notes
on a symposium
Undisciplined 2015
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on a symposium

A collection of
ponderings | grappling | perspectives
in response to:

Queen’s University
Cultural Studies Graduate Symposium

2015
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In the months leading up to Undisciplined 2015: Queen’s University Cultural Studies Graduate Symposium, the student organizing committee wrestled with the many challenges inherent to putting on an event that foregrounds the ‘messiness’ of critical scholarship. Why elect to celebrate messiness? As Stuart Hall notes, cultural studies is “an adaptation to its terrain...a conjectural practice. It has always developed from a different matrix of interdisciplinary studies and disciplines” (1990, 11). When the activist or scholar seeks out and mobilizes the best possible tools for understanding a given political terrain regardless of source, they are wading into messy territory. While suspicion of academic canonical knowledges appears in much of the critical work occurring within the disciplines, scholarship that strives to locate itself within this messiness is quite rare. And so, the opportunity to assemble young scholars who engage in this rare practice—who seek out the discomfort of unfinished-ness—was an incredibly exciting prospect.

From the start, “undisciplined” felt an appropriate theme for this year’s symposium re-launch. In retrospect, however, the name was not without issues. First of all, the work presented at Undisciplined 2015 was unequivocally the product of dedication, hard work, and, you guessed it: discipline. The program included activists engaged in a diverse array of sociopolitical struggles, artists and cultural producers who had spent years developing their craft, academics grappling with theoretical and empirical texts, and, as was most often the case, work that demonstrated some combination of the three. Presenters drew on the disciplines and used them as reference points in order to engage in critique, reinforcing Hall’s claim that cultural studies, “was never a question of which disciplines would contribute to the development of this field, but of how one could decenter or destabilize a series of interdisciplinary fields.” (1990, 16).
If Undisciplined 2015’s content was a product of disciplined work, and if it critically engaged with hegemonic academic disciplines, why select “undisciplined” as a theme rather than more established terms like “interdisciplinary,” “multidisciplinary,” or “transdisciplinary?”

In response to that question, I pose another: could “undisciplined” be a mood or feeling that we continually strive for in our scholarship? Conceptualizing “undisciplinarity” in this way goes beyond a procedural approach or fixed roadmap to engaging with the disciplines—be it through a commitment to a single discipline, to combining disciplinary knowledges, or to abandoning the disciplines altogether. To conceptualize “undisciplinarity” as a mood or feeling that shapes our work is to talk, rather, of aesthetics, ethics, and passion, and of energy and liveliness. It’s about fostering an affective atmosphere that not only welcomes critical scholarship that wades through this messiness, but also one that encourages us to linger there for a while, together. Undisciplined 2015 was our attempt to cultivate this community and atmosphere.

In the following pages, we offer a sampling of the conversations had at Undisciplined 2015. Our presenters came from various programs and departments at Queen’s University, as well as from other academic institutions throughout Canada. The discussions yielded were eclectic. Whether engaging in conversations on popular media or contemporary notions of spirituality, debating the role of cultural production in the university or the merits of a cultural studies approach to public pedagogy, this year’s panels, together, strove to cultivate and champion an atmosphere of “undisciplinarity”—an atmosphere that invited participants to embrace the fact that important scholarship is, if anything, always a bit messy.

I write this on behalf of the entire Undisciplined 2015 Collective:
Lois Klassen | Poyraz Kolluoğlu | Nicole MacDougall | Carina Magazzeni
Jamie McKenzie-Naish | Adam Saifer | Amanda White

Works Cited

Conferences matter. They matter not only because they give us an opportunity to write and read and present but also because they give us an opportunity to disagree and agree in person with all the immediacy that face-to-face encounters provide and that e-mailing conspicuously lacks. This exchange is the nearly abandoned product of four months of e-mailing back and forth in an attempt to speak to the fruitful exchange we had over lunch at Undisciplined.

In his presentation “On the Lived Nature of Contemporary Spirituality,” Galen made a case for methodologies that take account of the inherent complexity embedded within the ‘Spiritual but not Religious’ discourse (SBNR). More specifically, he argued that because terms such as “religion” and “spirituality” can be considered floating signifiers, we should be wary of any and all essentialist accounts of contemporary spirituality. At the same time, however, he argued that when individuals call themselves SBNR, they are often (although not always) unconsciously invoking a specific strand of Liberal Religion (Schmidt 2006)—one that belongs to its own porous and multifaceted tradition. Thus, Galen suggested that those who call themselves SBNR might not be so ‘not religious’ after all.

1 The discourse surrounding SBNRs is full of both controversy and contention. Some scholars argue, for example, that ‘spirituality’ is a byproduct of the narcissistic culture that saturates the west (Bruce 2002; Webster 2012), or that, at its worst, it is simply a rebranding of religion in order to support consumer culture and the ideology of late-capitalism (Lau 2000; Carrette and King 2005; Martin 2014). Conversely, there are those who believe we are seeing the emergence of a ‘progressive spirituality’ that is potentially transformative and socially conscious (Lynch 2005; Heelas 2008).

2 “Religion” and “Spirituality” may mean many different things to different people — they have no essential meaning. For more on the ‘signifier-signified’ relation see Strauss (1987).
Ian approached Galen, sandwich in hand, immediately after the session to comment on his overall approach. Basically, Ian agreed with Galen but noticed that he framed his paper as a response to older essentialist accounts that depict SBNR individuals as shallow, politically apathetic navel-gazers precisely because they lack a coherent underlying spiritual outlook or tradition. By identifying an underlying (if porous and multi-faceted) liberal religious tradition for people who call themselves SBNR, Galen seemed to be accepting the essentialist terms of the debate. “Why do SBNR individuals need a tradition?” Ian asked. “Why can’t SBNR individuals be inveterate bricoleurs and still be worthy of academic attention?”

Galen ate the scrumptious-looking (and tasting) brownie he was holding, took a deep breath and replied. He told Ian that he was right to point out the seeming hypocrisy, but that things were not so simple. Yes, he sought to problematize older essentialist accounts of SBNR by drawing attention to the complexity inherent in the discourse, while at the same time conceding that in many cases SBNRs were invoking a specific ideological strand—one informed by the long-standing tradition of liberal religion in America. However, despite appearances, it wasn’t the case that he was seeking to replace one essentialist account with another. Rather, his intentions were twofold: 1) he wanted to debunk the notion that all SBNRs were simply wholesale products of capitalist ideology—void of any real concern for social justice—while at the same time honouring the important work done in the field of social theory on the role Ideology plays in the construction of an individual’s subjectivity (thus for him to suggest that SBNR entailed no specific ideological strands whatsoever—strands that would have to come from some tradition or another—seemed intellectually disingenuous); and 2) he wanted to do this while sticking to his original thesis.

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3 Craig Martin (2014) argues that what goes by “spirituality” in the contemporary West—what he calls “the opiate of the bourgeoisie” (157)—entails/enforces four ideological strands of late-capitalism: quietism, consumerism, the cultivation of an ethic of productivity, and the assignment of responsibility to the individual.

4 Specifically as it relates to those schools of thought often associated/attributed with/to Karl Marx.

Thus Galen contended that despite the fact that specific traditions inform and shape an individual’s “spirituality,” scholars must also always account for the crucial roles played by agency, socio-cultural context, positionality, and biography in doing so as well. We might then say that rather than completely rejecting the essentialist terms of the debate, Galen sought to problematize and complicate them.

4.

As we both chewed our respective food, we came to recognize that our disagreement (if one could call it that) derived from our having different (although not competing) interests. Ian’s frustration with essentialist accounts arose from their implied dismissal of time spent studying the complicated, contradictory, and confused beliefs and practices of individuals—precisely what he himself held a vested interest in. Because Ian’s research focuses on the ways dominant conceptualizations of modernity as disenchanted privilege some engagements with supra-rational beliefs (i.e. those associated with established religious traditions), while ignoring others (i.e. those associated with magic and superstition), he sought to defend his right to give scholarly attention to individual rituals, practices and beliefs without at the same time having to assert that there existed some underlying tradition to which these individuals subscribed. Galen’s interests, on the other hand, were less centred on what should or should not be worthy of academic attention (although he does consider this important), and more on what scholars have previously said about SBNRs. He aimed to challenge the many criticisms of SBNRs that seem to dominate the academic discourse surrounding them, and in the process, outline what he saw as the appropriate way to study them. Thus, in the end, like many intellectual disagreements (although of course not all) it was not so much a disagreement as a matter of differing research interests. And upon finally finishing our lunches, we came to a mutual agreement that we were both right.
Maya Stitski  
Feminism, Politics, and Emancipation: Undoing Culture Through Hip Hop  

During my presentation at Undisciplined 2015, I shared my current scholarly findings that inform my doctoral dissertation (currently a “work in progress”). My project addresses the overlapping themes of feminism, hegemony, and culture, and draws on various disciplines, including cultural studies, gender studies, critical race studies, and black studies, in order to undo “culture” as a theoretical category. I first explore how many Western feminist theories inadvertently cast “cultural identity” as a racially stable category (in effect homogenizing non-Western women as a static, ahistorical, and self-explanatory category). I then draw on interdisciplinary theories of culture put forth by scholars such as Said, Spivak, Bhabha, hooks, Fanon, Hartman, Gilroy, and Hall, and focus on the ways that cultural identities emerge out of an intellectual history that depends on non-linear coalitions that function and rely on multiplicities (in other words, heterogeneous, complex, relational, ever-changing and contradictory social entities). Thus, I establish culture as an inherently unknowable category.
This vision of culture, I argue, will contribute to theoretical work that challenges structures of power in new ways precisely because it demands that we continually learn and engage with the unknown (rather than our understanding of cultural identity, and thus emancipation) through structures that seek to, and claim to, make gender and cultural politics knowable and transparent. I argue that creative works—specifically black popular culture and hip hop lyrics—are useful sites that reject unified, essential, and universalizing connotations of race and culture. The complicated relationship between mainstream Western feminism and hip hop is symptomatic of the ongoing discursive patterns that produce culture as a stable, ahistorical, and always already racialized category (Wynter 2003). Black feminist scholars such as Joan Morgan and Patricia Hill Collins address the problematic and underlying tension between feminism and the racial politics of hip hop. However, through hip hop, black men and women discuss notions of race and gender with a persistence that cannot be ignored. As Nas raps, “For every struggle, every strip, and every ghetto/For every black man totin’ inner pain and heavy metal,” and Mos Def recognizes, “The white unemployment rate? It’s nearly more than triple for blacks,” rappers identify a violent racialized oppression through structural everyday practices of racism that are particularly rampant and profitable in the 0.

The radical innovativeness of hip hop lyrics and black popular culture will be integral to my thesis, and will be analyzed to genuinely revise feminist thought of culture, gender, and emancipation, as hip hop exists outside of what is traditionally and normally valued as “knowledge.” In his song “Hip Hop is Dead,” Nas raps, “most intellectuals will only half listen,” while asserting in “Halftime”: “I’m an intellectual.” In The Fugees song “Zealots,” Lauryn Hill calls her raps, “logic and theory.” Hip hop is seen as an unconventional or “unnatural” form of life-writing, since blackness constitutes hip hop’s foundations.
My thesis argues that hip hop music can and does comment on, criticize, challenge, and produce new ideas of being in a gendered and racialized society that seeks to impose deeply troubling, and intensely laborious, false identities on racialized and marginalized communities. As Sylvia Wynter and Fanon argue, invention and creative text are key to developing an alternative and original way to re-think the articulation and re-articulation of culture. Thus, my thesis looks to the radical innovations that black popular culture and hip hop music present to deeply and fundamentally alter feminist thought of culture, gender, and emancipation.

Works Cited


Spencer Revoy

Shiny Black Boxes: Notes on the User-Friendly Interface

The central problem of the digital interface is a multifaceted one of representation: how best to represent the analog world through the digital medium; how best to represent the subjects who use intimate interfaces, like social media, or otherwise store personal information online and invest themselves into cyberspace; whether it is better to recreate the analog as closely as possible or conceptualize new digital forms for previously analog tasks; and how best to represent previously immaterial concepts, like social interaction, in a digital material form. Everything that runs through the interface, which is to say the vast majority of institutions, people and social forms in the global north, is not only mediated but constituted by the design of an interface.

Facebook illustrates this problem of representation well because its goal in designing its interface is to approximate abstract concepts—sociality and self-expression—that do not have material analog referents in the sense that Photoshop or Microsoft Paint do, digitally recreating the structure of a canvas and palette in a fairly straightforward, if augmented, manner. Facebook therefore exists in a particularly important class of interfaces that reshape the world as software becomes more central to living as such because they are not bound by any pre-existing
conceptions of how they ought to look. Facebook’s interface, rather than recreating something analog in a digital space, instead represents a new structure of social relations and subjective self-expression in a digital space.

However, like most software, Facebook’s interface only displays the promised results of its software and the mechanisms to display and receive information necessary for its successful function, ostensibly in a convenient and attractive format. This design logic does not account for the processes which allow the interface to function or acknowledge the possibility of undesirable results, whether an error in the code or worse. Under this design, the functioning of Facebook is essentially unperceivable to users, vanished behind an interface that remains predictable and controllable for users. This representational strategy persists in spite of the ever-growing public awareness of the many events which occur beyond the scope of Facebook’s functional promises to its users, such as intricate mass surveillance by Facebook and its affiliates, privacy breaches, data leaks and many other incidents that remain beyond the perception of the Facebook user because of the design of the interface.

Facebook’s interface design strategy is not uncommon, it is in fact representative of the prevailing wisdom of interface design; indeed, a total lack of representation where the instrumental elements of software are concerned is a hallmark of user-friendly design. Because of the predominance of user-friendliness, the production of computational space has been such that most of the action of cyberspace is imperceptible and inaccessible to the vast majority of users, whether it is algorithmic sortation, the functioning of code, the storing of information in databases, the movement of data across different servers as it is uploaded and downloaded, etc... However, as interfaces have been deployed in increasingly influential and ubiquitous ways throughout society, it has been questioned as to whether this hyper-simplification of the action of software, this insistent repression of any representation of process or instrumentality, is useful and convenient or a dangerous fantasy that inures interface users to the dangers of the networked world. This line of thought has only intensified as the post-Snowden awareness of corporate and governmental mass surveillance has grown. It is useful and, to my view, necessary to consider the role of the user-friendly interface in such programs, as well as the paradigm of user-friendliness itself.
Whether it is Facebook’s data collection or the National Security Administration (NSA)’s various surveillance systems, all subterfuge in cyberspace benefits from the near-wholesale repression of meaningful information that achieving the simplistic predictability of user-friendliness necessitates.

Under the paradigm of user-friendliness, the norms of software design have calcified to preclude any acknowledgment of the politics of software, the various exchanges of systems on- and offline that enable the conveniences and potentiate the dangers of cyberspace today. This has left the landscape of software appearing as a set of stable media interfaces that all centre the user in a position of control. However, this composition of an ideal cyberspace belies the chaotic political reality of cyberspace as a galaxy of varyingly empowered actors, both human and machine, that can (and do) effectuate programs of surveillance, theft, privacy invasion, voyeurism and other forms of violence on varying scales.

None of these actions or actors are perceptible, however, because the systems through which they operate, i.e. the instruments of cyberspace, such as databases where many hacks occur, are largely unrepresented to users. The now-infamous revelations by Edward Snowden that the NSA had used a secret court to force the telecom Verizon to allow it access to all customer metadata, and that this was an occurrence which was imperceptible to every customer regardless of the phone or interface used, speaks to the pervasive danger of user-friendly design and its strategy of near-total information repression. The scale of this danger magnifies as interfaces become enmeshed with more intimate, detailed, and constant streams of data from humans whose lives grow increasingly inseparable from software.
Abecé (2014), directed by Diana Montero, opens with a squeal of protest from a young boy. The boy is in a battle of wills with Leoneidi, a young woman whose frustrated face fills the screen. She playfully slaps the boy’s arms and legs and insists that he not bite her—and not wake the baby. The boy and Leoneidi, with the infant named Jesús and the baby’s father Maykel, are pictured as a nuclear family whose daily activities, in and around their tiny wooden house, are seen between short interview segments. Through Leoneidi’s shy responses we find out that she is a twelve-year-old mother whose passion for Maykel caused her to lose contact with her family, and to be hospitalized for emotional turmoil alongside the pregnancy. Montero’s interviews allow us long views of Leoneidi in thought. She quietly admits that she is wistful about returning to school in order to get her life back on track, and that she favours mathematics, of which “170” is the largest number she can identify.

Despite the video’s title, ABC’s are not discussed. But the title, combined with the final segment concerning Leoneidi’s desire for learning numbers, links this film to an enduring revolutionary trope of Cuban cinema. Similar to Ernesto Daranas’s recent Conducta (English–Behaviour) (2014), a feature-length drama about an aging teacher whose passion for education is fatefully enmeshed with her concern for the social welfare of her least privileged students, Montero’s Abecé both honours and troubles the longstanding identification of education and literacy to Cuba’s revolutionary tenacity.
These movies cast a referential nod to the 1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign during which over a hundred thousand young people (aged 10-19) volunteered to bring literacy lessons into the homes of mostly rural Cubans, in the Sierra Maestra and throughout the island. Signified by images of urban youth deployed in revolutionary garb, this year-long campaign is historicized as eradicating illiteracy and promoting educational access in Cuba. Another recent documentary, *Maestra* (English—Teacher) (2012) by Catherine Murphy, recalls the emancipatory effect of the campaign on the young women who were in the majority of the volunteers. Heroically travelling brigade-style away from their urban families, many recounted how the campaign inspired them to continue in academic and professional careers.¹

But within the small wooden house and yard pictured in *Abecé*, Cuban education is woefully incomplete and compromised. According to Diana Montero, the demands of motherhood are an unavoidable condition for many teenage women in Sierra Maestra. As a student filmmaker of Cuba’s famed Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), she was given rare access to this isolated family. Montero’s appearance at Undisciplined Graduate Symposium 2015 was facilitated by Queen’s Master’s student, Jessica Burgess, who is actively researching emergent filmmaking in Cuba.

¹ While visiting Havana with Queen’s University students in Global Development Studies (DEVS 305) “Cuban Culture and Society” I heard three former *Maestras*, now around 70 years old, candidly describe how the campaign experience also offered young women a kind of of sexual emancipation, enabled in part by their highly respected and socially supported roles as educators.
My fieldwork investigations in Havana, Cuba involved meeting and speaking with young, independent Cuban filmmakers. The artists I spoke with began to help me understand the unique production practices behind their works. These filmmakers develop their projects separately from the state-run Cuban Film Institute known as the ICAIC. The ICAIC established its legacy as the sole producer and distributor of Cuban film after the revolution in 1959. In more recent history it has not been able to sustain the growing rate of young filmmakers. However, the state has not altered the centralized model causing artists to seek out alternative modes of production and distribution in order to have their stories heard. When I asked these young filmmakers why they dedicated themselves to filmmaking they often responded with “Por Amor al Arte,” meaning “for the love of art.” Despite the significant economic, technical and ideological constraints they experience while attempting to create film in Cuba, they continue to invent new ways to produce film outside of the ICAIC.

One of the goals I have for my research is to expose more audiences to the images and stories captured by young Cuban filmmakers. At this year’s Undisciplined Symposium, I had the opportunity to discuss how images represent, and are informed by, young filmmakers’ interpretations of everyday life, identity, and futurity with Diana Montero. I met with Montero in Havana this past January for my research. After our interview she revealed that she had just been accepted to Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec on a six-month research scholarship for Latin American students. Due to a history of strict restrictions and high costs for travel, I was excited at the possibility of having Montero come to Queen’s and speak about her work.

At the conference we screened Montero’s film Abecé, a short documentary shot in Sierra Maestra, Cuba. The film follows a twelve-year old girl who has just given birth to her first child, as she struggles to adapt to her new role as wife and mother. Montero was able to engage in a discussion with the audience both about her filmmaking process and the story itself. The purpose of this presentation was to allow Montero
to discuss her aspirations for the future of this documentary, and if and how these aspirations have been influenced by the challenges she has faced as a young filmmaker in Cuba such as: minimal funding for her projects, government restrictions on shooting in the Sierra Maestra where her film’s characters lived, and the constraints placed on the internet access needed to help her circulate the work in Festivals.

Diana’s subject matter and the images she presents engage with themes of gender, class, and education that for reasons of censorship have not historically appeared in mainstream Cuban media. As a film student at the International School of Film and Television in San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV), she articulated during the presentation that she was given the tools and encouragement to diversify her documentary practice, which is something especially unique to the film school’s community. However she stated that along with most young filmmakers, she struggles to insert herself into international distribution markets, having gained little knowledge from her studies of how the film industry is structured outside of Cuba.

Michelle Smith & Jessica Davey-Quantick

**Twilight of the Living Dead: Engaging Students with Cannibalism and Glitter**

In summer 2014, we instructed a course for the Enrichment Studies Unit at Queen’s geared towards students Grade 7-8 and 9-12 entitled *Twilight of the Living Dead*. By studying Zombies and Vampires, students received an overview of the history of two types of monsters, as well as the social and political themes and histories that created the various genres. Using these monsters as an entry point, we engaged students with themes focused on nihilism, the psychological effect of consumption, the definition of morality, feminism, gender identity, Marxism, Imperialism, decolonization, religious history, ethics, media studies, the banality of evil, bio politics and more. And they weren’t bored. By using popular culture we were able to address complex themes as well as enable students to identify current manifestations of academic theories in their everyday lives. Students then applied this knowledge through the creation of an Apocalypse survival plan and by playing our live-action interactive Zombie Game. The zombie game gave them the chance to viscerally experience and apply these theories. The game is a live-action role-play, the most twisted game of tag combined with a pick-your-own-adventure
novel you will ever play. Students are presented with a variety of ethical conundrums and scenarios, from simple decisions like who will lead the group, to more complex choices like would you eat a fellow player if it meant you gained a weapon. This was teaching by reverse engineering: students applied situations and then, in the de-brief afterwards, we elucidated how their own decisions reflected Cultural Studies theory.

Our presentation at Undisciplined focused on engaging students using popular culture. Often, when popular culture (whether references to TV or movies, or the liberal application of memes and gifs) are used to ‘engage’ students, it’s on a superficial level: an attention grabbing technique that often reads more as pandering and less as actual engagement. Our talk focused upon how we managed to use these attention-grabbing mediums (which are often glittery), to deepen understanding. It wasn’t just about the most popular gif we could find however; we achieved our goals by using an interdisciplinary method to deepen understanding. Doing true cultural work means engaging with the actual culture; and you cannot do that within the neat boundaries of a single discipline. By breaking those barriers, we’re able to reach deeper understandings both in our own work and for our students.
After a summer teaching about how zombies wanted to eat your face and vampires are conspiring to turn you into their bug-eating minions, we were left with insights as to how we can give credibility to non-traditional academic work and use popular culture as a tool to engage interest both as instructors, and in our own work. More importantly, we addressed how we can use the application of ideas—as through our interactive Zombie Game—to avoid boredom by allowing students to work through concepts viscerally. We were able to address heavy topics, including the Academic Scooby Gang—Foucault, Said, Marx, the gang’s all here! Students at multiple levels were able to understand the concepts, not because they were memorizing what had been written in a static piece of academic work, but because they were able to engage with the actual theories as living, changeable examples of cultural phenomena. Because we focused on not just the theory, but the application of it, they were able to understand how they can be involved in the continuing creation of the culture around them.

“...we will introduce students to Marxist theory and cannibalistic barbecues in The Walking Dead.”

Scholarship isn’t just restricted to the printed page or the academic cannon; it’s a living experience that incorporates multiplatform expressions... in other words, popular culture. But how do we extend academic gravitas to television, movies, and comic books? How can this extension help us within our own academic work as well as help to introduce students to advanced and complex ideas and allow them to not just understand the theoretical cannon but apply it today? We treat pop culture and the theoretical cannon with the same gravitas: in the same breath in our course we will introduce students to Marxist theory and cannibalistic barbecues in The Walking Dead. We’re not actually explicitly telling them we’re going to make these connections: we just do it. In this way, students are introduced to the material on the same level, and they, in turn, in their own thought and work will make those connections. And because we come to these theories through things they are already interested in, and are in fact already experts in (as they are already cultural producers in this realm every time they share a meme on Facebook), they are able to more readily understand theory that if introduced in isolation may have been overwhelming.
Shaina Humble
“Forts and Furs”: Challenging Colonial Narratives Through Children’s Play

Literary Studies is a field that has been conventionally defined by library-based research, but what happens when we explore our research questions outside the confines of the university? “Forts and Furs” is a summer camp game played annually by children in grades five and six while attending camp with their elementary schools. I personally attended this camp as a member of the spring school program, as a summer camper, and later as a counsellor; I was intrigued by the game “Forts and Furs” because camp is a space where there is the potential to have challenging discussions regarding Canadian history and our responsibilities in treaty relations. Built from the Alberta Social Studies curricula, the game is framed by the summer camp as a representation of the Canadian fur trade. Dividing the children into two teams (Nation of the Earth and Nation of the Sun), “Forts and Furs” requires children to participate in a variety of activities that are intended to reflect tasks from the fur trade era, including: collecting “furs” and trading with “The Fort” and “Wandering French Fur Traders.” Drawing from Philip Deloria’s concept of “playing Indian” and Daniel Francis’ concept of the “imaginary Indian,” my paper reads the game as text to argue that “Forts and Furs” disseminates a monovocal, colonial account of the Canadian master narrative. The summer camp’s monovocal narrative is read alongside Louise Halfe’s (Cree) book of poetry Blue Marrow to examine how Halfe’s polyvocal history complicates the monovocal history disseminated by the summer camp. Modeling the polyvocal style of Halfe’s text, and employing less traditional literary studies methodologies, I conducted two interviews: one with an Elder of the Stoney Nakoda Nation (Camp was formally located on the Nation’s reserve land and continues to be located on Treaty 7 territory) and another with the director of the summer camp program. I also drew from personal experiences as both a former camper and counsellor of the program. During my interview with the director of the camp program she suggested that the relationships between camp and the Stoney Nakoda Nation had “dwindled” in recent years. Drawing from the director’s identification of “dwindling” relationships, as well as the Elder’s suggestion that he would be open to talking to the camp further, my paper examines potential means...
of rekindling the relationships between camp and the Stoney Nakoda Nation. As part of rekindling this relationship, children would learn about their responsibilities as treaty relations and this would, one would hope, facilitate further discussions and actions beyond camp. Despite the removal of “Forts and Furs” from camp’s programing during the spring of 2014, I argue that the proposed decolonizing methodologies from the game can also be applied to other programming both within the camp and outside. Personally, my work during this project helped me to begin to think critically about my previous role in teaching and participating in the game “Forts and Furs,” as well as my role within the camp community.

**Joddi Alden**  
*A Reflection on Time and Resistance in Pinay, Balikbayan, Canadian*

There never seems to be enough time when presenting research at a conference. It is always a challenge to whittle down 100 or 200 pages into a clear and concise twenty (sometimes fifteen) minute presentation, and even when the deed has been done, and the conference notes sit neatly in a much-annotated and distinctly dog-eared pile on the podium, I still wonder if I have too much or too little material. With the Undisciplined Symposium arranged by the Cultural Studies Program at Queen’s University, this time it was the former issue that plagued me; no matter how many times I recited my notes, almost by rote, the timing of my presentation in real time did not seem to be as spot on as when I practiced in my bedroom in front of my mirror—*can I condense more than two years of my life into fifteen minutes?* The answer, of course, is yes—we (graduate students) have to, even if we silently hope in our minds for just a little more time so that we can explain just a little bit more.

During my presentation at the Undisciplined Symposium this past year, I wish I had had more time—not for myself, but for the women about whom I was speaking. I am a Master’s student in the Department of Gender Studies and I was deeply honoured to have been invited to present alongside such distinguished colleagues. To summarize, my project examines the transnational migration of Filipina women who labour as domestic workers in different nation-states; specifically, I interviewed women at different points in their migration journeys, charting their movements from rural areas in the Philippines, to urban areas in the
Philippines, to intermediate countries such as Hong Kong, and finally to destination countries such as Canada. One of the most important chapters in my thesis involves identifying several counterhegemonic techniques of resistance that Filipina women use in order to resist gender, race, and class inequalities during migration. These counter-hegemonic techniques are important because they combat the intersection of multiple oppressions that would ordinarily result in destitution or destruction. Not so with Filipina women. Time and time again, the political and social power of poorer racialized women has historically been underestimated by white settler colonies whose neoliberal reforms depend on the exploitation of gender, race, and class inequalities in order to make profit. Filipina women, along with many other racialized populations, resist this—they refuse to succumb. Why do we not see these women as theorists for political and social change? These women’s powerful voices can help us shape and understand global accountability; they are not fragile victims of global forces, but are transnational agents of change and subversion. If there was more time, and if there was one point I could have stressed over and over again in my presentation, it would have been this one. So, do not tighten your borders to these women, Canada...learn from them—they show us how to live, not die.

Stéfy McKnight
Tomboy Tools

Composed of manipulated found tools, the sculptural series Tomboy Tools unifies labour and craft to question cultural-ascribed ideas of gender performativity. These works contend with the ways particular objects and practices are gendered and located within a gender binary; while labour, construction, and tools are culturally recognized as masculine practices, domesticity and craft are normalized as feminine. This work challenges these gender binaries by juxtaposing socially familiar masculine practices and objects with cultural ideas of femininity through craft and design, encouraging viewers to question the ways in which objects and practices have been marked as male or female.
My hope with this work is that it can encourage conversation and contemplation, acting as a visual gateway to questions around gender performativity and creating a space in which viewers can discuss these issues. For example, during the question period following the *Cultural Production in an Academic Context* panel at Undisciplined, attendees questioned where the work was going, in terms of the history of feminist movements, as well as how these objects relate to gender performance today. Upon reflection, this discussion led me to imagine some of the ways in which this body of work could be critiqued or developed towards a more intersectional approach. Drawing from this discussion I would like you to engage alongside me in a process of further reflection.


There will be space for your thoughts, questions and comments in relation to this work. Some questions to consider include:

Do feminist issues change over time?
How can I better include a critical context or discussion to frame my artistic practice?
What else is missing from this conversation?
Andrew Rabyniuk
“I would like to take this opportunity to…”

Thank you. was a performance art project delivered in the manner of an academic lecture. The project addressed the practice and politics of expressing gratitude publicly while also making apparent the necessarily relational constitution of an individual’s work.
Nas Album Cover, “Hip Hop is Dead”
Source: Pitchfork, www.pitchfork.com

Interface Graphic

Abecé (2014), Dir. Diana Montero
Source: Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV, www.eictv.org

Diana Montero
Source: trinidad+tobago film festival (ttff), www.ttfilmfestival.com

Sketch submission by Michelle Smith & Jessica Davey-Quantick of their Undisciplined 2015 presentation.

Stéfy McKnight, Un Marteau (2014), string wrapped around hammer head, 1”X16”X5”.
Source: Stéfy McKnight, www.smmcknight.com

Stéfy McKnight, Tête de Marteau (2013), craft jewels on hammer head, 3”X8”X1.5”.
Source: Stéfy McKnight, www.smmcknight.com

Photograph of Andrew Rabyniuk’s Undisciplined 2015 presentation.
Photograph taken by Amanda White.
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