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Popular Pedagogy in Canadian Television:
A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of *Trailer Park Boys*

Andrew Haddow, B.A. (Hons.)

Department of Graduate Studies in Education

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Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

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Abstract

This major research paper studied the representations of masculinity in the Canadian television program *Trailer Park Boys* from the perspective of public pedagogy and education. Motivated by a desire to expose how patriarchal discourses are learned through everyday practices and texts, a methodology of feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was formulated. *Trailer Park Boys* is a long-running mockumentary series set in a fictional trailer park near Halifax, Nova Scotia. It focuses on a cast of male characters with exaggerated personalities, and is satirical in tone. Prior to the main analysis of this paper, a collection of relevant literature was conducted and an opportunity to address a lack of gender-focused studies of Canadian television, including *Trailer Park Boys*, was noted. This study used the feminist CDA method to analyze what masculinities were reinforced as normal or abnormal in Seasons 3 and 9 of the program, based on the understanding that popular culture is a site of everyday learning. After the data was collected episode-by-episode, it became apparent that the themes of family, authority, and sexuality were helpful in understanding what relationship *Trailer Park Boys* had with traditional representations of heteronormative masculinity. It was found that despite the presence of some non-traditional forms of masculinity, the show ultimately reproduced stereotypical, and often harmful, discourses of masculinity. A final explanation of the connection between the results of the study and Canadian pedagogy and everyday learning was offered, and directions for future research were identified.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Popular culture – be it music, film, television, video games, or advertisement banners on our phones – is an increasingly pervasive force in our lives which educates as well as entertains. The idea that popular culture “both reflects and informs real life” (p. 1) is known academically as *popular pedagogy*, and is often the focus of study by scholars like Giroux (2004). This study will engage in a popular culture analysis, but rather than textual analysis for its own sake, the primary vantage from which the analysis will be conducted is that of education and public pedagogy. The form my analysis will take will be shaped by various styles of critical discourse analysis (CDA). *Discourse* is defined as “the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 56). Language – and by extension, texts – can therefore be said to be “socially shaped, but is also socially shaping” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 55). CDA is the field of study that seeks to examine “the tension between these two sides of language use” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 55). Feminist CDA, a method employed by scholars like Lazar (2005), adds a specific gender focus to the methodology. While explaining that CDA is, in general, “known for its overtly political stance and is concerned with all forms of social inequality and injustice” (Lazar, 2005, p. 2), the field is nevertheless populated by mostly heterosexual white men who fail to cite feminist scholars (p. 3). My major research paper, by embracing the work of CDA scholars such as Fairclough (1995), Lazar (2005), and Gee (2011a, 2011b), takes a public pedagogies stance to examine the relationship between gender discourse and the long-running Canadian television program *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001).

Being a text which is both Canadian and a situation-comedy/mockumentary, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) has unfortunately not received a great deal of

academic attention. This speaks to a long academic tradition of not taking television seriously, as well as the fact that Canadian television receives less academic attention than that of the United States, both of which will be discussed at length in the literature review portion of this paper. The research question that was formulated for this project was, broadly: what gender discourses are present in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), and what implications does this hold for everyday learning, pedagogy, and Canadian TV? More specifically, does *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) conform to or resist stereotypical representations of masculinity, and do these representations suggest a distinctly Canadian masculinity? Finally, these ideas will be connected from a public pedagogy stance to the lifelong learning of both gender and national identity.

This chapter contextualizes the situation of television and media in Canada. Issues of national identity have long been present in Canada's media politics, as content creators sought to distinguish themselves from their United States counterparts. As such, it is worth exploring both the historical and current relationship between Canadian and American media and the way in which Canadian viewers are inundated by cultural products that are not explicitly their own. Following a brief discussion of popular culture as a concept, I discuss the educational potential of media. As discourse can dictate what is considered acceptable, unacceptable, normal, and abnormal in a given social climate, the use of discourse analysis to explore the educational potential of media artefacts is useful. This type of informal (non-classroom) education can affect how someone identifies their place in a number of discourses including gender. I conclude by demonstrating the use of media towards transformative educational experiences, and the potential for media to resist and offer alternatives to dominant discourses.

Popular Culture and the North American Relationship

Due to their shared history, culture, and geographical placement, Canada and the USA are closely related and intertwined in countless ways – and media is no exception. As mentioned, the Canadian experience is saturated with popular media and culture from the USA. In 2014, of the current top 30 television programs in Canada, only eight are of Canadian origin (Numeris, 2014). The weighting of this top 30 is also significant, as no Canadian programming appears in the top 10, and the bulk of the Canadian content in the list is either news, sports, or reality television (Numeris, 2014). Likewise, the current top 10 DVD and Blu-Ray rentals contain no Canadian films or programs (Nielsen, 2014). It has been a long struggle for the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to regulate the amount of Canadian content broadcast across the country. The CRTC regulated, until very recently, that “not less than 60% of the broadcast year and not less than 50% of the 6 p.m. to midnight evening broadcast period must be devoted to Canadian programs” (CRTC, 1999).

A famous example of resistance to these Canadian content measures from the 1980s concerns the Canadian Broadcast Commission (CBC) and the sketch-comedy program *Second City Television (SCTV)*, in which the producers were asked to add an additional two minutes of Canadian material to the program (Durkee, 1982). Comedian and *SCTV* star Rick Moranis, in a 1982 interview with *People* magazine, recalls, “Our first reaction ... was, the show is done in Canada and we’re Canadian; isn’t that enough?” (Durkee, 1982). Humorously, Moranis and co-star Dave Thomas created the popular sketch “The Great White North,” in which the pair, dressed in flannel, parkas, and ski caps, cook Canadian bacon, drink beer, and discuss current events in exaggerated

Canadian accents (Durkee, 1982). The above example helps to illuminate the tensions between popular media and the politics of nationhood, culture, and Canadian identity.

It appears as though the CRTC and CBC have historically been on the defensive against the hegemony and domination of American media and culture, seeking to carve out a space for Canadian content and regulating how Canadians should be represented on the airwaves. In early 2015, however, the CRTC overhauled the Canadian content regulations (CBC, 2015a). While the prime-time regulation of 50% Canadian content withstood the changes, the percent of daytime television was eased from 55% to zero, with the recognition that many “stations have sometimes been broadcasting the same program episodes many times over the course of a day, or even over years, simply to satisfy the old Cancon rule” (CBC, 2015, para. 2). These reforms showcase a trend of the CRTC reacting to a changing television landscape, with CRTC chairman Jean-Pierre Blais admitting that “Television quotas are an idea that is wholly anachronistic in the age of abundance and in a world of choice” (CBC, 2015a, para 3). Speciality channels, for example, which focus on a single subject or theme, were previously regulated by Canadian content requirements ranging between 15 to 85 percent (CBC 2015a, para. 7). The 2015 reforms blended these requirements to 35%, with no distinction between daytime and prime-time programming (CBC 2015a, para 7).

Perhaps the biggest change to influence the Canadian television landscape in recent years is an increase in online streaming services like YouTube and Netflix, the latter of which has experienced several clashes with the CRTC. In July 2015, Netflix refused to provide the CRTC with their subscriber information in a debate that included whether or not the content available for streaming should be subjected to the same

regulations, including Canadian content regulations, as traditional television broadcasters – a category that streaming services do not yet fall under (CBC, 2015b). The extent to which Netflix, as one example, operates outside of normal Canadian television regulations, is not limited to the bureaucratic:

In cases where someone might find content objectionable - say because of profanity or graphic violence in one of Netflix's original shows - it's an open question whether the CRTC can take the same sort of action as it can against a traditional television broadcaster. (CBC, 2016, para. 6)

Currently, Netflix content is exempt from Canadian regulations, while traditional broadcasters like the CRTC can presently “levy a range of penalties against a network such as CTV or the CBC, up to and including the suspension of a broadcasting licence” (CBC, 2016, para. 7). These points are interesting from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, as online streaming services can provide content outside of what is considered traditionally appropriate. Within the present study, my analysis of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) contains seasons of the show produced both for broadcast television, as well as a recent season produced exclusively for Netflix.

Before proceeding any further, as this research is focused within the realm of popular culture, the term *popular culture* itself must first be properly defined. Historically, as Danesi (2012) explains, the term came into use in the 1950s, a post-war period “which gave people in the mass ... considerable buying power, thus propelling them into the unprecedented position of shaping trends in fashion, music, and lifestyle through the marketplace. ... By the end of the decade a full-blown pop culture, promoted by a savvy media-technology-business partnership, had materialized” (p. 2). With the

widespread saturation of the television in American homes developing at the same time (Danesi, 2012), popular culture, in this sense, implies a connection to mass media and to entertainment. According to Aronowitz (1989), “what we call ‘popular culture’ has become technologically mediated. ... We can no longer ... distinguish what really counts as a popular form from the electronically produced culture that is consumed as records, television programs, or movies” (p. 199). The individual, according to these authors, seems to take on the role of both a shaper and a consumer of popular culture.

Popular Culture, Ideology, and Pedagogy

Regardless of the agency of the individual in influencing the trends of popular culture, the act of consuming media such as film or television carries a great ideological significance. Scholars like Ellsworth (1989) remind us that a “film needs viewers to give it its meaning” and that “viewers are not passive recipients of an already meaningful message” (p. 58). Therefore, the process of meaning making within popular culture is undertaken by both the creators and the receivers or consumers. Although writing before the widespread adoption of the Internet, White (1989) claims that television occupies “a position of hegemonic centrality in the habits of everyday life. It is also the most overdetermined cultural apparatus, negotiating a complex range of economic, institutional, social, and cultural practices and interests” (p. 176). The potential for television, films, and media at large to shape, reinforce, or even challenge dominant ideological discourse cannot be overstated. After quoting a study by Mattleart (1985) in an analysis of the children’s program *Sesame Street*, Ellsworth’s (1989) article reads, “One may legitimately ask whether the true educational message of ‘Sesame Street’

doesn't reside in this initiation into the consumer universe" (as cited in Ellsworth, 1989, p. 60). The educational value of such programs, therefore, reaches far beyond the ABCs.

Writing about pedagogy and film, Giroux (2004) addresses this idea further when he states that "symbolic capital and political power now reinforce each other through a public pedagogy produced by media that have become handmaidens to dominant elites and corporate ruling interests" (p. 120). One of the predominant goals of the education system is to foster citizenship in students, and within the neoliberal context, citizenship has become entwined with consumerism (Ferguson, 2011). Writing about neoliberal ideology in the Canadian classroom, Ferguson (2011) suggests that "such a 'consumer citizen' identity ... contradicts and has the potential to overwhelm more democratic ideals of citizenship that schools have traditionally fostered" (p. 138). In an article regarding adult learning, Gouthro and Holloway (2013) explain that "a neoliberal framework devolves responsibilities for education onto the learner and minimizes government accountability for redressing social inequities" and that "this focus on individualism frequently disadvantages women, particularly those who have minority status or who come from a working class background" (p. 42).

As has been shown above, popular culture and the media can contribute to both the formal and the informal education of consumers and citizens. Enloe (2007) characterizes *patriarchy* as a system of beliefs that upholds the idea that women and men have natural roles to play in society – men being the stronger and more rational income earners, and women being the natural homemakers and caregivers (p. 67). While the West has undergone several waves of feminism in the last century, women are still routinely oppressed by patriarchy, as evidenced by their portrayal in the media.

Television and Film: A Feminist Perspective

The documentary film *Miss Representation* by Siebel Newsom (2011) excellently links the educational influences of popular culture to the oppression and limitation of women within Western society. Although the documentary is almost entirely America-focused, the consumption patterns of Canadian viewers and consumers make Siebel Newsom's (2011) central arguments relevant to this discussion. Including television, movies, magazines, and time spent online, teenagers today spend approximately 10 hours and 45 minutes each day consuming media (Siebel Newsom, 2011). The film presents the argument that girls are taught from an extremely young age to care about their bodies and looks through stereotyping and objectification, which shape their perception of their role in society. Siebel Newsom refers to this as a *culture of self-objectification* among women in the United States. This relates to the low percentage of women in positions of power in the country relative to their population; according to the film, women account for 51 percent of the population in the United States, but make up only 17 percent of Congress (Siebel Newsom, 2011).

The situation in Canada only recently got better. In 2011, women occupied 24.7 percent of the House of Commons, and approximately 36.3 percent of the Senate (Cool, 2011). With the 2015 election, a record number of women were elected to the Parliament – but the increase was a mere one percent higher than the 2011 Parliament (Anderssen, 2015), still below the global 30 percent critical mass goal (Cool, 2011). With women making up 50.4 percent of the population (Statistics Canada, 2015), this minimum should be set considerably higher in order for accurate democratic representation – by gender, at

least. Attempting to address this inequality, however, upon his election as Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau formed Canada's first gender-equal Cabinet (Anderssen, 2015).

The under-representation of women in Western popular media is a serious problem. Women represent roughly 37 percent of characters on mainstream television, and women over 45 years of age make up only 15 percent (Siebel Newsom, 2011). It is clear that the media tends to privilege men and their stories as important, which positions women – and particularly, older women – as irrelevant to Western culture and society. Using Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin as examples, the film reveals that the more power that women achieve, the stronger the resistance is to them within a patriarchal society (Siebel Newsom, 2011).

For instance, Sarkeesian of the *Feminist Frequency* blog has been subjected to much symbolic violence for her entrance into video-game discourse. Although she has been writing and making feminist-centred content about popular media for quite some time, Sarkeesian took to the crowd-funding website Kickstarter in 2012 for help to create a series about female stereotypes within video games, which premiered on YouTube the following year (Hicks, 2013). Her series, entitled *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, illuminates how female characters in games have long been delegated to passive roles like the damsel in distress, and how they are often sexually objectified (Sarkeesian, 2013a, 2013b). This reinforces the assumption that gamers are a predominantly male demographic, but, similar to the statistics above regarding women in television, this is not the case. According to the Entertainment Software Association of Canada (2013), women make up 46 percent of gamers, compared to 45 percent in the United States (Entertainment Software Association, 2013).

Similar to the statistics cited above from Siebel Newsom (2011), the under-representation of women in video games is undemocratic and serves to gender the politics of video games, evidenced through marketing, tropes and the relative scarcity of female main characters – all of which Sarkeesian (2013a, 2013b) covers in her web series. Sarkeesian was met with “waves of misogynistic comments, from the standard threats of rape to barely ironic demands that she ‘get back in the kitchen’” (Hicks, 2013). This capitulated in the creation of an in-browser Flash game in which players attacked Anita Sarkeesian until “her face [became] bruised and bloodied beyond recognition” (Hicks, 2013). Sarkeesian responded to the game in a piece written for the *Toronto Standard*, urging readers to “remember that this ‘game’ is a symptom of our deeply misogynist culture (both online and offline)” (Sarkeesian, 2012). Despite the seemingly limitless potential for media and popular culture to have negative educational impacts on Western culture, there is simultaneously a space for resistance to this dominant ideology through both the consuming and the creating of media.

Having introduced broadly the themes and goals of this research in the first chapter, this major research paper is first and foremost concerned with the educational or pedagogical impacts of popular culture and media. As demonstrated through the above research, popular culture can influence consumers in a way that establishes or reinforces oppressive systems of beliefs, behaviours, and discourses. While it is easy for the viewer or consumer to enjoy popular culture simply as a form of entertainment, Tisdell (2007) warns that due to its omnipresent nature, popular culture “has far more power to educate or ‘miseducate’ than the many formal and nonformal forms of adult education that scholars have written about and researched” (p. 6). However, critical-minded teachers

and viewers can use popular culture to encourage critiques or resistance to dominant patriarchal discourse, a subject that will be discussed further in the second chapter of this research. The second chapter is dedicated to reviewing literature relevant to public pedagogy and the history and examples of television studies in Canada. It also examines academic analyses that deal specifically with *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2011). Given that this major research paper will approach the aforementioned television program from a feminist perspective, and will more specifically examine the intersections of masculinity and national identity, the literature review will also include an overview of contemporary masculinity studies. Chapter Three presents feminist critical discourse analysis as the methodology that will be used to deconstruct the relationship of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2011) to various discourses. Chapter Four, presenting the analysis portion of this study, closely examines the representations of masculinity in the show's third and ninth seasons, and is organized thematically in relation to family, authority, and sexuality. The fifth and final chapter discusses the implications of my analysis for education and public pedagogy. It is my hope that this study can present an interesting and ideologically/discursively progressive piece of literature to both readers and to the fields of education, Canadian television studies, and discourse analysis.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In preparing this literature review, what became the most apparent theme was the lack of sources that combined television, gender, national identity, and discourse analysis from an educational standpoint. This problem is a compounded one, since television studies, as a field, is often not given as much attention as that of film or literature, and that, more specifically, Canadian television studies is not given as much attention as that of the United States. I have previously written about the ways in which Canadian viewers are overwhelmed by American content (Haddow, 2015), and therefore, analyses dealing with American television can and should be considered relevant to Canadian studies. However, this should not lead to a neglect of analysis of Canadian sources.

These issues, coupled with the specific type of intersectional analysis with which I would like to engage *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), and Canadian television as a whole, represent the significant gap in the reviewed literature – and therefore, the justification for the present educational research. Created by series director Mike Clattenburg (2001), *Trailer Park Boys* is a mockumentary-style comedy that follows the daily lives and musings of the residents of an Atlantic-Canadian trailer park. The criminal recidivism of male leads Julian, Ricky, and Bubbles, is interspersed with confessional segments in which the characters speak directly to the camera (Clattenburg, 2001). Running for an initial seven seasons and two feature films before a hiatus, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) was revived when lead actors Tremblay, Wells, and Smith purchased the show's rights from producers Clattenburg, Dunn, and Volpe in 2013 (CNW, 2013). It was later announced that seasons eight and nine of *Trailer Park Boys*

(Clattenburg, 2001) would be available exclusively for the digital television provider Netflix, where the show has remained since (CNW, 2014).

This review of the relevant literature is organized from broad to narrow. First, I will establish some background knowledge regarding public pedagogy, efforts to teach media literacy within the classroom, and some examples of recent educational studies that use popular culture to critique dominant discourses. The section following this deals with Canadian television studies in general and the history of television in Canada, as establishing both the academic and material precedents in regards to Canadian television is crucial to my final analysis. Next, several sources which analyze specific artefacts within the Canadian television canon will be presented and discussed to show how scholars before me have approached the analysis of Canadian television programs. The penultimate section will be dedicated to the work that deals specifically with the program *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Despite the apparent renewed interest in the series, with new episodes currently being produced, at the time of writing, there are very few academic sources that engage with *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). As this research will ultimately deal with representations of Canadian masculinity within the aforementioned television series, a final section of this literature review will be dedicated to the work of R.W. Connell (1992, 1997, 2005), whose work on masculinity theory has been very influential in the world of gender studies.

Public Pedagogy and Critical Media Literacy

Encouraging media literacy in Canadian culture and within classrooms will help citizens, viewers, and students to make sense of the ideological and pedagogical implications within popular culture. Broadly, *media literacy* can be defined by “a set of

competencies that enable us to interpret media texts and institutions, to make media of our own, and to recognize and engage with the social and political influence of media in everyday life” (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2011, p. 1). Consistent with Giroux’s (2004) theories on public pedagogy, Hoechsmann and Poyntz (2011) clarify that understanding popular media as educational and pedagogical helps to orient teachers and learners towards a better understanding of our society and a strengthening of democratic participation (p. 41).

In Canada, there are already movements underway to bring popular media into the classroom. Ferguson (2011) sets the scene, explaining that “this openness stems, on the one hand, from the chronic underfunding [of] the neoliberal” and, on the other hand, because “a pedagogy of the ‘popular’ is on the rise: backed by a multiliteracies approach to learning, teachers are placing great hopes in the potential of nontraditional texts” (p. 138). Without having critically-minded teachers to guide the negotiation of popular texts, in an argument similar to that of Jarvis (2006), Ferguson claims that ultimately, this inclusion of non-traditional texts has thus far failed to displace dominant and oppressive neoliberal ideology.

Indeed, Ferguson (2011) claims that this move to include popular media in schools, in the light of the neoliberal emphasis on standardized test performance, can largely be seen as an attempt to solve the “problem” of boys’ literacy (p. 142). While boys do tend to have reading literacy levels lower than that of girls (Statistics Canada, 2010a), attempting to address this by dictating what boys and girls are supposedly “into” (Ferguson, 2011) will prove counterintuitive and further limit gender equity in Canada. Regardless, the situation is hopeful, as the Ontario curriculum “offer[s] small openings

for more politicized lesson plans that explore the underlying forces of social power and conflict, and that understand the media and culture as potential weapons in the struggle to change the world” (Fergusson, 2011, p. 138). The responsibility, therefore, can be assumed by educators, teacher candidates, and professors of education in order to take advantage of these allowances for critical dissent.

While classroom media literacy is progressing, public pedagogy within the realm of adult education is still rare (Brown, Jubas & Taber, 2016). The work of Brown et al. (2016) is aligned with that of Giroux (2004) and Hoechsmann and Poyntz (2011) in that “adults are not passive consumers of media; instead, we (re)make our own meanings as we accept, resist, and challenge cultural representations” and that “popular culture and media can be powerful and persuasive vehicles for helping us look at the world in new and different ways and thus can be used by educators to engage students and problematize societal issues” (p. 1). In their work focusing on the “pedagogical importance among adult fans” of film and television, Brown et al. (2016) explain that although “the characters in fictional stories are not really living in the way that we are,” in consuming popular media “we learn about how other people live, the dilemmas that they encounter, and the choices that they make. We might learn something about what is problematic or missing in our lives, and about the lives that we might lead (p. 1). Further, “films and television shows reflect something about the cultural norms and values of the place where they originate,” and “these norms and values infuse televisual and filmic texts so that they can be seen as taking on a national quality” (Brown et al., 2016, p. 1). Applying the term ‘Canadian content’ to a film or television program, for example, can “convey something about aesthetic preferences and directorial style, but also thematic

preoccupations and representations of everyday practices and settings in particular countries” (Brown et al., 2016, p. 1).

In the same way that critical media literacy for young students requires a critically-minded teacher (Jarvis, 2006), adult educators are also an important part of the equation. In a study focused on how professors and their graduate students used popular media in their practice, Tisdell (2007) found that “adult educators are large consumers of popular culture as a source of pleasure” (p. 7) and that “that the participants’ use of media also helped them find alternative narratives for themselves; expanded thinking about ‘others’ of a different race, gender, or sexual orientation” (p. 8). Tisdell (2007) stresses that “from an educational and media-literacy perspective, it’s important to teach people to analyze popular culture’s unconscious messages” and tells us that “Henry Giroux (2004) goes even further and argues that educators have a responsibility to do so because popular culture is a mass-produced form of public pedagogy” (p. 9). An understanding of public pedagogy and critical media literacy is, as shown above, as important within the realm of adult education as for young children within the classroom.

Freire and Giroux (1989) write that critical pedagogy “must incorporate aspects of popular culture as a serious educational discourse into the school curriculum, and it must bring into the discourse of school policy and pedagogical planning the voices who have been marginalized and excluded” (p. ix). It has been shown above that women are often excluded and misrepresented within popular culture, which contributes to the reinforcement of a patriarchal social structure. It is crucial that critically-minded women and men play equitable roles in the crafting, teaching, and understanding of media and popular culture as a site of pedagogy.

Popular Culture, Fiction and the Potential for Resistance

To help illuminate the way in which the educational influence of popular culture can have positive pedagogical impacts, the transformative potential of fiction is discussed below. In a study conducted with a group of women across a diverse range of ages and socio-cultural backgrounds, Jarvis (2006) analyzed their responses to romantic fiction novels. She notes that the way in which this genre is often disregarded and not taken seriously suggests that the books' "emphasis on feelings, love, and relationships [is] shameful ... connected to the way some feminist critics see the romance as a subversive form that resists a dominant social tendency to belittle those areas of life, such as marriage and the family, with which women are often associated in favor of the public sphere" (p. 42). In the group led by Jarvis (2006), this type of fiction was used to guide students through a transformational learning experience in critiquing patriarchal culture. Her students were able to critique the heteronormative stereotypes present in the fiction and were able to "read texts as a series of signs with shifting but often preferred or dominant meanings" (p. 74).

Fiction – even when it embodies dominant stereotypes and discourse – can create a space for transformational learning in which readers can learn to see and critique ideology. In 2013, Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane documented the experiences of four young Canadian girls who participated in a book-club reading of *The Hunger Games*. The hope was that such a massively popular work of fiction could be used towards encouraging feminist sociological critique in students. Similar to Jarvis (2006), Taber et al. (2013) encourage teachers and youth workers to adopt a critical lens when reading

popular fiction. The researchers hope, “through such repeated opportunities for structured critique[,] that youth may gain some sense of agency for social change” (p. 1035).

Jarvis and Burr (2011) conducted a project to research the effects of the popular program *Buffy the Vampire Slayer (BtVS)* on transformative education. While the authors admit that it is up to the viewer to make her or his own meaning (p. 166), some media, “like *BtVS*, are constructed in ways that make them more likely than others to challenge existing sociolinguistic and moral-ethical frames of reference, to create dissonance, to offer alternative perspectives to accepted social beliefs and culturally approved aspirations, and to illuminate contemporary dilemmas” (p. 169). Jarvis (2006) argues that such programs that present “moral dilemmas, sophisticated character development, [and a] reversal of stereotypes and audience expectations” are more likely to initiate a transformational educational experience (p. 169).

However, it must be noted that such subversive and empowering heroines can also be entangled in gendered and potentially oppressive discourses. The ways in which subversive female hero characters can still reinforce patriarchal gender tropes are discussed by O’Reilly (2005). Similar to Wonder Woman’s being forced to prove her heroism, unlike male heroes, Buffy underwent examination in several episodes to validate her super powers and worthiness (O’Reilly, 2005). The programs, therefore, subtly reinforce heroism and strength as male traits that females can only possess unnaturally. Indeed, “when faced with the Watchers Council’s trials, Buffy initially regresses from powerful action hero to frightened young woman” (O’Reilly, 2005).

The complex tension between resistance and conformity is exemplified in the way in which lesbian characters are portrayed in the Canadian-American-produced series

Queer as Folk (QAF). While it is certainly against the grain for its time, Peters (2009) explains that “gay men are explicitly at the center of the *QAF* universe” and that the jokes used in the program “consistently imply an undercurrent of dislike toward lesbians” (p. 17). After interviewing many Canadian viewers, Peters concludes that “although the representation of lesbians on *QAF* holds the ‘promise of solidarity’” (p. 19), the portrayal of lesbians in the series was ultimately received as a negative one. As the particular television programs discussed above are relatively new, to understand the lifelong educational effects of popular media on individuals, we must turn to a different study.

Scholars Wright and Sandlin (2009) have conducted research on the lifelong educational and pedagogical impacts on audiences of the 1960s’ program *The Avengers*. Of particular interest was the replacement of one of the main male characters in the second season by Dr. Cathy Gale, played by Honor Blackman, who “rocked the existing stereotype of subservient, domesticated TV women” (Richardson, 1996, p. 41, as cited in Wright & Sandlin, 2009). The researchers noted that, among the women who had watched the program when they were younger, many began to examine the more traditional gender roles that their parents had embodied and “they looked to Cathy to provide alternative possibilities” (p. 540). Taking this study further, the research included three transgender women (male-to-female transgender individuals) and the impact that Cathy Gale had had on forming their gender identities; the authors say that “all three trans-women indicated Cathy Gale was the only person, in the media or in their lives, they felt comfortable modelling themselves on in terms of performing strength, physical abilities and attitude in confrontational situations” (p. 541).

Canada on Television

Moving forward, the following sections of this literature review examine Canadian television, the history of its academic attention, and examples of previous textual analyses. To begin, the idea that Canadian television studies is a neglected field is not itself revolutionary. Scholars such as Attallah (2010) have made this quite clear. The author comments on the “unworthiness” of television in the eyes of many academics, noting that “indeed, the very act of watching television is not something to which one readily admits. Watching too much television or too much of the wrong type (non-news programming) is particularly unacceptable” (Attallah, 2010, p. 15). Attallah (2010) posits that this, in part, explains the historically scarce number of peer-reviewed academic articles that analyse television.

While the state of television studies has improved since the time Attallah wrote this dissertation (Attallah, 2010), the amount of work written about Canadian television remains scarce when compared to the United States. Canadian television has always existed in the shadow of American television, and as Attallah (2007) contextualizes, “American film and television – and American culture generally – exercise a significant amount of pressure upon Canadian culture” (p. 333). While perhaps unsurprising, the relationship is more complex than one may think. Due to the lack of any Hollywood-like institution, or infrastructures of “theatrical, acting, or literary traditions” (Attallah, 2007, p. 333), the Canadian television industry took on a form quite different from that of the United States. Founded in 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which came into its own by providing war coverage during the 1940s, “retained not only its managerial structures and production habits but also its propensity to the factual, the

documentary, and the didactic” when it expanded into television in 1952 (Attallah, 2007). According to Attallah (2007), Canadian public opinion was distrustful of American culture, and therefore television, and as such, “if American television was popular and entertaining, then Canadian television would be didactic and enlightening” (p. 334).

While the cultural climate within which Canadian television exists has certainly changed since its inception, one constant is the way in which it must often define itself in relation to its more hegemonic American counterpart. The battle for viewership is still largely in favour of American content; as I have detailed in my previous work, the amount of American content in the top-viewed programs by Canadian consumers is consistently staggering (Haddow, 2015). The CBC does maintain regulations regarding the amount of Canadian content aired during primetime viewing hours (CRTC, 1999), and while there have been recent efforts to introduce new dramatic programming like *Being Erica* (Sinyor, 2009), *Ascensions* (Cruz & Levens, 2014), *Heartland* (Brooke, 2007), and *X Company* (Ellis & Morgenstern, 2015), the majority of the content that fulfills this requirement is often made up of news programming, sports broadcasts, and reality television (Numeris, 2014).

Within academia as well, Canadian television studies has also long been absorbed “into the narrative of cultural defence and into the rationale of the policy apparatus justified by that narrative” (Attallah, 2007, p. 325). While Attallah (2007) considers adherence to this narrative to be a hindrance on Canadian television studies, including national and cultural identity in a critical analysis of Canadian media can nevertheless enrich our understanding of Canadian discourse. Perhaps it is better, as Bredin, Henderson, and Matheson (2012) argue, “to explore Canadian television within the realm

of television studies,” to focus first on television and on nation second, rather than the inverse (p. 15).

In a later article, Attallah (2010) discusses one of the dominant ways television has been discussed academically, as well as television in relation to discourse and discursive practices. Here, the author explains how the field of “effects studies” has treated television as a medium and institution with tangible and measurable societal impacts, and how studies “specifically with the representations of violence, and then of sex, ethnic or professional groups, women, etc., have been commissioned by numerous governments” (Attallah, 2010, p. 9). According to Attallah (2010), there have been a number of studies focused on “representations of minorities, ethnic groups, policemen, women, etc. ... in the belief that these presentations not only reflected but also helped shape attitudes about the people represented” (p. 9). Attallah (2010) warns of certain presumptive qualities of effects studies, namely that “effects studies presuppose an equivalence between a representation and reality,” (p. 9) and “that viewers are blank slates onto which television effects its impact” (p. 10). Summarizing, Attallah (2010) writes that,

The necessity of current research on television – that is to say the way of talking about television, the way of constituting it as an object of study, in short, the discourse on television – has been to capture television as a technology capable of producing determinate effects rather than as part of a larger culture strategy. (p. 11)

Later, Attallah (2010) explains this idea of discourse, writing that,

A discourse, then, is *an order of regularity that insistently approaches, hierarchizes, and constitutes objects in the same way*. In the case of television, these objects are representations offered in television shows. The discourse of television constitutes its objects in the same way that certain things are said and certain others are not. (p. 18, italics in original)

Attallah (2010) writes that “the discourse of the institution of television that, like all discourses, is intended *to* someone, systematically arranges, orchestrates, and constitutes its audience through its construction of representations” (p. 19). Finally, the author concludes the article by claiming that,

It is through the internalization of the institution’s codes and practices that certain configurations that may at first have been eccentric or unusual (though never radically incomprehensible, as in the case of the cinema) came to be stabilized, and generalized. (Attallah, 2010, p. 21)

Attallah’s (2010) explanation of discourse is congruent with that of Fairclough (1995), and can help us formulate a model more specifically aimed at the analysis of television. However, it is important to establish that for the purposes of my research, referring to discourse and the discourse of television will not imply one uniform system – but instead, many overlapping systems of representations.

Before advancing much further, it is difficult to approach Canadian media studies at all without addressing the work of Marshall McLuhan. His book *Understanding Media* (McLuhan, 1964), was influential for privileging the televisual medium itself, rather than the content, in its potential to influence ideology. In the collection of the present research, there was evidence of a will to modify, if not outright reject, McLuhan’s work and ideas

(Bociurkiw 2011). Bociurkiw's (2011) book *Feeling Canadian* "privileges this much-maligned content" (p. 15) and represents a return to textual analysis within Canadian television studies. Another of McLuhan's (1964) lasting ideas was television as a *cool medium*, in that it carried less detail than *hot mediums* like film or print. In reference to this point, Bociurkiw (2011) agrees with McLuhan's (1964) assessment, yet the argument that television programs carry "less detail" (Bociurkiw 2011) in today's age of high definition, often high-budget and cinematic in quality content seems decidedly dated.

In the case of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), this differentiation between *hot* or *cold* is somewhat fluid. While the early seasons of the program's original run were shot in standard definition on extremely low-budget equipment, the show has since moved to high definition and foregone much of their original production aesthetic. Since the show's renaissance in 2014, following an acquisition of the rights and characters from the original producers by the three lead actors themselves, the *boys* have increased their online presence through the use of social media like Vine, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to encourage more direct interactivity between viewers and the world and characters of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001).

To return to more recent scholarship, the anthology *Programming Reality* (Druck & Kotsopolous, 2008) offers both a brief history of television in Canada, and the study thereof, and contains several interesting thoughts on the nature of the recent phenomena of reality television. Introducing the book, the editors comment that "historically, a strong communications perspective has informed the study of English-language Canadian television," and that "when communications scholars have turned their attention to Canadian television, they have most often done so from the perspective of state

regulation and international dependency” (Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008, p. 1). From this, two emergent trends are apparent: that Canadian television studies often borrows from, or is conducted by, other fields of academia rather than having a distinct field of its own, and secondly, that narratives of state have long been at the center of Canadian television. This, of course, also applies outside of academia, as the editors point out, “from the Massey Commission (1951) to the establishment of the Canadian Television Fund (1998), the Canadian state, much like other small-market nations, has associated television with policies of nation building” (Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008, p. 2). An interesting shift in policy, detailed in this book, took place in the 1980s, which “mark[ed] a neoliberal ideological shift, signified in part by an increased policy emphasis on globalizing Canada’s media industries and cultural output,” (Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008, p. 2). This would have a profound impact on the CBC, as the public broadcaster “began eliminating its in-house production in 1984 and changed from a producer to a patron of Canadian programming” (Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008, p. 2).

This shift towards privatization and globalization was when, as mentioned above, the CRTC and CBC began implementing mandates on Canadian content, “as a means to set itself apart from the private broadcasters and their Americanized schedules” (Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008, p. 3). This development is relevant to the current study in a variety of ways – namely, in its further emphasis on using television and communications to invent and preserve a unique Canadian identity, as well as the fact that the intended audience was now not only Canadian, but a global one. Unlike the early days of the CBC, where producing content distinct from that of America was undertaken for a domestic

audience in the name of nation building, from the 1980s onwards to the present, the project of Canadian identity in the era of globalization was arguably motivated by profit.

These trends of privatization continued into the 1990s, when the policies drafted in the 1980s began to “bear fruit” (Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008, p. 3). As Druick and Kostopolous (2008) point out, the solidification of neoliberal ideology and the shift towards globalization since and throughout the 1990s was “[paralleled by the] emergence and development of so-called reality television” (p. 6). Although certainly not exclusive to Canada, reality television has changed the state of television the world over. Made possible by the neoliberal economic landscape, “the fascination [reality television] holds as a concept in both popular culture and the academy is linked to its claims to be documentary reality, to its foregrounding of ordinary people, and to its emphasis on confession” (Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008, p. 6). It is unsurprising, then, that this thematic focus should lend itself so well to the demand to produce uniquely Canadian content.

Bringing us into the modern era of Canadian television, John Doyle describes the modern CBC as “a curious hybrid, simultaneously a public broadcaster and reliant on commercial revenue” (Bredin et al., 2012 p. xiii). As more content migrates online and to digital distribution platforms rather than traditional broadcast television, the future role of the CBC may become unclear. In its defense, however, Doyle posits that,

the CBC needs to exist. It’s a matter of cultural literacy. A country without a healthy diet of continuing homegrown drama is lacking in the fibre of contemporary storytelling. And CBC TV is our best hope for that diet of home

grown drama ... A country is simply inauthentic if its stories are not reflected back to itself. (Bredin et al., 2012 p. xii)

This brings us to an interesting point regarding the relationship between storytelling and national identity. Indeed, “storytelling should be perceived as another aspect of literacy, and the CBC as its main tool for furthering it” (Bredin et al., 2012 p. xiii). Further, Bredin et al. (2012) introduce the issue of identity by writing that “Canadian television is ... one of the primary ways of generating explanations for and coming to terms with what we know about being Canadian” (p. 5). With the overwhelming amount of American content consumed in Canada, outlined earlier, it is important to see “Canadian television as offering important space for the creation of culturally unique stories and narrative structures” (Bredin et al., 2012 p. 7). It is curious, then, why so few studies and analyses of actual Canadian televisual artefacts actually take place. Even Marshall McLuhan, arguably Canada’s most famous media scholar, was concerned most with the cognitive and perceptual effects of television as a medium – rather than the actual content itself (Bredin et al., 2012 p. 12).

Bredin et al. (2012) cite the early 1990s as a time when television studies in Canada became influenced by work in the field of cultural studies from American and British scholars (p. 12). Expanding on this, the authors explain that “this influence shaped a view of television not only as a technology, an industry, or a collection of mass-mediated texts, but as a cultural practice” (Bredin et al., 2012 p. 12). Despite this optimism, however, the authors remain somewhat sceptical, and point out that much of the current scholarship is easily “marginalized within larger disciplinary fields such as media studies, film studies, popular culture, and Canadian studies” and that “[m]any

noteworthy essays on Canadian TV end up scattered in various anthologies and periodicals” (Bredin et al., 2012 p. 14). While these other academic fields have indeed had an arguably positive and broadening impact on Canadian televisual scholarship, this trend “may also inhibit the development of Canadian television studies as a separate discipline” (Bredin et al., 2012 p. 14). Bredin et al. (2012) express relief at the prospect that “Canadian television scholars no longer feel the need to agonize over issues of national identity or defend the role of television within the nation-state,” and hope that their scholarship can help move beyond Canadian television studies’ “conventional discourses of cultural nationalism” (p. 15). This sentiment represents an emerging theme in the literature. While the present work deals heavily with issues of national identity, I hope to approach the subject in a way that differs from traditional scholarship and adds nuance to the existing literature.

While the CBC has been long involved with the creation and cultivation of Canadian national identity, it is worth exploring the idea, as McKinnon (2001) does, that technology itself has always had an integral part in the building of the Canadian state. Generally speaking, “Canada, geographically and historically, is formed and defined by its natural resources and hence technological dependency” (McKinnon, 2001, p. 137). This is, of course, also true in the creating of the Canadian imaginary, which McKinnon (2001) explains was also “created in relation to both the spaces of the natural world and the space produced by technology” (p. 132). Historically, technological developments that worked towards the creation of the Canadian state were the railroad, physically bringing the ends of the continent together, and the radio and the CBC, providing a national stage for dialogue and storytelling (McKinnon, 2001). Naturally, television

carried on this tradition, but Canadian television is, as McKinnon (2001) writes, “both a stabilizing force ... and a destabilizing one” (p. 132). In producing content about marginalized rural areas, for example, at once this content can both destabilize, by not focusing on dominant Ontario, and stabilize, by drawing in marginal areas as part of a national whole (McKinnon, 2001). Indeed, referring to the Newfoundland sitcom *Codco*, McKinnon (2001) writes that “we were made to feel that Newfoundlanders are part of ‘us’” (p. 143). This tension between central and marginal, and the relationship between technology and the creation of the state, appears to be an important theme in the history of Canadian television studies.

McKinnon (2001), establishing the ability of television to influence popular ideology and to establish and maintain discourses, writes that “the history of television is, in part, the history of those who have the power to produce discourse, who symbolically limit the world” (McKinnon, 2001, p. 136). The author (McKinnon, 2001) believes that “ordinary workers do not possess ‘cultural capital’ and thus are vulnerable to domination by the technology that they ultimately will serve rather than use” (p. 136). In the case of Canada, which relied on the use of mass media like the CBC in the nation building project (McKinnon, 2001), the discursive effects of television – both public and private – must be examined closely. However, in line with McKinnon’s (2001) sentiment about the stabilizing and destabilizing role of television, the author restates that “while it is true that television ‘promotes certain ways of acting,’ creating uniformity in its audience, it is also a product of a world run amok with differences” (p. 136). Pertaining to national identity in Canada, McKinnon (2001) writes “how national space is represented – whether

Canada is represented as a coherent whole or as constituted by the differences that make up the whole – is crucial” (p. 139).

While Canadian television has existed in the form of the CBC since 1952 (Attalah, 2007), long enough for countless representations to have been produced and broadcast, the present study will deal directly with a representation of a marginal Canadian community, specifically *Trailer Park Boys*’ (Clattenburg, 2001) take on the Maritimes. As a television program that presents itself and is easily recognizable as outwardly Canadian, it contributes to various overlapping discourses and, as I will argue, contributes to the public imagination of what are thought to be specifically “Canadian” values. Referring specifically to the opening-title sequence of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), and using Foucault’s (as cited in McKinnon, 2001) concept of *heterotopic spaces*, McKinnon explains that “the celebration of the memory of Canadian utopian myths ... and the re-inscription of Canadian space as a site of difference, is heterotopic in both a real site and a site sustained in the Canadian imagination and mythic history” (p. 139). This dominant belief that Canada itself is a sight of anti-hegemony, McKinnon (2001) argues, is helpful insofar as it “ensures that plurality can be respected and sustained and can help make a strong case for the radical democratic notion that alternative senses of history can make a country” (p. 139). However, within this heterotopic space in the Canadian imaginary, it can also be possible for differences and inequalities to become flattened or ignored, for stereotypes to be reinforced, for sites of domination to continue to take place, and for hierarchies to become or remain established.

Canadian statehood itself, McKinnon (2001) writes, “is rhetorically performed by exclusion: Canada is not the United States; English Canada is not French Canada; and

neither of these represents First Nations peoples” (p. 140). Naturally, this logic can be used to argue that White Canada is not Black Canada, Central Canada is not Regional Canada, Male Canada is not Female Canada. It is “only by adopting anti-essentialism and by giving up epistemological tenets of Enlightenment, like the essentialism of identity, [that] new, radical, democratic identities be constituted” (McKinnon, 2001, p. 140). To conclude this examination of McKinnon’s (2001) work, the author sees hope in using “satire [as] one way to teach television studies without resorting to dangerous and dualistic essentialisms in order to describe what could be “Canadian” about Canadian television,” (p. 146-147) and concludes that “satire on Canadian television presents one way to mobilize a sense of belonging to a tribe, race, gender, nation or to humankind without entrenching essentialized or homogenized identities” (p. 147). My research will work against these essentialist readings, and aid in the awareness of treating critical television consumption as a type of literacy.

Canadian Television Analysis

The following section of my literature review provides an overview of academic sources that deal directly with Canadian television programs, and the trends that emerged between these sources. A sample of scholarly articles was chosen, and reflects televisual representations of Canadian gender, sexuality, and marginalized or racialized groups. Deveau (2011) offers a gender-based critique of the Canadian *Kids in the Hall*, *The Red Green Show*, and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. *Kids in the Hall*, a sketch troupe formed in 1984 (Deveau, 2015), began their eponymous television show five years later (Bodolai & Michaels, 1989). *Kids in the Hall* (Bodolai & Michaels, 1989) lampooned both Canadian suburban life and Toronto’s corporate culture, “subverting these scenarios with absurd

characters” (Deveau, 2015, p. 327). *The Red Green Show* began on the Hamilton, Ontario station CHCH before settling on the CBC (Deveau, 2011). Spending 15 years on air, the show centers around the character Red Green “the leader of Possum Lodge, a northern Ontario lake community, [who] provides advice on marriage, fishing and carpentry to a hypothetical group of men who, it is presumed, are not sufficiently good at any of these things” (Deveau, 2011, p. 143). *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* remains a long-running comedy series focusing on satirizing Canadian politics and news and features, among many others, returning character Raj Binder, a strongly-accented South Asian immigrant sports reporter who “plays the naive newcomer who is discovering Canadian cultural norms for the first time” (Deveau, 2011, p. 145).

All three programs are examples of the sketch-comedy genre, and “have offered Canadian audiences unique parodies of nostalgic conceptions of Canadian masculinity” (Deveau, 2011, p. 134). Referring specifically to sketch, Deveau (2011) writes that “all gender performances – even those that might be construed as normative – are rendered comically absurd in this genre” (p. 134). This clarifies the satirical potential of characters like Red Green, who “clearly structures heterosexual masculinity as outdated, failing and laughable” (Deveau, 2011, p. 134). Although Red Green “conforms, in many ways, to normative masculinity,” the “presentation of the traditional outdoorsy Canadian man renders this character laughable not only for its inadequacy, but also for its insinuation that such a gender model could ever have been the foundation of a national social order” (Deveau, 2011, p. 143). Deveau (2011) praises the main character’s creator by writing that “Smith reminds his audience that no authentic image of masculinity or Canadian identity exists” (p. 143). Likewise, in *22 Minutes*, “the normative masculinity Mercer

mocks may be an imaginary, unrealistic mythology, but it still permeates popular discourses and media images related to traditional family values” (Deveau, 2011, p. 135).

In an article dealing with American television, Hanke (1998) writes that,

While this process of resubjectification may not signify a change in social structures of hierarchy and inequality, such comic texts can imply a lack of reverence for conventional masculinity, especially as it is defined in terms of competence and infallibility. (p. 76)

Moving away from macho representations of masculinity, *Kids’ Buddy* Cole character, according to Deveau (2011), “brought complex gender and sexuality issues to a mainstream audience” (p. 141). An extremely camp Toronto bar owner, Buddy, “as Canadian and gay ... experiences a double marginality” (Deveau, 2011, p. 142). This character was mentioned elsewhere in McKinnon’s (2011) work, who referred to Buddy’s gay bar as *transgressive* and claimed that Buddy “flouts homogenous notions of ‘the people’ within the nation state” (p. 144).

Kids in the Hall, *The Red Green Show*, and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* – and Canadian sketch comedy itself – have “offered audiences a range of critical imaginings of gender, especially of Canadian masculinity – *Canadian* and *masculinity* being complex, contradictory and ambivalent categories” (Deveau, 2011, p. 137). While “Canadian masculinity has not been well-considered in television studies,” Deveau (2011) does concede that literature and film studies have offered a wealth of related scholarship (p. 138). A common theme that the author found in broader Canadian pop culture is that of failure (Deveau, 2011, p. 133). While the artefacts examined by Deveau (2011) are not entirely recent, the author notes that “the linking of masculinity and Canadian identity

with themes of failure provides a compelling narrative, and one that continues to work implicitly through discourses related to Canadian popular culture” (p. 140). Deveau (2011) refers to Ramsay’s (1993) discussion of the Canadian film *Goin’ Down the Road*, released originally in 1970. The film features two men from Cape Breton who move to Toronto seeking prosperity and, after no success, migrate further westward (Ramsay, 1993).

One can read these characters as bumbling, *hoser* stereotypes, but Ramsay (1993) argues that their failures and transgressions, including stealing groceries at Christmas, are “not because of some abstract, flawed masculine ‘Canadian essence’, but because of real regional, class, cultural, and gender differences in the structure of ‘the democratic nation’ called Canada” (p. 38). Ramsey (1993) resists the temptation to generalize representations of Canadian men as losers, and therefore American men as winners, suggesting instead that “the Canadian imagination is simply more culturally predisposed to contemplate life from the margins” (p. 39). Ramsay (1993) describes *Goin’ Down the Road* as “not about dominant psychological and social identities as much as it is about the gaps, spaces and fissures in between pedagogically prescribed metaphoric identities. *Goin’ Down the Road* imagines the problems of trying to imagine Canada as a national community of heroic, hypermasculine men” (p.39). As Ramsay’s (1993) discussion is one of film analysis, and Deveau’s (2011) one of sketch comedy, there will be some differences between this format and the mockumentary sit-com style of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Notably, “unlike situation comedy, domestic disorder and social disruption are not righted at the end of the sketch” (Deveau, 2011, p. 136). This may be a valid point of criticism for the subversive potential of programs like *Trailer Park Boys*

(Clattenburg, 2001), which not only end both episodes and story arcs on humanitarian and, potentially, depoliticizing notes, but resets every season after a prolonged trip to prison. Regardless, the above sources show that there is a tradition of complex and subversive representations of Canadian masculinity in popular culture.

Having examined literature dealing with representations of gender, particularly masculinity, on Canadian television, the following portion of this literature review will focus on research that dealt with representations of marginal groups in Canada. Aired between 2007 and 2012, Nawaz' (2007) *Little Mosque on the Prairie* deals with a Muslim community in the fictional small town of Mercy, Saskatchewan and their relations with their neighbors. This program has received some academic attention by such scholars as Faiza (2011) and Eid and Kahn (2011). The Faiza (2011) piece contains criticism against the show's portrayal of Muslims in Canada, and the way in which it fails to offer representations that subvert dominant discourse. Speaking generally, the author states early on that "representations of race and religion may be problematic in a number of respects, ranging from issues of underrepresentation to stereotyping and bias" (Faiza, 2011, p. 36). When Faiza (2011) writes that "while the average viewer may be able to distinguish between fact and fiction, this becomes increasingly difficult if a variety of media come together to create a consistent picture" (p. 37), we can begin to understand how certain representations, like harmful stereotypes, can amalgamate into discourses that inform or educate public opinion. By contributing to the field of Canadian television studies, this paper hopes to address this difficulty and potentially encourage the creation of new texts which consciously work to subvert harmful tropes or discourses.

Little Mosque, in its choice to focus on a particularly underrepresented group in Canadian society, has been “touted as an enlightening and successful comedy that can challenge dominant discourses” (Mahtani, 2008, as cited in Faiza, 2011, p. 38). Faiza (2011), however, claims the program “does very little to change essentializing images of Muslim women” (p. 38). In terms of its subject matter, Nawaz’ (2007) situation comedy “features Muslim women (and men) in everyday life, rather than incorporating Muslim characters in dangerous situations ... unlike *24* or *Lost*, *Little Mosque*’s entire reason for existence is the depiction of Muslims” (Faiza, 2011, p. 41). Writing of the show’s inherent potential, Faiza (2011) tells us that “the Muslim characters are rounded people, albeit within comedic parameters, and thus the show carries far more promise for a balanced depiction of Muslim women than either *24* or *Lost*” (p. 41). However, the placing of marginalized characters within the tropes of a comedy, even one in which the white characters are made the subject of the jokes, can be argued to have a depoliticizing effect towards the real people that live in such marginalized communities and lessening the representation’s subversive potential (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p. 101, as cited in Faiza, 2011). The author concedes that “in fairness, *Little Mosque* does not entirely neuter difference, but there is certainly an element of de-politicization and glossing over difference” (Faiza, 2011, p. 42). The author’s main issue with the program seems to be that,

I would suggest that the show has an obligation to present Islam as a religion that is characterized by extraordinary diversity. Instead, the decision to depict the characters’ acts as inspired by Islam, not by their own interpretation of Islam,

seals off the boundaries of any discursive space and renders other interpretations irrelevant. (Faiza, 2011, p. 43)

Further, Faiza (2011) argues that while shows like *Little Mosque* (Nawaz, 2007) “aim for entertainment first, education second – if at all ... the potential outcome is significant enough that their approaches must be examined and challenged” (Faiza, 2011, p. 44).

This perspective is one that informs the present research greatly, and acts as a justification for the academic analysis of low-brow comedies like *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Even programs which aim or appear to be subversive must be critically analyzed, as it is possible to subvert some dominant discourses while conforming to others. In the case of *Little Mosque* (Nawaz, 2007) for example, “suggestions that Muslims are significantly different from the rest of the population, requiring numerous accommodations, have some educational value yet they also reinforce the idea that Muslims are problematic” (Faiza, 2011, p. 44).

Trailer Park Boys: Academic Attention

The following section analyzes literature that focused specifically on *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Similar to the broader trends in Canadian television studies, scholarly, peer-reviewed articles are few and far between. For the purposes of the present research, three journal articles and one chapter are discussed. Of these sources, while both positive and negative receptions and varying methodologies were encountered, certain common themes did become apparent. To begin, DeFino’s (2009) academic review of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) focuses on the use of the mockumentary genre to analyze the show’s themes. This author defends the program against its detractors, saying “while some critics of *Trailer Park Boys* deride the show for ‘laughing

at the poor,' its out-sized characters are drawn with remarkable affection" (DeFino, 2009, para. 1). DeFino (2009) refers to an interview with the show's creator, Clattenberg, who claims "the idea isn't to make trailer parks look bad or have fun at their expense ... It's about the people on the show playing the cards they're dealt" (Durban, 2003, as cited in DeFino, 2009, para. 1). DeFino (2009) next focuses on the technical side of the production, such as the use of interview scenes to bridge "the ironic distance between the audience and the subject" (para. 12). Describing a particular scene in which the characters rob a corner store, DeFino (2009) explains that "significantly, we witness this scene not through the probing, investigative lens of the dedicated straight man, but through the passive, clinical eye of the security camera: one more view of the complex relationship between subject and object" (para 14). The article concludes with the sentiment that "*Trailer Park Boys* presents poverty, not as ennobling or degrading, nor as a metaphor for the shared human condition, but merely as a precondition of its characters' lives" (DeFino, 2009, para. 19). Although DeFino (2009) does focus on the show's portrayal of class and poverty, those of gender, identity, and discourse are absent.

Hughes-Fuller (2009), an admitted fan of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), examines the show from the perspective of the carnivalesque, and considers it to be a successful critique of the neoliberal upward mobility focused reality TV genre from the perspective of a marginal part of Canada. Hughes-Fuller (2009) engages in a successful textual analysis from gender, class, and racial perspectives, and takes into account a great deal of previous scholarship. First, the author claims that *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) "is self-conscious and often ironic in ways that 'straight' reality programming is not" and that "part of what the series is doing is parodying the reality television genre

itself, and indirectly challenging the claims of any television product to unproblematically represent reality” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 97). Here again, we see a focus on the use of genre as a means of critique, and a comparison to the reality television format. This notion is elaborated on when Hughes-Fuller (2009) praises the show for speaking “from the margins (also for the marginalized)” and as one that “subverts the ‘winner-take-all’ values of game-doc shows like *Big Brother* and *Survivor*” (p. 97). In the case of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), “it seems likely that many audience members can relate to the struggles of the inhabitants of Sunnyvale Trailer Park, whose operational imperative is ‘getting by,’ and not – as in most reality television – ‘getting ahead’” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 103).

Turning to the common theme of class-based analysis, Hughes-Fuller (2009) reminds us that “in popular mythology, the image of the trailer park is fraught with negative associations” and that

‘trailer trash’ label reflects the insecurities of the working and lower-middle classes who attempt to preserve their own status by denigrating the tastes and habits of those they consider below them in the social hierarchy yet still too close for comfort. (p. 99)

In line with the ironic tone mentioned earlier, “it is this ‘white trash’ image that *Trailer Park Boys* at once exploits and subverts” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 99). Referring to the contradictory responses towards *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) by critics and viewers, Hughes-Fuller (2009) cites previous scholarship when explaining that “David Morley (1992) points out that media texts are always intertextual and interdiscursive and, according to Kevin Glynn (2000), such hybridization lends itself well to plural and even

conflicting readings” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 100). Within this article, and indeed in much of the research collected, is a hint of defense or justification in studying television, and especially in the case of a situation comedy like *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). The author continues this line of thought, telling us that,

There are any number of reasons – including, some would argue, common decency – for disliking *Trailer Park Boys*, but it remains the case that many viewers do find the series funny, which suggests that the specific *ways* in which it is funny are worth looking into. (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 100).

This sentiment is part of what inspired the present research. Texts that would potentially be considered unworthy of study, even within the field of television studies itself, occupy an interesting space that is due academic attention.

Borrowing from literary studies, Hughes-Fuller (2009) claims that *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) stylistically “[harkens] back to a tradition that is very old indeed: the upside-down world of the carnivalesque” (p. 100). We are taught that “according to Bakhtin, popular culture is distinguished by its embrace of bad taste, offensiveness to officialdom, comic verbal compositions, vulgar language, ritualistic degradation and parody, emphasis on laughter, and excessiveness of all forms, but especially of the body” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 100). These criteria appear to coincide perfectly with the world of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), perhaps best exemplified by “the ‘naked truth’ of Randy’s burgeoning burger-belly. He *never* wears a shirt, is ‘addicted’ to cheeseburgers, and when he works the streets (as a male prostitute) he does so near a fast-food restaurant” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 101). More than a literary comparison, however, we are informed that the use of “the carnivalesque also

problematizes ‘the relation between marginal and central; between what is ‘high’ and what is ‘low’; what is named and what is nameless; what is displayed and what is hidden’” (Lindley, 1996, p. 10, as cited in Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 101). The subversive portrayals of marginal life, the implied but unseen portrayal of the central, as well as the way in which authority in the park is consistently “thwarted” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 103), undeniably carry the potential to challenge dominant discourse.

Perhaps one of the most apparent of the accepted themes in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is that of community. In a show wrought with criminality, vulgarity, and drugs, “however tongue-in-cheek, what *Trailer Park Boys* represents, in microcosm is the kind of ‘caring community’ that has been associated, in popular national mythology, with ‘Canadianness’” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 104). Using McKinnon’s (2001) argument that Canadian statehood is “performed by exclusion” (p. 140) – namely that Canada is not the United States – we can extrapolate this idea of the ‘caring community’ to infer that such ideals are absent from United States identity, at least as far as the Canadian imagination is concerned. The United States being the hegemonic center in contrast to regional Canada, the concept that “as the cultural mainstream becomes increasingly toxic, only on the margins (as subculture) will community be possible” helps to explain why the ‘caring community’ became absorbed into the identity narrative of Canadian mythology (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 103). Naturally, within Canada as well, it can be expected that distant regions harbour such feelings towards central Toronto. Indeed, “hating Toronto,” as Byers (2011) writes, “might be understood as an important aspect of Canadianness” (p. 144).

Returning to the *Trailer Park Boys*, the representation of the ‘caring community’ is also used to subvert the white-trash stereotype. As Hughes-Fuller (2009) explains, “in a context where a homophobic response from ‘red-necked trailer trash’ could be anticipated, not just gay sex, but outrageous and fetishistic gay sex ... is accepted within the heteronormative community” (p. 103). This use of the caring community trope (Hughes-Fuller, 2009) in regards to the acceptance of homosexuality can be read as an attempt to promote this way of thinking as specifically Canadian. While seemingly positive on the surface, this type of essentialism carries with it certain risks, as “the danger with such mythologies is always that they mask a less-than-inclusive and far-from-benign reality” (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 104). The author ultimately reads the representations of community in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) as positive, concluding that,

In true carnivalesque fashion, the zonked-out denizens of Sunnyvale affirm the validity of life on the margins, and assert the spirit of community embodied in those who, while ill-equipped to handle the legal niceties and social proprieties of the cultural mainstream, still manage to survive, together. (Hughes-Fuller, 2009, p. 107)

The following two pieces, by Byers (2011) and McCullough (2009), represent an equally critical, but less positive reading, of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) as a Canadian text. The first of which, by Byers (2011), focuses on building the idea of a unique Canadian “brand” through televisual representations of marginal communities.

Heretofore, much of the scholarship around Canadian television analysis has discussed myths and imaginaries of Canadianness, or so-called Canadian values, as they

are represented and understood within Canadian television discourse. Byers (2011), while coming to many of the same conclusions as the previously mentioned authors, approaches these projections and representations of Canadian values as the building of a particular Canadian 'brand.' First defining what should be a successful piece of Canadian television, Byers (2011) explains that "popularity signals two things in Canadian TV: first, the visibility of a series beyond local and/or national borders; and second, a critical reception in both national and transnational spaces" (p. 142). Further, "popular Canadian television series tend to reiterate notions of Canadianness that resonate with the vision of itself the nation would like to circulate at home and abroad: the brand" (Byers, 2011, p. 142).

This idea of Canada as a brand or product is a helpful way of conceptualizing Canadian identity politics within televisual representations vis-à-vis globalized neoliberal economics. In terms of what criterion make up this brand, Byers (2011) explains that,

For quite a lot of Canadian TV, national branding means addressing a social issue that falls in line with the image of self/nation Canada wants to project to the world – and thus evokes affective responses from us – Canada as modern, sophisticated, creative, diverse, caring, and technologically advanced society. (p. 143)

Of course, these tenets are part of the imagined mythology of Canadian identity, and Byers (2011) goes on to say,

TV series that are popular are often seen as 'good' texts in that they (re)produce and reinforce mythic images of Canadianness, such as multiculturalism, diversity, liberalism (often through gentle critiques of right wing American policies), strong social conscience, and a pure, white, Anglo, history. (p. 143)

Regarding television that features marginalized regions like the Atlantic Maritimes, Byers (2011) tells us that “this story of regionalism is itself part of the central mythology of Canada, and regional counter-narratives participate in covering over uncomfortable parts of our national history” (p. 143). In regards to Canadian discourse, these programs are important as they “extend narratives about who lives in, and what it means to live in, marginalized parts of Canada,” and yet, “they tell this story within limits that do not disrupt dominant ways of understanding the Canadian brand, and, perhaps more broadly, dominant transnational narratives that elide contemporary and historical legacies of white supremacy, colonialism, and anti-immigrant sentiment” (Byers, 2011, p. 143-144). In terms of the consumption of such texts, it is essential that it be done critically, as “the representation ... of regionalism in Canadian TV must be read through the tropes of brand and popularity discussed above, as these are inextricably linked to broader questions about the global currency of particular televisual texts” (Byers, 2011, p. 144). While regional centered television would appear to be, by nature, anti-hegemonic, Byers (2011) reminds us that,

Like all Canadian productions, these are fuelled by the concerns of the neoliberal market economy but they also fulfill a secondary nation building function by continually putting back into circulation dominant myths of Canadian spaces and peoples, including the elisions of histories and legacies of colonialism and white supremacy. They critique centre but not the nation. (p. 145)

The focus of Byers’ (2011) article then shifts towards a discussion of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) itself. The author claims that the show “is a sitcom rooted outside the national centre, and it addresses a relatively invisible population” (Byers,

2011, p. 148). Referring briefly back to *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (Nawaz, 2007), *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is similar in that “it is clearly articulated as belonging to specific local spaces and yet has resonated with transnational viewers” (Byers, 2011, p. 148). Again, while giving voice to marginalized group, *Little Mosque* is guilty of “[implying] that racism and anti-immigrant sentiment are proclivities of regional ignorance absent from sophisticated urban citizens” (Byers, 2011, p. 147). As mentioned earlier, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) features heavily on a white-trash aesthetic, and therefore addresses the politics of whiteness and class. As Byers (2011, p. 148) explains, “by focusing the attention on the way whiteness is produced in relation to class and regional marginalization, [*Trailer Park Boys*], like [*Little Mosque*], draws our attention away from the more problematic colonial legacies of the nation” (Byers, 2011, p. 148). The author then discusses the opening title sequence of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), which “calls our attention to the romantic (re)construction of the past, presenting an image that evokes the 1950s ... [and invokes] a certain kind of Imperial nostalgia in many viewers” (Byers, 2011, p. 148). The author argues that “this sequence instructs us to imagine the trailer park as an idyll” (Byers, 2011, p. 149). While in stark contrast to the hyperbolic, carnivalesque, and oftentimes offensive (Hughes-Fuller, 2009) content that follows, the nostalgic utopia of the opening sequence establishes the caring community of the trailer park as a space preferable to the perhaps more corrupt hegemonic center.

Issues of race and whiteness continue through Byers’ (2011) piece. The “dominant [Anglo-Saxon] settler culture of much of the Atlantic region where [*Trailer Park Boys*] is situated,” is often invisible in discussions of ethnicity (Byers 2011, p. 149).

Byers (2011) goes on to point out that “the white poor or ‘white trash,’ it has been argued, are constituted like an ethnic group in being considered not quite white” (p. 149). While their lower-class status can obscure the whiteness of the main characters, it is crucial to understanding the cultural climate and setting of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), as,

This relationship between class and racialization is invoked by TPB’s choice to present Sunnyvale as racially integrated. The series introduces the often invisible African Nova Scotian population to the screen, but uses this introduction to cover over the deeply racist histories that keep Halifax one of the most segregated cities in Canada. (Byers, 2011, p. 149)

Citing the fact that, despite all of their get-rich-quick criminal activities, main characters Julian and Ricky never seek upward mobility or passage into Canada’s dominant and wealthy central region, Byers (2011) further cements the reading of the trailer park as “a utopic space in which class and social mobility as national and transnational commodities / values are refused – even as the text itself is exactly such a commodity” (p. 150). While the park appears to be a progressive space in which “belonging is imagined to be about where you come from, and unmitigated by race or sexuality,” it can also be read “as one of the last places where white men,” specifically here referring to Julian, “are still king, the last of the true white settler spaces” (Byers, 2011, p. 150). The author does admit, however, that despite these harsh criticisms, like *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (Nawaz, 2007), *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) “invokes a nostalgic white colonial past, but also disrupts the comfort of that nostalgia” (Byers, 2011, p. 150). It is extremely crucial to remember that anti-hegemonic texts are

not free from criticism or analysis, and must be carefully considered and evaluated for their potential to both confront and reproduce dominant discourses.

Finally, McCullough's (2009) chapter in the Atlantic-Canadian media-focused *Rain, Drizzle, Fog* (Varga, 2009) puts forth the argument that *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is a celebration, rather than a criticism, of global capitalism. Speaking first of the economic climate in which the program in question is produced, McCullough (2009) reminds us that "tax rebates, labour cost reductions, ease of permitting, and studio construction are strategies common to an international array of regional jurisdictions vying for film and television production" (p. 151). McCullough (2009) goes on to explain that it is impossible to separate economics and labour from culture, as "the region [Atlantic-Canada] has used the expansion of service industries in the period of globalization as a way of responding to devastating changes to the region's traditional economies that were organized around natural resource extraction and development" (p. 152). In what could be read as a criticism of *Trailer Park Boys*' (Clattenburg, 2001) inherent humanist themes, McCullough (2009) writes that "the use of localism and regionalism tends to blunt any criticisms of globalization by redirecting our attention toward tales of what are presented as common (and universal) human experiences" (p. 153-154). McCullough (2009) describes the show's representation of Atlantic-Canada during the time of neoliberal reform, and argues the critique is ineffective:

Popular because of its portrayal of the main characters' 'grace under fire,' as they wallow in regional underdevelopment, dysfunctional domestic relations, and generalized social devolution, it does not do this in order to generate a coherent

critique of the effects of globalization that have left the Maritimes, for instance, as part of the network of de-industrialized, service-oriented, 'processing zones' that now characterize the industrial frontline of globalization. (p. 154)

The double-voiced interpretation of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is seen once again, as McCullough (2009) reads the show "as negotiating the social and power relations which were operational during their production. In this sense, I consider them to be crystallizations of the structures of dominance and expressions of utopian desires of this particular historical conjuncture" (p. 156).

According to McCullough (2009), *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) and regional programs similar to it "reproduce the geopolitics of globalization" rather than effectively oppose them (p. 156). While the author admits that "there is an aspect of the carnivalesque in these shows, and they are often celebrated as regional triumphs largely on the basis of what is argued to be their subversion of codes and conventions of typical bourgeois national culture," they are essentially "ideologically harmless" (p. 156-157). McCullough (2009) sees the show's dual voice as a lack of focus:

In TPB, there is a bold normalizing of underdevelopment: the show is so equivocal that it treats the 'new imperialism' as both something to celebrate and something to be afraid of, particularly the extraordinary gaps between the wealthy and the poor, between the centre and the regions. (p. 158)

While the show establishes its location as around Halifax and Dartmouth, McCullough (2009) argues that the use of a fictional trailer park fails to use "place as a site of local resistance" (p. 166). McCullough (2009) goes on to suggest that the ambiguity of the setting "may partially explain its popularity" internationally (p. 166). Despite the

criticisms that McCullough (2009) has with *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) and other regional programming, the author does admit that “in their own ways, it has to be said that the shows are also pregnant with the progressive possibilities of cultural production that is recognizably locally made and politically resistant” (p. 166).

McCullough (2009) concludes by giving *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) some credit and concedes that,

The criminality of the poor is directly connected to the oppressive social relations they encounter daily, and the power of the local authorities is consistently undermined in acknowledgement of the larger geopolitical forces which transcend even the power of the local cops and trailer park supervisors. (McCullough, 2009, p. 166-167)

Masculinities: Understanding Connell

As the present study deals heavily with issues of gender and masculinity, it is important to mention R.W. Connell. The Australian scholar’s “first publication on gender resulted from involvement as a researcher on a large-scale quantitative survey of the teenage population of Sydney ... however, gender did not become an explicit research interest until the 1980s” (Wedgwood, 2009, p. 330). In a discussion on Connell’s work, Wedgwood (2009) explains that,

A crucial part of its enduring appeal across a wide range of disciplines is that it provides a critical feminist analysis of historically specific masculinities whilst at the same time acknowledging the varying degrees to which individual men play in the reproduction of dominant forms of masculinity, thus overcoming the social determinism of sex-role theory. (p. 330)

Regarding her influential book *Masculinities* (Connell, 1995), Wedgwood (2009) writes that “the book critically analysed male domination without condemning all men in the process” (p. 333). As Connell (1992) explains, men are not treated “as an undifferentiated class” but that “contemporary research ... documents a considerable range of masculinities” (p. 736). Unlike her contemporaries, and many present-day scholars, Connell positions “the study of masculinity right from the start as being the gender equivalent of what used to be called ‘power structure research’ – studying the dominant group to learn how to change the system” (Wedgwood, 2009, p. 337). When asked in an interview if she felt her work had a significant impact on the field of masculinity studies, Connell was reported to have voiced disappointment in the fact that “masculinity is still treated as a separate topic from gender studies,” or confined to “one chapter within the book of gender studies” (Wedgwood, 2009, p. 337).

To Connell (1992), masculinities are not only inextricable from gender studies, but are extremely complex and infinitely varied. The author explains that masculinities can and do differ between cultures as well as “within a particular culture at any given time” (736). Connell (1992) qualifies this statement by reassuring the reader that “the recognition of multiple ‘masculinities’ in recent research need not reduce the sociology of masculinity to a postmodern kaleidoscope of lifestyles. Rather, it points to the relational character of gender” (p. 736). An example of this concept of multiple masculinities discussed in a later study reads: “there are cultures where it has been normal, not exceptional, for men to have homosexual relations” (Connell, 1997, p. 8). In the context of Western society, Connell (1992) emphasizes the significance of the relationship between heterosexual and homosexual men, explaining that “to many people,

homosexuality is a negation of masculinity, and homosexual men must be effeminate. Given that assumption, antagonism toward homosexual men may be used to define masculinity” (p. 736). Connell (1992) warns us that “the view that homophobia is a means of policing the boundaries of a traditional male sex role (Lehne, 1989) grasps the dynamic character of the process but misconstrues its history,” and clarifies that “heterosexual masculinity did not predate homophobia but was historically produced along with it” (p. 736). When studying what is and is not considered masculine within a specific cultural time and place – and comparing the varying masculinities within – it is crucial, as Connell (2005) recognizes, to discuss hegemonic masculinity.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is distinct from other, often subordinated forms of masculinity, and embodies the “currently most honoured way of being a man” (Connell, 2005, p. 832). By using the word “currently,” Connell (2005, p. 832) implies that hegemonic masculinity is a contested concept which is different between cultural moments. Despite this variability, Connell (1997) highlights a common element seen in hegemonic masculinity, as she explains, “in a patriarchal society, the dominant or hegemonic form of masculinity embodies the currently successful strategy for subordinating women” (p. 8). Contextualized within Western society, Connell (1997) writes that “hegemonic masculinity is heterosexual, aggressive and competitive, and homo-social (excluding women from its social networks). It emphasises hierarchy and the capacity to dominate other men as well as women” (p. 8). Although positioned at the top of the masculinity hierarchy, it must be noted that this does not imply that a majority of men embody this role; indeed, “only a minority of men might enact [hegemonic

masculinity]” (Connell 2005, p. 832). Connell (1992) explains that the importance of studying hegemonic masculinity is nevertheless crucial, as,

relations of hegemony reflect and produce a social dynamic: struggles for resources and power, processes of exclusion and incorporation, splitting and reconstitution of gender forms. To analyze this dynamic is to explore the crisis tendencies of the gender order as a whole. (Connell, 1992, p. 736)

It is still possible, of course, to be complicit in or benefit from such a patriarchal system without directly demonstrating outwardly oppressive behaviour. On this point, Connell (1997) claims that such men “accept the patriarchal dividend, but are not directly involved in wielding power, in personal violence, or in displays of prowess” and believes that “this is the largest group in contemporary gender politics” (p. 8). If hegemonic masculinity is not representative of the majority of masculine behaviour, the question arises of how such a model retains its hierarchical status. According to Connell (1997), “there is a politics that exalts hegemonic masculinity, often by creating exemplary images or promoting the idea of male supremacy” (p. 9). Popular media is often where these politics are staged; medium like “televised sports, Hollywood thrillers, video games, super-hero comics, and airport-rack novels all insist on the physical superiority of men and their mastery of technology and violence” (Connell, 1997, p. 9). While the focus of my present research, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenberg, 2001), does not fall into these usually hyper-masculine categories, Connell’s (1997) theory that media is a site of reproduction for hegemonic masculinity, as well as the bulk of her work, in general, provides an excellent foundation with which to begin my analysis.

As I was conducting the literature review for my major research paper, I discovered the lack of a developed field of Canadian television studies, a fact referenced by many scholars (Attallah, 2010; Bredin et al., 2012; Deveau, 2011; Druick & Kotsopolous, 2008). The literature that was available, however, was often successful in its ability to synthesize and borrow traditions from literature and film studies to produce critical analysis. In work that dealt specifically with analyzing Canadian televisual texts, and specifically with *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), themes of class, identity, race, and globalization/neoliberal reforms were nearly always present in one or more form. Discourse analysis, or at the least allusions to discourse, was less common, but still present. While the broader articles often engaged in some form of gender analysis (Faiza, 2011; Ramsay, 1993), it was almost entirely absent from the articles examining *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). I established a familiarity with the work of Connell (1992, 1997, 2005) to better analyze issues of gender – and, specifically, masculinity – in response to the lack of gender analysis regarding *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). My research builds on this existing literature to explore and analyze how gendered discourses of masculinity and Canadian identity intersect in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), the show's relationship with Canadian public pedagogy, and the lifelong learning of gender and national identity.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The following chapter outlines the project's research methodology: feminist critical discourse analysis. I discuss the work of scholars Gee (2011a, 2011b), Fairclough (1995a, 1995b), and Lazar (2005), and explain how this model is used in my analysis. *Critical discourse analysis* (CDA) is a method of inquiry that is highly subjective and "does not pretend to adopt a neutral stance" (Lazar, 2005, p. 6). Further, although Gee (2011a) has provided several books detailing his method and toolset for conducting discourse analysis, the author "fully [anticipates] that these tools will be transformed, or even abandoned, as readers invent their own versions of them or meld them with other tools embedded in different perspectives" (p. 5). Although this subjectivity breeds infinite variations, there is a common theme that unites these models, namely "a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and political-economic or cultural change in society" (Fairclough, Mulderring, and Wodak, 2011, p. 357). Because of this open-endedness, it is crucial to show not only the precise way in which CDA is used for this research, but also how my unique model was formulated. First, I will discuss Gee's (2011a, 2011b) guides to discourse analysis that offer several conceptual tools (Clattenburg, 2001). Next, the chapter turns to Fairclough's (1995a, 1995b) work, which deals specifically with the application of CDA used for media analysis. Finally, the chapter ends with a focus on Lazar's (2005) feminist CDA, which provides me with a basis from which to approach this research from a perspective of gender.

Gee: Introduction and Tools

There are many forms that CDA can take, and many ways in which it can be used. This is because, as Fairclough et al. (2011) suggest, "CDA is not a discrete academic

discipline with a relatively fixed set of research methods. Instead, we might best see CDA as a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda” (p. 357). While prior knowledge of linguistics and grammar is not essential to performing CDA, it is paramount that those who use CDA acknowledge the potential of language to shape and be shaped by the world around us. Gee (2011a) begins by questioning the primary function of language itself:

If I had to single out a primary function of human language, it would be not one, but the following two closely related functions: to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions. (p. 1)

Gee “is concerned with a theory and a method for studying how language gets recruited ‘on site’ to enact specific social activities and social identities” (Gee, 2011a, p. 1). He explains that, “by ‘identities’ I mean different ways of participating in different sorts of social groups, cultures, and institutions” (Gee, 2011a, p. 1). For Gee (2011a), all language is “political,” elaborating that, “by ‘politics’ I mean how social goods are thought about, argued over, and distributed in society” (p. 2). According to Gee (2011a), social goods can refer to “anything that a group of people believes to be a source of power, status, value, or worth” (p. 2). Through the use of language, (speech, written text, or other media), the choice of words or images can then be said to have real-world consequences. Gee (2011a) uses the example of the descriptors “freedom fighter” and “terrorist,” terms that can be applied to the same person, but obviously carry significantly different connotations (p. 2). In news media, for example, the latter will have a very different

effect on the perceptions of the viewer than the former. Even the grammatical choices made in language carry political weight:

[The] grammatical perspective-taking process involves us in taking perspectives on what is ‘normal’ or not; what is ‘acceptable’ or not; what is ‘right’ or not; what is ‘real’ or not; what is the ‘way things are’ or not; what is the ‘ways things ought to be’ or not; what is ‘possible’ or not; what ‘people like us’ or ‘people like them’ do or don’t do; and so on and so forth, through another nearly endless list. (Gee, 2011a, p. 2)

Gee (2011a) assures that “politics ... has its lifeblood in such details. ... It is there that people are harmed and helped” (p. 2).

Gee breaks down language into seven *building tasks* (Gee, 2011a). These ‘tasks’ can guide students or researchers to ask appropriate questions and make connections between text and discourse; it is these tasks that have influenced my viewing and analysis of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Gee describes the first building task as *significance*, or when language is used to give something “meaning or value” (Gee, 2005, p. 11). For example, Gee (2011a) describes a meeting room with no predetermined front or back until an individual sits in a certain way, indicating the front (p. 11). By “speaking and acting a certain way,” language was used to give significance to a physical space (Gee, 2011a, p. 11). The next task, *activities*, is when language is used “to build an activity here-and-now,” for example when a certain type of casual talk is used before switching into “official language” (Gee, 2011a, p. 11). With the *identities* building task, language is used to build an identity. Using the meeting room example, Gee explains that one can use different types of language to indicate whether one is assuming a specific

identity like that of an authority figure (Gee, 2011a, p. 11). Next is the *relationships* tool, which examines the way language is used to establish relationships between “listener(s), reader(s), or other people, groups, or institutions” (Gee, 2011a, p. 12). The *politics* task, using the understanding of the word explained by Gee (2011a) above, helps the researcher examine language to understand the inferred perspectives towards social goods (p. 12). Language can also be used to “render certain things connected or relevant (or not) to other things,” and is highlighted using Gee’s (2011a) *connections* tool (p. 12). Finally, *sign systems and knowledge* helps the researcher understand the complex ways in which different languages or non-linguistic communicative systems operate, and how language can be used “to build privilege or prestige for one sign system or knowledge claim over another” (Gee, 2011a, p. 13). These building tasks help the student or researcher to recognize the ability of language to affect discourse, how people think and how they interact with each other. The tasks have encouraged me to ask questions that will help to expose the discursive subtleties of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001).

Produced as a companion book to his *Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (Gee, 2011a), Gee’s (2011b) *How to do Discourse Analysis* provides a practical framework to help researchers approach language and texts from a discursive perspective. The first language tool that is explained is the *situated meaning tool* (Gee, 2011b). In contrast to what Gee (2011b) refers to as an *utterance meaning* – which is similar to a dictionary definition and may not always be helpful in practice – the *situated meaning* of a word can potentially carry a wide range of definitions based on the context of the situation as well as the shared history and experiences of the speaker/listener (p. 151). These situated meanings can carry a great deal of ideological or discursive weight, including

“assumptions about the ‘kind of person’ who is an ‘appropriate’ and ‘acceptable’ listener (and maybe even person)” (Gee, 2011b, p. 153). When the purpose of an analysis is to expose oppressive structures and practices, this tool becomes invaluable. Gee (2011b) explains,

We want to be on the watch for cases where words and phrases are being given situated meanings that are nuanced and quite specific to the speaker’s worldview or values or to the special qualities of the context the speaker is assuming and helping to construe or create. (p. 154)

The next tool Gee (2011b) outlines is the *social languages tool*. This aids the researcher in understanding “styles or varieties of languages (or a mixture of languages) that enact and are associated with a particular social identity” (Gee, 2011b, p. 156). An example used by Gee (2011b) is if a doctor were to ask if a patient is stressed, it may be unclear whether or not the doctor is asking as a professional or as a friend. Gee (2011b) explains the exclusionary nature of *social languages*, using the example of academic language – which can be off limits to those who cannot afford to access education. Conversely, colloquial language can be used to show or build solidarity between speakers and listeners (Gee, 2011b). The *intertextuality tool* encourages the researcher to “ask how words and grammatical structures ... are used to quote, refer to, or allude to other ‘texts’ ... or other styles of language” (Gee, 2011b, p. 204).

Next, the *figured worlds tool* aids the researcher in understanding what is being presented as normal in a particular text (Gee, 2011b). Gee (2011b) explains, “[w]e use words based, as well, on stories, theories, or models in our minds about what is ‘normal’ or ‘typical’” (p. 168). What Gee (2011b) refers to as *figured worlds* “are partly in our

heads and partly out in the world in books and other media and in other people's heads, people we talk to" (p. 171). Explaining the necessity of such a system, Gee (2011b) writes "[w]e use such typical pictures so that we can go on about the business of communicating, acting, and living without having consciously to think about everything" (p. 174). The author concedes that "this is good for getting things done, but sometimes bad in the ways in which such typical stories can marginalize people and things that are not taken as 'normal' or 'typical' in the story" (Gee, 2011b, p. 174-175). Potentially discriminatory in nature, this tool greatly helps the researcher expose choices in language, grammar, and images that can contribute to the building or reinforcing of certain worldviews or discourses.

The *big D Discourse tool*, the last of the tools that will be discussed here, helps examine how discourses and cultural groups interact with each other, and how certain social identities are performed and recognized (Gee, 2011b, p. 179). Gee (2011a, 2011b) adheres to this distinction between *big D* discourse and *little d* discourse throughout his books on the subject (Gee, 2011a, 2011b). *Little d* discourse refers to "language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories)" (Gee, 2011a, p. 26) while "'big D' Discourses are always language *plus* other stuff" (Gee, 2011a, p. 26, emphasis in original). For Gee (2011b), discourse is "composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, distinctive ways of writing/reading," which are connected to "distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, and believing" (p. 183). These concepts contribute to the "enacting [of] specific socially recognizable identities," which can refer to any number of distinct or overlapping identities, from "a field biologist, a first-grade student in a specific classroom and school,

a ‘SPED’ student, a certain type of doctor, lawyer, teacher, African-American, Mexican-American, worker in a ‘quality control’ workplace, man, woman, boyfriend, girlfriend,” etc. (Gee, 2011b, p. 183). The author also distinguishes between primary and secondary discourses, and how and when these are learned (Gee, 2011b). *Primary discourses* are said to be that which are learned as children and are dependent on the beliefs of parents or caregivers, and “these can die, be challenged, hybridize with other discourses” (Gee, 2011b, p. 179). *Secondary discourses*, however, are learned institutionally through school, work, and arguably media as well (Gee, 2011b). Understanding the ways in which these multiple discourses overlap and interact with each other will help the researcher understand that nearly everything in a text is significant in terms of social identities, how they are enacted, or how the speaker wishes to be perceived (Gee, 2011b). Regarding the practical use of this *big D* discourse tool, Gee (2011b) urges us to,

Ask how the person is using language, as well as ways of acting, interacting, believing, valuing, dressing, and using various objects, tools, and technologies in certain sorts of environments to enact a specific socially recognizable identity and engage in one or more socially recognizable activities. (p. 204)

For my major research paper, I use a selection of Gee’s (2011a, 2011b) tools to analyze *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001).

Fairclough: Media and Discourse

While Gee’s (2011a, 2011b) guides to discourse analysis can and are meant to be applied to any form of language or text – including media – Fairclough’s (1995a, 1995b) work takes on a more media-focused approach. Fairclough (1995a) makes a direct connection acknowledging “the power (of mass media) to influence knowledge, beliefs,

values, social relations, social identities” (p. 2). Many of the examples in his book represent analysis of news media, rather than artefacts such as situation comedies or reality television, but Fairclough’s (1995a) model still contains many helpful ideas that contribute to my methodology. In a program which deals with issues of class and economic marginalization like *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), Fairclough’s (1995a) concept of *conversationalization* is useful. Through the use of colloquial or informal language, the purposes of this technique can be used to democratize discourses like science or academia by eliminating the barriers that can prevent social, economic, or cultural groups from accessing these subjects (Fairclough, 1995a). On the other hand, the same technique could be appropriated by politicians, companies, or other elites for the purposes of making invisible or naturalizing economic gaps or structural barriers for the sake of profit or votes (Fairlouch, 1995a).

Through CDA, Fairclough (1995a) encourages the discourse analyst to seek to understand the ways in which mass media can be used to support oppression through ideological assumptions (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 12). The ideological or discursive effects of mass media are not limited to the manipulation of verbal language, however. Fairclough (1995a) teaches that “choices among options available within visual codes – including technical options relating to the camera-work carry social meanings” (p. 24). The ideological potential of mass media is both *transformative* and *reproductive* (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 34), and Fairclough (1995a) advises that “one focus of analysis should be on how wider changes in society and culture are manifest in changing media discourse practices” (p. 33).

Fairclough (1995a) clarifies that “calling the approach ‘critical’ is a recognition that our social practice in general and our use of language in particular are bound up with causes and effects which we may not be at all aware of under normal conditions” (p. 54). Fairclough goes on to explain that language is “socially shaped, but is also socially shaping. ... Critical discourse analysis explores the tension between these two sides of language use, the socially shaped and socially constitutive, rather than opting one-sidedly for one or another” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 55). This complex dual nature was part of the inspiration for choosing *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) as the Canadian text on which to perform a critical discourse analysis. The subversive and satirical style of the program suggests that it resists at least some elements of dominant ideology and discourse, but the ways in which *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) conforms to or reinforces other potentially discriminatory and oppressive discourses are very much worthy of examination.

In order to make an analysis like this easier and more successful, Fairclough (1995a) offers a breakdown of three ways in which language relates and engages with discourse, “language use – any text – is always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief” (p. 55). Stressing the importance of this idea, Fairclough (1995a) continues “any text makes its own small contribution to shaping these aspects of society and culture,” and that “all three are always going on to some degree” (p. 55). By acknowledging the significance of all forms of media as cultural texts, Fairclough (1995b) helps to justify this type of research by pointing out that “it is increasingly through texts (notably but by no means only those of the media) that social control and social domination are exercised (and indeed negotiated

and resisted)” (p. 209). Inferring that there is a questioning of the value of textual analysis in academia, Fairclough (1995b) writes that “detailed textual analysis will always strengthen discourse analysis,” (p. 187) and that “textual analysis has an important role to play in social scientific research” (p. 208). Further, Fairclough (1995b) states that “even social scientists who have such apparently macro interests as class relations or gender relations cannot justify entirely ignoring texts” (p. 208). With Fairclough’s (1995a, 1995b) help, we can see that a seemingly insignificant text like *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) can have its own cultural importance. This methodological background, coupled with a perspective of public pedagogy, will provide a solid foundation from which to analyze the discursive significance of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001).

The term *discourse*, while often used to refer to the concept in general, is actually made up of multiple overlapping discourses. Fairclough (1995a) refers to common themes, experience, or communities as *orders of discourse*. The author provides an explanation and example:

The point of the concept of ‘order of discourse’ is to highlight the relationships between different types in such a set (e.g. in the case of a school, the discursive types of the classroom and of the playground): whether, for instance, a rigid boundary is maintained between them, or whether they can easily be mixed together in particular texts. (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 55)

The reason why this is of importance to critical discourse analysis – a methodology occupied with the aim of exposing and transforming oppressive and discriminatory discursive practices – is because “social and cultural changes very often manifest

themselves discursively through a redrawing of boundaries within and between orders of discourse” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 56). For the researcher, this is the crucial point of justification for the use of performing a critical discourse analysis:

The concern here is always with both continuity and change – in what ways is this communicative event [television episode or series, film, newspaper article, etc.] normative, drawing upon familiar types and formats, and in what ways is it creative, using old resources in new ways? (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 56)

Rather than focusing purely on textual analysis, then, the CDA researcher is “with the general, the overall structure of the order of discourse, and the way it is evolving in the context of social and cultural changes” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 56). Even in the case of media sources which have not often been taken seriously by academics, such as *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), all “media texts are sensitive barometers of cultural change which manifest in their heterogeneity and contradictoriness the often tentative, unfinished and messy nature of change” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 60). Further, “texts provide evidence of ongoing processes such as the redefinition of social relationships between professionals and publics, the reconstitution of social identities and forms of self, or the reconstitution of knowledge and ideology” (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 209). While Gee’s (2011a, 2011b) work helped to provide a practical framework and toolkit for actually conducting discourse analysis, Fairclough (1995a) offers a sound theoretical foundation.

Lazar: Feminist Connections

The final scholar who had a significant influence on this study’s methodology was Lazar (2005). Lazar (2005) tells us that the purpose of her book is to “advance a rich and

nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining a (hierarchically) gendered social order” (p. 1). Like Gee (2011a, 2011b) and Fairclough (1995a, 1995b), Lazar (2005) also offers justification against the use of textual analysis in her research. She rationalizes that studies in feminist CDA “are not merely textual de-construction for its own sake, but that the issues dealt with (in view of effecting social transformation) have actual material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific societies” (Lazar, 2005, p. 2). The driving force, then, behind adding feminism to CDA, is acknowledging “the need to theorize and analyse the particularly insidious and oppressive nature of gender as an omni-relevant category in most social practices” (Lazar, 2005, p. 3). Thus, “the marriage of feminism with CDA, in sum, can produce a rich and powerful political critique for action” (Lazar, 2005, p. 5).

Dealing specifically with constructs of gender within the framework of critical discourse analysis, Lazar (2005) begins by clarifying how gender as a concept operates:

First, ‘gender’ functions as an interpretative category that enables participants in a community to make sense of and structure their particular social practices.

Second, gender is a social relation that enters into and partially constitutes all other social relations and activities. (p. 5)

Lazar (2005) explains further that “the prevailing conception of gender is understood as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively” (p. 7). Having established the need to articulate a feminist stance when conducting CDA, due to the complex and overlapping nature of gender oppression, another strong connection between

CDA and feminist CDA is the desire to expose and question the normalizing of certain identities and practices within discourse.

Gee (2011a, 2011b) points out that language relies on the figuring of meanings and context in order to ease the process of communicating, and – while time-saving – can marginalize certain groups or cultures by excluding them from what is commonly considered *normal*. Even apart from CDA, Lazar (2005) argues that “gender ideology is hegemonic in that it often does not appear as domination at all; instead it seems largely consensual and acceptable to most in a community” (p. 7). Referring to patriarchy as structural, Lazar (2005) explains that “it is enacted and renewed in a society’s institutions and social practices, which mediate between the individual and the social order” (p. 8). Referring to it as an invisible power, Lazar (2005) writes that “the effectiveness of modern power (and hegemony) is that it is mostly cognitive, based on an internalization of gendered norms and acted out routinely in the texts and talk of everyday life” (p. 10). Referencing feminist CDA scholars, Lazar (2005) explains that their most important task is “to examine how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered social practices” (p. 10).

Lazar (2005) makes sure to highlight the complex nature of patriarchal oppression and the way it can overlap with “other relations of power based on race/ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, age, culture and geography,” and how this “means that gender oppression is neither materially experienced nor discursively enacted in the same way for women everywhere” (p. 10). By way of example, Lazar (2005) explains that “lesbians, in fact, may experience greater discrimination in that not only are they marginalized by the hetero-gendered order, they are made further invisible as ‘women’ even in the gay

community” (p.10). This is in line with one of the major problems with liberal ideology, which Lazar (2005) says was contested by many of her contemporary feminist scholars. Namely, liberal ideology assumes there is a universalism of experience shared by men and women, women and women, between races and classes, etc., and the idea that marginalized groups have the same chance of success as the dominant group if only they work hard enough (Lazar, 2005, p. 18). The way in which these ideas are normalized in language and texts, and the way in which patriarchal domination is practiced, reinforced, normalized, and resisted, is incredibly important to the feminist CDA researcher.

Method

The work of the above scholars was of invaluable importance to the formation of this study’s methodology. Of Gee’s (2011b) various tools, I selected the *figured worlds* and *big D discourse* tools to use for my analysis. These two tools were the best suited to my research goal of uncovering what discourses of masculinity *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) was portraying as ‘normal’ in Canada. *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is, at the time of writing, about to debut its tenth season. This is far too much content to analyze for the purposes of the current research paper, and therefore, two seasons were selected and compared. While all would prove interesting subjects for research, Seasons 3 and 9 are perhaps the most appropriate for several reasons.

Season 3 (Clattenburg, 2001) is far along enough in the series’ timeline that the characters and plots have been well established. Further, Season 3 (Clattenburg, 2001) also contains the episode in which characters Randy and Mr. Lahey come out as gay to the other characters. Season 9 is the second streak of episodes to be released directly to Netflix after the show’s change in ownership. This season is significant for the hyper-

masculine Colonel Leselie Dancer character, and for Ricky, who receives a large amount of screen-time dedicated to his quest to provide for his family. Masculinity is always on display in *Trailer Park Boys*, but these two seasons yielded a particularly rich analysis.

The theoretical basis provided by Fairclough (1995a, 1995b), the tools for conducting of discourse analysis found in Gee (2011a, 2011b), and the focus on gender articulated by Lazar (2005) have all shaped the methodology of my major research paper. When I conducted my analysis of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg 2001), I looked for instances of masculinity or gender that were directly referenced in the dialogue, as well as nonverbal elements. The data analysis was then organized by theme, rather than by character or by season. While looking for discourses of masculinity, like stereotypes, or certain roles or behaviours associated masculinity within the show, the common themes that arose were masculinity in relation to family, authority and sexuality. Having seen how closely linked these themes were with the representation of masculinity in the show, I decided to organize my analysis by these themes. Through analyzing and understanding these themes, I was able to get a clear picture of how masculinity operated in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) and what discourses, or types of masculinity, were being reproduced.¹

¹ Portions of Chapters One and Two were published elsewhere as Haddow (2015), based on my research, during my MEd candidature.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I present my analysis of masculinity in Seasons 3 and 9 of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). I explore dialogue, visual elements, and plot details episode to episode, but I chose to organize this data by three main themes that emerged from the data. These themes are family, authority, and sexuality. I chose these themes because they were present across both seasons, and always operated as ways of challenging, affirming, or discussing a character's masculinity. I organize these themes into subheadings, which I examine using Gee's (2011a, 2011b) conceptual tools, Lazar's (2005) feminist style of critical discourse analysis, and Connell's (2009) work on masculinity. In what follows, I explain my rationale for choosing the themes of family, authority, and sexuality, and describe how each inform discourses of masculinity in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Next, I briefly describe the plot of each season in order to orient readers not familiar with the television program. The critical discourse analysis itself will be organized by the previously mentioned thematic subheadings, and I explore each season separately. In the final section, I briefly compare the two seasons and outline their effectiveness as critical satire.

The main subheadings that form the organization of this analysis are masculinity in relation to family, authority, and sexuality. I chose these not only due to their thematic prevalence throughout the series across all seasons, but because three themes were almost always presented in relation to discourses of masculinity. Issues of family – specifically, fatherhood and family leadership – feature prominently in main character Ricky's story arcs. This conflict also consumes a great deal of screen-time throughout the season, demonstrating the thematic significance of familial masculinity in relation to the show.

Authority, and authoritativeness, is also closely linked with representations of masculinity in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Series antagonists Mr. Lahey in Season 3 and Leslie Dancer in Season 9 embody what could be called traditionally masculine authority positions of the law enforce and military officer. Both often embody violent hypermasculinity to exert their authority when threatened, suggesting a strong link between their positions of authority and their masculinity. Finally, I chose sexuality in regards to masculinity as a thematic subheading due to the show's prominent homosexual characters and frequent use of vulgar sexual language. There are instances in the third season of sexual openness and vulgarity as being heterosexually masculine, but the defining sexual thematic element is the homosexual relationship between characters Mr. Lahey and Randy. Less stereotypical than traditional western hegemonic masculinity, the show's third season represents these characters' homosexuality as matter-of-fact and unrelated to their masculinity and has little impact on the flow of the narrative.

With the Netflix revival and a change of leadership in the show's production, the ninth season of *Trailer Park Boys*' (Clattenburg, 2001) relationship with masculine discourses is slightly different in tone. Season 9 has stronger associations between vulgar sexual comments and masculinity, now making more direct references to male penetration and sexual domination. Additionally, the exploitation of a character's anxiety over having slept with transgender women is a major element of tension, and results in the final confrontation of the season. My analysis found that familial leadership was represented as a virtuous masculine quality, and it was clear what types of masculine discourses were being reproduced. Authoritativeness and hypermasculinity were usually embodied by villainous characters, and although these discourses of masculinity were not

represented as virtuous, they were still normalized and reinforced. Finally, my analysis of the overlap between sexuality and masculinity does not deal directly with an ideal type or discourse of masculinity, but more how each season either supports or resists heterosexuality as a dominant discourse. These categories, being the most thematically prominent in relation to masculinity throughout both Seasons 3 and 9, will be analyzed using Gee's (2011b) conceptual tools, specifically the *figured worlds* and *big D discourse* tools, to ask questions of this text and better understand what is being communicated as normal and abnormal masculinity within Canadian discourse.

Season 3

I first discuss the plot and characters in the third season of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Originally aired in 2003, the season represents a point before the program began to rely on more unrealistic stories and self-parody. Season 3 begins with the main characters' usual release from prison, but this time Julian and Ricky return to the park with a substantial amount of money amassed during the previous season. The season revolves around Julian's plan to take his friends on a cruise at the end of the year, funded by their characteristic recidivist criminal activities. At Bubble's suggestion, the usual strategy of attempting one large crime and risking jail time is abandoned in favour of a series of small, less noticeable crimes to avoid the risk of severe prison sentences. These range from smuggling Russian vodka, selling syphoned gasoline, and sneaking marijuana into a Rush concert, to using children to steal and "remarket" barbeques (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Volpe, 2003; Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003; Clattenburg, Torrens, Tremblay, Wells, 2003; Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003).

While Mr. Lahey still stands as the primary authority figure and counter to Ricky, Julian and Bubbles, further dramatic tension is provided in the latter half of the season by Julian's new police officer girlfriend, Erica. As a female officer of the law – and a competent one at that – Erica provides an interesting contrast to Lahey and reoccurring police character George Green. Among the main characters, Ricky's chaotic and aggressive masculinity is put in competition with Julian's calculated and plotting authority over his friends and the trailer park. Before they waste all of their money, the season opens with a contest between Julian and Ricky as they buy gifts for their friends in an attempt to outdo the other. Once this competition settles, the season revolves around the tension between Julian choosing Erica, a girlfriend and a police officer, over his male friends, specifically Ricky. Upset with Julian's behavior, and with Mr. Lahey's attempts to have him evicted from the park during an early Christmas celebration with his daughter, Ricky resolves to return to prison where he feels more welcome. Failing to get arrested despite his best efforts at breaking the law, Julian sacrifices himself by firing off a gun in front of Erica, getting himself, Lahey, and Randy arrested. The season closes with Ricky becoming trailer park supervisor, which in a way rewards Ricky's reckless behaviour, while the remaining members of the cast enjoy their cruise.

Family

The opening episode of the third season, *The Kiss of Freedom* (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003), begins the season with significant events regarding family and masculinity. Having returned home with unprecedented amounts of money, Ricky and Julian quickly begin competing over who can buy more gifts for people in the community (Clattenburg et al., 2003). The community of the trailer park clearly operates

as an extended family, with Ricky and Julian operating as literal and figurative father figures. While the two men's spending on their friends exemplifies the 'caring community' trope associated with Canadian values (Hughes-Fuller, 2009), ultimately, their competition is represented as foolish – suggesting that both competitiveness and 'breadwinner' spending, traditionally considered masculine traits, are here being resisted and questioned. This creates a vantage point from which the viewer can understand that the characters are trying to act masculine, as well as the ironic dissonance between their actions and what the show presents as ideal masculinity.

The climax of the episode, however, is different. Having promised the last of his money to both his daughter Trinity and his adversary Mr. Lahey, Ricky is made to choose between the two. (Clattenburg et al., 2003). Due to a bet made earlier in the episode, if Ricky cannot produce a down payment for a new trailer on time, he must kiss Mr. Lahey's bare buttock, an act of submission that could potentially change the community's perception of his masculinity. In this instance, Ricky considers sacrificing for his family to be the more masculine course of action, choosing public disgrace and giving up his need for shelter to do 'what is right' for his family. Nonverbal cues, such as the use of emotional music, as well as the placement of this event as the episode's climax, suggest that this moral lesson is meant to be taken seriously by the audience, and strongly connects virtuous masculinity with familial leadership and sacrifice. Supported further, Bubbles calls Ricky a "fucking good dad," and Lucy withdraws her previous claims for child support (Clattenburg et al., 2003). Even in the comedy of their excessive spending, Ricky and Julian could be said to have had their hearts in the 'right' places.

Returning to Gee (2011b), we can understand through this story the *figured world* in which these men relate to each other and their communities. Here, the compassion Ricky and Julian show for their community and families is presented as virtuous and admirable behavior for fathers and leaders of small communities. Looking at *big D discourse* (Gee, 2011b), we can also see how Ricky and Julian perform these leadership identities within the park, and how they interact with each other. While their competition is presented as foolish and is soon resolved, the episode still presents competition between male leaders as almost natural and unavoidable. Further, Ricky losing the bet with Mr. Lahey results in a display of power and dominance, with Ricky being forced to submit and perform a homosexual act. Of course, Mr. Lahey is equally as involved in this act, but being the dominator his masculinity is not presented as being publicly at stake. The behavior of Ricky and Julian in this opening episode – while exaggerated and satirical in format – nevertheless provides insight into how the show presents masculinity within the context of Canadian discourse.

Other examples exist throughout Season 3 that showcase Ricky's status as a familial and community leader. In the third episode, *If I Can't Smoke and Swear, I'm Fucked* (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003), Ricky attempts to curb his daughter Trinity's cigarette addiction by sharing his nicotine patches with her. This normally shocking subject matter is portrayed with affection, and while Ricky could easily be blamed for his daughter's smoking habit, the purpose here appears to be to show Ricky's earnest attempts to raise his daughter. The season's sixth episode, *Where in the Fuck is Randy's Barbeque* (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003), centers on Ricky's mentorship of a group of elementary school students from Trinity's class. The

episode opens with Ricky cooking pancakes for the children, but he soon uses them in a scheme to steal barbeques since, as he was informed by one of the young girls, “kids under twelve can’t go to grown up jail” (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003). Although clearly child exploitation, this is used for comedic purposes and to show Ricky’s almost ignorant naiveté rather than any kind of malevolence. While not given the kind of emotional weight or moralism of the first episode, these episodes still reinforce Ricky’s roll in his family and community as a father and leader. Thinking back on Gee’s (2011b) toolkit, even amongst the carnivalesque chaos of the trailer park, in which taboos like children smoking cigarettes are accepted as matter-of-fact, and lines of child exploitation are blurred, the role of the father is still discernable as normal and inextricably tied to masculinity. While portraying male characters as valuing their families is not in itself pedagogically problematic, the representation of Ricky as a father has some problematic elements. As Ricky’s duty as a father and his masculinity are so inextricably linked, and at times at risk, like when he is forced to commit a homosexual act with Mr. Lahey, the effect on public pedagogy serves to narrow the type of honorable masculine fathers to a heterosexual stereotypical one.

Authority

The relationship between masculinity and authority in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is ever visible. The cyclical nature of the show’s plot season-to-season almost always revolves around competing for or attempting to retain power and authority over the trailer park. Authority and authoritativeness can and do take many forms in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), but one of the most visible representation of this is the struggle between the lawful authority of Mr. Lahey vs. the

chaotic self-governance to which Ricky, Julian and Bubbles aspire. The second episode of the third season, *Temporary Relief Assistant Trailer Park Supervisor* (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Volpe, 2003), blurs this distinction when Ricky briefly takes over Randy's job as Mr. Lahey's assistant. This event is set into motion when Randy challenges trailer park owner and Mr. Lahey's ex-wife, Barbara Lahey (Clattenburg et al., 2003). Upon starting the position, the usually incompetent Ricky takes to his new job as law enforcer of the park with an unexpected aptitude (Clattenburg et al., 2003). While it can be assumed Ricky's lawful authority is only temporary, the representation of Ricky's seemingly natural proficiency towards authoritative behaviour is undoubtedly intertwined with discourses of masculinity. Before Ricky is hired on as assistant supervisor, several men compete for the position, with Bubbles calling it "a good paying job" (Clattenburg et al., 2003).

The episode maintains this positive attitude towards lawful authority, and Ricky's skill at enforcing it, until it is placed at odds with his friends' criminal activity. Similar to the moral choice between himself and his daughter in the season's first episode, Ricky is put into a situation where he must choose what he believes to be the correct course of action and, as I argue, which is the more masculine. Unlike the first episode's dilemma, however, here, both paths in front of Ricky are portrayed as masculine ones. Ricky chooses to cover for his friends and betray his new loyalty to Mr. Lahey and, more importantly, to his position of authority in the park. If there can be said to be a hierarchy within the masculine themes of family, authority, and sexuality, then it appears that *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) places the most importance on family and community. Ricky's job gives him automatic authority, an income, and respect in the

community, but rather than reading Ricky's return to criminal life as recidivist, it is loyalty to the family (here, Ricky's extended family) with which Ricky can maintain integrity as a masculine figure.

If we think in terms of Gee's (2011b) *figured worlds*, we can ascertain that this story naturalizes the maleness of lawful authority through Ricky's natural talent, as well as the fact that none of the strong female characters appear in the job interview scene. Using Gee's (2011b) *big D discourse* as a way of analyzing the roles being enacted, we see that Ricky acts different as a de facto law enforcer than he did previously, with more discipline and rigidity. Assistant supervisor Ricky interacts differently with civilians and criminals than he would normally, and is especially strict on side characters Cory and Trevor. While the interaction between these two identities, or discourses, appears unnatural in the chaos of the trailer park's usual context, the presentation of these conflicts and resolutions may appear to Canadian viewers as entirely more realistic than the show's usual stories. Ricky is shown as embodying a more honourable type of masculinity with his new job, as well as having the authority to dominate other men in the park, both characteristic of Connell's (2005) explanation of hegemonic masculinity. Although Ricky's assumption of this discourse (the lawful male authority role) is abandoned at the conclusion of this episode, the story fails to offer a critique of this model beyond placing it below familial loyalty in the show's internal hierarchy of masculine traits. Hegemonic masculinity is present in a more extreme form later in the season, embodied by a mentally unstable Mr. Lahey, which I shall analyze below.

The seventh episode of the third season, *The Delusions of Officer Jim Lahey*, deals with the fall out after Mr. Lahey and Randy come out as being gay in the previous

episode, leaving the trailer park supervisor in a fragile mental and emotional state (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003). The intersection of sexuality and masculinity in this episode is analyzed in the following section, as the theme of authoritativeness is also very prevalent. His trailer damaged by a car accident, clear plastic sheets separate Mr. Lahey's personal life from the community outside, parallel to the new transparency of his homosexuality. When a stray hockey puck breaks through these barriers and shatters the glass case housing Lahey's now retired police uniform, he snaps and begins impersonating a reinstated officer of the law. The theme of masculine authoritativeness is very prevalent in this episode, as Mr. Lahey uses violence, threats, and intimidation to uphold what he believes to be order in the community. Perhaps because his now publicly known homosexuality deviates from traditionally held forms of heterosexual hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), Mr. Lahey leans heavily into hypermasculinity to regain his perceived loss of authority within the community. As to be expected, this conflict is resolved by the end of the episode, but the brief transformation of Mr. Lahey leaves a lot to be unpacked. Operating as a villain character, his behavior and abuse of authority are not represented as being admirable in terms of what the show preaches as *proper* masculine behavior.

I argue that this episode fails to provide a critique of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). The unspoken *figured world* (Gee, 2011b) here is one in which violent, hypermasculine behavior is still linked with positions of authority in society. Although Lahey's anxiety around coming out can be normal for a well-rounded queer character, the shows juxtaposition of this anxiety with demonstrations of dominating behavior and hegemonic masculinity arguably takes steps backwards from the previously progressive

representation. Borrowing Gee's (2011b) *big D discourse*, we can examine how the roles of law enforcer and civilian interact. While Lahey's behavior is certainly excessive and meant to be shocking, and therefore not presented as ideal Canadian masculinity, the representation falls short of its potential to subvert hypermasculine discourse. Mr. Lahey's hypermasculine behaviour ceases soon after his status as a police officer is exposed as being false, which links this bad behavior directly with the role of the law enforcer. Although dealing here with a representation of a police officer, and not military personnel, Enloe's (2007) work is still invaluable to this analysis, as Mr. Lahey exhibits violent, hypermasculine behaviour. Enloe (2007) shows connections between the militarization of culture and the negative impacts this has on both female and male citizens, including violence and hypermasculinity. My research is within the realm of fiction, but my past work has shown the connections that can occur between fictional representations and public pedagogy (Haddow, 2015). In the same way, Mr. Lahey's fugue state in which his violent behaviour and authority is linked to his apparent status as a member of law enforcement normalizes this discourse of masculinity within the context of Canadian law enforcement. This argument will be brought up again in the analysis of the Colonel Leslie Dancer character from *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) ninth season, in a representation of militaristic hypermasculinity that stretches the length of an entire season rather than one episode.

Sexuality

Sexuality and masculinity intersect in several interesting cases throughout Season 3 of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). The public humiliation scene in the first episode, previously detailed during the discussion on family and masculinity, could

certainly be said to have sexual undertones including anxiety about perceived homosexuality and domination (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003). Later in the season, the episode *Who's the Microphone Assassin* (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003), while light on overarching narrative significance, is thematically significant when side character J-Roc is caught masturbating. Exposed to the trailer park, J-Roc's anxiety is only alleviated when male community leader Julian assures him "man, the ladies love that shit. It just means you have a healthy sex drive" (Clattenburg et al., 2003).

The most thematically significant instance of sexuality and masculinity, however, is unquestionably the show's exploration of Mr. Lahey and Randy's homosexual relationship. Eluded to throughout the program, the Season 3 episodes *Where in the Fuck is Randy's Barbeque* (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003) and *The Delusions of Officer Jim Lahey* (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003) are significant for their exploration of Randy and Mr. Lahey's experience coming out as a homosexual couple. Spurred on by a near death experience, Randy initiates the confession and Mr. Lahey reluctantly follows. Hughes-Fuller (2009) describes this scene in a positive light, that the members of the community accept Mr. Lahey and Randy's homosexuality, subverting audience expectations of a homophobic reaction from the trailer park denizens.

While a valid reading, I believe there is more to unpack here in terms of non-verbal cues. Bubbles' reaction to the new information is shown in close-up, wearing a clearly uncomfortable expression. Likewise, a few scenes earlier when Erica discovers Mr. Lahey and Randy's homosexuality, she reacts with a shocked facial expression and

what appears to be disgust, and is later asked by Julian to keep the revelation a secret. With reference to *big D discourse* (Gee, 2011b), we can think about the various roles being played in these scenes as discourses of themselves. The community leaders and outliers – straight and gay citizens, law enforcers and civilians – all operate and interact based on established norms of what is and is not normal in this context. The fact that characters like Bubbles and Erica exhibit negative or uncomfortable reactions once Mr. Lahey's discursive role changes from a heterosexual authority figure to a homosexual one reinforces these ways of interacting as normal. Speaking more to the dramatic structure of the show, the fact that Mr. Lahey's mental breakdown into a violent, hypermasculine version of himself comes immediately after his coming out also supports heteronormative discourses. While Mr. Lahey is, in every instance of the show, an incompetent leader and law enforcer, it is the insecurity he feels after coming out that leads him to become a tyrant that exhibits many of the traits of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). While ultimately the reaction of the trailer park community is one of acceptance, the apprehension visible in non-verbal elements suggests that the show is reproducing expected heteronormative masculine discourse. This discourse is normalized further within public pedagogy and through viewers who are unfamiliar with critical media literacy.

Season 9

Season 9, the second of the Netflix revival seasons, begins as usual with Ricky and Julian being released from jail. With the trailer park having been turned into an alcohol-free retirement community for seniors, Mr. Lahey employs supposed military war hero Colonel Leslie Dancer to both enforce the new rules and keep unwanted visitors like

Ricky from entering the park. Julian retains a third ownership of the trailer park, and while Barbara's and Mr. Lahey's attempts to wrest Julian's shares represent a significant amount of the driving tension, the primary antagonist is undoubtedly Dancer. Dancer's draconian rule over the park represents the logical conclusion of Mr. Lahey's exaggerated hypermasculine authority from the Season 3 episode in which he impersonated a police officer (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003). While drugs are consumed and guns discharged, in this season, there is less of an emphasis on criminal schemes and more on the deposing of Dancer from power. Julian's bid to take control of the remaining shares of the trailer park, for example, is to fix up and sell a motel that had been previously occupied by and used for criminal activity by new character Tommy Bean (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrents & Murphy, 2015). Julian acquires this motel through semi-legal means by bribing a questionable lawyer, rather than by violent means. Ricky, as well, vows to avoid illegal activity. The final confrontation which draws the attention of the police and sees some characters sent to prison is not the result of a grand criminal operation gone wrong, but a gun fight that breaks out over what is essentially a threat to the public perception of longtime villain Cyrus' masculinity.

Although the Netflix seasons are arguably very different in tone and form from the original run, the main thematic elements in relation to masculinity were very similar. Masculinity in relation to family is a major focus of the season. With Trinity soon to give birth to her first baby, Ricky experiences further anxiety about his role as the male head of his family. Sexuality is again strongly connected with masculinity, and the Netflix seasons are notable for the increased frequency and directness of their sexual jokes and references. The famously homosexual couple of the series, Randy and Mr. Lahey, are at

this point no longer together, as Mr. Lahey attempts to rekindle romance with his ex-wife Barbara. A connection between masculinity as authoritativeness is once again apparent, visible not only through the Dancer character, but also in the way all the other male characters navigate, confront, or submit to this authority. Also worthy of mention is the potentially transgender character Donna. In season eight, Donna is introduced as the sister of male character Don, both played by actor Leigh MacInnis. The viewer is led to suspect that they are the same character. What is always left unclear to audiences, however, is whether Don is dressing up as Donna, or vice-versa. In Season 9, however, we are presented only with Donna, now in a romantic relationship with Randy. This suggests that either Don was a persona created by the ‘genuine’ Donna, or that the community has accepted Don/Donna fully as a woman. As a long time viewer of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), the Netflix seasons appeared to me, on my initial viewing, to have a different relationship with dominant discourses, as well as a starkly different satirical voice, when compared with the original seasons. The Netflix seasons appeared to favour more straightforward presentations of shocking content rather than slyly poking fun at Canadian and Maritime culture, prompting me to want to compare seasons from these two eras in my analysis.

Family

In the ninth season of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), the thematic linking of family and masculinity are represented strongest by Ricky’s leadership and caring for his family, and by side character J-Roc’s relationship with his estranged son. While in Season 3 Ricky was concerned about how his young daughter Trinity was growing up, in Season 9 Trinity is an adult and expecting a baby with her partner Jacob. This intensifies

Ricky's sense of obligation to be a leader in his family. Ricky's leadership is not uncontested, however, as we learn that while in jail, Ricky's partner Lucy had been sleeping and living with police officer George Green, the long time series antagonist. Throughout the season, Ricky and George compete over Lucy, Trinity and the new baby, a struggle that takes the form of various contests of masculinity to provide food and shelter for the family. In the second half of Season 9, J-Roc is surprised to learn that he has a young son and, because the boy's mother decides to leave for work in Ontario, must now care for the boy, Mitch, also-called MC Flurry (Smith, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2015). Mitch does not respect his father, which we see through Mitch's constant jokes about J-Roc being white, as well attacks against his masculinity through use of the gendered slur "bitch" (Smith et al., 2015). These attacks and Mitch's lack of love or respect for his father once again reveal how the show connects discourses of masculinity with those of family. The son often humiliates and dominates his father publicly, therefore causing J-Roc great anxiety and insecurity.

The links between portrayals of masculinity and themes of family and male leadership are visible from the early episodes of the ninth season of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). The first episode, *Why in the Fuck is My Trailer Pink?* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015), establishes the conflict between Ricky and George Green right away. When picking up Lucy and Trinity from George's house, where they had been staying during Ricky's time in prison, Ricky's attempt to make peace with George is denied when George sucker punches Ricky. This use of violence to establish dominance is congruent with Connell's (2005) hegemonic masculinity, and the strong connection between violence and issues of family and masculinity supports my

argument that *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) does not stray far from traditional masculine discourses. As the competition progresses throughout the season, Ricky mostly struggles with basic needs like shelter and food, which George has in spades. In the second episode of the season, *A Stable Fucking Environment* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015), Lucy gives Ricky an ultimatum, demanding that he provide Trinity's expectant baby with basic needs if he wishes the family to remain with him instead of George. Ricky wins his daughter's respect when he secures a literal horse stable to shelter his family, but Lucy is unconvinced, and the competition continues. The conflict is eventually resolved when the Dancer character is removed from power and Ricky is free to reenter the trailer park, thus completing his list of requirements by providing a stable place for his family to live.

Drawing on Gee's (2011b) *big D discourse*, we can see that this competition between Ricky and George emphasizes masculinity and leadership as something to be fought over and, therefore, won or lost. The interactions between these two men can be read as a multitude of discursive roles, including man to man, home owner to homeless, educated to uneducated, and so forth. The violent and competitive behavior that George and Ricky exhibit is not necessarily presented to be taken seriously, but we still must consider the potential for these representations to reinforce harmful discourses. Comparatively, in Season 3's first episode (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003), Ricky's decision to choose his daughter/family over his own needs was actively represented as a noble and virtuous act. This was evidenced through the placement of the scene as the episode's conclusion, the emotional music queues, as well as the verbal praise Ricky received from other characters like Bubbles and Lucy. This moral and

humanistic approach is absent from Season 9's conflict between Ricky and George, but their behaviour is still normalized through its importance in the narrative, as well as the assumed need to compete over masculinity and the position of head of the family.

Although portraying good masculine behavior as having an active role in their family is not necessarily pedagogically harmful, framing this masculine discourse as one which is fought over with violence is consistent with discourses of hegemonic masculinity that have been shown to reproduce domination over women on a societal level (Connell, 2005). A further example of this domination is also seen in the very little amount of screen-time given to Lucy in this season, and by framing her relationship with George as fickle and duplicitous rather than as a strategy to care and provide for her daughter.

The way in which the relationship between J-Roc and his estranged son Mitch is represented across *Trailer Park Boys'* (Clattenburg, 2001) ninth season reinforces the discursive connections between family and masculinity. In the case of this relationship, as opposed to Ricky competing with another alpha male type for his family, J-Roc instead must overcome or earn the respect of his son, who resists at every chance. Winning his son's love is clearly important to J-Roc – but what is more thematically significant for my purposes is that Mitch's disapproval is often voiced through insults to his father's masculinity. There are many racial elements to this conflict as well, J-Roc being white and Mitch's mother being black, but for the purposes of this study instances dealing with masculinity will be more closely examined. The sixth episode, *The Sweet Liquory Load*, prominently features J-Roc and his son Mitch (Smith, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2015). The episode begins with an argument between J-Roc and his son Mitch. During this argument the son repeatedly calls his father a “bitch,” an insult targeted directly at J-

Roc's masculinity (Smith et al., 2015). When the conflict between the father and son is revisited later in the episode, the word 'bitch' is not used to attack J-Roc's masculinity directly, but Mitch still challenges J-Roc's authority. After the exchange, J-Roc expresses his feelings of intimidation, saying, "it's hard being a dad to someone who's harder than you," suggesting J-Roc indeed feels his masculinity is in question when compared to his son (Smith et al., 2015). Although the viewer can hear more insults flung at J-Roc from off screen, the father is thrilled and exclaims, "he didn't call me 'bitch!'" (Smith et al., 2015). This represents the start of the thawing of the relationship, which continues in the episode *Piss* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Bowles, 2015). Here, Mitch starts to slowly consider his father to be more masculine when J-Roc refers to a moment in an earlier season when J-Roc assaulted a police officer, which again associates masculinity with violence. This plot element is finally resolved in the penultimate episode when Mitch, perhaps unconsciously, refers to J-Roc as his "old man" (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Sonoda, 2015). J-Roc is nearly moved to tears, and the two finally admit their familial love for one another. Immediately after this, perhaps to preserve his reputation and save face, Mitch yells at his father, "fuck off, you old white bitch," but J-Roc is nevertheless satisfied that his son both loves him and respects his masculinity (Smith et al., 2015).

The only evidence in the season's plot or dialogue for Mitch's change of heart was the previously mentioned reference to violence against a police officer, again making connections to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). As with Ricky, dedication to family and fatherhood is not necessarily a pedagogically harmful representation, but by weighing the merit of father characters against hegemonically masculine traits, in this

instance the ninth season of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) appears to reproduce harmful discourses of masculinity in Canadian television.

Authority

Regarding the overlap between discourses of masculinity and authority and the reproduction of pedagogically harmful discourses like hegemonic masculinity, these are most prominently visible in the portrayal of the Colonel Leslie Dancer character. Dancer embodies many hegemonically masculine traits directly, but also of significance is the way that other characters react to, navigate, and negotiate with his authority and masculinity. As the primary antagonist of the season supplanting Mr. Lahey, Dancer is granted significant screen-time across the entire season. The first episode of Season 9, *Why in the Fuck is My Trailer Pink* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015), opens with the introduction of Colonel Leslie Dancer, and his military history and rank are immediately emphasized. Throughout the episode, Dancer is shown stopping and searching civilians for alcohol, physically controlling who enters and leaves the space of the park. At the design of Mr. Lahey, Dancer tries to separate Ricky from his family by prohibiting him from entering the park, while Lucy, Trinity and Jacob are free to enter if they leave the father figure behind. By embodying hegemonic and hypermasculine qualities, Dancer is established at the top of the hierarchy of masculinity, and therefore afforded a significant amount of authority and power to influence events in the narrative. This influences all three primary thematic categories of masculinity used in this analysis. Dancer's ability to physically separate Ricky from his partner and daughter, if they choose to enter the park, threatens Ricky's status as the head of his family.

In the second episode, *A Stable Fucking Environment* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015), Ricky challenges Dancer's authority by urinating on the park fence that separates him from his home, invoking themes of sexuality and masculinity by using penetrative language, "you can keep me out of the park but you can't keep my cock out" (Smith et al., 2015). Dancer retaliates by turning on the electric fence and electrocutes Ricky, who screams "real men don't try to electrocute other men's cocks when they are trying to piss" (Smith et al., 2015). These instances showcase how Dancer's place at the top of the masculinity hierarchy gives him the authority to threaten the masculinity of other characters, and highlights the overlapping nature of the themes of family, authority, and sexuality.

It is important to remember that Dancer's masculinity is dependent on his military history and rank, a fact we are constantly reminded of throughout the ninth season of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Later in *A Stable Fucking Environment* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015), Dancer verbally threatens Bubbles by recounting war stories and his masculine feats, causing Bubbles to literally run away. Dancer's authority over the park and other characters is always exerted either through pure intimidation or through reference to his past military feats, both of which are closely linked to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). Later in this episode, Randy challenges Dancer and disobeys the orders he was given to wear a uniform, and is physically attacked as a result (Smith et al., 2015). Dancer sucker punches Randy in the stomach, forces on the uniform, and then verbally disciplines him (Smith et al., 2015). Violence in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is usually presented as comedic, and almost always absent of consequence, but this scene carries far more thematic significance.

Rather than the chaotic and misdirected violence of the earlier seasons, this scene is used as a way for Dancer to assert his masculinity and dominance over Randy. While a clear and arguably one-dimensional antagonist, Dancer's violent behavior and authority over other characters are represented as unquestionably masculine. Connell (2005) argues that while men who actually fit the description of hegemonic masculinity, with traits such as violent and competitive patriarchal behaviour, are almost always in the minority, their influence on discourse and society as a whole is far more widespread. With this in mind, we can understand that Dancer's behavior both within the narrative itself and in relation to the program's relationship with Canadian and masculine discourse is much more significant than one may expect from a villain present for only one season.

Throughout the rest of the ninth season of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), Colonel Leslie Dancer continues to use violence, coercion and his military status to maintain his authority. Examples of this include trying to intimidate Ricky with a war story in which Dancer physically bested several younger men in a fight, putting Randy on probation and exiling him for drinking alcohol, and for using a Taser to physically subdue Randy after he sneaks back into the trailer park (Smith et al., 2015). Further proof of the connection between Dancer's masculinity and his military identity is evidenced in the way in which the villain's authority is unraveled and he is eventually removed from power. In the previously mentioned standoff between Dancer and Ricky, Ricky is not visibly phased by Dancer's intimidation tactics. When the scene ends, while Mr. Lahey expresses admiration to what he considers a "powerful brute of a man," Randy responds by questioning the veracity of Dancer's stories (Smith et al., 2015). After the scene where Randy is attacked by Dancer in fifth episode, Mr. Lahey and Barbara begin to challenge

Dancer's authority, insisting that his warlike tactics are not a part of his duties, sending Dancer into a trance recounting war stories to himself, while Lahey and Barbara sneak away unnoticed (Smith et al., 2015). Lahey confronts Dancer a second time in the sixth episode, *The Sweet Liquory Load* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2015). Insisting Dancer's treatment of Randy was too harsh, Dancer immediately replies "you're undermining my authority," but Lahey stands his ground and reminds his employee "who's paying [his] salary" (Smith et al., 2015). The scene is cut short before either man can claim dominance, but Dancer's authority is undone in the seventh episode, *Piss* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Bowles, 2015).

It is significant to my argument that Dancer's removal from power and the shattering of his hypermasculine persona comes not from other characters exhibiting stronger masculine characteristics, or from one of the show's characteristic moralistic scenes in which the character realizes the error of his ways. Dancer's hypermasculine behavior is not fundamentally questioned, nor is his character cast out as particularly abnormal. Instead, the villain is overcome by Randy discovering Dancer's wallet, which contain numerous fake identification cards, including his Canadian Armed Forces ID that designates his military rank as a private and not the higher position of colonel that the character used as leverage in his domination of others. When Randy makes this information public, Dancer enters a rage from which he does not recover for the remainder of the season. The connection between Dancer's authority and masculinity with his military rank and status is very problematic in terms of the show's relationship with discourses of Canadian masculinity. Hypermasculinity has been linked with problems within the military, such as the rape of female soldiers, as well as with the

militarization of culture itself, which can have harmful and violent consequences for citizens (Enloe, 2007). Problems within Canada's military may seem far removed from the world of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), but, as I have written elsewhere, the intersection of hypermasculinity and militarization in fictional representations in popular media such as film, television, and video games, can have detrimental impacts in the real world (Haddow, 2015). By adopting a stance of public pedagogy, it can be understood that shows like *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) influence the learning of viewers in numerous ways. While Dancer's characteristics and behavior as an antagonist were anathema to the main heroes of the show, the discourses of violent, hypermasculinity among males, military personal, or authority figures in general is not in itself criticized or challenged. This, in my mind, is the most disappointing and the most pedagogically harmful element of this season's commentary on masculinity.

Sexuality

There are multiple ways in which discourses of sexuality and masculinity overlap in Season 9 of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Not only is it difficult to detangle these threads, but the discourses reproduced in these episodes are multiple and often contradictory. This complexity results in a less consistent and arguably less effective satirical edge than previous seasons. Perhaps due to the presence of traditional network restrictions and censorship, the Netflix revival seasons feature more plentiful and aggressive instances of sexual language and situations. More than in previous seasons, aggressive sexual language seems more essential to the show's characters. Further, sexuality in these episodes functions as a site where masculinity is not only flaunted but also contested. Several times throughout the season, sexual expletives are used when

characters compete for dominance over each other, or when they are otherwise engaged in a conflict. The final dramatic confrontation of the season is a result of tension around Cyrus, who is at risk of being publicly exposed for having slept with transgender women on video. Presenting sex with a transgender person as a shameful transgression suggests that these actions are, at least as far as the characters are concerned, divergent enough from masculine sexual norms to discredit, disempower, and emasculate this villainous antagonist. In a show about masculinity, sexuality is given a great deal of thematic importance and influence over the narrative. Finally, as with Season 3 of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), Mr. Lahey and Randy's homosexual relationship is an element with great discursive significance. In Season 9, however, this representation is more reproductive of heteronormative discourses for many reasons that will be detailed below.

I found two main plot threads to be particularly representative of how masculinity is contested in relation to sexuality in the ninth season of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). The first is side character Tyrone's new job at Sarah and Barbara Lahey's spa and massage parlour. Although it starts fairly innocently, Tyrone is soon pressured into performing increasingly intimate sexual services for the spa's elderly female patrons. The second episode of Season 9, *A Stable Fucking Environment* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015), is when we first see evidence of this pressure and exploitation. After Tyrone protests Sarah's requests that he provide extra services for his massage clientele, Sarah directly attacks his masculinity with a slur, calling him a "pussy," after which he concedes (Smith et al., 2015).

While the nature of these favours are left unclear, things are brought further to light in the next episode, *Anointed in Liquor* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens &

Murphy, 2015). The scene is brief, but features Tyrone looking exhausted after a massage session. He complains to Sarah that he will need stronger breath mints to continue his work, insinuating that he has been performing oral sex on the spa's customers. The next episode, *The Motel Can't Live at the Motel* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2015), shows Sarah convincing a still reluctant Tyrone to stay and see his remaining clients, this time enticing him with the promise of extra money for his "magic fingers" (Smith et al., 2015). The scene ends with Sarah handing Tyrone a hand exerciser and saying, "you're going to need it" (Smith et al., 2015). Towards the end of the episode, Tyrone receives his pay and despite complaining of the tiring work, the cash eases his anxiety somewhat (Smith et al., 2015). This arc is concluded in the final episode, after Barbara, Sarah, and Donna have all been arrested and their spa closed down. Tyrone, however, has discovered he now enjoys the company of "old hoes," and is seen posing with an elderly sexual partner (Smith et al., 2015).

While this representation certainly inverts expectations of portrayals of sex workers as subjugated women, by placing an otherwise typically masculine character in the position, it is not in itself critical of traditional masculine discourse. Especially in the first instance of Sarah attacking Tyrone's masculinity to coerce him into the job, as well as the negative reaction of best friend J-Roc in later episodes, Tyrone's masculinity is linked to and emasculated by his sexual submission. Moreover, the profession of the sex worker is presented as something submissive and unmasculine. This is compounded in the scene where the Dancer character is defeated and Randy subdues the villain by anally penetrating him with his thumb. In this moment, Randy demands Dancer say "I'm a Private Dancer" (Smith et al., 2015), a double entendre meant to shame him for his

military rank as well as insinuate he is a private erotic dancer, further linking this type of work with themes of submission and emasculation.

The second plot element of Season 9 of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) in which sexuality was a site where masculinity was threatened, was the arc concerning the Cyrus villain character. There are two major events when this is touched upon, the mid-season episode *George Green: Industrial Cock Inhaler* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2015) being the first. Having acquired a motel which had been used previously as a storage house for stolen goods, Julian and company attempt to auction off the contraband when Cyrus appears, gun in hand, to retrieve his possessions (Smith et al., 2015). Among the contraband are pornographic videos in which the villain starred. Although the other characters tease Cyrus for his involvement in the films, Julian sees an opportunity when Cyrus admits that some of the women he had sex with in his videos “turned out to be dudes” (Smith et al., 2015). Using the tapes as leverage, Julian is able to convince Cyrus to give him the firearm and expel the trespasser from his property. Reading the gun as a phallic symbol of both masculinity and power, it is significant that it is the shame Cyrus is made to feel publicly that symbolically castrates him in this scene.

While the show treats the potentially transgendered Donna/Don character with a comparative amount of respect – as no one in the community questions her identity in Season 9, nor her relationship with Randy – Cyrus’ so-called transgressions are represented as shameful within the fictional world of the program. Additionally, this emasculation also removes Cyrus’ power to influence the outcome of the narrative, an idea revisited in the season’s final confrontation: Cyrus returns to the motel to retrieve the incriminating videos at the same moment Julian is trying to commit insurance fraud. This

confrontation results in an unintended gunfight that alerts the police and completes the show's annual cycle of sending the characters back to jail. The fact that this event is given such significance in the context of the narrative is telling in terms of which discourses of masculinity are being subtly reproduced. While the show does not make a direct, verbal attack against transgendered people, the links here between masculinity and Cyrus' sexuality are strong enough to support heteronormative and homophobic discourses.

The last element of *Trailer Park Boys'* (Clattenburg, 2001) ninth season regarding sexuality and masculinity that is pertinent to my analysis is the representation of Mr. Lahey and his homosexual identity. The treatment of this subject matter is quite different from that of Season 3, where homosexuality was an essential part of Lahey's character, and one that was not often addressed or discussed directly. Although scenes in which Randy and Lahey were engaged in sexual activities were not uncommon, actual discussion about homosexuality was rare, and the thoughts and feelings of the community members were left to non-verbal reaction shots, or purely to the imagination of the viewer. In Season 9, however, Lahey's sexuality is brought to the foreground as a subject of contention between characters. His sexuality becomes a major plot device within the narrative and is the basis for humour and visual gags. In the first two minutes of the first episode, *Why in the Fuck is My Trailer Pink* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015), we are greeted with a scene in which the currently broken up Randy and Mr. Lahey are unable to suppress erections for each other, to the disgust of ex-wife Barbara. In a shot focused on Barbara and Mr. Lahey, Randy stands just out of sight with

only his bare stomach and erection creeping into the frame, indicative of how the physicality of sexuality is much more on display in this season.

Throughout much of the season, Mr. Lahey makes many outward advances towards his ex-wife Barbara, usually through thinly veiled sexual jokes. This alone could be interpreted as a shift towards so-called 'normal' masculine behaviour, but is even more pronounced when taken with Lahey's growing uncertainty surrounding his homosexuality. This shift is first evidenced in the fourth episode, *George Green: Industrial Cock Inhaler* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2015), when Lahey turns down Randy's implied proposition to get back together and says, "I'm not sure that I ever really was that way. I think it was just the liquor talking, bud." While this type of fluidity regarding one's sexual identity is not at all abnormal, rather than using this uncertainty to explore the complexities of sexual identity, or to develop Mr. Lahey's character, it is used for humour and as a plot device for Julian and Ricky to exploit weakness in their rival later in the season. That Mr. Lahey only has homosexual urges when in an altered state of mind suggests that this behaviour is unnatural, and Barbara's reaction to her ex-husband's sexuality further supports this argument. As mentioned earlier, Barbara exhibits disgust at her husband's attraction to Randy, but when Lahey gets drunk and has sex with Randy in the seventh episode, *Piss* (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Bowles, 2015), she describes her ex-husband's homosexual renaissance and behaviour as "bad life choices." I don't believe that the show is intentionally adopting, nor should it be read as, an anti-LGBT stance, but by understanding public pedagogy and how fictional media influences lifelong learning, I believe that the perhaps unintentional consequences of this

representation reinforce heteronormative masculine discourses, and limit the subversive potential of the character and the show.

Season Comparison

My critical discourse analysis of Seasons 3 and 9 yielded results both surprising and in line with my initial expectations. Like many texts, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is multi-voiced, and its relationship with Canadian masculinity discourse is a complex one. Upon my initial viewing, before beginning this research, I found the early pre-Netflix seasons of the program to be critical and satirical in their representation of Canadian rural life, and of gender relations, while I read the later seasons as being less nuanced and more likely to reproduce harmful, dominant discourses. Feminist critical discourse analysis supported my initial expectations, but also exposed the opposite: harmful discourses were found in Season 3, and progressive elements in Season 9. In the case of the series as a whole, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) contains representations of masculinity both critical to heteronormative discourse, as well as representations that largely backpedal on this progress. Being a show produced with comedic and satirical intentions, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) is in, what I believe, to be a very effective position for influencing public pedagogy.

It became clear during my analysis that both seasons of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) contain mixed representations, or multiple voices, regarding what is and is not acceptable masculine behaviour for Canadians. Some representations, characters, or events could be perceived as criticizing dominant heteronormative discourse in Canada, while others appear to reinforce this ideology. In Season 3, the range of masculinities presented within the trailer park is reassuring, even though the

characters rarely deviate from their archetypes as Canadian losers. Even among the primary trio of Ricky, Julian, and Bubbles, each character projects a slightly different form of masculinity. Ricky is aggressive and unintelligent, Julian is more methodical and foreword thinking, and Bubbles is sensitive and, comparatively, more intellectually versed. Although Bubbles is perhaps presented as the least masculine of the three, he is nevertheless crucial to keeping the relationship between the three friends together. Using Gee's (2011b) "Big D" discourse tool, we can see the discursive significance behind the way in which these three main identities interact. Each are performing a different masculinity, and while Julian and Ricky often compete with each other for power and authority, ultimately the three types are stronger when they work in cooperation with each other. Many cathartic scenes end certain conflicts or story arcs, with the three men expressing their love and connection, working against dominant discourse by normalizing emotional displays and affection between male characters.

More significant still is the inclusion of gay/bisexual couple Randy and Mr. Lahey. While incompetent from a perspective of lawful authority, Mr. Lahey's representation is arguably still a masculine one within the context of life in the park. It is never suggested that Lahey's failure as a law enforcer is linked to his homosexuality. Other than his sexuality, Mr. Lahey's character is in line with many stereotypical masculine traits. Instead, his failure to maintain control of the trailer park is representative of a more general representation of law enforcement as incompetent both within and outside of the park. The Mr. Lahey and Randy characters, and their relationship with the other main characters, are perhaps the element most critical of dominant masculine discourse. While the characters are at odds with each other, the

sexuality of Mr. Lahey and Randy are largely considered irrelevant to the conflict. This argument does have its counterpoints, such as the reactions of certain characters, jokes made about their sexuality, and the coming out scene being used as a turning point in Mr. Lahey's sanity. However, ultimately the lack of direct and outspoken opposition to their union makes the representation, in my opinion, not entirely negative. What connects all of the characters is a loyalty and sense of community based around their trailer park. This caring community trope is one which has been documented in Canadian television literature before (Hughes-Fuller, 2009), so while this factor is not necessarily subverted by *Trailer Park Boys*, it is presented as something essential to the characters and their experience, i.e., lower-class Atlantic-Canada.

In Season 9 of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), I found the representation of the Leslie Dancer character to be quite problematic, and the Mr. Lahey character to be more stereotypical than in earlier seasons. To begin with Dancer, it is important to restate that the character, despite being a villain, is still a valid target for analysis. While his actions and behaviour are exaggerated, and he acts to impede the main characters, his ultimate downfall is not due to his hypermasculinity, but to his false identity and rank. This suggests that had Dancer truly been a colonel, his hypermasculinity would have been justified, if not admirable. Using Gee's (2011b) tools, we can gain further insight into how the representation of this character interacts with masculinity discourse. Using the *big D discourse* tool, we can question how different cultural identities interact (Gee, 2011b). The most obvious would be how someone in the military interacts with civilians. Here, while the Dancer's hypermasculinity is presented as over the top and unnecessary in the civilian trailer park, the actual masculinity of this interaction is not questioned. In

an early scene, when Dancer breaks J-Roc's stereo after a noise complaint, the civilian onlookers applaud his violent behaviour (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015). Later in the season when Dancer violently disciplines Randy, ex-girlfriend Donna watches in appreciation of the aggressive actions (Bowles, Smith, Torrens, Tremblay and Wells, 2015). Further, it is suggested that she begins to find Dancer sexually attractive after the incident (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Sonoda, 2015), adding another layer of interaction between the identities of a military man and a civilian woman.

In terms of the *figured worlds tool*, Gee (2011b) asks us to expose what is considered normal or acceptable through looking at words and stories. In the case of Dancer, his behaviour is considered inappropriate, but the war stories he tells are not properly critiqued by the other characters, nor is the narrative constructed in a way to encourage the questioning of hypermasculinity. While Randy, specifically, questions if Dancer's war stories actually happened, the values and worldview suggested in Dancer's words are left untouched. Characters usually react with fear or intimidation, like Bubbles, or respect and admiration, like Mr. Lahey (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Murphy, 2015). Therefore, the fact that it is Dancer's low rank and false identity that trigger his defeat in the narrative leaves the violent and hypermasculine world of his stories unquestioned and, we can assume, valid.

Regarding Ricky and his quest to become a provider for his family, this representation has several complexities. Similar to the caring community (Hughes-Fuller, 2009) trope discussed in relation to Season 3, Ricky as a father figure willing to make sacrifices for his family could be seen as noble, however the representation is more complex than it may first appear. The problematic elements in *Trailer Park Boys'*

(Clattenburg, 2001) support of this form of masculinity is visible through female family-head Lucy's attempts to care for her family. Lucy continuously tries to lodge her family with Ricky's rival George Green in exchange for sex. This action, while naturally hurtful to Ricky, is represented within the context of the program as duplicitous and counter to Ricky's progress through the narrative, rather than as a legitimate means of survival. Lucy's opinion on the matter is heard only once throughout the season. When Ricky asks if Lucy is "banging" George Green again, she nonchalantly replies "Well, he is letting us stay here" (Smith, Tremblay, Wells, Torrens & Sonoda, 2015).

Another problematic element of this representation of masculinity is that it is often framed within competitions. Ricky must compete with George for control of his family, and with Leslie Dancer for his ability to provide shelter for his family. His relationship with Jacob, in this season working to become a father figure within the larger family unit, could also be read as a form of dominance and competition. Establishing Ricky's masculinity as a father as something rooted in competition is harmful in that it normalizes competitive and aggressive behaviour as something inherently masculine, as well as establishes masculinity as something which can be lost.

As masculinities are varied and overlapping like Connell (1992, 1997, 2005) has taught us, the insistence on this type of behaviour as normal presents a narrower scope of what is acceptably masculine within the realm of Canadian television. Not only does this detract from the potential of television from an entertainment perspective, but also affects Canadian discourse through public pedagogy. While on the surface *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) isn't meant to be taken seriously, the *figured worlds* of what the show's creators believe, either consciously or subconsciously, to be normal are highly

visible through analysis like this one. The need for critical media literacy must again be restated, as fictional media has the potential to positively (Wright and Sandlin, 2009) and negatively (Giroux, 2004) influence viewers. Either through teachers in the classroom, or the conducting and writing of more research like my current project, critical media literacy can help viewers to better unpack the media they consume.

In comparing the subversive potential of Seasons 3 and 9 of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), neither season breaks free from the common Canadian television tropes of the 'caring community' (Hughes-Fuller, 2009), and the 'male loser' archetype. Despite this, Season 3 uses these elements to disrupt heteronormative discourse, through the Mr. Lahey character, and does so in an almost entirely non-verbal way. It must be said that overly relying on the caring community (Hughes-Fuller, 2009) trope, especially in a program like this which is so much about Canadian identity, can work to obscure the existence of prejudices and non-inclusive communities. However, the trope appears in the case of Season 3 to be used as a way of showing that Canadians, at least the ones in the context of an Atlantic trailer park, are accepting or at least ambivalent to homosexuality. Compare this with Season 9's use of hypermasculine discourse through the Leslie Dancer character. This representation is not critical of militaristic, violent, hypermasculinity, a discourse which has become normalized in recent years and negatively impacts both women and men (Enloe, 2007). While the show maintains a level of ironic distance throughout Season 9 as well, the reliance of the Netflix era seasons on more exaggerated characters, as well as on more directly dealing with issues of sex and gender through spoken dialogue, works to decrease the subversive potential of previous seasons that presented characters, masculinities, and situations as normal in their context.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The research question that I formulated at the start of this project was to learn what discourses of masculinity were present in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clatenburg, 2001), if they challenged or reinforced stereotypical, heteronormative forms of masculinity, and if a distinctly Canadian masculinity was suggested. I begin this conclusion with a brief summary of my findings, then explain my contribution to the literature, and the show's relationship with Canadian identity. I then discuss the connections of my research to education and public pedagogy, potential practical applications of my research, and finally prospective areas for future research in this field. To briefly summarize my findings, the types of masculinity being represented, challenged, and promoted in the show were found to be contradictory and multi-voiced. The main themes which were the most often connected with masculinity were family, authority, and sexuality. Each of these themes were represented as being crucial to the characters' masculinity, either as a virtuous aspects of masculinity or as a site in which masculinity was contested between characters. The contradictory nature of the discourses present in the show diminished the impact of elements that were otherwise subversive. These contradictory elements were witnessed in both seasons, but Season 9's representations were more problematic and, therefore, less effective at challenging dominant discourse. My potential bias for engaging in this research project was that, as a fan of the show during its original run, I was inclined to prefer Season 3 as opposed to Season 9. My results did favour the discourses of masculinity in Season 3 as being less stereotypical than Season 9, but counter to my expectations were the ways in which Season 3 conformed to so many of these discourses as well.

As was shown previously by Attallah (2010), Canadian television studies have been historically neglected in comparison to American television, film or literature studies. I have written previously about the way in which Canadians interact with the overwhelming amount of media from the United States (Haddow, 2015), but the present study deals directly with an openly Canadian text. Further, adding a methodology of feminist discourse analysis and examining discourses of masculinity was an approach I did not encounter during a review of the literature. While some sources examined gender in film sources like *Goin' Down the Road* (Ramsay, 1993) and television sources like *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (Faiza, 2011), critical discourse analysis is designed specifically to address injustice and societal change (Fairclough et al., 2011). My goal was to use Lazar's (2005) style of feminist critical discourse analysis to expose patriarchy in everyday practices and texts. My research contributes to the broader literature by addressing this neglected field, and by working towards the dismantling of oppressive ideological or discursive structures from a public pedagogy stance. Before going further, I will briefly discuss *Trailer Park Boys'* (Clattenburg, 2001) status as a Canadian text, as many of its uniquely Canadian characteristics may not be initially apparent to some viewers or readers of this research.

Trailer Park Boys and Canadian References

One of the initial expectations I had before beginning this research was the presence of an abundance of direct references to Canada and Canadian culture that would intersect directly with discourses of masculinity. References to Canadian locals and culture were present, if fewer in number than the memory of my initial viewing. This is perhaps due to the references throughout the series as a whole that establish the setting,

like the opening shot of the very first episode that tells the viewer we are near Halifax (Clattenburg, Dunn, Tremblay, & Wells, 2001). There are several references throughout Seasons 3 and 9 to nearby locales such as Dartmouth, as well as ones further away like Moncton, or further still, Ontario (Clattenburg, Torrens, Tremblay, & Wells, 2003; Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003; Smith, Torrens, Tremblay, & Wells, 2015). Regarding cultural elements that could be recognized as specifically Canadian by viewers include an allusion to national chain restaurant Swiss Chalet in a Season 9 episode (Smith, Torrens, Tremblay, Wells, & Sonoda, 2015), and Ricky can be seen watching *The Littlest Hobo* in the first episode of Season 3 (Clattenburg et al., 2003). A running joke in the early seasons is the censoring of nearly any branded goods, even though several of these products would be clearly recognizable to Canadians, such as Tim Hortons' coffee cups (Clattenburg, Tremblay, Wells & Torrens, 2003). While the references in Seasons 3 and 9 were subtle, taken in context with the series as a whole establishes *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) as unmistakably Canadian, but counter to my expectation was that these references did not directly intersect with references to masculinity. I concluded, however, that the program's long running self-identification as a Canadian text, as well as its constant portrayal of male characters and masculinity, are related indirectly. When Ricky's behaviour, for example, is portrayed as being particularly virtuous, when two masculine roles interact, or when certain identities are present or absent, this is a commentary on masculinities firmly located within, if not entirely specific to, Atlantic-Canada. In *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), every season is a contest of power and authority over the trailer park the characters call home, with this power structure being effectively wiped clean at the conclusion. Additionally,

with all main players over control of the park being male, with the exception of Barbara Lahey, the show equates each character's masculinity with their ability to control their lives, community, and peers.

Trailer Park Boys, Connecting Public Pedagogy and Critical Media Literacy

The potential for popular media to influence public pedagogy has been established both here and by many other scholars (Brown et al., 2016, Giroux, 2004, Hoechsmann and Poyntz, 2011, Tisdell, 2007). While I have cited Newsom's (2009) *Miss Representation* as proof that media has damaging consequences for girls and women, it follows that the same applies for men as well. While men are theoretically more naturally advantaged within a patriarchal system, it is of course very possible for boys and men to encounter discrimination in the face of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). By reinforcing dominant and often heteronormative discourses of masculinity, certain behaviours or identities can be normalized, and some can be ignored or made abnormal. Likewise, popular media has the potential to challenge these discourses and make spaces for a variety of identities and discussions. As was the case with the results of this study, popular media is often multi-voiced, due to the number of creative voices often present as well as the nature of writing critical and subversive material. As Sarkeesian says to start off on her feminist *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games* (Sarkeesian, 2013a) episodes, "it is both possible, and even necessary, to simultaneously enjoy media, while also being critical of its more problematic or pernicious aspects."

This is the sentiment in which I engaged with this research, as both a fan of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), and a critical media scholar. While this major research paper does not offer a guidebook or outline to teachers for including popular

media analysis in their classrooms, I nevertheless hope they do so. As shown earlier, movements have begun in Ontario to include media literacy in the classroom (Ferguson, 2011), but the results are very dependent on an enlightened and critically-minded educator to oversee these activities. The work of Taber et al. (2013) is an example of such an activity, as mentioned earlier in this paper, in which young girls discussed *The Hunger Games* to promote feminist critical analysis among students. Due to the nature of the mature content in *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), adult educators could use the show towards similar ends as Taber et al. (2013) above. It is in situations like this that I believe my current research could be beneficial to educators, as *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg 2001) is a program rich in potential for discussions on Canadian identity, gender, class differences, and more. My research could be used as a platform for further discussing masculinity as I did, or as an example of how to unpack a television program or popular media text, or as an example of critical discourse analysis. It could also be used as a guide for more age appropriate sources in the classroom to encourage critical media literacy in younger students. I believe that my findings are also of interest in that the source was found to having contradictory satirical voices, and could encourage close textual analysis of sources that are otherwise critical of dominant discourses.

Through understanding public pedagogy, it has become clear that people indeed learn while watching television, or consuming any media. Wright and Sandlin (2009) documented the positive impact characters in *The Avengers* had on viewers to help them critique subservient female stereotypes both within other television shows and their own lives. It is important to remember that sources critical of the mainstream or containing satirical elements are also capable of reproducing harmful discourses and ideas, and

should be subject to close analysis as well, as was found to be the case in Jarvis and Burr's (2011) examination of the educational potential of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and O'Reilly's (2005) examination of Wonder Woman. These heroines were found to be empowering through their reversal of stereotypical representations, but both programs still had instances in which their power was suggested to be abnormal for women rather than natural. *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) then, while offering a multitude of male characters that at first seem to resist stereotypical representations, like Mr. Lahey, upon closer analytical inspection does very little to challenge dominant, heteronormative, and hegemonic discourses of masculinities in Canada. While characters like Colonel Leslie Dancer have the potential to reinforce harmful discourses within public pedagogy, spreading critical media literacy so viewers can better understand the media they enjoy means that *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001) can still lead to critique and even transformative education.

Conclusion and Potential for Future Research

For educators, researchers or students curious about how this work could lead into other research projects, I have several suggestions. The most obvious one is to conduct a feminist discourse analysis around the female characters in the show, including but not limited to Lucy, Sara, and Barbara Lahey. While my major research paper was centered on masculinity and the male characters of the show, an analysis of the female characters would not only be fruitful but a welcome contribution to the literature. Next, I suggest a researcher look into viewership statistics and responses to *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001). Those taken from the time of the show's initial airing would be invaluable, if not difficult to obtain. Perhaps more realistic would be conducting a study

of new viewers to the show since the Netflix revival, which in turn made the old seasons also easily available on the streaming service. This would address the issue that my analysis proper deals only with the text itself, rather than any other data like surveys or interviews. While I planned this project around format from the outset, I also acknowledge that this external data would have made for a perhaps richer analysis. Viewing responses to the masculinity on display in the program, or what Canadian viewers personally identified with as being uniquely Canadian about the show or characters, would have yielded very interesting results.

As a student and researcher who has long been interested in the pedagogical effects of popular media, not to mention as a fan of *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), this major research paper was a fulfilling undertaking. While, as mentioned by Fergusson (2011), schools in Ontario are beginning to incorporate media literacy into the classroom, and that the curriculum contains spaces within which the critical educator can operate subversively, this shift is still in its infancy. I personally have grown up through the development of the internet as a popular means of spreading information and media, and have seen boundaries on network television pushed and broken, to the present-day when their reign is being challenged by digital streaming services. Likewise, current feminist scholars of popular media like Sarkeesian (2012) still face backlash for attempting to expose and dismantle patriarchal norms. It is because of this that engaging with my major research subject, *Trailer Park Boys* (Clattenburg, 2001), through a feminist critical discourse analysis, is relevant as my way of contributing to the dismantling of patriarchal structures and practices.

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