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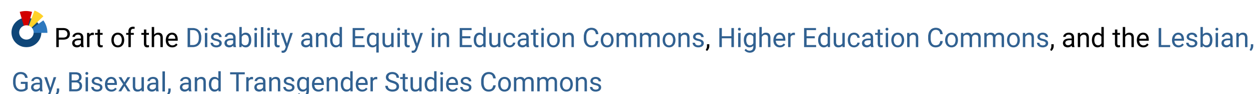

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"I'm Man Enough; Are You?": The Queer (Im)possibilities of Walk a Mile in Her Shoes

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Abstract

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes is a staple national program that engages college males in sexual violence prevention on many college campuses. In this manuscript, I use queer theory and crip theory—a conceptual framework that merges queer and critical disability theory—to explore both the positive outcomes and potential harm done in the production and implementation of this event. I conclude the manuscript with considerations for educators seeking to engage college students in critical praxis around ending sexual violence on campus. These possibilities are rooted in Cohen's (1998) notion of reorienting future praxis around the very nonnormative and marginalized people whose lives are centered through queer and crip theory. Thus, I provide queered and cripped possibilities for how educators can reimagine Walk a Mile in Her Shoes as a sexual violence intervention.

Keywords

sexual violence prevention, queer theory, crip theory, gender

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

Often labeled a “women’s issue,” males have increasingly begun to recognize their roles and become active in sexual violence prevention (Atherton-Zeman, 2013; Schafer, 2013). As early as 1984, the Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1984/2000) asserted:

> After hundreds of years of anti-racist struggle, more than ever before non-white people are currently calling attention to the primary role white people must play in anti-racist struggle. The same is true of the struggle to eradicate sexism—[males] have a primary role to play. (p. 83)

Answering this call to action, male social activists such as Paul Kivel (1992), Jackson Katz (2006) and Byron Hurt (Hurt, Nelson, & Gordon, 2006) have worked to engage other males in sexual violence prevention. Similarly, the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes (WMHS) program is a national program designed primarily to encourage males to fundraise for and build awareness of sexual assault and domestic violence prevention.

WMHS began in 2001. The central website for WMHS describes these events as “political performance art with public, personal, and existential messages” (“Home,” n.d.). These events, which began as community-based awareness and fundraising interventions, have become a staple program in addressing sexual violence prevention on many college campuses. Moreover, WMHS events seem to have achieved much of their purported mission to raise awareness and fundraise for local sexual violence prevention agencies. As evidence of these accomplishments, the WMHS website states:

> What started out as a small group of [males] daring to totter around a park has grown to become a world-wide movement with tens of thousands of [males] raising millions of dollars for local rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters and other sexualized violence education, prevention and remediation programs. (“Home,” n.d.)

These are certainly laudatory accomplishments. However, I assert that WMHS events may perpetuate harm toward nonnormative bodies and identities, specifically trans* students and students with disabilities.

There is a distinct lack of scholarly literature on WMHS, particularly regarding its inclusion as a programmatic intervention to address sexual violence on college campuses. Therefore, this scholarly essay attempts to address this gap by analyzing the purpose, intent, and enactment of WMHS through two queer theoretical frameworks to explore both the positive outcomes and tensions inherent in the production and implementation of this event. These tensions underscore the impossibilities of the event to deconstruct hegemonic—and harmful—understandings of the dynamics between those “being supported” (e.g., White, temporarily able-bodied females) and those “doing the supporting” (e.g., males seeking to reify their masculinity through their participation in the event), which are dynamics I address throughout the manuscript.

First, I discuss the continued conflation between sex and gender through language, highlighting how I will use this language throughout the manuscript. Next, I discuss my own positionality as a scholar, connecting how I experience various salient social identities to the present inquiry regarding WMHS. I then briefly discuss the two theoretical frameworks through which I analyze WMHS, namely queer theoretical literature focused on trans* identities (e.g., Butler, 2006; Namaste, 2006) and crip theory (McRuer, 2006), a critical/queer theory aiming to critique the ways in which society ostracizes people with disabilities and, thus, resists normative notions of their being “abnormal,” “broken,” or “tragic.” After an analysis of WMHS marketing materials and

events through these theoretical frameworks, I conclude the manuscript with considerations for educators seeking to engage college students in critical praxis around ending sexual violence on campus.

A Quick Note on (Sexed/Gendered) Language

Before embarking upon my queer critique of WMHS, I highlight a vast oversight in the dialogue on engaging males in sexual violence prevention. In the quotations in the previous section, I replaced the word "male" where the word "men" had been. My rationale for this substitution is to acknowledge that sex and gender—terms often conflated throughout literature and the public sphere (Renn, 2010)—are distinct categories through which one can understand personal identity. In this case, the term male signifies one's sex, a designation that is assigned at birth, whereas the terms "man" and "men" refer to one's gender identity, and the term "masculine" refers to one's gender expression, or the embodiment of a particular gender identity.

Although many presume sex to be biological and/or immutable, several scholars have persuasively argued otherwise. As Fausto-Sterling (1985) stated, "Sex…is no simple matter" (p. 88). She went on to detail the complexities of sex, gender, and the variability between and among these categories of identity, and suggested that the male/female and masculine/feminine binaries are far from adequate to explain the diversity of people's bodies, experiences, and presentations. Additionally, Butler (2006) coined the term "gender performativity," or the idea that how individuals express their gender in relation to the sex they were assigned at birth, produces effects in the world to which others respond. Butler further suggested that these responses, whether positive, negative, indifferent, or otherwise, create an environment whereby certain sexed bodies (e.g., intersex individuals) and gender presentations (e.g., trans* people) are culturally unintelligible (Detloff, 2012); or, put another way, the notion that any sex/gender combination that does not fall along normative and dichotomous lines (e.g., male/masculine and female/feminine) is culturally incomprehensible. Therefore, one is able to see that although sex and gender are discrete categories of identity, they also have a relationship whereby their cultural (dis)continuity influences everyone. Due to this, the concepts of sex and gender—and the links between the two—form an entangled relationship in which one cannot replace or consume the other. In this sense, biology—evoked in conversations about sex—serves as a site of contestation, complexity, and diversity much in the same way as theoretical discussions about gender have done (Wilson, 2010).

Culturally unintelligible gender presentations are those forms of expression that transgress "normative sex/gender relations" (Namaste, 2006, p. 585), or when one's gender expression does not mirror cultural assumptions of "normalcy" based on the sex one is assigned at birth. The conflation of sex and gender terminology furthers the cultural unintelligibility of trans* people by rendering their gender identities and expressions invisible, impossible, and unreal. Furthermore, this conflation lacks specificity, as the category of men, a marker of gender, is much larger than that of males. Discussions of men by definition include trans* men (e.g., Green, 2004) and females who identify as masculine (e.g., Halberstam, 1998; Pascoe, 2007). This is not the group of people hooks (1984/2000), Kivel (1992), Katz (2006), Hurt (Hurt et al., 2006), or WMHS organizers are referencing in their work on sexual violence prevention. Instead, they mean to discuss the role cisgender—or non-trans*—men must play in ending sexual violence. Therefore, my disentangling of sexed and gendered terminology is a way to be clear of who the

main—but not the only—perpetrators of sexual violence are (i.e., males) and, thus, why this population is being targeted for involvement in prevention efforts. It is also a reminder of how the language one uses has the potential to marginalize further culturally unintelligible populations despite one's intention of promoting anti-oppressive work, which is the case for WMHS.

Furthermore, sex, gender identity, and gender expression, which are often conflated throughout literature, are similar but not the same. For example, someone whose gender expression is masculine does not always—but sometimes can—identify their gender identity as a man. Because these terms are close in association and have largely been used as synonyms in public and scholarly discourse, I am careful to attend to the presumptions made by WMHS organizers regarding sex, gender identity, and gender expression. In doing so, I frame sex as biological and something that is assigned at birth (thereby honoring the plasticity of the presumed immutable nature of biological sex). I frame gender identity as an internal understanding of one's gender, and gender expression as one's external embodiment of gender, which may shift across time and space and may—but does not necessarily need to—align with one's gender identity. As such, there are times when I modify quotes, as I did previously in this manuscript, in terms of their sexed/gendered language. Doing this allows me to remain consistent with my use of queer theoretical perspectives in my critique, particularly as it exposes the normative assumptions regarding the presumed naturalness of, and linkages between, one's sex, gender identity, and gender expression.

My Own Positionality

There are three distinct reasons why the present analysis of WMHS is important to me. First, as a gender nonconforming individual myself, I have experienced the asymmetrical nature of gender policing and enforcement. Specifically, as an individual who was assigned a male sex at birth but who is comfortable expressing—and often does express—my femininity, I have had many experiences during which others have told me that who I am is wrong, uncomfortable for them, and does not belong. For example, I have had multiple encounters in which others have confronted and attempted to police my wearing high heels, suggesting that someone like me, who has certain secondary sex characteristics traditionally coded as masculine (e.g., a full beard), is doing something wrong by wearing heels, a type of footwear traditionally imbued with femininity. These experiences exemplify transmisogyny, which Serano (2007) described as occurring "when a trans person is ridiculed or dismissed not merely for failing to live up to gender norms, but for their expressions of femaleness or femininity" (p. 14). It is my contention that in many respects, WMHS, in its current form, furthers this same transmisogyny, and as such, I have written this piece as a way to counteract and resist the erasure and scapegoating of trans* femininity.

Furthermore, my previous work as a college-based sexual violence prevention educator and my current work where I am attempting to bridge the fields of transgender and disability studies have made writing this manuscript all the more pressing to me. As a former sexual violence prevention educator, I was—and still am—deeply conflicted about the ongoing use of WMHS events to raise awareness of sexual violence on college campuses. While I appreciated the centering of sexual violence as an important phenomenon around which to coalesce and resist, I was saddened that promoting a community free from sexual violence had to come at the expense of multiple marginalized communities (e.g., trans* women). Moreover, as

my own understanding of the intersections between disability, gender identity, and sex have deepened over the past few years, and as I began doing work regarding the significant overlaps between the disability and transgender communities, my concerns with WMHS only increased. In this manuscript, I translate these concerns with WMHS, which are related to my past and current positionalities as a scholar–activist, to arrive at a more conscious and critical understanding of how educators can further sexual violence prevention while not continuing to isolate or harm various marginalized populations.

Queer and Crip Theory

Although scholars are quick to highlight that there is no one canonical way of understanding or representing queer theory (e.g., Denton, 2014), there are several common threads present throughout these postmodern theoretical interventions. The first commonality across theories discussed as queer theory is an insistence on challenging notions of normativity (Warner, 1999). As a result of this challenge, a second commonality is, to use the phrasing of the postmodern scholar Alexander G. Weheliye (2014), the (re)articulation of who counts as human, not-quite-human, and nonhuman. In this sense, queer theory provides a fertile theoretical space in which to reorient who is/should be included—and by extension, who is/should not be included—as participants in social institutions, such as higher education. The third commonality amongst queer theoretical interventions is their capaciousness. For example, although queer theory first began in the early 1990s as a way to redress heteronormativity (Butler, 2006; Sedgwick, 2008), the field has grown quickly to address disability and compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006), race and racialization (Weheliye, 2014), and trans* oppression (Spade, 2011). In fact, the expansiveness of queer theory's evolution is perhaps one of its greatest strengths in that it has provided a myriad of perspectives through which to reorient oneself to what is assumed to be taken for granted (Ahmed, 2006). Furthermore, although in its nascence, there has been a recent turn to using postmodern theoretical perspectives to analyze students' experiences and college environments (e.g., Abes & Kasch, 2007; Denton, 2014; Nicolazzo, 2015).

Despite some higher education scholars openly wondering if queer theory is too corrosive to the notion of social identities, there is also an appeal to using these theoretical frameworks as a way to expose and deconstruct normative notions of sexuality, gender, and disability (Abes, 2007; Denton, 2014; McRuer, 2006). In other words, although queer theory poses challenges to notions of identities as stable and solid constructs, there is much to be gained from using these perspectives. Of particular use is the ability to leverage queer theory as a way to interrogate and undermine the tacit and presumed sociocultural enactments of normalcy that continue to regulate, sometimes violently, the lives of those deemed abnormal, abject, or otherwise unintelligible. In this sense, using queer theory for the present analysis made sense in that it allowed me to examine critically the discourse underlying the intent and (re)production of the WMHS events on college campuses, as well as to reimagine possibilities for how educators could reframe WMHS in potentially liberatory ways.

WMHS Explained

As previously mentioned, WMHS is an event designed to engage cisgender men in fundraising and awareness on the issue of sexual assault and domestic violence prevention. WMHS was originally conceptualized by Frank Baird. At the time, Baird had been a staff member at the Valley Trauma Center, a resource center focused on sexual and domestic violence prevention, for eight

years ("About Frank, Walk Founder," n.d.). Looking for a way to make a difference, Baird created WMHS as a way to engage males in sexual violence prevention efforts. Discussing his intentions to include men in prevention efforts, Baird stated:

> Violence against [females] does not just affect [females]. [Males] are hurt and angered when women they care about are raped. [Males] are hurt and angered when they try to develop relationships with women in an atmosphere of fear and mistrust and blame. And the same violence that targets [females] also targets [males] because rape isn't about sex, it's about power, control and violence. ("About Frank, Walk Founder," n.d.)

Thus, for Baird, sexual violence is something that affects both cisgender men and cisgender women. As such, WMHS is an effort to redress these multiple pains, albeit through a binary lens of gender and a perspective that equates cisgender men's hurt with the violence of sexual violence for cisgender women.

The main component of WMHS is cisgender men walking a mile in a pair of high heels. Additionally, those who organize WMHS events are encouraged to facilitate educational experiences designed to increase awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence. For example, the WMHS website suggested using two passive programs to promote education about sexual violence: (1) the Silent Witness National Initiative, a program where life-sized silhouettes are made with plaques in recognition of females who have been killed as a result of domestic abuse; and (2) the Clothesline Project, a program where individuals design t-shirts about experiences of sexual assault and domestic violence that are then hung on a clothesline for public display ("Collateral Experiences," n.d.). WMHS organizers are also encouraged to debrief the event with all participants after the walk portion concludes, however, the main WMHS website does not provide resources for what this debrief may entail.

People seeking to host a WMHS event must register with Venture Humanity, Inc., the nonprofit organization Baird established to centralize all WMHS events. As a part of the registration process, one must pay a licensing fee to attain the rights to put on a WMHS event. In terms of fundraising for WMHS, individuals or teams participating in the event may seek sponsorships for their involvement. WMHS event organizers may also require individuals and teams to pay a fee to register and participate in the event. Additionally, the organizers of specific WMHS events may seek monetary donations from local businesses or, in the instance of a WMHS event at a college or university, campus offices and departments. All money raised that is not used to recoup costs associated with the event is then awarded to local organizations working to provide services for survivors of sexual violence and/or an organization advancing sexual violence prevention education.

Analysis

In the sections that follow, I analyze both the marketing and enactment of WMHS events via queer and crip theories. In doing so, I critique both the rhetoric used to describe and explain WMHS as well as the (in)actions produced in relation to this rhetoric. Although my analysis operates on two levels, they are connected in the sense that rhetoric shapes action and vice versa. Thus, I have chosen to intertwine my analysis of the language and actions surrounding WMHS, as doing so allows readers to see how these elements mutually reinforce normative notions of sexuality, gender, and disability via this particular sexual violence prevention program. In other words, by entangling the ways WMHS reinforces sexual, gender, and

disability normativity in language and actions, one is able to understand how tightly woven these are and, as a result, the difficulty and care with which educators must work to disentangle them (which I attempt to do at the end of this manuscript).

A Queered Critique of WMHS

"It's not fashionable; it sure isn't graceful; it's definitely not pretty. But somehow it is a beautiful sight."

~Segment of a news broadcast covering a WMHS event in Tacoma, Washington

The promotional video for WMHS on the main organization's website features males wearing bright red heels. They have their pant legs rolled up so the viewer can see their heels, and as the camera pans from their feet to their head, all the men repeat the same question, "I'm man enough; are you?" (Carson, 2012). All the males in the promotional video are working in highly masculine fields, such as law enforcement, construction and public works, and firefighting, giving the impression that if these males are "man enough" to wear heels, all males should be willing to do so. The message throughout the video is clear: It takes a "real man" to wear heels.

Click the image or here for the video.
http://www.walkamileinhershoes.org/Resources/Walk%20Chambersburg%20PA%20USA%202014.mp4

However, this is a paradoxical message: The act of people assigned a male sex at birth wearing heels is not exclusive to those desiring for others to view them as "real men." For example, as someone who was assigned a male sex at birth but does not identify as a man, let alone a "real man," I have noticed the social panic and anxiety I cause by walking into a room wearing heels. My shoes cause people to stare, gawk, and gasp. My heels have also caused people to wonder what I am "trying to prove" by wearing them—to which the answer is nothing—as well as question my ability to teach effectively. Additionally, multiple male to different gender (MTDG) students (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011), or those students who were assigned male at birth but identify as a gender other than masculine, have shared with me their fear of wearing heels due to feelings of fear and vulnerability. Rather than being rewarded for our desire to wear heels, like the males in the WMHS promotional video, gender nonconforming individuals, including myself, have been ostracized, harassed, and have feared for our safety and wellbeing due to our gender expression.

Organizers of WMHS position the act of "real men" who participate in the event by wearing heels for a mile in order to make a point about the need to end sexual violence against women as nonthreatening; however, the practice of gender nonconforming individuals wearing heels is anything but nonthreatening. In fact, the discomfort and social panic caused by transgressing culturally intelligible sex/gender relations goes beyond just wearing heels. For example, in 2011, a number of conservative news pundits criticized J. Crew for featuring a photo of designer Jenna Lyons painting her son Beckett's toenails pink in their online catalog. Ablow (2011) went so far as to state:

> The fact that encouraging the choosing of gender identity, rather than suggesting our children become comfortable with the ones that they got at birth, can throw our species into real psychologi-

> cal turmoil—not to mention crowding operating rooms with procedures to grotesquely amputate body parts. (para. 7)

Furthermore, as many have pointed out, trans* women, particularly trans* women of color, continue to be murdered at increasingly high rates (e.g., Lee, 2015; Molloy, 2015), which is itself an example of how systemic racism, sexism, and transphobia intersect to make the lives of trans* women and feminine-of-center gender nonconforming people intensely precarious.

Namaste (2006) called this type of policing and enforcement of culturally intelligible expressions of sex and gender (e.g., those assigned male at birth must present a masculine gender) "genderbashing." Therefore, if wearing heels is not something only "real men" do, then how do the men in the WMHS promotional video mark themselves as sufficiently man enough? Additionally, how does the WMHS event further incite genderbashing by proposing that gender nonconforming individuals who wear heels as an expression of their gender are unintelligible, deviant, invisible, or impossible people? The answers to these questions signal problematic aspects to the otherwise positive intentions of WMHS events.

The insistence of WMHS participants being man enough to be involved signals an essentialized understanding of masculinity where one is either man enough or not. Those who do not present a sufficient expression of masculinity are then recast as feminine, which is portrayed as a deficit or a lack of that which is culturally valued and privileged (e.g., masculinity). Additionally, these essentialized notions of masculinity—and by extension femininity—suggest these categories are normal, with everyone who exists outside these categories being abnormal. For example, WMHS events use heels as a signifier of normal femininity and womanhood. Thus, heels—and the pain associated with wearing them—serve as a proxy for the pain and suffering experienced by women survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Of course, the conflation of femininity and high heels is overly simplistic. The use of heels as a symbol of femininity suggests that to be feminine, and thus, to be a woman, means to wear heels. However, this dismisses the reality that not all women wear heels, or that these women's not wearing heels does not necessarily make them any less feminine[1]. The conflation of women and femininity with high heels also has the effect of objectifying women, suggesting women are only women to the extent that their footwear conforms to normative notions of femininity. This has the effect of rescinding agency for women to name their own genders, be they feminine or otherwise. Although it is beyond the scope of this manuscript to interrogate this problematic conflation between femininity and high heels, I would have been remiss to not recognize the problem, signaling yet another critique of WMHS on a structural level.

The wearing of heels during WMHS events is also used as a strategy to cause participants to question how easy it would be to "get away" from a would-be rapist. Not only do these characterizations minimize the effects of sexual assault and domestic violence, but they also negate the nonphysical impacts of sexual violence (e.g., emotional and psychological trauma) as well as reify dangerous myths about most rapists being strangers who attack their victims on empty streets where they cannot escape or no one can

[1] It deserves pointing out that some women (both cisgender and trans*) do indeed choose to downplay, eschew, or otherwise dismiss their femininity. As such, one of the ways they may do this is by not wearing heels, which, as a symbol, have come to represent traditional notions of femininity. Therefore, although I suggest that not wearing heels does not make anyone less feminine, I do not want to suggest that the act of not wearing heels by some women does not carry multiple meanings, including the fact that to do so could very well be a signal of one's distancing oneself from femininity altogether.

intervene. I am not suggesting people are not sexually assaulted by strangers and/or on the street, as this does happen (e.g., Brison, 1998). However, most sexual assaults are perpetrated by people the survivor knows (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Koss, Dinero, Siebel, & Cox, 1988) and many occur in public places where others could intervene (Fisher et al., 2000; Planty, 2002). Additionally, a queer critique of WMHS events would suggest the wearing of heels by cisgender men is used to signal this behavior is abnormal, and thus, participants must be strong, or man enough, to participate.

Addressing the issue of normalcy, Warner (1999) stated:

> Nearly everyone, it seems, wants to be normal. And who can blame them, if the alternative is being abnormal, or deviant, or not being one of the rest of us? Put in those terms, there doesn't seem to be a choice at all. (p. 53)

Here, Warner highlighted the cultural unintelligibility of certain bodies, sexualities, and (gender) expressions. Warner also articulated the way normalcy does not allow for choice, but instead regulates one's life through the imposition of codes by which one must present and express oneself. Thus, the drive for normalcy mirrors Foucault's (1990) notion of biopower, or the constellations of power that regulate the lives of people. For example, if trans* people transgress "normal" gender expressions, we run the risk of violence (e.g., Namaste's genderbashing) as well as having our gender expression recast within a normalizing discourse. Trans* people who identify as MTDG may be understood as being gay and/or effeminate males, effectively erasing our trans* identity, which is a phenomenon I have termed compulsory heterogenderism (Nicolazzo, 2015). Although this recasting still marks trans* people as being abnormal or deviant, cisgender people, or those who do not identify as trans*, are able to safely categorize us within the masculine/feminine binary, albeit as failed men. Regardless, we do not see our identity as being in this binary.

The perpetuation of male/female, man/woman, and masculine/feminine binaries are naturalized and normal throughout WMHS events and leaves little room for trans* individuals, specifically people who are MTDG, to be understood as something other than imposters, deceivers, or pathetic individuals (Serano, 2007). Thus, WMHS events have a high potential for furthering an understanding of any nonnormative performance of gender as either abnormal or unnatural people, whether or not the individual is trans*. Some people go as far as to suggest trans* people are impossible people, meaning they believe it is impossible for anyone to exist outside the gender binary (e.g., Ablow, 2011). Specifically thinking about WMHS events on college campuses, these events will undoubtedly result in the reification of environments that have already been shown to be oppressive for trans* students, faculty, and staff (Bilodeau, 2005, 2009; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010).

A Cripped Critique of WMHS

WMHS events also perpetuate compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006), or the privileging of the lives, experiences, and narratives of people who are temporarily able-bodied. McRuer (2006) elucidated the insidiousness and constancy of compulsory able-bodiedness by stating that it "demands that people with disabilities embody for others an affirmative answer to the unspoken question, 'Yes, but in the end, wouldn't you rather be more like me?'" (p. 9). WMHS events comply with compulsory able-bodiedness through their insistence that cisgender males walk a mile in "her" shoes. The process of walking in heels, and of that walking to cause pain and discomfort, marginalizes people who are unable to walk in a way

where they would feel similar discomfort. Although people with disabilities that affect their mobility (e.g., quadriplegic people who use wheelchairs) assert their ability to walk (Kotake Yellow, 2010), such walking, viewed through compulsory able-bodiedness, is abnormal. WMHS also ostracizes people with disabilities who cannot wear heels for various reasons (e.g., people who have certain prosthetics, wear leg braces, or have conditions that would be aggravated by wearing heels) (H. Gibbons, personal communication, 18 April 2013). Thus, WMHS events marginalize people with disabilities who do not walk normally, with normal walking equating to what people who are temporarily able-bodied do (i.e., walking upright on their legs without the assistance of a wheelchair, crutches, braces, or other assistive devices).

It is also worth noting that cisgender men with disabilities are always already emasculated (Ostrander, 2008) due to their having a disability in a compulsory able-bodied society. This is due largely to the link between culturally intelligible notions of masculinity and one's being temporarily able-bodied (Gerschick, 2000). Thus, masculinity as an identity that requires individuals to be temporarily able-bodied is perceived as normal, whereas cisgender men with disabilities—who do not fit this mold—are immediately deemed abnormal or "less than" their temporarily able-bodied peers. Therefore, even if cisgender men with disabilities participated in WMHS, they would be unable to attain the label of man enough due to their being seen as deficiently masculine because of their disability. This critique connects with the aforementioned point about WMHS promoting an essentialized notion of masculinity, which assumes all males—and by extension men—are temporarily able-bodied. In fact, the WMHS website complies with compulsory able-bodiedness by not displaying any pictures or video of cisgender men with disabilities participating in WMHS events.

Whether the nonrepresentation of people with disabilities on the WMHS website was a conscious choice is ancillary to the reality that such an absence suggests cisgender men with disabilities cannot walk a mile in her shoes the way that one must in order to participate normally. Therefore, similar to trans* individuals, cisgender men with disabilities are made out to be invisible through the implementation of WMHS events. This poses a strange paradox for a subpopulation that is a part of the largest marginalized group in the country (i.e., people with disabilities) (Brault, 2012; Smart, 2008). For WMHS events on college campuses, this has the effect of dislocating cisgender males with disabilities.

Discussion: A Call for Educators to Consider the (Im)possibilities of WMHS

I have written previously about the importance of postsecondary educators promoting students' critical thinking skills (Nicolazzo, 2015). As such, it is incumbent upon educators to recognize the benefits and pitfalls of events such as WMHS. As educators, we must engage students in discussions about the conflicting aspects of these events as a way to promote events that reflect individual, organizational, and institutional values. This may mean educators need to make hard decisions that signal a break with putting on events that are seen as steeped in tradition, such as a campus organization hosting WMHS each year. Admittedly, this will be a difficult choice and will involve many challenging conversations about which not everyone may agree. However, the benefits may be substantial, especially in recognizing the liberatory potential for those of us who are seen as abnormal, culturally unintelligible, or impossible subjects.

One important lesson educators can pick

up from queer theory is that "people are different from each other" (Sedgwick, 2008, p. 22). This statement is deceptively simple but serves as a basis upon which educators can engage in critical reflection with students about the assumptions made about individuals based on social identity categories. For example, educators can use the trope of WMHS to ask critical questions about the event's assumptions and effects, such as, what is the impact of associating the wearing of heels as a marker of femininity and womanhood? How could the assumption of cultural intelligibility, as expressed in WMHS, render certain populations invisible? What does it mean to be man enough? How could the insistence that cisgender males who participate in WMHS are man enough do harm to students with disabilities by reifying compulsory able-bodiedness? These questions can serve as a basis for conversations about reimagining events that recognize the plurality of human experiences and identities. They will also help educators and students engage in dialogue about the multiple ways in which all individuals fail to "pass," or live up to the dominant expectations of the social identity groups with which we may identify (e.g., Mattilda, 2006).

WMHS has undeniable positive effects. As someone who has worked as a sexual violence prevention educator on a college campus, I value this work and still feel a calling to be active in violence prevention. However, the concerns with WMHS as an event, which I elucidated throughout this manuscript, are multiple and require immediate attention for the event not to reinforce genderism or compulsory able-bodiedness. Certainly, WMHS events raise essential money for sexual assault and domestic violence organizations, most of which are woefully underfunded. However, it does so while further marginalizing subordinated student populations and reinforcing the sex and gender binaries—and their linking via culturally intelligible understandings of sex/gender relations—upon which sex- and gender-based violence, harassment, and ostracism is founded. Therefore, I propose educators reimagine new events that achieve the same ends as WMHS but do so in ways that are liberatory rather than repressive. In doing so, I call on the queer theorist Cathy Cohen (1997) who signaled the liberatory potential in embracing a politics that recognizes the multiple voices and experiences of various marginalized communities. Specifically, Cohen (1997) stated, "It is my contention that queer activists who evoke a single-oppression framework misrepresent the distribution of power within and outside of…communities, and therefore limit the comprehensive and transformational character of queer politics" (p. 441). WMHS positions itself within a single-oppression framework (i.e., it seeks to address male violence against females), which limits one's understanding of WMHS as an event that reifies power and oppression across multiple groups and populations. For example, viewing WMHS through a single-oppression framework overlooks people from subordinated racial identities and/or LGBTQ populations, as well as disabled people and trans* people of all genders, all of whom experience varying heightened levels of sexual violence and domestic violence. Instead, people with privileged identities (e.g., White, heterosexual) are assumed to be the unspoken—and, therefore, normalized—group for which events like WMHS are meant to reach and support). However, there are possibilities for reimagining WMHS in ways that seek to promote sexual violence prevention without further marginalizing various populations in the process. I now turn to consider some of these possibilities as a way to answer Cohen's (1997) call of "envision[ing] a politics…where the nonnormative and marginal position of punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens, for example, is the basis for transformative coalitional work" (p. 438, italics in original).

Reimagining Possibilities for WMHS

Taking Cohen's suggestion of organizing events aimed at promoting social justice and equity around nonnormative and marginal subjects would encourage coalitional approaches to organizing events, which would encourage educators and students alike to embrace the differences between and among individuals on campus. For example, if a group wants to host a WMHS event, educators could propose a coalitional approach with student groups and populations ostracized by WMHS and find ways to weave awareness about the program's oversight as a central component of the program. This could mean featuring an LGBTQ speaker during the WMHS event, partnerships with students, faculty, and staff with disabilities on campus to promote participation, and not requiring participants to walk in heels during the event. It could also mean hosting a teach-in during a WMHS event to discuss its limitations and the way it reifies essentialized notions of sex, gender, and those bodies and presentations deemed culturally normal. WMHS could also be one in a series of events that addresses sexual violence prevention, allowing the campus community to gather a number of times to engage in critical conversations related to sexual violence prevention.

Leveraging a coalitional strategy for creating, organizing, and holding events on campus may have the effect of extending rights and privileges to those most on the margins. For example, individuals who transgress the gender binary have much politically in common with people with disabilities, which could prompt positive coalition building. Issues such as workplace discrimination, the inability to access single-sex spaces like restrooms and locker rooms, and the persistent inability for events such as WMHS to address the deleterious ways sexual violence impacts those with nonnormative bodies and gender presentations are all places around which these two groups can coalesce. Organizing programming on college campuses that recognize the intersections between and among different populations, as well as the impact of individuals who identify with multiple subordinated identities, will not only allow for a more accurate understanding of phenomena like sexual violence, but it will also lead to a better understanding of how to work toward prevention. In this way, coalition building could greatly enhance events like WMHS.

As Spade (2011) stated, "Social justice trickles up, not down" (p. 223), meaning if educators and students work toward equity for those most on the margins, all other marginalized groups will also reap the benefits of such efforts. Thus, educators and students working in broad-based, coalitional ways could help ensure that events meant to promote liberatory values, such as WMHS, would be organized in such a way that all people are recognized, validated, and embraced for who they are and how they express themselves. Although this work may not be easy, it is essential to the furthering of campus environments and events dedicated to equity and justice.

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