Journalism 308 – 001

Contemporary issues in journalism

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**Never check your brain at the bedroom door**

*Boom, boom. Pull me a beer   
No pretty drinks, I'm a guy out here.   
Rolling, rolling, rolling, rolling money like a pimp.   
My b\*tch is on my d\*ck like this*

*-Jessie J, “Do it like a Dude”.*

Kathy Howlett is not having a good time. The 24 year old is sitting at a side booth in a bar that used to be a pub. Now, it’s evolved like so many others. While the walls are still covered with the same quaint knickknacks, the room is unnaturally bisected by a crowded dance floor. And, instead of the Irish ditty that would be expected, the room is filled with a heavy beat that makes the song unidentifiable.

Two girls are leaning up against the pool table. Surrounded be a wall of men, the girls are making out with each other, occasionally pulling a random man from the crowd to join.

Howlett is unimpressed with the show. “You obviously don’t want to actually make out with that other girl. But, in the end, you know they’ll get male attention. So, of course an insecure girl will do that.”

This type of stunt is nothing shocking for her.

“The worst I’ve ever seen was at the bar. It was after a band had finished playing, and the singer was on stage making out with this girl. This other girl wanted to get involved and, what she did was, she went up to them and stuck her hand up the girl’s skirt,” Howlett said. “When I saw that, I left.”

Canada’s bars have become a primal hunting ground for a new type of predator. She’s the one who tries to pass off sexual acts as “dancing”, has piercings in areas that would make your grandmother blush, and, of course, whips out the standard girl on girl kiss when all else fails. She values being hot or sexy over being smart or accomplished. She is the female chauvinist pig.

**Invasion of the body snatchers**

The grandmother of this new type of woman is none other than dear old Samantha Jones. Even while going through menopause, the *Sex and the City* character remained veraciously sexual. Multiple partners, lesbian experiences – even a serious relationship –there’s nothing she wouldn’t experiment with.

Now, with cosmos in hand, thousands of Samantha Jones copycats have overtaken a generation of women. These copy cat women find empowerment by bucking traditional sexual roles, and embrace “having sex like a man”. Yet, the soul of the character seems lost.

“I don’t think that by showing off your tits you get more respect. You don’t get more power, that’s for sure,” Howlett said.

Although Jones was sexually liberated, she was also at the top of her field professionally and demanded to be treated with respect outside the bedroom.

And that’s something that Howlett finds is lost on the clones.

“You might get more money, working in a bar. But if you’re working in the professional world, you’re not going to get respect. Also, you’re not going to get promoted.”

Instead of pushing the Samantha Jones imitation to all parts of their lives, these girls have stripped her down to a couple flashy encounters. They become the sex they have had. The irony is, in this new sexual culture, the way these women have become most like men is not the sex they’re having, but the objectification of women - including themselves.

**Misinformed**

Before *Girls Gone Wild* became a best seller and little girls wore *Playboy* clothing, female sexuality was nearly nonexistent. It certainly wasn’t something you talked about in polite company.

“We have a whole history where ‘yes’ means ‘no’, and good girls don’t like sex. Think of the queen,” said women and gender studies professor Darlene Juschka.

When the second wave feminist movement emerged in the ‘50s, women’s sexuality was brought to the forefront. In 1949, feminist author Simone de Beauvior shocked people when she wrote that both man and woman had the same primal desires.

“Man is a human being with sexuality; woman is a complete individual, equal to the male, only if she too is a human being with sexuality.”

The road from taboo to trendy has taken a long time to travel. After a long battle, it only makes sense that women have become proud of this achievement.

Juschka believes that might be the motivation for the female chauvinist pig. “I see this as a perversion of a feminist impulse to claim sexuality,” she said. “There’s no self-reflection. I think it’s misguided.”

And it’s been T.V., film, magazines, and other forms of media that have been herding society down the wrong path. MTV alone broadcasts an average of 18 physical and 17 verbal references to sex per hour

In 2002, Paris Hilton was a little known heiress with a side job as a model. Only one year later, the release of a sex tape featuring the “celebutant”, *1 Night in Paris*, hit the internet. Not long after, Hilton had a new T.V. show and has continued to be the poster child for celebrities who are famous for being famous. In 2007, Kim Kardashian followed the same pattern: sex tape, show, fame for fame’s sake.

“Relatively recently, the revelation that a woman had appeared in any sort of porno would have destroyed her career - like Vannessa Williams, who was able to make a comeback as a singer. But now, being in porn is the comeback. It’s the thing that propels you into fame,” explained Ariel Levy, author of *The Female Chauvinist Pig,* on CBS.

That observation hasn’t been lost on Howlett. “With celebrities, that’s the way they get attention. The less clothes they’re wearing the more people will talk about [it and] the more money they’ll make.”

The irony is that this type of behaviour is detrimental to job progression, yet is viewed as the pinnacle of power in the celebrity realm. Levy argues that, whether or not it has any actual effects on a women’s career, a woman’s sexiness is the measure society uses to judge how well she’s doing. The States’ 2004 women Olympians are a good example. Logan Tom, Brandi Chastain, Amanda Beard, Amy Acuff, Haley Cope, and Jenny Adams swapped athletic gear for bikinis and body oil for a cover and feature in FHM magazine.

“These are women at the pinnacle of their field. They’re already famous. They’re already role models, so it’s not like they need to do this. But I think we have this sense in our culture, right now, that for a woman to be truly successful in any field she has to prove she’s hot in this one really specific way,” explained Levy.

**But what about the boys?**

Jordan Gamble is a young guy with a flair for dressing well, cool tattoos, and being well spoken. Female catnip. Not one to shy away from the bar, Gamble has fallen into the targeting sights of this new type of woman a few times before.

““For example, at Pauly D, me and my buddy were some of the only guys around. And [the girls] were... definitely very aggressive.”

It seems like this new, open world would be a man’s paradise. But, Gamble doesn’t find it so. While he admits he might be swayed every once in a while, in the long run this type of behaviour actually accomplishes the opposite of what the girl might expect.

“For me, it kind of degrades them a little bit. It makes them seem less independent and strong willed,” he said. “I always thought that it shows a lack of self esteem when they’re [showing off] too much.”

Back at the bar, Kathy Howlett finishes off her drink. The two women have long since left, each with a new male friend. They’ve been replaced by two women suggestively touching each other on the speaker. Howlett sighs and presents one last problem she has with this new wave of sexuality.

“What I found is, because I’m not like those women, I’m basically treated like I’m inexperienced. I don’t need to stick my tongue down some girl’s throat to gain experience.”

And where does she think women should get their experiences?

““Honestly, education. Being smarter. Not resorting to objectifying yourself.”

With that, she leaves the bar and leaves the Samantha Jones wannabes behind. A night at the bar plunges into an exhausting marathon of objectification and being objectified. Instead of a testament of how far we’ve come, the female chauvinist pig just shows how far we’ve got left to go.