Dedication

On behalf of the students within the fields of Social & Cultural Analysis, this issue of the Social and Cultural Analysis Undergraduate Journal is dedicated to the life and scholarship of Juan Flores.

In Loving Memory of

Juan Flores

1943-2014
A Note from the Editors

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Social and Cultural Analysis Undergraduate Journal. We are a student-run and reviewed publication dedicated to showcasing original and critical undergraduate scholarship that engages with the interdisciplinary fields of inquiry that are housed in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University.

The Department of Social and Cultural Analysis (SCA) combines topics and methodologies from the humanities and social sciences into seven interdisciplinary programs—Africana Studies, American Studies, Asian/Pacific/American Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Latino Studies, Metropolitan Studies, & Social and Cultural Analysis. The students and faculty in SCA pride themselves in their use of intersectional analytics to consider race, class, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability while investigating apparatuses of power and critiquing the relationships between individuals, institutions, and governments.

This year, we had a record number of submissions and editors for our fourth issue. Because of budget and spatial limits, we could not accept every submission and had to make some pretty tough decisions. I cannot say enough how proud I am that the journal has bourgeoned into a space where students can share their thoughts. Although this journal is not an exhaustive collection of the work that SCA students engage in, our journal incorporates various intersectional perspectives to look at a myriad of cultural phenomenon and how power is operating within these spaces and places.

We are forever grateful to the many people who have helped us to make this publication possible. Many thanks to our faculty advisor Melissa Fisher whose expertise, experience, and advice helped guide this journal to its praise-worthy status. Thank you to Betts Brown who consistently kept the journal on track and helped spread the word to fellow students and faculty members about the journal. A special thanks to Marlene Brito for securing the necessary funds to print this publication and for being so
understanding. A huge thanks to our format editors Alyson Miller and Maya Singhal as this journal would be aesthetically unpleasant to look at without your help and guidance. Finally, thank you to everyone who submitted pieces this year as your hard work and your undying fervor has shone through your critical essays, beautiful poetry, and glamorous pieces of art, which has ultimately created a fantastic and fabulous undergraduate journal that all of us are proud to publish.

Although I have only been part of the editorial team for the Social and Cultural Analysis Undergraduate Journal for two years, I can say without a doubt that this issue is the most comprehensive and inclusive of the multiple fields that SCA houses. Finally, I can say with certainty that you will enjoy this issue of the journal and you should look forward to seeing what our next issue will bring.

Nicholas Guarriello
Editor-in-chief

Alyson Miller, Ava Ahmadbeigi, Cindy Li, Clara Soriano, Iving Xu, Matthew Lim, Maya Singhal, Siobhan Vega, Susie Rand, Yasmine Kattan, Zara Mohidin, & Zasha Villa Cardoso.
Editors
Meet the Editors

Format Editors:

**Alyson Miller** is a fan of the Social and Cultural Analysis program at NYU and is too interested in each of the fields of study offered… which is why she has not picked one yet. Instead she spends her time watching Netflix, reading old pulp from the 40s, and traveling as much as possible.

**Maya Singhal** is a sophomore from the San Francisco Bay Area studying Social and Cultural Analysis. She strongly opposes patriarchy, racism and e-readers. In her free time, Maya reads too much and consumes copious amounts of coffee. Her favorite books are *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace, *Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. To date, her biggest life achievement is finishing Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. Maya also likes to think of herself as a jazz vocalist, but this may be an overstatement, and in reality, she is just overly obsessed with Billie Holiday.

Text Editors:

**Ava Ahmadbeigi** is a junior majoring in Social and Cultural Analysis. She's especially interested in gender, immigration, and memory and sometimes writes words that, taken together, resemble poetry. She enjoys accuracy and red wine (preferably Bordeaux).

**Cindy Li** is a junior studying Social and Cultural Analysis. Cindy loves Korean Pop Music and engaging in long conversations about critiquing popular culture.

**Clara Soriano** is a New Yorker originally from the Dominican Republic. She’s currently a senior at NYU majoring in Metropolitan Studies, and is passionate about education, sociology and the pursuit of happiness. During her free time, Clara enjoys tutoring young children in reading comprehension and early reading, binge watching TV Shows on Netflix, exploring humor in everyday life and going on walks.
Iving Xu is currently a junior majoring in Social and Cultural Analysis with concentrations in Asian/Pacific/American Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies. When not socially and culturally analyzing the world, she can be found indulging her love of cop shows and the flawless Lucy Liu.

Matthew Lim is a junior studying Asian/Pacific/American Studies and Gender/Sexuality Studies. He is constantly searching for spaces of community strength and empowerment and currently finding all the ways he can help create alternative educational spaces both apart from and within the school system. When not thinking about how he can develop his teaching practices to teach high school students everything he has learned under SCA, he can be found standing on benches taking pictures of inanimate objects and overcoming his avocado allergy.

Nicholas Guarriello is a graduating senior studying Gender & Sexuality Studies and Asian/Pacific/American Studies. When not discussing their thesis about male female impersonation and bodybuilding pageants or critiquing the mundane, they can be found obsessing over cute dogs (read: pugs, huskies, golden retrievers) on the internet, which they proceed to post on Iving Xu’s Facebook. After graduation, they will attend the University of Minnesota’s Feminist Studies PhD program.

Siobhan Vega is a graduating senior in the Social and Cultural Analysis department whose academic concentrations are Gender and Sexuality Studies and Africana Studies. When she is not dodging questions about her thesis, she can be found yelling about social justice and YAAAAAAAASing about all things femme and queer.

Susie Rand is a senior in SCA studying Gender & Sexuality Studies. She just completed her honors thesis, which explored the experience of moral eating in modernity. She hopes to someday live in a tiny cottage with many cats.

Yasmine Kattan is a senior in CAS majoring in Social & Cultural Analysis with a concentration in American and Metropolitan
studies. She is passionate about other cultures and enjoys photography. As a result, her featured photographs showcase the numerous environments she has both lived in and visited and highlight different urban environment from around the world. These photographs examine both vibrant spaces in the Middle East and West Africa and the individuals that inhabit them.

Zara Mohidin is a senior majoring in Social and Cultural Analysis and minoring in Law and Society. She focuses mainly on international development, globalization and women's issues. After NYU, Zara hopes to go to law school to pursue her passion for justice and equality.

Zasha Villa Cardoso is a senior at NYU, studying Gender and Sexuality, Anthropology, and Dance. She is the Program Coordinator for L.O.V.E. (Latinas On the Verge of Excellence) Mentoring which has allowed her to combine her passions for supporting and mentoring youth and advocating for the oppressed bodies in US culture. Her piece, The Act of Dragging Our Body through the Constraints of Gender: “As far as I’m concerned, being any gender is a drag”, examines how the oppressed bodies of non-conforming individuals in US culture are treated as victims and taught to victimized themselves through language and culture norms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colored Mother to a White Race</td>
<td>Rachel Laryea</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#someblacklivesmatter</td>
<td>Siobhan Vega</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A Souvenir”</td>
<td>Alyson Miller</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lives of China-Born Artists in the United States</td>
<td>Yue Wu</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent, Senegal</td>
<td>Yasmine Kattan</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Pee or Not to Pee: Gender Disability, and the Politics of the Bathroom</td>
<td>Chelsea Meacham</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Little Mermaid</td>
<td>Alyson Miller</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism as a Marketing Tool: How Hollywood, the Music Industry, and Wall Street are Making Money off Empowering Women</td>
<td>Alison Del Handel</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so all this time i was sitting on a nail</td>
<td>Gabriel Bamgbose</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“L’ile Gorée, Senegal”</td>
<td>Yasmine Kattan</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table of Contents, Continued

**Rightlessness and the Violent Exclusion: Producing the Illegal Immigrant**  
*Matthew Lim*  
70

**“Senegalese Surfers”**  
*Yasmine Kattan*  
86

**Young, Black and Powerful: A look at Style, Subversive Identity Performance and the Illegibility at The Door**  
*Michele Ling*  
87

**The Fangirl Gaze: The Influence of Gendered Media Audience on Emerging Sexuality**  
*Katharine Arnold*  
100

**An Act of Dragging Our Body Through the Constraints of Gender**  
*Zasha Villa Cardoso*  
117

**Her Kind**  
*Gabriel Bambose*  
127

**The Writing of Otherness and its Discontents**  
*Rachel Laryea*  
129
Colored Mother to a White Race

Rachel Laryea

Upon moving to New York City, I noticed a very particular phenomenon at work. In roaming the streets of Brooklyn Heights, Fort Greene, and the West Village, the frequency with which I saw those who I perceived to be black, African American women tending to white children had been exponentially higher than that of any other city I have ever inhabited. This nanny culture, which I came to find as a daily occurrence, not only peaked my interest, but also raised critical questions surrounding race, class and gender and the relationship between these categories and the domestic work these women engage in daily. Having spent the past four months employed as a nanny myself, I often find myself grappling with notions of accommodation versus resistance, agency, or the lack thereof, and the complex, yet oppressive history of domestic work in America and its vestiges in the labor market.

This research paper serves as an exploration of the intersectionality between race, class, gender, and family structure and the lived experiences of the women who partake in domestic work as a means of survival, financial support for their extended families, and as a potential source of empowerment and heightened levels of independence. Although I strive to highlight the moments of resistance and social and economic opportunity reflected in the lives of these women, I also aim to unearth the oppressive undertones of domestic work by problematizing the interpersonal relations between the employer and the employed, and the ways in
which preconceived notions of race, class and gender take precedence in the creation of the figure of the poor, immigrant female domestic worker.

In order to best understand both the onset and high demand for domestic workers in large cities like New York City, it is necessary to first understand the relationship between globalization and the capitalist world economy, and the mass influx of female immigrants as a product of these processes. In Saskia Sassen’s *Globalization and Its Discontents*, Sassen works to lay the foundation for unpacking this phenomenon by asserting that “at the national level the general trends shaping the job supply have brought about a greater inequality in the income distribution of workers over the last decade...Some of the fastest-growing service industries are characterized by a larger than average concentration of low-wage and high-income jobs, which means we can expect an even stronger polarization.”¹ This disparity in income, which generates a demand for high-end services in the city, allows for the exploitation of the many by the few and is the reason for the polarization of the city and the need for people to take on low-wage service jobs. Furthermore, the “expansion of the high-income workforce in conjunction with the emergence of new cultural forms has led to a process of high-income gentrification that rests...on the availability of a vast supply of low-wage workers.”² The “general shift” of America as a globalized country “to a service economy, the downgrading of manufacturing—partly to keep it competitive with overseas plants—and the direct and indirect demand for low-wage labor generated, directly and indirectly, by
the expansion of management and control functions centered in these large cities and necessary for the regulation of the global economy...contribute [to the] informalization in various sectors of the economy of large cities in highly developed countries.”

Sassen’s findings are concretized in the everyday reality seen in gentrified areas of the city. In neighborhoods like Brooklyn Heights, Fort Greene, and The West Village where property owners in part make up the high-income workforce, there is an ever-growing need for the maintenance of their homes, and the caretaking of their children. This need is met by the proliferation of informal economies like domestic work where immigrant women readily take on service work jobs to meet their own needs as low-income workers.

While Sassen provides the macro-level analysis of globalization, a capitalist economy, and the expansion of informal economies, Mitch Duneier in his work *Sidewalks* that follows the lives of primarily black book sellers on New York City sidewalks, brings Sassen’s theory to the micro-level by examining what the everyday, lived experiences of people engaging in these informal economies look like as a result of the large-scale, global processes at play. His work illuminates the global, national and local forces at work that come to have an effect on the economy as well as the lived experiences of those he is researching: deindustrialization at the global level, the stratification of race, class and gender in a society at the national level, and the punitive measures taken against street vendors at the local level. One of Duneier’s most salient points is the systematicity of the stratified American society,
and the resilience and persistence of a people to both engage in the market, as well as take ownership and some power over the market by way of actively participating in informal economies. The very fact that these poor, black men were able to take what could be considered as “public space” and turn it into a “private space” where they were producing goods for people speaks to the agency and power these men had as social actors who undoubtedly play an active role in shaping the economy. It is the lived experience of these men systematically shut out of more formal economies who are then able to resist and find ways to mold the modern economy by way of influencing the informal economies at play in which they have some power.

Although Duneier’s primary research group are black male street vendors, his findings surrounding informal economies, race, class, power, resistance and agency within these economies can be applied to the immigrant female domestic worker as a research subject to theorizing the ways in which this particular work allows for, modes of empowerment in a stratified society. Just as the male street vendors in Duneier’s case study are able to obtain some tangible level of financial autonomy, so are the women who also engage in the informal economy by way of domestic work. In Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, Ehrenreich explores the immigrant narrative of women from poor, developing countries who migrate to developed countries for the purpose of working as maids and nannies to financially support their families oceans away. In detailing the difficult choice these women have to make, either staying with their
children in these poor countries all the while unable to financially support them, or migrate to a developed country to take care of other people’s children in order to send money back home for their own children, Ehrenreich suggests that there are aspects of liberation and oppression at play in domestic work. As Ehrenreich states:

Some female migrants from the Third World do find something like ‘liberation,’ or at least the chance to become independent breadwinners and to improve their children’s material lives. Other, less fortunate migrant women end up in the control of criminal employers—their passports stolen, their mobility blocked, forced to work without pay in brothels or to provide sex along with cleaning and child-care services in affluent homes. But even in more typical cases, where benign employers pay wages on time, Third World migrant women achieve their success only by assuming the cast-off domestic roles of middle-and high-income women in the First World—roles that have been previously rejected, of course, by men.4

As suggested by Ehrenreich, although some women are able to feel empowered and liberated due to the financial independence they enjoy because of domestic work, their class, race, and gender often times serve as hindrances to their social mobility, and produces the invisibility of these women as people, and of the very issues spurred by domestic work. As a society we are not concerned with poor women of color who are often cheated by the system as they try to provide for themselves and their families. Instead, we allow them to exist in the margins of society because they fulfill a very distinct purpose, which is to clean the homes of the affluent, and
look after their children. To further expand on this, Ehrenreich argues:

To an extent then, the globalization of child care and housework brings the ambitious and independent women of the world together: the career-oriented upper-middle-class woman of an affluent nation and the striving woman from a crumbling Third World or postcommunist economy. Only it does not bring them together in a way that second-wave feminists in affluent countries once liked to imagine—as sisters and allies struggling to achieve common goals. Instead, they come together as mistress and maid, employer and employee, across a great divide of privilege and opportunity.\(^5\)

Hondagneu-Sotelo’s findings in *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning & Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*, an ethnographic research on Latina immigrants working as domestic workers in Los Angeles, are in agreement with that of Ehrenreich’s. In adding to the existing scholarship on domestic work, she argues that there are three main global trends underpinning the expansion of domestic work in developed countries. First, domestic work is a highly gendered phenomenon specific to woman leaving their countries to perform this work.\(^6\) Second, this field of work not only pulls women from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, but also women from higher socio-economic backgrounds who hold a relatively high status in their own country, which was made poorer by processes like colonialism.\(^7\) It is for this reason that it is not rare to find well-educated women in developed countries and major cities engaging in domestic work. Lastly, the expansion of service-based economies favors the migration of women laborers. This argument draws parallels to that of Sassen’s in theorizing the
relationship between globalization and the expansion of the service market. In addition to analyzing the global trends, Hondagneu-Sotelo pays particular attention to the micro-level, interpersonal relations at play for these women and their employers. As Hondagneu-Sotelo notes:

> Even as [white Americans] enjoy the attendant privilege and status, many Americans remain profoundly ambivalent about positioning themselves as employers of domestic workers. These arrangements, after all, are often likened to master-servant relations drawn out of premodern feudalism and slavery, making for a certain amount of tension with the strong U.S. rhetoric of democracy and egalitarianism. Consequently, some employers feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, even guilty.

For it is at this intersection of interpersonal relations that my own ethnographic research works to problematize the employer/employee relationship, as well as answer questions surrounding modes of empowerment, agency, and independence for these women who are forced to constantly engage with the intersectionality of their race, class and gender. My primary research method was engaging in interviews with eight women of color I met in my neighborhood who were taking care of white children, as well as two women I was put in touch with by the very women I interviewed in Brooklyn Heights. Not only did I use our time together as an opportunity to ask my own questions about the work that they do, but also as a time to learn about the lives of these women intimately as they shared with me their concerns, fears and aspirations not only for themselves, but for their families as well.
One of the women I got to know rather well through a series of encounters both through in-person interactions and over e-mail correspondence was Nina; a 28 year old African American graduate student who has been a nanny for the past four years. In asking her whether or not her racial and/or class identity has had any bearing on how she is perceived she responded:

“It wasn’t until I came to New York that I realized the racial dynamic at play. When I nannied in NC and MD there were nannies of all types with all types of children. Here, especially in the U.W.S. and rich parts of Brooklyn it seems that there are only women of color watching and caring for white children. And people who live in the area kind of have a facial expression like they are judging you. I feel uncomfortable because I know they think I am fitting into the stereotype of just another black woman doing domestic work.”

Heather, a 32-year-old Latina woman who has worked as a nanny for the past 12 years shared some of the same thoughts as Nina. In regards to unpacking her positionality she commented:

“I wonder sometimes if they, white people, see me as human. To them, I’m just another pair of hands ready and willing to take care of the kids, run errands, all that because I need the money.”

In interviewing all ten women, notions of invisibility were continually brought to the forefront in discussing their nanny jobs. All the women with the exception of one felt uncomfortable doing service work, but felt trapped because engaging in the work was the only form of financial stability and income for the women and their immediate families. For the majority of these women, they felt as though being women of color in a racially stratified society meant
that they would have to accommodate and remain complicit in racial stereotypes in order to benefit financially. As Rebecca, a 54-year-old Afro-Caribbean woman mentioned:

“I can’t be above this work because it is my only way to financial stability. White people have always seen black people the same, that won’t change. So if that’s the case, why not make money where I can?”

Although most of the women did not identify as actively finding ways in which to resist and push back against systemic structures that underpin the expansion of domestic work, or even unfair treatment by their bosses like being overworked and underpaid, most women were in agreement that a reliable, and steady income did in fact provide them a level of agency and an opportunity to be financially independent; a price they were willing to pay. One aspect of my research that was particularly interesting was that all women agreed that while being financially independent was appreciated, a great source of their empowerment came from molding the lives of these white children. As Roberta, a 33-year-old African American woman asserted:

“This country is full of racism and hate, but I think being able to educate, and teach the children I care for, love, is a beautiful thing. That is a powerful responsibility; to mold the minds of children. I spend at least eight hours a day with my children and I know when I talk to them about the world, they hear me. I know they’re listening.”

Based on my findings and the in-depth conversations I was able to have with the majority of these women, I have come to the conclusion that accommodation and resistance does not exist on a linear spectrum with each action on opposing ends, and we as
individuals are forced to pick one side or the other but rather, these concepts exist in a circular continuum; there is a give and take, a push and pull necessary for acquiring any sense of empowerment whether it be economic or through the work of being a constant figure in the lives of the children these women tend to. For most of the women, engaging in the work instills feelings of degradation because of society’s complex history with domestic work, but they too, recognize that they do not exist simply as women complicit in servitude. As much as they allow for themselves to be placed in a position where the dominant society is able to view them stereotypically as domestic workers occupying a very particular class, race and gender identity serving no other purpose, they are able to not only fashion their own lives, and the lives of their families through economic independence, but also help fashion the ideologies of the younger generation. Their work as caretakers is inherently political and that in and of itself is a source of agency and empowerment.

Rachel Laryea is a third year student at New York University studying Social & Cultural Analysis. In regards to intellectual interests, Rachel is most intrigued by the intersectionality of race, class and gender as it pertains to the lived experience for the peoples of the African Diaspora. After she graduates from NYU, Rachel's professional goals include pursuing a PhD program that allows her to continue writing, researching, and studying the lives of black people.

Endnotes

5 *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 32.
7 *Domestica*, 19.
8 *Domestica*, 19.
9 *Domestica*, 11.
When you think of a nigga, what does that person look like?

In March of 2014, Nicki Minaj released a song called “Lookin Ass [Nigga],” in which she put black men on blast for their triflin’ behavior. “Nigga” and its racist relative “nigger” typically denote black masculinity*. Thus, when Nicki rapped about undesirable, broke, lying niggas for two minutes and forty-one seconds, it was clear that her verbal missiles were directed not at the black population generally but at black men and black masculinity specifically. In response, black men began to throw
adult tantrums all over social media. Several artists, including Trey Songz and Cassidy, even felt the need to lyrically fire back at Nicki for this affront to their masculinity. They had to prove that they were not the “no dick in the pants ass nigga[s]” that Nicki had dubbed them in “Lookin Ass”. They had to show Nicki and the wider world that they were “real” men: men who had big money and bigger dicks.

In “Lookin Ass,” Nicki Minaj equates a “no dick in the pants ass nigga” with a “non man ass nigga” and a “pussy ass nigga” in order to criticize the way certain black men, certain niggas, fail to perform the black masculine role. Unlike calling men out for not having money (“non-mogul ass niggas”), calling them out for not having a dick is a literal low blow; Nicki hit black cis men right in the fragile sack that they desperately cling to like a gender security blanket. Unfortunately, by doing so, she also sucker-punched black trans men and women by implying that there is something deplorable about not having, or not wanting to have, a black dick.

Don’t know what a cis man is? Or a trans man? Don’t worry; I got you. If you don’t need this brief introduction to gender terminology, you can feel free to skip to the next paragraph…but I wouldn’t! In the United States, gender begins at, or sometimes before, birth. When a baby is born, the doctors look at its crotch and designate the baby as female or male depending on the genital configuration. Generally, babies that have vaginas are designated as female and raised as girls, and babies that have penises are designated as male and raised as boys. From these beginnings,
multiple gender identities can emerge, but let’s focus on “cis” and “trans” for now. “Cis” is an adjective that indicates that a person identifies with the gender that they were assigned at birth, and “trans” is an adjective that indicates that a person does not identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth. Thus, for the purpose of this blog post:

♦ A cis man is someone who identifies as a man who was designated male at birth because of his penis
♦ A cis woman is someone who identifies as a woman who was designated female at birth because of her vagina
♦ A trans man is someone who identifies as a man who was designated female at birth because of his vagina
♦ A trans woman is someone who identifies as a woman who was designated male at birth because of her penis

Of course, the diversity of gender identity is created within a network of other identities. For example, a black, upper class cis man and a white, lower class trans man probably have different definitions of “masculinity.” I could never even hope to capture all of the nuances of identity in this short post.

Why does it matter that Nicki Minaj lyrically assaulted trans men and women? There is more at stake here than hurt feelings; this is a life-or-death issue because the assault of trans people is often verbal, physical, and deadly.** At this historical moment in which droves of people across the United States are protesting the murders of innocent black cis men, the injustices
committed against innocent black trans women are largely forgotten.

I’d like to place another name on the table: CeCe McDonald. She is lucky; unlike many trans women who are attacked, she survived to tell her story. Four white people verbally accosted McDonald and several of her friends, all of whom were African American, as they walked by them. McDonald was called

*Islan Nettles, Tiffany Edwards, Brittany Kidd-Stergis, Yaz’min Shancez. All trans women, all murdered, all erased from the narratives of violence against black bodies.*
“nigger” and told that she looked like a “boy dressed like a girl tucking her dick in” (read the full court transcript of McDonald’s case). She tried to walk away but was bashed in the face with a drinking glass and chased down the street; she stabbed her pursuer with scissors and was able to escape.

Do the words that preceded McDonald’s physical assault sound familiar? They should because they speak to the phallocentric policing of gender that Nicki Minaj raps about in “Lookin Ass.” In the case of McDonald, she was not performing black masculinity correctly because she was “tucking her dick in;” she was not being the big-dicked nigger that her white assailants expected her to be. In the case of “Lookin Ass,” Minaj called out the “non-man ass niggas” because they didn’t have dicks at all! There is a racist cultural impetus to connect niggers and niggas with dicks; people who are perceived as black men have been and continue to be reduced to wildly sexual and terrifyingly large phalluses and thus compared to rutting beasts that need to be controlled by white supremacy. The 17th century travel logs of Europeans who went to Africa and the 21st century pornography tropes feature a fascination with and fetishization of the same thing: big black cock.

The lyrical and physical assault of “non-man ass niggas” – trans women who are perceived to be rejecting their penises and trans men who are perceived not to have them – is part and parcel of white supremacy. The words “nigga” and “nigger” police black gender expression: both language the black body as masculine and phallic, following centuries of racist ideology. Thus, to use “nigga”
and “nigger” against trans men and women is to reiterate white supremacist principles. To protest the murders of “real niggas,” black cis men, while ignoring the murders of “non-man ass niggas,” black trans women, is to only partially object to institutionalized racism. The hashtag isn’t #someblacklivesmatter; it’s #blacklivesmatter. Black trans lives and bodies must be included in the fight against white supremacy.

**Author Note #1:** There are some interesting examples of (what I interpret as) queer, self-referential uses of nigga by black women; my current favorite is in Nicki Minaj’s new song “Shanghai.”

**Author Note #2:** I am not trying to conflate the transphobia that black trans men experience with the transmisogyny that black trans women experience. This is merely a segue, facilitated by a reference to popular culture, to a discussion about how transphobia and transmisogyny are embedded in white supremacy.

**Siobhan Vega** is a graduating senior in the Social and Cultural Analysis department whose academic concentrations are Gender and Sexuality Studies and Africana Studies. When she is not dodging questions about her thesis, she can be found yelling about social justice and YAAAAAAAASing about all things femme and queer.
A Souvenir

Alyson Miller
Come and Go: The Experience of China-Born Artists in New York City

Yue Wu

Modern art can be understood as an embodiment of globalization, for it aims to acutely capture the dynamics in the modern world and to reflect problems. The artworks of immigrants directly or indirectly, present the artists’ life experiences as active participants in the globalization, for they are keen and sensitive to the differences between the new environment and their home countries, which usually become their artistic inspirations. At the same time, immigrant artists detect the favors and bias of customers in different areas, and promptly respond to the different tastes, by either adapting to the local trend or moving to other places where their own styles are in the favor of mainstream customers. The goal of this research paper is to analyze one specific group—artists and workers in the art field from China who work and live in New York City. Through case studies of several internationally renowned and several less prominent artists as well as curators, about their educations, careers, and life, we can take a peek of the neoliberal, elitist art field, and the artists and art-related workers’ pathways to success.

With the advent of globalization in the 1970s and 1980s, migrations have taken place within nations and across borders, and people have moved from less developed places to more developed metropolises. Coincidently, most of the artists discussed in this paper moved from China to the U.S. in the 1980s for higher education, as part of the Chinese economic reform movement that
started in 1978. The president of the PRC of that time, Deng Xiaoping, believed that “studying abroad is the most important and efficient way to improve national power” and that government should support “thousands of Chinese students to study in foreign countries to enlarge their horizons, rather than just eight or ten”¹ (Li, “China’s three waves of studying abroad”). In addition to the encouragement of Deng, the permission for students to pursue overseas education on their own expense enabled more students to study abroad. Family and social attitudes are extremely positive and enthusiastic, as the public “regards supporting overseas education as not a choice but a social responsibility”² (Li). Since 1981, students have been able to attend the TOEFL test in China, and the number of TOEFL test takers has increased fast³. Many parents even live frugally and borrow money to support their kids to study abroad. Under this circumstance, many artists also receive scholarships and funds to study in the U.S.

Educational background is a huge factor in the success of artists from China. Among Chinese artists who receive recognition in the U.S. and in China are Ai Wei Wei, Gu Wenda, and Xu Bing, all of whom studied at top universities or colleges in the U.S. They are recognized as “important Avant-garde artists from People’s Republic of China” by Jean Ippolito, Associate Professor at University of Hawaii at Hilo. Ai Weiwei is a Chinese contemporary artist and activist with international reputation. His bronze statues “Circle of Animal Zodiac Heads” were sold for £2,882,500 at Philips art auction on Feb.22, 2015 (Zhan, “News: Ai Weiwei’s Animal Heads sold over 288”). He was born in 1957 and came to
New York right after he graduated from Beijing Film Academy, and studied at Parsons School of Design and the Art Students League of New York. He lived in New York from 1981 to 1993, and returned to China because of his father’s illness. Another well-known contemporary artist from China, Gu Wenda, is famous for incorporating human hair into traditional Chinese calligraphy. Gu was born in 1955 and came to the United States with a student visa in 1987, at the age of 32. Now he lives in Brooklyn Heights and maintains studios in Shanghai and Xi'an in China. Xu Bing, another Chinese artists born in 1955 in Chongqing, moved to the States when he received the invitation from University of Wisconsin-Madison as Honorary Fellow in 1990, and pursued Master of Fine Art at The University of South Dakota in 1992, and also received Ph.D from Columbia University in 2010. Xu’s most famous piece “Book from the Sky” is an installation consisting of more than 4000 hand-carved Chinese characters, which has been displayed in Japan, Australia and New York. The three artists were born around the same year and received higher education in the U.S. at their late twenties and early thirties, the “golden age” for career development. Ai, Gu and Xu’s success in the U.S. cannot be explained solely by their talent and virtuosity; their opportunities to study and stay in the U.S. should also be taken into account.

Similarly, successful and famous China-born women in the western art world mostly have western educational backgrounds, and their academic achievements are usually more prominent than their male counterparts. For example, Tian Jiaolong is the head of the acclaimed Chinese Art Department at the Asian Art Museum in
San Francisco and the chairman of the Anthropology Department at Bishop Museum. She earned her Ph. D. from Harvard University in 2003. Another example is Cai Jinqing, currently the President of Christie’s China, a prominent international auction house. She received her bachelor degree at Wellesley University in 1989 and a master’s degree at Princeton University in 1993. Pearl Lam, on the other hand, received western education at a younger age. She was sent away to study in the United States and the United Kingdom at age eleven and later became owner of the Pearl Lam Galleries. She also attended the University of Buckingham in England. Notably, Lam is the daughter of Lim Por-yen, a Hong Kong real-estate tycoon and founder of the Lai Sun Group. Her family’s wealth and social status could be inseparable factors to her success. The three women’s experience in top universities in the U.S. may suggest that the museums and other art institutes in U.S. accept and promote immigrants who have the same ideology that is formed through western education.

Besides Western education, auction is a shortcut for Chinese artists to reach international popularity. Auction records at Sotheby’s and Christie’s, both famous auction houses, the former founded in the U.S. while the latter in London, are important criterion of artists’ success. The renowned Chinese artists, Chen Yifei, was the first to break the auction record of Chinese artists and elevated the price of Chinese artists’ works in the following decade. “Chen was the first Chinese artists who conquers the Western art world the western media, oil painting” (Zhang, Yu). He came to the U.S. in 1980 to study art at Hunter College and
graduated with a Master’s degree in Art, and later he returned and settled in Shanghai in 1990 to “build his name as [a] businessman” (Shenzhen Daily). Other Chinese artists like Zeng Fanzhi and Zhang Xiaogang also reach international recognition from auction. Zeng’s oil painting “Mask Series 1996 No. 6” was sold by Christie’s at HK$75,367,500 (USD$9,724,531), in May 2008; Zhang’s oil painting “Big Family No.3” was sold in the same year in April at 94,200,000 HKD (USD$12,154,454) by Sotheby’s. The styles of Zeng and Zhang are both heavily influenced by Western artists: Zeng is inspired by the German Expressionism, while Zhang is fond of Vincent van Gogh and John Miller. Even though both of them don’t have formal education from the West, they self-study the Western art, which make their artworks favorable in the international market.

However, without formal or informal education from the West, Chinese artists seem to face more difficulties in their careers in the U.S. Undesired education and ideology from the communist China may impede distinguished contemporary Chinese artists from receiving national recognition in the U.S. Mainstream. American museums’ celebration of certain anti-communist artists may be a cultural project continued from the Cold War era, when, for example, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) intentionally promoted abstract expressionist artists like Jackson Pollock to influence communist artists and intellectuals overseas (Cockcroft). During the early 2010s, contemporary Chinese art, including photography, exploded on the international art scene and has been the subject of numerous gallery shows, monographs, and museum
exhibitions in New York and elsewhere. However, the recently exhibited works have one similar subject: views that are anti-Chinese or anti-Communist. The homogenous subject matter forms a stark contrast to previous exhibitions in 1990s, when Chinese artists like Chen Yifei, Xu Beihong and others received international recognition for their virtuosity rather than their subject matter. Landscape paintings, historical paintings and portraits that flourished in 1990s are rarely found in major exhibitions now.

According to a report by Helen Stoilas, the Museum of Modern Art in New York acquired twenty-eight photographs by eleven contemporary Chinese artists in 2008, including Ai Weiwei, Rong Rong, Huang Yan and Sheng Qi. All of these artists are avant-garde artists who use their works to satirize either Communism or China. For example, Sheng Qi’s “My Left Hand: Me” (2000) shows the artist holding a childhood photo of himself with a hand missing the pinky finger. Sheng Qi severed the finger himself following the massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and then left China for a decade. This work expresses his anger towards the Communist Party of China, and this discontent appears to be embraced by MOMA. If Shen Qi is a single case, it may be unfair to suggest that influential museums in U.S. intentionally favor anti-China artists. However, it seem that nearly all the works of the four artists unanimously convey the same ideology as “My Left Hand: Me”.

This assumption has historical support and we can see many examples of Western nations using art as propaganda. In the Cold War era, Eva Cockcroft stresses the role of art in politics in the
article “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War”. She argues that “the political relationship between Abstract Expressionism and the cold war can be clearly perceived through the international programs MOMA, [which is] a Rockefeller dominated institution…” (Cockcroft 83). Mainstream museums’ promotion of certain artists and art genre is based then not only on the aesthetic or historic value of the art, but also on the political influence. Besides, paintings, performances and theatrical art are also utilized for similar purposes. In Nights Out, historian Judith Walkowitz depicts an interpretive dancer, Maud Allen, and her impact on World War One. Allen’s original, enthusiastic and seductive dance made her “a superior embodiment of Anglo-Saxonism, a daughter of Greater Britain” (Walkowitz 64). The theatre impresario J.T. Grein “intended to export the production [of Allan] to neutral nations as a war aim, to enhance British intellectual prestige” (Walkowitz 68). However, Grein’s strategy backfired, resulting in the vicious attack from The Vigilante, a right-wing press, which condemned British audience’s taste for Allen’s performance as the “Cult of the Clitoris” (Walkowitz 68). The examples of Pollock and Allan support the claim that political stances have close relationship to arts.

In fact, the western scheme affects some artists in China and their choices of subject, because they believe that creating anti-communist art is an easier way to cater to the international market. In the 798 Art Zone, an art district in Chaoyang District, Beijing, cutting edge artists respond to their counterparts in the U.S. and create works of similar subjects. For example, a local artist at 798,
Sui Jianguo's enormous concrete sculpture "Mao's Right Hand" and hollow sculpture “Mao suit” are examples of an ironic reflections on Maoism and Communism. The prominent Maoist slogans on the arches also serves as a form of sarcasm. Through history, art is frequently used as propaganda tools, so the preference of anti-communist artists may be the recent political scheme of the U.S.

Beyond the political aspects, China-born artists also experience racial discrimination which limits their success in New York. To probe the discrimination in its various forms, I draw from my own research by interviewing three less prominent artists from China about their personal experiences as artists in New York City. In my interviews, I asked the artists about their income conditions, experiences of discrimination, and their anticipation of future migration patterns. My first interviewee was Ke Baoming, a male artist who graduated from and taught at Hunan Academy of Fine Art in China, and now lives in Queens, New York. According to him, he and his artist friends make a living by selling paintings. They usually sell a painting for 2,000-3,000 dollars, and a printed work for 50 dollars. Most of the time, they are able to sell two to three paintings during one show, though sometimes no clients buy their works. He believes that the popularity is region-based, for people living in different areas have different taste for style. Ke is an expert in realism, a genre that he found less popular in New York, but is welcomed in Philadelphia and Boston. However, Ke has a strong desire to go back and develop his career in China, where he believes more opportunities and better prices are
available, because the rich in global cities like Beijing and Shanghai have become increasingly interested in art and art investment in the recent decade. Unlike the economic bubble in China’s art market, the art market in the U.S. is more mature and the prices are stable. Ke’s paintings are now worth 5000-6000 dollars each in the art market in China, which doubles the price in the U.S. Ke told me that twenty years ago when he owned a car in the U.S., most people in China only rode bikes; however, in recent years his relatives and friends in China can afford sports cars and designer clothes, while his living standard does not improve much. Therefore, now Ke spends at least three months traveling to different cities in China to sell his works.

Among the less prominent artists, female Chinese artists have more difficulties finding decent art-related jobs, and only a few were able to reach fame. Much literature has been published concerning the discrimination of immigrants and women, or both. The sociologist Saskia Sassen, for example, shows migrant women’s disadvantage in jobs in her book, *Globalization and Its Discontents*. She states that “female migrants are characterized by a double disadvantage, one of sex and one of class” (115). My research findings are in accord with some parts of the Sassen’s work, for example, the fact that immigrant women tend to earn lower salaries.

In the interviews, I noticed that immigrant women gave up their study or work and migrated with their husbands or boyfriends. As Sassen points out, “many of these women may become domestic or international migrants as a function of their
husbands or their families’ migration” (130). Women’s careers are usually not taken into account when their male partners move to a new environment. Ke’s wife used to be an artist in Hunan, China, but when she moved to New York City with her husband, she abandoned her career as an artist and now works as a clerk in the supermarket. Another woman who used to work in the art field experienced the same transition. Yanzi, who used to work as an auctioneer in Hangzhou, China, gave up the opportunity to go to graduate school when she moved to NYC with her boyfriend. She used to work at auction houses and usually earned 10,000 RMB (USD$180) in one auction, which usually lasts less than two hours. Her old job gave her flexible time and great sense of self-achievement. However, not able to speak English fluently, now she works a part-time job teaching young kids painting and drawing in Chinatown, on weekends, for a salary of eighteen dollars per hour. To make ends meet and follow the neoliberal idea of a flexible and hard worker, she sometimes works in a Chinese restaurant washing dishes, making 10 dollars per hour. In the essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, Linda Nichlin states that “men who yearn to fulfill themselves through what are often termed feminine artistic interests can find themselves as painters or sculptors, rather than as volunteer museum aides or part-time ceramists, as their female counterparts so often end up doing” (6). This is true for Ke’s wife and Yanzi, both of whom have profound professional knowledge and skills, but are not able to find a decent job in the art field. Yanzi and Ke’s wife are subjected to the white male-dominant society where they cannot find jobs that match
their talents. Furthermore, being migrant women, their lack of fluency in English prevents them from working outside Chinatown and thus limits their work opportunities. Therefore, they receive considerably lower salaries in comparison to U.S. born (white) women.

As we see from these interviews and analyses, customers, from private collectors to national museums, treatment of the works of artists from China in the U.S. reflects their existing bias and discrimination based on the artists’ nationality, gender, educational background and political beliefs. Discrimination towards immigrant artists exists in many forms. For one, the prices of their works are not competitive in the market compared to native artists. Furthermore, most women artists can hardly make a living, so they may need to do something totally unrelated to support themselves. Museums and galleries favor Chinese artists who have political views that they agree with in order to promote a certain ideology. However, since all of the artists I have mentioned in this essay work in China and in the U.S., this duality of work might serve as one solution for them to resist the social, political, and cultural injustice within the U.S and still make a successful living as artists.

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Endnotes

1 Translated by writer. The original text is “我贊成留學生的數量要增大”， “這是五年內快見成效，提高我國水平的重要方法之一。要成千成萬地派，不是隻派十個八個” (Deng Xiaoping).

2 Translated by writer. The original text is “尤其是1980年之后，容許自費出國留學，大大激發了全社會支持留學教育的積極性，使留學由單純的教育行為轉化成一種社會行為” (Li Xisuo).

3 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), is designed for non-native English language speakers wishing to enroll in U.S. universities.


Independent, Senegal

Yasmine Kattan
To Pee or Not to Pee:  
Gender, Disability, and the Politics of the Bathroom  
Chelsea Meacham

In few spaces are we more vulnerable than we are in the bathroom. However, it is not simply because of the taboo bodily functions that take place here that it is often the site of much turmoil. Legal and cultural rules dictate our access to and behavior within restrooms, with severe repercussions when broken. The bathroom can be seen as a site of discipline and repression, and bodies that appear to break established rules are often subject to further discipline. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault writes, “we must show that punitive measures are not simply ‘negative’ mechanisms that make it possible to repress, to prevent, to exclude, to eliminate; but that they are linked to a whole series of positive and useful effects which it is their task to support.”¹ All prohibitive actions are simultaneously productive—that is, performative. As a disciplinary site, the restroom most profoundly affects non-normative subjects, including transgender and gender nonconforming individuals and people with disabilities. The rules regarding bathrooms, whether maintained or subverted, speak to us as subjects about who we are when we enter the bathroom, and who we can be once inside.

Perhaps one of the earliest contexts in which we encounter the bathroom as a site of discipline is in school. Schools train us in navigating the social sphere as much as the academic and “restrooms are an important part of our social education.”² In
“Transgender Youth and Access to Gendered Spaces in Education,” an unsigned author unpacks the conflict surrounding transgender students’ access to sex-segregated bathrooms in schools, outlining various regulatory measures that have been taken at state- and school-levels, as well as the backlash they often entail. The author argues for students’ right to “perform basic human functions in spaces that reflect their gender identity,” advocating laws that honor this such as California’s AB 1266. However, such laws, although preferable to the alternative, do not completely eliminate the anxieties and tensions experienced within and around bathrooms by students who identify as transgender. Gaining access to the desired restroom is only half the battle; once inside, students are subject to new forms of discipline. Because restrooms are shared and social spaces, transgender students face the challenge of proving that they “belong” in the chosen restroom. As Foucault writes, “[t]he exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation.” Transgender students are accountable to the other students that occupy the restroom and may face negative repercussions in situations in which they do not “pass,” including harassment and even assault.

The presence of transgender students in public school restrooms has sparked many debates about the possible repercussions of such regulation. A father argued that California’s AB 1266 “could lead to an increase in sexual assault and a decrease in overall educational outcomes” for students. The ambiguity of his statement calls attention to which bodies are being valued inside these restrooms—those who are seen as rightfully “owning” the
space. His concern, although not explicitly stated, is likely not for the safety of transgender students themselves, who are far more likely to experience sexual harassment in the bathrooms to which they are confined without such regulatory measures. His belief that allowing transgender students more flexible access to their preferred restrooms will lead to increased incidents of “sexual assault” is deeply rooted in the assumption that transgender females are “really” males, and vice versa, who will be tempted to sexually harass their “opposite”-gender peers within the vulnerable space of the bathroom.

Furthermore, some parents have also expressed fear that allowing students to use their preferred restrooms will encourage cisgender students to abuse these policies in order to access bathrooms that do not necessarily align with their gender identity. However, this “free-for-all” bathroom anarchy is highly unlikely, as social rules govern bathroom use as much as official regulation, if not more so. The social repercussions to be suffered by entering the “wrong” bathroom far outweigh the excitement of “a peek at the opposite sex’s bathroom.” A male identifying student who chooses to enter the girls’ bathroom, even ostensibly for the purposes of investigation and penetration of a mysterious and off-limits space, will likely have to answer to taunting and questioning from his peers.

Perhaps the fact that tensions still exist when transgender students gain access to their preferred bathrooms reflects a larger issue with the segregation of bathrooms based on gender. As the author of “Transgender Youth” notes, “[j]ust because a child does
not identify as a boy...that does not mean the child identifies as a girl—and presenting the child with only boys’ and girls’ restrooms means that the child may be shoehorned into an identity that does not quite fit.”9 The agency that students gain when they are permitted to use their preferred restrooms still has its firm limitations. Even an alternative option, such as using “gender-neutral bathrooms in the principal’s or nurse’s offices,” does not solve this issue, as transgender students in this scenario are further isolated from the social world that is the public school bathroom.10 Opting for a gender-neutral bathroom in the presence of gender-segregated bathrooms does not necessarily reflect the freedom not to make a choice at all, but rather a third choice with its own implications in terms of gender identity. Bathrooms as disciplinary sites are unavoidable in a world of gender-segregated bathrooms. As long as there are gendered restrooms, there will be identities to be assumed by entering—or not entering—them.

Mary Anne Case reiterates this point in her piece “Why Not Abolish Laws of Urinary Segregation?”: “walking into a toilet segregated by sex requires that each of us in effect self-segregate by hanging a gendered sign on ourselves.”11 Case presents a potential solution to this dilemma, arguing that the most egalitarian restroom organization would be the replacement of gender-segregated bathrooms with single-person unisex facilities. Such a system would have implications not only in terms of sex and gender, but also in terms of disability status. In “Pissing without Pity,” David Serlin discusses the myriad issues public bathrooms present for people with disabilities. In addition to the potential physical
difficulties of navigating public restrooms, people with disabilities also face social stigma associated with using the restroom—stigma that often operates in terms of gender. He explains, “because of the freedom traditionally accorded to the male, heterosexual body in the public sphere, any body that requires some form of special accommodation or has particular needs is feminized as dependent.”

Public restrooms are often separated into “Men’s,” “Women’s,” and “Handicap,” erasing gender for those who opt for the “Handicap” restroom and “homogenizing the disabled as toilet users.” Paradoxically, people with disabilities are simultaneously feminized and stripped of gender altogether. Access to the restroom has implications that reach far beyond the restroom itself; for the disabled, restrooms act as a punitive force that continuously reinforces exclusion from the public sphere.

Perhaps the most symbolic of all restroom phenomena in terms of gender and disability status is the urinal, which Serlin describes as the “totem of masculinity.” The performative act of using the urinal physically and symbolically affirms the user’s masculinity. The presence and role of the urinal in men’s rooms raises many questions—does everyone who uses the men’s room have a penis? Can everyone who uses the men’s room use a urinal? Is someone who can’t use a urinal, regardless of genitals, still a man? Case suggests that her democratic single-stall restrooms should contain urinals in addition to toilets for economic and environmental reasons—how would the role of the urinal shift in such an environment? Does it matter if an individual uses a urinal if no one else has witnessed the act?
The introduction of unisex, handicap-accessible, single-person restrooms would dramatically transform the social aspect of the restroom, as all bathroom activities would now be done “in complete privacy.” This would eliminate some of the tension that surrounds the restroom as a simultaneously public and private space. However, this tension is further complicated when we consider that for many of those who experience particular stigma around restrooms—transgender individuals and people with disabilities—“accessing the women’s or men’s room [is] a way of entering the social, not retreating from it.” When transgender and disabled individuals are able to access their restrooms of choice in a way that feels authentic and unrestricted, the restroom acts not as a punitive force but as a valuable tool. Perhaps the ability to assume identities through our selection of restrooms is not a problem to be solved in itself, but a phenomenon which, under certain conditions, can facilitate the construction of identities in a way that is considered socially legible and legitimate.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains that “the body is…directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.” The bathroom is riddled with such “signs” and “ceremonies;” our bodies, already subject to prior “training” and “torture,” are further “marked” the moment we enter the restroom. Normative gender and embodiment are constantly produced and re-produced through the disciplinary site of the restroom. From our decisions regarding which restroom to use, to the various acts we perform within them,
our choices and abilities regarding restrooms are a result of the various overt and covert forms of discipline that operate within it—and within us. Foucault later writes, “[t]hus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience).”18 The bodies of transgender individuals and of those with disabilities, however, fail to become “docile” bodies—bodies that “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.”19 This “failure” can be oppressive or subversive, as bodies systematically excluded from certain bathrooms gain access to those spaces.

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Endnotes

3 Ibid., 1737.
5 “Transgender Youth,” 1729.
6 Ibid.
7 “Transgender Youth,” 1742.
8 Ibid., 1743.
9 Ibid., 1744.
10 Ibid., 1743.
13 Ibid., 180.
14 Ibid., 176.
18 Ibid., 138.
19 Ibid., 136.
The Little Mermaid

Alyson Miller
Feminism as a Marketing Tool: How Hollywood, the Music Industry, and Wall Street are Making Money off Empowering Women
Alison Del Handel

Section I: Introduction

For many millennials and those who market to them, female empowerment is now considered sexy. From Beyoncé and Katniss, to giving micro loans to women in the global south, female empowerment has become all the rage during the past several decades. The feminist movement, which was once scoffed at by the mainstream, is beginning to be seen as a marketing tool by mainstream institutions. But this is not your grandmother or mother’s feminism. It is a hybrid of sorts. Today’s feminism is saturated with neo-feminism and neoliberalist values. In the pop culture sphere this involves embracing traditionally feminine characteristics and consumer culture as a form of empowerment; and in the development sphere it involves pushing a neo-liberalist agenda with women at the helm.

In this paper I will argue this current form of feminism is less about actual female empowerment and more about the creation of capitol, particularly in Hollywood, the music industry, and the global development field. I also discuss how millennials’ feminism is reflected in the three fields. And I address the issues that second-wave feminist scholars take with it. Second-wave feminism denotes the period of feminist activity beginning in the early 1960s up until the early 1980s. Unlike their predecessors who
mostly concerned themselves with suffrage, second-wave feminists broadened the debate about gender to a wide range of topics: sexuality, family, the workplace, and reproductive rights.

In the current moment, feminism and female empowerment are being capitalized on more than ever before, but is this a good thing? Yes, the messages, theories, and ideas of feminism are being brought to the main stage of American culture, but they often have less to do with female empowerment than the revenue they create.

**Section II: Hollywood**

In her book, *Neo-feminist Cinema: Girly Films, Chick Flicks and Consumer Culture*, Hilary Radner discusses a recent development of empowerment that is marked by self improvement through cultivating one’s personal style and look and consuming goods to do so. She describes this phenomenon as “neo-feminism.” The sociologist Robert Goldman coined the term in 1992 to describe the ways in which advertisers suggested in the 1970s and 1980s that, “control and ownership over one’s body/face/self, accomplished through the right acquisitions, can maximize one’s value at both work and home.” (Goldman & Papson)² Take a film like *The Devil Wears Prada*. The film tells the story of a naive post-grad woman, named Andy, who moves to New York and scores a job as the assistant to one of the city's biggest magazine editors, the ruthless and cynical Miranda Priestly. Over the course of the film Miranda berates her and beats her down for no particular reason. It is only when Andy gives herself a make-over to resemble her high
fashion counterparts does she gain Miranda’s respect and rise in the ranks of the magazine. Andy does not do it by using her resourcefulness, creativity, or general knowledge. Her accomplishments are merely a jumping off point from her appearance. Yet this film grossed $326,551,094 in ticket sales. This is not an occurrence isolated to *The Devil Wears Prada* though. It can be seen all across the genre known as “chick flicks” or films marketed specifically to women. This phenomenon in film of women finding empowerment in heteronormative appearances, “underlines the importance of the woman and the feminine as a source of identification and pleasure for women audiences.” (Radner 195) It deeply reflects what the majority of young women, specifically millennials, associate with empowerment.

Feminism is being rewritten by millennials and it is deeply intertwined with consumer culture and neo-liberalism. Radner elaborates on the relationship between chick flics and neo-liberalism and writes that, “girly films, as an expression of neo-feminism, do not situate themselves against feminism; rather, they are indifferent to the kinds of social and political concerns that set feminists apart from the general group of female strivers seeking to achieve the ideals of neo-liberalism....Neo-feminism, unlike feminism itself, was compatible with the demands for synergy within Conglomerate Hollywood. Feminism in contrast, produced a discourse that was both hostile to, and critical of, consumer culture and its ancillary industries.” (Radner 192 & 196) Neo-feminism is essentially Hollywood’s dream. They get very little backlash, because it appears that the women in their films are
empowered individuals. They do not alienate their audiences by explicitly having these characters identify or appear as stereotypically feminist. Those sorts of characters have their place in the independent film scene, but not mainstream Hollywood.

Sherry Ortner in her ethnography, *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream*, discusses how many female writers and directors have found a platform for these characters and stories in the independent film scene. Usually these women cannot get their picture picked up by a major studio because the studio is not sure if it will get its budget and marketing money back in ticket sales. A blatantly complicated feminist character at the helm of a Hollywood picture is much more risky than a less blatant neo-feminist one. Also, “because the neo-feminist paradigm encourages and reinforces consumer culture practices, it constitutes a very attractive—and often exploited—version of feminine identity, from the perspective of Hollywood.” (Radner 8) Film studios can make even more money through product placement and merchandise that matches up with their films, thereby translating the consumer culture that runs rampant through their films into real life revenue.

A recent phenomenon in Hollywood is women anchoring blockbuster tent pole films. The traditional face of a blockbuster film was a hyper masculine man shooting a gun or a super hero (the embodiment of traditional American masculinity) chasing down bad guys. These franchises represent millions of dollars in revenue, but studios are pumping out more female focused mega
movies and are fighting to do so. Over the past year, female protagonists anchored some of the top grossing films in the world. *Gravity*, *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, *Maleficent*, and *Frozen* took in a combined three point six billion dollars worldwide. There are more women leading movies than ever and there are plans for many more to come. The top studios in Hollywood battled it out over the rights to the *Wonder Woman* story with Warner Brothers finally winning out. What is the reason for this shift though?

In his article, *From Now On, Women Save the World: Hollywood Has Realized That Movies Starring Women Can Make Money*, Brooks Barnes argues that, “All the estrogen is not rolling through Hollywood because there are more women than ever in senior studio jobs... studios are not spending hundreds of millions of dollars to make tent pole movies with female protagonists because cries of neglect have finally soaked in...the shift is happening because female ticket buyers — finally given the opportunity — have shown studios the big money.” (Barnes) Fifty two percent of the movie ticket buyers in this country are female. So naturally, they would be attracted to films with a titular character they could relate to. The influx of films anchored by powerful three-dimensional women is not entirely because of changing attitudes about gender in this country. It is because producers and studio heads realize that these films make just as much, if not more, money than films anchored by male protagonists. Feminism in mainstream Hollywood has very little to do with empowering women and much more to do with box office sales. So the shift is a completely capitol based one as it is in popular music.
Section III: The Music Industry and Specifically Beyoncé

Traditionally, female singers and performers have been sexy for the male gaze. It had next to nothing to do with sexual empowerment or the women having control of their bodies. The age-old adage, “Sex sells” was largely at play. Enter Beyoncé. The newly enlightened Beyoncé, that is. Universally loved, virtually unquestioned, and “flawless”, the 33-year-old entertainer seems to debunk every feminist stereotype ever uttered in mainstream America. She enjoys record-breaking career success, has taken the reigns of a multimillion-dollar empire in a male-run industry, embraced her sexuality, cultivated a happy marriage, became a mother, and all while being an African-American woman. Because of all of this, she’s speaking to the masses in a way that has previously been unheard of and she has become an extremely influential voice in a movement that has a problematic history when it comes to inclusion.

The word, “feminist” has an incredibly complicated past and a certain amount of stigma attached to it, but here is one of the most powerful and well-known female celebrities in the world, Beyoncé, reclaiming it. As far as feminist endorsements go this was, for lack of better words, the Holy Grail. Some feminist scholars have condemned Beyoncé’s brand of feminism and have cited her use of revealing costumes, sexually charged dance moves, and lyrics centered on love and relationships as signs of her non-feminist ways. But all of these things echo a trend in third-wave feminism
that involves, “sexual availability, represented by images initially addressing a male viewer...[being] rewritten as a form of empowerment (Radner 7).” Many second-wave feminists denounce this aspect of third-wave feminism because one of their principle beliefs was that popular culture and imagery was inherently sexist. But as Jessica Bennett points out in her article *How to Reclaim the F-Word? Just Call Beyoncé*, “You don’t have to like the way Beyoncé writhes around in that leotard ... but whether you like it or not, she’s accomplished what feminists have long struggled to do: She’s reached the masses.” (Bennett)

Consequently, many millennials see her as a feminist icon of their generation.

Maureen O’Conner is particularly taken aback by the boldness of Beyoncé’s gender politics in her article, *Beyoncé is a Feminist, I Guess*. She argues that Beyoncé is an outlier in her field because, “women who have a vested interest in being popular — i.e., celebrities — are still afraid of the word "feminism." Some fear alienating men...Others object to negative associations...the militant drive and sort of the chip on the shoulder connected to the "negative word." (O’Conner) She and many other cultural scholars were shocked that Beyoncé would latch onto such a polarizing word and completely embrace it. On paper it seems like an awful idea. A well-liked female pop star is going to align herself with an incredibly contested movement and may or may not estrange a good portion of her fan base. Yet somehow when she made this move, she was selling more records and being talked about more
than ever. Beyoncé has made herself an anomaly among her fellow female pop stars because she, “speaks the language of feminism so publicly...in a climate where high-profile mainstream female entertainers often explicitly reject the very word.” (Harris)7 Beyoncé has set herself apart from her fellow female performers by embracing feminism and even advocating it. She was even bold enough to use feminist language and imagery in her recent performances and in her On the Run tour. When she was promoting the tour at the MTV Music Video Awards, a giant “FEMINIST” sign blazed from behind her silhouette. The On the Run Tour ended up grossing over a hundred million dollars in revenue. It seems that feminism does sell, but it is worth inquiring whether these are truly Beyoncé’s gender politics or if this is merely, “corporate entertainment “feminism” [that is] added to get people talking and thus sell more records.” (McKenzie 41)8 Which brings up the question, where do Beyoncé’s motivations lie? Beyoncé’s public life, from the first photos of daughter’s face to her gender politics, appears choreographed and manicured. She exerts considerable control over her public image, more so than any other female celebrity, and one starts to wonder how much of it is reality. Does Beyoncé truly believe what she projects to her audience? Or does she recognize the profits it will generate? Like most pop stars, her look and persona was constantly evolving throughout her career. Her current persona is all about her empowerment as a woman. Has she finally reached the level of
fame where she can reveal her true self or is she reinventing herself to suit the times? Hossain questions how “real” Beyoncé’s supposed feminism is and points out the possibility that Beyoncé may be, “just taking advantage of a platform her fans gave her...Is Beyoncé only a feminist when it comes to selling her image, and the records they accompany? Is Beyoncé a fake feminist?” (Hossain) It’s hard to say, but one thing that can’t be denied is that at this point in her career, Beyoncé is at the top of her game financially.

Section IV: The Development Field

The concept of investing in women and girls has become a global phenomenon. “The Girl as human capital has become the darling of philanthrocapitalism.” (Murphy) Everywhere you look NGOs and non-profits are calling on people to donate to or invest in a third world woman or girl. You can even donate a dollar to a girl when you check out at the supermarket. In her article, The Girl: Mergers of Feminism and Finance in Neoliberal Times, Murphy discusses the figure of the radicalized third-world “girl” and how she has come to represent the face of transnational rescue and investment. She specifically targets a campaign called, The Girl Effect.

The concept of The Girl Effect is relatively simple: donors support a girl’s (usually African or Middle Easterners) education until she graduates high school and, according to The Girl Effect website, said girl will not fall into the cycle of poverty that has plagued her family and community. However, some experts in the
global development field have called the effectiveness of *The Girl Effect* into question. These skeptics have condemned the campaign for playing up gender stereotypes of women and girls as natural caregivers and thus shutting out groups of women who do not fit into these stereotypes. Also, many critics have accused the campaign of sidelining questions of structural inequality and power imbalance. Furthermore, the campaign lays out only two paths for girls in the global south; one of education, mobilization, entrepreneurship and one of child marriage, poverty, and HIV. This myopic view of girls in the global south encourages Western stereotypes of the victimized and helpless brown girl and shuts out other paths of life for these girls. It also takes an overly simplistic approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality. The campaign promotes a very neoliberal form of development because it is entirely based on individual girls climbing their way up the economic and social ladder within their communities. It is up to the individual girl to do the steps laid out by *The Girl Effect* and take the education *The Girl Effect* has given her to be entrepreneurial and innovative. Unfortunately this layout initiates many individual projects that do not link together to bring substantial and long lasting change for girls or their communities.

*The Girl Effect* falls in line with neoliberalist western values, which is why many prolific western companies and foundations support it. This “girl” that Nike asks its donors to support, represents an investment, but this radicalized third-world “girl” has come to represent the face of transnational rescue and investment. She is set up to resemble a real estate venture that will capitalize on
the rate of return once the neighborhood is gentrified. The neighborhood in this case, being the global south. The Girl Effect represents the, “bonds between Western liberal feminisms and financial logics.” (Murphy) The global north wants to aid the global south, but they also are invariably tied to a western capitalist tradition that pushes for individual gain versus societal gain. This does not translate well in the global south where masses of people find themselves well below the international poverty line. This campaign has a female empowerment agenda. There is no denying that, but it is motivated out of finance just as much as it is motivated out of feminism. While it is good that The Girl Effect is pushing for the empowerment of women and girls, it seems unrealistic to place the burden of development on their shoulders. Yes, conceivably there could be a girl out there who, with The Girl Effect’s support, pulls herself and her community out of poverty. But wouldn’t it be more sensible to mobilize her entire community? Wouldn’t there be a better chance for widespread and lasting change? I would argue yes.

Hester Eisenstein makes similar claims about women in the global south being the next big terrain for investment in a chapter of her book called, In the Global South: Women Replace Development11. Eisenstein argues that global capitalism has been pushed forward by the international feminist agenda. The needs of women in the global south were brought to the international community’s attention and were actually taken into account. “Gender as a category has become ubiquitous in the development literature.” (Eisenstein 135) Global development is no longer just
about vaccines, clean water, and mosquito nets, but financially empowering women. Eisenstein worries about this trend though. Firstly, many of these NGOs and non-profits portray women in global south as helpless, abused, burdened by children, and in need of saving for the sake of marketing to the west, a place that predominately associates women in the global south with this imagery. This encourages negative stereotypes and shuts out any notion that grass-root movements could be just as effective, if not more effective than international ones. Secondly, Eisenstein senses that many investors feel that focusing on encouraging women’s leadership will eliminate poverty, versus creating and stimulating an economy that will suit the people’s needs. Yes, women should hold power and leadership positions, but they shouldn’t become a quick and easy investment either. For a country to be pulled out of poverty, everyone needs to participate, not just women who are backed by NGOs and foreign investors. It’s time to stop asking what for women and girls can do for development and start asking what can development do for women and girls.

In her essay, *Neoliberalism, Gender, and Global Governance* Penny Griffin discusses the role of the World Bank and how, similar to so many of these campaigns that want to help women, actually forces them into a heteronormative framework. The World Bank is an intrinsically gendered global powerhouse and to make sense of the world around it, the Bank “depleys certain assumptions, meanings, tropes, and practices.” (Griffin 4) This makes it very difficult for women outside the norm to benefit from foreign investment, because they are not as safe as a woman or a
girl who fits into the heteronormative framework that the World Bank pushes. Lesbians, trans-women, or even just unmarried women have a much more difficult time finding people who are willing to invest in them in any type of way than their counterparts who fit into the norm. Feminism is not exclusive to one type of woman, but it is starting to become so in the global financial world.

Section V: Millenial Feminism

Feminism is being rewritten by millennials and many second-wave feminists take issue with it. The common thought process is that today’s young women take for granted all that the women before them did. Angela McRobbie, for instance believes that the characteristics of third-wave feminism undermine potential inter-generational solidarities between and among women of different generations. She feels that the current generation’s feminism sees her generation’s as, to put it crudely, embittered, passé, and the territory of ancient, furry, man-hating lesbians. Today’s feminists do not identify with many of the characteristics of the last generations feminists and in fact specifically reject some of them. Millennials lash out at their predecessors and accuse them of forcing their own ideals onto the current generation. Speaking as a millennial, Eliana Dockterman writes in her essay Flawless: 5 Lessons in Modern Feminisms from Beyoncé, “Why should my generation adopt the traditional “a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle” version of feminism? Even as modern day pundits like Hanna Rosin, Maureen Dowd and Sheryl Sandberg have picked up the baton, speculating about the “end of men” and the
perils of letting your career be derailed by family.” (Dockterman) Women today do not see the issue with embracing and flaunting their femininity and their desire for male companionship.

Millennial feminists are not entirely emancipated from their predecessors though. Both feminisms have arisen from the same social conditions as the feminisms that preceded it and even share some of the same ambitions. Both advocate financial autonomy for women, but the two have very different goals. Ortner describes it as, “younger women today have both incorporated the fruits of the earlier (“second wave”) feminist movement and rejected the idea of, or the necessity for, continuing to pursue feminist goals.” The goals of millennial feminism do not parallel those of the second-wave feminists. They correspond to the individualistic and rationalist agenda perpetrated by neoliberalism. This feminism focuses on, “choices, the individual, and individual fulfillment.” Whereas previous feminisms were much more community driven. Consequently, there is a certain amount of tension between the two generations. McRobbie condemns it all as, “pro-capitalist femininity-focused repertoire...[that] plays directly into the hands of corporate consumer culture eager to tap into this market on the basis of young women’s rising incomes.”

She argues that the constant appropriation of “girlie” in popular culture belittles the political strategy of re-signification and degrades an older generation of feminists. It’s also frustrating for some second-wave feminists because the hybrid form of feminism that so many millennials are perpetrating can be seen across so many spaces including, but not limited to, mainstream American
cinema, the music industry, and international development culture. Many of the second-wave feminists see their feminism as dead or on the verge of being completely swallowed into the new one.

**Section VI: Conclusion**

Women have a long way to go, but things appear to be looking up. There are more complex multi-dimensional female characters than ever before. Although the ones in mainstream cinema tend to find empowerment in consumerism and neoliberalism versus true feminist values and tropes. In the music industry, prolific female figures like Beyoncé are starting to publically speak about the struggles of being a woman in a male-run industry. Although its difficult to ascertain if they are doing this because they truly believe it or if they are trying to get people to buy their product. In the international development sphere, pulling women out of poverty in the global south has become a large priority of NGOs and non-profits. While it is good that these campaigns are pushing for the empowerment of women and girls, it seems unrealistic to place the burden of development on their shoulders. Is all the shouting about empowering women across so many spheres really for the benefit of women and girls though? Or has the world market merely transformed feminism into a tool for capital like so many second-wave feminists are claiming? On one hand, movements change over time. They keep some old ideals take on new ones and leave a few behind. On the other, marketing is a more powerful and more prevalent tool than ever. So is this current form of feminism the product of millennials’ wants and
desires, or is it the product of the marketing executives? Only time will tell.

Endnotes

so all this time i was sitting on a nail

Gabriel Bamgbose

i was small
i know nothing about nothing
booda would always call me
to come and take sweet
in his dark room
i would lick the sweet
and he would quip
he wanted to make me feel
something sweeter
he would carry me on his lap
i was only ten
he would rub me and rub me and rub me
he would caress my budding breast
with his fingers and his tongue
then i would feel something shook me
from the behind
oh it hurt bad bad
he would cover my mouth
with his broad palm
and i would find him
breathing hard
he would tell me
that's how to play mummy-and-daddy
and smiled at me satisfied
now that i am sixteen
i know how the real film goes
i know what it really means
i know how it really feels
to be sitting on a nail

Gabriel Bamgbose is currently a Fulbright Scholar in Africana Studies Program at NYU. He is the founding editor of Ijagun Poetry Journal. His work has appeared in Footmarks: Poems on One Hundred Years of Nigeria’s Nationhood, The Criterion, Lantern Magazine, and BareBack Magazine among others. He is the author of the poetry collection, Something Happened After the Rain (2014).
"L'île Gorée, Senegal"

Yasmine Kattan
Rightlessness and Violent Exclusion:
Producing the Illegal Immigrant

Matthew Lim

What does an illegal immigrant look like? That is the question the 18 Mighty Mountain Warrior Brothers, a YouTube comedy duo, attempts to answer. The Brothers created the YouTube video, “What Does An Illegal Immigrant Look Like?” after the passage of Arizona bill SB 1070. SB 1070 gave local law enforcement agents the power to stop people under “reasonable suspicion” to ask for documentation that proved their legal status. The brothers add their own insight to the controversial debate surrounding “reasonable suspicion” through the use of satire. The mock newsreel opens up with the Brothers claiming to have an answer to the “big question everyone has been wringing their heads over…’What does an illegal immigrant look like?’” They present the image of a Latino male, following with a, “Come on! What did you expect? Arizona is right next to Mexico, people. Get real!” Playing off of the audience’s affect and expectations, the Brothers evidently understand that the category of the “illegal immigrant” has become one that is racialized. But they push the boundaries of the imagery of an illegal immigrant and present a picture of a white man as the face of an illegal immigrant in Boston and a hockey player donning Canadian attire as the typical illegal immigrant in Minnesota. Further challenging the commonly imagined trope of the brown body as being tied to illegality, the Brothers say that the “typical legal immigrant…and typical American citizen look like this,” referring to the reused image of the Latino male who also
stood in for the face of the illegal immigrant. The mock newsreel ends with a “re-enactment” of how Arizona police officers determine one’s immigration status, depicting a police officer asking a young man crossing the street for his documentation. The young man willingly complies and presents the police officer with proper forms of documentation; however, the officer proceeds to violently beat the lawful citizen, because, according to the Brothers, “if anyone turns in documentation, they are illegal. Real Americans don’t carry that.” The closing of the video illuminates the paradox of the ambiguity surrounding the bill’s enforcement and reflects an ostensibly justified imaginary for lawful violence against the immigrant population.

But how is this imaginary mobilized? From the federal and state level down to the social realm of material relations, immigration control permeates every facet of an immigrant’s life that is branded as the illegal immigrant. What is the process of constructing the illegal immigrant, an “impossible subject” that is simultaneously “a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be solved”? This paper will begin to address those questions by tracking the development of the rhetoric that creates the category of illegal persons, starting from 19th century rhetoric regarding liberal democracy to the contemporary moment in which Arizona’s SB 1070 was signed into law. It will then discuss in-depth the narrative of national crisis through a governmentality based in failure and its impacts on brown bodies in the U.S. It will further contextualize the category of illegal immigrants and situate it within the current neoliberal regime, in which the immigrant is not only
racialized, but also positioned in the service of neoliberal capital. This paper will thus explore the ways in which the imagery of the racialized illegal immigrant is mobilized to render certain populations—namely, brown bodies—vulnerable to lawful violence.

The tension between two conflicting commitments of a liberal democracy—principle of equality and principle of national sovereignty—characterizes American public law. The principle of equality establishes that all are equal before the law and no person should be entitled to a greater share of privileges, nor denied basic rights based on arbitrary characteristics. The principle of sovereignty, however, grants nation-states the “right to self-determination and territorial integrity,” which is grounded on the notion that organized political communities have the presumptive right to control boundaries and membership within those boundaries in the self-interest of the state. Immigration policy is no exception to this pattern, and it is the tension between equality and sovereignty that creates a complex imagined and real relationship between the illegal subject and the national citizen. The self-proclaimed right to determine the contours of borders and membership inhered in the nation-state’s existence that is central to immigration policy is not only a claim to national rights, but also a theory of power. In “The Chinese Exclusion Case” (1889), the Court articulates the control Congress had over immigration: “the government, possessing the powers which are to be exercised for protection and security, is clothed with authority to determine the occasion on which the powers shall be called forth…” The power
[to exclude] is constantly exercised; its existence is involved in right of *self-preservation*” (emphasis mine). The perilous U.S. frontier is seen to be threatened by the encroaching foreigners, and this influx of migrants occasioned the U.S. Supreme Court to articulate that the principle of immigration control was a matter of national sovereignty. Immigrants are only allowed to enter with “the license, permission, and sufferance of Congress,” thus giving the legislative body the ability to define citizenship and what bodies are allowed to be included. Congress is made a necessary entity to protect the nation’s “independence” against the insidious threat of immigrants, a political form of “foreign aggression and encroachment.”

This democratic ideology that shapes the rhetoric of the Chinese Exclusion Case continues to shape the present-day anti-immigrant attitudes. Arizona Jan Brewer’s statement on signing SB 1070 into law epitomizes the fear-mongering that produces the meaning of what it means to be an American citizen:

Border-related violence and crime due to illegal immigration are critically important issues to the people of [Arizona], to my administration and to me, as your Governor and as a citizen. There is no higher priority than protecting the citizens of Arizona. We cannot sacrifice our safety to the murderous greed of drug cartels. We cannot stand idly by as drop houses, kidnappings, and violence compromise our quality of life. We cannot delay while the destruction happening south of our international border
Brewer drawing attention to her legal status as a U.S. citizen alludes to the lawful citizen/illegal immigrant binary, differentiating herself from the population that needs to be excluded. Her language of crisis and imminent danger is utilized to justify the passage of SB 1070, linking the bill’s necessity to the protection of not only the nation, but the very bodies of citizens. The idea of protecting the nation from the drug cartels, kidnappings, and violence brought over by the illegal immigrants is an extension of the “self-preservation” the Supreme Court claimed was the nation’s highest duty in the Chinese Exclusion Case. But the ability to control immigration now not only rests in the hands of the legislative branch; it now extends to the local enforcement agents. In other words, immigration regulation is relocated from the nation-state to the municipalities and state agencies.

The anti-immigrant backlash exemplified in Brewer’s speech that maintains the perception of immigrants as criminals is inconsistent and even at odds with reality. The Southern border is far from being unsecured; violent crime has fallen and in the southwestern border, it has dropped more than thirty percent in the past two decades. Even as the numbers of “illegal” immigration are falling, respondents of a CBS/New York Times poll express concern and consider illegal immigration to be a very serious problem, rising from 54% in 2006 to 65% in 2010. But the narrative of crisis and national decline secured social norms. The fear that shapes these narratives forms the boundaries between
citizens and immigrants and creates certain “truths.” These truths obfuscate the contradictions and disparities between narratives and realities, allowing for SB 1070’s extension of control. What we consider to be truth is thus a question of epistemology (how we know what we know), ontology (the production of beings and what can be said to exist), and politics (how truths affect the relations of power, force, and legitimization).

The production of the “truth” invoked in the narrative of crisis that criminalizes the illegal immigrant subsequently makes the immigrant a subject without rights. Laws, such as SB 1070, target the being and their bodies, rather than the actions. The linkage between immigrants and crime does not deviate far from the perception of immigrants described in the 1925 INS annual report: their “first act upon reaching our shores was to break out laws by entering in a clandestine manner.” The illegal status restricts migrants from having the option to be law-abiding when their very being is made irredeemably criminal. The criminalization of their existence vis-à-vis the “papers, please” law restricts immigrants’ bodily mobility in social spaces, which is part of the success of these laws—they engender a means of policing immigrants based on perceived status without trial. The pejorative of being “illegal” allows the legislative body to form laws that separate immigrants as a distinct class of subjects, stripped of the normal protections and rights accorded to citizen members of society. Consequentially, illegal immigrants become a population denied the “right to have rights.” Hannah Arendt argues that without membership as citizens of a polity, human rights are meaningless and do not apply
to those who lie outside the contours of national citizenship.\textsuperscript{22} The illegal immigrants are stripped of what is perceived to be human rights, such as the right to life and the right to equality.\textsuperscript{23} Inalienable individual rights are shown to inhere not in human personage, but in citizen, as “human rights” must paradoxically be recognized, guaranteed, and protected by the state.\textsuperscript{24}

In order to maintain the denial of human rights to the immigrant body, the state must maintain the narrative of national crisis through a governmentality based in failure. Politicians constantly cite the immigration system as one that is broken and needs to be fixed, failing to protect against the immigration crisis that threatens the “rule of law, security of citizens, and national sovereignty.”\textsuperscript{25} In their principles on immigration, Congressional Republicans claim that “the serious problems in our immigration system must be solved... But they cannot be solved with a single, massive piece of legislation... The problems in our immigration system must be solved through a step-by-step, common sense approach that starts with securing our country’s borders, enforcing our laws, and implementing robust enforcement measures.”\textsuperscript{26} Though this government failure is acknowledged, the state allows it to continue to persist. Removing a population of twelve million immigrants is deemed impossible. The sheer number dispersed throughout the nation’s population creates the image of illegal immigrants as the invisible enemy in America’s midst.\textsuperscript{27} The state subsequently denies one form of violent exclusion in the favor of another: the strengthening of border security and implementation of “robust enforcement measures.” Instead of holding the law
accountable to its legal precedent, it is held accountable to the “challenges arising from emergent, extralegal phenomena,” which, in this case, is the crisis of the rising, “violent” immigration population.\textsuperscript{28} Texts such as the principles on immigration or Brewer’s public statement engender a social imaginary in which the vaster project of expulsion is possible through an extended (“step-by-step”) process of attrition.\textsuperscript{29} The slow process of attrition normalizes the embedded, systemic violence of current policies. The success of affective techniques of containment relies on it not being successful, in which the failure to contain is the justification of the containment itself.\textsuperscript{30} The deferral of reform thus becomes an instrument of repression, allowing for the creation of rightless subjects within the democratic polity.

What allows for the continuation of this drawn out process of attrition is the crafted expansion of the definition of the state of “emergency.” A reworking of its meaning allows exceptional measures to take place, which is an increasingly regular feature of modern governance that is loosely articulated with the rule of law.\textsuperscript{31} In 2006, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents entered Swift and Company meatpacking plants in six states.\textsuperscript{32} They detained nearly 1300 employees, making it one of the largest workplace raids in U.S. history.\textsuperscript{33} The performativity of the state was manifested in large-scale ICE raids, terrorizing communities with these extremely militarized scenes of immigration enforcement. With these instances of the exposed naked arm of the state, the threat of deportation prolongs fear by imposing the threat of “social death,”\textsuperscript{34} which is described as ineligibility for
personhood—“populations subjected to laws but refused the legal means to contest those laws as well as denied both the political legitimacy and moral credibility necessary to question them.” The threat of deportation, and thus, “social death,” remains in the temporal and spatial “lag” between unlawful entry and apprehension. This renders the immigrant population vulnerable and subject to state legitimized violence during their entire residence in the U.S. Nearly 400,000 migrants are in ICE custody in more than 350 private and state-run prisons, and non-citizens have become the fastest growing incarcerated population in the country. These ICE campaigns were motivated by a restoration of the rule of law and further isolated a class of noncitizens by preventing them from escaping the permanently rightless status of illegal immigrants. The abstract principle of the rule of law is reconstituted as an apparatus of violence—“one that sustains and reproduces itself by presupposing the necessity of force.”

Containing the unauthorized immigrant presence within a state of absolute alienage is not simply a process that takes place at the legislative level, operating in a top-down fashion. Legal institutions are not only descriptive and symptomatic, but they are also prescriptive and reproduce the relations of production. Laws “structure the most routing practices of social life” and naturalize these forms of social relations. Theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault’s analysis of power allows for an understanding of these relations as reproductions of power. Though power can be coercive, visceral, and bodily—as seen with the large scale ICE raids—power can also be a pervasive and diffused force that is
social and structural. Prohibiting undocumented immigrants from participating in state and federal programs become the newest forms of surveillance. Activities that are not inherently illegal, such as having access to schools and health care, are forbidden by law. Laws that utilize deportation as a tool to instill fear in the undocumented immigrant population reshape relations that connect citizens with noncitizens, such as the ones between a citizen contractor and an undocumented injured employee, a citizen teacher and an undocumented disabled student, and a citizen doctor and an undocumented patient. Arendt argues that these laws threaten the “loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever,” which serves as the precondition for the loss of the “right to have rights.” Decentralized state terror denies immigrants the extralegal ties that assign them a place in society. Before the citizen can provide the necessary resources for an immigrant’s livelihood, they must first consider their status, because offering humanitarian aid to the people identified as illegal immigrants is considered a felony crime. Even in the absence of these laws, state surveillance practices have a significant impact on how noncitizens structure their own lives. In 2007, the parents of U.S. citizen Edgar Casterno did not take their infant to the hospital, fearing that they would ask about their legal status. This break in the relations between citizens and noncitizens led to the death of Edgar Casterno. Therefore, the conditions of rightlessness for the illegal immigrant subject are reproduced in domains where immigration status should not matter, from the workplace and housing to familial and communal life.
These forms of violence that are legitimized through abstracted principles and the creation of the illegal status cannot be detached from the process of racialization. Immigration is the primary site for policing racial bodies and law enforcement becomes the instrument of racial governance. Why is the image that is conjured in our minds the Latino male in the YouTube sketch, rather than two other white males subsequently shown? How has “immigrant” been tied to the brown body? The affect of the U.S. identity is not explicitly and affirmatively defined in bills like SB 1070, but rather, it is positioned in relation to the “performative affect of foreignness.” The illegibility of the white males as the immigrant connects to the ways in which our minds imagine Anglo-European immigration as the nation’s past, while racialized immigration is temporalized as if it has only been a recent event. The white, middle-class male citizen-subjects remain the invisible center in opposition to the foreign “other.” Numerous affects stick onto “colored, deviant bodies,” characterized by foreign demeanor and suspicious behavior. Laws such as SB 1070 demonstrate the degree to which illegality and alien-ness become performative affects of the brown body, and though not monolithically racial in the wording, “reasonable suspicion” becomes inextricably tied to race. It relies on affective identification, which causes responses that are often extralinguistic, either visceral or somatic.

These emotions do not simply reside internally within the subject, but they are felt and lived through corporeal experiences of being in the world, and the structural and bodily violence
disproportionately affect brown bodies.\textsuperscript{57} Though the illegal status causes social death in the temporal lag between the point of entry and deportation, it can also be the cause of literal deaths. Rene Torres, an undocumented immigrant with five U.S. citizen children, was a law-abiding man, who paid his taxes and resided in Arizona for years without any criminal record.\textsuperscript{58} Torres was racially profiled, handed over to ICE agents, and deported.\textsuperscript{59} Separated from his family, Torres died in the desert in an attempt to come back to reunify with his wife and five children.\textsuperscript{60} Immigrant rights activist Isabel Garcia said that she “fear[ed] that the Supreme Court has just made it easier for people across the country to suffer or even die like this.”\textsuperscript{61} Race thus becomes an external marker that does more than cause fear and emotions in the mind; it has real, bodily ramifications. This one of many tragic accounts shows that racism, according to scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”\textsuperscript{62} Gilmore’s definition of racism crystallizes how race and lawful violence interrelate and can cause the death of a law-abiding person.

The imperative of border control is a powerful informant of law enforcement and immigration control, but under the current neoliberal regime, the imperative of labor market regulation informs enforcement just as much. Neoliberalism, as described by Aihwa Ong, is not just about economics; it is a “more dispersed strategy that does not treat the national territory as a uniform political space. Market-driven logic includes the coordination of political policies with the corporate interests, so that development
decisions…promote the differential regulation of populations who can be connected to or disconnected from global circuits of capital.” Neoliberal ideology marks a shift away from liberal governmentality, in which concern for the immigrants’ welfare, as well as rights that would have been garnered to them, are stripped completely. Evidently, economic insecurities wrought by neoliberalism affect the political agenda on the federal level. The neoliberal nation-state denies rights and protections, but also positions immigrants in the service of neoliberal capital. For instance, Texas H.B. 2012 creates two sets of imagined immigrants—one that serves the domestic sphere that is allowed to be included in a limited way and one that works for large corporations that is seen to be taking jobs away from American citizens. In either set, immigrants are not seen as people who need compassion under H.B. 2012; they are framed as either economic factors or threats to the U.S. status quo. Two sides of neoliberal nation building thus emerge, articulated by Sara Ahmed’s concept of the “other” and the “other-other.” The “others” are people within the nation that can be saved by allowing them into the economy and culture of the nation. The “other-others” cannot be absorbed and assimilated; they must be expelled in order for the nation to continue to define and imagine itself, its borders, and its citizenry. Immigrants are thus differentially included, at once the focus of the subject of deportation and exclusion but also branded as a population whose purpose is to work as economic factors for the capitalist market.
“What Does An Illegal Immigrant Look Like?” is thus the site where these histories, rhetoric, and affective identifications are articulated through a satirical YouTube piece, combining two mediums that make an intervention more accessible and legible to the public—humor and media technology. The video is a product of the time and place of a neoliberal nation-state along with the projection of fear and antagonism that makes the exclusionary politics coherent in the concept and law of citizenship. The 18 Mighty Mountain Warriors Brothers use this video clip as an intervention in the mainstream discourse surrounding the illegal immigrant identity. Their playful reenactment of police brutality is poignant in its ability to pointedly draw attention to and critique the social imaginary of lawful violence against illegal immigrants. The scene points to the contradictions inherent in the process of creating the “other” (and “other-other”). The law-abiding person, who hands over his papers to the officer as requested, is still subject to the violent disciplinary practice because he is part of the “targeted population [that does] not need to break laws to be criminalized.” The principle of national sovereignty and protecting the rule of law destabilizes the borders by calling for policies of restriction and deportation. The point of exclusion (the borders) have collapsed into the space of inclusion (the nation’s interior), and the slow violence of attrition is justified by the need to stabilize the perilous frontier and rule of law.

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spaces both apart from and within the school system. When not thinking about how he can develop his teaching practices to teach high school students everything he has learned under SCA, he can be found standing on benches taking pictures of inanimate objects and overcoming his avocado allergy.

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Senegalese Surfers

Yasmine Kattan
The Door, a New York based nonprofit that offers comprehensive developmental services for underprivileged youth all under one roof, presents as a surprising space. With its white laminate floors, fluorescent pink and blue light tracks and colorful artwork, this alternatives center for young people is visually akin to any number of bowling parlors or skating rinks that populated the United States in the late 80’s. Dance-heavy music blares from a bulky sound system. Young people sit around in packs talking; a few occupy chairs in quiet corners playing with their cellphones, candy-colored Beats by Dre headphones blocking out the rest of the room. Some are here waiting for their GED classes to start, some are finishing up with their counselors, and others come for the free dinner and showers. Many are just here to hang out in a safe place, somewhere they can go to avoid unhealthy family situations, gang culture or even just the urban stagnation\(^1\) that exists in neighborhoods with few resources. In this respect The Door is like a ‘rec room’ or a public school, a community space for young people in New York.

In other respects The Door functions as a showroom for the latest in fashion and style. The space is an interactive runway for trendsetters and trend analyzers to move around and switch roles,
alternately modeling and taking notes. They wear the most basic, economical clothing with the latest from underground or popular designers, pairing old sweats with Timberlands; ratty converse sneakers with the latest from music producer Pharrell’s limited-edition only line of athletic wear, Billionaire Boys Club.

Underlying both these use-values of the space are the realities of a long history of systematic marginalization and oppression of minority peoples in the United States. This means most of the members are African American and Latino American teenagers from underprivileged communities, which affects the way relationships play out at The Door. Because it is a nonprofit geared towards providing alternatives for underprivileged or at-risk youth (health care, legal service, career guidance, counseling, food and clothing, recreational activities) both the members and the staff are very aware of the socioeconomic and cultural scripts associated with ‘charity’ and ‘social service’ and how notions of power, deservingness and belonging are constructed in such a context.

In this ethnography I explore these scripts from observations and data collected drawn from experiences as an Intake Counselor. I argue that by dressing in culturally conscious and often expensive clothes, the young people at The Door purposefully subvert notions of underprivileged, colored bodies as being abject objects. In doing so, they create a new kind of legibility for themselves within our social conscious, making it possible to have a more complicated understanding of what underprivileged can mean, and how a different definition may be more useful in imagining an alternative future for such communities in New York.
Though the staff are important in understanding the ways in which young people at The Door present their style, this ethnography will focus specifically on the members of The Door, in particular the young men, and the consumptive and productive practices that they embody, as well as the social and cultural implications that they ask us to consider.

When I started working there in early February, I found that like most other people living in the city, the young people at The Door were dressed for utilitarian purposes. They wore warm clothes to ward against the long New York winter. What was interesting was how fashionable their outfits were. Each young person was decked in layers and layers of patterns and textures: structured pea coats over colorful down jackets, thick socks with polka dots or tacos on them, plush beanies, wool scarves and heavy leather boots. None of them would have been out of place in an Urban Outfitters catalog, some ensembles creating silhouettes analogous to those seen on New York Fashion Week catwalks for the season’s winter collections. When asked where they bought their clothes, YP mentioned fast fashion stores like Forever 21 and H&M as places they ‘had’ to go to get their basics. However, it was the higher end stores like Nike (limited edition mostly) and Supreme, known for being trendsetters in athletic wear, that they cared the most about. These were their ‘statement’ pieces: a new pair of Air Jordan’s or a Baby G Shock Watch, which retail for about $250 and $120 respectively. It was surprising to know that they shopped at the same stores as us Intake Counselors who, on average, occupy a higher economic and social class. What is more, they seemed to be
unimpressed and even dismissive of the fast fashion clothes they purchased, as they were cheap and widely distributed. It was the unattainability or rarity of consumer goods that interested them. This greatly complicates how the dichotomy between those who ‘provide’ services and those who ‘receive’ services is understood. From what I observed the young people at The Door enacting just as much, if not more, buying power than the staff, thus subverting a very common narrative in cultural studies that scripts class as the signifier of taste. What did it mean then that these young people could afford the latest BAPE collection hoodie but in the process, also came to The Door for free dinner because they had no money left to eat? What kind of consumer behavior does this point to? Is it being accounted for in our notions of class and style in the US?

Pierre Bourdieu in Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste proposes the dominant narrative of taste and fashion, as he notes that cultural practices of dress are “linked to education level and secondarily social origin”. This ideology feeds into many of the popular tropes of those “in need”. Because they belong to a specific economic class they have tastes that embody their specific background. What evolves is a narrative of abjectness and coloredness for those who are below the poverty line. Consider the image of a small, malnourished black body. This depiction dominates our visual conceptions of poverty in ‘Africa’ and across the African diaspora. The picture below is one of the many black and white images of hunger and desolation that come up on the Google search engine when you type in “African children.”
The body is small, young and dressed sparsely in a draped cloth. He is viewed from a vantage point of someone who is leaning over, as if peering through a telescope. It is the curious gaze from a taller, stronger being: maybe a concerned scientist or an observant journalist. The gaze objectifies the body it looks upon while simultaneously setting itself up as the curator and narrator of the image.

Within our national consciousness, depictions of African American bodies differ from depictions of African bodies but work to create a similar narrative of abjectness and colored-ness. Usually black bodies within the US are seen as urban dwelling and present as older in appearance and in experience. They appear ‘toughened’ by hardship and trauma. These depictions also portray the African American body as being violent, angry, and ungrateful; dissatisfied in some way with the benefits they receive from their government.7
The young people at The Door do not exemplify either of these constructs, as they present a very different narrative of what ‘needy’ bodies should or do look like with their trendy, expensive clothing. Instead they are participating in what Thorstein Veblen refers to as Conspicuous Consumption, or the “use of wealth to manifest social power, whether real or perceived.” Thus the young people have a performative relationship with their clothes which produces a narrative of power rather than abjectness. Los Angeles native and New York-based artist Kehinde Wiley does work to visualize this alternative narrative for the stereotyped African American body. His portraits, based on photographs taken of young black men in Harlem, are posed and painted using oil and enamel to imitate classic portraits of the wealthy and titled in Western tradition.

Images 3 and 4. (Left)
_Morpheus_, 2008, oil on canvas.
Based on a sculpture (Right)
by Jean Antoine Houdon.

The young men at The Door look much like the Harlem youth painted in Wiley’s Black Light series. Though the young man
in Wiley’s *Morpheus* painting is lying in a similar position as the African boy in the Google photograph, the two representations are startlingly different in perspective and tone. In the former, the young person is wearing hip street clothes. His posture is relaxed, leisurely. He returns the gaze of the observer, his eyes in line with ours. He exudes casual confidence; he has the guiltless and drowsy look of someone who is not alert because he is not afraid. In some ways Wiley speaks to the “equalization of life chances” that Bruce Robbins called for in *The Sweatshop Sublime*. Compared to the small, emaciated body of the former image, this larger-than-life body (the painting is 108” x 180”) does not call for pity; instead it forces us to consider a black body as someone who exists within a culture and society akin to our own in power and agency. Staring down from museum galleries all over the world, the subjects of Wiley’s paintings demand attention and respect.

Though Wiley is an example of the alternate condition of blackness and identity performance that I saw at The Door, he does not account for a key part of my argument, which is that the young people themselves are curating their behavior and presentation via dress. Wiley is still a kind of filter through which the black body is seen; yet fashion at The Door seems mostly subversive of normative underprivileged black identity construction specifically because the young people do not look to outside modes of agency to describe themselves. The labels aren’t being put on them, they are writing the labels themselves. In the same way that *sapeurs* in the Congo are self-described, so too are the young men at The Door. They are hyper-aware of the social and cultural constructs that affect their individual
and collective identity and work to make themselves a part of the conversation, to become contributors rather than subjects. A movement that embodies this agenda is Black Dandyism, a subculture within African American male communities that has worked to create an alternate relationship between blackness and masculinity. In *W. E. B. Du Bois and the Dandy as Diasporic Race Man*, author Monica Miller describes Du Bois’ concept of Double Consciousness as a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body”. African Americans are thus born with a ‘veil’, which scripts certain meanings and behaviors onto their bodies to police them, and they in turn have learned to subvert normative society’s agenda. Here I would argue that the ‘warring ideals’ at play at The Door are between the imagined abject black body that is deserving of social services and the powerful masculine black body. Both hold currency for the young male members, the former with the staff at The Door and upper society at large, and the latter with other members at The Door and underprivileged black communities in general.

Rather than disregarding the conventional Western styles that disenfranchise or disqualify them, they appropriate the expensive clothing and designer brands, creating a different reading of such elitist and normalizing items on colored bodies. When talking to a member at The Door about style and labels, the young man said to me, “It’s important to me that people know I take care
of myself, that I can look exactly like the shit on the runway, because so much of that they took from the streets anyway. It’s like we’re appreciating the style you know, but we’re saying that they stole that swag from us in the first place.” This young person engages in parodic play with labels as a way of further subverting conventional styles that work to disqualify him. Another young person sported a black sweatshirt that fashion house Yves Saint Laurent became known for in the 2012 brand overhaul of their ready-to-wear line. The new logo, simply ‘SAINT LAURENT’ in bold white graffiti letters, is printed on the member’s sweatshirt as ‘AIN’T LAURENT’ in the same font. He tells me that the parody sweatshirt is being produced by certain fast fashion chain stores and have become very popular with his friends. This moment speaks to the historical unconsciousness that Caroline Evans describes as being necessary for fashion to constantly represent itself as new and fresh, rather than recycled and referential as it actually is. In Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness, Evans writes, “Fashion, while ostensibly a paradigm of novelty and innovation is in fact trammeled by the very historical conditions that produce it.” Thus while the ‘AIN’T LAURENT’ t-shirt presents itself as fashionable and new, it also works to call attention to the humor of fashion brand like YSL, known for its haute couture collections, reconstructing itself as something fresh and ‘never-before-seen’ in the high-end couture world; but also makes a further point to jab at the idea that YSL tried to present the new brand as definitive of a reimagined urban youth, when really the oversized sweatshirt and graffiti fonts inspired by street art have
been in circulation since the early 80’s when hip hop came into popularity in black inner-city neighborhoods, which in its own turn was partly inspired by prison style (the beltless pants and laceless sneakers originally meant to stop inmates from using either accessory as weapons). Thus, as Ulrich Lehmann is quoted as saying in Evan’s book, fashion constitutes an “aesthetic rewriting of history,” where clothing must constantly be novel, or at least novel in interpretation, in order to be valuable as a fashion commodity. If the ‘SAINT LAURENT’ shirt exemplifies this aesthetic rewriting, than the ‘AIN’T LAURENT’ shirt can be seen as a part of a subversive culture that calls attention to the references imbedded in our clothing that YSL tried to disregard. The sweatshirt is thus an alteration of conventional style whereby the young person creates a new set of meanings associated with certain clothes or trends. In this sense double consciousness can be seen as the play between the young men at The Door that articulate their own ideas of blackness and identity, as suggested by the parallel made with subversive Black Dandyism; and being themselves the product of iterations of black identity that precede them, as suggested by their referential nature to 80’s hip hop culture, prison style, and to an extent Kehinde Wiley’s portraits.

My observations and interviews at The Door suggest that these young men are aware of the normalized narratives of blackness and abjectness that work to police underprivileged, colored bodies and script them into certain modes of dress and behavior that signify their poverty or ‘lacking’. In acting out alternative black and masculine identities that connote power and
agency, they employ double consciousness to work within both modes; the one constructed for them and the one they construct themselves. Dick Hebdige summarizes this condition in *Subcultures: The Meaning of Life* when he writes that such subcultures “act out alienation…and manufacture a whole series of subjective correlative for the official archetypes of the ‘crisis of modern life’. Converted into icons these paradigms of crisis could live a double life.” He describes the many subcultures of punks, hipsters, skinheads, and teddy boys in mid-twentieth century Britain as producing alternate meanings for the objects (mostly clothing and other fashion accessories) that they wore, as a way of acting out the alienation they felt from the parent cultures of normative society. Though they coopted different images, cultural and sociopolitical scripts and musical styles, Hebdige underlines a commonality in the appropriation of black cultures. In speaking particularly about mod culture, Hebdige points to the use of ‘The Black Man’ as a symbolic “dark passage down into an imagined underworld.” In this alternate reality the Man could inhabit a structure while also escaping, subverting and altering it; a very alluring prospect for the young white men who yearned to cultivate identities outside of the model expected of them by British society.

Whereas Hebdige sees this double life as delineating a “hopeless condition” for British youth, I argue that the young people at The Door seem to suggest an inverse effect, whereby the symbolic appeal of expensive and fashionable clothing creates a magical, almost surreal relationship between their reality and an imagined life, one that allows for a transformation into an identity
that oscillates somewhere between the former to the latter. Here, black bodies are both the appropriators and the appropriated. By consciously participating in the production of fashion within their community that engage high fashion and fast fashion in parodic play, the young men at The Door have created a system of style evaluation where they function as model, stylist and critic. Thus the meaning and value in their consumptions and interpretations of fashion are generated from within their communities and filter outward. They are the subject and the critical apparatus that studies and interprets the subject. As one member said to me, adjusting the lapels of his fashionable coat, the style a hybrid between a down jacket and a fitted suit, “I decide what I look like and what I am trying to say with my style. I can be both black and powerful.”

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**Endnotes**

1 Urban stagnation is being described here as the preexisting condition whereby the communities in underprivileged neighborhoods work and live within the constraints of a stunted economy, limited social mobility, and second-class citizenship due to the long history of marginalization by both local and federal government and its many administrative systems of control (police force, housing regulations, health care, education, etc.) which result in the limited mobility and decreased life chances of people in such communities.
Focus is mainly on the young men because the members that agreed to submit to the interviews and observations happened to be all male, excluding one female member. Thus the results are due to chance rather than design.

This was mostly based off of who was willing to speak on the subject, but also because I was drawn to the way masculinity delineated a specific set of logics for ways of dress, and was therefore compelled to look closer into the teenage boys. Style operates differently depending on gender, and generalizations can not be made to the girls at The Door, who were scripted into different roles and thus subverted those scripts in different ways.

Prices were told to me by young people at The Door and do not reflect any actual statistical average calculated for either product.


This is a narrative that has gained considerable popularity on the Fox network. In which poorer black communities are described as 'lazy' and completely dependent upon government 'handouts' that they do not deserve.


Callaloo, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Summer, 2003), pp. 738-765


Ibid, Chapter Four, pg. 54

The hopeless condition being one in which the skinhead and other subculture participants borrow from reggae or black dandyism but undermine the “black contribution” to their style whether by willful resistance to such associations or by the nature of their white privilege which conditions their chosen exile. Thus these subcultures stew in a kind of social purgatory of their own creation, at best creating thought-provoking critique of their parent culture, at worst a self-indulgent annoyance to the status quo; whereas the black bodies who inspired such styles are excluded and made vulnerable to dominate cultures and groups without active consent or in their participation.
The Fangirl Gaze:  
The Influence of Gendered Media Audience on Emerging Sexuality  
Katharine Arnold

“After all, by now we all know the immense transformative power of a boy band to turn a butter-wouldn't-melt teenage girl into a rabid, knicker-wetting banshee who will tear off her own ears in hysterical fervour when presented with the objects of her fascinations. Hasn't this spectacle of the natural world - like the aurora borealis or the migration of wild bison across America's Great Plains - been acknowledged?”

-Jonathan Heaf, British GQ, September 2013

The boy band is a recurring cultural phenomenon that enraptures the attention of teenage girls and is ridiculed by nearly everyone else. Decade after decade attractive boys in styled outfits have sung their ways into the hearts of millions of girls across the world. The audience is almost exclusively female, and the performers are presumed heterosexual males, creating a subculture based on the gender binary. From the Beatles to The Backstreet Boys to One Direction, boy bands have created gendered-media marketed to young girls as they come to a crucial part in their social development: the onset of sexuality. Sex and sexuality infiltrates all media at some level, but young girls are taught to repress their feelings and ignore these sources.

The Beatles brought the first “dramatic uprising” of women’s sexuality when Beatlemania took hold in the 1960s. Since
then, young women have used teen idols both as an outlet for sexual frustrations and a space to explore sexuality. But their fandoms are often critiqued as irrelevant, because teenage girls cannot recognize “good” media. This snobbishness stems from the patriarchal power structure, which negates female interests.

This paper explores how the patriarchy limits female sexual expression, and the ways gendered media audience creates a space for female sexuality. In order to conduct the research necessary to complete this paper, I have drawn on texts that look at ongoing patriarchal structures, as well as limitations of female sexuality. Additional sources provide background information and complicate my understanding of boy band fandom. I have interviewed forty-seven anonymous fans of the current boy band One Direction. As an active boy band, they have a large, active fanbase. The fans interviewed range in age from thirteen to fifty-three. Each fan was asked the same questions in the same order through a messaging system. The gender ratio of the fans was one male to forty-six females (or 2% male). While this gender ratio is nowhere close to even, it is reflective of the fandom as a whole. In another survey I have conducted, 13 out of 410 (or 3%) of people who identify as a One Direction fan also identify as male. Given this skewed gender construct, I have chosen to observe the influence of fandom on female sexuality. Moreover, it is important that I also disclose my own subjectivity on this topic. As someone who has participated in boy band fandoms for over seven years, I am granted insight and access to this subculture that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.
This paper is structured into three parts. The first looks at the patriarchy’s influence on gendered media and discusses articles by Angela McRobbie, Sherry Ortner and Catherine Rottenberg to explain the ongoing role of the patriarchy in media spaces. The second section looks at the teen idol as a space for sexual expression and understanding for adolescent girls. This section discusses quotes from interviewees describing their interaction with the band and articles to supplement my thought. The third section looks at fan works—particularly different genres of fan fiction—to examine how fan communities interpret and interact with sex and sexuality amongst themselves.

Fandom exists in a strange plane of media consumption and awareness. It would be naïve to say fans are passive consumers of media when they engage with their media in such an extreme manner. Fans both consume culture and create it through their negotiation of existing media. Fans exist for all media, whether it is television, film, sports, or music. Media fans are categorized along gender lines, with fans of female media (i.e. boy bands) ridiculed in ways fans of male media (i.e. sports) are not. Boy band fans are cognizant of mockery they might face and sometimes resolve to self-closeting or self-censorship as some fans disclosed in their interviews:

I have fooled my friends into thinking I'm "done" with them [One Direction], (Female, 15 years old)

There's a stigma that One Direction is for little girls and I don't want people to think low of me. (Female, 18 years old)
I tend to hide how much I love them for the sake of not being ridiculed. (Female, 15 years old)

They [my friends] do know, but they don't know how much I really love them. (Female, 16 years old)

While others shamelessly enjoy them:

You shouldn't hide something that makes you happy. (Female, 18 years old)

I'm in college, so people expect me to be embarrassed about this, but I'm not. (Female, 19 years old)

While some fans are not afraid of admitting their musical tastes, all fans acknowledged that their media was stigmatized and not taken seriously by society. I found that younger fans were more afraid to be “outed” as a One Direction fan, while older fans were more secure and were not afraid to be open about it. The fans do not want to be associated with “little girls.” Female fans are dismissed in the same way as their media as a result of patriarchal rankings of masculinity and femininity.

Section I: The Patriarchy’s Influence on Gendered Fandom

In “The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change,” Angela McRobbie argues that popular culture has reached a space where feminism is no longer necessary. In her view, pop culture engages with post-feminism as a site where power can be reconstructed. Post-feminism occurred in reaction to the ideals and methods of second-wave feminism by increasing women’s educational and occupational opportunities. This raised their
visibility in society and media, but commercial culture hyper-sexualized women in turn. This sexualization endorses a new sexual contract based on “female consent, equality, participation and pleasure”.

The current age grants young women unprecedented economic capacities. Patriarchal economic power and domination is being offset by female participation in the workforce and greater spending freedom. As women gain higher occupational positions, they began to attain financial security and spending power comparable to men. This allows for new markets targeted towards women to expand. Many of these industries are aimed at the insecurities of women, included amongst these were the industries of self-help and self-care. These industries focus on the individual working to better themselves to fit the societal standard. Self-care re-instates gender norms, which distances young women from a feminist political identity. Additionally, women are forced to navigate the masculine dominion without jeopardizing their sexual identity.

Post-feminism is a masquerade. It declares women independent of patriarchal power perpetuated in our media, while also enslaving them to its doctrine. In her essay, “Too Soon for Post-Feminism” Sherry Ortner examines the evolving formation of patriarchy; a male dominated power structure. Patriarchy constructs boundaries between men and women, and masculinity and femininity. The patriarchy does not recognize identities beyond the gender binary, as it could upset the precarious power structures.

Gender remains a remarkably durable binary in society
despite social movements to change this view. Masculinity and femininity become opposites. If men are politically and economically powerful, women are automatically the opposite. In Catherine Rottenberg’s essay “How Superwomen Became Balanced” she declares that social relations need to be reimagined if society wants to remove gendered hierarchies. Post-feminism and the neoliberal age have redirected the discussion of feminist theorists. It becomes apparent that we do not live in a world where post-feminism can thrive. Ortner and Rottenberg support the claim that gendered hierarchies—especially that of the patriarchy—continue to exist and affect cultural norms. Economic and social biases fall along gender lines, with males remaining the dominant gender despite feminist activity. As women attempt to cross these lines, societal stigmas often force them to retreat. The patriarchy continues to devalue and marginalize female contributions. Given this, feminism will continue to exist and pursue the goals from its inception: to create a social system in which all genders have equal social power. Social power for females is, non-the-less, especially lacking in ownership of sex and sexuality. Within media and popular culture, women are generally sexualized but not allowed to be sexual beings.

McRobbie and others argue that this process of female individualization within the market is only obtainable if the girl becomes important to herself through modes of self-care. McRobbie remains wary of the consequences associated with female individualization and the subsequent sexual awakening it may cause. She believes that females are not granted the same
freedoms as males and therefore cannot behave as “badly” as them.\textsuperscript{14} Instead females have to navigate secondary channels to explore sex and sexuality, one of which is gendered fandom.

\textbf{Section II: The Teen Idol as a Sexual Outlet}

Sexual rights are the precursor to reproductive rights and gender equality. In “Why the Development Industry Should Get Over its Obsession with Bad Sex and Start to Think About Pleasure,” Susie Jolly discusses the politics of pleasure; especially how pleasure is denied to women.\textsuperscript{15} Discussions of sex and sexuality, particularly that of young women, are often associated with silence, shame and stigma.\textsuperscript{16} Women are taught that within a heterosexual relationship, the man has total power in sex.

When asked to juxtapose what fans have read in fanworks with societal representations of sexual power, many were able to identify a gendered power structure:

I think in society it is perceived that males are more dominating than females. (Female, 16 years old)

When looking at a normal, straight relationship I think that if someone is dominating the relationship it's usually the man. (Female, 16 years old)

Males definitely take on the more dominant traits. (Female, 16 years old)

Stereotypically, in a heterosexual relationship the women have a more submissive role. (Female, 23 years old)

The terms used to describe the regularity of male domination
include “normal” and “stereotypically,” and the generalizing “in society.” The patriarchal structure is enforced when women are taught they are the victims of “bad sex.” News and literature pin men as sexual predators. Our sexual education and cultural fabric focuses more on the possible negatives of sex—loss of control, unwanted pregnancy, not being satisfied, sexually transmitted infections, losing the object of love or lust—than pleasure.

The teen idol subverts the danger of male sexuality by being removed from the idolizer. Idols are marketed to be safe, androgynous, and pure. As one respondent mentioned, “celebrities can be very accepting and supportive of their fans which makes people feel more secure about being who they are.” Fans use celebrities to come to terms with and understand the evolution of their sexuality. Teen idols are coming into their own sexual identity. Despite their androgynous marketing, they are the focus of “disembodied lust” and ultimately become hyper sexualized by their fans and the media. This is then translated into teens and their desire to be the same as their idols, thus opening fans to sex and sexuality. Adolescents want to be normal and will emanate the normalized behaviors of their idols.

Teen pop allows for girls to openly use their gaze upon men in a way they cannot do in public. They can stare at boys and learn their form, as boys can do openly on the street. Males reserve the right to sexualize celebrities whereas females are seen as “hysterical” or “banshees.” Fans are also aware of their reputation to outsiders:
Outsiders generally see the fandom as a bunch of screaming, twelve year old girls. (Female, 17 years old)

I will quote my roommate: "A bunch of screaming 11 year olds!" (Female, 20 years old)

[The fandom is] a group of teenage girls who are completely psychotic, and will do anything to reach the boys. (Female, 15 years old)

In general, fans of One Direction agree that outsiders see them as mindless “12 year-olds.” It is interesting that the age of twelve was used so often. At twelve a girl begins to navigate womanhood, yet is still trying to develop agency as a teenager. Sexuality is a crucial aspect of the teenager’s agency, and the teen idol provides a space where the girl can navigate these thoughts at her own pace. As one fan described, she could “fantasize about N*Sync in situations [she] didn't fully understand and couldn't see [herself] in with boys [her] age.”

**Section III: The Teen Idol as a Character**

Sexuality goes beyond the focus of adoration. It also extends to the fan community as well. Fan fiction is a genre of literature that takes characters and settings of an original work then recreates them in a different context. Fan fiction ranges from G-rated “fluff” to NC-17-rated “smut.” It should be noted that fan fiction does not need to contain sexual explicit scenes, and most “fics” have very little, if none. Fan fiction is written and read by fans of all ages in every fandom imaginable. There is no prerequisite for writers, no formalized editing process and no
compensation for the author’s effort. While there are infinite plot lines, one thing remains: the characters in their stories are taken from the media they are centered around. Whether it is furthering the plotline for fictional characters in books and movies, or recreating events for real people in real person fan fiction (RPF), fan fiction offers a place for fans to recreate the worlds and people they “know.”

Fan fiction in boy band fan communities belongs in the RPF faction, and exists in two categories: alternate universe (AU) and canonical. Canonical plotlines follow what is “canon” or real-life events; AU takes the band members and transplants them as characters into other settings. Fan fiction writers and consumers are “overwhelmingly white, middle-class and straight or bisexual” women. Sexual repression has been a feature of middle class life for centuries; fan fiction provides a space where sexuality can be unleashed. Interestingly, the gender construct of fan fiction, at least in the boy band sphere, almost always incorporates two males in a romantic relationship; subverting the stereotype that fan fiction is used to satisfy the reader’s own sexual fantasies.

There are three genres of fan fiction that I will be looking at: Self-insertion (male/female pairings), Slash (male/male pairings), and femmeslash (female/male or female/female where a male character is regendered). Of the interviewed fans, forty-three out of forty-seven fans read fan fiction, and thirteen out of forty-seven wrote it (fig.1 and fig. 2). Like most media, fan fiction revolves around romance. This romance can be between the reader and a band member, an original character and a band member, or
two band-members. Out of nearly 32,000 fan fictions posted in the “One Direction” tag on the popular fan fiction archive “archiveofourown.org,” 88% of pairings are male/male. Comparatively, 11% of pairings are female/male and 0.2% are female/female. The remaining 0.8% consists of polygamous and non-romantic pairings. These pairings work to “challenge a patriarchal, heterosexist, and racially stereotyped cultural landscape.”

For boy band fandom, writers looking to write male/female pairings do not have many, if any, female characters to work with. Rather than write stories about the bands’ girlfriends, a subgenre exists in which the writer creates a generic, nameless character that the readers can imagine themselves in. The trend started in the 1980s with female fans of Star Trek rewriting the storyline to include “Mary Sue.” Mary Sue has since become a figure to contest the stereotypes of women represented in popular media. Mary Sue has evolved into the acronym “Y/N” meaning “your name” in cyber space. Self-insertion characters are often wrought with
superlatives, living out almost perfect lives. Females in media are often given secondary roles as romantic partners, which has a dramatic effect on how gender roles are translated outside of media. Women written into a fantasy role allow for women to experience a happy life without sacrificing desire. Women have a narrow definition in society, these fanworks allow women to “have it all” by Rottenberg’s standards.

The largest genre of fan fiction is male/male slash. Slash depicts “homoerotic dynamics between characters from popular media”. Within boy band fandom, this allows for romantic relationships between the members, foregoing the necessity of learning new characters. Slash defies heteronormative stereotypes by removing gendered differences from relationship dynamics. Fans have different reasoning’s for reading slash works:

I didn't really like learning a new girl character every time. (Female, 14 years old)

I really like reading fan fictions with bi/pan characters. I like seeing myself represented in the characters. (Female, 16 years old)

I wouldn't consciously read a heterosexual pairing since I get enough of straight couples in real life and every other kind of media that isn't fan fiction. (Female, 17 years old)

The most common reason for slash’s prevalence is the lack of female characters a fan can draw from boy bands. But slash also disrupts heteronormativity the same way Mary Sue allows for female empowerment. Fan fiction becomes a space where non-straight relationships can be normalized while criticizing patriarchal
structures and eluding the hierarchies of heterosexuality. Adolescent women have been victims of sexual repression for centuries, leading to an inability for girls to picture themselves in sexual scenarios. One young fan described her inability to write heterosexual fan fiction by not knowing how to write the female into a sexual situation. Heterosexual sex is defined through inequalities and has a defined place in society: the marital bed. In contrast, there is no sanctioned place for sex between people of the same gender, giving the writer more freedom to explore deviant sexualities without societal guilt. The redefinition of traditional sexual roles in slash erotica allows writers, and readers to reinterpret their own place in the sexual order.

Genderswap interprets the meaning of gendered bodies and how they intersect with sex, gender, desire and embodiment. Although a relatively miniscule faction of fanworks, its gendered implications are distinct. Genderswap puts male characters into female bodies, forcing them to observe the limitations placed on women in society. It generates an understanding of gender as a performance. When genderswap characters interact with the world around them it makes the reader question what socio-biological factors constitute womanhood.

While not all fan fiction is sexual, it has existed as a highly sexualized form of literature. Fans had varying opinions on whether fan fiction provided a space for readers to explore sex and sexuality. The fans that thought it did provide a space for exploration said:

I think it gives readers and writers a chance to see
how sex can vary within fantasies and see if they're comfortable with different sexualities. (Female, 21 years old)

The reason I know anything at all about safe sex is from reading Harry Potter fan fiction in middle school, and the reason I know anything at all about non-heterosexual sex is because of One Direction fan fiction. (Female, 18 years old)

While fans that did not think fan fiction provides a space for the exploration of sex and sexuality said:

Fan fiction is written to please, not provide a platform for self-discovery and sexual exploration. (Female, 16 years old)

[Sexually explicit] fan fiction is comprised of fantasy, not legitimate sexual experience. (Female, 17 years old)

Ultimately, fan fiction provides a space for sexual exploration. Popular and consumer culture are the primary sources for adolescent sexual education. As a subset of popular culture, fanworks provide an environment for sexual learning’s. By existing outside the mainstream literary world, fan fiction allows for representation of the “Mary Sue’s.” Individuals who do not get representation in the greater culture can be found by the plenty in fanworks. Fan fiction exists as a rare media platform where adolescent girls can learn sexual dynamics based on a caring relationship, not inequality. Their teen idols create a temporal space where young women can have sexual investment, without societal repercussions.

**Conclusion**
The societal attitude toward sex largely excludes the adolescent girl. Female sexuality is negated both as a form of freedom and a way to uphold patriarchal values. Boy bands perpetuate the patriarchal power structure by literally placing males on a raised platform in front of a female audience. However their fandom provides a space where gendered differences are irrelevant, allowing for a female dominated media audience. The aspect this paper focused on was sex and sexuality. By keeping male objects of sexual desire at a distance but still allowing female fans to utilize their gaze, boy band fandom provides a space where young women can safely develop their sexual identity. This paper was limited in its subject matter by looking at a very specific form of fandom with a certain audience. Further research could take the form of other researching and paralleling other fandoms with boy band fandom. These comparisons could provide information of the broader role fandom plays in the lives of different populations as well as identify the unique roles each fandom plays.

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Endnotes

5 McRobbie, The Aftermath of Feminism, 97
7 McRobbie, The Aftermath of Feminism, 18.
8 McRobbie, The Aftermath of Feminism, 156
9 Ortner, “Too Soon for Post-Feminism”
11 Ortner, “Too Soon for Post-Feminism”; Rottenberg, “Happiness and the Liberal Imagination”
12 Jolly, Susie. 2007. Why the Development Industry Should Get over Its Obsession with Bad Sex and Start to Think about Pleasure. Institute of Development Studies.
13 McRobbie, The Aftermath of Feminism, 147
14 McRobbie, The Aftermath of Feminism, 91
15 Jolly, Why the Development Industry Should Get over Its Obsession, 19
16 Anderson, Tonya. 2012. “Still Kissing Their Posters Goodnight: Female Fandom and the Politics of Popular Music” 9 (2);
    Jolly, Why the Development Industry Should Get over Its Obsession, 7
17 Jolly, Why the Development Industry Should Get over Its Obsession, 10
18 Jolly, Why the Development Industry Should Get over Its Obsession
20 Anderson, “Still Kissing Their Posters Goodnight,” 248
23 Ehrenreich, “Beatlemania,” 529
24 Chander “Everyone’s a Superhero,” 601
25 Ibid
26 Chander, “Everyone’s a Superhero” 607
27 Chander, “Everyone’s a Superhero,” 605
28 Busse and Lothian, “Bending Gender”; 2
    Rottenberg, “Happiness and the Liberal Imagination” 145
29 Busse and Lothian, “Bending Gender,” 1
30 Busse and Lothian, “Bending Gender,” 7
31 Jolly, Why the Development Industry Should Get over Its Obsession, 17
32 Chander, “Everyone’s a Superhero,” 610
33 Busse and Lothian, “Bending Gender,” 16
34 Busse and Lothian, “Bending Gender,” 15
35 Busse and Lothian, “Bending Gender,” 16
An interesting thought came up in our class recently that truly captured the meaning of this quote for me. A fellow classmate had been talking about the choices we make every morning when getting dressed and how different bodies have to plan out their attire based on where they may go and who they encounter that day. And I realized it is in those instances that we can actually witness the construction or becoming of a body into an individual.

In those moments of breakage from our everyday performances, we can see how in the United States the notion of a binary system for gender is flawed. This hierarchy that is created and reinstated each time we make a conscience choice between “male or female” causes us literally have to drag our way through our stereotypical gender norms in order to become and present ourselves as male or female. This policing of our bodies which Michel Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*, is a product of the power structures implemented by the state in order to insure that its population conforms to a set of societal norms. We internalize this normalization to such a degree that we “discipline” our bodies due to these apparatuses¹. These apparatuses can be “taken over” by institutions such as correction facilities or jails, schools, hospitals, and other areas of authority in our lives and so
when our world is being dictated to that extent, we then internalize the power becoming our own corrections officer.

Louis Althusser introduces us to these apparatuses in his essay, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”. Althusser separates the State Apparatus into two sections, one being the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the other being the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The RSA encompasses things like the military, police and government, whereas the ISA contains things like education, religion and family. The RSA is fundamentally different from the ISAs for two reasons, the first being that the RSA is strictly in the public domain whereas the ISAs can exist in both the public and private domain. The second difference is that, “the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatus functions by ideology”\(^2\). Althusser furthers this statement by saying that the RSA truly functions by both violence as well as ideology since no apparatus can function by one alone. Therefore, conversely, the ISAs function primarily by ideology and secondarily by violence, although most of this violence is usually internal to the apparatus. This violence within the structures of education, religion, family, etc, is what causes us to internalize and self-regulate our expressions.

This violence is what causes us to pause for a moment. And during these pauses we must calculate our next choices that will call into question our past choices and then define what we wish to put ourselves through. As a woman, or trans-gender, or homosexual, or basically anything other than straight white male
(and those who can pass as straight white male) are immune to this line of doubt. Their scripted gender does not include violence being done unto them for dressing a certain way, or walking a certain way. On the other hand for those being oppressed, women, people of color, the non-conforming bodies, we know the script, we have heard it, seen it, and probably have experienced it by now numerous times. The violence can range from a “simple” stare to physically being beat to death, so how does an oppressed body with a mind constructed by a society oppressing its own body have a chance to actually find some interruption to these social norms?

In “Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention”, Sharon Marcus discusses how disrupting the gendered scripts of rape is an effective method to prevent sexual violence. Marcus defines rape as “scripted interaction which takes place in language and can be understood in terms of conditional masculinity and femininity as well as other gender inequalities inscribed before an individual instance of rape”. Marcus also criticizes the perspective held by Hawkesworth and other thinkers who believe that “rape has always already occurred and women are always either already raped or already rapable”. The narrative goes that rape is an act that has always happened and an act which women should be in constant fear, however, Marcus believes it is rather a result of men and women blindly following gendered stereotypes. By following the scripts, women and men fall into a vicious cycle that can lead to even more violence and abuse. By following these scripts, men and women demonstrate how their respective gendered roles are a performance
and they are the casted actors. These gendered scripts already place women in a position of vulnerability where men are capable of taking advantage of women and asserting their power through any means, one being rape.

If we think of rape as any type of violence and instead place the normative body (straight white male and all who can pass as such) in the place of men and for women, we categorize all others (those who the violence is done unto), Marcus’ theory of the rape script lays out the subjectivity of the normative body versus the objectivity of all other bodies. Marcus writes “the gendered grammar of violence predicates men as the objects of violence and the operators of its tools, and predicates women as the objects of violence and subjects of fear.” These narratives are already giving the two bodies a specific role with an expectation of violence and objectivity. In essence, men or the normative bodies are given the power over women or the non-normative bodies, leaving these bodies to assume the passive, submissive role.

Marcus wrote her rape prevention theory in 1992 and still today this narrative of the objective body being expected to live in fear is prevalent. Any non-straight white male body is expected to encounter gendered violence and even taught to expect it. I find it even more troubling how society treats gendered violence such as rape. This is coming from my own experience with rape prevention. I was taught to fear rape more than to fear being killed. And it took being in this class to figure out that I was taught to fear rape more so than death because my body is worth more to society than my life. The rape of my body is deemed more violent and
more horrendous than the ending of my life and that to me is completely horrifying. As an objective body, I am taught to fear losing my body more than my life. According to Marcus, our society focuses on women and rape, instead of men and rape where women are rapable, deserve it, provoke it, are ashamed of it etc. and these are all things that perpetuate rape.

The way we, as a society, place the blame of gendered violence on the victim perpetuates the fact that these victims have to call into question their daily choices. The police and legal system do not help either. These structures of power offer post intervention and protection but only if the victim is even deemed a victim. As a woman, homosexual, bisexual, transgender, again any other individual other than the unmarked straight white male, the probability of being believed and then supported through the process is very low. Rape victims are expected to recount exactly second by second what happened and if one detail, no matter how small, does not match up with their story, they are immediately discredited. But let’s not forget this individual just went through a very traumatic experience and so to be asked to recall in such specific detail that moment can be quite the challenge. And as another member of the class stated, the police won’t file a case if it is not “bad enough”. If the victim is not hurt enough or traumatized enough then there is no case. And who is left to make that judgment, a police officer. An officer of the law who is a product of the very same system that perpetuates the gendered violence against non-conforming bodies, that objectifies bodies that are not straight, white, male, that blames the victim and
expects the victim to assume responsibility from the moment they got dressed that morning in an attire that provoked this violence. It is in these moments when the victim has paused to question their choices that we can look at language to better understand the culture norms that produce gendered violence.

Marcus uses the language of rape and calls into question how rape is enabled by narratives and cultural scripts. Gender roles expect men to be masculine, dominant and aggressive, while women are expected to be passive, quiet, and obedient. Thus, in order to prevent rape, women must defy gender scripts by resisting self-defeating notions of polite feminine speech and develop physical self-defense tactics. By breaking silence, women may be able to intervene, and recover agency and power. Additionally, Marcus highlights the presence of speech in rape. Most rapists use verbal and physical aggression, so it is important to focus on the power of language. This is also true for all types of gendered violence, where language plays a large part in the taunting and harassing of the individual. The “Continuum Theory” links language in rape where obscene language and other milder acts of sexual harassment are considered equivalent to rape. The problem with this theory is that it substitutes threats of rape as rape itself. This inevitably closes the gap between threat and rape, a gap where women can attempt to intervene. Thus, Marcus introduces the “Narrative of Rape.” She describes how rape takes place in scripted interactions within language based on masculinity/femininity. Unlike the “Continuum Theory”, this approach allows room for intervention. Scripts are social structures that inscribe men and
women inequalities, and allow rape to occur. Marcus uses patriarchy as an example because it is defined by masculine power and feminine powerlessness. Thus, rape is one of society’s ways of feminizing women and non-conforming bodies, or “keeping women in their place.” By defining rape as scripted, and therefore outlining specific cultural roles/expectations, we create a gap between the script and the performer, allowing an area of intervention.

Marcus describes the gendered grammar of violence. Grammar assigns rules and places people in positions within a script. Thus, gendered grammar places men as the operators of tools (power), and makes women the objects of violence and subjects of fear. Rape scripts assign women a disadvantageous script role because it makes women an object, not a person, and thus without power, agency, and is completely stripped of the self and rendered defenseless. Rape scripts also generate massive fear which is passed down from mothers to daughters and forces restrictions where women stay inside, and don’t go places alone or at night. This feeds into male power and enables rape culture. Thus, Marcus focuses on prevention. She wants to develop a feminist discourse that rewrites rape scripts, and inevitably cultural scripts. By doing this, she wants to put into the script what it excludes: women’s will, agency, and capacity for violence.

Nao Bustamente’s “Indig/urrito” demonstrated in performance what Marcus demonstrated in her writing. Bustamente’s work used parody and emphasized the gender and ethnic stereotypes in her performance. She not only was
performing but she asked her audience to perform with her. In Indig/urrito, she offered absolution, to white male audience members, from the sin of 500 years of colonial oppression. The method to get absolution though was to take a bite of her strap-on vegetarian burrito/dildo.

As if reading straight from the gendered scripts Marcus talks about, Bustamente demonstrates that gendered violence (and ethnic violence) occurs with body and language. Bustamente used stereotypical taunts used by males when receiving oral sex from while also making the participants kneel before her and use only their mouths. This act performs the scripts of rape Marcus writes about but in a drag or camp type of performance. Because it is a woman who is taking the role of the subjective body, she is able to make a drag like performance out of masculinity. Bustamente hyper-emphasizes her masculinity and draws attention to the violence being performance to an objective body by making the objective body a white male. She makes the powerful the powerless and does so with parody so that the audience laughs and does not turn against her for having called out their flawed societal norms. Her performance demonstrated the extent of the violence done unto other bodies because of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. She captured the audience and also had them participating in the violence. They became society and demonstrated how the powerful (represented by Bustamente) can mockingly violate others and society just laughs.

Bustamente’s participants became the objectified bodies, docile, powerless, and voiceless. She stripped them of their agency
and will all while asking them to repent for their sins (of past ancestors). Her piece captures so much more than what it was about, she brilliantly recreated society and parodied the unmistakable gendered scripts we expect from males and females.

As a society, we have internalized and disciplined our bodies to perform the gendered scripts laid out before us. And only when the objectified body questions why it has to perform a certain way and expect certain violence and live in fear, do we start to see the script being paused and possibly re-scripted. We need to call into question why some bodies are expected to victimize themselves when making daily choices and why those oppressed bodies are then blamed for the choices of the others, of the culture. Instead we should throw the script away and allow for each individual to decide how they wish to write and live their life and perform in their body.

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Endnotes

6 Nao Bustamante’s “Indig/urrito” [Video file].
Her Kind
(for Abimbola Adedeji)

Gabriel Bamgbose

She will always leave
the door of her heart ajar
for me to badge in and out at will
caring not if I mess up
or if I make up
she confessed she cast the key
into the deep
un-thoughtfully
un-knowingly
just for my sake alone
be who has not her kind
would not value her kind

She will always adjust
my collar where no wicked eyes
can inspect and find a chink
from which they can tear
down my lofty linen
she knows too well
I am a restless lad
yet she pats me on the back
to find my strength in my wily Self
he who has not her kind
would not value her kind

She will always trap
my hands down
when my wily wings
are impatient for a fatal flight
she will look into my eyes
and give me that touch
that will clip my wings
before they carry me away
like a dragon fly
heading for the wrath
of the mid-night children
he who has not her kind
would not value her kind

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The Writing of Otherness and its Discontents
Rachel Laryea

When liberal whites fail to understand how they can and/or do embody white supremacist values and beliefs even though they may not embrace racism as prejudice or domination (especially domination that involves coercive control), they cannot recognize the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure of racist domination and oppression that they wish to see eradicated. – bell hooks, 1989

With the reflexive turn in the seventies and eighties in the fields of sociology and anthropology a push for the scholar’s recognition of their positionality as a researcher existing in spaces of otherness, academics in the fields of social and cultural analysis have become more inclined to not only tell the story of their subjects candidly, but also pay attention to how their own lived experience intersects, or not, with the lives of those they study. Although this emphasis on reflexivity is essential to the processes of research and scholarship, I question whether a heightened sense of reflexivity is enough to adequately speak to and produce scholarship on the lived experience of subjects who lack any tangible commonalities, like race, class and gender which significantly impact how one navigates the world, with the researcher. Although scholarship can be a means for spurring social awareness and cultural competency primarily among peoples within academia, we cannot forget that the possibility for the proliferation of oppressive power structures, the furthering of an us/them dichotomy, and the reproduction of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy are possible consequences of the research methods used today. Works by anthropologist Carol Stack, sociologist Mitch
Duncier and journalist Katherine Boo all illuminate challenges brought forth by the practice of urban ethnography, but also provide my platform for critical critique of the ways in which otherness is constructed. Ultimately, an awareness of the distance, inevitably created by the subject and researcher, and shared commonality, by way of lived experience, between the two parties is part and parcel to one’s earned right and ability to tell the story of others.

In *All Our Kin*, published in 1974, Stack grapples with her positionality as a young, white woman conducting research on black family life, and the potential consequences of that relationship in the sixties. One salient question Stack asks, which is applicable to the broader issue of representation at large, is “Is it possible for an outsider who symbolizes the dominant culture to enter a black community, win the community’s participation and approval, acquire reliable data, and judge its reliability?” The answer is not simple. Although for every standard there is bound to be an exception, the white lived experience usually varies starkly from the black lived experience. The historically rooted negative effects of white dominant culture’s influence in minority spaces cannot be disregarded. Stack recognizes the struggle for white researchers to understand the impact of institutional racism on black life, and in so doing, cites civil rights activist and sociologist Joyce Ladner:

The relationship between the researcher and his subjects, by definition, resembles that of the oppressor and the oppressed, because it is the oppressor who defines the
problem, the nature of the research and, to some extent, the quality of the interaction between him and his subjects. This inability to understand and research the fundamental problem—neo-colonialism—prevents most social researchers from being able accurately to observe and analyze black life and culture and the impact racism and oppression has upon Blacks.³

To further expand on Ladner’s thoughts and to use her language, I would argue that it is also the “oppressor” who defines the ways in which the data is articulated and written into scholarship for the academy, which speaks to an enormous amount of control placed in the hands of the oppressor rather than in the hands of the oppressed. This process further perpetuates an us/them dichotomy that exists in front of the backdrop of a racially stratified society, inculcated with pre-conceived notions of whiteness and blackness, ideologies coloured with the vestiges of the cycle of oppression and neo-colonialism. Stack argues that “Members of a culture have biases that affect their perceptions of themselves and their life ways; outsiders bring biases to the cultures they study” and inversely, researchers are molded by the biases and perceptions harbored by their subjects.⁴ Although this can be true and Stack’s own perceptions were reassembled through her work with the people in The Flats, this notion does not mean that the external forces impacting her lived experience were changed to perfectly match that of the people living in The Flats. In this particular instance, social and cultural analysis at its core should require an
understanding of what it *feels* like to navigate an economically, socially and racially stratified world as a disadvantaged person of color, not simply what it *looks* like through observation.

Duneier as a white male sociologist, engaged in ethnographic research in the nineties, is forced to confront challenges similar to Stack, as posed by his work in relation to power, control, and just representation of a lived experience unlike his own. In reference to how he himself was perceived by his subjects, primarily black book sellers on New York City sidewalks, Duneier states, “My designation was Mitch. This seemed to have a variety of changing meanings, including: a naïve white man who could himself be exploited for ‘loans’ of small change and dollar bills; a Jew who was going to make a lot of money off the stories of people working the streets; a white writer who was trying to ‘state the truth about what was going on.’”

It is important to pay particular attention to the first two descriptions because they shed light on the ways in which existing power relations can be conceptualized between the oppressor and the oppressed. Duneier is portrayed as either a privileged white male naively trying to navigate this black community, or as someone who can exploit the lived experiences of others. Although Duneier claims that he is “committed to the idea that the voices of the people on Sixth Avenue need to be heard,” he recognizes that at times the trust he thought he had “developed was nothing more than an illusion: deep suspicion lingered despite an appearance of trust. In some cases, perhaps it always will. Surely it takes more than goodwill to transcend distrust that comes out of a complex history.”
Duneier and Stack feel the permanence of the complex history and the difficulty of disavowing that history. Duneier suggests that there was incredible desire for the people highlighted in his book to “ask their own questions, [and] have their own topics addressed and recognized.”8 Perhaps in the very desires of his subjects lay the solution; those who have lived the story should be those responsible for bringing that story to the forefront by any means necessary.

In addition to critiquing Duneier and Stack’s own critique of the possible limits to their methodology, I am equally intrigued by the problematic nature of Katherine Boo’s representation of the lives of people in poverty, particularly those living in the slums, in her recent book *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, where she aims to highlight the interconnected lives of several residents who inhabit the slums of Mumbai, India. Boo, a white female investigative journalist, not an ethnographer or sociologist by trade, creates a violent, nearly fictionalized, representation of her subjects. Her work calls into question the ethics of representation and whether or not portraying the lived experience of the poorest of the poor through a fantastical narrative is destructive to her cause of raising levels of social awareness and cultural competency, as someone existing outside of these systemic structures in which poverty is proliferated. Boo neglects the tedious work necessary for being transparent about her positionality, her evidence, and the struggle to achieve a meaningful level of interconnectivity between her lived experience and her subjects. Ultimately, her method is just as
dangerous, if not more, as the perpetuation of the oppressive power structures underpinning the works of Duneier and Stack. As a Social & Cultural Analysis student myself, newly acquainted with the methods and ideologies of urban ethnography and the ongoing conversation about ethical representation in the fields of anthropology and sociology, my critique of Duneier, Stack, and Boo may seem a bit unforgiving. However, I think a call to action, and a reformation of method is necessary. At the crux of this ongoing debate about representation is the question of power; who gets to speak for themselves and who gets to speak for others? Regardless of the consent of participants, should mass representation even be allowed? If we are both mindful of the oppressive history that fashions both the present and future, as well as the limits to effectively speaking to, theorizing, and writing about the lived experience of those who occupy a different race and class category, we can recognize that power should lie with the people to tell their own stories.\(^9\)

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**Endnotes**

There is a substantial literature on the reflexive turn, the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and the varied problems that can arise given a researcher’s positionality to his or her subjects. For example, anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod writes about what it means to be a “Halfie” who has insight into a particular demographic of people because of a shared identity, but also is a foreigner to that group of people because of another personal identifier. Anthropologist John Jackson also addresses questions surrounding representation in some of his work that unpacks his positionality as a black man researching urban environments and communities.