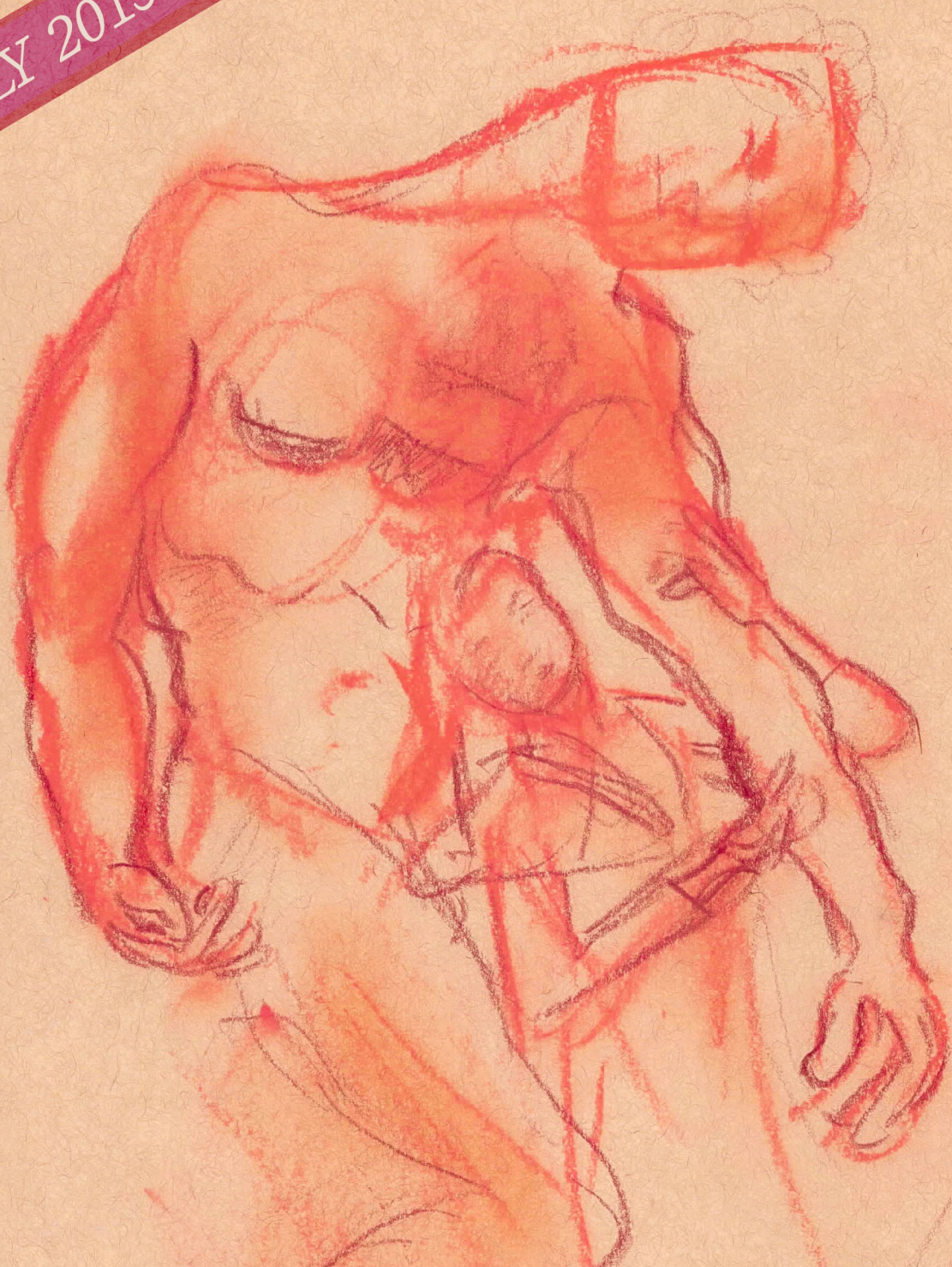


JULY 2019



THE
GIRLTALK
MAGAZINE

The Body Issue, Vol. II

Table of Contents

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

By Charlotte Kramon, Sierra Stern, Sophie Friedberg

3

A BRIEF ON ABORTION RIGHTS

By Alyse Rovner

4-5

WHY WOMEN COMPARE

By Charlotte Kramon

5-6

THE UNADDRESSED ISSUE OF MALE BODY IMAGE

By Anonymous

7

PRO CHOICE

By Zelda Barnz

7-8

WEAR THE SWIMSUIT, INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER WEINER

By Olivia Weiner

9-11

BODY IMAGE

By Anonymous

11

12

TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT | VANTAGE POINT:
UTILIZING VIRTUAL REALITY TO COMBAT
SEXUAL HARASSMENT

By Eunice Park

13

ANOREXIA AND PARIS: A NOT-SO-DYNAMIC DUO

By Anonymous

14

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHER CULTURES

By Nadia Rivera

15-16

KEEPING UP WITH THE KARDASHIANS'
BEAUTY STANDARDS

By Joanna Im

17

A GUIDE TO SUPPORT ABORTION RIGHTS

By Monie Choi

18

TO ALL THE BOYS WHO BODY TALK
(ABOUT 14 YEAR OLD GIRLS)

By Lily Kramon

LETTERS *from the* EDITORS

Dear Readers,

We are so excited to share Volume II of The Body Issue! Women's bodies have become a widely talked about topic. From abortion bans, the Kardashians, #metoo, Instagram models, and more, we see constant interpretations of what bodies should be treated like and what they should look like. This can be overwhelming. In The Body Issue, Volume II, young people break down the most pertinent body-related topics and reflect on how their views of their own bodies have changed.

Before we continue, we want to say a MASSIVE thank you to Eunice Park, Co-Creator of The GirlTalk Magazine. As she enters college, she will no longer be our Co-Editor-in-Chief. Don't worry, though—you will continue to see her write for the magazine! Eunice has dedicated herself to reaching and empowering young women and girls throughout her entire high school career. Her brilliance and passion has inspired us all and we are so excited to see her take on the world a powerful feminist and hardworking woman.

Two summers ago, in 2017, we published the first Body Issue. This round, many of those conversations continue while new ones are added. Three pieces consider abortion through both personal testimonials and valuable information. Eating disorders, sexual harassment, body image in different cultures, and objectification are brought back to our attention. A male discusses the often ignored areas of male body image, and other teens examine what social media has done to female body standards. At The GirlTalk Magazine, we strive to encourage open conversation about controversial topics that affect gender in an increasingly complicated society. That's why we've collected a diverse set of perspectives to share as a part of the global struggle towards gender equity.

As always, we would love to hear your responses to our magazine. We welcome any feedback or questions about becoming more involved with the Girl Talk Magazine, as we want to continue growing our staff. To submit articles, feedback, thoughts, and ideas, email us at thegirltalkmagazine@gmail.com, or feel free to contact us through our instagram and facebook.

A special welcome to our newest co-editors, Sierra Stern and Sophie Friedberg!

Best,
Charlotte Kramon, Sierra Stern, and Sophie Friedberg

Over the past several months I've been a part of GirlTalk Magazine, I've come to understand the real impact a publication like this can have. Each time we release a new bimonthly issue, I'm newly proud to be a contributor, and I'm so excited to step into the position of co-editor as a senior. The mission of GirlTalk is one I truly believe in—the culmination of varying perspectives on relevant issues regarding political and social equality. As co-editor, I hope to expand GirlTalk creatively, collecting more hand-drawn visuals from a wider range of artists, implementing a GirlTalk caption contest that will further involve my community with the magazine, and pulling in a diverse range of perspectives to share and contrast ideas about what feminism is and does. GirlTalk is a conversation that thrives off of involvement, and my primary goal for the future is to expand that dialogue.

Sierra Stern



A Brief on Abortion Rights in the United States

BY ALYSE ROVNER

**BARNARD COLLEGE
OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

Abortion is an incredibly heated term in American politics, eliciting immediate controversy about whether a woman should have the right to get one.

Decided in precedent set by *Roe V. Wade*, it was determined that the “right to privacy” meant that women could choose whether or not to

have an abortion. Although this was guaranteed by the Supreme Court, states still had the right to create legislation around abortion rights to limit the ways women could seek and attain them: creating restrictions through imposing age limits, raising prices (not covering them under insurance), and making clinics and finding a doctor difficult. However, these were not the only restrictions

states could make in deterring women from getting an abortion as we’ve seen in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Utah.

In creating restrictions on abortion rights, many conservative states aim at bringing *Roe V. Wade* back to the Supreme Court so that they can reverse its decision — as they believe

that it can easily be overturned as the majority of the Supreme Court is filled by conservative and originalist judges.

In particular, lawmakers in Alabama voted to ban abortion. This means that Alabama is the state with the most restrictive abortion laws — women could be criminalized for seeking one — and that the courts might consider overturning *Roe V. Wade*.

There is also a lot of conversation and legislation surrounding “heartbeat bills,” which have been passed in Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, and Ohio. “Heartbeat Bills” prohibit abortion after a heartbeat can be detected, which would make it extremely difficult for women to attain at abortion. A heartbeat usually occurs six weeks into pregnancy, and most women do not even know they are pregnant during that six week time period. This makes getting an abortion nearly impossible.

Abortion rights in the US are under-attack and many women feel violated; that their right to choose is being taken away. This has prompted many acts of resistance, including protests and demonstrations. Women have even dressed up in red cloaks and white hats (iconographic costumes from the *Handmaid's Tale*) as a political statement about the lack of autonomy women have for their own bodies. Whether pro-life or pro-choice, debate about a woman's right to have an abortion is more prominent than ever.

Although I have tried to be more factual while briefing out current polit-

ical climate, I could not end this without relaying the responsibility you all have to make sure women's rights and safety are not being stripped away. It is so important that women have access to safe, and legal abortion because women will continue to seek them even if banned as proven throughout history (especially during the years 1800-1973), as many women were forced to have coat hanger abortions. Coat-hanger abortions are an extremely unsafe method of attaining an abortion that often results in death. You have the power to create change and make sure an abortion ban does not become legislation. That means mean calling your senators, postcarding, running for office, voting, and voicing your opinions because it is on all of us to make sure we don't sit idly by while decisions are being made about our bodies, and politics are controlling decisions that have nothing more to do than with a woman's right to privacy already guaranteed by the constitution. ★

W H Y W o m e n C O M P A R E

BY
CHARLOTTE
KRAMON

OAKWOOD
SCHOOL

We raise girls to each other as competitors, not for jobs or for accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing, but for the attention of men.

You may recognize this line from Beyoncé's *Flawless*, where the melody is overtaken by impassioned feminist remarks. Perhaps you've seen the TEDTalk these words come from, *We Should All Be Feminists*.

I slid into my teenage years equipped with my phone, Instagram, and Snapchat. AT 17 years old, it's second nature to compare myself to the slim figures smirking at me through the screen. When I wanted to research the nature of female comparison, Google kept leading me to papers and articles about *competition*. I was sure that the phrases I typed into the search engine had the key word, “*comparison*,” not “*competition*”. With each article, paper, and abstract I read, I became more convinced that female comparison and female competition are nonexistent without the other.

I had a conversation at the gym the other day about women wearing makeup to workout. My friend didn't understand it. “Guys don't care!” he insisted. “I know people say women compare themselves to each other because of men, but I think competition is just innate for them.”

Or is it both? I asked. We compare ourselves because for centuries, we've been forced to compete for husbands. Parents have done what

they could to make sure that it was *their* daughter's uterus carrying the child of the wealthiest, most attractive man. Ok, so men don't care whether or not women wear make-up to the gym. We don't consciously think about that when we are so conditioned to present ourselves as attractive, whether or not we actively set out to look good for men.

Before I go on, I want to be clear: I am NOT saying that women dress up only to attract male attention. I love getting dressed *for myself* because it makes me feel good. But, girls have been raised for centuries to see each other as competition not for our own motivation, but for men. There is healthy competition for the right reasons, and unhealthy competition for the wrong ones.

My reading of the literature leads me to believe that early competition among young girls is caused by genetic factors, which in turn are caused by social trends. Biological history and social history aren't mutually exclusive. [Historically](#), families wanted to reproduce boys over girls. This has made girls more desirous of adult's approval and more aware of how other girls will affect that. As their daughters got older, their families wanted them to look desirable to compete with the multitude of women vying for an ideal partner. Because of this (and other long evolutionary theories that I read through but won't rehash), competition among women has two components: self-promotion and degradation of rivals.

The link between comparison and competition makes sense. Again, most women wear makeup and get dressed up for themselves, but we compare ourselves, too. I call myself a feminist, but my glaring hatred of the flab on my stomach is strongest when I see a guy wrap his arm

around his slim girlfriend's waist, or when I look at a picture and all I can see is my pudge next to my best friend's perfectly toned, yet very slim, stomach. In these situations, my mindset can go from "I'm rocking my favorite dress and I look great" to "no wonder she gets so many more guys than I do." I've talked to so many girls from all-girls schools who say that nobody tries to look good at school because "there are no guys to impress". In the straight community* at these schools, there's no competition, and nothing to compete for.

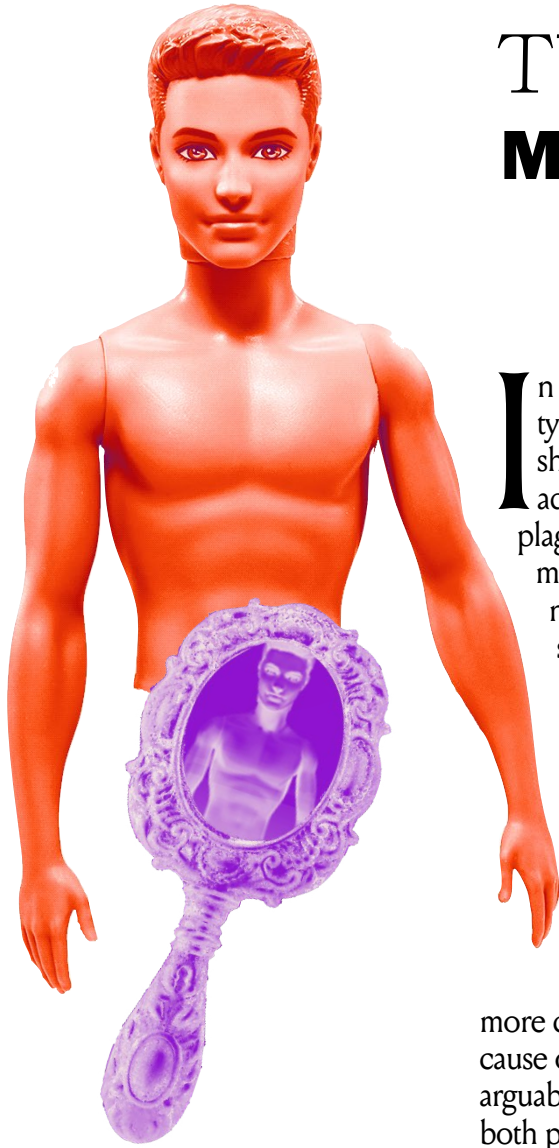
You can tell me to stop comparing myself to people or delete social media, but that's not going to eradicate my instinct to compare and compete with other women. Subtle and obvious age-old misogyny has ingrained this inclination into women.

Then, there's slut-shaming. Life experience and research indicate that women are not only more likely to criticize each other based on appearance, but are more likely to [criticize](#) women who wear revealing clothing or express more sexuality. [One study](#) found that "women, and not men, were less willing to become friends with a member of the same sex if the person was described as sexually promiscuous" because "promiscuous women threaten other women's efforts to attract and retain a desirable long-term mate by triggering men's desire for sexual variety and casual sex." The study specifically says that it is women, not men, who are threatened by sexual members of the same sex. Male body image is a serious issue,

especially in the dating world. But, men weren't always as concerned with competing for a long-term mate as much as women are due to ingrained misogynistic history. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why women criticize each other for expressing their sexuality. We are competing for men and always have been, so we compare ourselves because we fear the more "sexually desirable" women.

You can tell me to stop comparing myself to people or delete social media, but that's not going to eradicate my instinct to compare and compete with other women. Subtle and obvious age-old misogyny has ingrained this inclination into women. Men, of course, deal with rejection and insecurity, too. But I am a woman, so I can't speak to that. All I can speak to is how no matter what body type becomes "in," whether that's the Kardashian-Jenner hourglass or ballerina stick figure, it is always unattainable and always portrayed as the only way women can be beautiful or sexy. We just don't see that as much with men, and I think it's because of the old, oppressive habits that subtly (or not so subtly) stick to the human race. As social consciousness expands, I hope we can break free from the cyclical but constant expectations imposed on women. I don't know if women will ever stop comparing or competing with each other's looks. But I hope that, one day, we could do it a little less.

**I want to acknowledge that this article, this topic, and the research on this topic is extremely heteronormative. I hope members of the LGBTQ+ community can still learn, relate, or connect to this piece. As an intersectional feminist, I strive to be inclusive, but I fully acknowledge that this article was hard to make applicable to everyone. **



The Unaddressed Issue of **MALE BODY IMAGE**

BY
ANONYMOUS

In today's society, there is a such a huge emphasis on "body positivity" for women right now, which is fantastic. I truly believe that body shaming a woman is disgusting, and it is definitely an issue that needs addressing. That being said, there is also a body image problem that plagues males, which for the most part goes horribly unnoticed. As a male, I have been told all my life that to be considered "date material" I needed to be a certain height, have a certain build, and even things as stupid as eye color are consistently used as major factors in deciding whether a male is hot or not. I get that everyone has their own tastes, and that is completely understandable. But, society has drilled it into the minds of young men that if you're not tall and muscular, you're not good enough, and that is unacceptable.

I am not a very tall person, nor am I terribly muscular. On multiple occasions I have been told by a girl that if I was taller she would date me, but I'm "too short to be taken seriously." Yes. That was actually something that someone told me. There is nothing more confidence shattering than being told you're not good enough because of something that you can't even control. Male body image issues are arguably just as big of a problem as female body image issues are, and for both problems to go away, serious changes need to be made. ★

PRO-CHOICE

BY
ZELDA BARNZ

OAKWOOD SCHOOL

I am pro-choice and I am an adopted child.

My birth mother planned on having an abortion, but because she bled throughout her first two trimesters, she assumed it was her period and didn't realize she was pregnant until it was too late to abort the fetus. With no other alternative, she carried the baby to

term and then placed me with my adoptive parents.

I believe every woman should have access to safe and sanitary abortion clinics. I believe every woman and every AFAB (Assigned Female At Birth) person should have the right to make that decision for themselves. It breaks my heart to see the pro-life movement using adopted children to bolster their cause. I

see pictures of children holding up signs that read "adopt, don't abort" or "would you abort me?" – children who aren't old enough to make their own informed decisions about these topics. People often assume I'm pro-life because of my situation. I am pro-life in the sense that I support the lives of the AFAB people who are rape victims or experience accidental pregnancy. I am pro-life in the sense that I think gun control

should be enforced so students feel safe in their classrooms and workers feel safe in their workplace. But I am pro-choice in the sense that I think women deserve freedom, the freedom to make the decision of whether to get an abortion for themselves, and should not be subjected to the conservative authority of white male legislators.

People have asked, “Well, aren’t you glad you weren’t aborted?”

I am grateful for my family and my home and most other aspects of my waking life. But the fact that I was nearly aborted, or that there was some intention of aborting me, does not affect my current life’s trajectory. I see no reason to feel shame or guilt in the context of getting an abortion – but I understand why so many women feel that way.

That question doesn’t make sense to me. I grew from a fetus, that much is true. But that fetus wasn’t me. I am so much more than my physical body - I am built of a series of experiences and developments and personality. I wasn’t Zelda in the womb. I couldn’t speak or write or breathe on my own or eat on my own. I am not grateful every day for the circumstances that led to my not-abortion. I have other things to be thankful for – my adoption, the fact that I was lucky enough to be raised by LGBT parents. I am grateful for my family and my home and most other aspects of my waking life. But the fact that I was nearly aborted, or that there was some intention

of aborting me, does not affect my current life’s trajectory. I see no reason to feel shame or guilt in the context of getting an abortion – but I understand why so many women feel that way. White cis het men have negatively influenced the societal views that surround a women’s issue.

So this is a message from a young woman who, as pro-life people would see it, was nearly aborted. If you don’t support gun control, you are not pro-life. If the fetus you “save” was born and grew up to identify as queer or trans, would you still protect that child? Would you protect the children of color who are victims of police brutality? Do you fight for the rights of the children who die in ICE custody?

Almost half of all pregnancies end in miscarriage, but if conservatives care about saving fetuses, they’d support the clinics that contribute to healthier pregnancies.

And if conservatives are worried



about embryos, why don’t they protest the IVF clinics where usable embryos are disposed of on a daily basis?

It’s because the abortion ban isn’t about saving children. It isn’t about saving lives at all. It’s about controlling women and the AFAB body. ★

Wear The Swimsuit



BY
OLIVIA WEINER

OAKWOOD SCHOOL

An interview with author, Jennifer Weiner

Jennifer Weiner's books have sold over 11 million copies and spent over 5 years on the New York Times Best Sellers list. Her body positive protagonists - and female empowering social media presence - have created a massive following. In the summer of 2016, Jen posted a picture of herself in a bathing suit with the #weartheswimsuit hashtag asking women of all shapes and sizes to get out of their heads, get in the water and post a picture while they do it. A movement was born. Jen is currently on tour with her latest novel, Mrs. Everything (which just debuted at #2 on the NYT Best Sellers list), where she was generous enough to answer some questions about how young women can learn to embrace our bodies, use social media in a healthy way, and the one piece of advice she would give to her sixteen year old self.

1 It feels like women are culturally conditioned to hate our bodies, but the books you've written, stories you've told about your life, and the creation of the #weartheswimsuit

movement have pushed back on this idea. Why is this an important issue for you?

When I was growing up, the books that I devoured, by writers like Jackie Collins and Judith Krantz and Shirley Conran, were Cinderella stories, about poor little rich girls who fought their way to happily-ever-after. And all of them were thin. If there was ever a fat character, she'd either have to lose weight to get the happy ending, or she was consigned to the role of supportive best friend.

I loved those books, but they made me feel invisible and inadequate, and those were feelings I carried with me for years. I spent a lot of my teens and twenties on a diet, trying to get my body to a size that it did not want, and probably was never meant to be. I spent a lot of money, and a lot of time, and a lot of energy trying to fix myself, and it made me very unhappy. Finally, I decided that I would do my best to accept myself, just as I was, and get on with my life. And I can't say things have been perfect since then,

but they've at least been better.

When I wrote my first book, it was with the intention of helping other young women who'd felt the way I did learn to accept themselves, and believe that they deserve love, just as they were. And that's only become more urgent since I had daughters. I don't want them growing up or living in a world where self-loathing is the default setting for every woman. I want them spending their energy changing the world, not changing themselves.

2 What can a movement like #weartheswimsuit do to help women get over their fear about accepting their bodies and enjoying their lives this summer?

#weartheswimsuit was intended to get women out from behind the camera, and into the picture - and the water! For a lot of women, even confident ones, bathing suits are the final frontier of self-acceptance. When the world tells you that your body is flawed in a dozen ways, it's hard to put it out there in a few

handfuls of spandex.

But what we know – thanks, science! – is that looking at pictures of other normal women can help us feel better about ourselves. I posted my own picture, and encouraged other women to post their pictures, as a way of showing any woman who might be on the fence that there are lots and lots and LOTS of women who look just like she does, who are flawed and imperfect and are out there anyhow, enjoying the sun and the water. I told myself that if I got even just one woman out of her cover-up and into the pool, I'd have done my job for the week. Turns out, a lot more than that did it. I was very glad.

3 Social media is difficult for young women when it comes to body positivity. What's one small thing each of us can do to change that narrative?

I've actually got a few tips!

For starters, I wish there was an extension you could add on to your social media browsers that would post the words THIS IS NOT REAL over any shot where a filter or photoshopping or Facetuning's been used. Women need to remind themselves that, in real life, not even supermodels look as good as they do on the 'gram, and that what you're looking at (and, too often, comparing yourself to) isn't real – it is the result of intense manipulation. Even the "reality TV" stars aren't quite real – they've had plastic surgeries, or injections, or hair or eyelash extensions, or fake tans, and they have glam squads on call 24/7 to keep them looking the way you see them on your screen.

Another small thing is, whenever you're feeling dissatisfied, or like

there's something about yourself you need to change, ask yourself – who is making money from my dissatisfaction? What industries would collapse if women could accept themselves the way they are? Are those people who deserve your money, your time, your energy and your attention? What could you do with all the time and money and energy you saved if you decided, just for a day, to love yourself the way you were?

It is unrealistic to ask girls to unplug from social media – so much of their lives happens online. What they can do is fill their feeds with words and images of women who don't fit into the thin/tall/white box. There is research that looking at real women's bodies that haven't been airbrushed or retouched can change the way you feel about your own – you can actually rewire your brain and change the way you see yourself. When you look at normal bodies all day long, you feel more normal; when you look at artificially

perfected bodies all day long, you feel less than perfect.

The good news is, there are lots of women out there to follow! Here are some of my personal favorites:

Plus-size athletes: (Olympic shot-putter Michelle Carter, @shotdiva, yoga instructor Jessamyn Stanley, @mynameisjessamyn, softball player Lauren Chamberlain @lochamberlain

Musicians (@iamsarahpotenza, @bethditto, @lizzobeating)

Comedians (@jennyzigrino)

Models (@huntermcgrady, @tessholiday)

Actresses (Danielle Brooks – @danibb3, @daniellemacdonald, @beaniefeldstein, @jenponton)

Activists/Fashion influencers (@whitneywaythore, @nataliemeansthe12ishstyle)

Writers (@thelindywest, Samantha Irby, @bitchesgottaeat, @carmenmachado, @roxanegay)



There are many, many more, but these are just some of my favorites!

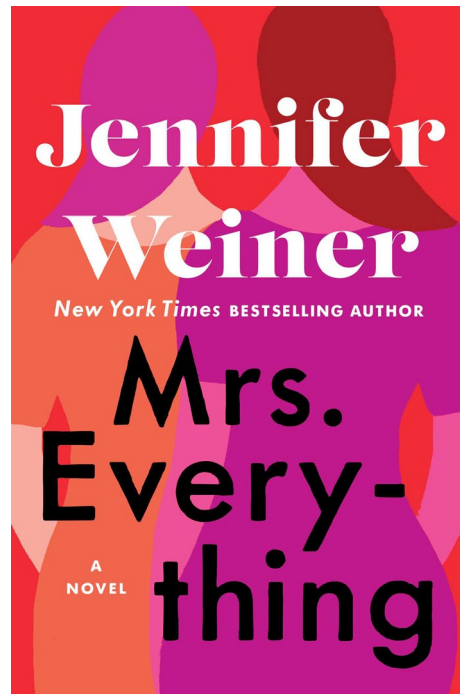
④ Your books often feature women that don't fit typical "leading ladies" stereotypes. Was that something you initially set out to do?

Toni Morrison has a famous quote, about how if you can't find the book you need to read on the shelf, it's your job to write it. When I was a teenager and a young woman, I could not find any books where girls who looked like me got happy endings, unless they got makeovers and lost 50 pounds first. I needed to read that book...and so I wrote it.

⑤ Your latest book *Mrs Everything* just came out. A review called it "an unapologetic feminist novel"... What does that mean to you?

Of everything I've written, *MRS. EVERYTHING* has the most to say about women over the years – what's changed, and what hasn't, and how it seems we're stuck, fighting

for the same rights, solving the same problems, over and over again. The groping boss in the 1960s becomes the groping boss in 2013. Abortion was illegal when one of the characters gets pregnant in the 1960s, and now, in some states, abortion might soon be illegal again.



I wanted this book to entertain readers – I want all of my books to do that – but I believe that the personal is political, and that by telling the truth about how women really lived, I can show what still needs changing.

I hope that readers will come away from this book feeling like Jo and Bethie are women they know, and that they'll also be provoked, and encouraged to think about their own lives, and the lives of all the women ★

Body Image

BY ANONYMOUS

I say this with no humor: my body is a liar. I refrain from saying I *myself* am a liar, because I do not believe that to be true. I relate my body and myself as two separate beings, each functioning behind a different brain. My body does things I do not wish, and leaves no paper trail behind it. It produces and leaves an inability to produce and more often than not, I am left with unanswered questions. My ragdoll body has been cut and poked and manipulated for study and leaves me with scars that I find difficult to hide because many of these scars are not physical. They are not red and blotchy and jagged to the touch, but they are deep and never-ending and sharp in my core. My body feels separate from who I *am*. I feel powerless. My body has betrayed me in ways inexpressible, and for that, I feel defeated. I feel defeated all the time. In a world that suffocates me with clear-skinned, size 0 models, looking at myself brings me no other feeling than defeat. And, in light of all of this, I know I am happy. My life has brought me intense joy and immense sadness, but every feeling has been felt fiercely and has been cataloged in my brain as an experience for my toolbox that I can pull from when I am in need. However, by my appearance, you would not believe this to be so. When you look at me you see an inability to control. You see depression and anger and misuse and mistrust. You see hatred and ugly and wild and careless. You see my body and you assume. You perceive me to be a certain way and I am not, and for that, my body is a liar. ★

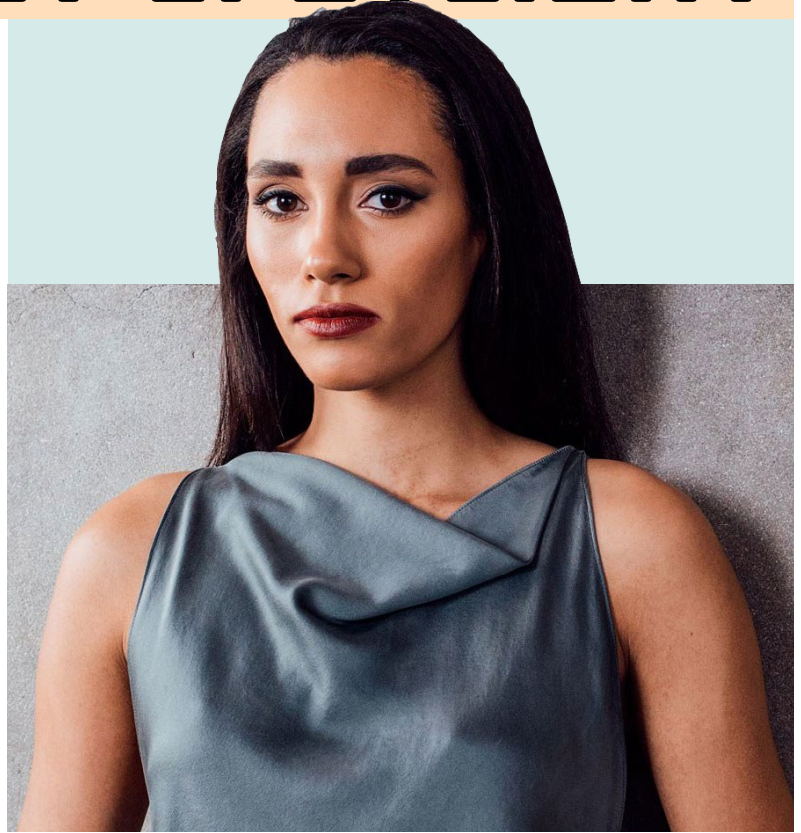
TECHNOLOGY SPOTLIGHT

Vantage Point:

Utilizing Virtual Reality to Combat Sexual Harassment

BY
EUNICE PARK

YALE UNIVERSITY



The newest technology of virtual reality has been touted as the “ultimate empathy machine”, allowing participants to immerse themselves in scenarios and take on the identities of others.

From serious films sponsored by the United Nations documenting the Syrian refugee crisis to creative methods of hands-on workplace training, the applications for virtual reality have been diverse. Recognizing this power of virtual reality, Morgan Mercer founded Vantage Point, a virtual reality startup addressing, preventing, and combating sexual harassment in the workplace.

A two time survivor of sexual violence, Mercer understands the weight and complications surrounding sexual harassment. Vantage Point creates an immersive VR experience that replicates workplace harassment, allowing participants to take on the identities of others to facilitate empathy in corporate board rooms, negotiations, outings, and more.

Though she understands that technology can often create apathy, with this type of immersive VR technology, she believes that it can drive empathy. She elaborates that, “With VR, you feel like you’re there.”

As the situation is unfolding around you, you’re forming relationships with the characters, you’re responding to a situation in real time, and your response influences the outcome that you see. It’s a lot more true to life.”

Furthermore, she believes that the greatest benefit of VR is its confrontation of subconscious biases.

Because Vantage Point’s VR technology is able to gather data to track a participant’s eye focus, response time, and more, Vantage Point is a powerful technology to confront participants’ subconscious biases given away through body cues.

Currently, Vantage Point has already secured over \$1.3 million in funding and has trained 2,000 employees in major corporations. And with the rise of #MeToo and #TimesUp, Morgan Mercer is hopeful for the future for recognizing, combating, and preventing sexual violence. ★

Anorexia AND Paris:

A NOT-SO DYNAMIC DUO

BY ANONYMOUS

The air awakens my features as I step out of my hotel and into the square illuminated by the Parisian sun. I smile when I hear the sweet sound of opera and turn my head to see the woman from the previous morning absorbed in song.

In order for my mom and I to reach our destination, *Le Souffle*, we stroll towards the center of the square, watching children consume whatever treats their parents packed in picnic baskets, dropping crumbs onto the green grass.

Couples recline in the greenery with their arms intertwined, sharing cigarettes as smoke diffuses into the air, mixing with the smoke from cigarettes of two women striding out of a café.

The women toss their cigarettes and continue on their way. Their slim shoulders miraculously cease to snap under the weight of their large designer bags, and they wear sophisticated coats that exude status and compliment their smooth manes. *Click click click*, go their heels, carrying toned legs practically out of fashion magazines. Their jaws are sharp, carved like a sculpture representing the highest form of female beauty. Their legs shoot out from un-

der their coats with circumferences so small, yet not *too* small.

My mom and her sweet tooth can't help but give in to the intrigue of macaroons in the window of a busy café, and so we wander in, deciding which sweet, colorful sandwich-shaped cookie look most delicious to us. I crave the authentic sweets, but the image of the two women haunt me. I eye my stomach as it sits under my sweater hiding layers of fat; layers that the women around me, many of whom are identical to the women from earlier, never see when they look in the mirror.

Around the corner, past the stone-covered sidewalks and across a sprawling garden, is *Le Souffle*. The bright blue front of the restaurant draws instant attention, its name inscribed in enticing gold letters emblematic of Parisian charm. There's a drawing on the door of a man in a suit and top hat holding up an illuminated fresh-baked souffle, ensuring the customer of its magnificence.

Inside, a waitress smiles and shows us to our seats and hands us a menu boasting of beautiful souffles. The list of options is seemingly endless until we finally decide on splitting an egg, cheese, and spinach souffle followed by a chocolate one for desert.

The image of the women return

to my mind and I interrogate my mother about the nutritional value of each souffle. What else is in the egg and cheese one besides eggs and cheese? What are they cooked with? What about the chocolate one? I nibble on the egg, cheese, and spinach, hesitating because it strays from the strict set of guidelines I made a couple days before for my food.

Over two years later, the memory of its fluffy deliciousness, complemented by the savory taste of fresh eggs and spinach, prevails in my mind. However, my paranoia of consuming a mound of fat remains a far more vivid memory.

The chocolate souffle is rich in sweetness and heavenly in flavor, yet I can only swallow two bites before I dread the sugar and fats oozing through my stomach and conjoining to form another layer of fat.

After consuming a total of six bites throughout the course of the meal, all I can think of is the content, not the taste, of the food. When I exit the restaurant, I see women around me who likely finished a lunch of a single avocado. My surroundings hardly register with me because I am distracted. Nevertheless, I am hungry, so I pull out a superfood bar, eat half of it, toss the rest of it in the trash, and plop a few raw almonds into my mouth. ★

Through the Eyes of the Other Cultures

BY
NADIA RIVERA

Hi, I'm Nadia Rivera. I'm 12 years old and I have some serious opinions about today's body images and society. There's always a certain image that women and men desire to be. For ladies, it might be a lifestyle and a look like Kim Kardashian. There's always something that we want to be.

One day, I was very bored, and I thought, "Maybe the idea of perfect started out as healthy. Then it probably got mixed up with pretty because healthy looks pretty." To be honest, healthy is often pretty, but healthy is what we should be striving to be. Believe it or not, pretty is different in different places and cultures.

There's a video on Youtube titled "Women Get Photoshopped Into Cultural Beauty Standards • Lady-like" on the channel "As/Is". (This channel has many videos like this which I recommend.) This video shows the difference between every body image in different places in the world. I would guess that most of our readers are in America, so you already know the standard here. But



you might be surprised to see that it is different everywhere else.

Typically in the Japanese culture, it is very focused on your facial features and eyes. It's a big thing to have doe eyes, too. Surprisingly, they don't focus much at all on how big your chest or waist is. Wow. Just think about that for a moment. Something that we focus on and desire so much in America may not matter at all in another part of the world.

Something that we focus on and desire so much in America may not matter at all in another part of the world.

In African-American culture, it's normal to be thick around your thighs, butt, and chest area. But what weirds me out is that the girl in the video had lighter skin in the photoshopped picture. Think about that. People scrutinize the hue of your skin- a biological fact that we can't change even if we wanted to, which I'm sure many people do.

And last but most definitely not

least: American "Beauty".

It's not even all about the image at this point, but about the status or lifestyle that comes with it. And I'm sure other people see it a different way but here's how I see it: Thick arched eyebrows with full and lush lips and a button nose. Almond shaped eyes with a cute yet defined jawline. Hair that always cooperates because it's thick but silky and easy to maintain (oh what a dream). Not very harsh or broad shoulders as they may be counted as "man shoulders," and toned arms. Nimble fingers, long nails and no calluses. A very large chest and skinny waistline and then out again with a big butt and back down again with toned and skinny calves. Not very rough heels and healthy feet. That was a lot to weigh down on you but think about it. It all comes down to the tip of your toe.

So what's the point of all this? To make you more insecure? No. My advice to you is to be satisfied with yourself. You are always going to be flawed, but that's what makes you you.

"In a world where society profits from your insecurities, loving yourself is a rebellious act." - Unknown ★

Keeping Up With the Kardashians' Beauty Standards

BY JOANNA IM

HARVARD WESTLAKE SCHOOL

Scrolling through the latest happenings on Instagram, Angel* noticed that the majority of the posts that she saw were of female models, who had variations of the same faces and body types. Whether it was Kylie Jenner, Kim Kardashian, or Anastasia Karanikolaou, Angel felt as if there was only one specific body type being pushed towards female-identifying media consumers.

Angel '23 said that she felt that society has not progressed in terms of representing realistic body types in the media.

"I think that society definitely has not gotten better at setting healthier and more realistic body ideals for women," Angel said. "Although the specific body type that is most ideal has changed since a decade ago, it is still just as true that having an 'ideal body' at all within the media is unhealthy for its audience. There are a lot of times when I see these 'Insta models' and feel like I have to look like them in order to be attractive."

Angel is not alone in her feeling pressured to look like body types portrayed online. According to a study conducted by Teen People Magazine, 25% of female adolescents said that they felt pressured to



have 'perfectly shaped' bodies by social media.

Philip Moon '20, who identifies as male, said that he believes that the media enforces stricter body ideals onto women.

"I think that the media influences body image of both men and women, but definitely has much more harmful and strict ideals for women," Moon said.

Moon said that celebrities such as the Kardashians help allow the media to create an unequal amount of pressure towards women.

"For one, the male body is significantly less sexualized in the media and in commercials than women are," Moon said. "Additionally, the ideal male body, as presented by the media, often focuses on muscle and strength which promotes a relatively healthy ideal, while it still may lead to unhealthy practices, while this historically has not been the case for a long time regarding the female body. The Kardashians are honestly a perfect example of both of these things, as they are famous for their bodies, which they leverage to promote unhealthy weight loss practices such as appetite suppressants and laxative teas."

On the other hand, Dennis Tang '20, an incoming college freshman, said that the media's portrayal of ideal body types can have both positive and negative impacts.

"I think body image plays a big role for someone who's heading off to college," Tang said. "On one hand, it's played a positive role by making me want to eat healthier and exercise more.

But on the other hand it can drain a good amount of mental energy to make sure I don't fit into the stereotype of the skinny asian nerd.

There's a sort-of pressure to avoid that image. I think the Kardashians create a "perfect image" of what people should look like and act like, as evidenced by Kylie's extremely successful cosmetics company, which can create pressure to conform to that standard."

Angel also said that the Kardashians created a new form of celebrity that may impact the media's role in female body portrayal in a largely negative way.

"The Kardashians definitely marked the beginning of a new type of celebrity – they're not models, yet they sell their bodies to advertising companies and to create their own show," Angel said.

"They don't really do much, especially when they first became famous – they sold sex and their faces to gain fame, which they only later used to create real businesses. This, to me, only further solidifies the media's ability to successfully objectify women and set unrealistic ideals for its audience."

Additionally, Angel also said that while the Kardashians implemented a new body type into the media, it is just as unhealthy as past body portrayals within the media.

"Although the Kardashians are 'curvier' and heavier than traditional body types in the media of models, they are just as unrealistic," Angel said.

"What the Kardashians are basically teaching female consumers is that it's okay to be a slightly heavier weight, but only if the weight is distributed in a totally unachievable way."

Dr. Robyn Goodman, whose research areas are related to cosmetic surgery, women's health, and gender issues in the media, said that the media often has a negative effect on women's body image, but also can change in order to promote diversity.

"Research generally finds that ideals are hard for the average woman to reach," Goodman said. "Keep in mind that the thin ideal has not gone away. Models today are slightly heavier – and I emphasize the slight part.

What often happens are competing ideals. Back in the late 1990s there were two ideals – excessively thin and 'skinny with muscles'

By showing more of a diversity of body types. What we see becomes normalized, so if there is a diversity of body types and sizes, then that diversity becomes the norm."

It is almost undisputed that social media promotes unrealistic body standards, which can negatively impact younger and more impressionable viewers.

This, however, can vary in its harm, depending on different factors – age, personality, self-confidence, and more.

Even acknowledging how unrealistic body types portrayed in the media in the first place can mitigate the insecurity one may feel from viewing these standards. *



A GUIDE *to* SUPPORT ABORTION RIGHTS

BY MONIE CHOI

OAKWOOD SCHOOL

As argued by pro-choice proponents, the Alabama Abortion Ban, just like any other restriction on reproductive rights, is not only an infringement on gender equality, but, also acts as a mechanism to maintain socioeconomic inequality. It is well known that having a child during times of economic instability makes it extremely difficult for the family to earn money and provide sufficient care for the growing child.

This causes a positive feedback loop in how the parent/s must pick and choose which responsibilities (looking after the child or going to work) he or she will fulfill. This ultimately results in the neglecting of other responsibilities. Abortion is important to many families as a method of family planning to avoid such situations in order to provide the best quality of life for a child.

However, when abortion is restricted and made inaccessible to the

public, this kind of responsible family planning is no longer an option, especially to low income families that benefit from it the most. What typically results is a viscous cycle of poverty in which the poor remain stuck in their position because of the inability to juggle the mounting responsibilities that come along with childcare and full-time jobs, leading the children to live in low quality lives.

Fortunately, there is a growing amount of resources for people who want to support abortion rights. Here is just a short list of organizations you can get involved in to promote the cause:

National Network of Abortion Funds

The NNAF connects you to funds specific to a certain state and is a resource that promotes abortion autonomy and awareness. It has a great guide to arranging an abortion safely.

<https://abortionfunds.org/need-abortion/#funds>

The Yellowhammer Fund

The Yellowhammer Fund provides funds for women looking to receive abortions at one of Alabama's three abortion clinics. Expenses such as travel, lodging, and abortion fees are paid for to make abortion as accessible as possible.

<https://yellowhammerfund.org/>

Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood is a great resource not limited to abortions as they provide sex education resources, free condoms, breast examinations, etc.

<https://www.istandwithpp.org/>

Call the Halls

Call the Halls helps connect you to your local representatives to show your support or opposition to relevant issues. This is a great way to organize your thoughts and be politically active if you have never contacted your representatives before.

<https://gumroad.com/l/callthe-hallsguide> *



To All the Boys who Body Talk (about 14 year old girls)

BY LILY KRAMON

OAKWOOD SCHOOL

When I was little, I would always wonder what it would be like to be a girl in middle school. I looked forward to having more freedom in and out of school and I was excited to get closer with my classmates who I would spend the rest of my middle and high school years with. However, I never prepared myself for the obstacles I would face.

After experiencing a full two years of middle school as a female, the majority of the girls in my class, including me, face too many problems that popped up because of our gender.

The first part of the problem started at the very beginning of middle school, when boys in our class created a rating system for girls. They didn't want teachers to catch them rating us so they used different kinds of food as code words for how they rated us. Sadly, that was only the beginning.

To this day, boys in my class have

continuously commented on girls' bodies and looks. These boys usually didn't make comments to our face, except for when they had their rating system at the beginning of middle school. However, these comments got around and soon all of us girls realized these immature boys were treating us like toys. **These demeaning comment had a huge impact on the girls in my class, including me. We felt uncomfortable wearing tight leggings,** because they showed our real body shape and butt size, and the girls were always nervous when they were on their periods because they were terrified that boys would notice.

Without these boys, girls are still self conscious about their bodies and have trouble finding the confidence to feel comfortable in their own skin. These boys simply added on to the heavy weight we girls already carried involving our body image.

The girls in our class haven't confronted the boys too much about this issue, but we talk to each other and support each other in order to



stand up against these disturbing comments. **I don't know if boys will stop commenting on our bodies in high school, but if they do, we will be there for each other** and continue to work on gaining more and more confidence.

To all of the boys in my class who have commented on my body and many other girls' bodies, you have attempted to take our confidence and pride away from us.

You make us feel uncomfortable and scared to show the world our raw body shape. While you guys are laughing together after you made another clever comment, there are girls staring at themselves in the mirror, wondering if they are pretty enough for the world.

We are not your toys. We are not on this earth to impress you and live up to your standards. We are on this world for way more than our looks and body image. We are here to change the world together as strong and powerful women, and your comments will not stop us. ★