Two Generations, Two Women, One Fight: Equality

A Performance

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As I skimmed through the pages of *Ethnographically Speaking*¹, I couldn’t help but revisit the many conversations my coworker/mentor and I have had about feminist theory. Our ideals of equality for all persons, no matter sex, gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, etc. lingered behind our every syllable. However, our words contradicted each other’s. Our views on what it means to be a progressive woman became a point of contention. How could we have the same goals in mind, but see the mode to achieve this equality as different? Our perceptions were in direct relation to our generation’s view of doing feminism. I, then, re-read Pelias² script on father-son and looked at the various literary representations of qualitative research³. And I began to visual our project-our script.

The Idea

**Cara**- There has to be a research project here. Our perceptions of feminism differ primarily because of age.

**Vicki**- That is true. We didn’t burn our bras, so women can play football in lingerie.

**Cara**- Oh no, here we go again. Why don’t we tell our stories? Tell our lived experience to further the conversation on various feminist viewpoints?

**Vicki**- Tell personal narratives as research?

**Cara**- Have you ever read *The Ethnographic I*⁴? Are you familiar with Carolyn Ellis and/or Art Bochner? Or autoethnography?

A Monologue: My Interpretation of Autoethnography

As Ellis⁵ pointed out autoethnography blurs the boundaries of research and personal narrative and is an inclusive term. She encourages other autoethnographers to interpret and adopt this method. There is no structured format to writing autoethnography, and reliability, validity, and truth is in the credibility of the author and the evocation of the story⁶.

Autoethnography is performative by nature, allowing others to engage the story. The act of writing one’s story is a performance in itself. We have rituals that lead up to writing whether it is cleaning our space, reorganizing our notes, checking our emails, or meditating to clear our minds of the daily grind. And then there is a physical act of typing or writing. The process becomes the mode of inquiry⁷.

We start with our story and our words, while thinking about our audience. We think about our story in the context of our society, connecting our story to a larger social issue. Autoethnography can be therapeutic for both author and reader, producing a narrative of healing powers⁸. For me autoethnography has always been about giving a voice to those afraid to and/or who can’t speak up and to encourage the readers to find their voices. Autoethnography can call for social change by bringing to forefront abandoned or ignored social issues, such as sexual assault, inequality, addiction, illness, human rights, etc. Autoethnography can be political⁹. These stories give insight into the actual experience as lived by the author, in turn, connecting to those who have lived similar experiences. As
many scholars\textsuperscript{10} have discussed alternative representations of scholarship such as poetry, performance scripts, performances, prose, paintings, photography can often be an affective conveyer of the lived experience.

Chang\textsuperscript{11} argued autoethnography is a research method “friendly to researchers and readers... it has potential to increase the understanding of interconnectivity between self and others across socio-cultural differences and ‘motivate them to work toward the cross-cultural coalition building’\textsuperscript{12}.” I believe that others who have lived similar experiences to the authors may begin to see that they are not alone.

\textbf{Vicki}- Here’s the thing: in my generation we fought to be equal, which meant be more like a man. And to be honest, I was taught to keep my emotions and stories to myself. I don’t share personal information. In order to compete in a man’s world, I became pretty insensitive and kept my stories to myself.

\textbf{Cara}- But there is much to tell, and I want to learn from your narratives.

\textbf{Vicki}- I will have to think about how much detail to share and how to feel comfortable living in the story I write\textsuperscript{13}.

\textbf{Cara}- to self: I wonder if Vicki will struggle with this auto/narrative format as a method of inquiry since she is tied to a more traditional scholarly voice as Ellingson\textsuperscript{14} described in her discussion on Richardson’s idea of crystallization. Will Vicki be able to reject an objective, universal truth often aligned with traditional social science epistemology and see that art and science can complement each other? I am reminded of Ellingson\textsuperscript{15} reiterating Ellis’ teachings found in her graduate course on qualitative methods: “Art and science anchor each ends of a continuum of methodology.” Vicki’s voice brings me back to the moment.

\textbf{Vicki}- First person storytelling as a form of inquiry, which in turn breathes life into research?

\textbf{Cara} - Yes, engaging the audience, allowing the audience to see what we see, feel what we feel\textsuperscript{16}, encouraging the readers to tell their story\textsuperscript{17}, creating a dialogue beyond the pages of this text.

\textbf{Vicki}- Why don’t we give it a shot and see where it takes us?

\textbf{The Performance}

\textbf{Cara} - Two generations

\textbf{Vicki} - Two women

\textbf{Both} - One fight: Equality

\textbf{Cara}—There is a good principle which created order, light, and man and an evil principle which created chaos, darkness, and woman—Pythagoras\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Vicki}—A man in general is better pleased when he has a good dinner than when his wife talks Greek—Samuel Johnson\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Cara}—Most women have no characters at all—Alexander Pope\textsuperscript{20}
Vicki—Women should receive a higher education, not in order to become doctors, lawyers, or professors, but to rear their offspring to be valuable human beings—Alexis Carrel

Cara- A women’s place is in the home.
Vicki- Housewives are such dull people.
Cara- Intelligent women are emasculating.
Vicki- Working women are unfeminine.
Cara- A smart woman never shows her brains.
Vicki- Women executives are castrating bitches.
Cara- Women are only interested in trapping some man.
Vicki- A woman who can’t hold a man isn’t much of a woman.
Cara- A woman’s work is never done…

Growing up

Vicki--Growing up--My mom was one of those millions of women who worked during the Second World War. She worked in retail before I was born. Even after I was born, she worked at Claire’s, an undergarment shop. Dad would stay with me when mom worked the occasional evening. When I was little she stayed home during the day with me until I started school. I remember her picking up a close family friend and her daughter and us bumming around, going to parks, visiting people, shopping. Pam and I would bring our Barbie dolls and play with them in the backseat of the car. I remember going to Antigony with Don and his mom. He and I would climb on the tanks and military equipment. Then we’d go for pizza and root beer. I remember my Russian Uncle Emil and Aunt May who would pick me up and take me to Kiddieland and to places on the northside of Chicago. He drove like a maniac, which made my mom crazy. I loved going out with them. My Russian uncle liked to take us to eat at Morrison’s and other buffet style restaurants. When I started school, my mom became a Kelly Girl. She worked part-time. Once I was in 8th grade, she worked all day. I became a latchkey kid. After school I would come home and wait for her to get home. Usually, she got home an hour after me. I remember telling her that I came home to a dog. She quit working and was home when I got home. I don’t know if my mom ever heard of Betty Friedan or even read The Feminine Mystique, but she stopped working to care for me. She went back to work when I was older, so perhaps she felt that “compulsory isolation” as Friedan called it.

Cara- Both my parents worked full-time. When I was younger, my mom worked early mornings and evenings, teaching aerobics and personal training. My dad would get us ready for school, and mom would come home when it was time for him to head to work. Mom would have dinner ready, then go back to work when dad came home from his day of work. After a while, my mom started running the pool, and we would just go to work with her anytime we weren’t at school. When my parents moved to Florida, the fitness industry was lagging behind. The kind of money my mom made up north didn’t exist in the south. For a while she worked, running the pool, but when we moved further south, she began working a desk job. She was miserable. I didn’t want to be that miserable when I grew up. I went to school and more school, so I could have more choices.
Vicki- Mom cooked all the meals and had dinner ready for my dad who was a meat distributor in the Chicago area. Dad worked long hours. Sometimes he would be home around 5pm; other times he’d get home after 7pm. We would eat as a family, except when dad ran late. Once I started high school, mom went back to work full-time because I was involved in after school activities.

Cara- Mom cooked most nights; dad grilled and made us breakfast on the weekends. We always ate dinner together. As my mom started working more, dad did more around the house. Now, they both cook. I don’t cook. I can, but I don’t like to cook. I’ve always dated men who could cook.

Vicki- I don’t ever remember a time that my mom wasn’t there for me. She never preached about what a woman should do or how a woman should act. She was a product of her generation and basically took care of the home and meals, even when she worked. She thrived when she was working—it gave her an identity. Also, it gave her extra cash, which gave her and my dad some freedom.

Cara- Mom told me I had to be able to take care of myself (I think she meant financially). She told me I couldn’t rely on a man to take care of me. I believed her.

Culture, race, ethnicity

Vicki--Culture, race, ethnicity--I lived the first two years of my life in a Czech neighborhood in Chicago. This very ethnic neighborhood consisted of first generation immigrants and their offspring, most who were born in the US. When I was two, my parents moved right outside of the city to the suburb of Cicero. Cicero was infamous for being home to Al Capone and his band of Mafia thugs. It was also famous for being the only Chicago suburb to prevent Blacks from moving in it. I have no idea if discrimination against Blacks was in the town charter, but no Blacks lived in Cicero, nor did they try to move into the town.

While Blacks weren’t welcome in the town, it was obvious the various ethnic groups who lived in the town also had disdain for each other. I heard the usual insults: “Bohock,” “Polack,” “Deigo,” “Wop,” “Kyke.” Was it the town or was it the times?

Cara- The neighborhood I grew up consisted of mainly Haitian/Haitian American, Latino/a (mostly Cuban and Columbian)/Latino/a American, and European American families. Most Haitian and Latino/a families were first generation immigrants, and I didn’t know much about where my white friends’ families were from or how many generations had lived in Florida. Creole and Spanish were spoken at home, and I tried to pick up on what my friends’ parents would say. Spanish was a bit easier, but Creole was difficult to learn. We lived in a working class, well-kept neighborhood. Our street was predominately white. However, the next four or five streets on either side of us was predominately mixed with Haitian and Latino/a families. On these streets, every so often there was a white family mixed amongst the other races. I’d say we had a mixed-race neighborhood. As kids we didn’t really notice our differences. However, I do remember our neighbor wasn’t allowed to play with my brother and I because we were white. Our neighbor would sit out front, watching the neighborhood kids play. Sometimes, we’d say & motion ‘come play’, but never got an answer. We would often hear the neighbor’s grandmother yell something in Creole, and the child would head inside. The
grandmother didn’t trust white people. At least, this was the story I was told by the other neighborhood kids when we moved into the neighborhood, and this was the story we believed.

**Vicki**- As a kid growing up in the town, I didn’t pay much attention to the racial slurs. All of us kids would hear the adults talking, and if you listened, you’d end up with a warped view of life. Most of us just kept quiet because in those days, children were seen not heard. Frankenberg’s qualitative study\(^{23}\) of white women, who came of age at the same time I did, emphasized the importance of children’s standpoint. She said, “Children do not define the terms in which the world greets them; they can only respond.” My response as I grew older was to be silent, but it didn’t keep me from mentally questioning why people couldn’t just get along.

I never got it: how you could dislike someone because their skin color was different or they were from some place else? Then again, I look back at the behavior my parents modeled for me and I see they really taught me to be open. My dad was always respectful of the Black and Hispanic men who worked in the meat industry. He treated them as equals.

**Cara**- Growing up, I attended many quinceañeras and tried hard to understand Spanish. In middle school, most of my female and male friends were Latino/a American (Columbian or Puerto Rican) or Haitian American. My friends and I would often hang out at my house, primarily dancing by the pool. And it was pretty obvious that I had a crush on one of my Haitian male friends. I would always dance with him, and we talked on the phone for hours. This crush led to one of the few father-daughter talks I’ve had with my dad. He tried to explain to me that many people discriminate against interracial dating and to be careful. He explained that if I dated a black man, my white friends might start treating me differently, especially when we got into high school. It was like he could see into the future. Somehow, he knew that in our high school most people socialized with whom they looked most similar and accurately predicted that our tight group of friends in middle school would go our separate ways. My crush’s family didn’t want him dating outside of his ethnic group, and his grandmother wanted him to date a Haitian/Haitian American girl. Our crush quickly faded as he started dating one of my Columbian American friends. I learned about endogamy\(^{24}\) and saw two young people struggle to find happiness because of their different races and ethnicities. It ended up his grandmother hated the idea of him dating a Latina girl even more than she hated him dating a Caucasian girl. And her family felt the same. She was from an ethnically proud family who wanted her to date another Columbian/Columbian American.

During homecoming one year in high school, that same middle school crush and I were on homecoming court together. I remember he showed up in baggy jeans and a t–shirt, and the rest of the court was in formal wear. I agreed to walk with him since I could still see that middle school friend in him, and everyone else saw a black man in baggy clothes. Even though, he and I had not talked in two years, I thought surely he wouldn’t categorize me. I don’t know what he thought of me, but I did ask why he wasn’t dressed, and he replied he wasn’t “going to do nothing for the ‘man’.”

I sometimes wondered if all the diversity led to more hate? What was happening to
those color-blind, innocent twelve-year-olds who played at the city pool together?

I have been in touch with most of these middle school friends via Facebook, and I am proud to have learned about race and ethnicity from and with them. Even if racial interactions weren’t always perfect, at least there were interactions.

**Vicki** - My mom was always open to people.

**Cara** - Mom just listened, but truly only cared that her kids were happy and healthy.

**Vicki** - Mom talked to anyone. I remember after I left home, she called to tell me about the drag queens she met, who were appearing in a fashion show at the Drake Hotel. She took pictures for them and talked with them about their gowns.

**Cara** - My parents grew up in unique situations given the times. My mother was born and raised in Miami, which was and is one of the more diverse areas of our country. My father was a military brat. My father’s father was a Lieutenant Colonel with thirty years of service in the Air Force. They moved every few years, and my dad spent much of his youth overseas. The military was the first US institutions to desegregate, and my father watched his dad work along side black men. My dad told me that he never heard grandpa say anything racist against these men, as they were fighting a different war.

**Vicki** - When I bought my Prius, my dad went with us. He was a WWII veteran in the South Pacific. When the sales guy kept trying to get Dad to buy a van, he said, “I’m not going to buy something from people who shot at me.” He never imposed his view on me, and I never felt like he judged me. Yet, in retrospect, it was clear I received mixed messages from my parents. Where we lived, how my parents and other adults spoke about the races and ethnicities, and the lack of interaction with blacks and other ethnicities established what Frankenberg called an “explicitly articulated or *de facto* segregation.”

**Cara** - In their mid-twenties, my parents met at the University of Colorado in Boulder. They were a product of their generation and location and lived the “hippie” lifestyle. The progressive thinking of this group is still more progressive than society as a whole today. They lived, breathed, and protested against inequalities. Dad was a recent college graduate, looking for a career, when mom got pregnant with me. Money was tight. They moved to Louisiana to live with my father’s parents, while dad looked for work. My sister, who was used to the Boulder way of life, befriended a black girl in neighborhood. They would often play together outside until a neighbor decided to inform my mother that everyone understood she was not from around there, but in this neighborhood, white girls were not allowed to play with colored girls. At nine months pregnant, my mother had a few words with the neighbor, shut the door, and searched for my father. She informed my dad: pack our bags and load the car. She didn’t care that she could go into labor at anytime, or that they were broke. She told him they were moving back to Colorado and refused to have her child born into that racism. My dad tried to calm her, but realized she was serious. They left within the next couple of days to drive back to Colorado. Needless to say, I was born in Boulder, CO.

**Vicki** - For me, race was not something discussed when I was growing up. I lived an insulated and privileged life of the white middle class. I attended an all white private Catholic elementary school. I attended an all white public high school. I attended a small private 99.9% white college in the South. So, I came to define myself by gender, not race, which was not unusual for women of my age. My worldview obviously came from
my background and later identifying with the women who were early role models of the Women’s Movement. Of course, what I didn’t understand at the time was that these women modeled their appeals on the same ideals of the 19th and early 20th century women’s right movement. bell hooks27 said, “The first white women’s rights advocates were never seeking social equality for all women; they were seeking social equality for white women.” Torrey28 suggested the media played a role in establishing the face of the Women’s Movement. The movement obviously consisted of white, middle class, privileged women. The speakers at ERA rallies were white. The audience members were overwhelmingly white. The nameless women who were photographed marching for equal rights were white.

Cara- After moving back to Colorado, my dad took a job that relocated him every two years, mainly throughout the West and Mid-West. After a couple harsh winters in Minnesota, my mom was ready to be back in a warmer climate. She wanted to be closer to family and insisted we move back to South Florida.

Once we moved to Florida, we stayed in Florida. I’ve lived in Florida for almost thirty years. I’ve heard some people say Florida is unique due to the various cultural differences between North Florida and South Florida. I always knew we were lower middle class/middle class, and both my parents worked hard to pay the bills. However, it wasn’t until college that I saw a different perceptive on the city I called home. The dorm I lived in my freshman year of college was co-ed, and during one of the first days of living there, I met a guy from a city neighboring my hometown. When I informed him of where I was from, he commented that he had never met anyone actually from that city and that his mom didn’t allow him to go into that part of town-it was too dangerous. I remember wondering if he meant that in reference to race or class? But I was so shocked by his comment that in response all I said was: now, you have met someone.

Vicki- At the time, it didn’t occur to me that women of different races were any different than me. We were all young women struggling to make our voices heard. Yet, it became obvious that few Black women were involved in the movement. In writing about the women involved in the movement of the 1960’s, bell hooks29 said, “They were unwilling to acknowledge that non-white women were part of the collective group women in American society.” Torrey30 suggested, “Black women have a backlog of attitudes toward white women which make it hard for them to identify with whites as sisters or join with them as partners.”

Cara- I think of myself as a woman first and foremost. Authors such as Beal31, Moraga32, and hooks33, critiqued second wave feminism, stating it was a white women’s movement. This movement was viewed as a binary movement, placing white gender norms at the center of the battle. I understand and agree all women have unique experiences, and women are not one size fits all. However, I often attribute various struggles in society to gender, but recognize that these struggles differ across cultures. If I were of another race would I attribute my struggles to my race or gender, both or neither? I often wonder if growing up in a neighborhood where the schools promoted their diversity afforded me opportunities that a person growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood could have never experienced. I remember in high school a teacher informed us that our school was 33% White; 33% Black; 17% Hispanic; 17% Other. Whether or not these numbers were 100% accurate34 my neighborhood believed these
numbers. Has this experience forced me to reject a white privilege canonical? I am not denying white privilege, but as a child this was not my story.

**Vicki** - I always questioned if white privilege included women. My impression was white privilege was for men only.

**Cara** - I do know what it feels like to be threatened, discriminated against, and ignored due to race. However, I rarely think about these moments of discrimination, but I do think about the moments where I have been treated unfairly because I am a woman. Maybe I should be more aware of the discrimination against whiteness that occurs in South Florida, where now my high school is 68.2% Black; 18.3% Hispanic; 9.01% White; 4.34% Other; .15% Unaccounted? Or maybe learning how awful it felt to be passed over due to my race created a sense of awareness? I learned never do this to another person, and maybe treating others with respect and recognizing our differences and similarities is enough to create a social change in itself. When I teach intercultural communication, I bring my story to the classroom and ask the students to find their story.

**Vicki** - Cara and I couldn't have had a more different experience.

**Cara** - The first time I realized my whiteness was in middle school. Even though, I was raised surrounded by diversity, there were still many divides. The divides were based more on ethnicity than race and/or color. Race and ethnicity were discussed at home, at school, and amongst friends. In fact, in my high school, the halls were segregated by symbols of ethnic pride. Jamaican Americans, Haitian Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, Colombian Americans, Cuban Americans, African Americans, and European Americans occupied different hallways, and there were definitely ethnic tensions. No student acknowledged the American at the end of their label (although most were born in the US), and calling a Haitian American the term African American or vice versa created a problem. The term black became the most commonly used term. In fact, even to this day, I get confused with what is p.c.? African American is commonly used, but where I was raised this couldn't be more politically incorrect. A friend of mine describes herself as a woman of color. When discussing race in the courses I teach, I interchange various terms for various races. I, also, explain why I use these terms. I invite my students into this dialogue.

In middle school, I was at a school dance and four or five black female students from a different neighborhood than mine surrounded me on the dance floor. I figured it was a dance off since my friends and I often had dance competitions. However, with in seconds of them approaching me my English teacher, a black female, stepped in and ushered me quickly out of the circle. She immediately reprimanded them. Looking back maybe it was a dance off and maybe my teacher overreacted, acting from her story of racial tension or maybe I was about to be jumped as the teacher informed me and I needed to be more careful. In seventh grade, I was confused with my introduction to my whiteness.

**Vicki** - I grew up in a white neighborhood.

**Cara** - All the middle schools around our area had a day called ‘cracker day’ every year. The actual date of this day circulated via word of mouth and somehow managed to be the same day across the county. On ‘cracker day’, many white students stayed home because the rumors were that if you were white, then the black students would beat you
up. I did see some white kids getting beat up by black kids, but my brother & I always hung out with black friends and didn’t see how this ‘day’ applied to us. Of course, not all white students were beaten up and not all black students beat up white students. But this was the rumor. I didn’t really worry too much about this day or really even think about it.

**Vicki** - As a young white woman, coming of age with a privileged white standpoint, I never considered the issues of racism and their affect on people of color. It wasn’t until I started teaching and working with students of all races and ethnicities that I became aware of the limitations of my background.

**Cara** - Third wave feminism grew out of a movement, resisting second wave whiteness. This movement strived to showcase that women are of different races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. According to Sandoval[^38], feminists of color still wonder if their voices are being heard. Walker[^39] coined the term womanist to be a more inclusive term. The first time that I heard this term I was in graduate school and began using this term instead of feminist.

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**Virginity, sex, sexuality**

**Vicki** - Virginity, sex, sexuality--I remember coming home from the movies one afternoon when I was about 10. My friends and I went to see some dumb movie and before we walked home, I ran to the bathroom. On the bathroom stall someone had carved “fuck you.” I stared at it for a while, not understanding what it meant. So, when I got home I asked my mom. She took me into the bathroom, closed the door, sat down on the toilet and proceeded to tell me the “facts of life.” I sat on the shag throw rug, thinking “why so serious?” It felt like it took hours, when in reality, it probably only took forty-five minutes.

**Cara** - In eighth grade, Snoop Dog taught me that women who were sexually active got passed around and were “trick ass bitches” and “hoes”. My generation and the younger generations start to learn about sex at young ages through TV, radio, and friends. My mom took me to get on the pill at 16. She was worried I was sexually active, and the message was clear: “Don’t get pregnant.” I wasn’t sexually active, and I wanted to wait until marriage.

**Vicki** - I also remember thinking, “holy cow—I just wanted to know what the word meant—I got places to go!” Little did I know that we were having “THE TALK”. Once she was finished, she reminded me that sex was something beautiful and should be shared with the man I love, after marriage. Notice, I said ‘the man I love’. The times did not acknowledge any other type of relationship. The Stonewall Riot of 1969 happened in New York City, but in this ‘burb of Chicago where I lived ‘queers’ or ‘fruits’ did not exist—well, at least not in the open. Manning[^40] said, “Like movements for women’s equality, queer movements often calculate their victories based upon legal decisions, ballot counts, and even public endorsement of queer individuals or events.” While this may be true today, back in the day gays were silent. Acknowledgement of a gay individual was a foreign concept, even within family groups.

I never questioned my sexuality. I was heterosexual. In our health classes and human sexuality classes, the films, books, information guides focused strictly on heterosexual
relationships. Chevrette clarified what women of my age were exposed to growing up. In fact, Chevrette cited both Elia and Lovass to make the point that heterosexuality was considered the “norm” in communication textbooks. They both found as late as 2003, that textbook examples “feated heterosexual couples almost exclusively.” There was no room for any deviation from the norm.

Cara - I was one of two virgins left in our larger group of high school girls. I was stuck between my father’s “men won’t respect you if you have sex with them” and my mother’s “who cares, have sex, but be safe...” And the messages I received from society were just as confusing. Woman had sex before marriage, but the more partners a girl had the more labels she gained...slut, hoe, whore, skank, scandalous, and trick. Vicki - I was young, naïve, and SCARED. My Catholic cousin got pregnant and was in disgrace in the family. She and her young man had a quickie wedding at the church. They stayed married for a while, but it was inevitable that they would divorce-two kids later. Anyways, I remember how everyone looked at Ruth. She was a slut, a loose girl. How could she disgrace herself and her very Catholic family: the five other kids and my aunt and uncle! Of course, had she been a lesbian, she would have hid her real self and remained an ‘old maid’ or perhaps she would have engaged in a loveless marriage to keep the family from questioning her. Clearly, being heterosexual was, as Chevrette said, “the taken-for-granted, ‘natural’ state of affairs.” Perhaps this presumed “natural state of affairs” is why it never occurred to me there were others who struggled with their sexuality in ways I would never understand.

Cara - The idea of marriage has changed. Women stopped getting married, so it became okay to have sex before marriage, but it still should be with someone you love. Vicki - When I got to college, I dated a lot of men. I enjoyed playing the field, but would not sleep with any of them. We enjoyed each other’s company. We enjoyed the whole chase aspect, but it was clear once you had sex, the relationship went to a more serious level. I wasn’t ready for that and neither were the men I dated.

Cara - At 28, I finally realized how oppressive all those messages were...women weren’t supposed to enjoy sex. You were a slut if you had sex without love. If you had sex, you became more worried about “What will he think of me? Will he call me?” Our younger women are fighting to be able to enjoy sex for the physical act without guilt, without love, guys can do this without the label. Some women don’t screw for respect or love; they screw because it feels good. We want our equality.

Vicki - Friedan is often associated with second wave feminism, voicing struggles for equality.

Cara - In my performance theory courses in graduate school, I had to read sections of Friedan’s text and other authors such as Bordo, Phelan, Dolan, Bell. Each author commenting on body politics and the personal being political, reminding as Butler stated, we perform our gender. We perform our sexuality.

Vicki - It is hard for me to disconnect my fight to be seen as a mind and not a body from my feminism script, which makes it difficult for me to understand some of the frameworks of third wave feminism. The last thing I’d want is my body to be in focus.

Cara - In a social resistance and performance course, I was introduced to third wave performance artists such as Spiderwoman. These women challenge a “hegemonic notion of feminism... by working at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender.” Other artists such as Hughes, Shaw, Moraga added notions of sexuality to their
discussion of feminism. These scholars moved us into a discussion on contemporary feminism (connecting gender, race, sexuality to theories of social construction, broadening our scope of feminism to be inclusive of all forms of womanism, and resisting a heteronormative, homogenous narrative).

**Vicki** - Some of this just seems extreme, and I don’t think I fully grasp ideas of exposing and using the female body. This seems more like objectification than a social movement.

**Cara** - In my opinion, using the female body as canvas desexualized the body. The body is no longer viewed as a sexual object but a vehicle for social change. Sex is sex.

**Vicki** - I lost my virginity when I was 19 to a man I was dating in college. We were in love. We dated for two years. While I already violated my script of “wait until marriage,” after we broke up I wasn’t ready to sleep with anyone else until I was in love.

**Cara** - My girlfriends and I passed around a guy one time. He was much younger than I, gorgeous, fun, no strings attached. Well, I watched my friends pass him around, they are from the “Sex and the City” generation; eight years younger than I. He was actually a good friend of mine. Everyone would joke about he and I sleeping together. I was still hearing the voice...Snoop Doggie Dog...so I wouldn’t. He eventually took me out on dates. We dated for months before we slept together, and I fell into a relationship with him. So my attempt to have sex and pass around the guy didn’t worked.

So, was it true? Did guys want a challenge and would date you if you didn’t put out? But then what happens if the girl doesn’t want a relationship, but just sex. As my grad studies continued, and I learned more about gender, sex, inequality, I decided against marriage. I wasn’t going to get married. I didn’t even believe in monogamy. I think out of respect for your partner, you don’t cheat, but monogamy isn’t natural...it is a social construct and women are fucked (without happy endings) in our social conundrum. So I wanted nothing to do with our social construct of marriage. I started to understand and fight to be sexual. I remember discussing my sexuality with my father. He loves me for me, but did comment that just because my social network accepted homosexuality, the world around me wasn’t changing fast enough. He informed me that there is still much hate towards and discrimination against same-sex couples. It wasn’t a comment on my partner choice, just a statement on society. This conversation reminded me of the conversation we had about interracial relationships. He always wanted to protect me from the harshness of the world. And in turn, I always wanted to change the world.

Luckily, in grad school, it’s all about free love, and by 30 no one is around to gossip and call you slutty. I’ve kissed many women and men. I can do it, but it takes courage and strength to have sex without attachment. Society doesn’t look highly upon these women. I think it’s just another way to oppress women and keep them insecure. Jenny Kitzinge from the Glasgow University Media Group reiterated, “Insults are used by men to oppress women and to deny female desire and sexual agency.” According to the website, All About Counseling: “Women’s issues,” women begin to label other women and themselves. In other words women start to oppress themselves. The author stated, “In this case, men no longer have to put women down, men don’t have to control women’s sexuality, women will control it for them.” I think it is just as hard for a woman to be sexually active with multiple partners as it is to still be a virgin before marriage—
labels and more labels. I personal don’t care and don’t think one’s sexual history says anything about their character. And I ask, what is so wrong with sex?

**Vicki** - I never had a one-night stand. Nor did I ever have a relationship with a woman. Only girls who were cheap slept around. When I had sex again, it was with the man I would eventually marry. We’ve been married over 30 years.

**On kids**

**Cara** -- On kids --

**Vicki** - When I was 16, I saw a black and white film in my health class, which showed a mother giving birth. The whole birthing thing looked pretty painful and pretty gross. When I got home, I told my mom I was never going to have kids.

**Cara** - My parents have always struggled financially. My mom didn’t finish college because while in college she got pregnant with me. By this time, she was now taking care of my sister and I and working full-time. Chernin\(^\text{56}\) wrote that this experience was a common struggle for second wave feminist. Many women worked and had families, but they did not have careers and families. She reported that this generation might actually resent their children and blame their children for them not having a career. School didn’t fit into this life. However, my mother’s best friend from college became extremely successful landing a job as a lobbyist after college. She didn’t have children. I wanted to be a successful career women like her, so I didn’t want children.

**Vicki** - In reality, being an only child, I wasn’t around kids at all. My mom wouldn’t let me babysit because she worried about liabilities. I spent time with my six cousins, but I didn’t like the noise too much. I don’t remember being lonely growing up. I didn’t have to share my toys, so not having anyone else around was fine by me. Little did I realize that this whole thought process fed into my lack of desire for kids. Coming of age during the second wave of feminism, I realized that a career and family could be possible, but only if I became Super Woman. Interestingly enough, my mom never talked about me having kids. At least I don’t remember her saying things like “wait until you have kids…” Then perhaps she wanted me to view myself as a person first, thinking the same as Hallstein\(^\text{57}\) who wrote, “as long as a woman is viewed first and foremost as a person rather than as a mother then motherhood will ‘naturally’ occur for most women.” She also stated, “this assumption dominated the second wave and is proving to be a somewhat erroneous and complex assumption for contemporary women.” Call it the perfect storm of feminist thinking and logic; I decided that the focus of my life would be a career. I didn’t know where my career would take me, but I didn’t want to be saddled with the responsibility of kids, if I had opportunities open for me.

**Cara** - I didn’t know you could have a career and kids. Well, I still don’t know if you can. However, women are having kids and careers. With women building careers, men are now taking on more roles in the household. I do have a choice to have children and a career if I want one, I think?

**Vicki** - My parents never hassled me about grandkids, for which I am grateful, but I knew they were both disappointed.

**Cara** - My parents get so irritated when I say I’m not having kids. Dad says, “Oh stop. You will have kids.”

**Vicki** - When I was 30, a favorite student of mine was killed in an automobile accident. I
spent a lot of time with the family, and during those days I began to think of a family as something important and necessary. I told my husband that I wanted to have a baby, which shocked him. We did talk about how to deal with a child and both of us working full-time. We talked about money and about responsibilities.

Cara - Two years ago, I wanted to have a child. I didn’t want a partner, just a child. The chair of my department and I have had a few talks about me having a child. He called it “Murphy Brown style”. I didn’t want to be in my late thirties having children. I panicked when I turned 32 and pressured my partner of six months to talk about it: “Where is this going?” He wanted to finish grad school and wait. I felt too old to wait. And then I remembered that I don’t even know if I want kids. But I want to have the choice.

Vicki - He wasn’t up for the whole baby thing, having lost his son in divorce from his first wife. That’s a whole other story and performance. We tried to get pregnant. I didn’t even have a scare. My doctor wanted to check me out, so I did one of those out-patient procedures to inject dye into my tubes to see what was up. I was so scarred with endometriosis that he couldn’t even inject the dye. At that moment, I knew I couldn’t/wouldn’t go through the painful procedures of in-vitro, which was starting to be big business. I just couldn’t bear the thought and actually was relieved. I now had a reason to not have kids---I couldn’t---it wasn’t: I wouldn’t.

Cara - While I was at a bridal shower a few weeks ago, I sat at a table with three women, my age, married with kids, and two were pregnant. They were talking about babies/kids. One turned and said, “Do you have any kids?” “No,” I replied.

Another responded, “And after this conversation, you probably won’t. Haha!” They were more uncomfortable than I. They turned and continued talking to each other. I have a career.

Career

Vicki - Career - After college I went on to grad school for my master’s degree. Women in school were focused on their careers. I can’t think of one woman who was in school with me at the time who had kids later. Our focus was career, not family. We all went into teaching, which actually gave us more freedom than the classic 9-5 job, but we still stayed true to our desire to pursue something beyond staying home with the kids. I can remember a woman I met on a scuba diving trip to the Caymans. I asked her what she did, which of course, all women my age did, and her reply was that she stayed home. She didn’t have kids yet, but she let her husband provide for her. I remember thinking how lame. Later, she did have kids, but I’ll never forget thinking she was a loser. I was working and earning not a lot of money, but I had an identity besides “Allen’s wife.” I worked at all levels of the public schools and then had the opportunity to teach at the college level. I completed a Ph.D. and attained my own status on the campus.

Cara - I had two goals I wanted to attain before I was 30: to run a marathon and to be Dr. Mackie. Done! With these goals, there isn’t room for marriage or kids. These are very selfish feats. I envisioned being a scholar, writing a book, teaching, tenure, possibly full professor. I didn’t realize it would hurt my dating life. I didn’t realize everyone would be married by the time I got done with my Ph.D. My older friends with Ph.D. degrees warned me that having a Ph.D. might narrow my dating pool. In fact, one
friend who was dating online noticed she got more dates once she took off her education status; she removed Ph.D. and had more dates. Men will say they don’t care, but in the end most men will be intimidated, if you are more educated.

Career = tenure clock, but is this enough. Family= biological clock. Maybe not full professor. Maybe I need to learn to keep my career as work. Maybe if it’s just work, I can sleep at night and not wake up thinking about what activities will work in class. Maybe, I have a lot to think about…I’m just starting my career.

Vicki- I’m just finishing my career. I retired at the end of the 2011 academic year.

Both- We had very different experiences.

Cara- Henry compared and contrasted various research articles on second and third wave feminism. The author stated that second wave feminists used feminism as a guide to follow and to not be like their mothers. They wanted careers and education. However, third wave feminist are rejecting second wave ideals and focus more on sexuality. Second wave thoughts were “prudish and puritanical” and focused on “the danger of rape and women’s lack of agency” where as third wave focuses on “celebrating women’s rights to pleasure.”

Vicki- Second wave feminist raised awareness to gender differences, but this wave adopted masculinity in order to compete with men. A friend actually referred to what she wanted in life as “marriage and to work like a man.” Mills stated, “Second Wave feminist linguistics assumed that gender pre-existed the interaction and affected the way that the interaction developed. Third Wave feminists focus on the way that participants in conversation bring about their gendered identity, thus seeing gendering as a process.” In the second wave, a difference is noted, however, in third wave, a difference is performed and embraced. With the second wave women making way for women to attain power positions, third wave wants to bring femininity to these arenas.

Cara- Second wave fought for equality: “I can do anything you can do”. Third wave recognizes gender differences and wants to celebrate these differences: “I can do anything you can do, but I am going to do it my way.”

Vicki- Things have changed in twenty years: As Epstein wrote, “The gap between rhetoric and reality remains, but the fact that women’s equality has been accepted as a legitimate goal creates an opportunity for changing the reality. It seems to me that probably the most important contribution of the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s was that it gave women a sense of their collective power.”

Cara- But much has stayed the same.

Vicki- According to Bell, “Women earned more doctorates for the first time in history in 2008-2009.” Bell’s article reported on a survey “that examined 57,600 doctorates, 90 percent of the total in the US. Women earned 67 percent of education doctorates and 70 percent of the doctorates in health sciences, a category that includes nursing.”

Cara- “Men received 78 percent of engineering doctorates and 73 percent of math and computer sciences doctorates. Men’s dominance in these fields helps explain why women report lower incomes than men,” Bell said. According to the American Association of University Professors, “Women remain underrepresented in the academic profession, accounting for 41 percent of full-time college faculty and 27 percent of senior professors.” John Curtis, the Association’s research director, said,
“Women faculty members earn, on average, 80 percent of men’s pay.”

Vicki- Curtis continued, “Men earn 23 to 54 percent more than women in all age groups: Women at every percentile level of their earnings distribution earn less than men at the same percentile level. In 2004, the median annual salary for men was $38,000 and for women it was $26,000. For instance, the highest-paid occupation for men and for women is physicians and surgeons, but the female median ($88,000) is only 63 percent of the male median ($140,000).” According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2010, “Women earned 81 percent of the median weekly earnings of their male counterparts.”

Both- We may have more options, but we still need to fight to be viewed as equal.
Vicki- Good girls didn’t have sex.
Cara- Good girls have sex, just no one knows it.
Vicki- Women had careers or family.
Cara- Women have choices.
Vicki- People stare at me when I say I have no children. Like I’m an outsider.
Cara- I’m an outsider. I have no children and no husband.
Vicki—If particular care and attention are not paid to the ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound to obey any laws in which we have no voice or representation—Abigail Adams
Cara—If I were asked…to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply: to the superiority of their women—Alexis De Tocqueville
Vicki—Genius has no sex!—Madame deStael
Cara—It is a feudal attitude that attaches importance to men and slight women—Mao Tse-tung
Notes

    The only data the author could find referenced the 20th day of enrolled, and the author noticed in 2013 ~400 students were unaccounted for by the 20th day, leaving her to question the diversity enrollment count. During her high school number diversity enrollment percentages drastically changed from 61.7% White; 26.1% Black; 9.8% Hispanic; 2.4% Other to 51.3% White; 28.1% Black; 16.5% Hispanic; 4.1% Other. The author was quite surprised to see a larger % of White students. By the time her younger brother’s class graduated high school diversity was reported at 34.8% White; 42.8% Black; 17.7% Hispanic; 4.7% Other.

37. R. Boylorn, personal communication. Dr. Boylorn and I have often discussed race and ethnicity over the past ten years of our friendship.


40. Manning, J. (2009). Introduction: Because the personal is the political: Connecting the queer, the political, and the relational. In B. Brushel & K. German (Eds.), *Queer identities political realities* (p. 1-8). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. (Quote on p. 3).


