canadian, and Lebanese-Canadian standards when it comes to obesity.

In the above narrative, Catherine reproduced a number of negative stereotypes about Lebanese-Canadian women who she contrasted to their Canadian counterparts. She suggested that one factor that might contribute to a modification in Lebanese-Canadian attitudes towards "obesity" was Canadianization. Furthermore, she herself borrowed various perspectives from "Lebanese" and "Canadian" cultures (as she sees them) to construct her own hybrid understandings. In contrast, other participants indicated that their parents were intent on preserving "Lebanese" cultural traditions and values in the Lebanese-Canadian diaspora, a pattern that Dalia Abdelhady (2006, 2008) has noted among Lebanese immigrants in Montreal, New York, and Paris despite the pressures to assimilate in a Western context. Given such diasporic complexities, the Lebanese-Canadian participants, including Catherine, did not, as subjects, demonstrate stable cultural identities, but rather multiple, hybrid, and fluid ones. In other words, "Lebanese" and "Canadian" cultures cannot be conceptualized as separate and fixed entities that influenced these young women's constructions of "obesity" in clear-cut ways.

While size oppression is a significant issue in Canada, the participants discursively constructed Canadian attitudes as being more nuanced, understanding, empathetic, and tolerant. In general, they also constructed Canadian women as being more educated, ath-

letic, and balanced in their lifestyles and health practices. For example, Lea spoke about Lebanese women's attitudes toward physical activity:

I've never known anyone Lebanese who exercises to prevent diabetes, cancer, and these kinds of diseases. I'm talking about what I see around me, all the people that I know that work out, my friends, me, sometimes. We just do it to lose weight; not because we want to be healthy, but because we want to be in shape. Lebanese girls are so desperate to get guys so they work out to look good and compete for the best Lebanese guy. Canadian women work out because they love it. They love working out. When you see girls like us, not us, actually, because I don't go the gym, but those Lebanese girls who go to the gym, they will walk out tired and complaining, but Canadian girls walk out happy. For Lebanese girls, it's like 'let's get done with it, thank God I worked out,' and next thing you know, they're at McDonalds.

Lea used the term "we" and implied that the only reason Lebanese-Canadian women engaged in physical activity was to "look good" so they could attract a male partner. Other participants, like Rania, also cast Lebanese-Canadian women in a less than positive and homogenous light, suggesting that they focused too much on their appearance: "Lebanese women, not all of them but most of them, are very concerned with the way they look. Some of them are not as worried about being healthy as by being seen as healthy or skinny... The difference is that [Canadians] put also more importance on the inside of a person, how a person is, and their health. The Canadians are more aware of the health issues." In many respects, then, Rania and other participants' representations of "Lebanese" women were at least partially grounded in hegemonic white colonial views and stereotypical assumptions about Third World women. Furthermore, the "extreme" standards of slenderness to which they referred were somewhat compatible with modern Lebanese ideals about the female body, but seemed incompatible with traditional Lebanese norms that value feminine curves.

While many of the participants associated Lebanese women and themselves with demeaning stereotypes, others constructed Lebanese culture in a much more positive light. For instance, Jocelyn praised the cohesion in the Lebanese-Canadian diaspora: "As Lebanese, we keep together, family stays together, friends

keep together, we talk to each other on the phone, we go places together. We are different than other cultures; we are different than the Canadian culture. We love each other, we are more into people. And when somebody has a problem, Lebanese people always stick to each other." Natasha used the expression "more mature," when discussing Lebanese-Canadians in comparison to Canadians:

When I'm at school or I'm with other friends that are not Lebanese, I am completely different. I'm, like, more Canadian, making more Canadian jokes about things that I wouldn't say with Lebanese people, having more fun, actually it's a different kind of fun. Like, when you're at a Lebanese festival or anything, your fun is really different; it's more close, there's no use of bad words or anything, it's a really mature environment. Actually, I think that Lebanese people are more mature. Because we're always talking, it's really like a big family and when you feel like a big family, that's when you're having fun because everyone is related, it's as if, like, you take the hands of everyone and never let go.

Natasha's narrative suggests how she performs a fluid cultural identity in different temporal and social contexts. According to Homi Bhabha (1994), the cultural hybridization of minorities often involves the valorization of one's non-Western culture without a rejection of the dominant culture. Like Jocelyn, Natasha highlighted the positive attributes of Lebanese culture and her own subjectivity, in an effort to challenge existing stereotypical assumptions (i.e., superficial, ignorant, backwards, lazy, over-focused on physical appearance, and dependent on men) that are associated with Middle-Eastern and Arab-speaking women (see Mama 1995 for a similar pattern among Black women in the British context).

Overall, the young Lebanese-Canadian women in our study oscillated between compliant and resistant subject-positions within dominant discourses of whiteness, heterosexuality, cosmopolitanism, and middle-class modernity. The participants engaged in a process of association with and dissociation from their Lebanese-ness and Canadian-ness, when sharing their perspectives on "obesity." They occupied a number of subject-positions within the dominant obesity discourse, appropriating some of its elements (i.e., idealization of whiteness and thinness) at times and, to a small

extent, resisting them at others (i.e., showing acceptance and empathy toward “obese” bodies).

Conclusions

In this paper, we focused on how twenty young Lebanese-Canadian women understood “obesity” and how this related to their sense of cultural identity. The conversations indicated that the participants constructed “obesity” as a major health issue and a disease, as a matter of bad eating habits and inactivity, as the result of a lack of will and self-discipline, and as an “abnormal” and “revolting” physical attribute. They also spoke about obesity in terms of personal responsibility and in relation to the conventional (i.e., white, heterosexual, able-bodied, bourgeois) norms of femininity.

Our feminist poststructuralist analysis allowed us to explore how the participants were hailed by subject positions available to them within various social discourses. In particular, we examined the ways in which they appropriated and reproduced elements of the neoliberal discourse of obesity, with its focus on traditional femininity, meritocracy, consumption, and individual responsibility for one’s health and lifestyle, as well as how they articulated some modest resistance to this prevailing discourse. Indeed, the conversation transcripts provide evidence of the intermittent and, at times, contradictory subject positions adopted by the young Lebanese-Canadian women. While resistance to the dominant obesity discourse seemed to have little impact on the participants’ health practices, they appeared to be aware of, and could recite, alternative discourses with regard to health, “obesity,” and body matters.

Complementing our poststructuralist stance, we used feminist postcolonial theory to better understand how young Lebanese-Canadian women’s multiple and fluid cultural identities informed their discursive constructions of “obesity.” The interviews offered them an opportunity to discuss their relationships, as diasporic subjects, to “Canadians,” “Canadian-ness,” “Lebanese-Canadian-ness,” as well as the “Lebanese-ness” of their mothers and other women through the lens of the body. Their perspectives were informed by social class, religion, and socio-historical context. The participants clearly adopted elements of the dominant obesity discourse, a neocolonial discourse that constructs health in ways that confirm the value of thinness, whiteness, and

middle class “modernity.” Furthermore, when speaking of Lebanese women, they often used the “us/them” trope. This suggests a desire—not always present, but there nonetheless—to dissociate themselves from Lebanese women and to affirm their Canadian-ness.

When this happened, the reasons they offered included representations of Lebanese women as inferior, less knowledgeable, more intransigent, and less nuanced, indicating the participants’ partiality for white colonial discourses. In the context of Lebanon’s past and present geopolitical positioning, we would further argue that young Lebanese-Canadian women’s appropriation of “Canadian” ideas about “obesity” and the body was at least in part a way to differentiate themselves from Muslim-Arab women and enhance their association with what they perceived to be “modern,” open-minded, and tolerant Euro-Canadian/Western ideas about physical appearance in general and “obesity” in particular. For instance, given the legacies of consecutive Ottoman, French, and Syrian presences in Lebanon and Muslim-Christian tensions as the result of colonialism, Muslim-Canadian and Arab-Muslim women in surrounding Arab countries are constructed as uneducated, backward, and old-fashioned in both Christian Lebanese and mainstream Western discourses. In this context, we could interpret the participants’ intense and frequent reproduction of the dominant obesity discourse—which is a white racialized discourse that constructs white bodies as the healthiest and fittest—as a desire to assert themselves as more Canadian/Western, more “Christian,” and less Arab. It follows that they spoke about “obesity” in ways that they viewed to be “Canadian.” At the same time, there were also moments when they resisted mainstream Western discourses that construct Third World and Arab-speaking women as backwards and constrained by culture, and highlighted the positive features of Lebanese and Lebanese-Canadian cultures.

Finally, this study has important practical implications. In particular, we hope that this work can assist health professionals and inform programs and organizations that seek to improve young minority women’s overall wellbeing. Given the limited success of current “obesity” interventions that adopt individualistic approaches (Aphramor 2005) and studies that shed light on the importance of the social determinants of health (Raphael 2008; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003),

it seems crucial to shift the focus from individual-level interventions that concentrate on the weight and shape of the body to broader and more structural interventions that focus on health. For instance, additional resources could be allocated to re-evaluate and design policies that would enhance the physical environments of Lebanese-Canadian and other minority women as well as provide them with more culturally-appropriate health services. Similarly, the development of programs and policies that address social and economic factors that potentially shape the health of minority women will likely be more effective than those that seek to prevent and eradicate the so-called “obesity epidemic” and promote weight loss activities that may cause more harm than good (Brownell 1991; Keel et al. 2007; Neumark-Sztainer et al. 2006). Finally, the participants’ moments of resistance to both the dominant rhetoric surrounding “obesity” and the cultural stereotypes about Lebanese and Lebanese-Canadian women could form the basis for the development of alternative and non-stigmatizing (i.e., less racist, heterosexist, sexist, classist) messages and discourses about fatness, health, and minority women.

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Diminished: Canadian Women's Experiences of Electroshock

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Abstract

"Diminished" is the result of a two-year feminist inquiry into the gendered experience of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) in Canada. This paper focuses on seven women's experiences with electroshock and how it affected their lives. It raises pressing questions for Canadian feminists about the apparent dispensability of women's minds, with the purpose being to re-ignite feminist interest in women's experiences of psychiatry in general and the damaging effects of electroshock in particular.

Résumé

L'article intitulé « Diminished » est le résultat d'une enquête féministe de deux ans sur l'expérience de la thérapie électroconvulsive (TEC) basée sur le genre au Canada. Cet article met l'accent sur l'expérience de sept femmes qui ont subi la TEC et la façon dont cette thérapie a eu un impact sur leur vie. Il soulève des questions pressantes pour les féministes du Canada au sujet du caractère apparemment superflu de l'esprit des femmes, dans le but de raviver l'intérêt féministe envers l'expérience des femmes avec la psychiatrie en général et les effets néfastes de la thérapie électroconvulsive en particulier.



Introduction: The Pathologizing of Women's Minds

For decades, feminist women's health scholars have documented countless examples of the medicalization and pathologizing of women's minds. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English (1973) provided vivid examples of the "treatments" and "rest cures" imposed on upper and middle-class women in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, and exposed the inherent sexism in the biomedical rationale used to justify women's discrimination in jobs, society, and the family. Phyllis Chesler (1972) also explored historical and structural examples of women's minds being pathologized in her seminal text, *Women and Madness*. Paula Caplan (1985) named and challenged notions of women's apparent intrinsic masochistic tendencies and later (1995) called into the question the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual's (the DSM) propensity to categorize almost any woman as mad. Carol Tavris (1993) proposed that gender-based bias has been at the root of women's supposed proclivity for madness and argued that women are *always* going to be so evaluated—or 'mismeasured', as she called it—as long as maleness and masculinity remains the unquestioned standard for normalcy. Jane Ussher (1991) invited us to wonder whether it was misogyny, and not madness, that led to thousands of women annually being prescribed dangerous psychoactive drugs or undergoing dangerous procedures in the name of treatment. In addition, concerns about women's assumed propensity for depression as an almost rite of passage have gained significant momentum (Jack 1991; Stoppard 2000), as have various critiques of the excessive prescribing of psychotropic medications to women (Cooperstock 1976; Stoppard and Gammell 1999).

While many authors have been critical of the ways in which the biomedically-oriented mental health system has been pathologizing women's minds since at least the late nineteenth century, there has also been growing concern about the extent to which women's minds have been shocked and 'treated' with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) or electroshock in the past few decades. This psychiatric procedure involves passing electricity through a person's head in order to cause a convulsion or grand mal seizure. It can be performed either bilaterally or unilaterally, with the bilateral form being the most commonly used and most destructive

to autobiographical memory (Breggin 1997). While the voltage used to induce a seizure varies with the age and gender of the individual, current "improved" procedures now involve a general anesthetic, a powerful muscle-paralyzing agent to prevent fractures, and artificial respiration with oxygen because the muscle paralysis renders the individual unable to breathe independently. According to Dr. Peter R. Breggin (1997), these improvements raise the seizure threshold, which in turn requires increased electrical energy in order to cause a seizure. A typical course of electroshock for adults is six to twelve treatments, administered two to three times a week, followed by what is termed *Maintenance ECT* in order to prevent a relapse of the presenting depression (Gomez 2004). Many theories about electroshock's mechanism have been proposed over the years, with estimates suggesting that there are seven being considered, but none have been conclusively proven (Challiner and Griffiths 2000).

One deeply troubling trend is the extent to which ECT is administered primarily to women and the elderly. In Canada and the US, approximately 70 percent of shock survivors are women and 45-50 percent are over 60 years old, with 10-15 percent being 80 years and older (B.C. Ministry of Health 2008; Ontario Ministry of Health 2007; see Breggin 1997). In fact, according to the Ontario's Ministry of Health (2007), women receive electroshock two to three more often than men. Seventy-one percent of the patients given ECT in Canadian provincial psychiatric institutions are women and, regardless of setting, 75 percent of the total electroshock procedures were administered to women. In addition, as recently as March 2013, ECT was proposed in North America for "treatment-resistant" depression and eating disorders in women (Lipsman et al. 2013).

In light of these trends, this paper focuses on the gendered contours of electroshock with a particular focus on the stories of seven Canadian women who underwent ECT treatments during the past forty years. Drawing on qualitative interview data gathered over a two-year period, we present their individual narratives, which illuminate the trajectory of their lives prior to, during, and after ECT. The purpose of bringing this study's findings to *Atlantis* is to re-ignite feminist interest in women's experiences of psychiatry in general and the damaging effects of electroshock in particular.

The Sole Intent: The Brain Damaging Effects of Electroshock

While proponents of ECT argue that applying a certain amount of electricity to the brain in order to create a grand mal seizure is safe and indeed therapeutic, electroshock is, in reality, a psychiatric procedure whose sole intent is to injure and disable the brain. The result is often a temporary flat lining of brain waves on an EEG where, after several applications, the patient always becomes significantly brain damaged with signs of confusion, generalized cognitive impairment, loss of judgment, and emotional instability. In fact, sometimes a patient's brain is driven into persistent seizures, so that attending anesthesiologists have IV push meds at the ready to undo induced seizures that do not stop on their own. According to Dr. Peter R. Breggin (2008), the world-renowned expert on the acute injury and brain-disabling principle of psychiatric treatment, the induction of multiple grand mal seizures during ECT disrupts, disables, and damages brain cells by (i) overheating brain tissue; (ii) causing severe intracranial hypertension; (iii) breaking down the indispensable blood-brain barrier; (iv) causing blood vessels to spasm and close; and (v) starving neurons of oxygen and other essential nutrients.

Dr. Breggin (2008) further argues that this type of acute injury and resulting brain damage is the very principle behind ECT treatments. He has, for example, demonstrated that brain dysfunction is considered therapeutic by psychiatrists who administer ECT. The subsequent euphoria (usually temporary) and the lobotomy-like apathy and disinterest (usually persistent) are mislabeled as signs of improvement, rather than as actual symptoms of brain injury. Breggin's fulsome examination of the psychiatric literature cites both electroshock pioneers and current proponents who measure success based on craniocerebral trauma, the need for induced trauma, and the necessity to induce cell death and apathy. Psychiatrists Edward Shorter and David Healy (2007) are modern proponents of ECT, who speak positively about the most damaging extremes of the treatment in the form of repeated ECTs administered daily or several times a day (intensive, regressive, depatterning, and annihilation ECT). This intensive ECT regime results in neurological and mental dilapidation where "patients were sufficiently injured to become incontinent, mute or babbling and needing to be spoon fed" (134).

A review of the literature that exposes the sole intent of and damage associated with ECT leads many to question how it is possible that the practice of electroshock still exists. In fact, Dr. D. Ewen Cameron's (1957) work that is considered pioneering by ECT proponents, for example, used multiple ECT treatments in order to erase an individual's memories and personality. Follow up studies to Cameron's work exposed that 75 percent of his patients had memory loss up to ten years later and experienced impoverished and unsatisfactory social adjustment (Breggin 2008). North America's best known author-psychiatrist Dr. Harold Sackeim acquiesced to pressure and embarked on a multi-site study, which sought to debunk assertions that ECT produced lasting brain damage. Sackeim and his colleagues (2007) followed up with 347 patients given ECT in routine outpatient practice at multiple sites and evaluated them using neuropsychological testing up to six months later. For all types of ECT, they found persistent and significant detrimental effects on mental function, in such areas as memory retention, attention, and autobiographical memory. The authors also found that, although all patients demonstrated impairments in mental functioning after the common bilateral application of electrodes over a patient's temples, the female ECT patients experienced the most impairment.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the growing evidence that ECT is associated with mental impairment, various community activists have lobbied to have ECT banned. For example, according to Don Weitz (2008), on 17 January 1984 at a public meeting of the Toronto Board of Health, seven members of the Ontario Coalition to Stop Electroshock tried to convince the Board to call a moratorium on electroshock in Ontario. The Board's decision to support this request marked the first time in Canada that a board of health or any health body tried to restrict electroshock. In 2005, leading anti-psychiatry scholar Dr. Bonnie Burstow hosted a two-day, Toronto-based "Inquiry into Psychiatry," where psychiatric survivors were invited to testify about the impact of electroshock, psychiatric drugs, and engagement with the psychiatric profession (CAPA Canada 2005). One of the spin offs of this historic two-day hearing has been the Coalition Against Psychiatric Assault's "Stop Shocking our Mothers and Grandmothers" events held every Mother's Day in several cities in Canada (see [Atlantis 37.1, 2015](http://coalitionagainst-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

psychiatricassault.wordpress.com). While the Ontario Ministry of Health refused to enforce the moratorium resolution presented by the Ontario Coalition to Stop Electroshock, these and other examples of public outcry about the dangers associated with ECT counter the common public perception that electroshock is no longer being used. This has been the experience of the authors—wherever we go, we are met with the question: “They still do that?” Indeed, many Canadians would find it hard to believe that electroshock is back in vogue and its use is increasing.

Previous Research on Experiences of ECT

Amidst the research questioning the safety of ECT and lobbying efforts to have the use of ECT reduced (or stopped), there is a growing body of research literature that documents people’s experiences and perceptions of ECT. Perhaps not surprisingly, the research literature is divided. Psychiatrists and/or biopsychiatric researchers who are pro-ECT publish research articles (in biopsychiatric research journals) that claim that ECT patients find it to be both safe and effective and as having minimal and transitory side-effects. For example, the Royal College of Psychiatrists (1995) published a “factsheet” that claimed that 80 percent of people who received ECT (mostly women) were satisfied with the procedure. Other pro-ECT reviews of the literature (Rose et al. 2003) found that up to 90 percent of ECT recipients reported it as helpful.

Other researchers who are not affiliated with psychiatry tend to publish research articles (in non-psychiatric journals) that maintain that people have a range of attitudes towards ECT (for example, Chakrabarti, Grover, and Rajogopal 2010). These include many people who report that electroshock was not helpful, that they received inadequate information about ECT (or its risks) during the informed consent process and felt coerced into undergoing the procedure, and found the experience frightening and/or demeaning; they also indicated that ECT resulted in persistent and distressing memory loss (particularly autobiographical memory loss). In particular, a number of qualitative studies of people’s experiences with ECT—which typically allow participants to speak at greater length and more freely—have, almost without exception, indicated that most participants found that ECT did not reliably help their depression and that the experience was a very negative

one (Fisher, Johnstone, and Williamson 2011; Froede and Baldwin 1999; Johnstone 1999; Smith et al. 2009). Some qualitative studies have also specifically examined women’s experiences of ECT, who reported that they received little or no balanced information prior to ECT, felt coerced into and fearful of the procedure, found the procedure to be disempowering and demeaning, and suffered from persistent and distressing memory loss after ECT (Orr and O’Connor 2005; van Daalen-Smith 2011; Edjaredar and Hagen 2013, 2014). The experiences of the seven Canadian women we interviewed provide further evidence of these trends and the diminished lives that resulted.

Methodology

“Diminished” is the result of a two-year long feminist qualitative Canadian study that explored women’s lived experiences of ECT. After ethics approval was obtained from the York University Research Ethics Review Panel, prospective interview participants for this project were recruited via the distribution of a poster and through word of mouth. Women who were in the midst of ECT treatments were recruited by staff at an outpatient ECT clinic. Nurses involved in the provision of electroshock were also interviewed for this study (see van Daalen-Smith 2011). Of the seven women interviewed, two were in the midst of ECT treatments and five had received them in the past. The seven participants were all English-speaking, ranged in age from 44 to 65 years old, and received ECT in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan between approximately 1975 and 2010. Six were white, one identified as First Nations, all were heterosexual, and while all were able-bodied at the time of their ECT treatments, three of the seven now self-identify as disabled. Five of the seven women received unilateral electroshock; one received both types and one was the recipient of bilateral electroshock. Informed verbal and written consent to participate in the research was obtained from all participants.

Rooted in principles of feminist emancipatory research, semi-structured interviews were conducted, all of which were recorded on a digital voice recorder. The women were asked to discuss the following topics: what their life was like before receiving electroshock; their experiences with and perspectives on ECT, including what series of events lead them to be prescribed the treatments; what they were told about

ECT; the effects of electroshock on their lives; and their recommendations for the future. The women's stories of distrust, coercion, and powerless invisibility were compelling to hear. They felt damaged by the experience and had great difficulty 'going there' during their interviews, but they pushed themselves as they wanted to tell their truths. The women were free to add anything else they wished to share.

The study's epistemological and methodological ethos was derived from feminist standpoint theory, as outlined by Dorothy E. Smith (1997). She suggests that "women's standpoint as a method commits us to beginning in the local historical actualities of one's experience, and as such makes ruling relations visible from a standpoint located in an embodied subject situated in the everyday/every night actualities of her own life" (128-9). Because women's and especially psychiatrized women's truths are at significant risk of being discounted and dismissed, standpoint theory is both a methodology and a politics that values lived experience and validates it as a legitimate source of knowledge. These principles guided our analysis of the stories shared by the seven women who participated in this study. In addition, the process of data analysis involved the constant-comparison method whereby codes, themes, and proposed relationships between data are proposed (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The data were divided into manageable portions called bibbits and were then coded to identify themes (Chenitz and Swanson 1986). Periodic check-ins with interested participants occurred during the process of data analysis to determine validity.

Results

The two years devoted to seeking out and listening to women's stories about electroshock was a journey of grim privilege, given that ECT is *not* an isolated treatment of last resort as many would assure us. It is currently being scheduled or performed all over Canada in both community and psychiatric hospitals through both inpatient and outpatient programming. In this section, the overall themes from the interviews are presented, including the women's journeys to receiving ECT, problematic practices employed in obtaining informed consent, the experiences of being blamed and shamed, and the maleficent impacts of electroshock on these women.

It's You: The Path to Electroshock

The journeys of the seven women—Ruth, Sandra, Linda, Celeste, Fran, Lee and Cathy (all pseudonyms)—to ECT shared many similarities. Almost all of the women asked a health care provider for support during a period of distress. Almost all. When Fran visited her family doctor for a stubborn throat infection that left her feeling drained and exhausted, she was receiving electroshock within a month or so. She explained that, while telling her doctor that she was feeling tired and sick, two tears fell from her eyes. Her doctor reached for his prescription pad and prescribed Prozac. For the next ten days, she "didn't eat or sleep on that drug" and was subsequently admitted to hospital with a diagnosis of both bipolar disorder and depression. Fran reported being told: "You're not responding adequately to any of the drugs we've given you Fran. We're going to try electroshock." She was deemed incompetent to make treatment decisions and so her husband was approached and convinced of its necessity. By this time, she was in such a fragile and unrecognizable state that her husband reluctantly agreed. As Fran noted: "even though they told him it was my only chance...his only chance to get me back, my husband stills feels guilty." Years later, after fighting for the right to view and obtain her hospital records, Fran discovered that her fourteen-month stay in a psychiatric unit involved over thirty psychiatric diagnoses and forty-three shock treatments.

Lee's journey started with insomnia following the devastating loss of her mother. She was prescribed strong sleeping pills that were then changed to Benzodiazepines to which she (predictably) developed debilitating anxiety. She was also diagnosed with several psychiatric conditions and each cocktail of powerful drugs she was given made her worse. Lee asserted that she was medicated *to* insanity. She too was told that she was not responding adequately to the prescribed drugs and that there were no others physicians could try. Lee recounted that she was told that ECT was a treatment of *last* resort, but she supposedly reached that juncture fairly quickly. Her husband was also convinced of electroshock's urgent necessity and was asked to provide consent.

At the time of her interview, Ruth was in the middle of a series of shock treatments, but she could not remember if she was scheduled for her fifth or seventh treatment the following morning. She was very

weak, her mouth was dry, and her color was ashen. Ruth explained that she had experienced varying degrees of depression since childhood and that pills did not help. They “made me worse, but I’m afraid to come off them.” Despite ardent opposition from family and friends, Ruth explained that she tried ECT (again), even though she had experienced severe “mania” when she underwent electroshock several years prior. At that point, Ruth noted: “I signed myself out of the hospital then...I’ve never been the same.”

Sandra, equally fragile, was in the midst of a series of outpatient ECT treatments. She explained that she had also experienced depression since childhood. Like other participants, Sandra was told that, because so many drugs had been “offered to her, and nothing worked,” ECT constituted the ‘last resort’ treatment. While she felt as though she was taking a risk undergoing electroshock, Sandra proclaimed that she would “try anything to feel better.” Because of her vulnerable state at the time of the interview, we did not probe further into the source of her lifelong sadness and distress.

Celeste described a history of childhood sexual abuse starting at the age of four and of physical and mental abuse in her home until she was seventeen. She disclosed her situation to a guidance counselor—exactly what adults tell children to do—and underwent an assessment in the emergency department of her eastern Ontario town. Without undertaking an investigation into other options or providing her with adequate information about ECT, Celeste was offered electroshock treatments. As she indicated, “they told me it would cure my depression...no one cared why I was depressed.” Celeste went on to explain that it was then that her ‘psychiatric career’ started; she was admitted, “held for months at a time, drugged, restrained, shocked” (despite flatly refusing consent countless times including in the OR, while strapped down on a gurney and wheeled to the treatment room), and blamed for not getting better. She indicated that her parents were the ones who consented to the electroshock and that this was an injustice: “My abusers got the right to consent to more abuse of me.”

Shortly after her fortieth birthday, Cathy told her physician that she experienced severe depression the day before her period and asked him if this was normal. He diagnosed her with “Premenstrual Dysphoric

Disorder” and prescribed several medications—some to treat PMDD and others to counter the side effects of the preliminary drugs. Cathy reported that her mood worsened significantly, and she was eventually told that the medications could no longer help her and that she needed electroshock. After receiving thirteen outpatient ECT treatments, EEGs revealed organic brain syndrome and dementia. Cathy was no longer able to work and reported losing nearly twenty years of autobiographical memories.

Linda told the story of being a twenty-eight year old mother of two children under the age of six years who was working at two jobs, trying to survive in a ‘rocky’ marriage, and feeling overwhelmed. She too, went to her family physician to discuss her feelings and to get support. She was told that she needed ‘a rest’ and was admitted to the hospital. Linda explained that, within forty-eight hours, she had been prescribed eight psychoactive drugs; within two weeks, she was sent for inpatient electroshock, despite being neither depressed nor suicidal. As Linda stated, “I asked for help and was given ECT. That’s not what I needed.”

In learning about the seven women’s pathways to receiving electroshock, it became evident that the main rationale for ECT being prescribed was the conclusion that *they* had each ‘failed’ to adequately respond to other treatments, thus individualizing its necessity. Once they were labeled “treatment-resistant,” the women were told that *they* had ‘failed’ to respond to (any number of) psychiatric drugs and hence, they had reached an assumed point of no return; in other words, electroshock was their only recourse and their only opportunity to regain some semblance of a normal life. They were also informed that they would need to periodically undergo maintenance ECT in order not to slide backwards. This idea of ECT as a last resort seemed to resonate with Ruth and Sandra who were undergoing treatments at the time of their interviews. While they indicated that drugs did not help “their” depression and that they knew little about ECT, they very much hoped that it would help them: fingers crossed, eyes closed, and futures held in the palm of someone else’s hands. However, ECT did not help most of the women and it was not what they needed. As Celeste explained, “I was just an abused girl who just needed to be heard. But all those drugs and then electroshock? That’s not what I needed.”

"Don't worry": Consent in a Fog

The women were asked to recount (if they could) what they were told about electroshock at the time of consent. All of the women remembered being told, "don't worry," and that ECT would "be helpful, was necessary, safe." They were also told that they were "good candidates for ECT" and that "other women just like you got better." Sandra noted that, "I didn't really understand it...how it works. Just that they say it helps women like me." Ruth and Sandra, who were in the middle of their ECT series, explained being shown an information video during their consent process. The video was produced, funded, and distributed by the manufacturer of the ECT machine, which downplayed the potential risks. As Ruth indicated, "I reluctantly agreed to this procedure being ignorant about the risks." When other participants were asked if they were made aware of any risks, many recalled that they were told that they would experience "some fatigue" and "mild temporary memory loss." Celeste, Linda, Lee, and Fran, however, shared that they were so incapacitated by the powerful psychoactive drugs they were expected to take daily, comprehension of what was involved was next to impossible. As Cathy maintained, "I was so drugged, there was no way I could have properly consented."

In each situation, psychiatrists approached parents or partners and convinced them of the necessity of electroshock and of the need for ongoing psychiatric hospitalization. Lee explained that doctors lied to her and her husband about ECT. While she was in no state to be able to ask questions, argue, or refuse, "my husband believed what they told him—that ECT was the last resort, and that there would only be some minimal and temporary memory loss. Nothing else. It was a soft sell. But they lied. They lied by omission." Celeste, whose parents consented to the procedure, remembered screaming and pleading to be let out of the restraints, to not be wheeled into "the torture room," and to "please don't do this to me." Both recalled the far away eyes of the health care team, seemingly detached and patently absent.

Tamed, Blamed, and Shamed

Despite spanning different decades, provinces, or healthcare settings, the women's descriptions of their experiences with electroshock shared many similarities. Aside from healthcare providers' individualization of its

necessity and the questionable procedures used to obtain consent, the women who were post-ECT recalled their sense of powerlessness in the face of indifferent professionals. Lee, for example, described the terror she experienced prior to ECT: "These treatments were handled like an assembly line, with a row of gurneys ready in the hallway. I shook in terror as I looked at the matter-of-fact faces above me. I thought I was going to die." She also maintained that she eventually realized that things would go far more smoothly and that she would likely "get out of the hospital sooner" if she didn't resist and "simply surrendered." For the women in the midst of treatment, their real-time experience included a combination of hope and desperation—of blind, yet powerful, trust and faith in a system that promised to help.

The women further explained that an overlooked part of the ECT experience involved isolating stigma that stemmed from being blamed and made to feel ashamed. They felt ashamed for "needing" ECT and this was reinforced via psychiatric labels like "treatment-resistant." Some family members had already considered the women to be "whack jobs" or "mental cases," and when they learned that the women had received electroshock, the stigma increased ten-fold. In other instances, family or friends blamed them for getting themselves into their predicament. The women recounted painful stories of lost relationships following (and, for some, during) electroshock as people lost patience with them or grew increasingly uncomfortable; as a result, the women became more isolated. Lee, for example, recounted how she felt betrayed by friends who abandoned her after they found out about her many ECT treatments: "most of my old friends are gone...they disappeared when they saw me trembling and spasming and muttering after twenty-five shock treatments." However, unlike current anti-stigma initiatives, such as the Mental Health Commission of Canada's (2014) "Opening Minds" campaign or Bell Canada's (2014) nation-wide "Let's Talk" campaign, the post-ECT women did *not* believe that erasing stigma so more women would agree to electroshock treatments was the answer.

Whether the women were post-ECT or undergoing treatments at the time of the interviews, they *all* discussed a profound change in their affect, motivation, and selfhood. They described being flat with no drive and little emotion; with each shock 'treatment,' their will

to fight eroded away like sand on a beach at high tide. Linda explained that it felt like pieces of her never made it back to her hospital room and even though she had searched for those pieces, she never found them again: “my life is like I’m looking through a window. I see life, but can’t touch it. I have no deep, no true emotion in me anymore. I just go through the motions. I miss the person that got away from me.”

The Maleficent Impact: Hope Dies

At the heart of the women's decision to undergo electroshock treatments was hope and the promise thereof. Believing they were out of options, they hoped that things would be different; that they would adequately respond to a treatment (finally); that it would work; and that the distress that had taken hold of their lives would subside—or be permanently extinguished. During the latter portion of the interviews, the women were asked about the *impact* of electroshock on their lives.

Ruth and Sandra, who were in the midst of ECT treatments, described feeling exhausted, yet less anxious, “lighter, closer to feeling like themselves, not up, not down, just blah; numb; flat; and forgetful.” Sandra did note that memories just ‘floated’ by her after her ECT treatments: “I can’t hold onto memories anymore...they kinda just float by.” They also indicated that when the feelings of lightness and reduced anxiety waned, they were told that they would always need maintenance ECT.

Regardless of whether their ECT was bilateral or unilateral or was prescribed in the 1970’s, 1980’s, 1990’s, or during this millennium, the five remaining post-ECT participants were unified in their assessment of electroshock’s impact. It devastated them cognitively, emotionally, spiritually, financially, and socially and, in so doing, killed any last morsel of hope they had. They described physical symptoms (e.g. leg pain, arrhythmias, cracked teeth, poor co-ordination, fatigue, joint and back problems, tremors, headaches), cognitive effects (e.g. amnesia, dementia, confusion, disorientation, un-relenting memory loss, inability to think or focus, forgetfulness, loss of attention span), and emotional consequences (fear, anxiety, flashbacks, apathy, embitterment, shyness, nervousness, decreased or flat effect, loss of self-esteem or the self they knew). Fran described her life as being ‘wiped out’ by ECT: “my life as I knew it has been wiped out. I don’t know who I am

anymore. I’ve had to re-create myself.” Similarly, Lee described her life as “joyless striving” since her ECT, trying to make it through each day by compensating for her post-ECT losses.

In total, the women described sixty-four adverse effects of electroshock, which demonstrated that the shared hope that accompanied each of the seven women’s journeys to the electroshock room had all but died. Electroshock affected every aspect of their lives (see Table 1.). In addition, all of the women were no longer able to work and survived on disability pensions for a portion of or the entire time since receiving electroshock. Celeste explained why she was sobbing during the interview: “I live in sheer poverty. ECT and the drugs cheated me of a life. To this day, I wonder what I would’ve become if I wasn’t forced to have electroshock.”

Discussion

This study adds to the growing body of qualitative research on women’s experiences of ECT. In particular, it adds further weight to growing evidence that women’s experiences of ECT are characterized by the following: a lack of knowledge about ECT; a fear of the procedure; being told that ECT was their only hope or the “last resort”; a sense of generalized powerlessness and humiliation; cognitive side-effects; and severe and persistent autobiographic memory loss (Ejaredar and Hagen 2013, 2014; Fisher, Johnstone, and Williamson 2011; Froede and Baldwin 1999; Johnstone 1999; Orr and O’Connor 2005; Smith et al. 2009; van Daalen-Smith 2011). Given the disturbing picture that is emerging from this qualitative research, it is not surprising that feminist critics, like Dr. Bonnie Burstow (2006a), argue that ECT is a form of violence and power over women, and are calling for an end to publicly-funded ECT.

Empathy, not Apathy

The women, whose narratives are centred in this feminist inquiry, sought support from a health care professional during a period of distress. Celeste was an abused girl who wanted and deserved to be heard, believed, and made safe. Lee was bereaved and bereft—for mother loss can leave an irreparable void in many women’s lives. Linda was overwhelmed with work and home life and simply wanted to talk. Fran had a mere throat infection. Rather than addressing the underlying

causes of the women's distress and listening empathically, medical professionals prescribed medications that made their mental conditions worse. To a health care practitioner who views women's distress 'symptoms' through a *bio-psychiatric* lens, the women's modes of "coping" become pathologized and medicalized.

In other words, they were blamed for any undesired side-effects of what have been identified as harmful and ineffective psychiatric drugs. It was them. It was *their* depression. It was *their* response to the drugs, which served as a key justification for more aggressive psychiatric intervention like electroshock. Such psychiatric modalities fail to address the social phenomena that contribute to women's gender-based depressive responses to trauma, oppression, poverty, and misogyny. This response is not rooted in empathy, but rather seeks to achieve quick and lasting apathy in those receiving ECT. With all that is anecdotally and scientifically known about the resultant brain damage, how it is that the application of electricity to the brain can possibly be viewed as therapeutic?

An analogy could be drawn to cancer treatments, which have been described by feminist women's health activist Dr. Susan Love (2000) as *slash, burn, and poison* (surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy) for the purpose of killing the 'bad cells' and leaving the 'good cells' alone. It is suggested that electroshock might work to extinguish some of the painful memories or sources of women's sadness and distress or somehow attack and disable *only* the brain cells responsible for "medication-resistant" depression. However, this precarious cure is akin to taking a sledgehammer to kill a flea and hoping the dog will be okay. Might we value the dog more and seek to prevent its distress in the first place? Might we value women's brains more?

The notion that there is nothing left for women, except the application of electricity to the brain, is unimaginative at best and carelessly maleficent at worst. Many feminist scholars argue that, through chemical and then electrical manipulation, psychiatry seeks to induce apathy, labeling this outcome therapeutic. In fact, early electroshock proponents wrote about a desired taming effect (see Breggin 1979, 2008). When women experience gender-based oppression and/or trauma, the psychiatric process of blaming women through a sophisticated process of diagnostic labeling *IS* a form of violence. Dr. Burstow (2006a), Canada's leading feminist critic of psychiatry, is right. It is abuse. It is answering trauma with trauma, abuse with abuse. It renders those who seek support all the more diminished. If being ignored, ill-treated, abused, dismissed, or devalued is not enough—is not diminishing enough, psychiatry responds with further diminishment erroneously re-

Dementia	Forgetfulness (& resultant safety risks)
Confusion	Erased education
Disorientation	Loss of friends
Decreased emotion	Unemployed/unemployable
Changed personality	Unable to complete tasks
Don't recognize people who know them	Unable to complete schooling/courses
Significant short-term memory loss	Low attention span
Weight gain	Get lost in house/neighborhood/plaza
Poor coordination	Apathy
Unable to manage household tasks	Flashbacks
Unable to schedule things	Embarrassment
Unable to remember or keep appointments	Labeled
Disorganization in life & surroundings	Stigmatized
Live in fear it will happen again	No longer believed/seen as credible
Creativity stunted	Learning disability
Back problems	Poverty/living on disability
Joint problems	Loss of imagination
Forced to re-learn how to dress, brush teeth	Numbing of emotions
Barely know children/husband/family	Shy now
Not believed	Forgets things from one day to the next
Written off/categorized/demoralized	Amnesia
Paranoia	Memory disability
Cracked teeth/dental problems	Can't think the way I used to
Constantly shaky	Forget what read almost immediately
Not grounded	Headaches
Arrhythmias	Tremors
Guilt for impact on family	Nightmares
Embittered	Hands/feet tingle
Anxiety	Leg tremors/twitches
In a stupor/fog	Constantly lose track of what I'm doing
	Loss of self confidence
	Loss of Self

Table 1: Reported Impacts of Electroshock (van Daalen-Smith 2011¹)

ferred to as therapeutic treatments. For at least five of the women interviewed for this study, engagement with psychiatry in general and with electroshock more specifically left them less-than they were prior to asking for assistance. As Lee noted, after ECT, “you become a permanently diminished human being.”

“What difference does it make?”: A Call to Canadian Feminists

When Fran was interviewed, she was living in the Yukon and re-creating a life. During her hospitalization, Fran kept a secret journal. Thankfully, her husband smuggled it out of the psychiatric hospital before it was discovered. Had it not been for that journal, Fran would not have remembered most of her experiences during her electroshock treatments and psychiatric hospitalization. She recalled that, while undergoing her treatments as an inpatient, she pleaded with her physician to stop them because of frightening memory loss. She vividly recollects that her physician, standing in her hospital room doorway, responded by asking: “What difference does it make?” For her, she was rendered less of a person in that moment: “Maybe I always was less of a person to him...to psychiatry.” She felt defeated, devalued, and diminished. It wasn’t that she did not want to feel—it was that she wanted to feel *better*. It wasn’t that she wanted her life to stop—she wanted it to start.

Through this study that has explored seven Canadian women’s experiences with ECT as well as other Canadian studies (Ejaredar and Hagen 2013, 2014; Froede and Baldwin 1999), we have learned that so much needs to be called into question and changed. That ECT damages the brain should be enough for Canadians to collectively call for a global ban on electroshock (see van Daalen-Smith et al. 2014). In addition, it is evident that the types of responses that the women who participated in this study received lacked empathy and any socio-political understanding of women’s lives. The mechanisms through which consent was sought were fraught with violations of human rights and the rights of hospitalized persons, especially given that fulsome and balanced information was not provided and consent was often obtained from others after the women became mentally incapacitated by the very treatments prescribed to help. The women entered the psychiatric facility as thinking and feeling individuals—but they left both foggy and

flat. The notion that electroshock is a therapeutic modality of last resort is a dangerously fallacious myth.

Given women’s experiences of electroshock discussed in this paper, Canadian feminists should consider the following questions:

1. Why are so many women and elder women more specifically given electroshock? What do the disproportionate statistics tell us? Do they speak about the continued pathologizing of women’s minds?
2. Why is the response to women’s trauma more trauma?
3. What role does Big Pharma play in the unquestioned prescription of psychoactive drugs among women in general and among those experiencing distress more specifically?
4. Why did mostly white heterosexual able-bodied women step forward and participate in this study? Is it that psychiatry is disinterested in investing in marginalized women? Is it that in confronting systemic racism, ableism, classism, or homophobia (to name but a few) on a daily basis, most marginalized women are fearful of further oppression and dismissal?
5. Why is apathy considered a therapeutic outcome? Does psychiatry perpetuate itself through its use of a *drug, shock, and lock* treatment plan? Who exactly is served by the inducement of chemical or electrical apathy?
6. Are women’s minds so dispensable that electroshock is (again) increasingly prescribed despite the scientific evidence of its destructive impacts?

The continued practice of medicalizing and pathologizing women’s minds has been shown to have devastating outcomes, some of which are discussed in this paper. Electroshock is not prohibited as many perhaps had hoped, and the troubling ageist and sexist applications of this procedure is of urgent concern. The voices of the seven women who participated in this study urge us, all of us, to place this issue back on our collective activist agendas. The Ottawa-based activist and electroshock survivor Sue Clark-Wittenberg, who despite being rendered “un-employable” because of her “psychiatric incarcerations”—used her own meager funds to create a poster wherein she asks us to “Please help stop the abuse.” Shall we?²



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Endnotes

¹ The authors secured permission of the editor of *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* to draw on the narratives presented in van Daalen-Smith (2011).

² Post Script: Readers of *Atlantis* are directed to the recent groundbreaking publication by Canada's leading feminist critic of psychiatry Dr. Bonnie Burstow (2015) entitled, *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness: An Ethical and Epistemological Accounting*.

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The Potential of Government Intervention in Violence Against Women: Lessons from Newfoundland and Labrador

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Abstract

While an increasingly neoliberal and neoconservative state has created challenges for Canadian feminists, Newfoundland and Labrador's Purple Ribbon Campaign, launched in 2009, illustrates how feminist analyses of gender-based violence can be incorporated into a government-sponsored anti-violence campaign. This article examines the successes and limitations of the Purple Ribbon Campaign's anti-violence analyses.

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Résumé

Alors qu'une situation de plus en plus néolibérale et néoconservatrice pose des défis aux féministes canadiens, la campagne du ruban violet à Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, lancée en 2009, illustre la façon dont les analyses féministes de la violence à caractère sexiste peuvent être intégrées dans une campagne antiviolence appuyée par le gouvernement. Cet article examine les succès et les limites des analyses antiviolence de la campagne du ruban violet.

Gender-based violence became an issue of central importance for feminist scholars and activists in Canada beginning in the late 1970s. In the years since, feminists have debated how and to what extent to involve the state in efforts to combat gender-based violence. There is a strand of radical feminist theory that significantly shaped the Canadian feminist anti-violence movement, which identifies the roots of gender-based violence in patriarchy and sees the state as an institution that works to uphold patriarchy (Bevacqua 2000). Many feminist organizations, such as shelters, rape crisis centres, and counselling services, however, came to and continue to rely on the state for funding and charitable status, and in the current era of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, they are pressured to accept restrictions on their advocacy work to maintain this support (Beres, Crow, and Gottell 2009; Bonisteel and Green 2005; Janovicek 2007; Rebick 2005). Many Canadian feminists in the 1980s also began to frame violence against women as a human rights issue and a crime, encouraging women experiencing violence to access state services, such as the police and criminal justice system, after Canadian law was changed to recognize physical and sexual violence in intimate relationships as crimes (Janovicek 2007; Johnson 1996). The question of whether the state can or should be an effective feminist ally in efforts to address gender-based violence is one that has not yet been resolved.

Canadian feminists working at the government level have been somewhat successful in making gender-based violence an area of policy importance, as is shown by the government-sponsored anti-violence campaigns, laws, and policies that exist federally and provincially. In this paper, I examine one of these campaigns in light of the tensions that feminists who have worked with and within the state have confronted. In 2009, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) launched the Purple Ribbon Campaign as part of its six year, provincially-funded Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) action plan (Executive Council 2009).

The VPI built on the earlier Provincial Strategy Against Violence, which was introduced in 1995 (VPI 2002; VPI 2006). The Purple Ribbon Campaign aims to increase public awareness about male violence against women and to facilitate its prevention in the province. The campaign's dominant message is that gender-based violence is unacceptable in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it encourages residents to wear a purple ribbon to symbolize their commitment to ending violence against women. The campaign's major social marketing tools are directed at parents with young male children and include a TV commercial and a series of print ads, which share the same takeaway message: "I will show him how to respect women." In effect, it is telling parents that they have a responsibility to teach their sons that violence against women is never okay (VPI 2013a).

The Purple Ribbon Campaign is worthy of examination through the lens of feminist scholarship because its message is explicitly gendered. The NL Government, via this campaign, names the issue 'male violence against women' and calls for men and boys to acknowledge that they have an obligation to respect women (Executive Council 2009). Thus, it places violence within a larger social framework of unequal gendered power relations in society. This sets the campaign apart from violence prevention campaigns sponsored by the governments of other Atlantic provinces, in that it closely resembles feminist framing of violence (Girard 2009). Its message is also surprising because the campaign emerged during a period when provincial governments embraced neoliberalism and neoconservatism, a context in which the state has tended to fail to recognize the gendered contexts of social issues, and typically creates or funds gender-neutral analyses of violence, rather than programs and services that are women-centered (Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). I argue that the Purple Ribbon Campaign shows some important successes in incorporating a feminist analysis and message about gender-based violence, which can serve as an example for feminists working in other Atlantic provinces who are collaborating with their governments to create campaigns to combat violence. At the same time, the ways in which the Purple Ribbon Campaign has conformed to neoliberal and neoconservative discourses illustrate the constraints associated with doing feminist activism within the context of the current state.

My interest in the Purple Ribbon Campaign comes from my personal connection with this issue and the province. I was raised in a tiny outport in rural Newfoundland. There was violence in my home when I was growing up and I was aware, as a child, of several other homes in my community where gender-based violence was also occurring. Violence was quite normalized in our community; it was a both a public issue, in that everyone in the community knew about it, and a private one, as it was seen as the responsibility of individual households and families to manage and solve. The Purple Ribbon Campaign has been successful in changing such attitudes in my community and many like it. I also acknowledge that I hold a position of relative privilege, being a white, settler, middle-class, and university-educated woman. Thus, my experience of violence may be very different than the experiences of other diverse groups of women in the province, particularly Indigenous women, women with disabilities, and women living with poverty.

More than One View: Feminist Analyses of Gender-Based Violence

Just as there is no one 'feminism,' there is no one 'feminist analysis of violence.' Feminist analyses of violence against women that have developed over the last four decades can be loosely characterized as radical, liberal, and intersectional, while recognizing that there is significant diversity within each of these analyses and points of commonality among them. As Wini Breines and Linda Gordon (1983), for example, have stated, "all flow from a concern with women's rights and freedoms" (493). All hold that women experience disproportionate harm from gender-based violence and advocate for actions that focus on the perpetrator and the social structures that enable or condone violence, rather than on the victim (Bevacqua 2000; Johnson and Colpitts 2013; Walker 1992). While the preferred terminology for violence differs by perspective and time period, all feminist analyses advocate for terminology that shows that violence is a result of unequal gendered power relations in society. While the favoured term in many policy circles and within the fields of sociology and psychology is often 'family violence,' Mary Ellsberg and Lori Heise (2005) write that, "feminist researchers find the assumption of gender neutrality in the term 'family violence' problematic because it fails to high-

light that violence in the family is mostly perpetrated by men against women and children” (11). Other terms favoured by many government and professional services, such as ‘spousal,’ ‘couple,’ ‘intimate partner,’ or ‘domestic’ violence, are not considered congruent with a feminist analysis (Walker 1992; Morris 2002).

Most radical feminist analyses of violence hold that violence is the vehicle of men’s domination that works to perpetuate women’s oppression in all areas of society (Walker 1992). Discussions within second wave radical feminist consciousness-raising groups showed that many women experienced male violence in their lives. Presented with evidence of such a high prevalence of violence among women and with commonalities in experience, radical feminists saw gender-based violence as not just a personal issue, but one that was also political in nature and needed a political response (Bevacqua 2000). Consciousness-raising served multiple purposes: it provided a space for women to share their experiences of violence, created spaces for action and self-organizing among survivors, and allowed for organized state lobbying and awareness raising on the issue of violence against women (Beres, Crow, and Gottell 2009; Bevacqua 2000). The first shelters, rape crisis centres, support groups, and activist campaigns were political responses that came out of radical feminist organizing, with women who had experienced violence at the forefront of service provision and advocacy efforts (Clark and Lewis 1977; Kelly 2003; Mardorossian 2002). Radical feminists also maintained that violence against women is a structural problem, rooted in how masculinity has been constructed under patriarchy. Patricia Yancey Martin and Robert A. Hummer (2009) argue that this construction, in its most narrow and extreme form, endorses sexual violence against women. Ending gender-based violence, in their view, would require social transformation and the elimination of patriarchy (Bevacqua 2000; Nelson and Robinson 1999). Early radical feminist perspectives on gender-based violence, however, did not account for differences or systems of power other than sexism; their position was that all women who experienced violence did so because they were women and that violence took the same forms among all groups of women (Kelly 2003).

A central achievement of liberal feminist activism in Canada has been to move violence against women into the public sphere and bring it to government

attention (Bohmer et al. 2002). Seeing gender-based violence as originating in the unequal division of labour within the family and the wider society, and as preventing women from achieving their full potential, liberal feminist actions have focused on ensuring that violence against women is recognized as a crime under Canada’s legal system and that there is funding for victim services (Bevacqua 2000; Walker 1992). Liberal feminists did experience some successes in their dealings with the state. The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women argued successfully for the criminalization of wife battering in 1980 and sexual assault within marriage in 1983 (Levan 1996). Given their primary focus on criminalization and service provision, however, liberal feminists have been criticized for their reformist politics. Marina Morrow, Olena Hankivsky, and Colleen Varcoe (2004) write that, “Some feminists have argued [that] the hegemony of certain forms of feminism (liberal reformism) meant that the anti-violence movement favoured institutional reforms and professionalized responses over more socially transformative strategies to end violence” (369). Kristin A. Kelly (2003) further points out that liberal feminist approaches to gender-based violence have also been critiqued for their failure to take into account the many reasons why women might not want to seek help from the police or state agencies when seeking to escape violent situations.

Building on the challenges voiced by women of colour and other women who did not see themselves represented in the largely white and middle-class radical and liberal feminist analyses and political campaigns, the most recent shift in feminist theorizing has been to adopt an intersectional analysis of women’s experiences of violence (Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). This feminist approach is more nuanced than radical and liberal feminist analyses; it holds that gender-based violence is rooted in more complex systems of power than simply patriarchy (George and Stith 2014). Intersectional perspectives look at how women’s experiences of violence are shaped by multiple systems of power, including colonization, racism, classism, and ableism (Johnson and Colpitts 2013). Michelle Bograd (2005) describes the value of an intersectional approach as follows: “Intersectionalities color the meaning and nature of domestic violence, how it is experienced by self and responded to by others, how personal and social con-

sequences are represented, and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained” (27). An intersectional analysis also acknowledges that, while women from all backgrounds and walks of life experience violence, some women are more vulnerable to violence than others. In Canada, the highest rates of gender-based violence in personal relationships as a percentage of the population can be found among Indigenous women, women with disabilities, and women living in poverty (Bograd 2005; Morris 2002). Intersectionality also exposes the ways in which violence is embedded in many social structures, including the state, which rely on these oppressive systems of power to dispossess diverse women of resources and push them to the margins of society (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). Action designed to address gender-based violence cannot be separated from efforts to combat all other sources of oppression.

Shaping the Purple Ribbon Campaign

Feminists in Newfoundland and Labrador have been lobbying for government action on gender-based violence for the last twenty-five years. While Kate McInturff’s (2013) report for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that the province has lower overall reported rates of intimate partner violence and sexual assault as compared to other Canadian provinces, she points out that still, “On any given day, nearly 50 women will seek protection from a shelter or transition home in Newfoundland and Labrador” (18). In 1988, the Newfoundland Status of Women Council (now called the St. John’s Status of Women Council) began to tackle the issue of sexual violence and fought to raise community awareness and for the establishment of a Rape Crisis Center (Hartery 2006). In 1993, the first Provincial Strategy Against Violence began a series of public consultations, during which feminists enjoyed some modest success in introducing a gender-based analysis into the strategy. The grassroots feminist community networks that exist in many regions in NL assisted in evaluating the strategy and ensured that voices from around the province were heard. George (2000) maintains, however, that the NL government’s approach to gender-based violence via the strategy was limited:

On the one hand, it has expanded its attention to violence and the experience of vulnerable populations, in its plan to

create ‘safe, caring’ communities. On the other, the structural changes it has developed and the fiscal restraint it exercises has made these initiatives difficult to realize in a meaningful way. (181)

The language of ‘safe and caring communities’ invoked in the strategy did not take into account structural inequalities and how vulnerabilities to and experiences of violence are shaped by sexism, racism, and other systems of power (George 2000; Bograd 2005). According to Janine Brodie (2002), the lack of attention to systematic inequalities is typical of neoliberal state strategies that seek to address gender-based violence. Fiscal constraints precipitated by the cod moratorium, the resultant major downturn in the local economy, and the province’s enhanced dependence on the federal government limited the provincial government’s willingness and ability to provide the necessary services to make the strategy a success (George 2000, 2011). Feminists all around the province, however, continued to advocate for a long-term strategy against violence. In 2006, the NL government established a six-year Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) action plan (George 2011).

Launched in 2009, the Purple Ribbon Campaign was one of four VPI campaigns. Others focused on youth violence, child abuse, and elder abuse. The VPI worked across multiple government departments and consulted with a variety of community partners and stakeholders. These included the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, local Status of Women Councils, the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and their member shelters, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault and Crisis Prevention Centre, the Seniors’ Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador, the St. John’s Native Friendship Centre, the Multicultural Women’s Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, among others (VPI 2013b). The VPI was centered in the Women’s Policy Office (WPO), which is part of the Executive Council of the provincial government (George 2000). Although the VPI action plan concluded in 2012 (VPI 2013b), a new plan is currently under development.

Successes and Tensions in a Neoliberal and Neoconservative Climate

The Purple Ribbon Campaign is unique among anti-violence campaigns in the Atlantic provinces in

that it incorporated key elements of feminist analyses of gender-based violence in its framework, message, and content, while enjoying substantial government funding. At the same time, neoliberal and neoconservative discourses did shape how this government-sponsored campaign was framed, a trend that feminist anti-violence scholars and activists have identified as characteristic of state responses to violence against women in other regions in Canada beginning in the 1980s (Beres, Crow, and Gottell 2009; Brodie 2002). In this section, I consider key components of the Purple Ribbon Campaign—the framework, message, content, and funding—with this tension in mind.

The Framework

The 2006 VPI action plan, within which the Purple Ribbon Campaign developed, included a series of Guiding Principles. The “core principle” was articulated as follows:

The core principle is that the social and cultural roots of violence are based on inequality. While women, children, seniors and persons with disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence, other factors such as disability, sexual orientation, economic status or racial origin can put them at even higher risk. Society reinforces violence through expressions of sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, racism and other biased attitudes. (VPI 2013b)

Given that “inequality” and the “social and cultural roots” of violence were specifically recognized, the VPI Guiding Principles were congruent with feminist analyses that emphasize that violence is based in structural inequalities. The naming of specific social identities and systems of power that increase vulnerability to violence (Johnson and Colpitts 2013) indicates that an intersectional feminist understanding of violence was incorporated into the action plan. This framing could be considered a feminist success because neoliberal discourse does not recognize systemic oppression on the basis of gender, race, or any other social division (Brodie 2002). In the Atlantic region, the Prince Edward Island (PEI) government is the only other provincial government to recognize that structural inequality contributes to “family violence” in its official anti-violence campaign, citing “injustice based on sex, race, age, class, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability” as a causal factor (Government of PEI 2014). Unlike

NL, however, PEI does not name the systems of power, termed “biased attitudes” in the above quote, that contribute to these inequalities.

Contrary to feminist analyses, neoliberal states also tend to treat gender-based violence as a problem caused by individuals (Levan 1996). In Canada, this trend is often reflected in the use of such terms as ‘family violence’ or ‘domestic violence’ in federal and provincial government anti-violence campaigns, including those in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and PEI (Executive Council Office 2014; Government of PEI 2014; Newman and White 2006; Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women 2013). Andrea Levan (1996) asserts that these terms locate “the problem in the family rather than in a societal system of gender relations, and furthermore, obscure who was doing what to whom” (330). Thus, many feminists favour the language of ‘male violence against women’ or other similarly gendered terms because they make gender and structural inequalities visible (Walker 1990). The Purple Ribbon Campaign adopted this latter terminology in all its materials. (However, the provincial legal system often uses the term ‘family violence,’ particularly in reference to legal provisions associated with its Family Violence Protection Act (VPI 2013a)). Breines and Gordon (1983) are also critical of the umbrella terms ‘family’ or ‘domestic violence’ because they conflate very different relationships of violence—intimate partner violence, child abuse, and elder abuse—rather than recognizing that different analytical approaches and policy responses are required in each case. While the PEI government has launched one campaign that seeks to address these different forms of violence, NL developed separate violence prevention strategies to address intimate partner violence, child abuse, youth violence, and elder abuse (Government of PEI 2014; VPI 2013b).

The Message

The Purple Ribbon Campaign also stands out in the Atlantic region because of its unique message about gender-based violence, which has been disseminated through a series of print ads, a television commercial, and its website, respectwomen.ca. Both the ads and commercial are directed at families with male children; they encourage parents, and particularly fathers as primary male role models, to instill respect for women’s equality in their son(s) while they are teaching them

other fundamental skills and values, such as the tying of shoes and importance of sharing. The tagline in these print ads and the commercial is: "I will show him how to respect women" (VPI 2013a; see www.respect-women.ca to view the social marketing materials). In the press release announcing the campaign, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women stated, "If our young boys are taught to respect women from day one, then we have tackled a major obstacle in preventing violence against women in the future" (Executive Council 2009). The ads direct viewers to the campaign's website where they can obtain detailed information about gender-based violence in the province (www.respectwomen.ca).

The Purple Ribbon Campaign tagline makes violence against women explicit, naming men as the leading perpetrators of gender-based violence. This message is consistent with the radical feminist perspective on violence and, by using the umbrella term "women," it does not signal women's different positionalities and their varying vulnerabilities to and experiences of violence. That said, this gendered message is significant, especially given that neoliberal states tend to remove gender from the language of social policy (Kingfisher 2002). In Canada, neoliberalism has worked to ensure that, "Gendered identity...is now coded as just one of the many identities that make up the Canadian multicultural mosaic, rather than as a fundamental structuring principle informing the daily lives of Canadians, and a critical component of citizenship equality" (Brodie and Bakker 2008, 70). In this latter framing, women escaping violence become one of many 'special interest' groups looking for state support (Gotell 2007). When gender-based violence does gain attention, federal and provincial governments would typically prefer to fund a gender-neutral message about violence, rather than a woman-centered one (Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). Hence, it is noteworthy that the NL government has funded an explicitly woman-centered message.

The way in which the message of the Purple Ribbon Campaign is couched in the notion of respect and boys learning to respect women is also consistent with multiple feminist analyses of gender-based violence. Respect, in this instance, suggests an understanding of different power differentials, which feminists have identified as creating the conditions in which gender-based violence occurs. Respect is also linked to equality in

the campaign's print ads (VPI 2013a). Some feminists have argued that boys are socialized from childhood to see violence, aggression, and toughness as acceptable, and often necessary, markers of hegemonic masculinity (Anderson 2005; Walker, 1992). The comments made by Minister Responsible for the Status of Women cited above support this understanding. The campaign's emphasis on teaching boys to respect women from an early age can be seen as an attempt to disrupt socialization into violent forms of masculine behaviour.

Despite these successes, neoliberal ideas have clearly influenced this takeaway message. Neoliberalism individualizes social problems, including violence, and encourages people to rely on themselves and their families, rather than the state, to deal with them (Kingfisher 2002). The message, "I will show him how to respect women," is directed at parents and especially fathers, who are asked to assume primary responsibility for addressing gender-based violence and ensuring that their sons will not be a part of the problem in the future. This message ignores the insights of intersectional feminist analyses of violence, that insist that gender-based violence is complex and strategies to combat it must take into account multiple systems and institutions of power that support it, including the state.

The Content

One feature that is common to all anti-violence campaigns in the Atlantic provinces is the provision of a list of resources, such as phone numbers for police, shelters, crisis lines, and affordable housing, for women seeking to leave violent situations. All four provincial websites have incorporated a liberal feminist emphasis on conceptualizing gender-based violence as a crime and stressing how the police and the justice system can help to ensure that the perpetrator is charged and the violence is stopped. However, this law and order approach overlooks the fact that many women who experience violence do not wish to involve police or the criminal justice system. Kelly (2003) cites a number of reasons why that might be the case: "distrust of police and state authority; fears that bringing in outsiders will escalate the violence; love for the abuser; a desire to keep the family and relationship together; feeling shame about the violence; and wanting to avoid public disclosure and exposure" (51). Furthermore, many women in abusive relationships depend financially on their partner or their partner's family and would not be able to make ends

meet without that support (Bennett, Goodman, and Dutton 1999). Mandatory charging in cases of assault in intimate relationships has resulted in some women also being charged after using physical force in self-defence (Ontario Women's Justice Network 2013). The Purple Ribbon Campaign and the Nova Scotia Domestic Violence Resource Center are the only campaigns in the Atlantic region that openly acknowledge these barriers on their websites. Both still encourage women to seek police assistance as a primary action, but also identify other options such as shelters, crisis lines, counselling centers, and seeking support from family and friends.

While the criminalization of gender-based violence was a key success of liberal feminism in Canada, Bohmer et al. (2002) argue that a criminal justice approach has the potential to take much of the power in these situations away from women survivors, as they have little control over what happens to their partner after police are involved. Rather, power is placed in the hands of the state and women who have experienced violence are relegated to the role of victim and their resistance and empowerment are overlooked (Gotell 1998). The criminal justice approach, evident in the Purple Ribbon Campaign and other provincial government-sponsored anti-violence initiatives, is also consistent with neoliberal and neoconservative discourses of law and order as a means of social control. Violent crimes are understood as acts committed by angry individuals in individual families, and not as symptoms of wider structural problems that need to be addressed (Gotell 1998). Another goal of neoconservatism is to maintain the integrity of heterosexual marriage and the traditional nuclear family (Brown 2006). By framing of gender-based violence as an individual crime within dysfunctional families, these institutions and the unequal power relations within them remain unchallenged (Bryson 2003; Gotell 1998).

Nevertheless, the Purple Ribbon Campaign can also be commended because it adopts an intersectional analysis of violence in many of the materials on its website, although it does not specifically use the term 'intersectionality.' For example, the statement prefacing the fact sheet on statistics on violence against women in the province integrates an intersectional perspective :

How violence affects victims depends on other aspects of their lives, such as their age, ethnicity, background, lev-

el of ability and sexual orientation, to name only a few. These multiple dimensions are weaved into all life experiences. For women, the impact and severity of violence can depend on many physical, social, and economic factors. (VPI 2013a)

The campaign website also includes specific information on violence as it affects different groups of marginalized women, a list of barriers that prevent women from leaving a violent relationship, which indicates an understanding of structural power relations, and a special section on additional challenges rural women face when seeking assistance (VPI 2013a). In the Atlantic region, the Purple Ribbon Campaign is the most comprehensive in this respect, although the Nova Scotia website includes content that speaks to Indigenous women, African Nova Scotian women, and women with disabilities (Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women 2013).

Despite the breadth of the Purple Ribbon Campaign website, it includes only one section on the specifics of violence against Indigenous women, and very little of the information in that section is specific to the province (VPI 2013a). Indigenous women's experiences of violence were not represented in the first Provincial Strategy Against Violence (George 2000). There are a substantial number of Mi'kmaq, Innu, Inuit, and Métis women in the province who face their own unique challenges in regard to gender-based violence that, like Indigenous women in other parts of Canada, are often complicated by geographic isolation and the legacies of colonization (Johnson and Colpitts 2013). Glynis George (2011) writes that the Women's Policy Office has not been able to successfully integrate many of the concerns and priorities of Indigenous and settler feminists in policy and action plans. That said, the Aboriginal Women's Violence Prevention Grants program, which is another component of the VPI, funds specific gender-based anti-violence programs in Indigenous communities on the island and in Labrador (VPI 2013b).

The Funding

The amount of NL government funding allocated to Violence Prevention Initiative and the Purple Ribbon Campaign can be interpreted as another feminist success in their efforts to ensure that gender-based

anti-violence work remained on the provincial agenda. An examination of NL provincial budgets from 1999 to 2012 indicates that the budget for Women's Policy stream, which encompasses both the Women's Policy Office and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, grew almost every year.

This increase has been quite dramatic, with the amount budgeted growing from \$685,600 in 1999 to \$4,886,300 in 2011 and dropping slightly to \$4,755,500 in 2012 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 1999, 2011, 2012). In comparison, funding for the government branches that deal with women's issues in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 2012 was \$774,000 and \$3,198,000 respectively (Government of New Brunswick 2012; Government of Nova Scotia 2012). The NL government's growing funding package for the Women's Policy stream is particularly noteworthy in a neoliberal era of fiscal restraint and debt reduction (Gotell 1998). Federal and provincial governments have increasingly invoked fiscal restraint as a justification to impose funding cuts in various sectors, including feminist organizations who do gender-based anti-violence work, women's policy and anti-violence initiatives, and social welfare programs, such as income support and healthcare, the absence of which can increase women's vulnerabilities to violence (Cohen and Pulkingham 2009; Gotell 1998). Newfoundland and Labrador is certainly not immune to this fiscal strategy. The 2013 budget included particularly harsh cuts to the health care system, eliminating over 200 jobs (CBC News, 2013). Within this landscape, it is possible to hypothesize that the generous funding allocated to the Women's Policy stream and, within it, the Purple Ribbon Campaign might in part be due to its compatibility with a neoliberal pro-nuclear family and law and order agenda.

The Purple Ribbon Campaign was the last of four anti-violence campaigns funded under the VPI. Bégin (1997) has argued that, since the emergence of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, the focus of social programming has shifted to those deemed most 'deserving' of state support. In Canada, this has meant that social program funding directed towards women's equality has steadily been reallocated to the wellbeing of children and families (Brodie and Bakker 2007; Morrow, Hankivsky, and Varcoe 2004). In the area of violence prevention funding, children and the elderly are typically deemed to be the 'most deserving' of violence

protection from the state (Bégin 1997). Indeed, the VPI campaigns on child abuse, elder abuse, and youth violence were all implemented a year or two before the Purple Ribbon Campaign was launched (VPI 2013b).

Looking Forward

Given that the federal government actively encourages non-profit organizations to move towards a corporate service provision model so they come to rely less on state funding, feminist alliances with provincial governments may be an even more necessary step in future activism. The infamous ten percent rule, which allows non-profits to dedicate only ten percent of their resources to advocacy, limits the ability of feminist organizations to pursue the kinds of actions encouraged in feminist analyses of violence on their own (Bonisteel and Green 2005). However, the example of the Purple Ribbon Campaign shows that a government-sponsored campaign on gender-based violence can successfully retain key elements of feminist analyses of violence, including explicitly gendered terminology, the lens of structural inequality, and a consideration of intersectionality, in its framework, message, and content. Of course, the Purple Ribbon Campaign has not escaped the influence of the neoliberal priorities and ideologies that is the current *modus operandi* of the NL and other provincial governments. While this has certainly impeded the adoption of a deeper intersectional and structural feminist analysis of gender-based violence in NL, it is very likely that this absence has allowed the VPI and the Purple Ribbon Campaign to enjoy such a high level of government support. That said, the campaign could serve as an example to the other Atlantic provinces in terms of how to integrate a degree of feminist analyses into their own gender-based violence initiatives. There is also reason to be optimistic that feminist analyses of violence will continue to shape the new VPI action plan and anti-violence initiatives that are currently under development in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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La Grande Sartreuse?: Re-citing Simone de Beauvoir in Feminist Theory

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Abstract

This paper has two goals: to show why Clare Hemmings' work, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011), which focuses on the types and consequences of feminist "stories," should be applied to Simone de Beauvoir; and to argue that Beauvoir's place in the history of feminist thinking should be revisited. I propose to use some of the critical tools gleaned from Hemmings' text to think through the place of Simone de Beauvoir in feminist theoretical storytelling.
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Résumé

Cet article a un objectif double : démontrer pourquoi le travail de Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011), qui met l'accent sur les types et les conséquences des « récits » féministes, doit s'appliquer à Simone de Beauvoir, et faire valoir que la place de Beauvoir dans l'histoire de la pensée féministe doit être réexaminée. Je propose d'utiliser certains des outils critiques du texte de Hemmings pour réfléchir à la place de Simone de Beauvoir dans la narration théorique féministe.

Why should we read *The Second Sex*?...She's out-of-date, male-identified and just Sartrean anyway. (Simons 2010, 909-910)

Most scholars and teachers of feminist theory will engage with Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) at some point during their careers and many are also drawn to her memoirs, novels, and other political writings. In particular, the introduction to *The Second Sex* is widely taught to introduce feminist theory, second-wave feminism, existentialist feminism, and other topics. Despite this popularity, Beauvoir scholar Mary Dietz (1992) has argued that *The Second Sex* bears a striking resemblance to the Bible: "[it is] much worshipped, often quoted and little read" (78). To extend the analogy, *The Second Sex* also has translation issues, poses interpretive difficulties, and contains its own "golden rule" ("One is not born, but becomes a woman"). In trying to make sense of Beauvoir's position in feminist scholarship and teaching, I was struck by usefulness of Clare Hemmings' (2011) self-reflexive reading of feminist citational practices and storytelling, offered in *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*.

Hemmings identifies what she calls the "stories" that emerge from feminist theorizing and describes how these stories build a picture of feminisms' past and feminisms' possibilities for the future. She argues that, while stories are informative and necessary explanatory vehicles, they often gloss and oversimplify the novelty of feminist intellectual work. Hemmings' analysis focuses on citational practices in some of the foremost feminist academic journals (*Signs*, *Feminist Review*, *Feminist Theory*, and others). By asking questions like "who do we cite..." she exposes the assumptions that emerge from feminist storytelling. For Hemmings (2011), stories are:

the overall tales feminists tell about what has happened in the last thirty to forty years of Western feminist theory and

indicate too their status as ‘myth’ or common opinion. By ‘narratives’ I mean the textual refrains (content and pattern) used to tell these stories and their movement across time and space. (227)

Stories and narratives, she argues, affect the direction of feminist theorizing and build a political grammar that delimits how one might position oneself as a feminist scholar. A set of recurring stories that Hemmings is interested in delineating is the various intellectual and activist trajectories of second wave feminism, as well as how critique and transformation led to new directions or waves.

In much of her analysis, Hemmings does not cite particular instantiations of these stories, but relies instead on their appeal as *familiar*. In other words, certain ways of telling and retelling feminist history often appeal to us without a need for justification because we recognize them. Similarly, my analysis here focuses on a sense of familiarity embedded in common stories told about Beauvoir and the “common opinions” and “myths” about her work and life (and especially the intersection of her work and life). My sense of familiarity is shaped by my own status as a scholar who moves between disciplines (philosophy, women’s and gender studies, and others). In some ways, I continue to try to make sense of how a philosophy professor could tell me in the second year of my undergraduate degree *not* to write a paper on *The Second Sex* because it was *merely* a sociological application of Jean-Paul Sartre’s ideas (so, write a paper on him instead). At the same time, I have occupied other intellectual spaces where Beauvoirian scholarship crackled with complexity. Broadly, using Hemmings’ provocative work, I want to examine the stories told about Beauvoir so that the *how* of the telling can itself be a further entry point for understanding feminist storytelling practices.

Telling Feminist Stories

Telling stories about where feminism has been and where it is going not only locates the speaker, but also reveals a set of concepts animating the history of feminist analysis. Within these stories, Hemmings (2011) in particular identifies three “interlocking narratives of progress, loss, and return that oversimplify this complex history and position feminist subjects as needing to inhabit a theoretical and political cutting edge in

the present” (3). The temporal structure of these narratives often leads to narratives of disavowal or being “beyond” past thinkers. Not only do these narratives have a temporal structure, but they also carry an affective tone. Narratives of *progress* track what feminist analysis has “overcome” through critique and provide a positive account of excitement and delight for the future (35). Narratives of *loss* centre on how feminism’s radical political potential has given way to the institutionalization of feminism (in the academy) and political individualism and thus have an affect of disappointment or grief (64). Progress and loss narratives share a common structure, but differ in affective texture:

They both construct a heroine who inhabits a positive affective state or a negative affective state in progress or loss narratives respectively. Both require emotional attachment to the tale told in order to remain its subject and continue to safeguard or transform feminist meaning in heroic mode. Both make use of prior, atextual attachments to feminism, assume that the reader wants to be a ‘good’ feminist and not a ‘bad’ one, and propose that there is only one way to be properly feminist in the current moment. (62-63)

Because of temporal positioning and affective tone, narratives that oversimplify a thinker’s position in feminist debates and struggles also lend themselves to a reductive and dichotomous moral reading that encourages the reader to take sides.

In describing how some feminist intellectual practices tend toward the reductive, Hemmings’ analysis itself runs the risk of reductive readings. Her focus, however, allows for thinking carefully about framing practices themselves, especially how affect attaches to feminist stories. Drawing our attention to feminist affect in intellectual practices is especially helpful, I think, since feminist scholarship is not simply about knowledge production, but aims for social change; sometimes one might be energized and hopeful about this possibility, and other times one might be (rightly) pessimistic or frustrated. An example of these feminist affects is a common response to loss narratives, which are *return* narratives that attempt to spark an affect of hope where one can return to the “good old days” (Meagher 2012, 601). Hemmings (2011) gives a voice to return narratives: “We may have been convinced by the turn to language, a poststructuralist capacity to deconstruct power

and value difference, but we know better now” (4). Even though each narrative has different affects, Hemmings argues that one of affect’s unique qualities is that it permits all three narratives to overlap in one’s thinking without overt contradiction (5).

Hemmings further captures a particular form of feminist framing that encourages a linear temporal displacement of thinkers through a narrative teleology of idea -> critique -> overcoming critique. One consequence of linear displacement is that ideas are sweepingly dismissed as no longer relevant because they did not survive an overly harsh critique. Conversely, overcoming critique in linear displacement might also suggest that an idea has *solved* more problems than it actually did, thus marking the perhaps still relevant critique as ‘having been overcome’. Ladelle McWhorter (2004), for example, has expressed reservations about intersectionality that speak to the problems associated with linear displacement of critiques. Though intersectionality has vast potential for rethinking multiple overlapping forces of oppression and how power operates within oppositional politics, for McWhorter, it can also be used as a catch-all to avoid charges of racism and classism (39). Consequently, many important critiques in feminist analysis remain unaddressed and unfortunately, they are marked as having been addressed. Paying attention to these practices of critical displacement, Hemmings argues, reveals operating assumptions about what scholarly problems require feminist attention. In general, loss, return, and progress narratives narrow the pool of available feminist theoretical resources. Thus, she endorses feminist practices of revisiting thinkers constructed as “past” to complicate stories and open possibilities for new ways of thinking and forms of critique in the present. According to Hemmings, canonical figures ought to be revisited not just because they are part of an existing feminist canon, but as a way of retracing how framing practices have produced current problems.

Hemmings further observes that one of the important dimensions of loss narratives is the story about how feminism has lost its radical political edge. This narrative suggests that, for example, Judith Butler and other queer theorists are too poststructuralist and not political enough. At the same time, progress narratives operate as a parallel narrative of *improvement* in the temporality of feminist theory. We are “beyond” the

mistakes of the 1980s, 1990s, and especially the 1940s when Beauvoir was writing. Thought in this way, temporalities of progress create a drive to be current in the present, which allows the dismissal of past feminisms as necessarily “old-fashioned.” Hemmings urges us to think through ideas on their own merit—to think with theorists that appeal to us in the context in which we are doing our work, instead of focusing on what is necessarily cutting-edge. This poses a larger question about feminist intellectual practices: What happens to storytelling when one becomes aware of and tries to shift feminist narratives of progress, loss, and return? If we can draw normative advice from Hemmings’ analysis, it suggests that we no longer construct a future teleology wherein we surpass and disavow theorists—like Beauvoir—who may be useful for making sense of current debates in feminist politics.

Beauvoir’s “Star Status”

Linda Zerilli (2012) is also engaged in reflecting on feminist intellectual framing practices. She argues that Beauvoir has become an especially salient figure for thinking through what amounts to “good” or “bad” feminism (n.p.). One’s position on Beauvoir, Zerilli argues, becomes a test of acceptability to the normative standards of academic feminism. She writes:

Our rhetorical productions of the good (feminist) Beauvoir versus the bad (not so feminist or not the right kind of feminist) Beauvoir are symptomatic of our reluctance to accept a feminist theory without solace, by which I mean a feminist theory that refuses to yield the identities of victim and victor, oppressed and oppressor, and, consequently, a feminist theory that resists our understandable but also potentially dangerous desire for directives in the face of social injustice. (n.p.)

Zerilli’s challenge to feminist theory offers a way of reflecting on how a theorist, such as Beauvoir, fits into the tradition of feminist storytelling, especially in light of how feminism generates normative politics. Hemmings (2011) writes that it is especially feminist theorists with “star status” who are used in citational practices to frame feminist intellectual work. Scholars with “star status” are seen as moving a discipline forward, are widely cited, are often fixed to a particular decade, and are positioned at the top of hierarchies of thinkers so as

to represent entire schools of thought (e.g., one scholar is taken to represent postmodern feminism or psychoanalytic feminism) (176-177). Individual thinkers are often positioned as responding to previous ideas and moving the set of questions they confront into a new zone of inquiry. One result of this process is that theorists with “star status” become bigger targets of feminist critique and a touchstone for the framing of intellectual projects. Beauvoir’s place in framing practices reveals her “star status” and my argument is that this ongoing practice affects how her ideas are interpreted and taught. For example, many feminist texts that have little to do with Beauvoir will begin by quoting “one is not born a woman” in order to set up gender as a social construction, an interpretation that, as I discuss below, is not faithful to her text.

According to Hemmings (2011), one dimension of “star status” is to be “decade-fixed.” For example, Butler’s theoretical “moment” is decade-fixed to the 1990s, when she contributed to a poststructuralist, and maybe anti-essentialist, turn in feminist theory. Interestingly, Beauvoir’s decade positioning is ambivalent. Although *The Second Sex* came out in French in 1949 and 1951 and the first English translation was available in 1953, it remained relatively obscure in Anglo-American feminist circles and reached wider circulation only once the second-wave feminist movement was underway a decade or so later. Because *The Second Sex* is closely associated with second-wave feminism, Beauvoir’s work is often positioned in progress narratives as something that has been overcome. A familiar story is that *The Second Sex* is essentialist and negative about the female body (Ruhl 2002) and thus, is no longer relevant for queer and postmodern thinkers who “overcame” essentialism during the postmodern turn in the 1990s. At the same time, Beauvoir is also read along other lines/temporalities. Karen Vintges (1999) enacts a kind of return narrative, when she argues that not only is *The Second Sex* not essentialist, but that it also contains the relevant seeds for a poststructuralist approach to the self that buttresses many of the criticisms of Beauvoir’s text. Loss narratives could focus on the radical accountability of the existentialist feminism in *The Second Sex*, in that it urges women to refuse complicity in their oppression. Perhaps I too am enacting a loss narrative in arguing for Beauvoir to be revisited.

Heterocitation

Hemmings’ analysis helps to make sense of the reading of Beauvoir as merely *applying* Jean-Paul Sartre’s ideas to the situation of women. Not only is Beauvoir a “star,” but she was also in a long term relationship with a “star,” which also complicates how she has been interpreted (though their relationship rarely influences how Sartre is interpreted). Libraries continue to brim with secondary (and feminist) literature that places Beauvoir and her intellectual work in a derivative subject position (for example, Leighton 1975; McMillan 1982; Hekman 1990; Moi 1993) in relation to Sartre and his work. In philosophical circles, her work is still often disregarded and devalued; it is framed as a sociological application of Sartre’s ontology and is rarely seen as making a unique contribution to existential-phenomenology (Simons 1999, 51). Zerilli (2012) rightly notes that if Beauvoir’s text merely applied Sartrean ontology to gender, then it would have been a much shorter work.

The reading of Beauvoir as derivative fits into a larger pattern that attaches to theorists with “star status” that Hemmings labels “heterocitation.” In heterocitation, a male intellectual precursor is identified as the *primary* and *exclusive* influence on the female feminist thinker’s ideas. Just as heterosexuality is closely tied to monogamy, a female feminist thinker is usually connected to a *single* intellectual precursor. Two examples immediately come to the fore: Michel Foucault is often cited as a primary influence on Butler and Jacques Derrida is cited as a primary influence on Gayatri Spivak. Beauvoir’s heterocitation to Sartre fits squarely in Hemmings’ analysis. As Hemmings argues, heterocitation is a heteronormative reading that ignores other possibilities, such as Butler’s lesbian connections to Monique Wittig as well as Beauvoir’s ambiguous sexuality (whose relationships with women are rarely explored save for Simons 1992).

Beauvoir did not block some of the interpretations of her work as derivative because she regularly disavowed the label “philosopher.” She often insisted, as she does in *Force of Circumstance* (1965), that Sartre was the philosopher, but she was not (12). However, Margaret Simons (1999) interprets Beauvoir’s disavowal as meaning that she did not create a systematic philosophy to understand and shed light on all aspects of philosophy (ontology, ethics, and so on) (103). Some

have argued for Beauvoir's influence on Sartre's work as a way of elevating her status to that of philosopher (Fullbrook 1999). Charlotte Witt (2006) cautions against such an interpretation, calling it the "best supporting actress" approach because it does not acknowledge the originality or independence of her work (542). On the question of influence, Simons (1999) has argued that Beauvoir and Sartre's works cannot be understood without reference to *each other*. In other words, their work should be approached as a conversation that involved critique and the development of different trajectories of thinking over time, rather than a one-way, exclusive relationship (103).

Heterocitation can be especially pernicious when it is used to mark the feminist thinker's *departure* from feminism. Sartre's ideas have been quite rightly criticized as misogynistic, somatophobic, and pessimistic, but they are not *merely* so. If Beauvoir's personal and intellectual relationship with Sartre is considered *ipso facto* a departure from feminism, her thinking is not understood as properly independent and creative. An unsettling conclusion when applying heterocitation to Beauvoir and Sartre would be that Sartre is responsible in part (or more) for the radical *feminist* ideas contained in *The Second Sex*. Sartre's involvement in Beauvoir's life and writing is often used as a way of marking her departure(s) from feminism or a corruption of her otherwise feminist sensibilities, and as proof that she did not transcend her situation. How do we police these departures and what is it that she is departing *from*? The intellectual losses that result from policing ideas at the outset deplete the pool of available feminist theoretical resources in general and, according to Hemmings, actually move feminism *away* from *itself* through a process of narrowing.

One way in which the interpretation of Beauvoir's thinking as derivative affects how she is understood lies in relation to the central arguments of *The Second Sex*. For example, Susan Hekman (1990), a feminist commentator on Beauvoir, has argued that,

The source of the problem is that there is a contradiction between the first and the second parts of her [Beauvoir's] book. In the first part she defines woman the other as primordial and necessary...In the second part of the book, however, she takes an entirely different tack. In her analysis of how woman is made, woman becomes a socially

constituted being that can, by implication, be constituted differently if different social practices were instituted. (76)

Sara Heinämaa (2003), who reads Beauvoir as more closely aligned with Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty than Sartre, maintains that this reading of Beauvoir is contradictory because of its over-association with Sartre's (1966) ontology in *Being and Nothingness*. Further, she cautions that, "[a]s long as we interpret her claims within the sex/gender framework or within the framework of Sartrean philosophy, the book seems self-refuting" (xvi). Unlike Hekman (1990), Heinämaa argues that there is a change in *focus* between volume one and volume two of *The Second Sex*, but not a shift in the general theory. The first half of the book focuses on what has been said about women (in philosophy, biology, psychology, and so on), while the second half concentrates on how one experiences oneself in response to what has been said about women. Many Beauvoir scholars have argued that Beauvoir's text amounts to a substantial critique of Sartrean individualism and absolute freedom (Zerilli 2012, n.p.). Heterocitation, then, robs us of complicated readings of Beauvoir by narrowing her work down to a Sartrean framework.

For scholars of feminist theory, it was exciting and encouraging to have a new translation of a canonical work such as *The Second Sex* published in 2010. Many hoped that this translation would provide a fresh look at Beauvoir's intellectual legacy. In a review that I co-wrote with Emily Parker (2012), we discussed problems with the volume that Knopf Publishing commissioned from translators Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier. If one chooses to teach the new version (and, as Parker and I discuss, it is not clear that we should), I strongly caution *against* reading the introduction by Judith Thurman (2010), which reiterates outdated interpretations of Beauvoir's intellectual achievements, falling into many of the problematic storytelling traps I have identified. She emphasizes that Beauvoir felt inferior to Sartre, thus setting up the interpretation of Beauvoir in a secondary subject position. The introduction focuses on Beauvoir's personal psychology, her romantic attachments, and her personal struggles with feminine expectations and whether she "lived up" to the critique contained in *The Second Sex* in her personal relationships. Thurman presents Beauvoir as a constructivist who denies the biological realities of

the body and who is horrified by the female body in particular. Beauvoir's negative characterization of female bodies is interpreted as once again undercutting her feminism (xv).

Feminist Futures: Re-citing Beauvoir

In Beauvoir's case, her intellectual and intimate partnership with Sartre continues to obviate considerations of her work as relevant to contemporary feminism. This coupling is, in part, secured by reading Beauvoir without a background in existential phenomenology, which is necessary for understanding the conversations in which she was intervening. Her work is not easy to read; for example, she often quotes philosophers that contradict each other, she is not explicit about her methodology, and she is less than concise. If Beauvoir is not approached as an inventive and agential thinker, it may be tempting to attribute her dense philosophical ideas and their obscurity to Sartre's influence. Penelope Deutscher (1997), however, cautions against a recuperative reading of Beauvoir that enforces conceptual clarity and hierarchical explanations (see also Parker 2012, 941). She argues instead that Beauvoir's work must be approached as troubled, full of tensions and difficulties because the situation of oppression she was trying to describe was *itself* riddled with ambiguities (Deutscher 1997, 90-91).

I realize that this meta-analysis of how we do feminist theorizing paints feminist theory with too few brushes. It is meant to be evocative and to disrupt the narrative temporalities that we have learned so that we may "briefly glimpse a different history that emerges in the retelling" (Hemmings 2011, 82). This is why Hemmings re-cites Butler by interpreting her through the influence of Wittig, rather than Foucault. In so doing, she opens up interpretations of Butler that link her more closely to lesbian and radical politics—something that does not come through as clearly when she is read solely as influenced by Foucault. Further, a re-citation of Butler *via Beauvoir* could prove to be fascinating future work since it influenced Butler's (1988) significant essay on gender constitution.

Hemmings draws out the affective attachments that are cultivated by narratives and the ways in which they form the basis of possibilities for future theorizing. Do negative feminist feelings towards Sartre foreclose future interpretations of Beauvoir's work? If so, how

could we re-cite Beauvoir in ways that disrupt these affects? Who is the Wittig through which she can be re-cited? Both Heinämaa (2003) and Deborah Bergoffen (1997) read her through Husserl, which runs the risk again of heterocitation, though not as sharply as in the case of Sartre. A possible re-citation for *The Second Sex* would be to think through her work on women as influenced by her interest in racism, as she draws many analogies and dis-analogies between the situation of women and Black people in America. She credits the descriptions of racism in Richard Wright's 1930 novel, *Native Son*, as awakening her to greater consciousness of how oppression affects one's ability to express their freedom in the world. There are, however, good reasons to approach such a reading with caution, as *The Second Sex* contains serious issues with regard to race and racial analysis that I do not intend to gloss over (Markowitz 2009). That said, if we re-cite *The Second Sex* in this way, would it change the radical possibilities contained in the text? Would it reveal novel connections to anti-racist feminism and possibilities for coalition in Beauvoir's work? Thinking through Beauvoir with Wright could open up new possibilities for reading complexity about race and gender back into *The Second Sex*, which is sometimes too quickly dismissed as (and rightly criticized for) focusing too heavily on the situation of white women. Further, it may be useful to understand *The Second Sex* in relation to some of her subsequent works, such as the English publication of her preface to her work on the Djamila Boupacha case (Beauvoir 2012), which extended her theory of the Other to the case of French colonization of Algeria. In this vein, scholarship on Beauvoir as an anti-colonial theorist is beginning to emerge (Kruks 2005; Nya 2014).

Conclusion

Zerilli (2012) captures the continually vexing position of analyzing and interpreting Beauvoir's intellectual work. She argues that the contemporary interpreter of Beauvoir will likely encounter an either/or choice between interpretive narratives. She writes:

It is not my purpose here to convince readers that Simone de Beauvoir is the most important feminist intellectual of the twentieth century or that *The Second Sex* changed the lives of thousands of women. I want to resist the temptation to shower Beauvoir with accolades or to rescue the

so-called mother of second-wave feminism from her feminist critics, if not her murderous daughters. I am reticent to assume the unlikely position of knight errant - Beauvoir is no lady in distress. More importantly though, I suspect that to give in to that temptation or wish would be to contribute to what appears to be the either/or interpretive approach to Beauvoir: namely, as Moi herself notes, the twin tendencies in feminist scholarship either to idealize Beauvoir as the perfect feminist or to condemn her for having betrayed feminism. Either she criticized the masculine subject of modernity or she embraced it as a model for women. Either her relationship with Sartre was the model of free union or it was an instance of female subordination. Either she felt solidarity with women or she refused to identify herself as a woman. And so on. (n.p.)

I hope that what I have offered here about heterocitation and feminist storytelling practices will, in part, help to undo some of the force of the dichotomous reading of Beauvoir that Zerilli identifies. My ending is necessarily speculative, since I do not know the best or most creative ways to suggest that Beauvoir should be re-cited. I hope that she will be revisited not because she is a "star," but because reading her in multiple registers can make us think carefully about the feminist intellectual project of reading Beauvoir and what we are doing when we tell feminist stories.

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Having, Being, and Doing Privilege: Three Lenses for Focusing on Goals in Feminist Classrooms

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Abstract

Using two published accounts of teaching experience in Women's Studies classrooms by way of illustration, I argue that seeing privilege through three lenses—something one has, something one is, and something one does—can assist feminist educators in meeting diverse goals in their anti-oppression classrooms as they continue to grapple with the messy and often contradictory challenges of privilege.

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Résumé

Selon deux récits publiés sur des expériences d'enseignement dans les cours d'études des femmes à titre d'illustration, je fais valoir que le fait de considérer le privilège sous trois aspects—soit quelque chose que l'on a, quelque chose que l'on est et quelque chose que l'on fait—peut aider les éducateurs féministes à répondre à différents objectifs dans leurs cours anti-oppression alors qu'ils continuent à faire face aux défis embrouillés et parfois contradictoires que pose le privilège.

Introduction

Coinciding with an enormous reorientation in feminist scholarship toward intersectionality and multiple sites of difference and power (see Davis 2008), privilege has become a central concept in feminist academic circles. Scholars, like Peggy McIntosh (2012), have provided seminal contributions to an increasingly robust literature in "privilege studies" that connects Women's and Gender Studies with anti-oppression work in other diverse disciplines. As feminist educators, teaching students about privilege is necessary, but not enough. We also routinely encounter the effects of privilege as it operates in our classrooms and among our students, but responding to the challenges created by privilege is far from a simple pedagogical task. Our ideas about what privilege is are varied, and the stories we tell and the conclusions we draw are different because of the often unspoken assumptions embedded in our understandings of privilege. These contradictions and imprecisions often become most visible in teaching, where our practice must meet the unpredictability of our students. In one striking example, Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell (1993) and Jen Bacon (2006) published accounts exploring the problems and challenges that emerged from workings of privilege in their two Women's Studies courses. Both sets of instructors intended to engage students in anti-essentialist and poststructural approaches to sexual identity. Despite similar goals, Bryson and de Castell thought that privilege prevented some students from engaging in their project, while Bacon thought that it aided some students in doing so. These examples suggest that despite the pervasiveness of privilege across contexts, its effects can often be uncertain and even contradictory.

In this paper, I begin by examining the classroom experiences described by Bryson and de Castell (1993) and Bacon (2006), and the very different conclusions they drew about privilege based on their attempts to queer their Women's Studies courses. I then outline three lenses that educators can use to understand priv-

ilege—as something we have, something we are, and something we do, which I argue encourage us to look at privilege in different ways in our day-to-day practice. To demonstrate the features of these lenses and their applicability to anti-oppression educational practice, I apply them to each of Kevin Kumashiro's (2002) four approaches to anti-oppression education. Having explored the relevance of these three lenses of privilege for varied classroom goals, I finally apply the three lenses to Bryson and de Castell's and Bacon's analyses of their two queer-focused Women's Studies classrooms to illustrate how they can broaden the questions we ask about privilege in our teaching practice and refocus our attention on the choices we are making and the goals we have as educators.

Contradictory Conclusions in Two Women's Studies Classrooms

Separated by an international border and more than a decade, Bryson and de Castell (1993) and Bacon (2006) wrote about their experiences with privilege in their respective Women's Studies classrooms. Despite having very closely related goals in their two courses on lesbian studies, their respective analyses of the effects of privilege in their classrooms came to nearly opposite conclusions. In this section, I introduce these two accounts in order to demonstrate that the problems privilege creates in our classrooms can be messy and even contradictory.

Bryson and de Castell (1993) examined privilege in the context of their Women's Studies course called "Lesbian Subjects Matter: Feminism/s from the Margins?," which they taught in 1991 at a "major urban Canadian university" (288). In doing so, they asked two main questions: "First, we asked whether the claiming of cultural representation and voice necessarily entails the inevitability of essentialism"; and "Second, we questioned whether a politics of identity—especially an identity constructed 'on the margins'—could be a viable strategy, either theoretically or politically" (289). In theoretical terms, the course addressed issues related to essentialism, identity fragmentation, and the politics of identity (288). In practical terms, students examined a series of "texts" and heard in-class guest presentations by diverse "lesbian subjects" (289). Given training in various audio-visual technologies of the day, students were asked to under-

take a project "exploring some aspect of lesbian identity/representation and making use of any appropriate technology" (289). Other required tasks included presenting their description of a hypothetical meeting between two famous lesbians (290) and producing their own journals (291).

Bryson and de Castell (1993) explained that they tried to use queer pedagogy "deliberately to interfere with, or intervene in, the production of 'normalcy' in schooled subjects" (285), but were disappointed with the results. They found that "white students who identified as heterosexual made, for example, lifeless presentations 'about lesbians' that bore painful testimony to their inability to imagine an encounter between, say, Audre Lorde and Mary Daly" (291). They also observed that, in class, their white heterosexual students mostly "'passed' as lesbian" and stayed silent (292). The authors soon realised that "in selectively focusing on lesbianism as a site for the construction of difference/s," they "had created an us/them structure" that prevented collaboration in exploring difference, even though such an exploration had been their intention (292). In the end, nearly all of their heterosexual students wrote "standard essays, created individually and produced on word processors in print form" that dealt with "topics of identity and difference by means of a critique of the heterosexism of institutional knowledges, such as other women's studies courses" (292). The authors believed that, for most of the straight-identified students in the class, the texts in question and the identity of lesbian became objects of distant inquiry and study, even though the instructors had explicitly warned against such an approach throughout the course (291).

As Bryson and de Castell (1993) further documented, only one heterosexual student, "a woman of colour" (292), joined the many lesbian and bisexual students who engaged thoughtfully and used various media in ways that meaningfully challenged the traditional "division of labour in classroom tasks," "power relations," and "received knowledges" (293). In short, the authors found that,

students usually given the space, voice, and liberty to speak and to be heard ended up in this course reverting to tepid, formulaic, disengaged essays, while students 'of difference' took permission to play with form, genre, substance, and personal/political purposes, and produced

what was undeniably outstanding, innovative, and, above all, engaged work. (293)

Due to the effects of privilege in their classroom, Bryson and de Castell indicated that all the energy of the class was used to deal with the discomfort of the heterosexual students (294). Based on their observations in this classroom, they came to the conclusion “that lesbianism, although it could of course be any other subordinated identity, is always marginal...and that lesbian identity is always fixed and stable, even in a course that explicitly critiques, challenges, deconstructs ‘lesbian identity’” (294).

Bacon (2006) taught her Women’s Studies course, entitled “Lesbian Studies” (270), with similar intentions, but with a different approach. As a new faculty member asked to teach the course for the first time, her goal was to disrupt identity fixity. She explained that she somewhat naively “assumed a Lesbian Studies course would be an interrogation of the category ‘lesbian’” (271). Unlike Bryson and de Castell, Bacon did not provide details about the assignments students were asked to tackle in the course and their reactions to them, but rather focused on her classroom approach and the progress of the class discussions.

Bacon (2006) began the course by sharing a standard “coming out narrative” based on her own experiences to which the students responded positively (272). At the outset, she found that both straight and lesbian students were comforted by the fixed and clear representation of lesbians about whom they could learn. Yet, this was just the beginning, as she explained:

In my classroom, I begin the semester presenting an identity that is static...I inhabit, and perform, a lesbian body. But as the course continues, the provisional and fluid identities...are going to appear, and it’s my job to make that overt and explicit for my students. (276)

Over time, then, Bacon intentionally performed “alternate versions” of her “coming out story” that showed lesbian identity as much more fluid and uncertain than her initial story (276). This gave her an opportunity to lead the class through contentious, but illuminating, discussions about power and identity and the role that privilege plays, for example, in disagreements over bisexuality (276-277).

While Bryson and de Castell (1993) found that it was the privileged straight students who resisted their attempts to queer the classroom, Bacon (2006) observed that her straight-identified students got her deconstructionist approach first (276) and her marginalised lesbian students were the ones who were most resistant to the project. By way of explanation, she highlighted the tension between “the LGBT classroom” where such students “might just get what they’re looking for” and “the queer classroom” where “this can be more difficult” (276). For lesbian-identified students, she noted, this was often their first time away from home and their first real opportunity to meet others with the same or similar identities. She also believed that they enrolled in a Lesbian Studies course because they were seeking to understand their own fixed identity and were not looking to unfix it. They were also seeking institutional legitimization. While heterosexually-identified students already experienced the privilege of legitimacy, those who did not understandably resisted attempts to destabilise what they had worked so hard to legitimise. “Our students want to be normal, too,” she stated, “because it is a measure of privilege to be able to shun the normal—to queer the categories of our lives for the delight of pushing our politics further than our bodies might readily go” (279). Thus, Bacon believed that some measure of privilege, and the security that comes with it, was a kind of asset for queer learners in her classroom.

While these three instructors aimed to destabilise rigid identity categories in their classrooms, their observations and conclusions about privilege and identity and the problems privilege posed in their teaching were starkly different. This comparison, of course, is not perfect. It is not possible to know exactly what happened in these classrooms or what queer pedagogy meant to each instructor. Queer theory also changed significantly between 1993 and 2006, as did societal attitudes toward sexual identity in Canada and the United States. Yet the comparison illustrates the significant extent to which privilege can have unpredictable and even contradictory effects on the pursuit of our teaching goals.

Three Lenses: Privilege as Having, Being, and Doing

To respond to these sorts of contradictions, I suggest a theoretical model that allows us to see privilege through three different lenses: as something we have, something we are, and something we do.

Privilege as Having

The first lens sees privilege as something we have. Linda L. Black and David Stone (2005) state that scholars tend to agree that privilege is “a special advantage” that “is granted, not earned,” and “is a right or entitlement that is related to a preferred status or rank” (244). They note that “privilege is exercised for the benefit of the recipient and to the exclusion or detriment of others” and “is often outside of the awareness of the person possessing it” (244).

Black and Stone’s definition begins to illuminate the ways in which privilege is thought of as a thing, substance, or entity. Adam Howard (2008) has characterised early scholarly understandings of privilege as follows:

what might be called the ‘first generation’ scholars have constructed *commodified* notions of privilege. Privilege, in other words, has been understood extrinsically, as something individuals *have* or *possess*...or something they *experience*, rather than as something more intrinsic, as something that reveals who they *are* or who they have *become* in a fundamental sense. (23)

It is unclear whether Black and Stone’s (2005) definition is consistent with such a commodified notion, though their description of a “special advantage” that can be “exercised” (244) suggests it could be. Nevertheless, the concept of privilege as a possession can be useful for conceiving of the sum of resources that some have, but others do not. For example, Howard (2008) describes his early school experiences as the child of parents with mental and physical illnesses living in poverty:

Ignoring the fact that most adults in our community could barely read or write, the school, even at the kindergarten level, expected us to be able, for example, to recite the alphabet, count up to a certain point, be able to write our names, and hold books the right way. Although my parents had a higher level of literacy than most in the community...they did not read to us and did not spend time with us rehearsing the alphabet or teaching us our numbers...they taught us different lessons about life that come from living in poverty. These learning experiences had no value in transitioning to formal schooling. (x)

Considering Howard’s story through a possession lens highlights how students living in poverty were not given the preparation consistent with the expectations of

the schooling system that was available to more affluent students. This lens sees privilege as something that is bestowed on a person or taken by them.

Thinking about privilege as something one has, then, can be useful for identifying particular advantages held by some and not by others. There is something eminently practical about such a conception. There are, however, limitations to the possession lens, which assumes that privilege functions largely as an external object and is similarly applicable in all contexts. In the latter case, it cannot account for the fact that a status that privileges a person in one setting might prove to be of no use, or even to be a disadvantage, in another setting. For example, a gay-identified white man may have privilege in certain queer communities, but he might not in a particular professional sports team. Thus, the possession lens does not draw attention to the multiple intersecting ways in which different identities and settings can interact to produce both privileged and oppressed statuses. Also, privilege understood as a possession does not address any interaction between privilege and other factors in one’s life and circumstances, such as one’s notion of self or views on the world. It implies that privilege is its own discrete entity that is fundamentally distinct from its context.

Privilege as Being

Despite its usefulness in conceptualising some situations, scholars have challenged seeing privilege simply as something one has. Howard (2008), in his study of affluent students in private and public schools, explicitly breaks with earlier definitions of privilege as possession, instead advocating for a notion of “*privilege as identity*” (23):

As an identity (or an aspect of identity), privilege is a lens through which an individual understands self and self in relation to others...Social systems function in ways that support and validate the social construction of a privileged identity for some while limiting and discouraging its construction for others. (23)

In his view, privilege is a part of identity formation. Howard notes that “[a]lthough there is an important connection between what advantages individuals have and their identity (that is, how their advantages in life fashion a particular sense of the self),” he also aims to

“situate privilege in a more comprehensive framework by exploring the process by which privilege is constructed and reconstructed as an identity” (23). Howard’s work suggests a lens through which privilege is seen as not simply a matter of having, but rather a matter of being.

Providing an example related to his own schooling experience, Howard (2008) explains how the incompatibility between his school’s expectations of his academic preparation and the reality of his life, as described above, resulted in his illiteracy and in teachers assuming he was a weak student (xii–xiii). While Howard’s story indicates that privilege encompasses particular advantages or experiences that one has, it can also show privilege to be a matter of something one is and what one has become through institutional and structural processes.

The conceptualisation of privilege as being has certain advantages over privilege as having, in that it accounts for the interaction between privilege and the self. Howard’s analysis suggests that privilege is related to how one sees oneself and that this interrelationship is shaped and negotiated through one’s ongoing experiences. This creates space to identify and critique the ways in which privileged identities are formed, which suggests that perhaps lasting interventions into privileged identity formation, and therefore privilege, are possible across situations and contexts. The lens of privilege as being also creates space for understanding the connections between privileged identities and the institutional and structural processes that create and reinforce them, including educational institutions (see, for example, Tisdell 1993).

There are also disadvantages to seeing privilege as being. Like privilege as having, it does not adequately address the multitude of ways in which privilege is situated, contextual, and enacted in particular locations and moments. While Howard’s (2008) analysis is certainly compatible with these observations, thinking about privilege as something one is suggests more stability than reality often allows. Contextual factors can play a significant role in the operation of privilege in particular moments. In the classroom, for example, this might involve the extent to which a student identifies intellectually or personally with either the instructor(s) or other students. The focus, then, on privileged identities instead of on contextual, situated privilege may unnecessarily limit efforts to minimise the workings of

privilege of some over others in particular contexts and institutional locations. While the integrated, overarching lens of privilege as being has the potential for systemic change outlined above, it also limits attention to the ways in which privilege in particular settings should be considered or mitigated.

Privilege as Doing

There are some advantages, then, to thinking about privilege as something one has and something one is, but neither accounts well for the situated operation of privilege. For this, we need a conceptualisation of privilege as something one does. Working in a post-structuralist tradition, Kevin Kumashiro (2002) argues that “being privileged requires that a person thinks, feels, acts, and relates to others in only particular ways; it requires that a person be identified by others in only particular ways” (156). In this understanding, one must “constantly *become*,” for example, “privileged as masculine” and one can never fully be it; such privilege requires constant testing and proving of one’s masculinity and lack of femininity (156). Privilege, then, is something we must continually do.

It is important to note that Kumashiro (2002) and Howard (2008) are by no means incompatible in their approaches. They both acknowledge situated experiences and processes as crucial to the workings of both privilege and oppression. It is perhaps most accurate to say that their focuses are different: Howard concentrates on the creation of particular identities in certain structural contexts, while Kumashiro considers the operation of oppression in situated moments. These are related, but it can be useful to differentiate between the two, as they potentially have different implications.

Seeing privilege as something one does allows for detailed attention to the ways in which privilege is created, acted out, and contested. It also emphasises a situated understanding of privilege, which, as the rest of Kumashiro’s (2002) work suggests, can illuminate contradictory and contested ways of knowing and being. This conceptualisation is not, however, complete. Little can be said about systemic privilege using this lens, and by itself, it is limited in its ability to critique broader structural environments that lead to very different levels of privilege across contexts. It also lacks the benefit of seeing privilege as a possession, which can at times

provide us with the ability to see the concrete advantages that a person has in a particular situation or setting.

It is clear, then, that these three ways of conceptualizing privilege—as having, being, and doing—all have distinct advantages and disadvantages, but we need them all in order to deal with privilege in theory and in practice. People can “have” privilege. They are also affected by the ways in which they “are” privilege and the ways in which privilege helps to constitute their identities. Lastly, they can “do” privilege as they create, recreate, and constantly negotiate privilege through discourses and situated interactions.

Having, Being, and Doing Privilege in Anti-Oppression Classrooms

In this section, I seek to flesh out the features of the three lenses pertaining to understanding privilege and to demonstrate that they are applicable to the practical concerns and goals of anti-oppression educators. As Jennifer M. Gore (1993) has noted, the Women’s Studies literature on feminist pedagogy has a long history of attentiveness to classroom practice. In keeping with this tradition, I apply the three lenses to some of the ways that feminist and other anti-oppression educators actually do anti-oppression education.

Kumashiro’s (2002) work on approaches to anti-oppression education is ideally suited to this purpose for two reasons. First, Kumashiro is sharply focused on what educators do in the classroom and the goals they pursue, and not just on the theories underpinning their broader commitment to social justice. Second, he connects these practices and goals to relevant theories of oppression, which allows us to more thoroughly examine the connections between those theories and the three lenses of privilege. In short, Kumashiro’s work allows me to connect the three lenses to theories of oppression and to the details of practice. In the following discussion, then, I examine his four anti-oppression education approaches through the three lenses of having, being, and doing privilege in order to expand on the theory behind these lenses and to show their applicability to practice in feminist classrooms. Kumashiro’s four approaches include “education for the Other, education about the Other, education that is critical of privileging and Othering, and education that changes students and society” (31).

Education for the Other

Education for the Other focuses on the needs of those who are marginalised or harmed in educational settings through such means as direct violence and harmful assumptions made by peers and educators (Kumashiro 2002, 33-34). This approach suggests that schools must be transformed into safe spaces for all students and that students who experience oppression must be given particular spaces that provide both safety and resources (34-35). Kumashiro sees strength in this approach because it draws the attention of educators and institutions to the problems of oppression within educational settings, highlights the diversity of students within schools, and focuses on student needs that are not being met (36-37). One weakness he identifies is the practical difficulty associated with defining marginalised groups and assessing their specific needs. He also maintains that this approach does not adequately take multiple sites of oppression into account (37-39). It also focuses on the Other as the problem and ignores the fact that “Oppression consists not only of the marginalizing of the Other; it also consists of the privileging of the ‘normal’” (37). Kumashiro notes that privilege is largely left out of this approach, as the focus is placed solidly on the Other and not on those against whom the Other is juxtaposed (37).

Though education for the Other does not seem to leave much space to consider privilege at all, it is most closely connected to seeing privilege as something one has. Within a particular classroom, education for the Other asks educators to work to identify and meet the needs of marginalised students, particularly with regard to harm to, and assumptions about, the Other. In this way, privilege is potentially visible as the norm from which oppressed students are excluded by the unfairness of the educational system. This approach seeks to compensate for privilege, by giving Othered students resources and by trying to keep teachers and other students from taking their resources away through insensitive or abusive behaviour.

While education for the Other does not focus on privilege, this should not be considered solely as a disadvantage. While privilege must certainly be a consideration in the anti-oppression classroom, an overemphasis on privilege, and those who have it, can result in insufficient attention being paid to the needs of those who are Othered. This approach demands concern for

the needs of the Other and, in this way, the absence of attention to privilege can have its uses as well.

Education About the Other

Education about the Other sees oppression as growing out of “partial” knowledge about the Other, which is “based on stereotypes and myths” (Kumashiro 2002, 40). Since the problem is ignorance, the goal of the educator should be to make student knowledge more complete by providing information about the Other, both in individual lessons or workshops and through full integration into the curriculum (41). Thus, education about the Other seeks to encourage both empathy and the acceptance of the Other as “normal;” its additional strength is that it is directed at all members of a diverse classroom, not just the oppressed (41-42). However, as Kumashiro explains, providing information on the Other can become a “dominant narrative,” in which the experiences of a particular group are understood in a singular way as *the* experience of all members of that group. This approach also requires using “the Other as the expert,” as marginalised students are asked and expected to speak on behalf of an entire group (42). Both of these practices, he argues, can help to reinforce divisions between “us” and “them.” Education about the Other also does not recognise that knowledge is always situated and that, in practice, it is impossible to teach students everything about everyone (42). Kumashiro recognises that this approach, like education for the Other, does not sufficiently consider the ways in which privileging is as important as Othering in the formation and maintenance of oppression.

Despite its lack of overt engagement with privilege, education about the Other might be most attuned to privilege as having, since teaching about the Other could peripherally raise questions about advantages that the Others in question do not have. Yet, this is decidedly not its focus. Privilege as being is even less of a consideration in education about the Other than it is in education for the Other. Given that the Other must be identified to be studied, questions about identity are a significant component of education for the Other; however, there is a danger that such education would identify the Other in terms of particular characteristics that are understood to be inherent and not in terms of constructed identities based on the oppression of some and the privileging of others.

Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering

Education that is critical of privileging and Othering suggests that radical educators should provide “not knowledge about the other, but knowledge about oppression,” and that they should “teach a critical awareness of oppressive structures and ideologies, and strategies to change them” (Kumashiro 2002, 45). Kumashiro associates this approach with the consciousness-raising strategies advanced by Paulo Freire and some feminist educators, in that it advocates for “un-learning or critiquing what was previously learned to be ‘normal’ and normative” (46). One of its strengths, in Kumashiro’s view, is that educators are called on not just to change the attitudes of or create opportunities for individual students, but also to teach students to think critically about themselves and the social world (47). It also calls on students to understand their own complicity in systems of oppression (47). Because of the structural focus of this approach, however, the different ways in which people experience oppression, even though they may be members of the same identifiable group, can become obscured (47). Education that is critical of privileging and Othering also assumes that knowledge about oppression will lead to student action against it, without necessarily assessing the relationship between knowledge and action (48). Finally, Kumashiro identifies this approach as vulnerable to the pitfalls of the modernist tradition, as “consciousness-raising assumes that reason and reason alone leads to understanding,” even though the ideal of “rational detachment” serves to “perpetuate a mythical norm that assumes a White, heterosexual, male perspective” (49).

Moving beyond the individualistic limitations of the first two approaches, education that is critical of privileging and Othering is more likely to address privilege, as it recognises that oppression consists not only of the denigration of some, but also of the elevation and privileging of others. This approach has strong ties to the lens of privilege as being. Howard’s (2008) work, which is consistent with privilege as being, suggests that privileged identities are not pre-existing and must be formed through interactive processes. However, seeing privilege as something that one is and something that is part of one’s identity suggests a fairly fixed, systemic approach to identity that is recognisable across contexts. Thus a systemic approach to oppression can accommodate a systemic approach to privilege. Kumashiro (2002)

critiques the third approach for its structural understanding of oppression, which he argues insufficiently grapples with the “contradictions” and “diversity and particularity” associated with multiple identities (47). As such, it likely contains a similarly structural, and therefore less situated and multifaceted, understanding of privilege. Given this somewhat fixed approach, education that is critical of privileging and Othering is perhaps more apt than other approaches to encourage student awareness of the role of privilege in oppression. It is possible to say something substantial about privilege within an approach that can generalise across structures and systems. Yet structural approaches can lead to static understandings of both oppression and privilege, and it might be tempting to presume that we, as educators, can predict the effects of privilege in our classrooms based on students’ identities alone. This is an important danger of seeing privilege as being and only as being.

Education that is critical of privileging and Othering also has important affinities with seeing privilege as having. Pedagogies in the consciousness-raising tradition often explicitly aim to empower those taught (Kumashiro 2002, 46). As Gore (2003) notes, the notion of empowerment generally presumes “a notion of power as property” (333). If power is seen as property, privilege is likely to be seen in similarly discrete terms and perhaps as something that can be given through empowerment. Thus privilege can be seen as something one is or something one has in this approach.

Education that Changes Students and Society

Kumashiro’s (2002) main focus is on his fourth approach, “education that changes students and society” (31), which uses “poststructuralist theories of discourse” (50). It is based in queer and feminist approaches to psychoanalytic theory and poststructuralism, and emphasises the importance of recognising partiality in the classroom and the resistance of students to learning that contests their own understandings of themselves; it also stresses the need to give students opportunities to work through various crises generated by challenges to their worldview and sense of self (53-68). A major strength of this approach is that it acknowledges the situated, shifting workings of oppression and identity (53) and thus, it does not attempt to create an educational model to be applied in all cases (68). Another strength is that it problematises oppression itself and asks educators and theo-

rists to be explicit about how their understandings delineate what is considered and what is not, and with what effects (68-69). Kumashiro does, however, recognise that poststructuralism and psychoanalysis have grown out of Western thought, perspectives, and experiences (69). As such, they are not neutral and do not account for the concerns of other epistemological traditions (69).

This approach to anti-oppression education addresses privilege in decidedly different ways than the others. Not surprisingly, education that changes students and society understands privilege largely as Kumashiro does: as something that one must constantly work to create in varied, situated contexts. In this instance, the educational goal is that students come to comprehend themselves in new ways, particularly through the “paradoxical, discomfiting condition” of crisis that necessarily accompanies the process of unlearning oppressive knowledges (Kumashiro 2002, 63). It also asks students to consider how different ways of “reading” various stories and texts and one’s “investment in privilege” shapes one’s own understandings of the lessons learned (151). As such, Kumashiro draws attention to how certain ways of thinking are discursively privileged over others, and seeks to challenge and trouble privileged views and understandings.

Predictably, then, education that changes students and society shares a significant limitation with the lens of privilege as doing: there is a degree to which both actually do not allow one to say much that is definitive about privilege at all. Both are, on the one hand, acutely aware of privilege within the realm of discourse. On the other, given their refusal to universalise, they cannot comment on privilege across situations and contexts. Kumashiro’s fourth approach resists advocating for specific methods of teaching across classrooms or singular understandings of interactions or texts. Kumashiro (2002) argues that “those who propose antioppressive approaches need to refuse to speak as the authoritative voice” and should “enact different antioppressive forms of education while troubling those very forms” (202). This approach, then, might suggest ways of challenging privileged readings of a particular classroom or interesting ways of reading privilege in different classrooms, but it does not allow for generalizable theoretical prescriptions to combat privilege.

Education that changes students and society relies significantly on privilege as doing in its use of the

concept of resistance. As Kumashiro (2002) explains, “[w]e resist learning what will disrupt the frameworks we traditionally use to make sense of the world and ourselves” (57). Such resistance can be a significant barrier to anti-oppression education efforts (57) and itself can be a way of doing privilege. Effective implementation of poststructuralist anti-oppression education approaches requires a great deal of thought about the ways in which persons in privileged situations and with privileged identities might grapple with this sort of crisis in situated moments and how it contributes to their resistance or openness to critical learning.

Privilege as being, perhaps appropriately, has a contradictory relationship with education that changes students and society. On the one hand, privilege as an identity implies stability that is not consistent with this approach’s insistence on fluid, constantly constructed meanings or its refusal to generalise across cases. On the other hand, privilege as being could recognise that privileged identities are constructed by various everyday interactions that reinforce them and, in this way, privilege as being can be tied, albeit more loosely, with a poststructuralist approach to anti-oppression education.

It is clear, then, that the three lenses of having, being, and doing privilege are applicable to both the practical classroom goals of anti-oppression educators and to the theories of oppression upon which those goals rely.

Three Lenses of Privilege in Two Women’s Studies Classrooms

Considering the three lenses through which we can view privilege and the connections I have drawn to various kinds of anti-oppression classroom practice, I now return to the two Women’s Studies courses discussed above. Bryson and de Castell’s (1993) and Bacon’s (2006) different observations and conclusions about privilege in their classes can be further illuminated by exploring what lenses of privilege were embedded in their assessments and by considering them in light of their specific pedagogical goals.

Both sets of authors were explicit about their desire to enact queer pedagogies against more essentialising or structurally fixed ideas about identity and oppression. They were largely working toward education that changes students and society. After all, Kumashiro’s fourth approach is based in queer theory,

which seeks to destabilise categories that reinforce oppression. While elements of the three other approaches to anti-oppression education can be detected in their analyses, the fourth appeared to be their explicit aim and we are left with the impression that they wished to queer their classrooms. Given this commitment, we might expect that the instructors would have embraced a situated and shifting understanding of privilege and approached privilege primarily or exclusively as something one does. However, their pedagogical methods were much more mixed.

Bacon’s (2006) analysis implies the use of all three lenses of privilege. From one angle, she might have seen privilege as something one has. She described the privilege of her heterosexually-identified students as a resource that allowed them to abandon with some gusto the commitment to a discrete category of lesbian. This is evident in her statement that, “Our students want to be normal, too, because it is a measure of privilege to be able to shun the normal - to queer the categories of our lives for the delight of pushing our politics further than our bodies might readily go, and they are in the process of acquiring that privilege” (279). From another angle, Bacon might have seen privilege as something one is. She hinted, for example, at the ways in which some students had been socialised to understand themselves in privileged or marginalised terms based on their sexual identities and their suburban Pennsylvanian upbringings (275), which speaks to the process through which privileged identities are created. From yet another angle, she might have seen privilege as something one does. Bacon described the upending of traditional arrangements of privilege in her classroom, which privileged homosexuality over heterosexuality (275). She said that her lesbian-identified students were looking for a place where they could develop their identity, see examples of others with that identity, and feel comfortable in that identity (276). This observation suggests that her lesbian-identified students understandably wanted to use her classroom space to do privilege in a rare case where they were afforded the opportunity.

In contrast, Bryson and de Castell’s (1993) description of what occurred in their classroom was based on a more fixed and less situated idea of privilege, one much more in line with privilege as being. They often identified “white straight-identified women” (291) as

the students who were privileged in their classroom and emphasised the “continuous and inescapable subtext of white heterosexual dominance” (294). Their explanations of the effect of privilege in their classroom relied heavily on identities formed outside the classroom, suggesting privilege was something their students experienced as being.

There is certainly room in Bryson and de Castell’s (1993) analysis for considering privilege as doing. They recounted, in some detail, the ways in which their privileged students acted to recreate privilege, either by refusing to situate their own experiences (294) or by choosing to write detached academic papers instead of engaging in the more subversive coursework options (292). The authors’ story, written differently, could provide an interesting and insightful account of how students do privilege by performing it. In the end, however, Bryson and de Castell seemed to fall back on the idea that it could not be otherwise; one gets the sense that these students were doomed to repeat the excesses of privilege based on their training as privileged subjects. This is particularly evident in their conclusion that “lesbianism...is always marginal, even in a lesbian studies course, and...lesbian identity is always fixed and stable, even in a course that explicitly critiques, challenges, deconstructs ‘lesbian identity’” (294).

I do not mean to suggest that Bryson and de Castell should have seen privilege differently. I would argue that we need all three conceptualisations of privilege, but I do not think we must use them all in all instances. The choice to look at privilege as being, as fairly static and predictable and as homogeneous across white heterosexual students, can be a strategic one. But, as feminist educators, recognising that we have a choice about how we look at privilege means opening up the possibility of looking at privilege differently and asking different questions. At issue, then, is whether the choice to see privilege as being in this classroom setting was the most effective one, given the goals set out by the instructors.

These two case studies might initially have seemed incommensurable, given that these teachers described nearly opposite effects of privilege in their two Women’s Studies classrooms. However, the three lenses of privilege open up different questions and refocus attention on our goals. Were Bryson and de Castell’s aims best served by seeing privilege as something one is? Might they have opened up more space to pursue their

poststructuralist goals by trying to understand privilege as something one does and considering new strategies to challenge that doing? Might such an approach have helped them to reach their goal to analyse the “tensions between post-structuralist theories of subjectivity and the political/pragmatic necessity of essentialist constructions of identity” (Bryson and de Castell 1993, 285)? Similarly, might Bacon’s goals have been better served by focusing on one aspect of privilege, instead of all three, in her assessment of her classroom? Which of these might have helped her to support her LGBT students in following her deconstructionist performance, and/or to challenge her straight students?

By focusing on pedagogical goals and on the different options we have for thinking about privilege, we might ask the following kinds of questions about any of our classroom spaces: What should my goal(s) for this specific Women’s and Gender Studies classroom be? Given those goals, am I best served by thinking about privilege as having, being, or doing in this context? What is illuminated by thinking about privilege in this way? What is obscured? Am I really using only one of these lenses or are others imbedded in the way I think about and act on privilege? How do my assumptions about privilege affect the choices I make as a teacher? How might they affect the way I reflect on my teaching? These kinds of questions focus attention on our practice and on the choices we can and do make every day as educators. They remind us that we are not simply trapped in classrooms where privilege is an obstacle to our aims; we can decide how we want to see it in a particular setting, given what it is we want to do. For the many feminist educators who are already working hard to address privilege, thinking about privilege as something one has, something one is, and something one does can help us reflect on the choices we make in responding to oppression and privilege in classroom settings.

Conclusion

In our most despairing moments, as Bryson and de Castell (1993) found, privilege can seem to be an immovable and monolithic barrier to our best feminist aims. In the classroom, privilege can be a stubborn and visible constraint, but we can also find concrete opportunities to disrupt or work through it. Being more explicit about what we mean by privilege and what our goals are for our classrooms can help us to see possibil-

ities and not just roadblocks. Seeing privilege as having, being, or doing can help us to do that.

While these three lenses can be useful in a variety of contexts, I focus here on the classroom because I believe it is one of the most important feminist spaces. It is also one of the most challenging spaces where we confront both expected and unexpected elements of privilege in our day-to-day work as feminist academics. It is my most fervent hope, then, that these three lenses can help to open new possibilities for how we see our classrooms and for reaching our goals within them.

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The Paradox of Inter/Disciplinarity: A Rethinking of the Politics of Inter/Disciplinarity and 'Women's and Gender Studies' for the Current Moment

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) should be embraced and acknowledged as a discipline. This is premised on two contentions: that disciplines are arbitrarily differentiated and that couching WGS in the mystique of interdisciplinarity serves to marginalize the study of issues pertinent to gender, women, and feminisms in comparison to other topics. We maintain that WGS is disciplinary, but we also highlight the importance of multi- and interdisciplinary partnerships and research.
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Résumé

Dans cet article, nous faisons valoir que les études des

femmes et du genre doivent être acceptées et reconnues comme une discipline. Cet argument est basé sur deux assertions : que les disciplines font l'objet d'une distinction arbitraire et que la présentation des études des femmes et du genre dans la mystique de l'interdisciplinarité ne fait que marginaliser l'étude des enjeux pertinents au genre, aux femmes et au féminisme, comparativement à d'autres disciplines. Nous soutenons que les études des femmes et du genre sont disciplinaires, mais nous mettons aussi en évidence l'importance des partenariats et des recherches multidisciplinaires et interdisciplinaires.

Introduction

Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) should be embraced and acknowledged as a discipline. This argument is premised on two contentions. The first is that disciplines are arbitrarily differentiated and that the dichotomy between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity is a false one. The latter term in particular is commonly used but rarely defined. For the purposes of this paper, we adhere to the definition of 'interdisciplinarity' first set out by William H. Newell and William J. Green (1982): an "inquiry 'which critically draw[s] upon two or more disciplines and which lead[s] to an integration of disciplinary insights'"(24).¹ The second contention is that couching WGS in the mystique of interdisciplinarity serves to marginalize the study of issues pertinent to gender, women, and feminisms in comparison to other topics. As such, we maintain that WGS is disciplinary, but highlight the importance of cross-, multi-, and interdisciplinary partnerships and research.

To illustrate these points, we explore the definition and practice of interdisciplinarity in WGS programs as well as elsewhere in the humanities and the sciences. In our estimation, such discussions about, and debates over, inter/disciplinarity are of particular relevance when considering the efficacy, purpose, and value of a WGS doctoral degree. We thus offer a hypothetical Joint WGS PhD program which takes into account some of the intellectual tensions we outline in the first section of the paper. In advocating for a doctoral degree that is delivered as a Joint PhD program, we consider questions related to disciplinary boundaries, the importance of disciplinary subjectivity, and the need for cross-disciplinary knowledge production and career training (Boxer 1998).

Interdisciplinarity vs. Disciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity is...one of the founding and key defining elements of feminist knowledge projects—it can probably be found in virtually every mission statement or program description of any Women's Studies program anywhere in the world. (Hark 2005, 10)

Since the first National Women's Studies Association conference in 1979, Women's Studies and feminist scholars have debated the interdisciplinary or disciplinary nature of the field and have examined

the efficacy, and even the possibility, of interdisciplinarity as an idea, an ideal, and a practice (Boxer 1998). In the latter case, this gave rise to new understandings of the intent and normative directions of Women's and Gender Studies as an area of inquiry. As early as the mid-2000s, Sabine Hark (2005) indicated that most WGS scholars regarded interdisciplinarity as a fundamental characteristic of the field (see also Maynard and Purvis 1998; Bostic 1998; DeVault 1999). A quarter of a century earlier, in the early 1980s, Sandra Coyner (1983) encouraged scholars to embrace and claim WGS as a discipline, and to refer to it as a discipline among other disciplines. While we, like Coyner (1983) and Ann Braithwaite (2012), recognize and are critical of the false boundaries produced when disciplines are delineated, WGS is a discipline both in aim and in practice and is one that embraces and benefits from exposure to and collaboration with a multiplicity of disciplinary objectives, methodologies, theories, and epistemologies.

In 1998, Judith A. Allen and Sally L. Kitch, in their article, "Disciplined by Disciplines?," argued that WGS constituted a new interdiscipline. They maintained that, through the process of transcending boundaries and borrowing from other disciplines, WGS had created a new and different arrangement of knowledges, epistemologies, and methodologies (Allen and Kitch 1998, 278). Braithwaite (2012) has further suggested that all disciplines are inherently interdisciplinary, in that no traditional discipline has ever operated in isolation, but has been built through cross-disciplinary interactions (see also Boxer 1998). While university and other funding models encourage disciplinary "bodies" to strictly define their own boundaries, such boundaries can be considered quite arbitrary.

Braithwaite (2012) has further pointed out that disciplinarity is usually taken to refer to the coherence of "a set of otherwise disparate elements: objects of study, methods of analysis, scholars, students, journals, and grants...disciplinarity is the means by which ensembles of diverse parts are brought into particular types of knowledge relations with each other" (211). Disciplinarity is less a reflection of "any naturally occurring or necessary divisions between types of knowledge," (211) than it is "a creation of historical moments and institutional and locational necessity" (212). As Coyner (1983) noted, disciplines often seem "more uniform, more

structured, more methodical, more ‘disciplined’ than areas closer at hand” (47). One of the most powerful myths about disciplines is that they are “unified bodies of knowledges, methods, approaches, and practitioners that make them different from each other” (Braithwaite 2012, 212). We suggest that this myth of the unified discipline, as opposed to the unbounded interdiscipline, is ultimately damaging to traditionally interdisciplinary subjects like WGS.

The notion of uni-disciplinary competence, as Julie Thompson Klein (1993) has asserted, ignores the reality that “the degree of specialization and the volume of information that fall within the boundaries of a named academic discipline are larger than any single individual can master” (188). It renders invisible the “differences between sub-disciplines in any field; connections between sub-specialties across different fields, and the frequency of cross disciplinary influences in the modern university” (Braithwaite 2012, 212). Most importantly, the positing of disciplines as ‘unified’, as contrasted to interdisciplinarity, ignores the fluidity—the “constant negotiation and struggle [in] redrawing boundaries and redistributing areas of investigation”—within disciplines (213). This definition of disciplinarity, which is understood as being about “overlaps, intersections, blurred boundaries, and new and shifting configurations of knowledge... seems to also describe how interdisciplinarity is largely understood” (213).

We argue that to be a new interdiscipline is to (rightly) claim disciplinary title and space and that the particular ways that WGS accepts, takes up, rejects, contends with, and celebrates certain histories, epistemologies, subjects of study, and methodologies can be described as a collective project of constructing WGS (Allen and Kitch 1998). As such, we reject Wendy Brown’s (2008) claim, in “The Impossibility of Women’s Studies,” that women’s studies should be dismantled and absorbed into other disciplines. In our view, her dismissive analysis does not do justice to the scholars who are doing WGS. There is also a risk associated with consistently denying disciplinarity in the act of creating WGS, as the acts of working, constructing, and doing “in the field” does create a something “there” that was not “there” before (McCaughey 2012, 138-139). Functionally, identifying the “there” as always interdisciplinary is to deny opportunities for cri-

tiquing the phenomenological roots of the process of discipline formation.

Interdisciplinarity Elsewhere

Interdisciplinarity is not a new concept. As Irwin Feller has pointed out, “it is the way that many disciplines, particularly the life sciences, naturally evolve” (Feller quoted in Pray 2002, par. 3) and hence, interdisciplinarity has considerable currency in the natural sciences. In conducting a cursory review of Canadian universities, we found that the University of Toronto offers some of the most robust interdisciplinary programs in the country. Despite this, the University of Toronto’s WGS program is somewhat uniquely considered its own discipline. By focusing on the University of Toronto as a case study and by referring to a number of other North American programs, we explore concepts of inter/disciplinarity and its tensions and challenges in relation to WGS.

At the University of Toronto, the disciplinary field of History covers an “inexhaustible range of topics” (Department of History 2013, par. 1), including the subfields of “aboriginal societies, labour, psychiatry, patterns of settlement and migration, politics, the Renaissance, revolution, rock ‘n’ roll, slavery, superstition, trade unions, women studies, and more” (Department of History 2013, par.1). The discipline of Political Science also encourages “creative research...in an array of interdisciplinary areas of inquiry” (Department of Political Science 2013, par. 1). Similarly, the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto has claimed WGS as a discipline, while encouraging “an engagement with an interdisciplinary range of theories and methods that grapple with how gender and sexuality is tangled with questions of race, citizenship, embodiment, colonialism, nation, global capitalism, violence, and aesthetics” (Women and Gender Studies Institute 2013b, par. 2).

Many North American universities claim to formalize “the long-standing interdisciplinary commitments of a diverse faculty” (Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Neuroscience 2013, par. 2) and “are changing to meet contemporary demands,” as “disciplinary boundaries are shifting” (Laursen, Thiry, and Loshbaugh 2009, 1). Examples of interdisciplinary engagement can be found in disciplines as diverse as Atlantic Canadian Studies, Policy Studies, History, Forestry,

Neuroscience, Comparative Literature, Environmental Studies, and Chemistry. For example, much like WGS, Chemistry PhD programs across the United States are “developing research interests with faculty and graduate students in different fields, and enjoying the intellectual challenges and discoveries in new areas of study,” as “strong interdisciplinary relationships and maximum flexibility within research options allow...universities outside the top ten to attract outstanding faculty and students” (Laursen, Thiry, and Loshbaugh 2009, 1). In the field of Engineering, “research institutions are experiencing a surge of innovative interdisciplinary initiatives aimed at bringing together students, postdocs, and faculty from different departments to solve complex problems in ways that they have never tried before” (Pray 2002, par. 1). What all of these programs showcase is that applying the label of ‘discipline’ has not served to diminish the transcendence of disciplinary boundaries.

Interdisciplinarity, however, is not the only term used to describe the processes associated with transcending disciplinary boundaries. In 2006, the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies, for example, defined trans-, inter-, and multidisciplinary as follows:

Multidisciplinarity involves a variety of disciplines but without integration of concepts, epistemologies or methodologies. In interdisciplinarity, concepts, methodologies and epistemologies are explicitly exchanged and integrated. Transdisciplinarity is a specific form of interdisciplinarity in which boundaries between and beyond disciplines are transcended and knowledge and perspectives from different scientific disciplines as well as non-scientific sources are integrated. (Bertrand et al. 2006, 2)

Presumably, exposure to a wide array of disciplinary backgrounds would enable graduate students to work at the crossroads of or to draw on a multiplicity of disciplines to enhance understanding of whatever topic is under study. Many programs use interdisciplinarity as a ‘buzzword,’ but there is a difference between engaging meaningfully in interdisciplinary research and marketing one’s program as such because of its current popularity.

We observe that interdisciplinarity is often used to stand in for multidisciplinary, as defined above, and that this application goes unproblematized both in traditional disciplines as well as in WGS because of the popular appeal of the term. For example, the Univer-

sity of Nevada in Las Vegas houses a multidisciplinary studies degree program *within* their interdisciplinary studies programs, which begs the question of what they mean by either. They describe their *multidisciplinary* program as one that “combines specialized knowledge from individual disciplines as a means of approaching and analyzing problems from divergent and multidisciplinary perspectives” (Interdisciplinary Degree Programs 2015, par. 1). However, the combination and integration of concepts from separate disciplines can be either interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary: the difference lies in the extent to which integration is structured. Interdisciplines are a meaningful combination, or synergy, of two or more disciplines to create something new. Multidisciplinarity is any combination of one or more discipline. It is unclear in the above example if there is clear understanding of the differences.

Similarly, Northwestern University’s *Multidisciplinary Program in Education Sciences* is described as:

...An innovative interdisciplinary doctoral training program to develop a cadre of scholars trained to conduct relevant and reliable research on pressing policy and practice issues in education. This Multidisciplinary Program in Education Sciences (MPES) is intended for students who want to pursue a research agenda that focuses on practical questions in U.S. education from a rigorous interdisciplinary perspective. The program seamlessly integrates training in statistics, evaluation, cognition and learning, and education policy. (School of Education and Social Policy 2013, par. 1-2)

This second example again demonstrates that it is not clear what the difference is between an inter- or a multidisciplinary program. In this case, the two are used interchangeably, one in the title of the program and the other in describing it. Without consistently using the correct definitions, it is impossible to know how meaningfully the disciplines interact.

Within WGS, definitions such as multi- and interdisciplinarity still fail to capture the ways that WGS scholars use diverse disciplines relationally in research and teaching. What we have achieved in WGS meets the definition of interdisciplinarity, in that we have created something new. In WGS, the integration, transcendence, and even the involvement of multiple disciplines takes place in a deeply meaningful way, and the ways that feminists have theorized knowledge in WGS has

given rise to unique methods and epistemologies. An example of this is the characteristically feminist practice of reflexivity in academic study, wherein nothing exists in a vacuum and all points of connection can also be points of transmission, influence, and change.

While it is possible to argue that WGS is inherently liminal, we do not support the view that more traditional disciplines are less liminal or more fixed. We suggest that all disciplines exist on the boundary lines of other disciplines, and yet other disciplines are seen as more legitimate place holders in terms of disciplinary status. Susan Stanford Friedman (1998) points out that many disciplines were considered interdisciplinary in their formative years before attaining recognized disciplinary status (319; see also Pryse 2000, 107). Like disciplines, such as Sociology, History, or Political Science that are no doubt influenced by connections to other disciplines, WGS is similarly constituted. In other words, it would appear that, in practice, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity cannot easily be distinguished from each other (Braithwaite 2012).

Interdisciplinarity in Practice

In the 2006 work, *Practicing Interdisciplinarity in Gender Studies*, Enikő Demény et al. examined European understandings and applications of interdisciplinarity in the context of collaboratively planning the “ideal” interdisciplinary WGS Master’s course. In their view, what scholars and students in the field referred to as interdisciplinary work could better be described as multidisciplinary (Demény et al. 2006, 8). They also maintained that the use of the term interdisciplinarity sometimes masks the problems and inconsistencies associated with making hasty connections or applying discipline-specific terminology ahistorically and out of context (5-10). Despite these concerns with interdisciplinarity, the six WGS scholars involved in the collaborative course development project—Enikő Demény (Babes-Bolyai University, Romania), Clare Hemmings (London School of Economics, UK), Ulla Holm (Göteborg University, Sweden), Päivi Korvajärvi (University of Tampere, Finland), Theodossia-Soula Pavlidou (University of Thessaloniki, Greece), and Veronica Vasterling (Radboud University, The Netherlands)—were not prepared to abandon the concept. However, they were not in agreement about how to construct a feasible model of interdisciplinary practice.

One of the reasons for this lack of consensus was that the members of the group were generationally, geographically, politically, and disciplinarily diverse. While grounded in feminist studies to varying degrees, their disciplinary backgrounds included Linguistics, Philosophy, Literary Theory, and Psychology, all “mixed” with feminist studies (Demény et al. 2006, 11). This diversity also contributed to some of the difficulties they encountered in designing the syllabus, both in terms of structure and content, for this ideal Master’s-level course. While the six scholars shared a common project vision, when the group came together, each bringing their own proposed syllabi, they were surprised at what each of them had produced. Each project member had avoided clustering disciplines or introducing themes and concepts in an arbitrary manner; however, each of them had also been hesitant to overstep their own disciplinary boundaries when determining the topics and concepts best taught under the auspices of a different discipline. Namely, each scholar had described what the other scholar ought to teach based on their own limited knowledge of the other scholars’ fields.

This raises a key question about interdisciplinarity: are practitioners required to have expert-level knowledge in multiple fields in order to work interdisciplinarily? Is this possible or feasible? Our knowledges are only ever partial, and our specific situated experiences and academic training limit, and expand, our understandings of the world in particular ways (Haraway 1988, 13-24). The above case study demonstrates the need to engage in interdisciplinary training with attention to potential blind spots and with a commitment to strong partnerships across disciplines. We aim to address this dilemma in our PhD program. As described below, our program is a joint degree with two disciplinary ‘homes’ and is designed to address the need for strong interdisciplinarity.

WGS as a Discipline

Given that disciplines are increasingly recognizing and expanding the scope of their inherent interdisciplinarity in research focus as well as methodologies, the distinction between interdisciplinarity and disciplinarity is an arbitrary one. From our perspective, WGS should not be couched in the mystique of interdisciplinarity, but rather should be recognized as a discipline with some agreement on its foundational texts, shared

affiliations through conferences, associations, and journals, engagement in specific debates, a common (if ever fluid) language, and other features signalling discipline-ness. In other words, we imagine WGS as a discipline that was founded in the margins of an array of disciplines and one that has successfully eked out for itself a defined and refined institutional and intellectual position. The WGS programs that are operating now as well as the ones we envision for the future are an iteration of disciplinarity with a strong emphasis on engaging and being in relationship with/belonging in a multiplicity of disciplines.

In discussions about contemporary WGS, there appears to be a lack of consideration of the past to account for the ways in which all disciplines come to be as well as how the multiplicity of subject matters and research methods associated with many disciplinary fields constitute, validate, and improve each other (Boxer 1998, 388-389). Perhaps one difference between WGS and traditional disciplines is that, while the latter might consider interdisciplinarity to be useful for expanding the breadth and capacity of researchers to produce cutting edge scholarship, WGS has thus far existed at the crux of multiple areas of inquiry and is seldom seen as standing 'alone.' This particularly applies to the presence or absence of stand-alone WGS PhD programs. While we acknowledge that various WGS units have established Ph.D. programs, in our view, a Joint PhD program would best serve WGS graduate students.

Our Program: 'Gender, Feminisms, and Women's Research'

In developing our program, it became apparent that we had to decide on the purview of an ideal WGS doctoral training program. We propose 'Gender, Feminist, and Women's Research (GFWR):' this is meant to reflect the breadth of research topics that faculty and students engage with, many of which are not adequately represented by the name Women's and Gender Studies. Our choice to center 'gender research' signifies a rejection of dualistic gender theorizing and an explicit adoption of gender frameworks that are inclusive of the study of all facets of gender expression. Within gender research, there is space, albeit a potentially problematic one, for sexuality studies. Guided by Gayle Salamon's (2008) and Bobby Noble's (2012) work on the easy, but misguided, alienating, and even dangerous conflation

of gender and sexuality, we recognize that by naming gender and not sexuality and by housing the latter within the former, we are complicit in privileging the study of gender over sexuality. As Salamon (2008) argues, it is impossible to consider gender and sexuality as wholly separate, and yet to consider them as the same is inaccurate and can lead to faulty analyses of issues related to gender and sexuality (115-136; see also Noble 2012, 277-292). In naming the program, GFWR, we acknowledge that we are privileging the area of studies named in the title, but we have chosen these pillars to reflect the larger, more established base of research and scholarship in the studies of gender, feminist, and women's studies than in some related areas. While gender, feminist, and women's studies constitute our envisioned three main pillars of research, we would house sexuality, queer, trans, and critical masculinity studies within and around gender research; these latter fields would work in the spaces between the three main pillars as well as in and through them. In encouraging work done by, for, and with multiple subjects, we would aim to house multiple fields within our GFWR program.

The decision to highlight 'feminist research' functions to signal the important political work done in WGS departments and programs. Catherine Orr (2012) has rightly problematized the notion that WGS academic scholarship must be 'activist' in conventional terms (85-101) and we resist the loss narrative that idealizes Women's Studies' more 'activist' past (Hemmings 2011, 59-94). At the same time, it is important to emphasize, as does Orr, that the act of engaging in feminist academic work is a form of activism. We agree with Wendy Brown's assertion that "privileging the political over the intellectual...[effectively] concedes that these operate on separate planes" and contributes to a lack of vibrancy within the field (Orr 2012, 85-101). We envision that the work done in a GFWR program would not rely on the false distinction between academic and activist, but rather would embrace a broader definition of activism that includes politically relevant academic work.

Despite, and perhaps because of, the ways in which feminist and WGS scholars have troubled the field, we insist that this line of research remains ever contemporary and relevant, while remaining in conversation with other research areas to forward comprehensive and rigorous analyses in WGS (Braithwaite et al. 2005). Feminist research has made significant con-

tributions to, and drawn critical insights from, critical race studies, law and public policy, history, ethnic studies, and critical disability studies. Feminisms have also changed and developed because of the acknowledgement that truth is only ever partial (Braithwaite et al. 2005). We see the frameworks of multiple feminisms acting as a hinge between peoples' academic and activist work and as a mechanism to recognize the political work that happens in WGS departments and programs.

The inclusion of 'women's research' reflects our desire to build on historical Women's Studies. Like the word feminist, the term 'woman' has been used to implicitly define the subject as white and middle class and has resulted in the privileging of their narrowly-defined and exclusive concerns and issues. However, Judith Butler (2004) has argued that contested terms "are never finally and fully tethered to a single use" (179); they are also "not to be seen as merely tainted goods" (180) due to their changeability. She further maintains that the reappropriation of such terms has progressive possibilities. Hence, the continued use of the word women indicates an attempt at reappropriation and re-interpretation to include women's multiple and partial narratives and experiences in the definition of women.

Joint PhD Program

In keeping with Boxer's (1998) assertion that the most common administrative unit for a discipline is a department and that the introduction of a PhD program constitutes the highest level of disciplinary achievement, we encourage the development of a capstone, joint PhD. When the PhD program in Women's Studies was launched in the Pacific Northwest in the late 1990s, faculty and students expressed concern that, even though this move would institutionally validate this area of study, a Women's Studies doctoral degree would not be competitive in a job market still unsympathetic to interdisciplinary degrees (Yee 1993, 368-369). This move is a response to the recognition that, while WGS is a discipline, it does not offer the same opportunities for career advancement that other disciplines potentially do.²

In advocating for a Joint PhD program, we are not suggesting that WGS should not be considered to be or continue to operate as a stand-alone discipline. The Joint PhD program we have in mind recognizes WGS or GFWR as a full-fledged discipline and addresses the

real-world job market, inside and outside of academe, where having skills and background knowledge in other disciplines is highly advantageous for new graduates. We believe that, through a joint degree, scholars from across disciplines could pursue their WGS interests and, through this engagement, more scholars would institutionally validate GFWR by taking and rigorously applying the rich education obtained in the program into a variety of academic settings. Recognized disciplines receive more formal institutional recognition, have easier access to space and funding, and are more attractive to PhD students. Our PhD program would provide an intellectual and physical space for intersectional research production and benefit scholars through shared equipment and funding, while lending credibility to intersectional research that is typically inhibited when physical space is denied. The shared funding and resources allocated for intersectional research would minimize competition between disciplines for capital and reduce redundant spending. In our estimation, rather than being threatened by the pairing of two disciplines, WGS or GFWR would be strengthened and made more applicable in today's job market through multidisciplinary partnerships. We envision the GFWR program as a potential site of cutting edge intersectional research that blurs disciplinary boundaries and creates spaces for strengthened bonds between knowledge production and scholars alike.

Conclusion

We remain confident about the importance and applicability of a WGS education at the graduate level. We insist on the importance of explicitly centering research pertaining to, or about, women, gender, and feminisms in the traditional university environment. Further, we remain committed to engaging dynamically with the needs of WGS academics and students with a view to the long-term future of the field. In regard to our Joint PhD program, we are optimistic about the potential for graduate-level WGS programs to travel and be constitutive of other disciplinary fields and, in so doing, further institutionally validate WGS as a discipline. The paradox of our argument for WGS' disciplinarity is that every discipline may be considered to be to some degree interdisciplinary. However, this constructive tension enables critical inquiry into the institutionalization of epistemological praxis. As we have explored, many

other disciplines in both the humanities and sciences have already reaped the benefits of 'interdisciplinary discipline' status. Defining oneself as a discipline does not serve to eliminate inter- and multidisciplinary inquiries, methodologies, and research. We have argued that the dichotomy between 'disciplinary' and 'interdisciplinary', which has so entrapped the field of WGS over the past decades, is a false one. To continue to couch WGS in the mystique of interdisciplinarity as opposed to taking up the position of discipline-hood has had, and will continue to have, detrimental consequences for both the intellectual work and scholars in WGS.

Endnotes

¹ For further discussion on definitional struggles, see Grace 1996, 59-61.

² While jobs in WGS in some contexts are on the rise, in many academic institutions, as well as in non-academic sectors, an education in WGS may be considered a poor preparatory degree, or even a hindrance, to finding work.

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