I Am a Sexual Being: An Exploration of Over-Sexualization and Its Effects

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I AM A SEXUAL BEING:
AN EXPLORATION OF OVER-SEXUALIZATION
AND ITS EFFECTS

Erin Bass

Senior Capstone,
Division of Humanities and Communication
Spring 2016
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Senior Capstone
Writing and Rhetoric, Creative Writing and Social Action
Creative Project
Dr. Lee Ritscher
Division of Humanities and Communication
Spring 2016
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Project Proposal

1. **Name:** Erin Bass  **Concentration:** Writing and Rhetoric, Creative Writing and Social Action

2. **Project Description:** My project will be a small collection of three creative non-fiction pieces that creates a personal look at sexism in the form over over-sexualization and sexual assault as a result.

3. **Alignment with Common Theme:** These aspects of my identity that I am going to be presenting are grounded in my being a woman. Because the theme for my class is Race, Class, Gender and Social Justice, taking a deeper look at gender and showing the effects of sexism in my personal life will contribute to the fight against the patriarchy.

4. **Purpose:** The primary purpose of my project is to enlighten and inspire people.

5. **Format Rationale:** My project will provide an intimate view of my personal experiences which will hopefully create a greater understanding and, in turn, acceptance in our community. I find that it’s easier for people to distance themselves from issues if they only see statistics. By providing real life examples, I hope that it will be more difficult for readers to ignore the issue.

**Capstone Title:** I Am a Sexual Being: An exploration of over-sexualization and its effects

6. **Working Summary:** This project will be an intimate look at how over-sexualization of women and bisexuality has effected me. In the first section, I will look at how women are catcalled or followed as a result of sexualization, which will be shown through personal stories. Incorporated in the bisexual piece, I will present a look at how bisexual women are treated in the gay and straight community and the rate of abuse they suffer. When exploring my experience as a sexual assault survivor, I’m presenting the stories of those I’ve known that have been sexually assaulted and then delving more deeply into my own.
8. **Expectations:** I expect that I will have to create many drafts of the creative pieces before I am satisfied with it. I expect the deliverables to be remitted in a timely fashion in order and to follow the guidelines put forth by the capstone committee to the best of my abilities.

9. **Specific Skills Required:** Because I have chosen to do a creative non-fiction essay, I will need to use creative writing skills. I will have to create engaging material using rhetorical tools I have learned throughout my education. I have much experience analyzing language as I have been taking classes in it and writing essays on it for over five years. I have been writing creatively for much of that time as well. A deep understanding of rhetoric and how people can utilize language and manipulate the structure of pieces has enabled me to do the same. I am confident that what I have learned through all of my time analyzing texts, coupled with experience in creative writing, will enable me to complete this project, as well as the Writing and Rhetoric and the Creative Writing and Social Action concentration, successfully.

10. **Next Steps:** I will create an outline and then I will divide each topic into their own essay. From there, I will begin writing the essay focusing on the over-sexualization of women. Second I will write the piece on bisexuality. Third, I will write the piece about sexual assault. I am ordering it in this way because the first two pieces skim the topic of sexual assault, alluding and building to it, so the third essay gives a much more in depth look at examples of the dangers I discussed a little in the other pieces.

11. **Timeline:**

   February 17th: Submit proposal

   February 24th: Finish basic outline

   February 25th: Begin research/annotated bibliography

   March 15th: Finish first essay
April 1st: Finish second essay

April 12th: Finish third essay

April 17th: Finish reflective essay

April 20th: Finish synthesis essay

April 25th: Finish compiling CV and resume

May 4th: Complete final changes to the project

May 7th: Create cover and title page

May 8th: Compile portfolio

May 15th: Create poster
Are We Safe Yet?:

The Female Experience

I, as a woman, am constantly looking over my shoulder. Tonight, when the sun has set and there are only flickering street lights to shed light on the pavement in front of me, I will walk to my car quickly, clutching my pink pepper spray with my finger poised on the trigger. Prepared for an attack. If someone falls into step behind me, I will run through each and every lesson I learned during self-defense classes. I will scan the horizon for my car, for other people, for an open building- for an escape. All of my senses will sharpen, my primal instincts kicking in. And, honestly, more likely than not, I will make it to my car unscathed; the person behind me a non-threat, having not thought twice about my presence or quickening pace. After all, I’ve made it safely to whatever destination I’m heading towards every other time over the last twenty-some years.

Walking to my car at night isn’t the only time I’m overly-cautious. I sit in a coffee shop and cringe when a man sits at the table nearest to mine. I pick up my feet, moving faster, when I see men striding confidently toward me on the sidewalk, even in the well-lit afternoon of a sunny day in a crowded place. I hunch over when walking near a street, glancing over my shoulder to see who’s driving each approaching car, whether a man or woman, and if I’ve somehow managed to catch their eye. I question an oddly placed vent in the shower at a hotel, imagining a man hiding between the walls or a camera propped in that small space. Irrational, maybe. Though I know I’m probably safe, I become hyper-aware, like an animal whose instinct is warning them to prepare for flight or fight, because I know that although I am safe now, have
always been safe before now, there’s enough evidence that horrible things happen to girls at the hands of men.

The other day, I sat in the passenger seat of my car while my girlfriend drove. The air was warm and I relaxed against the worn gray seats, crunching happily on sweet-salty plantain chips, as we discussed the sudden car-stopping traffic. We crept forward and I glanced to the right. It was just for a moment, but it was too long because I caught the eye of a man sitting in an old construction truck. With the next jolt in traffic, his truck crept next to our car again. This man that I accidentally caught the eye of had brought his friend in on the act. Both were staring down into our small, beat-up Toyota Corolla from their imposing truck. My girlfriend hadn’t taken notice yet, but I had a sense of impending danger. So, as nonchalantly as possible I said, “Hey, you should get away from this truck when you can.”

A quick glance from her to the truck to our right and she knew. With a roll of her big brown eyes and an “Ugh- men,” she maneuvered the car through traffic as smoothly as possible, something that became easier as the lanes switched from two to three. Yet, this man with his friend and too-big truck was not to be discouraged. Those men stayed next to us and behind us, trying to catch our eye, until we reached our exit and beyond. They followed us three blocks after the exit until we lost them at a quick changing light.

I recently told my mother this story. She said, “You didn’t go home, right? Never drive towards home.”

Because this thing where my girlfriend and I were followed by two men? It’s common too. It’s so common that my mother was not surprised by it at all. This story doesn’t get the reaction that it should because it happens all the time. This hasn’t even happened to me just once,
so, I know it’s not a rare thing that only happens to scantily-clad women in rough neighborhoods. Being followed home is just one of the things women have to worry about. Women are followed by men and we have to think about all of the precautions we can take to keep ourselves safe. We look over our shoulders, afraid, because men think they have an inherent right to our bodies.

When I was thirteen years old, I was strolling across a parking lot, midsummer heat rising from the asphalt like a furnace, to the shopping mall with my best friend and, again, three men in a truck— Why is it always guys in trucks?— pulled up next to us. As my best friend and I walked across this parking lot, that truck full of middle aged men drove next to us, slowly. They whistled and shouted and sang their shitty archaic mating song that I’d wager had never gotten them laid. And we walked, two girls barely more than children, quaking in our matching daisy-patterned ballet flats.

When my mother was fifteen, everyday when she walked home from school, a man would sing “Brick House” to her as she walked past his house. When she was sixteen, while stopped in traffic on Main Street, a man strode confidently up to her car, reached into her car, and pinched her cheek. My sister’s friend had her apartment broken into when she was on vacation. Her underwear drawer was raided and a picture of her on vacation at the beach with her family was stolen. Later, it came out that her neighbor had been the one to break in.

It’s these types of stories, the ones that I hear women tell, that I tell, somehow both flippantly—as though its a right of passage as a woman—and with a mixture of fear and anger in their voices, that are not spread enough. Stories of rape and sexual assault are reported and announced often. Yet these instances of men following women, of men cat calling a woman, or
groping a woman, or even stealing a woman’s underwear, are not on the news or in articles or even treated as anything other than a nuisance.

But it’s the things that men do that lead to those more horrible events that are seen as newsworthy. Let a man get away with these smaller acts and they will not learn respect or boundaries. In their eyes, we will become meek and a thing to be easily conquered, possessed, owned by their grabby hands and loud mouths. How do we as women protect ourselves from the men that behave this way? How do we make them understand our fear and become their equals rather than their prey?
Misrepresented and Mistreated:

A Day in the Life of a Bisexual Woman

This is my umpteenth time coming out, so I’ll do it fast and without flair. I am bisexual. There, now I’ve got that out of the way. See? Quick and dirty- three words and no rainbow cakes, no rainbow flag, no rainbow anything as a matter of fact. I, as a bisexual, as a person that is seen to fall somewhere between gay and straight and therefore not excepted by gays or straights, do not wave the rainbow flag. In fact, I mostly ignore its existence, much in the same way my sexual orientation has been ignored.

Bisexuality is often referred to as the invisible sexuality. Our selfness is so easily misidentified, looking around- at media, at people on the street- it’s so easy to think that we don’t exist because people’s orientations are judged by the perceived gender of those holding our hands. For as long as I’ve been dating, I’ve only been seriously attached to men. Until this point in time. Yet because I am now dating a woman, I am a lesbian- absolutely, undeniably. Because that’s the only possible explanation.

I will not act as though my experiences are the same as everybody else’s, or even anybody else’s. Coming out to my family was easy enough. Ironically, I’d told my oldest sister over the phone while sitting on the floor in my closet, old shoes digging into my ass and clothes covering my face, afraid of being overheard by my roommate. I told her a month before anyone else. The only other person in my family I directly told was my mother. I’d called her after a night class, nervous fingers picking at the worn plastic of my steering wheel, while I rushed through the announcement that I had a girlfriend. Calmly, she replied, “Does that mean you’re a lesbian?” This made me pause. Less than a year before, I’d been dating a boy. I’d dated him for 2
years and ahead of him had been another boy whom, I’d been in a relationship with for 3 years. I’d always shown interest in boys, so why would dating one girl take away all of those experiences? After explaining to her that no, I’m not a lesbian- I’m bi, I asked her to spread the word to my father and other sister. That is the extent of my coming out story- except for all of those other times I’ve come out since and all of the times that I’ll come out in the future.

When I began my current relationship, I didn’t question my past with men. It wasn’t even a surprising turn of events. My reaction was more, *Yup, that’s what I thought*, and less *Oh, shit, what does this mean? Am I gay now?* From what I’ve read, this isn't entirely typical, nor is it unique. So, like I said before: My experiences do not speak for all bisexuals, I am not an expert, I am not an elected spokesperson for bi rights. I’m just a bi girl standing in front of my readers, asking them to love her. Or, at least, to understand and be sympathetic to the bullshit many bi people deal with.

I’ve realized over my time as a registered member of Bisexuals Anonymous, that we are an enigma to those around us. Our fluid nature confuses or upsets those that cannot begin to understand, like children trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, angry when our shapes don’t match their neatly made boxes. Except we’re not squares or circles- we’re those awkward stretched out shooting star shapes and everybody is looking at the wrong side of the peg box- they don’t even see the star-shaped hole in which we fit and they don’t realize it exists. Because of this confusion, bisexuals, as a group, are often misrepresented, mislabeled- ignored or unwelcome. We are seen as neither gay nor straight because our affection is not bound by binaries or genders. We cannot choose. We are confused. We are not to be taken seriously. We are
going through a phase. We are greedy, selfish. We are hot, horny, single and ready to mingle all of the time and with all of the people.

You see, these are the reactions we get when we come out like I just did at the beginning of this essay. So each time we explain our hazy orientation, so that our star peg can go in that star-shaped hole, we brace for reactions. We tell our truth and we wait for a possible, “Oh, so you don’t know what you like yet, you’re still experimenting,” or a, “You’re probably gay and just too afraid to admit it.” Or, the most obnoxious and dangerous of all the reactions, “Only attention-seeking sluts identify as bisexual” and “Bisexuals are just greedy- they want to have sex with everybody.”

Oh, yes. These are things that I have heard, not just once, but several times. Not to me or about me, as far as I know, but something I’ve heard people say before they realize there is a Bisexual in their midst, that their safe homo/hetero binary space has been infiltrated by a Greedy Attention Seeking Bisexual Slut. Bam! Here I am, comin’ to get ya with my fluid sexuality.

In reality though, I don’t even like to talk to most people, let alone have sex with them. So, joke’s on you.

But however untrue it may be, the idea is still floating around out there. And that’s dangerous. It’s dangerous in the same way that men cat calling women is dangerous. It promotes the idea that our bodies are not ours. Whether or not we actually are hyper-sexual is irrelevant. The idea is out there, that language surrounds us, so that choice is seemingly already made for us.

I recently came across a report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, (otherwise known as the CDC). The CDC’s National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence
Survey reported their “2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation” which looked at sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence. Their key findings were that, compared to both heterosexual and lesbian women, “bisexual women had significantly higher lifetime prevalence of rape and sexual violence by any perpetrator….” as well as a “…significantly higher lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner…” (Walters, Chen and Breiding). Of course when reading this, there are things to take into consideration. Of almost ten thousand women interviewed, only 2.2% identified as bisexual. And, although it was determined that the majority of their abusers were men, there was no concrete timeline for the attacks, only that they happened at some point during their lifetime. Because of that, looking at their identification as bisexual and how that relates to sexual assault becomes a sort of chicken-and-egg situation. Which came first? And, more importantly, which influenced the other?

While reading this study, I couldn’t help but laugh. The life of a bisexual woman is certainly a difficult one. They go through life unaccepted by mainstream media and therefore made invisible, unaccepted by heterosexuals for their gayness, unaccepted by the LGBT for their supposed straightness. To top off all of that, there’s a bigger chance that they’ve been sexually, physically, or mentally abused in the past than any of the other sexual orientation groups they tested. It’s really no wonder that compared to lesbians, bisexual women are “…26% more likely to report depressed feelings and 20% more likely to have suffered from anxiety” (Brooks).

I’ve done a lot of reading recently about bisexuality— from the personal experiences to the statistical reports— and I’m left wondering a few things. When will we stop lashing out at
those that are unfamiliar? When will we, instead, create a society built on acceptance and embrace that which we do not understand?

Any Is Too Many:
Musings on the Overwhelming Prevalence of Sexual Assault

The first time the concept of sexual assault was introduced to me, I was eight years old. I was sitting in the backseat of my mother’s car, half-listening as she and my father discussed something I don’t remember. As their voices became more serious, my ears strained to hear and my mind raced to understand. They were saying that someone they knew had a daughter that recently met a boy. Then while the parents were away, the daughter invited the boy over and that’s when it happened. The daughter was raped by the this unknown, unfamiliar boy.

I could understand all of this conversation up until that word ‘rape,’ but I knew it must be bad. Up until that point though, everything seemed to check out to my eight-year-old brain. I thought, Well, of course she invited him over! How else are they going to play and be friends? So, in order to understand where things went sour, I asked in my sweet, read: high-pitched and several decibels too loud, eight-year-old voice, “Mommy, what does ‘rape’ mean?”

She went on to explain that it was a term used to describe when someone forced someone else to have sex. Still just as confused as before, if not more so, I nodded my head in faux-understanding.

Since being eight years old, I’ve known more people that have been sexually assaulted than I ever thought I would, family and friends, and extensions of friends and family. Here are a few:

1) My best friend growing up, two separate abusers. She told me about the incident with her mom’s boyfriend while we were cruising the poorly lit parking lot of a community college in my aunt’s tired van, the music loud, but her voice louder to my ears- so attuned to the lilt of
it from a lifetime together, I could pick it up no matter the volume of our surroundings. Later, she told me about how her own boyfriend had raped her, in the back seat of his car outside of a bowling alley. She waited to tell me because she didn’t want me to hate her boyfriend.

2) My classmate in middle school, by her father all her life. When this came out, I was fifteen. She and I had grown apart; now part of a larger school, we had become passing acquaintances in that weird position of having been close before and now unsure whether to wave or pretend that sleepovers and trips to the movies together had never happened. I was, however, still close friends with one of her childhood friends. That’s who fed me this information, in a scathing tone, jealous that she hadn’t been told before the information had been made semi-public at a prayer circle at some church camp. Because the girl was a minor, the law quickly became involved and there was a speedy trial which led to her father being arrested.

3) My grandmother, by her stepfather. This is a story I’ve never actually been told. For the longest time, all I knew was that my grandmother hated him, that she thought he was an awful man, that there was still some remaining resentment toward him and her mother. That she married my grandfather at barely sixteen as a way to escape that home. I heard snippets of conversations where someone mentioned his name in a hush voice only to be met with a quick subject change. When I finally summoned the courage to ask about the family resentment, I turned to my mother, someone I felt was far enough from the situation- a person transplanted into the family through marriage. She turned to me, much like she did when I was eight years old asking about rape, and said, in a voice that was both quiet and
strong. “He used to sneak into her bedroom at night when she was little. Her mother didn’t believe her.” I knew what that meant.

4) My friend, by a boy at a party. She is a year younger than me and at the time, I was attending college an ocean away and she was in our small town finishing up high school. The details are not entirely clear because at the time, our friendship was tense. She’d been mad at me for leaving, yet wouldn’t admit it, and I was mad at her for the way she’d chosen to deal with my leaving. So, though we’d been talking less and less, she’d text me about a party she’d attended after prom. She said that she couldn’t remember what had happened, that she was too fucked up on pills and potion. A storm raged inside her and flashes of memory struck like lightning throughout the following days. *A boy at the party. Everybody passed out around her. Sloppy kisses. A short struggle.*

5) Myself.

*I’m lying in the very backseat of this SUV. My head is on the lap of a boy I’ve known since we were just seeds in our mother’s bellies, since before we were seeds in our mother’s bellies. It is his twelfth birthday and we spent it at the beach with his family. The sun and salt has seeped into my skin, freckling and tanning me. I am glowing from the inside out. My eyes drift shut and the sun flickers across my lids, a strobe light lulling me into an-almost sleep.*

*And that’s when I feel it. A hand is slipping down the front of my sandy jeans. My eyes spring open. I am shocked, unsure, unable to speak, unable to move. Frozen from the inside out.*

*Later, we pull into the parking lot where my mother and sister are waiting to pick me up. I trip over and open the door, silent. I’m terrified that they will see this change in me- that they*
will know what happened. I’m infinitely hopeful that they will see this change in me- that they will know what happened.

But they don’t. They chatter at me, buy me a candy bar, and I cradle a smile, fragile and false. I am recoiling.

That was the first time I felt this acidic churning in the pit of my stomach, the one I get every time I kiss or touch somebody I haven’t before. That was two years before I had my first kiss. 4 years after I learned what rape and sexual assault was from. I was twelve. I was too young.

There’s so much I don’t remember about it- what I was wearing, what music was playing, what people were talking about. This is what I do remember: the way I felt, way back in the last bench seat in that SUV. I don’t even remember if I was awake or if I had drifted off as I tend to on long car rides. What I do remember, more than anything else is that burning in my stomach, like I’d been sucker punched and still couldn’t catch my breath.

When I did have my first kiss, I was fourteen and it was New Years Eve. I was surrounded by friends, the lights were dimmed, some movie was flickering on the tv in the corner of my sister’s old room. Body electric, I watched as he leaned in and pressed his lips, sloppy and wet, against my own. The burning, churning, stirring in my stomach hit me instantly.

I’ve never understood what that feeling is or why it happens to me. I used to think it was my body rebelling at something so foreign, from the land of another’s body, being mixed with my own familiar essence. Now I just wonder if it’s nerves and fear mangling my insides in protest, in memory, of that day when I was twelve. My body aches like I’ve betrayed it. I wonder if I have.
I swallow the last drops of my fourth gin and tonic, more gin than tonic. Mind beginning
to distance itself from body, I smile, sloppy, at the boy to my right. This boy that I’ve loved for
years leans in, blue eyes twinkling, and says in my ear, “Come with me.” His calloused hands
snatch my smooth fingers and he tugs me up from my stool.

We leave the detached garage with its pool table and bar and the old friends and family
that laugh while reminiscing about summers before. I stagger behind him, stumbling up the stairs
and into the room where he is staying for the weekend, into the room that was mine until I was
thirteen and moved across the hall. The walls that once had been covered in pictures of cartoon
characters playing in a park scene are now a dark blue. The room is stifling, air stagnant and
hot, left over from the summer day.

He nudges me onto the bed and I tumble, laughing loudly, onto the rumpled comforter.
Slowly, he climbs over me. He kisses my neck and my stomach churns in response. His mouth
takes mine, stiff and awkward and all wrong. Grabbing his shoulder, I shake my head. Harder
and harder until his lips have no choice but end their assault on mine.

With angry and confused eyes he asks, “What?”

“Not tonight, okay?”

He laughs, puts his mouth against my neck again and runs his hand up the side of my
body.

“No. No. I don’t want…” My tongue is uncooperative and slurs my speech, my voice is
not my own as it pleads quietly. My hands move sloppy and weak as I push his shoulders and
chest. Soft gestures and soft words read wrong by this boy lying on top of me, heavy, unhearing-
immovable...
Like the stories of women being followed and catcalled and groped, these stories are also all too common. The stories I hear the most are the ones like mine, where the girl is unaware of what was happening and too afraid to stop it. Or the girl was drunk and though she didn’t want to, the boy didn’t listen because, well, she was drunk and, I guess, that no didn’t count.

A girl told a story, on the night before her wedding, about her first date with her husband-to-be. She said that the first night they went out, she’d gotten drunk. She said that she was sloppy, had later gotten sick, her movements were uncoordinated. Later, they’d had anal sex, despite her saying no. She said, “I remember he’d tried to move that way and I said no, no, no, but I was kind of falling over, drunk, you know? So he did it anyway.” She laughed, “And now we’re getting married. I guess that’s how you get engaged.” The girls laughed along with her, agreeing, remembering all the things they’d done for boys despite not really wanting to.

So I sit here thinking about why we, as women that have relationships with men, think that we must sell out our bodies and ourselves to win the shitty prize that is a man? These men are privileged. *These* men believe that they are entitled to women’s bodies and they take without even realizing that they should ask, that they didn’t ask, for it to be given. Not all men are like the men in these stories, but enough of them are that I am often full of fear coming into contact with men. There are enough men out there like this that I have all of these stories for this essay and more. These are just the stories that I know and I am only one person. How many other tales of sexual assault are there? When will that overwhelming number dwindle into nothing? I wonder, will it ever?
A Call to Arms

Women, rise up. Share your stories. Realize that men are not your prize, you are. You walk through this world, exposed under the male gaze, so throw your shoulders back, meet their stares unwavering with fire burning in your eyes. Know that you can create life, that flowers bloom in your body, that your softness in the wake of other’s hardness is not a weakness, but a strength. Expose those that have hurt you because that is how you stay safe.

Sisters, speak up. For yourselves and for each other. Do not compete with one another; protect and support one another. When you see injustice against your fellow women, speak out, loud and proud. Do not put the affection of men over the safety of women. Stand next to those that need it, strength unwavering because we are women and we are stronger than anybody knows.

Men, listen up. Read my stories and listen to those of the women around you. Realize that something has to change because our reality is unacceptable. Understand that our distrust of men is not an insult to you, but a plea for a better world. Value of women does not lessen the value of men. Listen to our plea, hear us when we say no, notice when we flinch as you come into our space and help us. Help us create a safer space for all of us. Be angry with us, not at us.

Brothers, stand up. For your mothers, daughters, wives, sisters. Stand up for women that are none of those things because women are valuable without any connection to you, to men. Use the power handed to you to help change our reality. When we speak, listen. When we fight, join us. Help us create a safer space because a safer world is a better world, one from which we can all benefit.
Reflective Essay

Each of the topics I covered in my creative nonfiction essays are so important to me, not only because of how they have affected me but because of how they’ve affected those around me as well. I wanted the reader to understand the momentousness of the issues I covered. I hoped to make readers see it through my eyes, feel my hurt, anger, and disbelief and have it become their own for at least as long as it takes them to get through my pieces. In order to do this, I had to use the voice I created as a writer, as well as craft elements such as imagery, scenery, dialogue, and a careful manipulation of the structure.

The most important part of these creative nonfiction essays was creating a voice that is both serious and engaging for the reader, as well as being authentic. I found it most important that my voice was personal and original because each of these pieces that I wrote are largely about my own experiences. Writing these essays in my own voice, as closely to the way that I speak and think, will more effectively allow the readers to see from my perspective. I am opening up my life to them, both through relaying the information I have read, the mistreatment I have witnessed and experienced myself, as well as my own perceptions and thoughts on all that is going on around me in regards to the issues I cover in the essay.

In addition to the voice, it was important that I create a clear picture of the scenes that I do describe. So much of these pieces are commentary and a relaying of my thoughts that when I did write out specific memories I have or things that have happened to me, I tried to make them as vivid as I remembered them. I tried to be completely honest in the way that I remembered each event occurring. In order to help relay these memories to the reader, I tried to explain the
scenery as accurately as I could. However, I wanted to create a specific tone for each scene that I did paint in order to reflect the changing moods. In order to do this, I used imagery and detailed descriptions.

I also used some dialogue, but it was very minimal. The dialogue that was included was written for two different reasons. In my piece titled, “Are We Safe Yet?: The Female Experience,” I used dialogue twice: once to tell the story of the man in the truck that followed us, and the other time to show a common reaction to the man in the truck following us. Again, in the piece about being bisexual, I use dialogue to give examples of different reactions to bisexuality that I have seen. This was in order to show different perspectives that have been presented to me at different times.

My primary audience is women. My secondary audience is anyone that considers themselves a feminist. These are all feminist issues. Because my main goals are to inspire and inform people, I think it is important that people that find women’s issues important. While I think the issues I’m discussing are ones of which everybody should be aware, I know that many people will not be interested or will not open themselves up to the information provided. Because of that, I’m aiming it at women and feminists that are interested in being enlightened regarding these issues and ready to take action.

I was originally planning to write a more factual narrative- one that was equally fact and personal. It evolved into something that was much more personal than I thought it would be. I ended up using less technical research than I thought I would. I was originally going to put in media cases and statistics. As I was writing it though, I began to feel that those things were too
cold and detached for the topic. Though that’s originally what drew me to doing it that way- the logical point of view contrasting with a personal voice- I felt that was no longer right for the piece. Instead of doing it with a blend of appeals to logos and pathos, I decided to use some interviews instead, mostly to get a more accurate look at memories and personal stories that I’m using. I didn’t quote anybody or use anything from my discussions with people in the essay. Mostly the interviews just inspired me to look at the topics slightly differently than I had before that point. The creation of the pieces was a very fluid thing. I felt that it was always changing in some way.

The theme for the class is social justice, particularly for race, gender and social class. My project is relevant because of the importance of gender. Every aspect of my essay relates to gender in some way or another. My pieces are very feminist in nature. We are in the middle of a change, one of many, to the feminist movement. Feminism is growing in popularity as it comes to be more accepting of all people. My pieces bring forward the mistreatment of women and bisexuals and the horrible reality that is sexual assault. All of this is relevant to the teachings of the patriarchy and the dismantling of that structure by the feminist movement.

Creative nonfiction is a genre that is fairly common. It’s a strong way to bring the reader into the story while presenting something as truth. I went through a phase where I was reading a lot of memoirs, both for class and for fun, and I think that is partially what interested me in writing it. I have always enjoyed reading creative nonfiction essays, ever since I first knew they existed. I have a Norton Anthology that I enjoy flipping through just to read the essays. Creative nonfiction gives the reader the opportunity to live the life of somebody else and experience something they may never be able to otherwise. Also, for my creative writing concentrations, I
had to take classes that required me to write creative nonfiction pieces. I really enjoyed incorporating real life events with artistic ability in order to really pull in the reader.
Synthesis Essay

The theme for the class is social justice, particularly for race, gender and social class. The class covered many different topics from systematic racism to the past and present of sexism to the rights of transgender people. Each discussion we began often touched on each area of the class’s theme even when we had only set out to discuss one. Every day in class brought out new perspectives and a new chance to be enlightened by my classmates and my professor. I hope that my project, though focused solely around gender, will bring out a viewpoint that will change the way some people think in the same way that this class contributed to a change of mindset for me.

My project definitely revolves around gender. Every aspect of my essay relates to gender in one way or another. It explores the mistreatment of women and is therefore about social justice issues. My piece is relevant to the gender aspects of our theme that we covered in class and delves deeper into issues about it that we did not. Our talks in class about gender and sexuality were all very enlightening and I think that my project is almost an expansion of those discussions that we had in class.

As a bisexual woman, I think that when it came to talking about sexuality, it was really fun to hear how other people in the class regarded the issues. I was also really glad to be able to contribute to those discussions with a different perspective than some had. It helped me form ideas and opinions that I had not fully considered before then. These ideas were brought into my capstone project in some ways. Though they are not directly referenced, I definitely thought a lot about them when writing certain pieces.
There were several examples from class that I definitely remember thinking back on while writing my essay. One of them was when we discussed feminism and the different aspects of the movement. The most interesting part to me was when we discussed the way women have been treated throughout time. We also delved into how women’s value lies greatly in our relationships with men. It was brought up that women’s identity is often built around how men treat them and what value a man is able to bring to them. This led to the discussion of how that shaped society’s views on lesbians. As someone that has experienced relationships with both men and women, I felt I had a different point of view to add. A lot of the main points from that discussion inspired different aspects for my essays.

Another class that I think inspired my gender essay greatly was one where we discussed hair color and attraction. I do not remember how the subject got to that or what the main topic of that class was that day, but at some point we began to discuss cat calling. Then, we discussed how much something as small as hair color changed a woman’s experience. I have been through almost every color throughout my life— from purple to blonde to red to blue to black and everywhere in between. However, it has been about five years since I have been blonde or had my entire head dyed rather than just chunks of it. So our conversation about hair color intrigued me quite a bit. One classmate noted that when she had been blonde, she had been cat called much more and even followed on several occasions. She said that there had definitely been a rise in inappropriate, scary male behavior being directed at her. I do not remember what my experience was when I had blonde hair so I can not really say if it was a similar experience. Because I did not remember if my changing hair color changed the level of male attention I received, I did not
write about it in my pieces. However, it is certainly something that I thought about several times while writing my pieces.

This class definitely required a lot of independent work. Most of our projects were done without any collaboration with one another other than some peer reviewing. However, I think that our time in class with one another all contributed to the themes of our individual projects in at least some small way. I know at least in my case, I would not have been quite as inspired to write these pieces if we had not collaborated in class. As I said before, the ideas that were traded in class were extremely influential in my project.

We focused on the past of social justice, but often our conversations would end with us talking about the present and the future of social justice. When we would discuss the present and future of social justice, we would often ask each other questions about how we felt the future of these social issues was going to change, or if it would at all. In each of my pieces, I end with questions. This is something that I feel very much reflects the way our classes went as well as how social issues in general work. For every problem that is solved and for every question that is answered, others rise up to take their place. I wanted the reader to reflect on these much the same way that we would reflect in class and the way I would later.

Overall, I feel as though my understanding of the subject has certainly grown. My perspective has changed and I feel that as a person and as an activist, I have evolved because of the discussions we have had in this class. I tackle many issues in my essays that I think are important, in general and to the theme of the class. I know that they are very important to me and without HCOM 475, I would not have been able to write these pieces.
QUALIFICATIONS:
Editorial Intern at Marick Press  Present
Public Relations Coordinator at Marick Press  2016
Content Editor of Policy and Procedures at John C. Fremont Hospital District  2015-Present
Writer and Editor of informational brochures for San Joaquin Drug  2015-2016

EDUCATION:
Bachelor of Arts in Human Communications, emphasis in Writing and Rhetoric  2016
and Creative Writing and Social Action, California State University at Monterey Bay  GPA 3.7
CSU Summer Arts: Essay Writing: Public Issues and Personal Passions  2016

RELEVANT COURSES:
• Grammar Usage and Power: A beginning coverage of the elements of the English language and relevant language theories.
• Creative Fiction/NonFiction Writing: A workshop course that focuses on fiction and creative non-fiction writing.
• Multicultural Rhetoric: Analyzes the cultural concept and role of rhetoric in relationship to epistemology, ethics, and politics.
• Poetry Writing Workshop: A workshop course that focuses on the creation and analysis of poetry.

LANGUAGES:
English, Spanish

COMPUTER:
Mac iOS, Windows, Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Creative Cloud, Submittable