In this themed issue, ‘Genders and Sexualities: Demilitarising the Binary Beachhead’, ‘binary’ is a crucial concept. For graphic designers and others who create concepts and images using computers, binary refers to the smallest bits of data used to run programs and is a sequence of instructional numbers containing 1 and 0 that have a value, such as either low or high or off or on. Many social phenomenon are also understood in terms of a binary way of thinking, such as the gender binary of two distinct opposite and disconnected forms associated with ideas of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ – an individual can be either male or female, a girl or boy, a man or woman.

So, back to the challenge of developing a concept for this themed issue cover design. The theme of this issue is to challenge the binary ways of thinking associated with gender and sexuality, to understand them as non-binary and to recognise that many people feel ‘out of place’ in a society structured around gender and sexuality binaries. The widespread LGBTQ community has championed non-binary ways of understanding and experiencing gender and sexuality, and has adopted a number of symbols for self-identification, one being the rainbow flag to demonstrate shared values and unity. For the cover design, the symbolic peace dove with ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ transiting colours seemed appropriate, shown flying into the rainbow of colour and light.
Social Alternatives

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Discourses of identity are primarily binary in nature, framing constituent terms in pairs. Each pair has a superordinate and subordinate version of the given category (e.g. male/female, straight/gay, white/non-white, etc.). This sociocultural convention serves the interest of hegemony by obscuring or concealing superordinate identities – and those holding them – from observation and thus critical examination. Yet, it is of great importance to excavate the iterations and lived experiences of identity if we are to make progress on issues of inclusion, equity and social cohesion. Our shared biology has thus far not prevented superficial and/or mythical notions of difference from generating conflict and alienation. As Connolly (1991: 94) notes, An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being … Identity requires difference in order to be, and converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty.

To further complicate things, every person holds multiple innate and acquired identities. Despite this additional shared characteristic, it remains a significant challenge to consider more than one identity category at a time and how they affect each other. The need to increase intersectional work in academia remains a key challenge within the social and educational sciences, but there is wide interest in doing better.

The theme I proposed as Guest Editor for this issue of Social Alternatives is, ‘The Present State and Future Directions of Genders and Sexualities: Demilitarising the binary beachhead’. While the articles are primarily focused on genders and sexualities, these identities are only two of many components inhabiting and/or being performed by each person. Their virtually unlimited iterations make for very daunting challenges in understanding, discussing, or otherwise working on them. At the time of this writing, Donald Trump has just been elected President of my country. I am not interested, and it seems to me short-sighted, to discuss the present political moment here because it is exactly that – just the latest iteration of phenomena that have repeated themselves in countless times and places. The conditions that enabled the latest crises (e.g. Trump, Brexit, etc.) arguably have much to do with binary and oppositional thinking, both individually and collectively. Indeed, there are many similar if not identical phenomena in countries and regions around the world.

So, rather than discussing discrete instances, it seems much more productive and hopeful to examine how binary and oppositional frameworks constrain humanity, nations, communities and our individual personhood. I would further argue that gender and sexuality – and their binary framing – are the most substantial influences of how we organise social life because they are its foundation. One cannot even go to a public toilet without declaring one of two permitted options within what is actually a continuum, and this mundane artifact of our functioning represents one of the countless ways in which our lives are influenced, constrained or elevated by the rigid symbolic and substantive structures of societal, community and familial life. For that matter, the ways in which such paradigms inhabit our consciousness and interior lives inform the hegemonies of learned helplessness. This thematic issue represents a small but sincere effort to talk back, and to engage in the project of individual and collective liberation. It’s a small thing in one sense, but for people who might read this issue of Social Alternatives, I hope that it is personally and professionally elevating and affirms whatever voice inside might be hungry for more than either/or and zero-sum intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships.

In the first article, ‘Mindfulness as a Healing, Liberatory Practice in Queer Anti-Oppression Pedagogy’, Beth Berila contextualises the issues engaged throughout this special issue, invoking the lived experiences of queer and gender fluid identities as a call to disarticulate and indeed dismantle the binary constraints for people of all social identities. Berila’s framing calls us to honour, understand, and attend to – in her words – the ‘deep trauma and divides that need to be healed if we are really to interrupt these dominant paradigms about gender and sexuality’.
In the second article, ‘Resisting Erasure: Critical Influences for Men Who Survived Sexual Violence in Higher Education’, Dan Tillapaugh challenges reductionist assumptions about who is affected and how, expanding our conceptions regarding the stakes and impact of sexual violence. In their article, ‘Global Citizenship as a Feminist Pedagogical Tool’, Tanya Bakhru and Robin Rogers model reimagined power relations between teacher and student. Together, they explore questions of gender and global citizenship within their Women’s Studies classroom, and how microcosm and global scale are inextricably linked.

Just as one classroom might be a de facto representation of the world writ large, so too can this be said of a single person. Hagar Akua Prah vividly illustrates this assertion in her article, ‘Viewing Education in Canada through an Intersectional Auto-ethnographic Lens’. Akua Prah gives an account of her own personal and immigrant experiences as a black, queer, female, Ghanian-Canadian, and how her own story figures into constructions of identity more generally. Katherine Fobear continues the process of weaving first-person accounts of gender, sexuality, and nationality identities; in this case subjected to forced rather than chosen migration experiences. Her article, ‘Nesting Bodies: Exploration of the body and embodiment in LGBT Refugee Oral History and Participatory Photography’ holds space for compelling testimonies of oppression, resilience and embodiment through narrative and visual artifacts provided by her research participants.

Siphiwe Dube and Cáel Keegan excavate hegemonic and transgressive gender and sexual scripts found in the artifacts of film. Dube’s article, ‘“Toys R Us”: Toy Story 2 and the re-inscription of normative American masculinities’, ironically notes the poison pills covertly embedded within this seemingly benign children’s movie released in and from a globally dominant nation. Projects of socialisation and reification are exposed, and prospects for alternatives are considered. Keegan’s article, ‘History, Disrupted: The aesthetic gentrification of queer and trans cinema’, begins with his assertion that,

LGBTQ cinema in the Global North has become structured by disruptive narrative strategies that reroute the transformative power of queer and transgender histories upward and away from the most at-risk LGBTQ populations.

Utilising disciplinary tools from Cultural Studies, Keegan explicates a politics of suppression and reduction imposed upon ‘communities with little to no cultural representation – HIV positive, working-class, and of colour, queer and trans populations’, contending ‘that historical disruption and resulting aesthetic gentrification of queer and trans cinema in the Global North has potentially global implications for the future of LGBTQ representation’.

This editor concludes the special issue with a narrative essay entitled, ‘What’s a Nice, Straight, White Guy Doing in an Essay Like This?!?! Privilege, oppression and the binary politics of positionality’. My purpose is to critically question liberal belief systems and their (our) assertions about who can and/or should speak about privilege, oppression, their meaning and – just as important – proposals for change to their present configuration. Rather than discussing these issues with esoteric jargon such as, ‘epistemological privilege’, I suggest that awake people of dominant identities can and should do more ‘heavy lifting’ rather than expecting already busy people of marginalised social identities to educate and fix the intractable problems of social inequality. In short, while the latter should have more space and agency to speak their truth and demand reforms, the expectation of, or deference to them to do so is another form of exploitation and colonialist intrusion.

References

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Dr. Jason Laker is a Professor of Education at San José State University in California, USA, prior to which he served as AVP and Dean of Student Affairs, Fellow in the Centre for the Study of Democracy, and faculty of Gender Studies at Queen’s University in Canada. His scholarship includes two texts regarding gender and men’s development; and two comparative higher education texts (co-edited with colleagues in Spain and Croatia) about fostering citizenship and democratic education among students.
Mindfulness as a Healing, Liberatory Practice in Queer Anti-Oppression Pedagogy

Beth Berila

Many social justice classrooms teach about queer issues. Many LGBTQAI+ students are adept at reading their environments and positioning their identities in relation to it. The experiences of living as queer identities with a heteronormative and gendernormative social context brings with it deep trauma and divides that need to be healed if we are really to interrupt these dominant paradigms about gender and sexuality. Many of these experiences emerge in our social justice classrooms, while still others remain invisible.

This article argues that integrating mindfulness practices into a queer anti-oppression pedagogy can enable a deeper wholeness and healing. What if we were as adept at acknowledging our own pain of oppression as we are about reading our external environments? What if we had empowering, mindful counter-narratives to invoke when faced with oppression? This article will offer both theoretical and practical ways to integrate mindful awareness and healing into a queer pedagogy.

‘What if a queer pedagogy puts into crisis what is known and how we come to know?’ (Luhmann 1998: 126).

‘To acknowledge our pain is to recognise the complexities of our bodies as both the place in which we forge meaning in our lives, and the location within which we catalyse liberation’ (Manuel 2015: 79).

H ow do we unlearn systems of oppression? How do we dismantle them not just on the surface but at their deepest roots? How do we cultivate healthy bodies, selves, and communities? Social justice courses, including those offered in Ethnic, Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Departments, have long utilised anti-oppression pedagogy to do just that. Entire fields such as Feminist, Queer, Anti-Racist, and Anti-Oppression pedagogies speak to the recognition that HOW one learns about oppression plays a pivotal role in dismantling it. Feminist scholar bell hooks (1994: 14), drawing on the work of Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh and Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, says that engaged pedagogy must be focused on both wellbeing and praxis, which she defines as ‘action and reflection upon the world in order to change it’. Thus, it is no surprise that many of these fields recognise knowledge production as a political practice and the classroom space as embedded in power dynamics.

Running parallel to these trends is contemplative pedagogy, which integrates various mindfulness practices into modes of learning. Activities such as meditation, journaling, mindful dialogue, and deep listening can enhance students’ focus, cultivate compassion, and deepen inquiry and introspection (Barbezat and Bush 2014: 11). These practices deepen analytical skills and enhance holistic education. They help students reflect on their relationship and responses to the material they are studying; something that is also central to feminist queer social change (Berila 2015: 15).

While contemplative pedagogy opens insightful possibilities for the college classroom, and anti-oppression pedagogy helps us unlearn oppression, only recently have these two trends begun to speak more directly to and with one another. Social justice community organising has long included contemplative activities (think of song in the Civil Rights movement, and drumming and dance in Indigenous Resistance movements), but the two trends have merged more in community organising than in higher education pedagogy. Recent initiatives by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, including the October 2015 conference at Howard University entitled ‘Building Just Communities’ speak to the need to more intentionally integrate these conversations. This article explores how this integration can better serve our LGBTQAI+ college students. I will first explain some of the survival skills that many of our queer college students develop that, with mindfulness practice, could enable more intentional healing. I then examine what queer theory offers to contemplative social justice pedagogy.

Key Definitions
First, some notes about my terminology. When I say queer students, I mean anyone who self-identifies as a member...
of the LGBTQAI+ community. That includes but is not limited to lesbian, gays, bisexual, transgender, agender, asexual, pansexual, intersex, genderqueer, aromantic, androgynous, bigender, bicurious, androsexual, gynosexual, demisexual, polyamorous, genderfluid, and questioning individuals. I will sometimes refer to this community with the alphabetical acronym (LGBTQAI+) and other times will use the word queer as an umbrella term. I recognise that both these options are flawed, as they inevitably leave someone out. In using this language, I am attempting to be as inclusive and open-ended as possible.

By feminist, I mean a framework of analysis and politics that understands gender in its complex relation to all other categories of identity, including race, class, sexuality, dis/ability, and national location. The intersectional feminist framework I use is deeply informed by queer theory, decolonising feminist theory, and critical race theory. As part of my own feminist praxis, I will situate myself in relation to this work. I identify as a white, middle-class, Western, cisgender, lesbian, queer woman who is not currently living with a dis/ability. I am a Women's Studies professor at a Midwestern state four-year college in the US where I am out as a feminist queer professor.

By heteronormative, I mean the presumption that heterosexuality is the only ‘proper’ and ‘natural’ sexual identity. This ideology is deeply embedded in social institutions that then uphold heteronormativity (such as media that only portrays heterosexual couples, laws that deny same sex marriage, or medical practices that render transgender identity a ‘disorder’.) By queer, I mean an anti-assimilationist politics that recognises that heterosexual and homosexual are two parts of a binary that depend upon one another (Luhmann 1998; Zacko-Smith and Smith 2010). Queer is a critique of all binary that depend upon one another (Luhmann 1998; Zacko-Smith and Smith 2010). Queer is a critique of all those identities are further layered by our racial, class, and dis/ability locations. Thus, a middle-class, middle-class Hmong lesbian’s experience of queerness will be very different than that of a working class, white, transman living with a dis/ability. And for each of these complex intersectional identities, their experience often changes based on the particular context, as one might experience racism in one moment, transphobia in another, and both in another.

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I should note that queer theory is highly skeptical of identity politics, where organising is done on the basis of sameness around a particular identity. While I agree with this argument in the abstract, I also aver that identity categories can be strategically useful. Many LGBTQAI+ students need to define and embody their queer identity, not as ‘essentialised truths’, but also not as the destabilised category of poststructuralist queer theory. The latter is something many feminist and queer students want to do toward the end of their undergraduate studies. But I also find that, in their lived experiences, many LGBTQAI+ students need to create an empowered sense of their queer identity before they can deconstruct it. Thus, for the purposes of this article, I hold these two paradoxical positions simultaneously.

A full explanation of queer theory and pedagogy as it relates to contemplative pedagogy is beyond the scope of this short article, though I do hope to catalyse deeper discussions of their connections. What I would like to focus on here is how contemplative pedagogy can be combined with queer theory/pedagogy to better empower our LGBTQAI+ college students. And, since these relationships are best when they are reciprocal, I will conclude the article with how queer theory can help us imagine social justice contemplative pedagogy in transformative ways.

The Survival Strategies of LGBTQAI+ Communities

The queer community is so diverse that it is difficult to generalise about all of its members. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say there is diversity throughout queer communities. Not only is there ever-changing diversity of sexual and gender identities within the queer community (as is illustrated by the LGBTQAI+ acronym) but each of those identities are further layered by our racial, class, national, and dis/ability locations. Thus, a middle-class Hmong lesbian’s experience of queerness will be very different than that of a working class, white, transman living with a dis/ability. And for each of these complex intersectional identities, their experience often changes based on the particular context, as one might experience racism in one moment, transphobia in another, and both in another.

Nevertheless, having worked with queer students over the past twenty years and been a part of the community even longer, I think I can safely say there are some common trends that affect many, though not all, of our queer students. Many of them are adept at reading their environments and positioning their identities in relation to it. They may determine when and where to come out, notice when their gender performance is at odds with the cultural expectations around them, or be on the lookout for physical or emotional oppression in their environment.
Many of them demonstrate survival techniques that resemble certain mindfulness skills, though they are rarely used intentionally with the same purpose. A mindful queer pedagogy that helps students more intentionally practice these skills for self and community care could be both healing and liberatory.

Many queer students carefully determine whether it is safe for them to out themselves. The coming out process is constant in hetero- and cisgender normative environments – one generally needs to out oneself with every new person. This shifting terrain is intensified by intersectionality. For instance, a Latinx student’s relationship to their queer identity and how it is perceived may shift depending on whether they are in a college classroom, a queer student group, or with their family. While the student’s identity is always the same, which aspect of their identity is centered and which is most marginalized will likely shift based on context. The typical expectation is that the student must do the navigating of this complicated terrain, but a mindful queer anti-oppression pedagogy would require their communities to do the navigating with them.

In many college spaces, the default assumption is that a person is heterosexual and cisgender unless they mark themselves otherwise. Some students are ‘read’ as gay/queer whether they choose to come out or not, and those assumptions by their teachers or classmates may result in stereotyping or other forms of marginalisation (Mancini 2011; Kiekel 2012; Windmeyer et al. 2013). Most queer students know this and carefully read their environment to determine how to behave to best protect themselves. In some of my courses, I have had students out themselves on the first day of class and continue to be outspoken about queer/trans issues all semester; others wait until well into the class to come out, while still others only do so in their papers to me, and, I presume, some never do at all. These choices, of course, are shaped by their place in queer student identity development (Blodeau and Renn 2005: 28). But these decisions are also the result of students carefully assessing their environment, checking in with themselves about their own sense of safety, and determining their actions accordingly.

Most LGBTQAI+ students have navigated deep self-reflection before acknowledging their queer identity to themselves and then to others. Often, they have to overcome staunch self-denial and may need to explore their identity in highly emotionally and/or physically unsafe environments. So even if the students are ‘out and proud’ by the time they reach college campuses, the process of coming to that realization 1) often includes many scars; and 2) entails deep self-reflection that our heterosexual and cisgender students may not have had to experience around this particular issue. Many youth still need to come out in the face of homophobic and transphobic fears. Moreover, there may be a misunderstanding or lack of understanding of what they are exploring.

While lesbian and gay identities are now much more recognized, if a student is exploring pansexual, aromantic, or other lesser-known gender or sexual identities, there may be less information and acceptance because the communities around them (their families, their school, their peers) may be less familiar with those categories. Having to educate oneself and one’s supposed support network, meeting people where they are, while also navigating one’s own shifting journey, requires skills very akin to mindfulness traits.

Thus many of our queer students, by the time they identify as queer, have already engaged in deep self-reflection and maintained an ongoing reflection about their own senses of safety and their defence mechanisms that they use to survive oppression. For many students, though, their use of these skills is not intentional. They may be used as defence mechanisms – often unconscious ones – but they may not be used as proactive healing mechanisms that can lead to individual and collective liberation. That is the place where a mindful queer pedagogy could prove incredibly transformative for our queer students.

One of the most critical pieces to unlearn is internalised oppression. Many LGBTQAI+ students grow up surrounded by messages that they should be heterosexual, adhere to the biological sex and gender they were assigned at birth, and perform in normative ways. When awareness begins to grow that those prescriptions do not fit them, many queer individuals deny those feelings, sometimes not even having a language to understand what is going on. Eventually they name it for themselves and then to others. Even once we/they come to an empowered queer identity, there are often layers of internalised oppression to unpack in a process that often lasts a lifetime (Nadal and Mendoza 2014: 237-242). Students do not simply drop that internalised oppression when they enter a college classroom; in fact, it might be deepened and triggered in that institutionalised and often heteronormative and cisgender normative space (Nadal and Mendoza 2014: 236-237). Moreover, students may not know how to name what is happening for them, which can spiral them even deeper. Sometimes just having a language to describe and understand the eruptions of internalised oppression is an important part of the healing process. Feminist and antiracist pedagogy has long noted that one of the first steps in unearthing internalised oppression is naming its existence. Often, messages of internalised oppression masquerade as ‘truth’, giving the self-hatred more power. So recognising those narratives, naming them as a tool of oppression, and learning to see HOW deeply they
are ingrained in ourselves and constantly reinforced by external sources is a powerfully healing practice (David 2014; Berila 2015). Only then can we begin to replace those harmful messages with more empowering ones, both individually and collectively. This practice is one that a mindful queer pedagogy can enable.

The experiences of living as queer identities with heteronormative and gendernormative social contexts brings with it deep trauma and divides that need to be healed if we are really to interrupt these dominant paradigms about gender and sexuality. Many of these experiences emerge in our social justice classrooms, while still others remain invisible. My experience of almost twenty years teaching LGBTQAI+ students is that many of them are just beginning to uncover how deeply those internalised messages have rooted in their sense of self. Fewer still have healthy coping mechanisms for handling them in the moment and for healing from them in the longer term (Nadal and Mendoza 2014: 242-243). Oppression is a trauma that, like most trauma, is held in our bodies (van der Kolk 2014: 89; Berila 2015: 33). It can be triggered in unexpected ways: by a sound, a smell, a comment made in class. But for many queer students, this trauma is a daily part of their lived experience, and they may or may not understand that that is what it is. Unlike some forms of trauma, which happen only once, trauma from oppression is a daily and ongoing experience. There may be pockets of respite from it (such as in a queer student organisation or in a relatively safe peer group). But in general, it is an ongoing experience with little respite that is often intensified when students embody multiple marginalised identities. A mindful queer pedagogy would help them discern when that is happening and offer them tools for healing. It would also help the campus community change the structural conditions that produce that oppression.

While college campuses often talk of wellness, it is important to situate the wellness for marginalised groups within the context of structural oppression and violence. Handling stress, test anxiety, being away from home, and the financial pressures in college are not the only issues – sometimes not even the primary ones — that queer college students face. They also face the daily micro/macroaggressions of living a queer identity in oppressive institutional spaces. For many queer students, college is one of the places where they can find their supportive communities and come into a fuller sense of self, but it is also yet another shifting terrain of marginalisation.

In this context, a mindful queer pedagogy *politicises* the concepts of wellness. It acknowledges that, ‘acts of healing became acts of resistance, inscribing the vital link between personal health and collective freedom’ (Fett 2002: 20). Though Fett’s point is made in the context of African American women and racism, it is nevertheless a critical one here as well: for members of marginalised groups, self-healing and wellness is never just an individual thing, because WHAT they need to heal from includes structural oppression that targets their whole group. Moreover, for many members of marginalised groups, broader cultural ideologies devalue their worth, so they need to come to healing and self-empowerment over and against this devaluation. As Tara Brabazon writes in her article, ‘Fitness is a Feminist Issue’ (2006: 77 emphasis in original), ‘[t]o move fitness beyond the self-help discourse, self making must transform into sense making’. Thus, healing and wellness are ways of empowering queer students because it supports them in their project of self-making – which for many queer college students may be the first time they get to author their own sense of self. It also helps them with the ‘sense making’ of all the pressures, oppressions, and ideologies they need to unlearn in order to do so.

**Toward a Queer Mindful Pedagogy**

According to the engaged Buddhist leader Bhikkhu Bodhi (Manuel 2015: xiii), ‘Mindfulness brings to light experience in its pure immediacy. It reveals the object as it is before it has been plastered over with conceptual paint, overlaid with interpretations’. It offers an undoing, or an unlearning, of all those heteronormative and transphobic messages so many of us internalise. While queer theory would critique the presumptions in Bodhi’s quote that there is an ‘object’ prior to all the conceptual interpretations of it, what I would like to draw on here is how mindfulness can offer practices to help us pause, discern, and disrupt the layered interpretations that have so deeply constructed sexuality and gender. It can help untangle our sense of our experiences apart from the social constructions we have learned. A mindful queer pedagogy can help with that emancipatory process because it offers embodied tools on which students can intentionally draw.

Contemplative pedagogy and a feminist queer pedagogy have many similar principles, including a recognition that knowledge is contextual, a focus on the generative nature of teaching practices, an embrace of multiple perspectives, and a recognition that the ‘life of the mind’ is inevitably connected to our bodies (Langer 1997: 129-138; Berila 2015: 12-15). Of course, what is meant by that last point often differs dramatically between the two fields. When contemplative pedagogy talks about linking the mind with the body, it often means becoming aware of our physiological and emotional reactions to our thoughts. When feminist queer pedagogy talks of the body, it is often in terms of a site of oppression and as a venue for the performance of our identities. Until recently, these two directions often veered far apart.
In that schism, I argue, lies the possibility for liberatory transformation. As Manuel (2015: 23) writes of social justice 'isms', 'none of these political or social paths seemed capable of transforming suffering at its core' because they often missed the embodied component of this process. They are responding to what Manuel (2015: 65) calls the 'socially imposed suffering' of oppression. Mindfulness spaces, however, also tend to miss the mark. Too often, the latter defines liberation as something that happens when one transcends the body, ego and identity (though, of course, this varies by the particular tradition or path one is practising). Manuel (2015: 8-9) writes, 'Even though it has been said that we can awaken right where we are, in the very bodies we inhabit, we still speak of awakening as if it happens somewhere outside of our particular embodiment in time and space.'

What would happen if we brought these two together? What if we drew on contemplative pedagogy to reflect more deeply on the politicised narratives about gender and sexuality we have learned, discerned their effect on our hearts, bodies, and psyches, and cultivated compassion and resilience to help heal from oppression? While it is a common practice for meditation leaders to say things like, 'just notice whatever arises and let it go', what would happen if we better understood that what comes up is the result of being targets of oppression? And that how we make meaning is dependent upon exclusionary binaries?

While this integrated pedagogy could prove empowering for our LGBTQAI+ students, there are also critical interventions that queer theory, politics, and pedagogy have to offer contemplative pedagogy. One of the most important interventions centres around queer theory’s fundamental challenge to our basic paradigms. It explodes the notion, for instance, that there are only two options for gender: male and female. Moreover, it also looks at how those two options mutually constitute one another in a powerful binary that shapes our very ways of making meaning throughout society. Once that is disrupted, we have to learn new modes of understanding.

Let me offer a very simple but revealing example. How often do English speakers say ‘men and women’ or ‘he and she’ when we talk? For many people, the answer is quite often. However, this gender binary erases genderqueer, transfolk, agender people, and anyone else who does not align with male/female gender roles. Once we realise that, we have to mindfully reflect on each and every sentence we say, unlearning deeply entrenched grammatical rules that uphold the heteronormative and cisgender binaries. For me, given that I speak off the cuff a great deal while I facilitate class discussions, this queer insight demands constant, moment-to-moment reflection on the ideologies and language forms I have deeply internalised. It also invites reflection on my feelings that arise each time I notice I make a mistake, to pause and make a different choice in my language, which helps transform the classroom community.

Let me offer another example. I always come out as queer the first day of class and often reference my queerness throughout the semester. When we get to the queer unit in my introductory Women’s Studies class, some heterosexual students are inevitably surprised, because they chose not to hear my coming out (queer students almost always recognise my queerness). In one class, despite the fact that I mentioned getting married to my same sex partner, one of my students heard me say ‘partner’ and translated that as ‘co-worker.’ Scholar Kevin Kumashiro (2002: 4) tells a similar story, noting that his students often refer to him as gay even though he is very clear about his bisexuality. As he notes, ‘this tendency to think of sexuality as either/or often reflects a desire to stabilise and normalise a person’s own sexual identity’ (2002: 4). To acknowledge his biness or queerness means to acknowledge sexuality as fluid, unstable, which also, then, invites an examination of ‘normative’ identities. If sexuality and gender are fluid and unstable, if what we have learned about both are entirely shaped through discourse and power dynamics, then we also have to examine not only our own identities but the relationships between ‘us’ and ‘them’, the norm and the Other. That requires students to change how they see themselves.

Doing so is often very uncomfortable, but it is necessary to create social change. This process requires sitting with uncertainty and ambiguity, something that can run counter to higher education’s emphasis on mastery. Contemplative learning can be helpful here, since it teaches us how to sit with the discomfort of not knowing, even suggesting that that is where rich transformation lies. If, as Deborah Britzman (1998: 81) notes, learning necessarily entails unlearning, then mindful practices can offer students some ways of engaging this unsettling process. But it needs to be combined with queer anti-oppression pedagogy to recognise WHY that unsettling is necessary and what liberatory possibilities lay on the other side.

Queer theory teaches us that there is no essentialised or core gender that pre-exists our expression of it. That means that everything we think we know about gender and sexuality are storylines. Like all the thoughts that arise during meditations that we are supposed to let go of, so too are our assumptions about gender and sexuality. What if we chose not to feed the storylines? What if we suspended all that we thought we knew and instead let each moment be a new beginning? In this way, learning becomes a process of risking the self, much like Foucault (1982) suggests: “the target … is not to discover what we
are, but to refuse what we are” (Luhmann 1998: 129).

In the context of queerness, that would mean NEVER making an assumption that we know a person’s sexual or gender identity. It would mean always listening carefully for when/if they identify themselves and letting our understanding be partial and evolving. It would mean asking a person how they identify, what pronouns they use, or being OK with not knowing. It would mean troubling dominant identities and their relationships to marginalised ones. These and many other queer mindfulness practices would allow for more freedom for queer students but would also radically change our classroom communities. People would have to question and unlearn some fundamental beliefs about one another. It would also open possibilities for how we teach anti-oppression.

Queer theory invites us to challenge all things normative, even in our pedagogy, our mindfulness, and our social change practices, which opens possibilities for uncertainty, fluidity, and liberation. Integrating mindfulness practices into a queer anti-oppression pedagogy can enable a deeper wholeness and healing. What if we were as adept at acknowledging our own pain of oppression as we are about reading our external environments? What if we had empowering, mindful counter-narratives to invoke when faced with oppression? What if we adapted that external flexibility to an internal tenderness for the complex oppression of others? What if we were mindful of queer liberation?

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End Notes
1. I am intentionally using the singular ‘they’ pronoun here to honour genderqueerness. I understand that that usage goes against traditional English grammar rules, but a queer analysis would point out that those rules are themselves part of the heteronormative, cisgendernormative, and patriarchal discourse.
2. I recognise that some queer theorists would also critique the process of authoring our self-identity, while still others would say that discourse itself is the only self we have (in other words, there is no self apart from that discourse). But in terms of the lived experience, and health of our queer students, the ability to make sense of self and to self-make is a critical step in their empowerment.
Resisting Erasure: Critical influences for men who survived sexual violence in higher education

DANIEL TILLAPAUGH

Significant attention has been paid to the issue of sexual violence on college and university campuses within the United States. However, much of this attention has reinforced the myth that only heterosexual cisgender women experience sexual violence. This study challenges this myth. In this article, I discuss this narrative constructivist inquiry study that included 15 cisgender and transgender men who survived sexual violence in US colleges and universities between 2005 and 2015. In particular, I focus on highlighting the critical influences that shaped these survivors' post-trauma lives. Four main themes emerged from the data; which include (a) situational variability; (b) institutional resources; (c) community; and (d) agency. Implications for professional practice and future research are shared.

In an editorial in Time in July 2014, John Kelly, a senior at Tufts University, shared his experiences of being raped twice during college. As the first man who survived sexual violence to testify before the United States Congress, Kelly (2014) expressed the anguish he suffered with his university’s inability to respond effectively to support him in his experience. In the United States, media reports on issues of sexual violence, defined as any unwanted sexual experiences (Banyard et al. 2007), at colleges and universities have been prominent for the past decade. Increased attention and enforcement of Title IX and governmental oversight has shone a spotlight on the issue at many colleges and universities. Administrators at colleges and universities have an ethical responsibility to report and counsel students who have been victims of sexual violence, and if administrators are ill-equipped to provide this type of support to all victims (particularly men, queer, and transgender students), they are not fulfilling their obligations.

Much of the current conversation around gender-based or sexual violence tends to reinforce the fallacy that women are the only victims of sexual violence on campus (Porter and McQuiller-Williams 2011; Turchik and Edwards 2012). In fact, this myth is incorrect. One in 71 men have been victimised by rape in their life while one in five men have experienced some other type of sexual violence (NISVS 2010). These rates very likely under-represent the reality of sexual assault given that men are less likely to report sexual violence (Turchik and Edwards 2012). In 2015, The Washington Post conducted a poll that found five per cent of college men had experienced sexual assault (The Washington Post 2015 ). However, conversations about men survivors of sexual violence (MSSV) are often absent from larger sexual violence prevention dialogues in higher education. In their work on the experiences of sexual victimisation of college students, Banyard et al. (2007) found that 33 per cent of MSSV told no one about their experiences. As a society, this lack of reporting, or silencing of survivors, plays a role in campus administrators, law enforcement, counsellors, and medical professionals being miseducated on issues related to men being sexual violence survivors (Banyard et al. 2007; Turchik and Edwards 2012).

Stories such as John Kelly’s are powerful counter-narratives to the more dominant narratives on sexual violence on campus which are stories about women survivors, yet a dearth of research exists on the experiences of MSSV in college. In fact, in a review of the current literature in 2016, only a handful of articles specifically looked at the issue of sexual violence and coercion specifically for college men (Banyard et al. 2007; Hartwick et al. 2007; Larimer et al. 1999; Porter and McQuiller-Williams 2011; Turchik and Edwards 2012). In the extant literature on men and sexual violence, much of the scholarship discusses the connections between sexual violence and coercion and alcohol use (Banyard et al. 2007; Larimer et al. 1999; Turchik and Edwards 2012) as well as gender roles and expectations (Hartwick et al. 2007). One critique of these articles is that they are either a quantitative study or a literature review; therefore, while survivors of sexual violence have disclosed their experiences, there have not been opportunities for these survivors to share their stories and have their voices heard. Given the connection that is often raised around
gender role expectations around masculinity, Kelly (2014) stated, ‘The gender norms that allow men to rape at such staggering rates also creates ideals of masculinity that silence male survivors’. Therefore, it becomes imperative that studies, such as this one, give voice to those who have been silenced.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the experiences of men survivors of sexual violence (MSSV) during college. In particular, this article focuses on critical influences related to MSSVs’ experiences of post-trauma.

**Methods**

For this study, I used narrative constructivist inquiry (Sparkes and Smith 2008). Narrative constructivist inquiry ‘recognizes the significance of sociocultural narratives in the construction of people’s lives’ (Sparkes and Smith 2008: 297). Through the narratives or stories that individuals tell, they create meaning of their lived experiences, process their emotions or feelings, and come to understand the social phenomenon they experience (Sparkes and Smith 2008). In particular, the use of narrative constructivist inquiry infers a connection between the socio-political context in which one lives and operates and an individual’s narrative. This is particularly important given that through these narratives, individuals may explore how they feel about a particular event, how it relates to their internal sense of themselves, their morality, and their sense of themselves as a person’ (Crossley 2003: 289).

Given this study’s purpose and the need to understand the experiences of men who are survivors of sexual violence and/or coercion in college, narrative constructivist inquiry provides a lens to examine the individual participant’s experiences. This includes not only his feelings and emotions of such violence, but also the socio-political context involved. Additionally, while each of the participants may be connected by their experiences with violence, their particular situations are unique unto themselves. Narrative constructivist inquiry provides a helpful lens to understand similarities as well as distinct differences among the individual study participants (Sparkes and Smith 2008). The research question guiding this study is what were the critical influences for men who survived sexual violence in college and their healing after experiencing sexual violence?

**Recruitment of Participants**

Participants were recruited via social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Reddit), posts through sexual violence survivor agencies and organisations, and through emails sent by higher education administrators and faculty to their students. The information distributed included a link to the study’s recruitment website, and individuals self-nominated themselves to participate. The research criteria for this study required that participants (a) identified as cisgender or transgender men and (b) experienced sexual violence at a college or university within the United States between 2005 and 2015. Fifteen individuals were interviewed twice over the course of two months with in-depth questions about their experiences of sexual violence, their perceptions of sexual violence prevention programming on their campus, and their recommendations on how to better support MSSV in higher education. These interviews lasted between thirty to ninety minutes and were conducted by phone. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. As a means of verification by participants, participants were asked to review their interview transcripts for verification prior to data analysis.

**Participants**

The participants ranged in age from 20 to 33. Two of the men identified as transgender men while the other 13 identified as cisgender. Eleven of the participants identified as White, two as Hispanic or Latino, one as Black, and one as biracial. Eight of the men identified as gay, three as queer, two as bisexual, one as heterosexual, and one as ‘straight or bi-curious’. Each of the participants reported at least one incident of sexual violence. Yet, two participants were violated repeatedly by their assailant multiple times over a sustained period of time.

**Data Analysis**

In analysing the data, I used Polkinghorne’s (1995) concept of narrative smoothing, where I centered the research question and removed redundant or unnecessary information from the participants’ transcripts by eliminating information not related directly to the research question. From there, I (along with two graduate student research assistants) engaged in initial line-by-line coding of all transcripts, identifying key codes around critical influences post-trauma. Additionally, we reviewed researchers’ notes and created analytical memos throughout this process given the constructivist paradigm’s emphasis on the relationship established between the researcher and the participant (Polkinghorne 1995). After the initial coding, we reviewed those codes from participant transcripts and researcher notes and began to categorise them to view broader patterns and themes. From there, we engaged in dialogue to test the four emergent themes.

**Findings**

Using the data obtained from the 15 participants in the study, four themes emerged as critical influences for the men following their experiences of sexual violence. These four themes were: (a) situational variability; (b) institutional resources; (c) community; and (d) agency.
As a result, after their break-up due to the violence, he never disclosed this experience to any of his friends. His first boyfriend in college had sexually assaulted him, issues of sociability. For example, Raul shared that after the MSSV expressed how challenging it was to run into their perpetrator(s) played a significant critical influence in the MSSVs' lives, often in difficult ways. Many of the survivors; however, for some participants, avoidance was impossible. Lucas experienced sexual violence committed by a classmate. After the assault, Lucas was obliged to attend classes with his perpetrator, where he experienced a high degree of distress. He stated:

Shortly after the incident … the teacher indirectly called me out for not being, or not participating heavily in class. At that point, I realised that I needed help because in a three hour class, I was staring at the wall and attempting coping mechanisms to deal with the situation.

These feelings of distress were often characterised by depression, anxiety, or even symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These experiences connect to the research on psychological consequences of MSSV (Larimer et al. 1999). This issue is also connected to the last subtheme of the survivor’s perception of trauma severity.

**Survivor's perception of trauma severity:** The perceived severity of the survivors’ trauma from their experiences of sexual violence played a critical influence in how MSSV moved forward in their healing. Participants with sustained violence by the same perpetrator (such as Flynn or George) as well as those who had multiple sexual violence experiences (such as Greg, Sam, and Will) often discussed the impact of the violence differently than others. George’s experience was substantially different than that of other participants given that a campus administrator repeatedly assaulted him during a period of a year and a half. George was resigned to believe that the continuous violence he experienced was inevitable because of his perpetrator's power and authority. Flynn similarly encountered issues around his perpetrator's power and authority as his supervisor at work. Based upon the stares and comments he received from his supervisor, he became self-conscious and changed how he dressed at work. Flynn said, ‘it got to the point where I would … purposely wear baggy pants at work because [my supervisor was] just like always staring’.

For individuals who had been assaulted multiple times by different assailants, they often measured the severity of their experiences against one another. During our interview, Sam recalled a memory about his first sexual experience in college when his boyfriend at the time forced
him to have penetrative anal sex by saying, ‘if you don’t do this, you don’t love me’. Sam stated,

And you know, no, I didn’t know that it was coercion at the time. I thought that it was just normal interaction. It was my first time. And that’s how people interact with each other, you know, it’s just that is ... the way that I had learned that gay men interacted. And I thought it was normal.

Sam’s first sexual encounter with another man was internalised as normal and that had had a significant role in his ideas of what sex was supposed to be like. This also had had an effect on his views on how gay men related to one another in intimacy, so his other experiences of sexual violence were often minimised. This lack of awareness and education is also connected to the theme of institutional resources available to men as survivors of sexual violence.

**Institutional Resources**

Accessing institutional resources resulted in mixed reactions for the MSSV. In particular, those who reported their incidents found that process to be problematic. Some participants found solace in disclosures to faculty members or staff, particularly those working in violence prevention spaces or multicultural centres. Most participants had no idea about how to report their experiences of sexual violence or found the process confusing.

A few of the MSSV: Aaron, Henry, George, and Flynn, chose to report their sexual violence experience within their campus processes. Yet the process for doing so was unclear. Most of the men, even those who chose not to report, worried about how they would be perceived if they reported their trauma. Some MSSV who did report encountered a lack of understanding from campus police or campus administrators. For instance, Aaron filed a report to campus police as well as a dean who both were dismissive of his concerns and unsympathetic to his situation. In the end, there was no discussion by these campus administrators to provide Aaron with further resources and supports. While some participants struggled with negative encounters with campus administrators, others had positive experiences.

Many participants commented that they largely had positive or helpful interactions with campus administrators who were engaged in trauma support roles, including violence prevention program staff and counselling. Participants who accessed support through violence prevention program staff characterised these experiences as ‘incredibly validating’ and ‘really helpful’. Aidan shared:

I was in with this nervousness of like, you can’t share all of these details because it’s gross and it’s completely, you know, you’re a bad person, and this is a weird thing to talk about anyway. I had all of these sort of feelings and thoughts. And I think that particularly the director had a way of validating me that I appreciated.

In addition to the support from violence prevention program staff, other participants found more campus-based informal resolution programs to be helpful. Greg shared that his college had a community concern program for ‘informal resolution[s]’. He was able to file a report outlining the concerns around a peer who had engaged in coercive and inappropriate behaviours toward him on multiple occasions. As a result of filing the complaint, the student was spoken to and ‘since then, he has not done those things’. These types of experiences were helpful for some participants in negotiating their post-trauma lives because they started to feel some sort of control back in their lives. In many ways, this sense of control was achieved through the MSSV’s support networks and community, which will be discussed next.

**Community**

All of the participants spoke meaningfully about the importance of community following their sexual violence. Friends often were named as key supports. Through their disclosures to others, some participants found that their friendships were tested or challenged. This is supported in the body of literature on MSSV; Walker et al. (2005) reported that MSSV often became emotionally distant from others and withdrawn from close family and friends. Henry stated, ‘I found out who my friends were’. He shared a story about a friend who had actually been engaged in some collaborative research with Henry’s perpetrator, and ‘he removed his name from all the projects that he had with [my perpetrator]’. That level of support was particularly moving for Henry; he stated, ‘I will never ever forget that’. However, not all of the participants felt as if they had the type of support networks that they wanted.

Therapy was another critical influence for the MSSV. Many of the MSSV found counselling an essential aspect of healing and coping with the aftermath of their trauma. After the first interview for this study, Greg decided to seek out a counsellor because ‘I don’t think that I had sat down and thought of it all at the same time before’. He felt as though the therapeutic process was beneficial because it allowed him to ‘just work through some of the emotions that were left behind and some of the anxiety that it’s left me with, which has been a very positive influence’. While most participants did not participate in support groups or group counselling, some participants desired to do so. For instance, Raul shared that he was ‘having trouble finding
a support group’. He felt as though ‘if men were a part of the conversation … that perhaps … the information [of programs and support groups geared to men who are sexual violence survivors] would be easier to find’.

While counselling served as an important element in some survivors’ lives, finding partners who were empathic and sensitive to their identity as survivors also became critical. Many of the men acknowledged that they experienced triggers when engaging in intimate sexual behaviour after their experiences of sexual violence, which is supported by previous research on MSSV (Mezey and King 1989). George admitted that having his long-term boyfriend helped him feel more comfortable, particularly when he is triggered because, ‘I can address it, and I’m comfortable enough with [my boyfriend] to address it with him and let him know he hasn’t does’t anything wrong’. Similarly, Sam maintained that his relationship with his partner helped him end some unhealthy coping mechanisms, particularly high-risk sex and drug use. He stated:

There was something about the way that I saw myself, reflected in the way that he saw me, that I was able to find validation within myself. That is, if I could love me half as much as he loved me, then I could treat myself better.

This realisation by Sam about the importance of self-validation also had quite a bit to do with finding one’s agency, which will be discussed in this next section.

Agency

Reclaiming a sense of control and finding one’s voice as a survivor of sexual violence were highlighted as critical influences for the MSSV. Gaining a sense of control was exhibited in different ways for many of the participants. In some cases, MSSV gained control by walking away from reporting their sexual violence and eliminating negative interactions with campus police (Aaron) or campus administrators (Henry). For others, control meant having the need to be clear about boundaries with other people. Henry shared how he had to stop dating a woman because her desired expectations for their relationship exceeded the boundaries he had created to feel comfortable in an intimate relationship.

Controlling the disclosure of one’s sexual violence survivor identity became important for all of the men. At first, many of the men felt a great deal of shame around their survivorship, but as they continued to disclose to others, that shame dissipated and ultimately often became empowering. Many of the men shared their stories to help educate others that men could be survivors of sexual violence. Aaron wrote an anonymous article in his campus’s student newspaper during Sexual Assault Prevention Week detailing his experience. Similarly, Wade wrote a blog post sharing his story and highlighting the absence of discussion around sexual violence outside of men as perpetrator and women as victims. Aidan spoke about the power of channelling his feelings around his sexual violence through his spoken word poetry. Both Sam and Mark often would talk about their identities as survivors when speaking on campus to help shift the public perception and awareness that men can indeed be survivors.

Implications

There is a need for re-examining and reforming the ways that administrators and faculty in higher education promote sexual violence prevention. Currently, in the United States, many of the conversations on sexual violence in higher education centre women as victims (Harris and Linder 2017). If discussions of men and transgender survivors are not included in these conversations, this needs to be addressed immediately and integrated in all levels of the work. Micah spoke to this issue, stating:

You always hear the one in five statistic [for women]. And what they don’t include is 1 in 16 men. Or you know, 50% of trans folks. That’s sort of never on the board. And so that is always, for me, really triggering – as in feeling erased from the conversation.

Survivors are paying close attention to the conversations of sexual violence on their campus. If campuses are not engaging in gender expansive practice, survivors internalise that erasure and are troubled by being rendered invisible.

Likewise, higher education administrators need to review campus policies and procedures. Many institutions in higher education, particularly within the United States, centre cisgender women as survivors; therefore, there is a need to change the language of our policies to reflect the realities of all survivors. These issues are highly problematic because it upholds the hegemony around sexual violence to see only cisgender women as victims whereas this research clearly points out that there are many survivors outside of that population. Additionally, administrators need to be proactive in having students understand the various steps of the process of reporting sexual violence. If this is not understood by students or requires multiple iterations of communicating their experiences, they may be less likely to report and not find the supports to help them following their trauma.
Higher education administrators need to implement programs and services designed for men as survivors. Counselling played a key critical influence for many participants. However, counselling services are often under-resourced in higher education, and as a result, senior administrators must consider providing additional resources to strengthen collaborations between counselling and sexual violence response and education staff. Additionally, the establishment of support groups may be particularly helpful for men as survivors, particularly to overcome some of the stigma that often is internalised of being alone as a MSSV.

Administrators and faculty should also challenge systemic hegemony within campus environments. Hegemonic masculinity is deeply entrenched in many colleges and universities through programs, policies and structures. By thoughtfully examining how hegemonic masculinity plays out on their respective campus, administrators and faculty members may uncover the ways genderism, sexism, racism, and other oppressive systems affect the lives of students, particularly MSSV. Also, this work may help bring awareness to campus officials and administrators about their biases, assumptions, and stereotypes and be more inclusive of all survivors of sexual violence.

Future Research

Given that this is one of the first qualitative studies examining the experiences of college men who survived sexual violence in a number of years, more research is needed to expand our knowledge and the discourse among campus faculty and administrators. In particular, future research is needed to examine MSSV and the ways in which gender narratives, scripts, and performances influence how they make meaning of their identity as survivors of sexual violence. Gaining insights on this phenomenon would be important, particularly to assist higher education professionals in supporting MSSV more substantially. Additionally, it would be helpful to understand the long-term implications of sexual violence for men; therefore, a longitudinal study would be beneficial for those working on college and university campuses. One limitation of this study was the low number of transgender men and men of colour who self-nominated themselves to participate in this research. As a result, additional work that centres the experiences of these men and their experiences of sexual violence would be critical. Lastly, much of the current research has been framed in gender differences between men and women survivors. However, this type of work upholds a gender binary that further erases survivors who may be transgender or gender non-conforming. As a result, more studies that centre gender and view sexual violence through an inclusive gendered lens would be an important contribution to the field.

Conclusion

In our final interview, Aidan stated, ‘I think that I am still struggling to validate myself as a survivor … But I think that I am slowly getting there’. Aidan’s comments are reflective of many of the participants in this study. The process of finding their identities as survivors is an ongoing process, and the critical influences affecting their lives following their experiences of sexual violence play a role in that identity development. For higher education professionals, understanding these key influences becomes important in terms of providing resources and action-oriented strategies in possibly assisting these survivors more adequately. In honour of the courage shown by each of these men in sharing their experiences, higher education professionals must do whatever possible to learn from their stories and help end the erasure and marginalisation experienced by MSSV during college.

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Astronomy Domine

I still hold that I was the one who made you listen first.
You bought tickets to the tribute, years later,
but I’m claiming this one for now.

Driving you home, the music was my call. This, you need to hear.
Sitting in silence, no audacity to break high hopes, we met between bars and lifts.

Yes, you replied. Yes. This is it, the maker’s mark. Point of origin.
The contact will remain, floating down the traffic lights on the edge of sound.

Naming planets under breath, each is a stepping stone in the channel. No ice.
We’ve crossed the flow, satellite passing hand to eye.

We draw to your door, let you go, and the sound remains. Sitting back until the song fades down, cutting the engine before the next begins.
Now there are no such signs.

EXODUS

In the dark quilt of witching hour ravens stir black on midnight blue a full moon lights their way Bomb tired bullet weary most wait for thistles of daylight The sun rises on a sea of masks set in grief a blanket a bundle a child clutched to chests Some with not a person left in this world

_Liz Murphy_,
_Binalong, NSW_

Siobhan Hodge,
_Perth, WA_
Global Citizenship as a Feminist Pedagogical Tool

TANYA BAKHRU AND ROBIN ROGERS

This paper is a collaborative effort between teacher and student. Together, the authors explore notions of global citizenship and its use as a pedagogical tool to expand understandings of gender in a global context in the Women’s Studies classroom. Throughout the work, a reflection on the ways in which self and other are constructed and operate across time and space is revealed including issues such as complicating the way in which notions of ‘gender’ and ‘the global’ are engaged with in the classroom, transgressing the confines of the academy by challenging stagnant, singular notions of local and global, and implementing the characteristics of a global citizen into learning processes. This paper argues that by invoking notions of global citizenship both teachers and students in the feminist classroom are able to reach beyond immediate surroundings and deepen understandings of gender in a global context.

Participating in higher education in an era of globalisation places students and faculty within a complex landscape that both compels them to engage with intercultural knowledge and simultaneously pulls them towards neoliberal configurations of education. Over the past several decades there has been a concerted effort to globalise the classroom and integrate ‘the global’ into pedagogical practices. Such an educational approach must be met with interpretation and negotiation as students and faculty confront global capitalism and hegemonic ideologies that reinforce hierarchies of power and domination as they play out in the academy. Within this difficult and often paradoxical context, transformative notions of global citizenship as a pedagogical tool can provide a path forward for students and teachers in the Women’s Studies classroom to deepen and complicate their understanding of ‘the global,’ challenge normative moves to internationalise or globalise the curriculum, and work toward social change.

This paper is a collaborative effort between teacher and student. Robin was a student in several of Tanya’s Women’s Studies classes at San Jose State University, California, and served as the SJSU Women’s Studies Program intern for several years. Together, teacher and student explore notions of global citizenship and its use as a pedagogical tool to expand understandings of gender in a global context in the Women’s Studies classroom. This article is rooted in the experiential knowledge that Tanya and Robin cultivated by participating in feminist learning processes. We aim to share practical strategies and outcomes of course design and implementation based on transformative notions of global citizenship, in particular Ikeda’s (2001) three characteristics of a global citizen outlined below.

While notions of global citizenship vary in terms of theory and practice, normative imaginings of global citizenship emphasise its link to ‘national and global competitiveness, efficiency, consumption, and productive citizenship’ (Roman 2003: 269). Hegemonic understandings of global citizenship in educational terms are viewed as part of a project to ‘produce the right subjectivities for a new universal economic order’ and as something that frames education as ‘solely subordinate to the economy’ (Andreotti 2010: 239). For these reasons one may be wary of using global citizenship as a pedagogical tool in the Women’s Studies classroom, a place that has its roots in seeing the academy as a place for social change.

However, challenges to normative configurations of global citizenship abound and include the idea of educating oneself and others based on and with the aim of peace, embodying an ethic of care, acting from motivation based on global concerns, and acknowledging global interdependence (Noddings 2005: 3-4). These characteristics align easily with established feminist pedagogical approaches. As Peggy McIntosh (2005: 25) explains, many of the qualities that are essential to global citizenship are gender-related. In other words, they are qualities that have been traditionally delegated to and rewarded in women. McIntosh (2005: 23) states that ‘the idea of a global citizen [is associated] with habits of mind, heart, body, and soul that have to do with working for and preserving a network of relationship and connection across lines of difference’, thereby challenging the historically exclusionary nature of citizenship and its neoliberal underpinnings for women and other marginalised groups.

In the context of the classroom, global citizenship can be seen as a step towards what Daisaku Ikeda...
(2001: 99) calls, ‘people-centered education’. It is closely linked to the notion that education should be concerned with enabling individuals and communities to develop the capacity to ‘find meaning, to enhance one’s own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstance’ (2001: 100). Unlike conventional notions of citizenship, global citizenship as it is used for the purposes of this article is not contingent upon nation of birth. Rather it is based on a sense of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all phenomena. Ikeda (2001: 100) puts forth three characteristics of a global citizen:

1. The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living; The courage not to fear or deny difference, but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them; The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one’s immediate surroundings.

These ideas parallel Dower and Williams (2002:1) assertion that:

A global citizen is a member of the wider community of all humanity, the world or a similar whole that is wider than that of a nation-state or other political community of which we are normally thought to be citizens.

Dower and Williams (2002: 4) argue that the current context of globalisation and resulting social, economic, or political problems in areas like development, human rights, or the environment has served as motivation for individuals to regard themselves as global citizens. These points, particularly Ikeda’s three characteristics of a global citizen outlined above, became central to both teacher and student experiences as Tanya designed and implemented her Women’s Studies class, WOMS 102: Global women, and as Robin enrolled as a student in the course.

Tanya: I am an Associate Professor of Women’s Studies at San Jose State University. San Jose State University is part of the larger 23 campus California State University System. SJSU has approximately 30,000 students and is located in downtown San Jose, an urban space in the heart of Silicon Valley. The vast majority of SJSU students are California residents and nearly half come from the local county (Santa Clara). The student population is comprised almost equally of Asian, Hispanic, and White students with far fewer African American and American Indian students (SJSU OIR 2011: 1). Reflective of the wider local population, it is difficult to identify one racial majority amongst the student body. Notably, about half of incoming freshmen and transfer students identify as first generation; being the first in their family to attend college. (SJSU Student Affairs 2016).

The Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at SJSU is housed in the Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences and offers a stand-alone minor and a concentration in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in the Sociology major. Our program is relatively small in terms of faculty and course offerings but we serve a large number of students through our General Education classes.

One of the program’s most popular courses is WOMS 102: The global study of women. WOMS 102 is an upper division General Education course, covering GE Area V, ‘Culture, Civilization, and Global Understanding’. University guidelines state that courses in this area are intended to:

1. give students an appreciation for human expression in cultures outside the U.S. and an understanding of how that expression has developed over time. These courses should also increase students’ understanding of how traditions of cultures outside the U.S. have influenced American culture and society as well as how cultures in general both develop distinctive features and interact with other cultures (SJSU UGS 2005: 1).

Working within the parameters of this GE area is challenging. The retention of a US-centric approach to the course objective as well as a false delineation of American culture and society and those ‘outside the US’ creates difficulty in teaching about women in a global context because such notions of ‘global understanding’ are singular, reductionist, and in conflict with contemporary transnational feminist pedagogies and theories. Furthermore, framing ‘global understanding’ as ‘somewhere out there’ or ‘somewhere else’ limits the vast source of knowledge about genealogies of traditions and cultures that a student body as diverse as that at SJSU already brings with them to the classroom.

The description of GE Area V courses above perfectly exemplifies the larger issues of dominant pedagogical efforts to globalise or internationalise the curriculum, which reinforce mainstream understandings of the nation, hierarchies of power in terms of race, gender, and citizenship, and represent a move toward constructing education as a consumable product. Such an approach builds upon and perpetuates already entrenched inequalities rooted in historical legacies of patriarchy and domination in the academy and results in ‘corporate cultures of power, domination and surveillance coincide[ing] with a politics of complicity in the academy and elsewhere’
(Mohanty 2006: 8). As a teacher in Women’s Studies, an academic field of inquiry that grew out of the need to challenge the intellectual idea that the human experience is a male experience as well as the exclusion of women from academic content and canon, being critical of and yet working within the bounds of the GE guidelines was a struggle. Perpetuating a sense among students that they are intellectual tourists, voyeurs, and vagabonds viewing ‘their pedagogical and curricular experiences as brief excursions into “other” people’s lived cultures’ (Roman 2003: 272) could all too easily occur. These tensions were at the fore of my mind as I developed and implemented WOMS 102: The Global Study of Women course.

Robin: For me, a student intern for the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program as well as Dr Bakhru’s research assistant, taking WOMS 102: The Global Study of Women, my understanding of global citizenship went through many changes throughout the course and continues to expand, shift, and change. When I try to apply the concept of global citizenship to my life, it means recognising that borders, whether social, political, or economic, are ultimately social constructs. Even though my perspective is informed by local narratives, by utilising a global citizenship framework I am able to recognise the impact my actions and inactions have locally and globally, and take responsibility for the choices I make.

Robin: I first heard the term ‘global citizenship’ during my initial semester working as Dr Bakhru’s research assistant. I had the vague notion that global citizenship meant thinking of myself as an entity in the world, not just an entity in San Jose, my hometown. I thought of ‘global citizenship’ as simply applying traditional concepts of citizenship to a global scale. Such an understanding is problematic, however, because it is narrow, entrenched in values specific to the community I grew up in, and assumes my understanding of the word ‘citizenship’ is universally accepted and relevant. As I progressed in my exposure to the idea of global citizenship, I began to see it as including a sense of community and responsibility. The more I participated in feminist events on campus, such as Women’s History Month programs or student sponsored conferences, such as the South Bay Women’s Conference, I started to develop a sense of mission for gender and social justice in global terms.

In the spring of my final year at San Jose State University I took WOMS 102: The Global Study of Women alongside WOMS 160 Women, Race, Class; and two English courses (my Major discipline) concurrently. This multidisciplinary experience was important in my learning process. Throughout the semester I found many connections, applying frameworks from my Women’s Studies courses to my literary analysis, and applying detailed analysis of language and perspective to my Women’s Studies courses. Through cultivating an imaginative empathy, developing a sense of the interconnectedness of life and summoning up the courage to engage with difference, those notions of Global Citizenship presented in WOMS 102 helped me to shift my sense of myself in the world and develop the ability to have meaningful discussions with people whose experiences and frame of reference differ significantly from my own.

Tanya: Attempting to place Ikeda’s (2001: 100) first characteristic of a global citizen, the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living, I turned to Chandra Mohanty’s 2003 work Feminism Without Borders. In this work she discusses what she calls the ‘Feminist Solidarity or Comparative Feminist Studies Model’ of feminist pedagogy. Mohanty (2003:238) asserts that:

It is the way we position historical narratives of experience in relation to each other, the way we theorize relationality as both historical and simultaneously singular and collective that determines how and what we learn when we cross cultural and experiential borders.

Mohanty raises a very salient point in her discussion of anti-globalisation pedagogies and moves within Women’s Studies to ‘internationalise’ or ‘globalise’ the curriculum, precisely what Area V courses like The Global Study of Women, are designed to do.

Mohanty’s proposed Feminist Solidarity Model is based on the assumption that ‘the local and the global are not defined in terms of physical geography or territory but exist simultaneously and constitute each other’ (2003: 242). It is contexts, links, and relationships that are material and temporal between local and global that should take our focus. ‘What is emphasized are relations of mutuality, co-responsibility, and common interests, anchoring the idea of feminist solidarity’ (2003: 242). By using the framework of feminist solidarity, Mohanty stresses that students are able to see interconnections between communities of women and between each other as students with experiences that complicate what is understood as local and global and that exist interconnected with each other.

As I designed and implemented The Global Study of Women syllabus, I made a concerted effort to organise the class in such a way that would build a tapestry of gendered experiences over time and place and that historicised and contextualised women’s lives in various geographic and social locations. For example, I began the class with discussions of colonisation, domination, constructions of difference, and patriarchy. I approached these topics in historical, geographic, and social terms. I strove to, as Sreenivas (2004:5) suggests, ‘make explicit the politics of
knowledge about “other” women' and ‘introduce contextual detail that situates gender in relation to multiple localized layers of meaning’. By selecting readings that interrogated representations and discourses of the concept of nation and the category woman and by introducing the concept of global citizenship early on in the course, I invited students to transform their self-perception into one of participants in an intellectual and political project, positioning them as agents of social change.

As the course proceeded, our content moved into thematic material addressing issues of women, work and migration; women’s health and global capitalism; and ecology and the global food system. Examining subjects that manifest globally, albeit in different ways dependent on geographic and social location, I attempt to facilitate students' ability to recognise the web of interconnectedness each of us have with other individuals and communities in various places, spaces, and temporal moments; including their peers in the class. I also encourage students to courageously examine their own experience and participation in such phenomena by invoking an imaginative empathy based on dialogue with each other. Because the student population of San Jose State is so diverse in terms of race, class, gender, citizenship status, and age, a diversity of experiential knowledge always already exists in the classroom. By tapping into this knowledge and encouraging students to share the ways in which the political is personal in their own lives, the global merges with the local and notions of global citizenship manifest throughout the course. As a result of witnessing the transformations of many of my students in their understanding of themselves and their place in the world, I believe there is great benefit in incorporating notions of global citizenship into Women’s Studies curriculum as a necessary tool for teaching about global women’s issues and women’s lives around the world.

**Robin:** For me, acknowledging the interconnectedness of all life and living came to the fore in our final paper. The assignment was a research paper in which each student chose a fruit or vegetable and was asked to research the journey of that food through the global industrial food system. I chose to research my favourite fruit, peaches. This research project helped me understand the connections between my purchasing decisions as a consumer and the many people involved in the agricultural industry along the journey of the peach. The paper gave me an opportunity to explore themes discussed throughout the semester, such as gendered division of labour in food production, the transformation of natural resources into commodities, and the relationship between globalisation from above and globalisation from below as they relate to a single issue important to me, the food I eat.

This research paper enabled me to reflect on my own disconnect with food production by revealing the elaborate global food system and all the various actors, particularly women, I do not necessarily see in that system yet am completely entwined with and dependent on for my food. While investigating the journey of the peach through the global food system (Rogers 2013), I found the language that is used to make consumers feel more connected to the farming process actually obscures the reality of the global food system that distances them from the food they eat or the people who provide that food.

**Tanya:** Robin’s observation of the contradictory nature of the global food industry echoes feminist critiques and analysis of traditional notions of citizenship (Lister 1997, 2003; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999; Friedman 2005 as cited in Hua 2011) that as student and teacher we were struggling with and against throughout the duration of the course. Part of my own hesitation to implement global citizenship in the classroom stemmed from the historically exclusionary aspects of conventional citizenship. Traditional notions of citizenship are closely linked to rights and obligations to the state and the status of community membership with which those rights and obligations come. Citizenship therefore extends to ‘not simply a set of legal rules governing the relationship between individuals and the state in which they live but also a set of social relationships between individuals and the state and between individual citizens’ (Lister 1997: 29).

As Ruth Lister (1997: 36) expertly points out, the ability of particular groups to act as citizens and the extent to which they are able to partake of rights as citizens depends on the degree to which they are included or excluded from citizenship or seen as non- or partial citizens. Lister states that historically, women were excluded from citizenship theory and practice (1997: 38) and this exclusion interacts with ‘other axes of social division such as class, “race”, disability, sexuality and age’ (1997: 38). For example women, who form a significant population of present day migrants or asylum seekers, frequently face compounded struggles to penetrate the exclusionary force of ‘nation-state-bound citizenship’ (1997: 36). They are characterised as economic dependents and are often required to assimilate culturally as a precondition of citizenship not taking into account issues of gender, sexuality, age, or class (1997: 37). More fundamentally, political theory on citizenship typically assumes a universal category of ‘woman’ (1997: 38), overlooking the many variations of experience within the category ‘woman’.

Keeping in mind Ikeda’s (2001: 100) notions that global citizenship entails ‘the courage not to fear or deny difference, but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them and the compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one’s immediate surroundings’
it is even more critical that classes like WOMS 102: The Global Study of Women, engage in critical, yet often difficult discussions of race, class, and gender. Such an opportunity could easily go out the window in ‘global perspectives’ classes where ‘students tended to homogenise such differences into the space of the nation-state’ (Sreenivas 2004: 1). In an article exploring these issues, Sreenivas (2004:1) observes that, ‘Ironically, emphasising the global seemed to obviate critical analysis of our own local spaces, whether communities, regions, or nations’ (2003:1) and she asks, ‘How then, to create a classroom environment that encourages critical analysis of both local and global, and shows how these levels are linked’ (2003:1). In teaching WOMS 102 within the confines of a GE Area that problematically makes invisible those connections and intersections between local and global spaces, I am well aware how easily these categories can become clearly defined and stagnant.

It is in addressing such issues that I have found critical imaginings of global citizenship to be useful; those that ‘are framed around radical appeals to openness, to difference and to the negotiation of meaning’ and that ‘equip people to live together in collaborative, but un-coercive ways’ (Andreotti 2010: 234). Global citizenship education, from such a perspective has the potential to help students develop the skills and conceptual frameworks necessary to understand and resolve the critical global challenges facing humanity in the 21st century.

Furthermore, I made central to class discussions notions of civil discourse and introduced students to both theoretical and pragmatic ways that dialogue can be a means to engage with difference rather than fearing or denying difference. I ask students to reflect on what it means to open oneself to the lived experiences of others and view those experiences as legitimate. Using Cynthia Enloe’s work as a centrepiece, we discuss issues around the idea of ‘seriousness’ and who is ‘taken seriously’ and in what context (Enloe 2013). By incorporating notions of global citizenship into WOMS 102 in these ways, I tried to foster global awareness and sharing among students while simultaneously problematising the categories ‘women’, ‘international’, and ‘domestic’ in terms of topic matter but also in terms of students’ identities. Through selected readings and assignments I aimed to shape the class in a way that facilitates students’ development, and recognition of global women’s issues.

**Robin:** As the semester went on, the perspectives and skills learned in WOMS 102 continued to empower me to develop my ability to engage with difference. In autumn 2013, three white students were charged with misdemeanours for torturing their Black roommate, posting racial slurs around their dormitory, trapping him in his room, and putting a bicycle lock around his neck (Wang 2016). I was shocked. I could not understand how a student could be so mistreated on campus for months without someone intervening.

In one instance I sat discussing it with a classmate from WOMS 102. It did not take long for our discussion to broaden out to racism in California. She grew up in California in a small community where overt racism was rampant. The campus hate crime was difficult for her because it reminded her of the reaction she received post-9/11 as someone that was often identified as Middle Eastern. In the eyes of those who perpetrated racism towards her, it did not matter that she was an American citizen or that she was not of Middle Eastern descent. Through our dialogue on race and racism, I realised that identity is a transaction between who you are, and who you are perceived to be. The experiences she described did not fit the narrative of the California I grew up with. As a mixed race woman (generally perceived as white) in a diverse neighbourhood in the Bay Area, I was taught to believe in a tolerant, relatively safe California.

Through our discussion, I realised that the difficulty in learning from tragedy is the temptation to view it as an isolated, local incident. As a Japanese American, I couldn’t help but recall the history of Japanese internment during World War II. During World War II, citizens and legal permanent residents of Japanese descent along the US West Coast were forced to leave their homes and businesses and relocate. This included 120,313 Japanese Americans who were locked up in heavily armed internment camps with no trial or evidence (JANM 2016) in the name of security. Those who were allowed to return to their homes after the war faced violence and vandalism (Ina 1999). It was framed as a terrible thing that had happened in the past, but the rhetoric was eerily familiar.

In 2001, the USA Patriot Act was enacted, allowing law enforcement to obtain business records, and conduct searches and seize property without notifying suspects until several days afterwards (ACLU 2016). According to the ACLU, the Patriot Act, despite its name, is used primarily to investigate American citizens in cases not involving terrorism (ACLU 2016). This has since been ruled unconstitutional in multiple court cases (ACLU 2016) but remains in effect as of the writing of this paper (USDOJ 2016). Studying women in a global context through a theoretical framework incorporating feminist theory and notions of global citizenship has taught me that recognising and having the courage to discuss not only instances, but patterns of violence and persecution are critical to creating meaningful change.

In another instance, one of the topics covered in the semester dealt with transnational migration and gendered labour, particularly the experiences of women who
migrate to do care work. We discussed notions of care as a commodity in this context and connecting them to forms of emotional labour we encounter in our own lives. One student in our class shared her own experience as a nanny. She deeply cared for ‘her kids’, attended significant moments in their lives, celebrated their growth, and developed a shared history with them. The fact that she referred to them as ‘her kids’ revealed a deep sense of connection and care that would be unrequired or even inappropriate in other forms of work. This was a facet of care work that in my limited experience I had not thought of. By contextualising her experiences within the narratives of nannies in the article, I was able to make connections to the text I would not have on my own, allowing me to understand the material in more depth through imaginative empathy. This important step enabled the class to take the discussion further and consider how differences of class and citizenship status in her circumstances and those of the nannies in the article may have impacted their experiences, and gain further insight into the nature of gendered labour in a global context.

Conclusion

As globalisation continues to permeate all aspects of our lives, and economic and environmental disasters become increasingly frequent, it is imperative that Women’s Studies classrooms not only prepare students to respond to these phenomena, but also continue to place global justice and transformation at the fore of feminist infiltrations into the academy. Regardless of how one’s geographical and social location may change, it is vital to nurture a political consciousness in a period when divisiveness, apathy, and fear are pervasive.

As Tanya and Robin describe in their experiences engaging with global citizenship in the Women’s Studies classroom, a reflection on the ways in which self and other are constructed and operate across time and space is revealed. For Tanya, this meant complicating the way in which notions of ‘gender’ and ‘the global’ are engaged with in the classroom. It also meant transgressing the confines of the academy by challenging stagnant, singular notions of “Global Citizenship”, in N. Noddings (ed), Educating for Global Awareness, Teachers College Press, New York.


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**First Light**

before dawn
it’s quite light here
actually never that dark
so close to the city
but there is the drama of tree shadows
playing against the wall of the new flats
cast by the intense street light
that someone decided to install
and we still have some city views

at that hour the quavering lights
of the Central Park complex
are out
but other buildings are golden
I tried to shoot photos of that scene
of the crazy shadow
the golden buildings
and the square of light
in the neighbour’s kitchen skylight

then the loudspeaker starts
from the Council depot
and the loud beeping siren sound
ringing out like the Muslim call to prayer
over rooftops
and echoing into the dark space
of the pre-dawn twilight
and if we hadn’t been awake before
we would be after that

**GIRL IN A PARK**

Young girl on the far side cardigan sandshoes picking up meagre light hands grasping swing chains high Her rocking There she is again

Apart

Two older girls walk by that way she leaps up runs to speak quietly urgently to one returns quickly to her place on the swing rocks Everyone else her age is inside having tea Her breath is visible She is the girl who went to court because of what her father did to her

She never leaves me

*LIZZ MURPHY,
BINALONG, NSW*

*ANNA COUANI,
SYDNEY, NSW*
Viewing Education in Canada through an Intersectional Auto-ethnographic Lens

HAGAR AKUA PRAH

Highlighting some themes from my study of the Black educational experience in Canada, this article focuses on future possibilities for inclusive teaching, research and policy in higher education. Taking a critical Black feminist theoretical perspective, informed by an intersectional analysis of the social construction of identity, my study employed a qualitative auto-ethnographic method and offered an emic or ‘insider’s perspective’ on the lived-experience of being Black and multiply marginalised on the journey to claiming a higher education. Using the study as a departure point, this abstract invites the reader to consider: (a) whether a methodological approach encourages self-reflection; (b) how sharing lived experiences might impact and influence the receiver-reader; and (c) what theoretical and practical implications the study might have for equity and inclusion in higher education.

Introduction: Orality and Auto-ethnography

Africans believe in ‘nommo ... the generative power of the spoken word’ (Hamlet 1998: 91). Orality is not only a communication vehicle or a means to convey knowledge from generation to generation, but it is described by Maryam Nabavi as ‘pedagogy that takes on many forms, including proverbs, praise-songs, storytelling, folklore, debates, poetry, fables, riddles, singing, myths and mythologies’ (Nabavi 2006: 178). My people are from Ghana, West Africa. Ghanaians inherited from their ancestors a pictographic writing system called Adrinka, comprised of symbols often associated with a specific proverb rooted in the cultural experience. The Adrinka system of symbols acts to preserve and transmit the cultural values of our people, while proverbs constitute an important part of the Ghanaian oral tradition and their use is widespread as mini-stories conveying cultural wisdom, values and expectations. This rich oral and symbolic literary tradition has been core to the survival of my culture, its people and its community. Prefacing each section of this article is a symbol and proverb, which communicate an aspect of the themes discussed in that section.

As a member of the African Diaspora, narrative processes resonate with me – I was raised relying on and celebrating oral forms of expression. Drawing on and telling my oral history was a way of ‘finding voice against historical misrepresentations, and seeking empowerment’ (Nabavi 2006: 179). Oral histories were popularised and theorised during the feminist movement to bring voice to the experiences of women ‘in a culture that has traditionally relied on masculine interpretation' (Fontana and Frey 2005: 709). Today, narrative and auto-ethnographic approaches have emerged as ways to give voice to marginalised researchers and participants while providing communities with a deeper understanding of the meaning of these experiences (Williams et al. 2005).

Auto-ethnographic and phenomenological methods of inquiry were employed in my study to uncover a deeper understanding and meaning of my experiences. With auto-ethnography, I placed myself at the centre of the research, emphasising reflexivity while stimulating deeper understanding and uncovering new meaning and appreciation of social and cultural dynamics (Ellis and Bochner 1996). It is a method of inquiry that connects ‘the personal to the cultural’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 740) and uses ‘personal text as critical intervention in social, political and cultural life’ (Jones 2005: 763). The auto-ethnographic method allowed me to remain true to an integrated view of myself where the ‘self as researcher and the lived self are not separate’ (Richardson 2000: 923-948). Audre Lorde said it best: ‘If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crushed into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive’ (1984: 125). By studying my own marginalised identity and social location, the auto-ethnographic process facilitated my own resistance, transformation and liberation.
The Black Educational Experience

Among the things that have always been important to Ghanaians is the value placed on education, knowledge acquisition and openness to learning, exemplified by the Adrinka symbol of knowledge, life-long education, and continued quest for knowledge and in the proverb: ‘Knowledge is like a Baobab tree...no one can encompass it with their hands’. This fundamental value counters the racism inherent in characterisations of Black people as uninterested in and incapable of contributing to knowledge generation, learning and education.

Canadian society and, by extension, its educational institutions have been shaped by Western European, Christian and Anglo-Saxon traditions, and their colonial, patriarchal and racist legacies continue to steep and affect the experiences of multiply marginalised Black individuals and students (Kobayashi and Johnson 2007: 3-16; Taylor et al. 2007; Nguyen and Stevenson 2008; Razack 2002; Henry and Tator 2000, 2009). The dominant Canadian narrative, emerging from racist stereotypes, constructs a deficit lens through which society perceives Blackness; distorting, doubting and denying the moral character and motivations of Black people and communities. It is assumed that African Canadians are ‘more prone to deviant behaviour ... lack the motivation, education or skills to participate fully in the workplace, educational system, the arts and other arenas of Canadian society’ (Henry and Tator 2000: 5). For instance, gaps in the achievement of Black students and the challenges they face, consciously or subconsciously, continue to be linked to this dominant racist discourse. Educational research on Black children in Canada continues to focus on ‘notions of ‘disadvantage’, ‘underachievement’ and ‘immigrant deviance’; the dominant narrative blames the values and attitudes of Black communities for their ‘economic and educational plight’ (Henry 1993: 208).

Henry and Tator (2000) find pervasive resistance by dominant and more privileged social groups to recognition of the existence of racism, despite the research and testimonials of scholars and those victimised by racism. This resistance comes in the form of overt and implicit distrust, disbelief, discrediting, denunciation, doubt and denial of Black people and our experiences. This deep-rooted and entrenched racist discourse acts to preserve a ‘capitalistic and highly stratified social system’ (Henry and Tator 2007: 117), with Black people at or near the bottom of this social and economic class hierarchy. The dominant discourse is so powerful that it creeps into our psyche and we find ourselves constantly fighting the internalisation of ‘supremacist values and aesthetics, a way of ... seeing the world that negates [our] value’ (hooks 1992: 3).

As a Black female first generation university graduate, my interest in the topic of the educational experiences of Black women in the academy and my approach to my research was both personal and political. In order to account for my historical and contemporary realities, I undertook to critique, resist and challenge the dominant discourse and I intentionally used approaches premised on value systems and world views that not only invite but call for the de-colonisation of research methodology (Hamlet 1998: 89-106). By exploring and sharing how social and cultural forces have impacted my life I identified, for myself and the reader, the effects of systemic oppression on my educational journey.

Black Feminist Thought: ‘... Some of Us Are Brave’

In 1977, at a convocation speech at Douglass College, renowned feminist, poet and author Adrienne Rich urged female students to consider that they are not simply receiving an education but claiming one: ‘You cannot afford to think of being here to receive an education; you will do much better to think of yourselves as being here to claim one ... ‘to claim’ is: to take as the rightful owner; to assert in the face of possible contradiction. ‘To receive’ is to come into possession of, to act as receptacle or container for; to accept as authoritative or true. The difference is that between acting and being acted-upon (Rich 1977: 1)

This activist perspective came from her knowing that the experiences of women have not been accounted for in higher education. For Black women, this exclusion is compounded. bell hooks argued that no other group has
had their ‘identity socialised out of existence as have Black women’ (hooks 1981: 7). Extending this argument, Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith (1982) co-edited a book called All the women are White, all the Blacks are men: But some of us are brave dedicated to the subject of this exclusion. Exclusion in the context of the academy was addressed by Constance Carroll who wrote: ‘There is no more isolated subgroup in academe than Black women ... they have neither race nor sex in common with White males who dominate the decision-making stratum of academe’ (1982: 118). I know this all too well through my own lived experience. Almost thirty years after hooks and other Black feminist scholar-activists vigorously contested the social and academic exclusion of Black women, the lives and contributions of Black female scholars continue to be marginalised in the knowledge generation and research endeavour.

Patricia White writes about the continued marginalisation of Black female scholars, particularly when these academics are perceived as ‘[straying] outside the acceptable boundaries of research for a minority female’ (2008: 85). Rai Reece asserts that, as we Black women negotiate our space and place in the world, our complex identities and experiences can only be viewed and understood through an ‘array of varying lenses’ (2007: 266). She refers to this standpoint when she speaks of ‘Black feminism’ (2007: 267) and differentiates it from ‘the first and second waves of feminism [historically] focused on the Eurocentric premise that all (White) women were oppressed equally’ (2007: 266). Reece characterises Black feminism as being connected with activism and social justice in two significant ways: it demands more dialogue, theoretical representation and presence of Black women in the academy; and, it urges academics to take on the role of scholar-activist and to include the experiences of Black women in their teaching and research. Referring to Black Feminist Thought, Patricia Hill Collins (1991) writes that Black feminist standpoint theory, as a theoretical paradigm or interpretive framework, presupposes that reality is a function of power relations and structures that affect the mutual construction of race, gender and class (intersectionality), that knowledge is rooted in the particular and situated experiences of Black women (subjectivity), and that to better understand and represent the world of Black women requires the use of ‘alternative’ research methods and evaluation criteria, such as, for instance, lived experience, reflexivity, praxis, emotionality, and personal accountability.

My research was framed using critical Black feminist standpoint theory which acknowledges the interconnectedness of race, gender and class, the problems with the external definitions applied to Black womanhood and the need for Black women to define and to validate their own realities (Collins 2000).

This theoretical perspective ‘links the standpoint of Black women with intersectionality ... giving keen consideration for power and structural relations’ (Olsen 2000: 244).

As a post-modern feminist study that is critical of conventional processes and values such as linearity and objectivity for instance, the presentation of my thesis was fluid and dynamic. I created an autobiographical timeline with memorable events and experiences, particularly those that were significant to my schooling and educational journey. Using the timeline as a stimulus, I recorded and transcribed oral recollections of my experiences, including conversations with my mother. Photographs, imagery and drawings, included in the body of the thesis, were used as cues to elicit memories. Black feminist scholarship provided me with conceptual tools for further understanding and attribution of meaning to my experiences. Relating stories of other Black feminists offered triangulation of the emerging themes from my narrative and common threads in the experiences of Black women in the academy. Stake (2005: 454) suggests that such ‘multiple perceptions’ of similar experiences can help “to clarify meaning”.

Lionnet (1989) discusses the autobiographies of Zora Neale Hurston and Maya Angelou – two African-American women who belong to very different cultural backgrounds but who share a ‘profound concern for the rhetoric of selfhood, [and] the processes of self-reading and self-writing as facilitated or impeded by the styles and languages in which they are compelled to write’ (21). Lionnet argues that the autobiographical process acts as a ‘revalorisation of oral traditions while re-evaluating Western concepts’ and leads to ‘reclaiming absent history and memory or acknowledging ideological distortions thereby re-appropriating the past to transform and understand ourselves’ (4-5). She asserts that those of us who have been oppressed and silenced have much to offer to a global understanding of affirmative and egalitarian principles.

My research methodology pushed the boundaries of what has conventionally been thought of as legitimate academic research. By using an auto-ethnographic style, I hoped to contribute to the ‘... preservation of disappearing cultures and vanishing lore’ (Lionnet 1989: 99) while performing a counter-hegemonic act of resistance and offering a different way of understanding and affirming the Black experience. Annette Henry suggests that Canadian educators and administrators should seek alternative approaches to educate Black children and that African-centred and Black feminist standpoint epistemologies may be useful tools to create new and more relevant Black educational theory and practice to inform these alternative models (Henry 1993: 206).
My life and educational journey can be understood as a series of ongoing and constant border crossings — literally across national boundaries, but also across racial, cultural, gender and class lines (Tastsgiolou 2000: 98-121). I am a Black female immigrant from West Africa, who has lived in poverty in both Ghana and Canada and who, in my late twenties identified as a lesbian. My life and educational journey included West African indigenous learning experiences and colonial English schooling in Ghana, primary and secondary experiences at schools serving ‘at-risk’ learners in a small town in Southern Ontario, Canada, and experiences of claiming a higher education within Canadian academia.

My story begins with my early childhood experiences in Ghana and ends at the moment in time that I completed my Master’s thesis. It did not intend to capture my entire life story, but the relevant aspects I chose to share with the reader. Below are excerpts from my thesis:

I was born in Prestea, Ghana—a small gold-mining town in West Africa. I grew up in dire poverty on African soil in the midst of land and resource exploitation by the British and other European colonial powers. It had only been eight years prior to my birth that this former British colony, called the Gold Coast, gained independence and assumed the name Ghana. I can recall looking out into the distance, from the shanty-town where I lived, towards the English compounds of the nearby gold mine.

When I turned seven, I was able to extend my right arm over my head and bend it so that it reached my left ear—that was the test to tell my mother it was time for me to start going to school.

I would put on my school uniform—the only dress among my few articles of clothing. It was a forest green sleeveless dress with a trim of yellow around the shoulders. I was aware that these were the national colours...I didn't own a pair of shoes but I would walk barefoot for over an hour every day to school.

A poor girl from the village was not expected—even by Ghanaian standards—to have or pursue educational ambitions. However, as fate would have it, I would escape extreme poverty. Ironically, colonialism brought an Irish Canadian man from Harlinton, Ontario to Prestea, Ghana who would soon transform my life.

In Ghana I was Akua (Hagar) Araba Prah and my brother was Kobina (Emmanuel) Kojo Prah. We spoke Fanti. In Canada, I was called Hagar Redmond—my colonial Christian first name and the last name of my Irish-Canadian stepfather: my brother became Emmanuel Redmond.

In Kingston, I grew up in working poor neighbourhoods and government assisted housing surrounded by White working class families among which were many Portuguese, Greek and Italian immigrants. My primary school and my first secondary school were labelled problem schools. The schools predominantly served working poor families and at risk youth. Student's struggles were visible—by that I mean you could see some of us didn't have enough to eat, weren't adequately clothed and suffered from neglect and abuse at home.

I never heard the word ‘university’in my circles and it certainly wasn't used in reference to any aspirations I might have had. I never contemplated continuing my education—it was never expected of me nor did I think it was remotely possible.

During the period between my graduation from high school and my decision to pursue an undergraduate degree, I experienced significantly personal growth and recaptured a sense of self and identity. I developed a positive self-concept and racial/ethnic cultural identity. I reclaimed my African name, gained greater capacity to deal with racism, achieved success in my workplace, grew self-confidence and felt a greater sense of belonging and security facilitated by the stability of my family life and my long-term employment.

Once I opened myself up to the possibility of higher education, I came face to face with my internalised oppression. And, no amount of strength and resistance could protect me from internalising the decades of overt racial stereotyping and characterisation. I regularly had to engage in self-care and self-talk to cleanse myself of the toxicity of racist images, representations, words and behaviours that sneakily crept into my psyche, eroding my self-concept. These were revealed in the form of anxiety that turned into tentativeness to follow through with my academic hopes, for fear of failure.

Eventually after almost two decades of community activism, I found the strength and confidence to return to education as a mature student. In the beginning, I feared that I might not succeed as compared to the students who seemed groomed for this type of academic work. Frequently, I worried that I could not make it through the process and I briefly but seriously contemplated quitting my program. Once again, I turned to a spiritual place within me and to my unseen but vocal community rooting for me.
In life I have always insisted on using my voice and being visible – never seduced by silence and denial. A very dear friend who shared similar yet distinct experiences of oppression and silencing as a Jewish woman described my insistence on voice and visibility in the following lines of a poem called Not gonna make you invisible (Zolf 1999: 64)

‘Can’t afford to split or I’d be dead
she cracks … one fist outstretched and one wrapped round her son … ’

However, writing my auto-ethnographic thesis was challenging as I had to recall and reflect on difficult and painful memories and feelings (Ellis 2003). I found myself negotiating what to share and about what to remain silent. Lewis (1993) discusses the notion of tentative speech in relation to what she calls the ‘dangerous and uncertain terrain of memory work’ (9) where we are ‘caught between moments of re/examination, re/evaluation, re/appropriation and re/affirmation on the one hand and experiences of pain and loss on the other’ (8). The experiences I do share, and which constitute this representation of my life story, are those that I felt I could disclose while maintaining a sense of privacy, dignity, and safety.

Destructive Forces and Protective Factors

ENA: Andrinka symbol of courage, valor, and heroism

‘One does not make a shield on the battlefield’ – African proverb

Through the research process, I found that my experiences were consistent with themes in the experiences reported by other Black youth and Black women, that these shared experiences uncovered contradictions between the dominant discourse and my reality, as well as my educational potential as a Black woman and scholar. Among the themes, I discovered several tools that I and others employed, consciously or not, to survive and thrive in the face of adversity through the Canadian educational system. The literature regarding the experiences of Black youth in the school system, as well as Black women in the academy, demonstrates several themes in the collective Black educational experience. On the one hand there exist destructive forces, which act as barriers to educational achievement, and, on the other hand, protective factors which help mitigate oppressive educational experiences and enable educational achievement. The barriers and enablers in my story are mapped with the barriers and enablers documented in the literature to reinforce themes in the collective Black experience.

With regards to my story, barriers and challenges in my early educational experiences included poverty, lack of parental involvement, lack of community during early adolescence, cultural displacement, isolation, loneliness, lack of representation, hidden curriculum, racial harassment and violence, alienation, lack of belonging, stereotyping, streaming, low teacher expectation, and lack of mentorship and academic guidance. Getting through my school experiences required that I draw on inner strength and a sense of self-worth, as well as relishing the rare but powerful instances when I glimpsed the possibility of achieving educationally, facilitated by culturally relevant teaching practices and styles that touched me on a cognitive, emotional and spiritual level. The factors that contributed to my developing a sense of academic capability, and resolving to pursue higher education many years after graduating from high school, included the nurturance of my sense of inner strength, reconnection to spirituality that grew from a strong sense of self and African pride, location and use of my voice, and establishment of a sense of belonging and agency through community activism. These experiences enabled me to conceive of returning to higher education.

Black youth face several challenges including: racially biased and deficit-oriented teacher perspectives, racial stereotyping, low teacher expectations, differential treatment and streaming, poverty, ‘othering’ and racial marginalisation, lack of representation in teaching and administrative staff, exclusion of Black peoples and their histories in the (hidden) curriculum, as well as both subtle and overt acts of racism, hostility and violence (Ladson-Billings and Henry 1990; Codjoe 2001; Dei et al. 1995; Dei 1996: 42-61; Perry 2003; Henry 1993; Smith and Lalonde, 2003). The mitigating protective factors that facilitate achievement among Black youth include: a strong sense of racial identity and pride, self-esteem, extra-cognitive social and emotional competencies, personal psychosocial assets, sociability and interpersonal relationships, parental and community involvement, perceptions of belongingness and culturally relevant classrooms (Reynolds 1993; Codjoe 2001; Perry 2003; Goss and Alexander 2007; Trueba 1994; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Smith and Lalonde, 2003; Ladson-Billings and Henry 1990; Asante 1987).

Black women in the academy also experience several challenges including: isolation, stereotype threat, marginalisation, barriers to post-secondary educational access, and persistence in the form of financial, familial and community obligations, and systemic racism (Henry 2000: 93-97; Liddell 2007; Williams et al. 2005; Jordan-

Concluding Remarks: Future Possibilities for Higher Education

To traverse the educational terrain and remain physically, emotionally, psychically and spiritually intact, as a Black and female learner, necessitates strength and pride in racial and ethnic identity, extraordinary psychosocial assets, and spiritual resilience to face and combat relentless adversity. Through the narrative exploration of my life and educational journey, juxtaposed against the documented experiences of other Black students and scholars, I provide the reader with an insider perspective on the Black educational experience. Testimonials can be powerful tools to influence affective, cognitive and behavioural awareness and change. Sharing the depth of my individual story was intended to bring the reader into my lived experience and affect not only their hearts and minds but also to move them to action. Personalising the research was an invitation for the reader (future professor, practitioner or policy-maker) to feel authentically, think critically and act responsibly to contribute to more inclusive education. Still, I accept the reader controls their own interpretation and action. Some readers may take in my story as new or useful information. Others might use it to reflect more deeply on their identities and relationship with privilege in education and society and begin to ask important questions about the organisation of power along these lines. Yet others may bank it with other testimonials and maintain their denial (benign or not) of the realities of the Black educational experience.

Recommendations for institutions of higher learning have been well documented. For instance, among critical factors suggested to improve retention and success of Black students in the academy, Dei (1996) recommends the following: greater opportunities for, and access to, counselling and support services as well as academic advising and mentorship for Black students; support for student-run groups and programs that offer Black students venues to freely express their racial/ethnic identities and celebrate their cultural pride; more inclusive curricula that reflect the histories and cultures of African-Canadians; scholarships and recognition of academic excellence among Black students; visible symbols and images of prominent African-Canadians; and more robust alumni networks that involve greater numbers of Black alumni.

Notwithstanding the structural and policy changes that are required for systemic and sustained social and educational change, individual teachers and faculty members can use their influence and locus of control to make change. At the individual level, educators can foster inclusive and equitable educational experiences by employing some social justice strategies. For instance, they can start by taking responsibility to gain an accurate and critical historical and contemporary knowledge about the Black experience in Canada. Educators should also understand how oppression works, be aware of their own power and privilege, be self-critical, be willing to make mistakes and be role models by recognising and interrupting racial bias and stereotyping. Kobayashi (2009), in writing about her experiences as a woman of colour in Canadian academia says ‘special pedagogic and counselling techniques have to be developed for dealing with students’ (68) in order to foster an inclusive classroom. To be effective change agents, educators must also appreciate, and not only understand, the impacts of individual and systemic forms of racism and be knowledgeable of identity development theory as well as human emotional, intellectual and behavioural responses to challenge and change. It is imperative they be able to perceive and address individual and group processes and utilise knowledge and skill to create a more inclusive classroom experience. Teachers and professors must build their capacity to be self-aware, attuned to group dynamics, and able to establish a classroom that allows for the authentic expression of racial and cultural identity.

Sharing my personal and emotional journey offers the potential of consciousness-raising and transformation. Academics and practitioners can ask critical questions. As a teacher or faculty member: (1) how can you interrupt racial stereotyping, contest dominant discourses; (2) how can you improve teacher pre-service training and education curriculum; (3) how can you increase your knowledge, attitudes and skills related to inclusive education; and, (4) how can you offer access to support networks as well as mentorship and academic advice to a racially marginalised student? As a student service provider: (1) how can you foster more equitable and
inclusive broader learning environments; and, (2) how can you improve your counselling services for marginalised students, or invest in and support student clubs and groups that offer a connection to ethnic/racial identity and cultural pride? As an administrator or policy-maker: what educational policies will you (re)formulate to improve equity and inclusivity in access, retention, persistence, graduation, post-graduate pursuits, faculty recruitment, promotion and tenure?

Western systems of education, texts, and literature continue the colonial tradition by ‘rewriting history to deny [our] existence, devaluing [our] knowledges, and debasing [our] cultural beliefs and practices’ (Wane 2006: 87). They are steeped in subtle and overt Eurocentric and colonial value systems. They privilege written over oral, scientific over intuitive, academic over practical, detached over expressive and linear over circular ways of knowing, learning and teaching. In so doing, their curriculum and pedagogy are culturally irrelevant to so many students of the African diaspora. The documentation of my educational journey sought to expose not only the many mythologies and systemic challenges in society but also those barriers embedded in its primary system of social reproduction and education. The work also highlights the often unseen assets and capacities of Black students and scholars.

In conclusion, I hope my work and words validate and inspire Black students and scholars to steadily continue on their educational journeys. The significance of my research to those seeking to unsettle dominant discourses in higher education will only be realised if my thesis succeeds in conveying the link between my story and the collective Black educational experience. Only then might educational practitioners, academics and policy makers understand and respond to the themes in the Black Canadian educational experience with individual and systemic interventions.

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Nesting Bodies: Exploration of the body and embodiment in LGBT refugee oral history and participatory photography

KATHERINE FOBEAR

While forced migration researchers have done much to resist and destabilise nationalistic and xenophobic representations of refugees, much of the research being produced overlooks the bodily experiences and embodied phenomena that generate particular meanings of home and belonging for forced migrants (Grønseth, 2001). The body is a necessary condition of life, yet it is rarely considered an integral part of research on forced migration. In this article I look at how forced migration is an intrinsically embodied experience for refugees coming into Canada claiming asylum based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Through the participatory photography and the narrative of Jordan, a gay cisgender refugee from South Asia, I explore how he experienced border crossing, asylum, and home in Vancouver, British Columbia through his body. I make an argument for the need to put the body back into understandings of forced migration and refugee settlement in order to interrogate the ways that refugees create a sense of home and belonging in the face of marginalisation.

I recorded the excerpt above during my interview with Jordan, a gay cisgender refugee from South Asia. Jordan was a participant in my 2013–2015 research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans* (LGBT) refugee settlement in the metropolitan area of Vancouver, Canada (Metro Vancouver). The study used a mixture of participatory photography, oral history, and ethnography, focusing on each LGBT refugee’s sense of home and belonging in Metro Vancouver. For his participatory photography, Jordan wanted to take photographs of one of his favorite parks in the city. The picture above is from one fieldtrip to the park. We walked together in the park as Jordan took pictures. Jordan later provided commentary on these photographs and the meaning he imbibed to them. In this article, I explore Jordan’s narrative and participatory photography. It was Jordan’s desire not to be erased that led him to come to Canada and make a refugee claim. According to Jordan, it is his ‘alive body’ that keeps him connected to Canada and to his country of origin, and it is this body that allows him to feel at home despite not having a physical home of his own. As we will see in this article, the physical, sensual, emotional, and mnemonic attachments of the body figure prominently in Jordan’s stories and pictures. It is through his body that Jordan

Jordan: You know…and this is the truth, if it wasn’t for Canada, I would not be here the way I am here today. So all the negativity of keeping a job and a place to live…I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for Canada. Being able to live here. I truly believe that Canada is a land of dreams and opportunities and peace. I always felt so peaceful here. It's such a peaceful place. I can fully feel safe here. I feel it deep within me. That's home for me. Not my living situation. Not the place where I sleep. That's not a home. That's just something I have to deal with (Interview with Jordan, May 2014).
talks about his experiences of settlement and creating a sense of home for himself.

The first section will review the significance of the body in understanding narratives of forced migration and settlement. I then explore Jordan’s narrative of migration and the refugee process through his oral history and participatory photography. I examine how memory leaves a physical trace on the body and how memory is bodily imbued. I turn toward Jordan’s experience at his refugee hearing and how LGBT refugee bodies are marked. I then move to Jordan’s experience of home and belonging. Jordan experiences precariousness and marginalisation because of the lack of affordable and safe housing in Vancouver. Jordan is caught between two ‘homey’ and ‘unhomey’ spaces: his country of origin and his current home in Vancouver. He navigates between these two spaces through his body. Home does not necessarily lie in a physical structure or location, but rests inside Jordan and his constant fight against erasure. Jordan’s body is agentic and a site of possibility. Martin Heidegger’s concept of dwelling (1971) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of embodiment (1968) provide a useful frame for understanding how the sensory body creates sites of attachment and belonging. These sites of attachment and belonging help to create a sense of home where a physical home is currently nonexistent.

Bringing the Body Back into Narratives of Migration and Settlement for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans* Refugees

While forced migration researchers have done much to resist and destabilise nationalistic and xenophobic representations of refugees, much more research needs to be done on the bodily experiences and embodied phenomena that generate particular meanings of home and belonging for forced migrants (Grønseth 2001; Shum 2014; Coker 2004). Forced migration is an intrinsically bodily experience. State and society regulate refugees’ bodies throughout their displacement, asylum process, and resettlement in a host country (Ahmed 2000, 78; Hua 2011; Bauman 2001; Bromley 2000; Kristeva 1991; Fortier 1999, 2001). For feminist, critical race, and postcolonial theorists, the body is a cultural and social signifier of values and norms. Michel Foucault argues that the reproduction and regulation of bodies have been central to social order throughout history (1977). Bodily attributes are socially imbued with significance that in turn is highly regulated. These discourses and social markers assist in regulating bodies and maintaining a social hierarchy (Foucault, 1977). ‘The body has a history,’ and the discipline and surveillance of bodies is embedded within states’ immigration policies and processes (Csordas, 1994, 2). Social norms around sexuality, gender, and race; ideas about cleanliness and reproduction; and discourse surrounding legality determine which bodies are allowed to migrate into a state’s territory, what resources become available to certain bodies, and which bodies are granted citizenship (Turner, 1991). Karma Chavez writes that refugee bodies are caught in a web of relations once they cross state borders. Militarised state surveillance, border checks, containment in detention centres, and medical checks construct refugee bodies as ‘out of place,’ calling into question a person’s legal right to be in the state and claim asylum (Chavez, 2010). These regulatory measures situate refugee bodies as threatening or dangerous to the nation’s wellbeing and encourage discourses about ‘bogus’ refugee claims, illegality, and ‘queue jumpers’ in an attempt to delegitimise refugee claims and displace refugees as threatening invaders (Gehi, 2009). A recent example can be seen in the depiction of Syrian refugees as being good or deserving refugees, while refugees coming from other regions who are also experiencing similar social conflict, corruption, and economic despair are seen as being economic migrants or “bad” refugees and are forcibly sent back (Holmes and Castenda, 2016).

While society and various economic, political, and social structures and discourses regulate refugee bodies, those bodies are not passive (Pons, 2003). The body is active, expressive, and sensual. We experience the world through the body, and the ‘body incorporates multiple ways to articulate our involvement in the world’ (de Certeau, 2000; MacNaughten and Urry, 2000). We know and feel places through multiple corporeal and sensual practices (de Certeau, 2000; MacNaughten and Urry, 2000). For Merleau-Ponty (1968), the body is not an inanimate thing, but a sensory and physiological entity that inhabits and haunts space. Only through the body do we have access to space, and spaces are embodied.

For the purpose of this article, I draw upon the phenomenology of the body. Phenomenology emphasises the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001: 2). A phenomenology of the body places the body as ‘our point to view the world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). The body provides us with a perspective, and the body is affected and shaped by its surroundings in the place that it dwells. Bodies are oriented by the world around them, and this orientation shapes our perception of social reality (Ahmed et al., 2003: 9). Persons experience themselves simultaneously in and as their bodies, and we feel the reality of our presence in the world through our bodies (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994: 54; Waskul and Vannini, 2006).

Taking all of this into account, and recognising the limitations of fully understanding the embodied experiences of another person, I argue that a focus on the body provides a nuanced and necessary understanding of the lived experience of LGBT refugee migration and
settled. LGBT refugees are not disembodied actors (Gorman-Murray, 2009: 444). Their sexualised and gendered bodies form the core basis to their asylum claim as sexual and gender minorities. They must navigate through heteronormative state apparatuses in which they are marked as queer and marginalised. Sensual experiences and bodily attachments, as well as emotional and embodied actions and narratives, suffuse LGBT refugees' migration and settlement experiences. LGBT refugees' stories are embodied narratives that are 'complex acts of narration about self, inhabitation, and space,' situated in the body and experienced bodily (Ahmed, 1999: 342; Gorman-Murray, 2007, 2009). An embodied understanding of home and belonging allows the exploration of how LGBT refugees locate and situate themselves in their narratives of migration and settlement.

In designing this project, I wanted another avenue for LGBT refugee participants to express their meanings of home and belonging outside the confines of a sit-down interview. Participatory photography was employed as another medium of communication between the participants and me to help the participants reflect on and illustrate their past, present, and future desires, feelings, and lived realities around home and belonging (Sirriyeh, 2010; Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Andrew Irving (2007) writes that visual methodologies like participatory photography are another means of performance in which participants selectively engage with different subjects, memories, and meanings and decide what to document with their cameras. The camera is the tool used to take pictures, but it is the participants who frame the images through certain lenses of experiences and intentions (Irving, 2007). Participatory photography's potency lies not simply in pictures, "but in the dialogical interpretation that occurs between the researcher and those taking the pictures" (Plunkett, Leipert and Ray 2013: 159). I wanted the participants to dictate what photographs were produced and the meanings behind them. The only request I made was that the photographs speak to the participants' feelings and experiences of home and belonging. The project was open to the participants in terms of how they wanted to frame "home" and capture it in their pictures. Participants were given access to a camera or had the option of using their own cameras. They had six weeks to take pictures. After all of the pictures were taken, I sat with each participant individually to discuss the pictures and understand the participants' intentions and meaning for each photograph. What came out of this was a multisensory experience of home and belonging that went beyond the text into the realm of affect and memory.

In our three extended interviews and our photography fieldtrip together, Jordan described his upbringing as being very difficult. He grew up on an island in South Asia. His family and community originally came to the island

*"I was a little flower finally able to fully bloom"*

**Coming to Canada and the Refugee Hearing**

**Photograph of winding path, taken by Jordan, May 2014**

**Jordan:** Oh, this is nice. The winding path. It reminds me of my journey.
**Kat:** In what way?
**Jordan:** The path turns as I turn. It's my journey. Journeys are never straight. (Interview with Jordan, July 2014).
as indentured workers during European colonisation. His family and cultural community were economically and politically marginalised as ethnic and cultural minorities. Homosexual acts were not criminalised in his country, but it was very much seen as a social taboo in Jordan’s tight-knit cultural community. Jordan tried hard to keep his sexuality a secret from his family and from the outside world. He described his coming out not as a gradual process of awareness, but as a forced exposure that caused him considerable duress.

**Jordan:** I think in my journey as a gay man, there was never any coming out experience. There was only the feeling of exposure. I always knew about my desires, but my family and community did not. I was soon exposed. My body was exposed... Others exposed me. Family members found out about my sexual orientation and reported me to the police. It was torture...

You know, sometimes when I am having a difficult time, I think about this. I’ve tried to attempt suicide back when living in [country in South Asia]... I climbed up the tree and wanted to hang myself. I was standing on the branch and I already had the rope tied around my neck and on the tree. I was contemplating on jumping off the branch or not...

And while I was contemplating that, the branch that I was standing on broke. It just broke automatically...It was choking me, but I got it off and it left a mark. When I think about that day, I can still feel that rope around my neck.

When I go back there...when I think about that time...it’s funny. I still feel the rope. I am alive and safe here in Canada. But I can remember it. I will never forget it (Interview with Jordan, July 2014).

### Photograph of an owl, taken by Jordan, May 2014

Jordan wanted the picture of the owl to represent his experience with the rope. An owl that flies in the direction of a cemetery or burial ground is believed to be a sign in his country, a bringer of death. Throughout our oral history interviews and our photography fieldtrip, Jordan often brought up the story of the rope as a significant moment in his life that he returns to time and time again. Understandably, this story has considerable emotional weight. It is a memory that serves as a ‘check-point’ for Jordan and helps him bring perspective to his current situation. It is also a memory that is deeply sited in Jordan’s body. Though the rope’s physical mark is no longer there, the rope is still in emotional residence. Jordan’s story speaks to how emotion is an embodied phenomenon. We experience emotion corporeally (blushing, clenching of fists, smiling). Our emotional reactions drive us to act and think in certain ways (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994). Memory is also embodied—not only physically, by the scars or marks on our bodies, but in the bodily responses brought on by remembering. There is no memory without body memory (Casey, 2000: 146). Our bodies and embodied selves orient and frame our memories (Casey, 2000: 146). Narratives are therefore
embodied (Jenkins and Valiente, 1994: 177). As Pau Obrador Pons argues, ‘The body is not only written, but it also writes, that is, it has an active role in the configuration of human experience and its meaning’ (2003: 55). The body serves as a point of reference in our narratives, and when we tell stories to other individuals, we experience the telling and listening through our bodies. Bodily expressions work in conjunction with the telling of and listening to a story (Hydén, 2013; Antelius, 2009). We perform our narratives through our bodies. Jordan’s body memory carries within it marks of emotional meaning that in turn shape his perspective about his life in his country of origin as well as his current life in Vancouver.

Jordan knew that if he was to survive, he needed to leave his home country. He worked hard to stay in school and get enough accreditation to qualify for a college program in Canada. With the financial help of an older male friend, Jordan was able to afford to come to Vancouver on a student visa in 2004. He tried to find a way to live permanently in Canada on a work visa. Jordan connected with Rainbow Refugee, a Vancouver-based volunteer organisation assisting individuals claiming asylum based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV status. He learned through Rainbow Refugee that he could make a refugee claim based on sexual orientation. After making his claim, Jordan waited more than a year for his refugee hearing.

Photograph of bright pink flowers, taken by Jordan, May 2014

Jordan: I like this picture. The color, it is my spirit—so vibrant. You know, it is amazing with flowers. They bloom in spite of the wind and the rain. They are rebellious... (Interview with Jordan, July 2014).

Jordan described his refugee hearing as an emotional moment. He needed the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) member at the hearing to see that what he was saying was the truth. He wanted to connect with the IRB member on an emotional and bodily level on which she could empathise with him. Jordan needed to have the IRB member register his physical and emotional feelings as genuine. Matthew Zagor writes that the refugee hearing is a bodily performance, as refugee claimants must physically perform certain roles in order for the asylum officer in the United States or the IRB member in Canada to recognise their claims as valid (2014). Refugee hearings in Canada are private hearings in which refugee claimants must both physically show and verbally prove that what they are saying is credible and convincing. The claimant sits in front of an IRB member, accompanied by a legal representative, a translator, witnesses, and invited observers. The IRB member asks the claimant a series of questions regarding their history of persecution and claim for asylum. A refugee hearing can last up to eight hours. During this stressful ordeal, claimants are under an incredible amount of scrutiny for any inconsistencies in their stories. A mixed-up date or a different way of describing an event can provide enough grounds for a case to be rejected as not credible (Heller, 2009; Morgan, 2006; Jordan, 2009; LaViolette, 2009; Miller, 2005; Shari and Ou Jin Lee, 2011).
For LGBT refugee claimants, the burden of credibility and identity is always dependent on the story presented to the IRB member. The claimant must not only show adequate proof that they are a sexual or gender minority, but also provide a convincing explanation of their need for asylum. Physicality and bodily performance are also factors in the refugee hearing, as the IRB member may make snap decisions about a claimant’s credibility based on their appearance and how they act in the hearing. LGBT claimants have been denied asylum because an IRB member did not believe the person was a sexual or gender minority based on their physical appearance. Sharalyn Jordan (2010), Nicole LaViolette (2014), and David Murray (2014) document the ways that not appearing ‘gay enough,’ that is, not appealing to Western stereotypes of homosexuality such as being feminine or flamboyant, may cause an IRB member to decide that a claimant is not a sexual minority and therefore not credible.

Luckily for Jordan, he was able to successfully and convincingly explain his story to the IRB member at his hearing and was granted a positive decision at the end of the hearing. Jordan had the advantage of being fluent in English and having support from his friends and volunteers from Rainbow Refugee, who helped him to prepare. Jordan was also fortunate to be assigned an IRB member who took special care to make sure that she understood exactly what Jordan was trying to tell her. She asked several follow-up questions to clarify points of confusion. She also made sure to make Jordan feel comfortable in telling his story by saying that he could take his time and take breaks when needed. Jordan described the IRB member as a caring individual who was open to hearing and understanding his truth. Jordan’s experience in his refugee hearing speaks to the importance of IRB members’ consideration of the cultural and social differences in storytelling and the need to take the time and care necessary for refugees to express themselves. However, for every success like Jordan’s, many refugees are misheard and discredited because of cultural mistranslations in the hearing and appearing ‘gay enough,’ that is, not appealing to Western stereotypes of homosexuality such as being feminine or flamboyant, may cause an IRB member to decide that a claimant is not a sexual minority and therefore not credible.

Photograph of a spider's web, taken by Jordan, May 2014

Jordan: This is a spider’s web. Yeah, it’s funny to think about, but spiders can make a home wherever they go. It’s really incredible. I feel like I have had to do that too… (Interview with Jordan, July 2014).

personal biases of the IRB members assigned to their hearings. The refugee hearing is a performance of utmost importance in which the IRB member holds the claimant’s life in his or her hands. Although a refugee claimant can appeal a negative decision in the Refugee Appeals Court or Federal Court, the chance of success is low. Understanding how physicality, bodily performance, and embodiment play in the refugee hearing allows researchers to challenge cultural and personal biases in IRB decision-making and work towards a more just asylum process.

Jordan’s housing situation was constantly shifting since his first arrival in Vancouver, as he couldn’t afford to
keep a place of his own. Vancouver has the highest cost of living in Canada and one of the highest in the world. The average monthly rent for a studio apartment ranges from $800 to more than $1200 per month (Preston et al., 2006; Sherrell and Immigrant Services of British Columbia’ (ISS), 2009; Hiebert et al., 2008; Mattu, 2002; Francis and Hiebert, 2014). Finding safe and affordable housing in the Metro Vancouver area is one of the toughest challenges LGBT refugees face—in terms of both affordability and a place that is safe for LGBT persons. Because housing in Metro Vancouver is so competitive, landlords have an unfair advantage over tenants. Refugees are at the mercy of landlords' goodwill not to raise the rent every month, to keep the conditions of the building up to code, and not to force them out of the apartment arbitrarily. For all of these reasons, housing in Metro Vancouver can be very unstable and precarious for LGBT refugees. It is common for LGBT refugees women's shelters because of their gender nonconformity (Pyne, 2011; Mottet and Ohle, 2003). Gay and lesbian refugees may face discrimination from staff, and harassment or violence from attendants, because of their sexuality. This leaves very few options for safe temporary or emergency housing for LGBT refugees.

Jordan cannot afford to live alone, and it has been difficult for him to find suitable housing with a roommate. He has never lived in one place for longer than a year. Jordan has stayed with friends and lovers as a guest or paying reduced rent. These arrangements have always been conditional and temporary. He has never considered any of these places a home of his own, only a place to rest. The constant moving has caused considerable stress for Jordan.

**Jordan:** Housing has been one of the biggest challenges in my life. I have slept with bedbugs. I have slept with mice running around the house and sometimes jumping on me in bed. I have slept in a house where there was no heat and I woke up shivering, and I'm, like, constantly waking up in the night and rubbing my body to keep warm. I have slept in someone's balcony for about two months, paid about $450 a month. I have slept on couches and on mats on the floor.

Jordan: It is so hard on my body there. The stress and the pain. It's heavy. I feel so heavy. But when I come back here, it's such a relief. Such a relief.

Every time I come back from there, I feel like my body is getting lighter. The air is so different. I always take a deep breath when I get off the plane (Interview with Jordan, July 2014).

in Metro Vancouver to face periods of homelessness. Refugee claimants make up a significant percentage of those staying at homeless shelters in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. These homeless shelters offer a temporary respite for refugee claimants as they seek to find alternative housing options. However, homeless shelters can be very dangerous areas for LGBT refugees to stay because of homophobia and transphobia. Trans* persons face a particular vulnerability at men's and
I have been through that. I have cried, and I have been the only person knowing that I'm crying and I'm wiping my own tears. I have gone through that. But still, I love this city because I am safe. Bedbugs cannot kill me. Mice cannot kill me. Sleeping on the floor cannot kill me… (Interview with Jordan, August 2014).

Stoertzler and Yuval-Davis write that the particular meanings we hold of home are embedded in our situated imagination (2002). Having to move around frequently in Vancouver has left Jordan feeling that the physical places he stays at are not homes. For Jordan, home can be a precarious space and a site of violence. His country of origin is embedded in the emotional and embodied pain of being a cultural and sexual minority. Jordan sends money to his mother and helps with the maintenance of the family home in his country of origin. Since receiving his Canadian citizenship, Jordan has visited his family home three times to see his family and pay his respects. These are emotionally and physically difficult trips for Jordan. Jordan is happy to be with his mother and family, but the poor living conditions of his family coupled with the political and social violence against gay and trans* persons makes it difficult for Jordan to stay long. Visiting his country of origin is a bittersweet experience for Jordan. While he is happy to see his mother, siblings, and friends, the situation with his family and the painful memories of the past make the journey very harrowing. Jordan does not feel that he belongs to his country of origin because of the pain he experienced and continues to experience there.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes that 'home in itself has no fixed territory; depending on the context in which it appears, it can convey the concept of settlement or unsettlement' (2011: 53). Jordan’s homeland and his current home in Vancouver are both places of settlement and unsettlement. He chose the picture of the tree bark to show this contrast between soft and rough, belonging and not belonging, of being rooted to a place, but also being uprooted. Jordan feels attachment to his homeland through a shared cultural understanding, history, and kinship. He feels attachment to his current home because of the opportunity it provides him to live openly as a gay man. These homes are also 'unhomy' places where Jordan has experienced precariousness and constraint. I see in Jordan’s story and photographs that home for him is not a static place of rootedness, but a constantly shifting terrain that is attached to relationships, emotions, memory, and embodiment. In Vancouver, home as a physical place is contingent on and embedded in the shifting relationships Jordan has with various persons in the predominantly white and middle-class gay community. While many of these relationships have been beneficial and pleasant for Jordan, they have been unequal in terms of wealth and property ownership. Jordan feels belonging in Canada, but not because he has a physical home here. Home is not located in material objects or even specific homing practices. Home is located centrally in Jordan’s body, a body that is sensual and experiencing the world around him.

Kat: So, we have talked about your housing experiences. But, what does the word home mean to you?

Jordan: There is a song. I want to sing this song. But there is this song and that is my answer. I wish that you can look this song up and look at the translation. It’s called Jahan pe saver ho Basera Wahin Pei. Home is like the words of the song. It doesn’t matter where I am living if the sun is shining on me. I am alive here. It’s a way that will boost you, or, at least, make you feel good that you have a home environment even if you don’t have a place of your own. I listen to the song and feel home (Interview with Jordan, July 2013).

Home is not necessarily the space you physically live in, but a place where you can nest. Nesting for Jordan involves the emotional and embodied aspect of inhabiting and experiencing a place where one is alive. Throughout Jordan’s narrative, he frequently references his ‘alive body.’ Home becomes both expanded and collapsed through his body. In a very literal sense, Jordan’s alive body represents the physicality of being alive in the face of extreme situations, both in his country of origin and in Canada, that could have killed him or left him destitute. Jordan is alive to physically experience the world around him. His body is a landscape that reflects his experience (Caine, 2010: 1306). Jordan’s body memory of the rope leaves an emotional resonance that situates him in the past and the present as well as in his country of origin and his current location. The rope stretches from there (country of origin) to here (current location) to orient Jordan’s perspective of home and belonging. Jordan cannot talk about his home here without thinking about what his future may have been if he had stayed in his country of origin. It is this sense of push and pull that creates a sense of home for Jordan in Vancouver, where he has no physical home of his own.

Jordan’s alive body is also sensual. Home rests in Jordan’s ears, his lungs, and his limbs. He experiences the world through his body, through the sensations he experiences. Jordan’s sensual body in turn invokes emotional attachment to a generalised sense of place and belonging in Canada. The air he breathes in Vancouver feels different from the air he breathes in his country of origin. His legs feel heavier in his country of origin. His legs feel heavier in his country of origin.
Jordan's alive body is also a body that dwells in a place of possibility (Pons, 2003: 49). Dwelling is a concept first created by Heidegger as a form of embodied coping and engagement with a place (1971). A person dwells in a place when they are at peace in that place, when they can exist there in freedom to be themselves. You can 'be yourself' where you dwell. You do not have to put on a role for a particular occasion. Living and engaging with the environment through everyday practices and experiences leads a person to preserve a place as a 'place for themselves' (Heidegger, 1971; Janz, 2008). This allows a person to relate to a place as a homeland—a place that feels safe, secure, familiar, and protected (Griffiths and Prozesky, 2010). Heidegger's concept of dwelling is based on a static notion of place being rooted to a particular environment, physical structure, or location. However, Michel de Certeau (2000) and Doreen Massey (2005) view the concept of dwelling as intrinsically mobile and not rooted to one particular location (Pons, 2003). Their sense of dwelling involves the imaginary and physical places of belonging and homing desires. Our sense of belonging can both shift and encompass other locations through the attachments we make. Dwelling relates not so much to a fixed and clearly bounded space, but to a place of 'becoming, a moving achievement between feeling at home or not' (Schillmeier and Heinlein, 2009; Schillmeier and Doménech, 2009). Dwelling in this sense is not about closing places off, but opening them up to their possibility (Schillmeier and Doménech, 2009). To dwell in a place means to dwell in a place of possibility.

The places in which we dwell shift as our bodies move in places of possibility where we can explore ways of being. These places of possibility provide the opportunity to create our own future and build lives for ourselves outside of cultural, political, economic, and social restraints. This involves creating new attachments to places through the relationships we develop with the environment and with other individuals. Canada is one place of possibility for Jordan, as it provides protection and distance from the violence of his past. Jordan's alive body is also a place of possibility. Jordan may be constrained by his economic and housing situation, but he feels at home in his alive body despite these constraints. Jordan dwells and creates a sense of home for himself inside of and through his body. His body is a dwelling place where he can experience and interact with the world around him. It is a body that feels at peace and is open to possibility. It is in this place of possibility that Jordan feels at home.

All forced migrations are in one way or another queer. Refugees' feelings of belonging and of longing stretch across time and space, creating queer circuits of attachment that defy norms and state boundaries. Jordan's body is a constantly changing archive of his migration as he works to build a home for himself in between Canada and his country of origin. The physical and emotional effects of past and present trauma along with his experiences of desire and hope create a place of possibility. With each new twist and turn of Jordan's journey, his sense of home changes. Home is a fluid presence that rests inside his body, a place where Jordan can dwell and experience the world. It is a place of possibility.

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End Notes

1. I use the term “LGBT refugees” to refer to individuals who file refugee claims based on fear of persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (Jordan, 2010). I acknowledge that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans* are Western-based identity categories that may or may not be applicable to many individuals, especially those living outside of Western Europe and North America. In this article, the term ‘trans’ is an umbrella term that generally refers to individuals who do not associate or identify themselves with the gender assigned to them at birth. I use the word ‘transgender’ instead of ‘transgender’ in order to address the wide spectrum of gender nonconformity and variance. Cisgender refers to individuals who do associate themselves with the gender assigned to them at birth and generally correspond to the binary gender system found predominantly in Western society (Roen, 2001; Stryker, et al., 2008; Spade, 2008).

2. I use the term “homey” to describe the feeling of being at home. Home in this context means a sense of belonging, security, and affection.

3. For more information about Rainbow Refugee, please visit their website: http://www.rainbowrefugee.ca/.

Curiosity

We have barely touched the base of the oceans, but here we are millions of miles away and taking photos of the ground.

There is something more compelling, perhaps, in this iron-rich soil so far from home, than the dark basin of the seas. The sun rises and sets, we glimpse mountains and tracks in the sand. No such markers beneath the waves. Go too deep and you find life that never sees light.

We found water on Mars, but not too much. Wouldn’t want to scare people off.

Single servings beamed back across the system, hoping to snag a sample. Bite sized.

More funding, more hours: we are always poor for something. There is more just ahead, we know it. Sitting at onscreen, millions of miles from the Martian sunrise, the unknown ground is almost between my toes.

I stretch hands beyond water and find welcome sands, an intimate press filtered in red, closer than we’d ever dreamed before.

Siobhan Hodge, Perth, WA
Introduction

Drawing on Judith Newton’s (2005) idea of ‘male romance’ as articulated in her study of ‘Men’s Movements in America’ – specifically The Promise Keepers – entitled From Panthers to Promise Keepers: Rethinking the Men’s Movement, this article analyses specific forms of representations of American masculinities in the film Toy Story 2 (1999). In tracing how Toy Story 2 deals with traits identified by Newton as constituting ‘male romance’, the article aims to, first, raise questions regarding the role of popular media in both reinforcing and challenging the prevalent ideas of ‘normative’ masculine gender performativity in American culture. The article’s second aim is to challenge the ways in which both the proponents and detractors of the ‘crisis of masculinity’ discourse gloss over the complexity of masculine identity-formation in settling for a singular narrative of hegemonic masculinity within American culture. To that end, the article argues that Toy Story 2 also offers examples of the re-inscription of the hegemonic masculine identity along the lines proposed by Newton. In sum, the article’s discussion highlights how the themes of agency and subjectivity in male identity-formation need to be perspicaciously attended to in similar ways that are taken as the norm in feminist discussions of intersecting matrices of power.

In other words, the article highlights not only how seemingly ‘simple’ children’s stories mask ‘greater’ ideological narratives about gender identity-formation, but also how the consumption of such narratives can be problematic for the broader contemporary context of rethinking and reformulating the social imagination of gender, race, and sexuality as part of the project of achieving equality and justice. While the inquiry into the ideological impact of animated children’s films is not new per se, the particular focus on masculinity is not a subject of much scholarship and, moreover, it is still important to investigate how supposedly ‘simple’ children’s stories mask entrenched and problematic narratives about gender identity-formation – especially given the proliferation of scholarship analysing Disney movies in relation to other forms of identity representation such as that of women, racialised groups, and colonial subjectivities.

The article’s second aim, which is put forth through the argument that the representations and treatment of the discourse of masculinities in the film Toy Story 2 are informed by the same concerns raised by the ‘crisis of masculinity’ discourse, is to challenge the ways in which both the proponents and detractors of the ‘crisis of masculinity’ discourse gloss over the complexity of masculine identity-formation in settling for a singular narrative of hegemonic masculinity within American culture. That is, rather than simply pandering to the dominant narratives of loss or regression prevalent within the discourse of the ‘crisis of masculinity’ the article argues that Toy Story 2 also offers examples of the re-inscription of the hegemonic masculine identity along the lines proposed by Newton regarding certain types of men’s movements, such as The Promise Keepers, in America; where such men’s movements re-negotiate masculine gender performance through reconfigured scripts about fatherhood in particular. In this sense, the article’s discussion highlights how the themes of agency...
and subjectivity in male identity-formation need to be perspicaciously attended to in similar ways that are taken as norm in feminist discussions of intersecting matrices of power with regards to gender in general.

The ‘Crisis of Masculinity’ and the Men’s Movements in America

The public prominence of men’s groups concerned with articulating various forms of ‘masculine identity’ (however varied this identity is conceived) has been part of both the academic and non-academic American scholarship for quite some time now. As Newton observes, ‘National dialogue over masculine ideals has been common to U.S. history’ that the latter half of the past century can be said to have been ‘characterized not only by conversations about masculinity but by a series of organized efforts to revise, reinvent, and/or revive masculine ideals’ (2005: 5). Such efforts to revise, reinvent, and revise the masculine ideals, it should be noted, have been informed largely by a post-World War II perception in North America that men and boys (mostly but not solely white) are assailed everywhere by a ‘crisis of masculinity’.

It is important to briefly describe the prevalent ‘crisis’ narratives as a way of further situating my analysis of the film Toy Story 2. Various notable scholars and public critics of gender in America have noted the traditional narrative of the crisis by noting how post-sixties economic, social, and cultural developments ‘had gradually eroded the grounds on which dominant masculine ideals had once been based’ (Newton 2005: 8). Hamilton Carroll notes, for example, that: ‘In Hollywood feature films, prime time television shows; self-help books, newspaper columns, conservative talk radio, news magazine cover articles, and presidential speeches the discourse of masculinity in crisis is clearly evident’ (2011:2). This idea of ‘masculinity in crisis’ is based on an idealised hegemonic masculinity that ‘implicitly assumed men’s right to greater power and privilege than women’. Consequently, as Newton further observes, the challenge of this ground through a combination of ‘growth in gender consciousness, an increase in the percentage of women in higher education, greater access for some women to traditional male-dominated forms of employment, laws against gender discrimination’ (2005: 8), led to the perception that men were being deprived of authority, and, worst of all, men lacked a well-defined enemy and a clear frontier to which they could direct their manly prowess.

In other words, men no longer possessed ‘exclusive ownership over the social roles once held as bastions for establishing and performing patriarchal’ (Atkinson 2011: 5) hegemonic masculinity. While there were some men and women who saw this as an opportunity for men to break ‘new ground by engaging arguments relating to how men themselves, and not only women, are deeply scarred and alienated by stereotypical or ideal-typical notions of maleness’ (Atkinson 2011: 1), much of the response was mixed. The rise, then, of religious men’s movements such as The Promise Keepers in North America can be located within the broader history of American men’s response to the perceived crisis.

American Men’s Movements and Male Romance

In her book, From Panthers to Promise Keepers, Newton identifies a common trait within the various responses to the ‘crisis of masculinity’ articulated by different men’s movements that she analyses, which she calls ‘male romance’. According to Newton, ‘male romance’ encompasses men separating from women, creating ritual space, risking intimacy and disclosure, and undergoing a rebirth through the agency of male figures or other men (2005: 15). ‘Male romance’ takes the ideas of heroic deeds, adventure, and romantic love from the traditional romance genre and reinterprets them in the context of contemporary American masculine identity-formation (Cowling 2008). In fact, according to Newton, ‘Actual and purely fantasised versions of male romance [ ... ] are easy to come by in U.S. history. Elements of male romance have shaped the formation of the state, fraternal brotherhoods, street gangs, boys’ clubs, gay circuit parties, and heterosexual weekends or evenings with the guys’ (2005: 32). Most recently, in a book analysing masculinity in contemporary television shows, Michael Mario Albrecht has also highlighted what he calls ‘male bonding’ as a key feature of 1990s American masculinity discourse (2016: 35-37).

In the case of The Promise Keepers for example, the men observe this male bonding through the organisation’s conferences, which are large gatherings that bring men together for a time of encouragement and being challenged in various areas of being a man (The Promise Keepers 2008). While these conferences are varied, they are, nonetheless, national events meant to bring together large numbers of men into one place – usually hockey arenas in Canada or big football stadiums in the United States – where men are separated from women, create ritual space through communal prayer, risk intimacy, and undergo a rebirth through the agency of male figures or other men. The events usually feature high-profile Christian ministers as main speakers – that is, agents who help the men through their transformation process. During the conferences men are encouraged to set their personal relationships with Jesus right by taking risks (heroic deeds) and participating in an adventure that will be rewarded with the most satisfying relationship they’ve experienced yet. The unstated invocation is that men can achieve the kind of transformation they seek primarily by attending one of the Promise Keepers conferences and
in the company of other men. In this sense, time with other men is deemed important for masculine gender identity formation, and it is important that men pursue such a project in the ‘wild’ company of other men as the Mythopoetic Movement is also known to have advocated. Admittedly, the preceding analysis of the ‘crisis of masculinity’, the men’s movements, and Newton’s ‘male romance’ begs the question of its significance for the film Toy Story 2, to which I turn next.

**Toy Story 2**

As Woody, the cowboy protagonist toy of the Toy Story series, prepares to go to cowboy camp with Andy, his owner, his arm is ripped, forcing him to stay home instead. Woody has a nightmare about being abandoned and ending up in a garbage can with other abandoned toys. As he wakes up, Woody meets an old friend named Wheezy (a rubber penguin toy) whom Andy’s mother has placed in a box to be sold at a yard sale, but Woody stages a rescue mission with the help of Buster (Andy’s dog). While rescuing Wheezy, Woody falls off Buster and gets stranded in the yard sale. Eventually he is stolen by an enthusiast toy collector, Al McWhiggin, who intends to sell Woody as part of a collection to a museum in Japan. In response to Woody’s disappearance, Buzz Lightyear, the space ranger deuteragonist, leads Slinky, Mr. Potato Head, Rex, and Hamm (a group of male-identified toy characters) on a mission to find and rescue Woody from Al McWhiggin. Buzz and his crew eventually succeed in locating Woody at Al’s apartment, but this is not until they are shown navigating traffic, elevators, and cars in their quest to get Woody safely back in Andy’s room before he returns from cowboy camp.

Meanwhile, in Al’s apartment Woody discovers that he is a valuable collectible based on an old, popular TV show called Woody’s Roundup. The other toys from the collection – Jessie the yodelling cowgirl, Woody’s horse Bullseye, and Stinky Pete the Prospector – are excited on returning home because he considers himself foremost as Andy’s toy. Stinky Pete tells Woody that they can only go to Japan if the collection is complete with Woody. When Woody continues to insist on returning home, Jessie reveals that she was once the beloved toy of a child named Emily who eventually outgrew and abandoned her. Moved by Jessie’s story, Woody decides that he will stay with the Roundup gang. Soon after, Buzz and the other toys find Woody, but he refuses to return to Andy’s house. Buzz reminds Woody that toys are meant to be played with and convinces him to return to Andy’s house. Woody offers Jessie and Bullseye the chance to come with him, but Stinky Pete prevents their escape. Al then arrives and loads them into packaging to be shipped to Tokyo. Buzz leads the group to rescue Woody once again and ends up battling and defeating the Prospector. This done, Buzz assists Woody in rescuing Jessie and the toys finally get home just in time for Andy’s return. The final shot shows Woody with Bo Peep in hand, Buzz with Jessie in hand, and other toys watching Wheezy sing ‘You've Got a Friend in Me’ (Wikipedia).¹

In fulfilling the mission of rescuing Woody, the members of the crew have to rely on one another and risk vulnerability by being open about their fears as well as letting other members of the crew who are better at certain things take the lead in situations that require the skills they don’t possess. Rex, for example, is good at navigation and helps the team navigate their way to the airport in pursuit of Al. His naiveté also offers comic relief for the other toys and deflects attention from their shortcomings at his expense. Slinky Dog, a toy dachshund with a metal slinky for a body, is useful as a bungee cord at various points of the mission. However, he always gets caught and misses out on some of the action. Despite the limitations posed by such failure on his part, Slinky is always ready to put himself in harm’s way by literally stretching himself out.

Hamm the Piggy Bank is a sardonic character who has a cork in his belly in place of the original stopper. He is always embarrassed when the cork comes out and all his coins spill out on the ground. Hamm is also practical and reads manuals, and is always on the lookout for the simplest solution to a problem. He is the first to spot Al’s Toy Barn across the street from where the rest of the toy crew stands, for example. Mr. Potato Head is also usually sarcastic and outspoken, and mostly suspicious of everyone except Mrs. Potato Head. Moreover, in Toy Story 2 he is depicted as a traditional family man who loves his wife so much that despite Tour Barbie’s appeal at one point in the film he reminds himself and others that he is a married man. His ‘positive’ familial character is also affirmed by his adoption as a father by three alien toys whose lives he saves by flying out the window during a clearly dangerous drive to the airport in pursuit of Woody.

**Toy Story 2 and American Male Romance**

Significantly, it is during this mission to save Woody that we learn about the weaknesses and fears of each male toy character, and this happens in the company of other male toys. In this sense, Newton’s elements of ‘male romance’ are easy to come by in the Toy Story 2 narrative. We can observe, for example, that it is the male toys which embark on the mission to save Woody rather than the female ones. Granted, this separation from the female toys is not a result of soul-searching as in the case of the men in the men’s movements who set upon the path of masculine identity affirmation away from women and in the company of only other men. It is interesting, nonetheless, to note how the success of the mission relies on the absence of female toys. In actual fact, two of the female toys that stay

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behind – Bo Peep and Mrs. Potato Head – are portrayed in very traditionally normative female gender roles. Mrs. Potato Head is portrayed as the overbearing matriarch who knows about and can take care of men's needs, and Bo Peep as the fragile princess who coyly shows affection for the man of her choice (a damsel in distress).

In other words, both Bo Peep and Mrs. Potato Head are deemed not fit for the dangerous world out there that only their men can traverse, despite the fact that Rex the Green Dinosaur who is part of the male crew that goes in search of Woody suffers from anxiety and an inferiority complex about not being scary enough (a trait that is counter to the one usually associated with masculine character, namely bravery). In fact, the film reiterates the unsuitability of the female toys for the danger that awaits the male toys, and affirms that the adventure can only be taken by men. For example, as Buzz and his crew get ready to leave, Mrs. Potato Head warns them not to talk to toys they don't know. In addition, the camera pans wide, clearly establishing a contrast between the smallness of the toys and the vastness of the terrain they have to traverse in search of their friend Woody. Indeed, with Buzz, the ever self-assured space ranger as the leader, the male toys embark on a dangerous mission.

As part of highlighting the 'male romance' aspect of the journey of transformation, it is clear by the end of the film that the characters have bonded together as men – a result of participating in the mission. While it is arguable that the bonding also includes the female toys, since Jessie ends up being part of Andy's toy collection, it is clear by the end of the film that the conversation between Buzz and Woody at the end of the film – a conversation that seals their 'brotherly' affection for one another – makes it clear that this is a bond between two males, and by implication the other male toys who were part of the rescue mission. In other words, the male toys achieve Newton’s ‘male romance’ by risking intimacy and facing up to an unknown and dangerous world together, and, as a result of completing the mission of rescuing Woody, bonding together as men. Moreover, in order to underscore that this is not an affirmation of homosexual male bonding, the film emphasises the heterosexual relationships of Buzz and Jessie, Woody and Bo Peep, and Mr. Potato Head and Mrs. Potato Head, while also relying on a normative macho male-bonding context of gaming for Rex and Hamm who are seen playing the 'Buzz Lightyear: Attack on Zurg' video game together.

Furthermore, Woody's change of mind concerning his identity (Roundup Gang member versus Andy’s toy) happens at the behest of the other male toys. That is, his undergoing intentional soul-searching mimics closely the same manner of the men who join men's movements such as The Promise Keepers, and his decision to stay with Andy's toy crew happens in opposition to Jessie's prior convincing narrative. Also, while it is Buzz who delivers the speech that finally convinces Woody to change his mind, Buzz does so as the 'spokesman' for the rest of the crew. In other words, Woody's change of heart or transformation and his acceptance/affirmation of his identity as 'not a museum toy', but a 'child's toy', is achieved through the agency of other male toys. It is significant, I think, that the position that Woody reneges from in order to emerge as a re-born home-toy is that offered by a female toy, Jessie – the fact that Stinky Pete the Prospector plays a role in this argument notwithstanding. That is, by presenting Woody’s choices in binary terms that privilege the notion of separation from women in the process of masculine identity formation, the film reproduces dominant ideas of masculine identity formation as not feminine. Woody has to reject the choice offered by Jessie to go to Japan in order to emerge as a self-made male toy who knows who he is in response to the identity psychic drama he suffers.

Heteronormative and Racialised Toys

Not only does Toy Story 2 play into the traits identified by Newton as ‘male romance’, it also does so in terms of racialised ideals of ‘masculinity’. In particular, all the toys of Toy Story 2 are white-identified, not only in terms of how they look or don't look, but also on the basis of those selected to play their voices. Given the direct privileging of whiteness in this narrative, it is fair to observe, along with Newton, that:

 various forms of purely fictive and concretely realised male romance have played a central role in U.S. history, where they’ve functioned to help reproduce and sustain dominant ideals of masculinity that were based on the implicit belief that economic, gender, sex, and race privilege constituted true manhood for white, property-owning men and that the latter represented the U.S. nation as a whole (2005: 33).

The toy characters, in other words, are assumed to stand for a generic American experience, but this American experience is actually premised on a very specifically white masculine romance engaged by the male toy characters in particular. By privileging white masculine ideals of male romance and reproducing these ideas as representative of national American manhood, Toy Story 2 promotes a particular narrative about gender and race that also figures prominently as a carrier of unstated values and norms that are then consumed through the media of popular culture, such as film, by consumers (including children and adults) who are liable to take them as normative to some extent.

What is more, the film stays too close to another key component of normative masculine identity, namely,
the acquisition of women companions as part of the process of building the nuclear family. It is significant that the protagonist and deuteragonist, Woody and Buzz, get together with women as potential partners or love interests as a way of affirming that their friendship is not homosexual, but heterosexual. In case one thinks this is a one-off situation, Buzz’s relationship with Jessie is consummated in Toy Story 3 and Toy Story 4 is set to focus on Woody’s love story with Bo-Peep. Furthermore, just in case one misses the point, the end of the film highlights Mr. And Mrs. Potato Head’s adoption of the alien children who are forever grateful to their new father. As if to say in very clear terms: only a committed and married man can be granted the role of fatherhood, not Hamm the pig, Rex the dinosaur, or Slinky dog, all of whom are rendered questionable father figures as they are unattached despite their affirmation as appropriately ‘masculine’ through their participation in the rescue mission.

In fact, the film affirms another area of shared common ideology amongst the men’s movements that Newton analyses – the prevalence of the theme of family as foundational to understanding what it means to be a man. More specific to my interest in The Promise Keepers, the movement emphasises the roles of husbands and fathers as foundational to the masculine project (and responsibility) of restoring the moral compass of North America. In highlighting the movement’s focus on the family, Robert A. Cole notes regarding Promise Keepers America that, ‘PK draws strongly on the Christian evangelical tradition, seeking to return men to God and the teachings of Jesus as they relate to the family’ (2000: 115). Moreover, it is the nuclear family in particular that is seen to be the core of society, ‘and this movement’s persuasive efforts are directed at reviving values that champion and conserve the traditional family’ (Cole 2000: 115).

Indeed, the fourth promise of the seven promises noted earlier clearly states that a promise keeper should be committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values. To that end, as Newton also explains, a far more central vision of The Promise Keepers America was not about taking the nation for Jesus, but was defined by what she terms the Promise Keepers’ gender project, which meant ‘producing a less career-focused and more compassionate and caring Christian masculinity, that, while retaining many conservative elements of evangelical thought, was distinctly more liberal than some conservative, evangelical masculine codes’ (2005: 215). While Newton’s point is made in the context of responding to those critics of the American Promise Keepers movement who saw it as a political movement bent on fusing religion and politics in disturbing ways, her observation regarding the movement’s focus on a gender project goes far in underscoring the argument that the movement’s interest lies primarily in family orientation and gender roles education, albeit understood in very traditional terms.

In fact, although lauding the Promise Keepers for ushering in a different vision of fatherhood in America by emphasising the equal role of fathers in the home, Newton recognises that this vision of the Promise Keepers is still problematic for men who do not fit the category of father or husband in the traditional sense. Specifically, as she notes, ‘in grounding masculinity in family rather than career, in affirming men’s equal role as fathers in the home, and in casting family men as citizens and representatives of the nation, Promise Keepers construct[s] a new national manhood ... This national manhood, however, like many others, omit[s] women and gay men’ (2005: 237). Indeed, while Promise Keepers America should be commended for its ability to push participants as re-invented fathers and husbands ‘toward a wider-ranging conception of social good’ (Newton 2005: 243) by dealing with issues such as antiracism, it falls short of its own mandate of re-inventing the very idea of fatherhood and, consequently, masculinity in general.

Re-inscription and Toy Story 2

The preceding critique notwithstanding, I have to also draw attention to Newton’s warning that ‘male romance cannot be written off historically as a mere vehicle for reproducing male dominance, promoting separation from and/or mistreatment of women. That is, the cultural meanings of male romance seem to be far more complex than that’ (2005: 42). As she observes further, ‘Although most forms of U.S. male romance lend themselves to being read as exercises in consolidating an identification with the privileged category “man,” insofar as a masculine rather than a human ideal is being affirmed, the social and political effects of male romance, along with the ideals of masculinity that they have helped produce and sustain, would seem to have been contradictory and historically variable’ (Newton 2005: 48). Toy Story 2 is a testament to the multiplicities of masculinities promoted in the public sphere in so far as we can observe that not all the male toys are the same, despite the other limitations highlighted so far. In this sense, the film affirms what Richard Howson observes elsewhere regarding the concept of hegemonic masculinity, namely that, ‘masculinity as a social phenomenon does not represent a coherent unified system that is simply reproducible across time and space. Rather, masculinity is defined by configurations of practice within a system of gender relations’ (2006: 53-55). Consequently, it is problematic to think about masculinity as representing a coherent social subject.

Howson’s argument regarding the multiplicities of masculinities notwithstanding, we have to address the problem posed by Toy Story 2 in that as a whole narrative, the film promotes a very specific ideal of American manhood that privileges the elements of separation from women, the bonding of men and their risking of intimacy,
as well as their rebirth in the company of other male figures – elements which have the greater propensity to have negative ramifications as part of the response to the ‘crisis of masculinity’. In other words, it is arguably that ‘male romance’ in the American context can be seen as more than a vehicle for reproducing male dominance through its creation and promotion of ritual space that helps men address the psychic conflicts regarding the construction of their identity, and thus presenting us with a complex set of practices that both affirm and challenge normative American masculine traits (Newton 2005: 42, 48).

Given, however, that upon further examination this complex set of practices reveals and supports a problematic gender hierarchy at work in narratives such as Toy Story 2 and those of the men’s movements such as Promise Keepers that specifically focus on men and masculine identity-formation as part of a larger discourse responding to the ‘crisis of masculinity’ phenomenon in the American discourse on national manhood, it behoves us to pose questions regarding the moral and ethical implications of the promotion and the popular consumption of such narratives and complex practices as part of a vigilant discourse against the backlash on the achievements that might disappear under the guise of complexity. Of course this is not to deny that movements such as The Promise Keepers and films such as Toy Story 2 promote other valuable, complex, and rich lessons around ideas of collaboration, friendship, loyalty, solidarity, and trust amongst others. But the question should remain, at what cost? Indeed, it is precisely because of this looming question that I echo Donna Haraway and hold that, once I have learned to see the Sacred Image of the Same that lurks behind complexity I have a hard time letting go of my monomaniacal critical vision, which might be worse than the objects I am complaining about (2004: 261), thus leaving me with no friends at Disney-Pixar contra the mantra of the Toy Story franchise: ‘You’ve got a friend in me’.

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Dube’s overall academic work examines how contemporary religious discourses engage with gender (mostly critical masculinity studies), transitional justice (specifically the role of religion in truth commissions), and popular culture (hip-hop and literature). Using both Critical Discourse Analysis and the Social Critical Theory as tools for engaging the concept of the ambivalence of religion, Dube’s thinking explores how to use this heterogenous concept in productive ways for both the academic study of religions and praxis application in social transformation contexts.

End Notes
1. While regarded as a problematic source for academic purposes in general, I found this site’s description of the film very useful for the synopsis of the film.

Diaspora fragment 6

an ancient forbidden language murmurs in the dawn
a language that I do not know in my head
or on my tongue
but feel in my heart.

LINDA ADAIR, SYDNEY, NSW
History, Disrupted: The aesthetic gentrification of queer and trans cinema

CAEL M. KEEGAN

This essay connects Sarah Schulman’s discussion of aesthetic gentrification in The Gentrification of the Mind with the concept of disruptive innovation to analyse patterns in recent mainstream film exploring LGBTQ histories. Since the Great Recession, LGBTQ cinema in the Global North has become structured by disruptive narrative strategies that reroute the transformative power of queer and transgender histories upward and away from the most at-risk LGBTQ populations. Films such as Dallas Buyers Club, Stonewall, and The Danish Girl purport to represent ‘actual’ moments in LGBTQ history, but instead appropriate aesthetic space from communities with little to no cultural representation - HIV positive, working-class, and of colour, queer and trans populations - instead offering that space to symbolic gentrifiers. Cultural erasure of AIDS activism and of trans people’s important roles in LGBTQ histories and politics are among the most deleterious shared outcomes of this new wave of cinema. This essay contends that historical disruption and resulting aesthetic gentrification of queer and trans cinema in the Global North has potentially global implications for the future of LGBTQ representation.

Gentrification is a process that hides the apparatus of domination from the dominant themselves. Sarah Schulman, The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination.

Why does a film like Roland Emmerich’s Stonewall (2015) exist? The event Stonewall purports to represent – the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion that is commonly recognised as launching the US LGBTQ rights movement – has been well-explored to the exclusion of many other important LGBTQ histories. When the trailer for Stonewall was released during summer of 2015, a torrent of rebuke from critics and social media users poured across the internet, lambasting the film for its erroneous ‘historical’ depictions. Stonewall drew fire particularly for how it supplanted the critical role lesbians and queer/trans people of colour played in starting the riot, instead centring on a fictional white, gay male lead. In an interview with Buzzfeed’s Shannon Keating, Emmerich defended his decision to alter LGBTQ history in ways that disrupt its true political legacy, mostly for the comfort of straight viewers:

“You have to understand one thing: I didn’t make this movie only for gay people, I made it also for straight people,’ he said. ‘I kind of found out, in the testing process, that actually, for straight people, [Danny] is a very easy in. Danny’s very straight-acting. He gets mistreated because of that. [Straight audiences] can feel for him.’ (…) ‘As a director you have to put yourself in your movies, and I’m white and gay,’ he said (2015).

Stonewall literally erases the vibrancy of lived queer and trans histories through a well-intentioned but oblivious occupation. The film went on to become a box office flop, perhaps partially due to the backlash against its politics, but also because the film is a poorly-made, garish caricature of the ‘based on a true story’ biopic genre to which mainstream LGBTQ film emerging from the Global North is currently reduced. If we choose to take Stonewall seriously, however, we can see that the film itself is no outlier: its representational strategies are actually quite typical of most contemporary big-budget films purporting to represent queer and transgender lives. What can be learned from the production of such a terrible ‘gay’ film by a gay director? This essay treats Stonewall as the most obvious example of an emergent pattern in mainstream representations of LGBTQ history: disruptive innovation in the portrayal of past LGBTQ lives and the resulting aesthetic gentrification of queer and trans cinematic worlds.

In The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination, Sarah Schulman (2012) provides an essential explication of how economic and policy pressures on the social organisation of urban space can subsequently alter the aesthetic forms of a culture. Schulman’s book performs a number of astonishing leaps across epidemiology, urban planning, economics, social policy, and the publishing and theatre worlds to explain why LGBTQ culture and politics became so homogenised after AIDS. She locates this shift – from radical, community-based queer arts to bourgeois, gentrified
expressions of ‘homonormativity’ (Duggan 2004: 50) – in the effects of mass death and trauma experienced during the AIDS crisis. As radical queer and transgender activists, artists, novelists, and playwrights died of AIDS, a newer and less politicised generation of creators and consumers emerged to replace them. These newcomers occupied urban and artistic spaces as if no oppositional creative cultures had preceded them. This unconscious substitution of ‘complexity, difference, and dynamic, dialogic action’ with ‘sameness,’ ‘homogenisation,’ and ‘the institutionalisation of culture’ (Schulman 2012: 14) is at the heart of how Schulman defines the aesthetics of gentrification. In chapter four, ‘The gentrification of creation,’ she describes a literal ‘dynamics of death and replacement’ (2012: 23) by recalling a scene in avant-garde playwright Penny Arcade’s play Invitation to the End of the World:

In the scene, Penny imagines the mother of Rita Redd, a drag artist who died of AIDS, standing on a street corner in the East Village stopping passersby and asking if they’d ever heard of her son. ‘He did shows,’ she insists. ‘He put on lots of shows.’ She can’t understand why none of the recent yuppie arrivals know who he was. She doesn’t realise that his audience has also died (2012: 84).

Schulman’s elegiac account of the true consequences of the AIDS era provides a compelling set of answers for why, in 2016, LGBTQ-themed films that earn wide release are generally so divorced from actual queer and trans experience. Cinema is yet another reflection of the gentrifying processes Schulman points out in her discussions of contemporary theatre and fiction: the radical filmmakers who surfaced during the ‘New Queer Cinema’ (Rich 2013) era of the 1990s and who – along with AIDS activist groups Queer Nation and ACT-UP – protested the treatment of LGBTQ people in mainstream film, have been largely displaced by a small number of executives, producers, and directors (mostly white and male), who create LGBTQ films for mainstream audiences.1 Schulman notes, ‘Since the mirror of gentrification is representation in popular culture, increasingly only the gentrified get their stories told in mass ways. They look in the mirror and think it's a window’ (2012: 28). LGBTQ film roles are written for straight and cisgender (i.e. non-transgender) actors who might win awards, while queer and transgender actors struggle to get work. With the exception of a few independent or long-anticipated gems – notably Tangerine (2015) and Carol (2015) – recent LGBTQ representation in the cinema of the Global North remains dismally infrequent, wooden, and inaccurate. Perhaps most pertinently, a new wave of films purporting to represent crucial moments in LGBTQ history has begun to whitewash and depoliticise queer and trans cultural legacies. In the ‘symbolic neighborhoods’ (Cohen and Hanlon 2006: 33) of our communities, queer and trans people ourselves have become almost entirely absent, gentrified out of our own history by those who benefit from representing us – to themselves. The result is a set of films sold as windows into the LGBTQ past while they function largely as mirrors reflecting the ‘gentrified minds’ of their own producers, gay and straight alike.

In what follows, I argue that adding an analysis of disruptive innovation (DI) to Schulman’s brilliant critique can help to explain why gentrification’s effects have persisted and intensified well into our purported period of ‘recovery’ from the global crises of both AIDS and the Great Recession. That markets in the Global North currently conceptualise disruption as the most desirable form of creativity is important in recognising how economic and social patterns of gentrification impel corresponding aesthetic effects. Analyses of disruptive innovation as both an economic and aesthetic form are thus key to assessing mainstream LGBTQ representation in the post-crash era. I therefore interject at a critical moment in Schulman’s account – her prediction of the ‘end’ of gentrification (2012: 18) – to note how disruptive innovation drives gentrification aesthetically. I then examine three recent and highly debated LGBTQ-themed films produced in the Global North – Dallas Buyers Club (2013), Stonewall (2015), and The Danish Girl (2015) – to analyse how each engages in disruptive innovation practices that replicate Schulman’s ‘dynamics of death and replacement’ (2012: 23).

Disruptive innovation: gentrification’s engine

What is disruptive innovation? DI theory has gained increased recognition along with the tech market’s explosion in both the US and Europe, but is still generally overlooked in critical discussions of gentrification. DI was originated by Harvard Business School professor Clay Christensen in his landmark 1997 book The Innovator’s Dilemma and refined by Christensen in the later work The Innovator’s Solution (2003), written with Michael E. Raynor. In these two works, Christensen develops DI as a theory for why certain businesses (mostly in the computing revolution) were being displaced by newer companies offering what were then understood as ‘inferior’ products. DI is Christensen’s theory for how certain innovation strategies can disrupt the relationship between products and markets by offering lower performance that is more convenient, portable, or cheaper (1997: xv). Disruption theory asserts that consumers are often willing to tolerate a downgrade in product quality (e.g. streaming video or music over high-resolution hard media) in exchange for a more flexible delivery system, and that such downgrades are often effective in penetrating previously disinterested markets. The immense profitability of disruption as practised during the tech boom has elevated DI theory to...
a central position as one of the ‘most widely celebrated and cited ideas in modern business’ (Lepore 2014: 1).

In *The Innovator’s Solution*, Christensen and Raynor lay out a framework for creating DI strategies to break into established markets, offering a set of ‘litmus tests’ for disruptive design. They ask:

- Is there a large population of people who historically have not had the money, equipment, or skill to do this thing for themselves, and as a result have gone without it altogether or have needed to pay someone with more expertise to do it for them?
- To use the product or service, do customers need to go to an inconvenient, centralised location? …
- Are there customers at the low end of the market who would be happy to purchase a product with less (but good enough) performance if they could get it at a lower price?
- Can we create a business model that enables us to earn attractive profits at the discount prices required to win the business of these overserved customers at the low end? …
- Is the innovation disruptive to all of the significant incumbent firms in the industry? (2003: 49-50).

These recommendations for disruptive market capture map onto the processes gentrifying LGBTQ film aesthetics in ways that are difficult to ignore. Yes, queer and trans audiences have traditionally not had access to means of mass self-representation and have relied on others to create images of us in popular culture. Yes, in order to access any sort of cultural representation, queer and trans people have historically needed to live in large, urban environments and have access to centralised spaces such as gay bars, public museums, LGBTQ film festivals, and LGBTQ bookstores. Yes, there are large numbers of working- and middle-class LGBTQ people who will go to see LGBTQ-themed films with ‘less (but good enough) performance’ (Christensen and Raynor 2003: 50) for under ten dollars. Yes, the Hollywood model of writing LGBTQ-themed films with the specific goal of generating Oscar nominations for straight and cisgender actors has resulted in a profitable ‘discount’ product that has captured the business of these consumers. And yes, just as Schulman describes in the publishing and theatre worlds, these disruptions into LGBTQ cultural representation have effectively locked most queer and transgender writers, directors, and actors out of a business that largely transfers LGBTQ wealth upward into the hands of white, creative elites. DI also penetrates into the content and aesthetics of LGBTQ cinema itself, providing us with low fidelity products that are marketed as more ‘universal,’ ‘inspiring,’ and ‘relatable’ than films created by and for LGBTQ people.

Disruptive innovation strategies are so widely celebrated in the Global North—a recent US handbook describes DI as ‘the greatest theory of business growth and value creation, ever’ (Paetz 2014: 3)—that DI’s conceptualisation of ‘creative’ displacement has become a central practice in both consumer and cultural production, as well as in urban life. Below, I discuss the gentrifying effects of disruptive innovation on the ‘symbolic neighbourhoods’ (Cohen and Hanlon 2006: 33) of queer and trans cinematic worlds. Each of the films I discuss contains a set of disruptive innovation strategies that hollow out and occupy queer, trans, and of colour histories, turning their aesthetics toward the reproduction of dominant culture. Much like the rapidly gentrifying landscapes of New York City, Seattle, and San Francisco, these films are populated by white, bourgeois, straight, and cisgender bodies that then come to colonise the aesthetic space of the LGBTQ cinematic archive as its representational subjects. As in Schulman’s account, there is little to no acknowledgement of whom or what these bodies have displaced. Queer and trans viewers of these films are left to imagine our histories through the disruptive innovations they offer us—a market strategy that produces upward distribution of LGBTQ resources from the very desire to see ourselves represented that these inferior products withhold.

*Dallas Buyer’s Club*: ‘You croak, you croak. It’s not our problem, it’s yours’.

*Dallas Buyers Club* (2013) is the first major U.S. film since *Philadelphia* (1993) to address the AIDS crisis. While *Philadelphia* told a fictional story about a gay man played by a straight actor (Tom Hanks), *Dallas* tells the ‘actual story’ of a straight man, played by a straight actor (Matthew McConaughey). That twenty years separate these films should alert us to the very thin archive of AIDS narratives in US feature films: there is as yet no ‘actual story’ of LGBTQ people’s experiences of the AIDS crisis in US narrative cinema. In *Dallas*, those untold histories are supplanted by a different narrative—a gentrifying effect perfectly mirroring Schulman’s ‘dynamics of death and replacement’ (2012: 23). I begin here with *Dallas* precisely because it represents a return to aesthetic considerations of the AIDS crisis in a new, gentrified form that circulates around the topic of disruption innovation. *Dallas Buyers Club* is a disruptive innovation that is topically about disruptive innovation itself. The film is, quite un-coincidentally, a story not about AIDS activists (we do not have a major film about those lives, and may never) or even about actual queer and/or transgender experiences of AIDS. *Dallas* is a story about disruptive innovation, entrepreneurialism, and the upwardly mobile ‘success’ story of a straight, white man’s capitalist response to contracting HIV/AIDS.
Dallas Buyers Club was marketed as the ‘actual story’ of Ron Woodruff, a straight man with AIDS who formed a Texas-based for-profit buyer’s club in order to illegally import unapproved drugs into the US during the AIDS crisis. While Woodruff was a real person, Rayon, a transgender woman who acts as Woodruff’s business partner in the film, never actually existed. This contrast between who is real and who is fictional establishes the basic aesthetic politics of the film. Woodruff’s story is represented as historically important, while Rayon (named after an artificial fibre) is a narrative device who will die before the film ends. Rayon, who is referred to consistently as ‘he’ throughout the film, represents a double erasure of trans people from the narrative of the AIDS crisis: not only is Rayon ‘not real,’ but she is also played by a cisgender male actor, Jared Leto, who subsequently made insensitive comments about the role that were characterised as ‘dangerous and selfish’ by trans actors (Billings 2014: 1). The casting of Leto, and his winning of the Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his role in Dallas, is an indication of the film’s intended audience.

Dallas Buyers Club offers us the story of Woodruff’s entrepreneurialism, tracing how he used the AIDS crisis for his own personal gain and disruptive profiteering. Woodruff offers his clients not AZT, but a cocktail of other compounds that medical historians and AIDS activists have subsequently argued would have been ‘almost useless’ (Matthews 2013: 1). The film sells Woodruff’s profit-motivated drug smuggling as ‘heroic,’ but can only do so because the work of AIDS activist groups such as ACT-UP – who were militantly challenging social policy, drug approval and pricing, and the lack of federal AIDS funding – is marginalised in the film. Woodruff is the ultimate disruptive innovator, capitalising on the infection and dying of his own and others’ bodies during the epidemic to amass profits from the HIV-positive community by distributing a less than effective product. Woodruff is clear that he forms the buyers’ club to make money, not to necessarily save lives, reminding clients that can’t pay for the drugs. ‘I’m not running a goddamn charity!’ Dallas, which is ostensibly about AIDS, is actually about the business of AIDS – proceeding from a gentrified aesthetic in which queer and trans communities and their activist histories are literally removed and replaced with other bodies that engage in profit-making as the only available expression of resistance. The single version of community in this film, the club, is organised through its capitalist activity – ‘buying’. Ron and Rayon’s relationship is a business partnership, not a practice of solidarity. Yes, Ron eventually turns toward the ‘productive’ end of extending his life, but the film consistently represents private capitalist innovation as more effective than protest or the public sector.

Thus, while the film is packaged as though we are witnessing a fight between a political insurgency and the medical industry, Dallas actually represents the same clash between an emerging disruptive capitalism and earlier forms of bureaucratic state management that Schulman traces in The Gentrification of the Mind. Schulman illustrates how, as AIDS physically removed queer and trans bodies from urban spaces, those spaces were then appropriated by corporate developers and sold to straight gentrifiers (2012: 37-8). The same processes of death and replacement are present in Dallas, a narrative that substitutes the histories and bodies of actual queer and trans people with that of a straight, profit-seeking disruptor. The end result is a gentrified narrative that reflects pre-existing dominant representations of AIDS. Nearly all mainstream cultural representations of AIDS during the crisis were also of white, straight people – ‘innocent victims’ such as Ryan White, Kimberly Bergalis, and the Ray brothers. Dallas Buyers Club is therefore not an alternative AIDS history, but simply more of the same: a ‘window’ into the past that functions instead like a mirror.

Stonewall: A whiter shade of pale

Roland Emmerich’s Stonewall is a fitting example of how some bourgeois, white gay cultural producers have adopted a thoroughly gentrified aesthetic practice for representing LGBTQ histories. Emmerich reimagines the events of the Stonewall riot through the eyes of a fictional white, middle-class, Midwestern character, Danny Winters (played by straight actor Jeremy Irvine), who has relocated to New York City from Indiana to attend Columbia University. Danny, who is gay but largely asexualised, falls in – quite unbelievably – with a crowd of poor, queer and trans Village youth who hustle on Christopher Street. One of these characters, Ray (Johnny Beauchamp), appears to be based on the actual historical figures Ray Castro and Sylvia Ray Rivera. Rivera, a Puerto Rican trans woman who was present at Stonewall and who, along with black trans woman Marsha P. Johnson, worked to organise queer and trans youth in the Village, is not directly represented in the film. While Johnson does appear as a character, she is played unconvincingly by a cisgender male actor (Otoja Abit) and given only marginal, short scenes. Rather than centring on the experiences of the disenfranchised queer and trans people of colour who were driven to militant resistance against police violence at Stonewall, Emmerich’s film instead places a ‘white surrogate’ who can ‘properly tell the story of “the other”,’ (Jung 2015: 1) at the focal point of the narrative. The film’s tag line, ‘Where Pride began,’ suggests that it was men like Danny and not impoverished queer and trans youth who created gay liberation.

Emmerich’s response to criticism of these choices – claiming that they were necessary to make straight audiences comfortable – is a clear articulation of gentrification aesthetics as a strategy for market
capture and the upward distribution of profit as well as representational space. ‘Testing’ of the film as a product with straight audiences revealed that they preferred Danny as a point of sympathetic identification over bodies that actually represented the inventors of gay liberation politics – queer and trans people of colour. Danny himself is a disruptive innovation Emmerich inserts into the narrative to assuage heterosexual and homonormative viewers alike with a feeling of ‘safety’. The effects go well beyond simple historical error in their injuriousness: Danny’s role in the film is to transfer political imagination upward, away from poor people, trans people, and people of colour and toward middle-class white gay men – who have indeed become the historical beneficiaries of gay liberation as it lost its resistant energy after AIDS. In a series of particularly telling moments, Procol Harum’s ‘A Whiter Shade of Pale’ plays on the jukebox whenever Danny dances in the Stonewall, an ironic indicator of Emmerich’s gentrification tactics.

Stonewall, however, gets worse as its narrative unfolds: Marsha P. Johnson herself is widely credited with starting the Stonewall Rebellion by throwing a shot glass into a mirror (Kasino 2012), but Emmerich reassigns the role of instigator to Danny, thoroughly erasing the crucial part trans women of colour played in the creation of gay liberation. In what is perhaps the most insulting scene I have ever witnessed in an ostensibly ‘queer’ piece of cinema, Danny grabs a brick out of a black queer youth’s hand and throws it through Stonewall’s window, screaming ‘Gay power!’ and initiating the riot. In this moment, Danny becomes the fictionalised agent of a gay liberation politics that was strongly inspired by Black Power and largely invented by queer and trans people of colour. The implication is that, before Danny arrived as a gentrifier, the oppressed queer and trans population of the Village had no political imagination at all, only a juvenile criminality they directed laterally among themselves. Danny’s ‘gay power’ is a paternalistic substitution of white, cissexist supremacy for actual gay liberation politics, an innovation that produces a far inferior product for a much wider (i.e. straight) consumer audience. Toward the close of the film, Danny says to Ray, ‘Don’t you understand? I can’t love you!’ The line is an overt description of how gay identity politics have unfolded in the time since AIDS. Stonewall rather accurately represents the exclusion of trans people and people of colour from the gay imaginary, but it blames this exclusion as ‘unlovable’ on those ostracised populations themselves, rather than on the white, middle-class gentrifiers who have been willing to abandon them in exchange for nominal inclusion in straight culture.

The Danish Girl: ‘Such a power in you’.

Tom Hooper’s The Danish Girl (2015) is another recent and widely-criticised attempt to represent LGBTQ histories through what might be called a disruptive innovation aesthetic. The film, based on David Ebershoff’s 2000 novel of the same name, purports to recount the life of Danish painter Lili Elbe, who was one of the first people to undergo sexual reassignment surgery. Elbe had become well known in European salon circles through the many portraits her wife, Gerda Gottlieb, painted of her – both nude and in women’s attire. In 1930, Elbe travelled to Berlin to
undergo surgery at Magnus Hirschfeld's world-renowned Institute for Sexual Research, after which she was legally recognised as a woman and forcibly divorced from Gottlieb by the Danish state. Though Elbe hoped to remarry and have children, she died in Dresden in 1931 after a failed surgery that would have constructed her womb. A version of her diary, *Man into Woman*, was edited by a third party and published posthumously in 1933 (Meyrowitz 2002: 20, 30). It was this fictionalised diary that became the basis for Ebershoff's novel and, later, Hooper’s film.

Hooper's 'based on a true story' biopic about Elbe is thus many times removed from any direct depiction of her life. Unlike the film would have us believe, the 'real' Lili is not historically representable in any simple manner. As Tobias Raun argues, the most reliable source of Lili's historical presence is the paintings of her by Gottlieb, for which she posed voluntarily (2015: 2). The various alternative records of Lili's life and medical history were 'mainly left in the hands of medical and legal experts' who pathologised her (Raun 2015: 1) – a series of disruptions driven by their own interests in her as an object. Therefore, Lili's story has become over time the story of cisgender agents' control over the meaning of her life and her body. Hooper’s film cannot help but reproduce this problematic, representing Lili as having been ‘created’ by Gottlieb as an artistic experiment gone awry. Lili is robed of any transhistorical agency the film might have granted her character. Instead, it focuses on Gottlieb's artistic process and career over and above Lili’s self-creation as a co-participant.

*The Danish Girl* strongly thematises Gottlieb’s increasing discomfort with Lili’s medical transition and life as a woman, while Lili’s subjective experience of transition is represented only through a series of highly recognisable transphobic stereotypes: a clothing fetish, a dysphoric ‘mirror scene’ (Keegan 2013: 9), misrepresentations of transphobia as homophobia (Bettcher 2007: 47), and eventual death as the price of self-actualisation. It is Gottlieb, and not Elbe, who survives the film. The dynamic by which Lili is supplanted in her own story by Gerda is most evident in a scene after Lili’s first surgery, in which they discuss Gerda’s ‘creation’ of Lili: what Gerda paints, Lili claims, she reciprocally becomes. 'Such a power in you,' Lili says admiringly of Gerda, as if her existence is entirely dependent on Gottlieb’s talent. In a moment of supremely disruptive innovation, a cisgender idealisation of transgender experience is substituted for the history of an actual trans life. As film critic A. O. Scott points out, *The Danish Girl’s* title should arguably be interpreted as referring to Gottlieb, rather than to Elbe (Scott 2015).

*The Danish Girl* therefore represents transgender identity as well as the transgender body as creations of the cisgender imagination. This effect is heightened by the casting of a cisgender male actor Eddie Redmayne to play Lili. The presence of Redmayne in the film reinforces the evacuation of the historical Lili from her own narrative, producing a politically inferior product that is easily consumed by audiences who might assume that transgender women are actually mentally ill ‘men in dresses’. *The Danish Girl* does little to disabuse viewers of the assumptions that transgender people are tragic and that our bodies are medical anomalies. The film instead passively sanctions these attitudes by removing any historical reference to a theory of why Lili exists, even though European sexologists had developed a robust literature about sex and gender variation by the early 20th century (Meyrowitz 2002: 14-16). Representing the diversity of these theories would have explained Lili’s feelings and offered the audience a way into identifying her as a specific kind of woman. Instead, *The Danish Girl* erases the existence of any but the most damning and pathologising literature, pushing the audience to view Lili as a doomed sacrifice to history.

The most disruptive quality of *The Danish Girl*, however, is that Lili never encounters a single person like her, even though the actual Lili most certainly would have. The film suggests that there was absolutely no community available to people like Lili during the 1920s-30s, which is patently false. When the real Lili travelled to Berlin in 1930, the city was a global hub for sex and gender minorities: there were so many people traveling to see Hirschfeld that by 1909 German authorities had begun to issue a special form of identification called a ‘transvestite pass’ (*Transvestitenbasis*) to those utilising the institute’s services, which included medical treatment as well as social networking and job placement (Beachy 2014: 172-80). The institute treated and politically advocated for high numbers of patients like Lili, estimated minimally at ‘dozens’ (Beachy 2014: 172) before its destruction by the Third Reich in 1933. To remove any possibility of community or shared identification from Lili is a disruptive innovation that symbolically repeats the Reich’s razing of Hirschfeld’s institute, allowing *The Danish Girl* to represent Lili Elbe as a lonely ‘transgender pioneer’ (Scott 2015) when historically she was one of many people who underwent early medical reassignment. Lili was not even the first: that was likely Alan Lucill Hart in 1917 (Meyrowitz 1998: 161). This obfuscation presents cisgender viewers with an easily recognisable and consumable biopic narrative while it simultaneously defrauds transgender viewers of access to a more accurate history. Lili is alone because it serves the film’s gentrified structure that she be stranded in her difference — another ‘window’ into a past that is erased by the very presence of the text.

The gentrified films discussed here are part of a new, post-crash wave of cinema emerging from the Global North that purports to represent ‘actual’ moments in the LGBTQ past. These films are marketed to global audiences as if they represent official queer and trans histories, but engage in disruptive innovations that appropriate aesthetic capital from communities that already have little to no cultural representation – HIV positive, working-class, of colour, and transgender populations. Cultural erasure of AIDS activism and of trans people’s important roles in LGBTQ culture and politics are among the most
deliberate shared outcomes of these texts. Because the Global North is a primary driver of how cinema is written, financed, and produced, the disruption and gentrification of LGBTQ cinematic worlds may contain broad-ranging consequences for the future of film.

For what purpose does a film like Stonewall exist, then? Gentrified LGBTQ films like the ones I discuss here present pressing examples of the need to imagine and demand our own messy and fertile queer and trans histories in their place. Many of us deeply desire a de-gentrified aesthetic informed by our own rich cultures – one capable of illuminating the brilliance of our continued resistance and survival. At the risk of invoking Schulman’s yet-unfulfilled prediction that gentrification will ‘end,’ I propose evidence of a reprise. The sharp criticism of Stonewall and its subsequent failure at the box office is small but heartening evidence that LGBTQ audiences (still) possess communal knowledge of our political histories - perhaps most encouragingly represented by Reina Gossett’s response to Stonewall, Happy Birthday Marshal!, a historically accurate film that restores queer and trans of colour people to their central role in the Stonewall riots.

In our collaborative destruction of Stonewall’s profitability, LGBTQ people demanded that this text not supplant the possibility of a different archive – one replete with complex, sustaining images of ourselves. That desire, which undergirds a century of queer and trans people seeking their images in film, is older than disruption, and will, I predict, outlast it. In an indictment of the damage disruptors have done to the social body, historian Jill Lepore points out that disruption is ‘not a law of nature,’ but an ‘artifact of history’ (2006: 47). Stonewall, too, is such an artifact – of a time saturated with fear, when mainstream cinema struggles to reflect anything but our obsession with safety, familiarity, and sameness.

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End Notes

1. In a recent interview describing her decades-long effort to write a successful screenplay for Carol (2015), Phyllis Nagy noted, ‘People who finance films about lesbians are often very straight white men, not always, but often, who in some way require a pat on the back, a nod to their own understanding of what the psychological process is for women who choose to love other women. Many times I had to do a little song and dance about how what is extraordinary about this project is the lack of such logic – and would you ever expect that kind of logic now from a gay male film that you were producing? In some bizarre way we’ve moved beyond it to a certain extent in films about gay men, and gay men are allowed to be hatched from an egg, just gay. But lesbians require a very particular sort of self-reflection - which nobody I know has actually ever gone through’ (Jaffe 2016).
T

de the literal definitions of various social identity categories (e.g. gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.) can be technically applied equally to all people simply because we all have them. Yet, it remains very much the case that naming any one of these identities conjures up their subordinated forms. This is to say, ‘gender’ codes ‘women,’ ‘sexual orientation’ references homosexual, ‘ability’ elicits ‘disability,’ and so forth. This serves to reify the social order in that it demarcates and marginalises the subordinate while leaving their superordinate forms (e.g. white, cisgendered, able-bodied, male, wealthy, etc.) unmarked and sequestered from the critical gaze.

Relatedly, there has not been sufficient consideration of how such conventions also withhold vocabularies of identity from people who hold their superordinate forms, constraining or preventing the essential quality of introspection, intragroup and intergroup dialogue necessary for solidarity and reform. Just as it is ‘reasonable’ (in quotes to question the salience or wisdom of such a rhetorical arrangement) for a marginalised person to assume disinterest or preference on the part of the privileged to maintain the current arrangement, this paradigm also invites those with superordinate identities to assume that the marginalised seek revenge rather than equity. In short, it interferes with the prospect of dialogue, understanding, social cohesion and solidarity while rigidifying oppositional relations.

As a person who identifies as Caucasian, heterosexual, cisgendered, male, able-bodied (for now), middle-class and Jewish, among other identities, I have thought a lot about questions of identity, and reflected on the social and political implications of representation and voice. Like other religio-ethnic minorities, I have experienced marginalisation and invisibility, and instances of anti-semitism. The salience of being marginalised and/or having the legitimacy of my personhood questioned is all too familiar.

Yet, I also know the feeling of confusion and offence when mywhite privilege was first challenged, or being called out for phrasing that affirms heteronormative, cissexist and/or transphobic conceptions of identity and social interactions. The more invested (intentionally or not) I have been in privileged perspectives, the more intrusive such confrontations have felt. That is, until I took the feedback and vocabularies on board, empowering me to reflect more deeply, broadly and expansively. Now (mostly and increasingly), I mindfully work to enact commitments to hold space for human diversity, and to appreciate (sometimes after a small pinch feeling) receiving notice when I don’t fulfill my pledge in this regard. It is in my personal – and our collective – interest to be challenged so that we can become better with ourselves and each other. And, while I prefer for challenges to be offered with grace and patience, it seems too much to ask of marginalised and oppressed people to make this a condition of engagement. Fortunately, these vocabularies (along with training in counselling skills) allow me to recognise the heat of the delivery as more information about the other’s pain rather than an attack, and to invite readers of this essay to consider doing the same.

Just as important, these vocabularies illuminate the legitimacy and importance of challenging inappropriate or unkind words and actions by a person of marginalised identity(ies), and permission to disagree. In terms of disagreement though, I believe such an assertion should be internally vetted against internalised centric and supremacist ideation in order to remove debris of privilege before conveying the feedback. This cleaned honesty is important in that I regard the practice of declining to challenge or disagree (when one would have otherwise done so in response to someone with superordinate identities) as a patronising form of discrimination arising from a superficial form of liberal sensibility.

Nonetheless, I do sometimes find myself using critically self-conscious phrasing such as the title of this essay in my writing and speaking engagements. This was especially true in my former executive university administrative positions as Dean or Vice President, which
entailed speaking at a lot of events. Among those were events relating to social identities generally, or intended to celebrate particular cultures and communities; to foster an inclusive campus climate; and/or to focus attention on barriers such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression. A number of these invitations, whether for welcoming remarks on behalf of the university or even keynote speeches and extended presentations, came because of my position. In such situations, I would often have an uneasy or worried feeling that perhaps I should not be the one speaking.

After all, most of these events were intended to create spaces for marginalised voices to speak their respective truths. So, when I speak – especially when asked to speak at some length, I experience it as a proverbial needle-threading exercise. That is, how could I provide the endorsement associated with my position while at the same time avoid presuming that my words were necessary to legitimise the event or the voices that would be expressed there? Complicating this further is that the people who invited me often experience my presence (because of my position) as legitimising – which both affirms their voices but also re-inscribes the very privileges and hierarchical frameworks they seek to dismantle. Moreover, given my particular social identities, I often benefit from this equation, whether in a general sense or in the form of ‘strokes’ that anoint me ‘one of the good ones.’ This is – as best as I can understand currently – why such unsure feelings arise in such contexts.

Normally I try to avoid burdening marginalised people with my self-conscious fretting over how best to take responsibility for my privileges. It seems to me that such insecurities and contested questions are less consequential to me than the impact of marginalisation or oppression on minoritised colleagues and students. This may strike some readers as rooting in a zero-sum paradigm, which is not my intention. Rather, while I believe our liberation is mutually bound, the present lived experiences of social inequality and privilege often feel quite binary. For instance, as a Jew trying to raise Jewish children with my female Jewish partner, I must confess that I am not particularly interested in hearing Christian people’s guilt about the experience of their non-Christian counterparts during the overwhelming and all-pervading three-month deployment of Christmas each autumn. Neither am I generally or particularly motivated to take the time to explain this experience to them, or to, yet again, discuss whether Christmas trees are or are not religious, why this isn’t the point, or why my ‘issue’ isn’t with Jesus or Christianity, etc. etc. etc. If I had a dollar for every time a non-Jewish person – upon learning that I am Jewish – offers an anecdote about how their roommate at university was Jewish, or how a cousin married one of us, and they have curly hair too—then, well, I’d have a lot of dollars.

Further, I decline the invitation to be the Jew who tells them it’s OK, because it isn’t. Even as I am writing this, I feel some pressure to assure readers that I am not angry, but I also wonder, what if I WERE angry? So what? The socially constructed rules of engagement in identity discourse and politics tie people and communities in knots, more often rigidifying rather than traversing relational dichotomies. I write essays like this to work things out, and to invite others to join me. My proposal is for a social project to reconcile these discrepancies, enabling us to move forward equitably and together.

I left my last administrative post six years ago to take up my current role as a professor of education. My primary scholarly focus is on the structures and conditions shaping lived experiences within universities. We often refer to this as ‘campus climate,’ referencing the feelings, cultural elements, and tensions associated with living, studying and/or working in these uniquely strange institutional places that are part of, while set apart from the broader society. Universities are congealed cultural locations with reciprocal influences between them and their host communities, regions and nations.

Three aspects of university climates are of particular interest to me. First, I believe that the questions of campus climate (or that of any community) focus so often on the people who experience it negatively that institutions fail to engage those whose symbolic and substantive presence (however well-meaning or unintentional) actually holds sway in fostering that climate. While there is an argument to be made that internalised ‘isms’ and ‘phobias’ can cause marginalised people to be implicated and/or complicit in their own harmful experience – and these are important issues to discuss – I do not believe this changes the need to discuss the involvement of people with dominant identities, or our responsibility to make changes. So, when I hear someone ask about the climate for, say, people of colour within a campus or community, I want to ask, ‘what are the white people like there (and/or straight, and/or male, etc.)?’ It seems to me this is a more productive, though discursively peculiar way to phrase the question. This is not to suggest a lack of agency or impact among marginalised people, nor to ignore lateral identity politics. Rather, integrity and honesty necessitate engaging questions of climate for a marginalised group with an interrogation of the influence of privileged groups. Too often, the people most hurt by such dynamics are further strained by minimisations and demands that they do the remedial work alone.
My second, and related reason for wanting to write this is to talk about what ‘nice, straight, white guys’ like me might be able to do to contribute meaningfully to a climate that is welcoming to people of colour, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, and so forth. I approach this from the standpoint that it is in the interest of those of us with privileged identities to do so. Many well-intentioned people with dominant social identities might interpret this assertion to the effect that it feels good to intend and attempt supportive effort to advance equity and social justice. Indeed, it often does, but it likely involves many difficult interpersonal interactions as well before (possibly) achieving the aims of the struggle. But, I am not referring to the personal satisfaction of trying to do right by others. Rather, I am asserting that there are costs to privilege that – while not equivalent in type and intensity with the cost of oppression – have substantial and negative impact. Specifically, the social stratification that both underwrites and reproduces privilege and oppression also robs all of us of authenticity, trust, solidarity, learning and the great many other benefits of genuine engagement across difference.

So, with regard to my first interest, I’d like to examine the ways in which climate discussions tend to be framed. I have worked at six quite different post-secondary institutions in several regions of the US and Canada; and I have studied many others as part of my doctoral program in Higher Education and scholarly efforts since then. It has been my observation that similar dynamics are playing out on post-secondary institutional campuses around the world in terms of identity politics. That is, aside from what one of my colleagues refers to as ‘Kumbaya Diversity’ (i.e. the pithy, fetishised, ‘taste some ethnic food and watch a Pride Parade’ at arms-length without social risk type), there will be an incident (a bias crime; an ignorant editorial cartoon or perhaps an inappropriately-themed student costume party; an offensive public comment by a well-placed student leader, administration official or faculty member; or a newspaper exposé, etc.), followed by an uproar – particularly by those whose identities were the object of the incident. Oftentimes there will be a few liberal folks of whichever majority identity is implicated who will proclaim themselves as allies to the first group (though they/we are at great risk of talking much and listening little, and also of not waiting for an invitation or request to actually get involved). The institution will set up a task force or blue-ribbon panel. Then, a climate study will be commissioned to determine how bad things are. Then, the findings will illuminate the obvious and list several recommendations (most of which have been suggested before the first incident occurred). Certain majority-identified people (in whichever identity category is being discussed) will come forward and question the methodology employed for the study. A senior official, perhaps the executive head, will endorse the report and commit the institution to addressing the problem. Then, the least expensive and/or most cosmetic of recommendations will be adopted (the most popular seem to be special assistants, enrolment managers or Vice-Presidents for diversity, most of whom are saddled with responsibility without the necessary authority to achieve the aims of their roles). Finally, things will quiet down, either because of frustration, placation, or both. At some point this will repeat itself. All along, the binary nature of these dynamics – during both peaceful and chaotic times – limits the discourse to one identity (e.g. race, sexual orientation, gender, ability, class) at a time. So, those whose identities are additionally complicated because of inter-sectionality (e.g. bi-racial, inter-sex, Transgendered, etc.) tend to receive little, if any support for the complexities of their journeys. For people who hold more than one marginalised identity, such as LGBTQ people of colour, I have not seen any significant institutional effort to surface and support their lived experiences. My hope is for this essay to serve as a catalyst for more sophisticated conversations, mutual understanding, and efforts toward truly inclusive higher education communities.

This brings me to my second interest, which is to invite other readers who are nice, straight, white, cisgendered, able-bodied folk into an opportunity. That is, to reflect on our own identities in a more critical way, also free of indulgence in guilt, shame, parochialism or condescension. By doing so, perhaps we can come to know ourselves as people with salient racial, gender, sexual, classed, bodied understanding of identities. I don’t mean cognitively – of course we know we have such identities. I am talking about humble, contemplative and reflective spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which we consider with great detail and radical honesty how our particular identities shape our lived experience, and how our students, colleagues, acquaintances, and friends who hold one or more marginalised identities. This difficult work is much like attempting to explain water to fish; the invisibility feels so natural and has been so for our whole lives. It can thus be terribly difficult to conceive of, no less to actually observe it. From there, we can contend with the question, ‘what am I to do?’ We can work on listening to people of marginalised social identities without making it their sole responsibility to determine the answer to this question or compel them to ‘educate’ us about their identities. I think straight, white, cisgendered women can benefit greatly from this as well, and that they ought not to invoke their experiences with sexism to abdicate responsibility any more than I should invoke my experiences of anti-semitism to engage this difficult and complex personal work. I believe it is my responsibility as a straight, white cisgendered man to find ways to offer others like me the requisite challenge and support to become involved in, and committed to this hard work. I
can listen to their shame and guilt in the face of evidence of privilege, because I have felt it (I still feel it). Just as others have done for me, I can ask them to set aside (for now) their guilt and shame so that we can engage in an undistracted and radically honest deliberation. When I speak with them, I am less likely to be accused of ‘having an agenda’, and more likely to be viewed as ‘objective.’ These are ironic privileges attached to our identities, and they can be utilised to disarm the resistance that undermines achievement of self-awareness among others with privileged identities.

With regard to the self-consciousness, I am reminded of bell hooks’s (1984: 73) article, Men: Comrades in Struggle. She observes:

Men are not exploited or oppressed by sexism, but there are ways in which they suffer as a result of it. This suffering should not be ignored. While it in no way diminishes the seriousness of male abuse and oppression of women, or negates male responsibility for exploitative actions, the pain men experience can serve as a catalyst calling attention to the need for change.

In this instance, hooks is graciously discussing means by which men can be engaged to address sexism. I believe there are analogues across other identities that can provide hopeful opportunities for addressing the racism, ableism, homophobia and other forms of bias and discrimination that hurt people of subordinated social identities, and offering those with superordinate identities salient notions of their identities which are useful vocabularies for dialogue across difference. I believe that critically self-aware, straight, white cisgendered men can liberate themselves from hetero-normative distance from other men, and from the blandness and limitations associated with experiencing life without overt race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, embodiment or heritage. I believe that men who do this can not only have more rewarding lives themselves, but can also be great allies to people of colour and/or other marginalised social identities. For marginalised people who are willing and able to share their stories with us, I believe that the experience of being truly heard and believed can be liberating as well. Indeed, our mutual liberation rests upon our ability to finally encounter each other with authenticity and an openness to be vulnerable and to honour each others’ vulnerability without judgment. Since identity is socially-constructed, how are we to ‘get somewhere’ unless we are able to learn about each others’ contributions to this paradigm, and to take on agency to make different choices?

So, in closing, I would like to return to where I began. ‘What’s a nice, straight, white guy doing in an essay like this?!!!’ My answer is that I’m here to invite my privileged kin into – or more deeply into – the project of replacing our present stratified and binary social arrangements into the egalitarian collective so many have imagined, but no one has yet lived. If you are convinced, or at least intrigued, I invite you to contemplate how your respective privileged identities inform how you see the world, other people, and yourself. Perhaps your findings will generate a new frontier for engagement across difference, or at least the cultural humility to remain uncertain until the answers come. This is how we can start; by transforming ourselves.

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Diaspora fragment 1
Predawn quiet
anguished and unusually alert
a refugee of vocation,
sutured into dependability
employability
suddenly the threads are unravelling
‘opportunities’ beckon with every day
soft pink clouds, terrify
in their expansive imprecision.

LINDA ADAIR,
SYDNEY, NSW
Retirement Village Lifestyle

GERD LEDERBAUER AND JULIE MATTHEWS

Notions of ‘active’ and ‘productive’ ageing’ are important and compelling, as too is the active and productive lifestyle often associated with retirement villages. Based on a case study of one retirement village, this article details the growth of the retirement industry in Australia and limits of current understandings of active and productive ageing. We argue that what is often overlooked is the increasingly commodified nature of retirement village life where lack of financial resources can prevent participation and lead to exclusion and isolation.

Introduction

The retirement village industry sells dream lifestyles through glossy sales brochures that promote a multitude of facilities, amenities and services. This article discusses the implications of the active ageing dream and argues that the notions of ‘active and productive ageing’ fail to capture the increasingly commodified nature of retirement village life. We argue that active ageing in a retirement village comes at an economic and social cost, and that non-participation entails penalties that can result in social exclusion and isolation. The article is based on a case study of one retirement village on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia. We outline the nature and growth of the retirement industry in Australia and the value and limitations of current understandings of active and productive ageing. We show how active ageing is enmeshed in practices of commodification and how productive ageing requires theorising through a socio-economic lens to understand how residents end up participating in the for-profit activities of the retirement industry and the limits of current retirement village options.

The commercial retirement village concept in Australia is broadly based on the United States system of retirement communities (Manicaros and Stimson 1999: 33). Currently, few studies focus on the socio-economic conditions of ageing and none focus on Australian retirement villages. There are large knowledge gaps in the field of social gerontology (Minichiello et al. 1988: 24, 26-9) and there is a paucity of Australian literature in the field (Asquith 2009: 255, 266-67).

In Australia retirement villages are age-segregated ‘communities’ developed in urban locations and offer similar facilities to small community villages and towns (Manicaros and Stimson 1999:33-6). Australian resident-funded retirement villages are those where owners/managers operate according to prevailing market principles and legislation (McGovern and Baltins 2002: 23-46). While a degree of variation exists within the modern commercial retirement village industry, there are many similarities in structure and operation. In Australia there are two categories of retirement villages: not-for-profit, no frills villages operated by religious and/or charitable organisations and/or municipal councils and commercially owned self-funded villages. The latter village-type dominates the retirement housing market. This article focuses solely on commercially owned and managed retirement villages. They are open to all retirees, age pensioners and self-funded, although access depends on the affordability of the house and monthly village fees (Lederbauer 2014: 38-45).

Commercial retirement villages usually comprise between 100 to 280 housing units and the age of entry varies from 55 to 65 years. These villages offer contract agreements ranging from leasehold, lease/loan, lease/licence or a form of freehold (strata) title, usually for 99 years (McGovern and Baltins 2002: 39-41). Housing designs vary, ranging from freestanding villas to duplexes and apartments. Retirement village fees include the up-front purchase price, monthly village fees, which incorporate all operating costs, and finally, the exit fee, which varies between villages and ranges from 30-49% of either the original purchase or the current market price. Retirement villages and boutique resorts, containing a wide range of facilities, amenities, services, resident organised activities and entertainment can be regarded as ‘one-stop’ villages (Lederbauer 2014: 80-3).

Commercial villages on the Sunshine Coast can be one of three types: i) up market villages and boutique resorts with 5-star facilities, ii) benchmark villages with community-standard accommodation and the potential for subsidisation from government funding or charitable organisations, and iii) basic villages with no frills accommodation, few on-site facilities and largely
subsidised through government funding or charitable agencies. All retirement villages cater for residents in overall good health. Higher end villages may include serviced apartments, meals, and supplementary care options such as nursing home accommodation. Boutique and benchmark villages offer strata title (freehold), leasehold, loan and licence, while basic villages are only available for rental, with low entry fees and high exit fees (Stimson 2002: 36).

Typically, a facilities manager controls the daily operations and directs several administrative and facility staff. The most common facilities include a clubhouse, offering indoor entertainment, indoor/outdoor pools and hobby workshops. Services are provided through hair dressing salons, medical suites, libraries, and computer rooms, bus services to local shopping centres and mobile retail services. Social committees often organise village activities, such as bingo, trivia, bus excursions, and ‘Happy Hour’ (Lederbauer 2014; Lend Lease: 2012; Stockland: 2014).

Today, many commercial villages are owned and managed by multinational corporations with backgrounds in finance, insurance and property development (Lederbauer 2014; 80, 84-5, 88-9, 92-3; Lend Lease 2012; Stockland 2014). In comparison, United States retirement communities/complexes fall into different categories: Retirement New Town, Retirement Village, Retirement Subdivision, Retirement Residence and Continuing Care Retirement Centre (Manicaros and Stimson 1999: 33).

In the early 1970s there were few commercial retirement villages in Australia. In 1973, the founder of Buderim Gardens, Charles Hawtree, established a retirement village, as a family trust on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast. The village was owned, managed and operated as a mainstream commercial enterprise (Hawtree, C. 1999, pers. comm., 10 Oct. 1999). Village accreditation was voluntary, following the policies of the age-care industry. Although these villages operated according to commercial principles, eventually a need arose to develop an overarching organisation dictating specific policies/principles of the new industry. This organisation was known as the Retirement Villages Association Australia (currently a division of the Property Council of Australia 2006 – 2016).

The socio-economic restructure of Australia after WWII saw the emergence of a consumer material-orientated society, which tended to exclude the elderly. The inequalities of the era were to some extent remedied by the provision of support detailed in the Aged Persons Homes Act (1954), later amended to the Aged and Disabled Homes Act. The Act provided Commonwealth assistance towards the provision of homes for aged and disabled persons. Under the Act, government capital subsidies were granted to facilitate the building of retirement villages by religious and not-for-profit organisations. The phasing out of capital subsidies by the Whitlam Government in 1974 (Le Guen 1993: 9-10) stimulated the emergence of the early commercial retirement village industry (Stimson and McGovern 2002: 6-7).

Post-1974 saw many small companies/family trusts being bought out by the corporate sector and the creation of the retirement village industry. This represented a significant change from a non-commodified retirement service to a profit-making venture. Although these new enterprises ‘entered the market on substantially the same commercial footing as the voluntary sector operators’, they were not subject to any government regulations and operated along free market principles (McGovern and Baltins 2002: 24). The initial Queensland Retirement Villages Act (QRVR 1988) proved unsatisfactory and was later repealed and replaced with a new Act (QRVA 1999); the latter is subject to ongoing amendments. The new act clarifies village operators’ rights and obligations in ‘protecting and explaining the rights/interests of village residents’ (McGovern and Baltins 2002: 24).

Modern market exchange underpinned by free market ideology reflects the dominance of neoliberalism in the operations of public and private activities (Brown 2005: 38). These conditions inform the operations of commercial retirement. Management is driven by economic motives where goods and services are produced for profit, under the conditions of market exchange (Scott 2001: 12; Williams 2002: 2). Regrettably, little literature in the field specifically investigates retirement villages as commercial enterprises that consolidate consumerist practices. This article seeks to rectify this omission.

In the early 1990s, large national and multinational corporations began to enter the retirement village market. Today, retirement villages are dominated by an industry that is financed by construction, finance, insurance and property development corporations (McGovern and Baltins 2002: 24). Corporations such as Lend Lease and Stockland are public companies, which, at times, raise capital to further invest in and develop the retirement village industry. Smaller ventures could not compete with big business and were bought out or taken over (Stimson and McGovern 2002: 6-7). Indeed, an estimate claimed that by mid-2007, increased corporate investment in the retirement villages sector resulted in about 26% of the industry in Australia being under the management of 11 major industry participants.

In line with notions of corporate social responsibility, the retirement village industry has adopted World Health
Organizations (WHO) definition of “active ageing” as ‘the process of enhancing and optimizing the health, participation, security and quality of life of those who are ageing’ (WHO 2002a: 12). However, although the industry argues that it recognizes its responsibility concerning the social and welfare objectives of society, village operators are often unable to balance social objectives with profit maximisation (McGovern and Baltins 2002: 46).

This is evidenced in the many disputes previously adjudicated by the Queensland Retirement Villages Tribunal. The various commercial tribunals were later merged into a new agency (QCAT 2009). In addition, various disputes are also heard in the Queensland District Courts and/or the Supreme Court of Queensland. In this context, a Queensland retirement-village residents association provides appropriate advocacy services (ARQRV 2014). Most cases relate to financial issues or interpretation of the Queensland Retirement Village Act 1999 (Lederbauer 2014: 35). Problematically, multiple contract types and structures allow operators to engage in unethical and unjust behaviour (Keogh and Bradley 2002: 1-17). After operator fees, entry fees, exit fees and recurrent charges many retirees find that after ten years of ownership, they receive less than they initially invested when they move out (Parker 2011).

**Productive and Active Ageing**

The notions of active/productive ageing have been taken up and subsequently incorporated into commercial business models. The idea of active ageing is captured in the simple phrase “engaged in life” (Buys and Miller 2006 4: 6). Broadly speaking active ageing holistically involves the interconnectedness of all aspects of ageing; socio-economic, psychosocial and bio-medical. By way of contrast the concept of productive ageing can be understood as: activities that produce or develop the capacity to produce (paid or unpaid) goods or services. Productive ageing is thus not limited to economic activities (Hinterlong et al. 2001: 3-7) but includes socially valued non-commercial informal activities (Bass and Caro 2001: 39). Though productive ageing is a component of active ageing, there are important distinctions. This makes productive ageing a useful way of theorising the socio-economic elements of retirement village activity because it acknowledges the social importance of economic and social productivity such as volunteering and care giving in domestic settings and career-related activities undertaken through educational programs, vocational training centres, community colleges or university (Bass and Caro 2001: 41).

The focus on productivity does not over-emphasise the biomedical aspects of ageing, which are problematic in notions of active ageing. A focus on the economic factors of active ageing, i.e. income, work and social protection fails to fully attend to other aspects of productivity (Bass and Caro 2001: 41). Unfriendly environments and lack of social support often prevent older people from volunteering. For instance, Miller’s (2009) study of older Australians’ leisure-time physical activity compared community retirees with retirement village residents. She emphasises the way demographic, social, physical and environmental factors come together to enable or restrict physical activity and productivity. Retirement village residents led more active lifestyles than their peers in the community because they were able to receive more social support than their peers in the community (Miller 2009: 20). In the case of the Sunshine Coast retirement village, those who could afford to pay for access services such as transport and exercise classes had access to social support services and were thus more able to stay productive.

Voluntary work is a particularly important aspect of productive ageing. It takes place in and outside retirement villages and benefits the older person and the wider community (Davis-Smith and Gay 2005: 22). It enables older people to stay connected to society and use their expertise and also maintain a sense of purpose. Sustaining innate value and self-respect, results in independence, better health and well-being (WHO 2002b: 1-3). Additionally, voluntary work unlocks a wealth of knowledge, expertise, skills and wisdom for younger generations. Unfortunately however, often volunteering can be impeded by practical barriers and restrictions such as ‘insurance issues, lack of access for disabled volunteers, legislation on health and safety, health of volunteers’ (Davis-Smith and Gay 2005: 14). Such restrictions prevent older people from taking risks and contribute to a sense of worthlessness and non-productivity can lead to social self-exclusion. The loss of productive contribution is a great loss to society in general (WHO 2002b: 1-3).

**Consuming and commodifying retirement**

Retirement living is no less enmeshed in the materialism of contemporary consumer society than any other element of society. In this section we argue that active and productive ageing extends and stimulates new forms of commodification and consumption (Hepworth and Featherstone, 1982). Indeed, the retirement village sector itself draws from mainstream marketing principles to commodify its clients into a marketable product.

Consumerism and commodification are imprecise terms. Consumerism tends to refer to general situations of choice (Giddens 2003). The term commodification more specifically focuses on various transactions involving commodities. Nevertheless both terms are somewhat problematic because they tend to refer to the purchasing
decisions and choice as opposed to cultural and identity projects. The modern self has become a project of consumption based on the accumulation of goods and lifestyles (Giddens 1991). However, ‘commodification is unevenly contoured’ (Williams 2005: 14) and ‘both the commodified and non-commodified spheres co-exist in a relationship of complementarity’ (Williams 2005: 133). Below we argue that these processes are at large in the retirement village sector where commercial and non-commercial activities occur. However we suggest that non-commodified activities are gradually being erased to establish unequal consumerist-commodified conditions.

Retirement village residents in the Sunshine Coast retirement village experienced the impact of financial inequality caused by commercial marketing principles. They were prone to financial inequalities because services and activities are provided at a cost. Interestingly the corporate retirement village sector has successfully circulated the romantic image of the retirement village as a ‘cottage industry’ while at the same time leading the sector into the mainstream neoliberal economy such that the retirement village sector has become indistinguishable from other paid for service sectors of society. Financial exclusion as noted by Conolly et al. (2011) and marginalisation occur due to the ever-increasing costs that make it difficult for pensioner-residents to participate in activities that require additional fees such as bus excursions, bingo and so on. Social exclusion is often a consequence of economic exclusion (Kneale 2012). Non-participation in village activities may prevent the formation of friendships. The choice of housing design and location may also influence a new residents’ social acceptance or exclusion by determining his/her social status. Interestingly, older residents pursuing less active lifestyles are not as affected in the same way. Indeed they could be ascribed with a status of ‘doyen’ commanding respect such that their self-imposed isolation may instead result in a form of social inclusion.

In the Sunshine Coast retirement village, those with financial means are more able to participate in costly village activities such as bus excursions and river cruises than those with low economic capital. Consequently a dual village society is in the making. Village facilities and amenities require services and human resources. The village provides a dedicated hair salon facility; however the salon required a hairdresser to provide the service and the service provider required payment. A clubhouse facility was present onsite, but again this facility required paid staff and/or volunteers to organise activities. In addition, users were often required to pay additional fees for equipment or to subsidise prizes.

The point to be made here is that the relationship between the commercialisation of a retirement village and the commodification of the retirement village lifestyle is intricately connected to socio-economic status. Although socio-economic status is primarily determined by wealth, it also relates to cultural social standing. Bourdieu (1984: 226-56) distinguishes economic and wealth based-capital from cultural-social capital (gained through education, knowledge or interest in the classic arts). These different types of capital can be combined in various ways. For instance high or low economic could be combined with high or low cultural-social capital in various combinations. Conditions in the retirement village challenge this model. Wealthier self-funded residents with high economic capital tend to have high socio-economic status, regardless of the level of their cultural-social capital.

However, socio-economic status is not the final arbiter of social inclusion. Individuals, groups and business entities often collude or conspire regardless of age or status to mitigate for or against inclusion. For example a residents’ committee called for a special resolution to change the residents’ constitution, giving increased powers to the committee and indirectly greater control to village management, thereby reducing the power of most villagers. Indeed one new resident went so far as to lobby on behalf of management and management interests in the assumption that those interests were aligned to his own.

Conclusion
The retirement village industry, corporate village owners and village residents and their lifestyles are undergoing significant changes as the industry transitions retirement service into a profit-making venture. The commodification of the retirement village lifestyle stimulates inequality in complex ways. Many retirees perceive the commercialised retirement village system as desirable or at least are unable to see any alternative. While the nature of retirement may have changed significantly, from that of a passive lifestyle to an active one, the retirement cohort is less an emblem of active and productive ageing than a product of contemporary consumer society, embracing commercialisation and subscribing to principles of commodification. That is not to undermine the importance of productive ageing which includes both commodified and non-commodified components and which includes participation in volunteer activities inside and outside the village. However it does underline the fact that the promotion of active ageing by corporate village owners facilitates commodification. Retirement villages are subject to the same principles as mainstream commercial organisations. It is not clear whether the pre-1973 not-for-profit village sector operated by charitable/church/municipality councils was fairer and more equitable. However it is clear that we need to consider the feasibility and desirability of alternative ways of achieving productive ageing.
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Small Tragedies

GEOFF DOW

1.

He slumped there, one hand upturned and the suggestion of a shrug in the operational shoulder, perhaps accompanied by a raising of the eyebrow and additional forehead creases on that side. The sentiment behind the constrained movement seemed as real as if we had really been communicating. It was an offer to communicate, an invitation to me to confirm with him that this was what it had all come to. Even then I refused, for some reason unable to reciprocate his honesty. I proffered a smile – genuine enough, in its way, but far from fully acknowledging what he knew and desperately wanted me to accept. Not just his impending death but the belittling of his previous gestures. They had been made over the past few years before his final stroke. On each occasion, he'd broached topics, reminiscences, I'd been non-committal, impossible to reach. I've since come to understand how disappointing that must have been for him.

And now the cherubic positioning of his face and mouth, not quite a smile, apparently more than instinctive, signifying something both warm and regretful, no admonition at all. Could he determine his responses, or were they primordial reactions of a body resigned to the inevitable, sensing the end was close?

A few days earlier, arriving for our regular weekly picnic, I'd found him prostrate, unresponsive, looking to his left only. The ambulance drivers cut open his shirt and attempted to lift him onto a stretcher; surprisingly he resisted, grabbing for parts of the bed. His face contorted by horror, I was able to see and hear what seemed to be his excruciating self-realisation; not what's happening? but is this really happening now? He couldn't speak but the inaudible scream was loud enough. Later in the hospital he, or his automatic reflexes, still struggled to shift his length off the bed where, abandoned by orderlies, I was compelled to hold and cajole him into quiescence. It was slightly chaotic and comedic – and, in its unfolding, tragic.

Not one but three medicos had separately approached me in the space of a few minutes and enquired, within hearing distance, whether I would be prepared to allow the hospital to eschew active interventions or treatment and to merely facilitate nature's course. I'm not sure whether he could still hear, but from what I later learned I presume he could. He was 92 and the only answer I had was a squeamish and ashamed yes. It all seemed somewhat indecent. Much later, when the increased medications had begun to dull his sensations emphatically, I'm pretty sure he could still hear.

So my own cowardice conspired with the system's functional requirements – care with minimal disruption – to await a result which, as I've discovered, was not the end but only the beginning of a culmination whose capacity to stoke self-reproach I never expected to experience, or to need.

Each day I travelled to the hospital – a journey of about ninety minutes on a road always busy – I wondered whether there would be a recovery (no one was entirely candid with me). I also wondered, sporadically, about the meaning of his relocation into a 'closed' or high-security ward with, presumably, higher dosages and more insistent custodianship, without which his attempts to leave his bed would have occasioned distress to all.

For all that, there were moments of near serenity. I spent a couple of hours with my arm on his. We'd never had physical intimacy before, just manly handshakes. I thought, at least once, that this would be a nice way for him to go – so comforting for me to have been there as he died, able to absolve myself for the previous, foiled exchanges. Of course it would have salved my own inadequacies without relieving the void that was, in different ways, ahead for each of us. But touching was a comfort – and an achievement – that I still hope he might have been registering.

Eventually, a week after the initial stroke, he succumbed to the predictable. We'd never really spoken.

2.

His house was a mess. I had known this and dreaded the tasks ahead for some time and so, able to take some
time off from work, set myself into the process of clearing, cleaning, packing, discarding, hiring skips and arranging transfers to charities. There were more papers than I had expected – tax returns going back a half-century, bills and receipts, multiple copies of bank statements, postcards (mainly from me), ancient records of his employment and education, at least one – a school composition – dated 1929.

He had a large shed out the back – with a now unsurprising assortment of broken tools, nuts, bolts, screws, nails, electrical parts, bits of cord, wood, aluminium, disassembled motors, many diligently collected and labelled in old cigarette tins or spruso jars. Somewhere there I discovered an erstwhile school case (‘ports’, we called them in Queensland). In it, mementos relating to his previous marriages – letters, photos, certificates, newspaper cuttings – included my mother’s ashes. She had died suddenly in 1948 at the age of 26, so they’d been retained here for 65 years, almost my entire life. I had never been told. The astonishment was considerable. What could he have imagined would be their fate? In the event, I resolved immediately – one of those decisions that occurs to one without need for reflection – to scatter both sets of remains together, in the river where he and I had often picnicked.

Armed with the newly discovered correspondence between them, never intended for my eyes of course, but nonetheless preserved, I have been able to piece together some idea of my mother’s life and personality at least insofar as they had evolved by the period 1942 to 1948. I haven’t had the courage to read all of the material and perhaps I never will, but the insight into a lively woman (apparently a musician and dress-maker) has been important for me. It’s not the fact that he never spoke to me about all this that’s impacted on me in the past few months, but that I never asked. The information was available but so untapped. It’s also visceral – the school port contained the handbag she had when she died, complete with cosmetics and coins, the ageing smells and feel of a life scarcely lived. What does it say about father-son communication in the modern world? Is it symptomatic of that era? Or sui generis?

At the same time I discovered something more revealing. A 20-foolscap-page chronicle he’d written for the first 60 days following my mother’s death. It was addressed to me and divulged his feelings of immense distress and grieving during that time. It had neither beginning nor end and had been ripped out of some bound notebook, denying me access to the complete context. But the sentiment, this time despair, was palpable and almost unbearable. I wept, in genuine empathy, finding it hard to allay incredible self-indulgent wallowing. He had kept on working – this had helped, he explained to me – while hiring a nurse to look after a child aged between 6 weeks and (as I later learned) three years.

3.

I had maintained my visits, but endured rather than enjoyed them, departing each time with a guilt that has since deepened, leaving an old man wondering why he had so few friends or so little companionship. Maybe he had begun to think he’d lost a son, just as he’d earlier lost a wife and partner. At the time, I thought I was doing as much as I could, but it was never as much as he thought he was entitled to. I have expended much energy forsaking my parents’ chattels, never sure of how much this amounted to disrespect. Lapses occurred early, and though fault was probably in both of us, as either could have reversed it, towards the end, I now understand responsibility was mainly mine.

I have learned something of a mother who I never otherwise knew. And perhaps I am having a more meaningful relationship with my father than when he was alive, though this is not helping him now.

These are small tragedies in the big scheme of things; and I wonder still why hesitation and prejudget should have festered into indifference. That’s what I’ll live with from now on.

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Diaspora fragment 2

The pulsing DNA of
the night owl
out on a limb
hard work breaks no sweat
still eats one’s brain
waking at 4 am to make to do lists
churns the gut,
go against the grain.

LINDA ADAIR,
SYDNEY, NSW
BOOK REVIEW


d/Deaf research has long existed on the margins of social research as a specialist area, to the detriment of both d/Deaf people and social research. This book eloquently illustrates the value that d/Deaf research adds in challenging the taken-for-granted ‘knowledge’ and practices that operate in the broader field of social research.

Applying examples from d/Deaf studies to the broader social (research) context, Young and Temple have delivered a book that is useful as both a guide to d/Deaf studies and a generalist text that challenges ‘conventional’ research processes and notions. Young and Temple provide well-reasoned arguments and articulate examples of the importance of social researchers examining the social process(es) of ‘doing research’, which obligate the reader to consider how the choices researchers make influence what types of knowledge are silenced, reinforced, challenged and legitimised. In doing so, they build the argument that researchers create, rather than reflect, realities. They use steps of the research process to illustrate how decisions and research outcomes are shaped by the researcher’s starting point (ontology and epistemology); arguing that researchers should be reflexive about decisions that are made during the research process and cognisant of how decisions create (and silence) knowledge.

Young and Temple carefully inform the reader about the purpose of their book, and equally prepare them for the discomfort the content may create and the lack of clear cut solutions proffered (Chapter 1). They subsequently discuss the diversity of experiences of being d/Deaf and illustrate how definitions used by researchers directly implicate the reported results (Chapter 2). They examine how research methods influence what knowledge is (not) produced, and how the relationship between epistemology, methodology and method are not necessarily pre-determined (Chapter 3). In what follows, the authors challenge conventions of ethical research, applying examples from realities of d/Deaf lives to traditional definitions and practices of informed consent, privacy and anonymity (Chapter 4). Using definitions of being d/Deaf, and the heterogeneity that characterises d/Deaf populations, Young and Temple illustrate how population definitions and sampling influence the validity of inferences that can be drawn from research (Chapter 5). The authors identify how decisions made around language use during data collection, analysis and reporting have important implications for how experiences of being d/Deaf are represented. They also emphasise the power dynamics that may occur throughout the research process in relation to language, and how it is that through these choices, researchers mediate what is known, how it is known and who is seen to tell (Chapter 6, 7). Finally, the book touches on the impact of developments in information and computer technologies on the research process including data collection, analysis and dissemination (Chapter 8).

Throughout the text, Young and Temple construct social research as limited by the taken-for-granted research processes, and also constrained by a lack of research reflexivity. They position the individual researcher as empowered within the research process. However, upon my reading, it became apparent that the authors provided little consideration of the diverse pragmatic, political and geographic context(s) within which researchers operate and how these contexts equally shape the researcher’s so-called ‘choices’. Research does not begin and end with the researcher. Researchers operate within a complex social context where often their choices are shaped by the academic system(s) they operate within. What is known, silenced, challenged and legitimised as knowledge is equally shaped by normative practices within social disciplines, schools and departments, and even more so by the peer-review dissemination processes. Young and Temple briefly discuss how developments in computer-mediated technology are creating opportunities to challenge research processes, and are optimistic about the incorporation of visual spatial languages in the publication process(es). However, the developments they discuss are yet to be seen in mainstream journals, and Young and Temple do not address the barriers that are likely to prevent or delay the implementation of these developments.

I would highly recommend this text to both people new to the area of d/Deaf studies and experienced d/Deaf studies researchers. The authors provide a succinct, but detailed picture of the landscape of d/Deaf studies, capturing the un-realised value of d/Deaf studies and key debates within the field. Gently and respectfully guiding the reader through various tension-filled areas of d/Deaf studies, the authors explain arguments without forcing the reader one way or the other and allow them to learn and perhaps adjust their view. The extensive, and up to date references cited in the book are also a useful resource for the reader – particularly for those new to the area. Overall, the book provides a useful snapshot in time of d/Deaf studies and social research. The cohesive narrative of the text obliges the reader to continually question their epistemological and subsequent methodological decisions and their role in the creation, silencing, challenging and legitimisation of ‘knowledge’.

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BOOK REVIEW


When The Guardian recently released what is known as the Nauru Files – over 2000 individual incident reports documenting allegations of abuse, sexual assaults, self-harm, appalling conditions and mundane cruelty experienced by the refugees and asylum seekers on the Australian government controlled detention camp on Nauru – it was like being in a darkened room where a flashlight is repeatedly briefly turned on to shine a fleeting spotlight. You can get a sense of a series of individual moments and try to build together a complete picture from there.

What Offshore – Madeline Gleeson’s very thorough new book – achieves is to turn the overhead floodlights on and try to illuminate the whole picture of how the detention camps are run on both Nauru and Manus Island and by whom, how they were set up and how atrociously inadequate and cruel the conditions are. Most damnfully, it shows beyond the tiniest doubt that this cruelty is deliberate, and the overall control and responsibility for this calculated inflicting of extreme suffering leads directly back to the Australian government and its senior Ministers.

In a way this book could be seen as something of a companion piece to Eva Orner’s film Chasing Asylum, which was released earlier this year. This film features footage of the camps and interviews with some of those who worked there. What Gleeson’s book does is dig much, much further, producing a large volume of irrefutable evidence about what is going on in Australia’s offshore detention centres and the complete absence of due process in how this done – a fact recently reinforced by a scathing report from the Australian National Audit Office into the Immigration Department’s handling of the contracts for the offshore detention centres. The book starts with a brief history of Australia’s policy towards asylum seekers who arrive by boat, starting with very first Vietnamese arrival over forty years ago in April 1976, and the subsequent response of the Fraser government. Under the Hawke government, detention of boat arrivals became more common and in 1992, the Keating government formally legalised mandatory detention – becoming part of a long running pattern of both major parties agreeing to rush through harsher laws to circumvent High Court rulings challenging the legality of how the asylum seekers were being treated. By 1999, the Howard government introduced Temporary Protection Visas, and in 2001 the first version of the so-called Pacific Solution was implemented, with camps set up on Nauru and Manus Island following the interception of the MV Tampa cargo vessel after it approached Australia with 438 refugees it had just saved from drowning at sea. In 2008, these camps were officially shut down by the Rudd government.

The book then starts on the journey of outlining the story of the reintroduction of the offshore detention centres under the Gillard government, using the report of the three person Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers on August 13, 2013 as its starting point, and detailing how it has developed from there until the present day. As happens often in politics, the recommendations in the report that matched what the government wanted to do were immediately seized upon, whilst the caveats and warnings of the Expert Panel that the recommendations had to be taken as a whole and not cherry-picked were ignored.

The political imperatives of the time were such that haste to get the offshore centres set up trumped every other consideration. Gleeson details the processes followed, which saw an MOU signed with the government of Nauru within two weeks, and the first asylum seekers being transferred there exactly one month after the Expert Panel’s report was first received. The first asylum seekers arrived on Manus Island in November.

People who have followed the asylum seeker debate in Australia may feel they know most of the details, but almost anyone who reads this book will find many details and incidents they were unaware of. It is likely that, no matter how well versed you may be in the treatment of asylum seekers, you will still experience at least one sinking moment where you find yourself thinking “surely that can’t have been allowed to happen”. Of course, Gleeson’s book is meticulously researched and referenced, and these not only happened, but continue to happen at this moment.

Gleeson makes clear over the course of the book the imperative placed on secrecy by the Australian government, which is one of a number of features of this iteration of offshore detention where things have been taken to a greater extreme compared to its initial version implemented under the Howard government. It gradually becomes chillingly clear over the course of the book that the level of institutionalised bureaucratic cruelty and callousness, and the shabbiness of facilities also well exceeds what was in place in the Howard-era.

The book makes good use of details derived from a number of Senate Committee inquiries, but also outlines the strong resistance of government to provide solid information to these Committees, providing a need to rely on whistle-blowers, freedom of information, and leaked documents and footage. This refusal of government to provide information even to the Parliament has now become so commonplace, it is easy to forget how serious a matter it is. It stands in stark contrast to the enormous detail and extensive examinations which the Senate Committee examining the notorious Children Overboard saga and of the aspects of the establishment of first Pacific Solution was able to access.

But despite the best efforts of governments to obscure, deflect and hide information, there is now a great amount of detail on the public record. Gleeson’s effort in pulling it all together is to be commended. Whilst the
book outlines information in large and sometimes heartwrenching detail, it is not a polemic. It simply documents the information, quotes the eye-witness accounts, references the reports and lays it out for the reader to see and assess for themselves. Sometimes, it almost feels too clinical when detailing what can only be described as horrific scenes and circumstances. But this clinical nature matches the calculated implementation of these measures by the Australian government, where even those who want to help are unable to do so. Indeed, while there are some awful individual incidents which are described, the greatest horror described is the relentless day to day reality. The steady drip, drip, drip of example after example and the unchanging determination of a parade of different Australian Government Ministers not to be seen to yield an inch in the face of the ever-growing evidence of harm makes this a confronting read.

Author: Andrew Bartlett, Research Fellow, Migration Law Program, ANU, Australian National University

At St John the Baptist Church, 2016

bells call
the atheist

bells ring her bones
count her steps down
warm sandstone trudge

past cracking graves
they wait
for a city to come
a headstone states

she stands next to
a Uniting family
a young Reverend
a Lutheran friend
on the green
Anglican field
glare in her eyes

apprehending
a culture
outside in, so rare
these days to feel
a so sure and familiar
Protestantism
religion of her school and family
not requiring much
not even belief, but
at the very least
a little decency

church bells

from wars we fight
come people seeking
refuge

Aunty Violet
welcomes
to country
to protect
all our spirits

children and families
wait for the order
to board the planes
to leave

bells call

#LetThemStay

Sarah St Vincent Welch, Canberra, NSW
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