



SPRING 2023

A Letter from the Directors

Since 2008, the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis and the Program in GSFS have created fifteen conferences on “feminism in the global context.” Our very first conference was on

has gotten better that we have chosen this topic, so clearly hopeful. To the contrary, war, climate collapse, and a growing global populist movement that uses feminism and LGBTQ rights

say gay” law in Florida, and the continued use of LGBTQ persons as a “threat to children” in a variety of places have left many of us feeling defeated. Add to this the continued persistence of



“Sex and War,” a somber theme at the height of the U.S. military wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This year’s Gensler Family Symposium theme is “Performing Feminist Joy.”

It is not because the world

Above: GSFS Professors pose with Anahi Russo-Garrido, Below: Jae Basiliere (left) and Treasure Brooks (right)

as the “internal enemy” to be destroyed have left many of us feeling as if there is no future. The overturn of Roe v. Wade in the U.S., the “don’t

white supremacy in the U.S. and racial and ethnic violence everywhere. Even walking down the street for too many of us is becoming a dangerous and radical act. But the point of “performing feminist joy” is not to ignore what is happening or engage in toxic

positivity. Instead, feminist joy is how we survive.

At this year's Gensler Symposium, many of our speakers have told us to "breathe." Anahi Russo Garrido taught us how to engage in self-care and meditative practices and pedagogies as a political act. Selfcare should not be about

Soderling continues to push us to breathe and ferment with sourdough bread as a way of surviving the Covid pandemic and the pandemic of racial violence we are living through. Abraham Weil and Kelly Sharron help us reconnect it all back to the natural world—forest, moss, the fungi—as a way to better understand the

building and we hope it will attract many of us to stop, play, laugh, and then make the world more joyful and feminist.

In other words, we are creating community through joy rather than fear. We are breathing deeply together, rather than alone. And as always, we are inviting the wider community in to



self-indulgence, but a way of disrupting the logic of subjecting certain bodies to a slow death because of deeply embedded structural violence. Sol (Treasure) Brooks returned to Middlebury to help us play and laugh and also mourn. As Sol told us, don't "just relax" but "only relax." Jae Bassiliere performed drag as an act of radical and joyful resistance to the current explosion of anti-trans laws and violence around the country. Stina

feminist joys of Black trans-feminist theories. Finally, after years in the making, our own Prof. Carly Thomsen in collaboration with two of her classes, Reproductive Politics & Feminist Building, will reveal a ten-hole miniature golf-course on May 12. This course will educate its players about reproductive justice at Kenyon Arena until July 15, 2023. This is deep play, the kind of play that is world-changing and world-

engage with, perform, and embrace feminism in the global context.

Laurie Essig
Chair of the Program in
Gender, Sexuality and
Feminist Studies

Karin Hanta
Director of the Feminist
Resource Center at Chellis
House

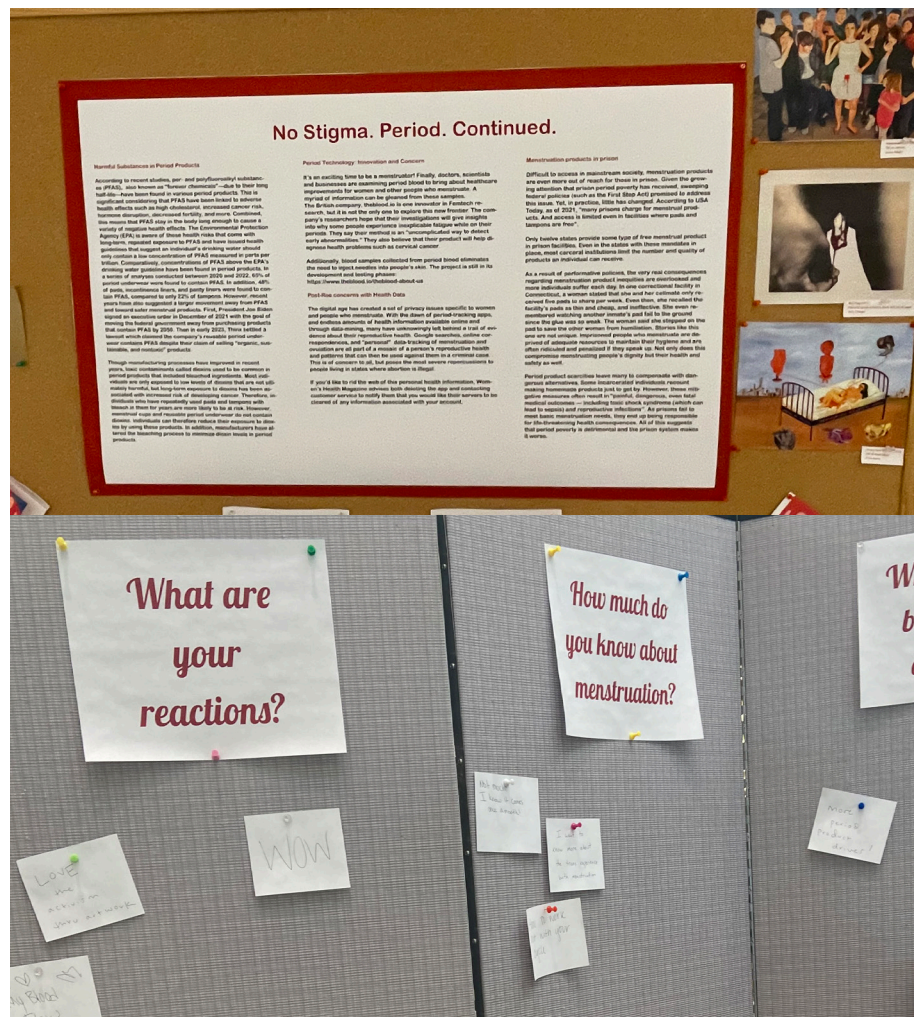
No Stigma. Period.

By Halsey, Andrea, Mat, Lu, Nabila, Lily, and Daisy

As a part of a month of menstruation-themed events organized by The Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House, the SGA's DEI committee, SPECs, and various student activists starting during the week of March 5, Chellis workers designed a library display titled “No Stigma. Period.” The display featured research on harmful substances in period products, period technology, post-Roe concerns with health data, access to menstruation products in prisons, removing the “pink-tax in Vermont,” and menstruation across the globe. Additionally, workers posted TikTok style videos on the Chellis

Instagram, interviewed students about their menstruation knowledge while sharing additional facts and normalizing the conversation. Here is a collection of much of the research featured below.

According to recent studies, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as “forever chemicals”—due to their long half-life—have been found in various period products. This is significant considering that PFAS have been linked to adverse health effects such as high cholesterol, increased cancer risk, hormone disruption, decreased fertility, and more. Combined, this means that PFAS stay in the body long enough to cause a variety of negative health effects. In a series of analyses conducted between 2020 and 2022, 65% of period underwear was found to contain PFAS. In addition, 48% of pads, incontinence liners, and panty liners were found to contain PFAS, compared to only 22% of



Above: Scenes from the library display on Period Health and destigmatization in Davis Family Library in March

tampons. However, recent years have also suggested a larger movement away from PFAS and toward safer menstrual products. First, President Joe Biden signed an executive order in December of 2021 with the goal of moving the federal government away from purchasing products that contain PFAS by 2050. Then in early 2023, Thinx settled a lawsuit which claimed the company's reusable period underwear contains PFAS despite their claim of selling "organic, sustainable, and nontoxic" products.

Though manufacturing processes have improved in recent years, toxic contaminants called dioxins used to be common in period products that included bleached ingredients. Most individuals are only exposed to low levels of dioxins that are not ultimately harmful, but long-term exposure to dioxins has been associated with increased risk of developing cancer. Therefore, individuals who have repeatedly used pads and tampons with bleach in them for years are more likely to be at risk. However, menstrual cups and reusable period underwear do not contain dioxins. Individuals can therefore reduce their exposure to dioxins by using these products. And additionally, manufacturers have altered the bleaching process to minimize dioxin levels in period products.

In terms of further technological research, doctors, scientists

and businesses are examining period blood to bring about healthcare improvements for women and other people who menstruate. A myriad of information can be gleaned from these samples.

The British company, theblood.io is one innovator in Femtech research, but it is not the only one to explore this new frontier. The company's researchers hope that their investigations will give insights into why some people experience inexplicable fatigue while on their periods. They say their method is an "uncomplicated way to detect early abnormalities." They also believe that their product will help diagnose health problems such as cervical cancer. Additionally, blood samples collected from period blood eliminates the need to inject needles into people's skin. The project is still in its development and testing phases: <https://www.theblood.io/theblood-about-us>

However, the digital age has created a set of privacy issues specific to women and other folks who menstruate. With the dawn of period-tracking apps, and endless amounts of health information available online and through data-mining, many have unknowingly left behind a trail of evidence about their reproductive health. Google searches, online correspondences, and "personal" data-tracking of menstruation and ovulation are all part of a mosaic of a person's reproductive health and patterns that can then be

used against them in a criminal case. This is of concern to all, but poses the most severe repercussions to people living in states where abortion is illegal.

If you'd like to rid the web of this personal health information, Women's Health Magazine advises both deleting the app and contacting customer service to notify them that you would like their servers to be cleared of any information associated with your account.

Difficult to access in mainstream society, menstruation products are even more out of reach for those in prison. Given the growing attention that prison period poverty has received, sweeping federal policies (such as the First Step Act) promised to address this issue. Yet, in practice, little has changed. According to USA Today, as of 2021, "many prisons charge for menstrual products. Access is limited even in facilities where pads and tampons are free." Only twelve states provide some type of free menstrual product in prison facilities. Even in the states with these mandates in place, most carceral institutions limit the number and quality of products an individual can receive. Period product scarcities leave many to compensate with dangerous alternatives. Some incarcerated individuals recount making homemade products just to get by. However, these mitigative measures often result in "painful, dangerous, even fatal medical outcomes

— including toxic shock syndrome (which can lead to sepsis) and reproductive infections”. As prisons fail to meet basic menstruation needs, they end up being responsible for life-threatening health consequences. All of this suggests that period poverty is detrimental and the prison system makes it worse.

Around the world, perspectives regarding menstruation vary from being seen as sacred to being shunned like a secret. There is also a staggering lack of menstrual products in many countries, as well as unique practices that Westerners would never dream of.

Attitudes towards menstruation are often based on cultural norms and spirituality. In the Cherokee nation, menstruating women are often considered sacred and powerful. Menstrual blood is deemed a source of feminine strength that gives women the power to even destroy their enemies. Unfortunately, this kind of positive perspective is rare in most societies. For example, in Somalia, women on their period cannot participate in observant Muslim society, as they are not considered clean. Similarly, an old tradition in Japan declares that women cannot be sushi chefs because their menstrual cycles imbalance their sense of taste. Despite this, women in Japan are overturning this idea slowly and claiming their own seat at the table by founding their own sushi restaurants. This hopeful story reflects the world’s slow progression towards a more positive outlook

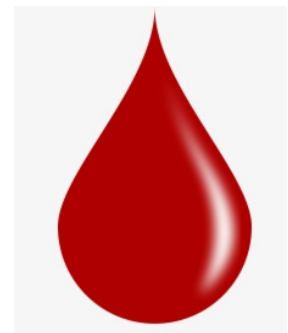
on periods all over the world, where it is seen as a normal and healthy process rather than one to be ashamed of. While the stigma surrounding menstruation is still as present as ever, feminists around the world aim to change these outdated ideas in their own communities while extending support to those in need. With the help of others, restricting beliefs surrounding periods continue to become more open and inclusive everyday, and empowering rituals and visions regarding menstrual cycles grow and thrive.

Specifically in Vermont, the Menstrual Equity Coalition is a growing coalition of gender, youth, reproductive justice, and other advocacy organizations in support of increasing access to menstrual products. Due to the efforts of the coalition, the Vermont House and Senate approved a change to a tax bill, H.436, making period products — tampons, panty liners, menstrual cups, sanitary napkins, and other menstrual products — tax-exempt as of June 8, 2021. The bill thus removed what was called a “pink tax” of 6%. The “tampon tax,” a component of the pink tax, refers specifically to the cost of the product in states where medical and health supplies are tax-exempt, but not tampons. “Why are tampons taxed when Viagra isn’t?” was the question at the heart of the push to repeal the pink tax. Opponents of the tax argue that tampons and pads should be treated like groceries and medical supplies: They should be tax-exempt

because they are necessities,” the New York Times wrote on July 12, 2019.

In the same year, Lydia Sheeser and Alivia Roth, two eighth graders in Edmunds Middle School in Burlington, were instrumental in the repeal of the pink tax in their home state. They were turned on to the issue when they started working on a social studies project. “Our question was: how can we help ensure women’s reproductive rights and how can we ensure that women have access to low-cost feminine hygiene products in Vermont?” Sheeser said. The two classmates brought the issue to the attention of legislators in the session starting in January 2020. Sheeser and Roth’s Change.org petition published on May 29, 2019 garnered 2,348 signatures.

Additionally, students were able to interact with the exhibit in Davis Library by adding in their reactions to questions to the exhibit, existing knowledge of menstruation, and changes to Middlebury’s campus related to menstruation products to the exhibit. They specifically mentioned a desire for period product drives, period circle talks to stimulate open conversation, and excitement surrounding the Period Forum on March 9, 2023.





Above: Collaborators for the 2023 Period Forum pass out period products and attendees participate in Kahoot

My Beautiful Black Hair

By Mei Dwyer-Frattalone '24

At the end of Black History Month on February 24th, the Anderson Freeman Center (AFC), with support of the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House, held an event featuring St. Clair Detrick-Jules and her recent book, *My Beautiful Black Hair*.

St. Clair highlighted her motivation for compiling interviews and portraits of Black women letting their hair go natural: her little sister, Khloe. Reflecting on her mixed race identity that she shares with her sister and recognizing that Khloe's tighter curl pattern would be viewed differently from her own, St. Clair

explained how she hated to see her little sister so self-conscious about her afro. To uplift Khloe and a broader community of Black women, St. Clair decided to start her journey collecting 101 pieces of Black pride, one from each Black woman she interviewed, to create the mosaic of Black excellence that is *My Beautiful Black Hair*. Her intention of empowering her sister and her afro is interwoven throughout the book; some women who were interviewed wrote personalized letters to Khloe that show solidarity, love, and strength. Therefore, the event emphasized the power

of storytelling and community building. Those wanting to make a difference can learn from St. Clair's story of being a positive role model for her sister - *My Beautiful Black Hair* shows us how starting as small as standing up for your sister can lead to something as large as a community of 101 Black women and a published work. Combined with the AFC's initiatives to make Black hair care and styling more accessible and affordable, the event was a positive end to Black History Month 2023.



Photo by Mei Dwyer-Frattalone

Continued Support for the Iranian Women, Life, Freedom Movement

By Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri '24

Since J-Term, a variety of student organizations and academic departments have organized events to educate students, faculty, and staff about the current Women, Life, Freedom Movement in Iran. Between the three events, the Middlebury community has learned about conditions that led to the movement, its present state, and the future of Iran.

During J-Term, The Middlebury College Chapter of Amnesty International covered the past. A small group gathered to hear Middlebury College Religion Professor, Ata Anzali to give a talk on the movement. His discussion focused on the historical context leading up to the present day movement. Professor Anzali contextualized the 1979 Iranian Revolution, its impact on the lives of Iranians, and their disenchantment with the current regime. The event concluded with a roundtable Q&A that offered participating students a chance to inquire

and engage with the material he presented.

Dartmouth Art History Professor Pamela Karimi traveled to Middlebury to discuss the present state of the movement. She has researched the movement from an art historical perspective. Her talk, titled Women, Life, Freedom: Art of Protest in 7 Acts, gave attendees a sense of the vast importance of the arts to the movement. Karimi noted that one of the features of this movement that distinguishes it from past movements is the centrality of art. According to her, street marches and protests with women artistically and symbolically removing the mandatory hijab are an act of performance art. She adds that the visuals associated with the movement, which largely spread through the vast reach of the internet, have been incredibly powerful. One of the examples she provided was the use of sanitary napkins to cover security cameras meant to enforce the mandatory

hijab. Additionally, protestors have been writing the phrase “this is a face that can make change,” on the mirrors of their university bathrooms.

Georgetown University, Qatar Government Professor Mehran Kamrawa addressed the present in a talk titled Social Change in an Unchanging State: Life and Protest in Contemporary Iran. He dissected the current political implications, reactions, and changes in Iran that have occurred since the movement first erupted. He placed a large emphasis on what is happening on the ground in Iran. Additionally, he elucidated the immense symbolic importance of the mandatory hijab to the Iranian government, which he attributes to its ideological nature. Throughout the talk, he noted the immense strength of the young girls’ protests, commended their continued ability to resist the Iranian government and spoke in awe of the state’s inability to quell their efforts.



Russian & GSFS Professor Kevin Moss Retires

By Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri '24

Professor Kevin Moss, Jean Thomson Fulton Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures started teaching at Middlebury in 1983. An eminent scholar in Russian and Gay & Lesbian Studies, he published the first anthology of gay writings in Russia, Out of the Blue:

Russia's Hidden Gay Literature (Gay Sunshine Press, 1997) as well as numerous articles.

Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri: How did you first get involved in feminist and gender studies?

Kevin Moss: I came to the discipline from a queer theory angle. I was trained in Russian literature, which is rather conservative as a field as opposed to French or English literature where feminist approaches began fairly early on. When queer theory began with people like Eve Sedgwick, they looked at English literature. I didn't get

any training in that, and queer theory didn't exist when I went to grad school in the 70s and 80s. After I was at Middlebury for a few years, I decided to consider looking at Russian literature and culture, which I was primarily teaching, through the lenses of gender

culture and have tried to keep up on developments in other Eastern European countries beyond Russia. I educated myself about feminism and queer theory, while also already being a gay activist on campus. I wanted to teach an intro gay and lesbian studies

class, which I'm now teaching for the last time. When I started at Middlebury, there was no Women's Studies program. It began shortly after I came. But gay and lesbian studies doesn't really fit into women's studies, so I was one of the people who lobbied for broadening women's studies into gender studies, something that had already happened on

many campuses and in grad programs. Within gender studies, I was primarily studying and teaching sexuality. So when the major was changed to gender, sexuality and feminist studies,



Above: Professor Kevin Moss

and sexuality. In the 1990s, nobody was yet doing that. I worked on an anthology too, which is the first in any language of gay Russian literature. I have also worked on Hungarian and Croatian

I already fit in. And I've interacted a lot with Chellis House too.

SAK: Has the study of queer theory and Russian literature expanded?

KM: Oh my god, yes. We now have lots of young scholars who have specialized in the subject in grad school. When I started, there was nobody — just me and Laurie Essig, who also is an early pioneer of queer Russian studies and ended up at Middlebury. So we're a center of Russian queer studies, right here at Middlebury.

SAK: Have you ever done any activism related to the discipline?

KM: I've done a lot of gay and queer rights activism, both on campus and in the state of Vermont. Before the Vermont law of non-discrimination for sexual orientation was enacted, we adopted a policy at Middlebury, I believe, in 1990, which I introduced at a faculty meeting. At the time, Middlebury was the last of the top 10 liberal arts colleges to adopt such a policy. Within that group, Middlebury was considered more conservative. So we weren't at the forefront. I also helped lobby for a policy to get domestic partner benefits at the college before marriage was possible. It was adopted in 1994. A few years later, we introduced a policy to add gender identity and expression to the college nondiscrimination clause, again before the state adopted similar policies.

SAK: That's incredible. How did the college community react when these policies were implemented?

KM: Everybody was very positive. There wasn't much pushback. There was an attempt by the previous president to ensure we didn't adopt a non-discrimination policy, unfortunately. But the year I brought it up, we had a new president. The first thing he said when we adopted the policy was "but we're not going to have any affirmative action on this front." In other words, we're not going to go out and hire gay people, which we didn't ask for in the first place. He said and did some other strange things. Some of the administration who worked in Old Chapel back then were kind of conservative and not openly hostile, but not helpful either. So when we did get domestic partner benefits, we were actually one of the first colleges and universities that had equivalent benefits. The president of the college then said that he was going to announce it "without undue fanfare," which means: I'm not going to trumpet this, we're going to do it, but very quietly because we don't want the world to know that suddenly, Middlebury College is giving benefits to same sex partners of employees. We would have preferred if he said, "Yay, Middlebury. Look, we're the first among these colleges who are giving benefits to same sex and other domestic partners." But most of my colleagues on the faculty, and certainly the

students were always very supportive.

SAK: Do you have a favorite class you've taught in the department?

KM: I've really only taught the one: Intro to gay and lesbian studies. I've taught many first year seminars that include gender and sexuality, which I've liked. In both, I get a very different slice of the student body than I get in Russian language, which is most of what I teach. Historically that's not as diverse as a first-year seminar or Intro to Gay and Lesbian Studies.

Those classes are still primarily women. The demographics have changed as well. There's a stereotype that women take Intro to Gay and Lesbian Studies more eagerly than people who identify as men. The first few times I taught it, it was all queer students. Then we got a straight woman taking it, and then more straight women. And then finally, we got a self-identified straight cis man who took it, who said he was taking it because his girlfriend had four moms, and he wanted to understand that or to understand her better. Then there was a long time when there were almost more self-identified straight people than queer people. And now we have more trans and non-binary identifying people because there are more people identifying that way at the college.

SAK: What mark do you hope to leave on the department?

KM: I know that there are

people offering more queer studies courses now, and I hope that continues and the curriculum can be expanded to include courses on different branches of queer theory. We have people doing very interesting things.

SAK: What are your hopes for the future of the GSFS program and the discipline?

KM: I hope it continues to thrive and have an impact on the real world. This is always

the question; what is the relationship between theory and practice? Activism and queer theory have a fraught relationship. My hope is it continues and thrives as an academic discipline and that it helps students leverage theory into something practical — at Middlebury, in Vermont, in the US, in the world, wherever it is.

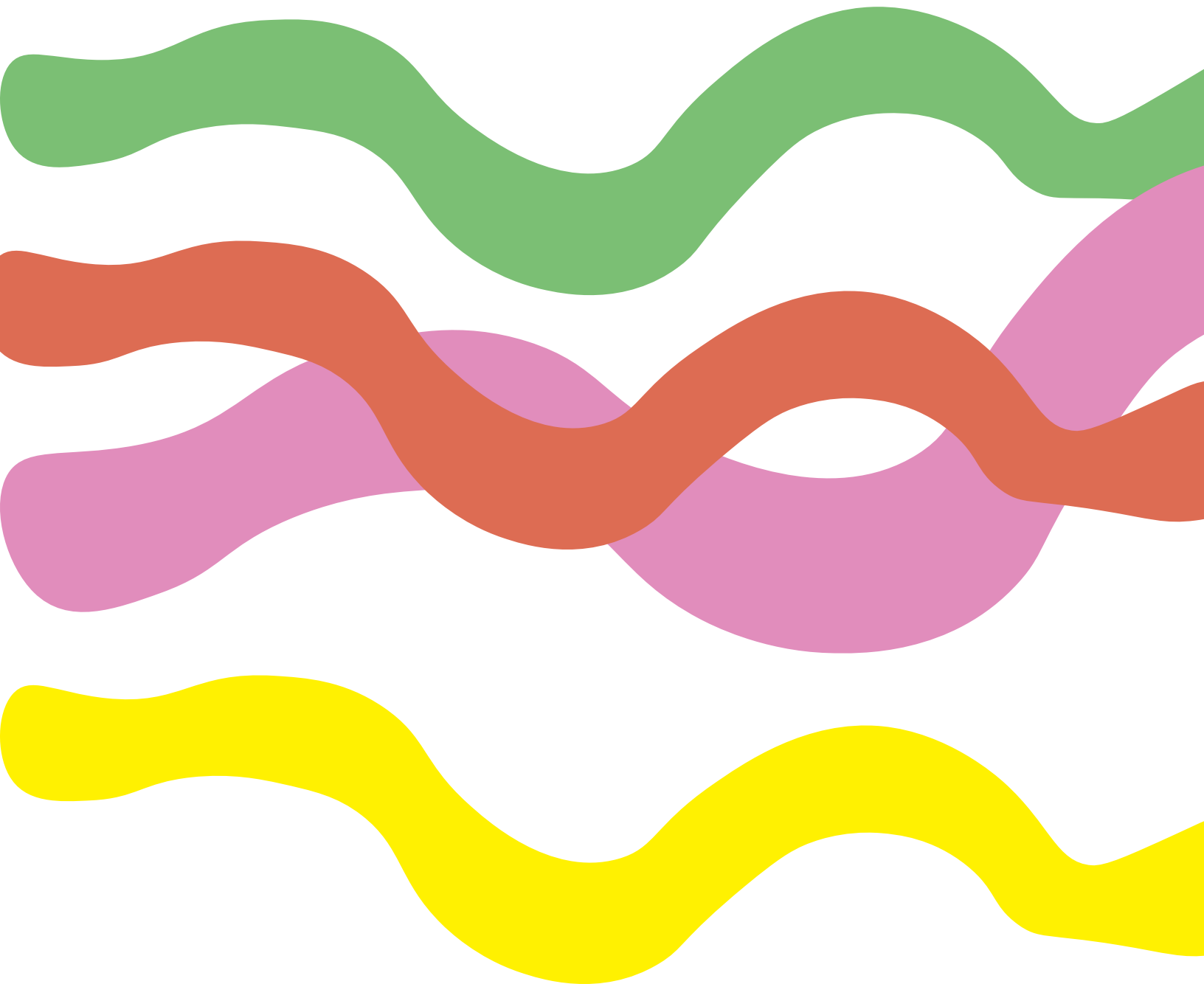
SAK: Are you excited to retire?

KM: Yes, I am.

SAK: Big plans for retirement?

KM: There's going to be lots of travel. It will be nice to be able to travel not just during spring break and summer, and to be able to read things because I want to and not because I'm preparing them for a class or writing a paper.

SAK: Good luck for your retirement!



Middlebury scholars contribute to 50th anniversary issue of *Feminist Studies*

Led by GSFS (former) faculty Carly Thomsen and Hemangini Gupta, a group of Middlebury scholars contributed to the 50th anniversary issue of the eminent journal *Feminist Studies*. Titled “What’s the Use of Feminist and Queer Theory?: On Messy Methods, Archives, and Objects,” the forum article included contributions by Kristin Bright, Laurie Essig, Jessyka Finley, Karin Hanta, Jennifer D. Ortegren, Karin Hanta, Fernando Rocha, Patricia Saldarriaga, and Catharine Wright.

Editors Hemangini Gupta and Carly Thomsen described the collection of short essays as follows:

By thinking with Feminist and Queer Studies, what new languages, object of study, archives, and methods are enabled for those with other disciplinary trainings? This article uses as a case study a recent workshop that we — two Ph.D.s in Feminist Studies — convened for our colleagues who are affiliated with Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies and had expressed their desire to be in conversation with current Feminist and Queer debates. We selected seminar texts based on topics explored in

recent special issues of Feminist and Queer Studies journals, including: feminist method, feminist technoscience and new materialisms, affect, and feminist and queer geographies. Following a week-long feminist and queer theory workshop, participants reflect on how our discussions regarding method, archives, and objects of study inform their own intellectual and political concerns and commitments. Ultimately, this article offers insights into the new engagements and vocabularies engendered by feminist and queer theory as it travels across and against varied disciplinary persuasions.

The 50th anniversary issue set out to celebrate a half-century of groundbreaking scholarship and research, creative expression, and political commentary. The essays published in this issue clarify categories, illuminate

the struggles we face, and interrogate our efforts toward solutions by renowned scholars such as Lila Abu-Lughod, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Jennifer Nash, and Robyn Wiegman.



Arthur Martins '23.5 Wins Kellogg Award

I am excited to share that my GSFS and English joint thesis “Meat Markets: Queer Examinations of Grindr” has been selected for the 2023 Kellogg Fellowship in support of transnational fieldwork at the São Paulo, Brazil, and New York City, U.S, LGBTQ+ Pride Parades this June.

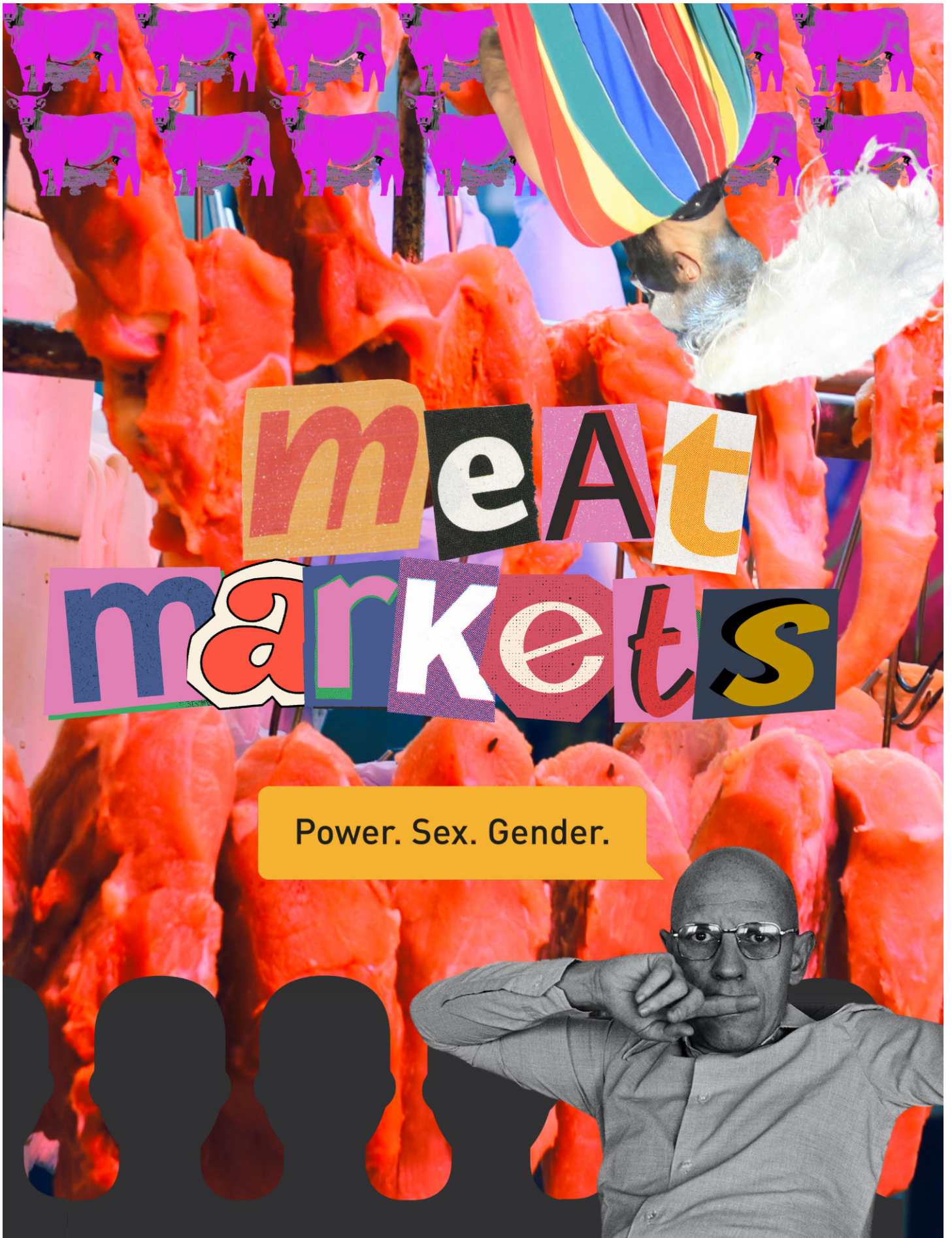
Even if you have never used Grindr, the self-declared “largest social networking app for gay, bi, trans, and queer people,” you probably have heard of it. Indeed, according to CEO—and Middlebury alum—George Arison, the app amasses 11 million monthly users across 190 countries. Today, it is recognized by 85% of its target demographic and worth at least \$1.1 billion US dollars.

Despite having become a fixture of the contemporary queer male experience since its launch in 2009, the app’s rise to prominence has not been without controversy. Users have pointed out that the app mishandles user data, leads to depression among users, and contributes in various ways to a culture of discrimination, including through racism, sexism, and body-shaming. It is, as people have pointed out, an environment hostile to fostering community. In many ways, the aesthetics of

the app’s interface, complete with a black-and-yellow grid of headless torsos, pictureless profiles, and an assortment of body parts, is visually in line with a fast-food menu. On Grindr, bodies—and their attendant appearances, identities, and desires—acquire value. Grindr is a marketplace. Meat Markets, the title of this year-long thesis advised by Professors Carly Thomsen and Spring Ulmer (ENGL/ Creative Writing), is an examination of queer men’s experiences on this infamous “dating” app through the lens of queer analyses of big data, masculinity, and capitalism. Throughout the months of June and July, I will engage in ethnographic and oral history fieldwork in Brazil and the U.S. to understand how gay men “market” themselves and their desires on the platform and why.

As an interdisciplinary scholarly and creative project, this thesis is meant to inspire conversation about power and community. It is a deep dive into the intersection of two of the most human experiences: desire and consumption. More specifically, it is an analysis of the ways in which neoliberal capitalism and technology inform the production of our very desires and our

consumptive practices in a moment when it seems almost impossible to craft life outside of social media. It is also an examination of how gender, race, class, and other social markers have divided and continue to divide LGBTQ communities. Meat Markets is an opportunity to tell a story—data driven, creative and personal—about the struggles for acceptance and of finding a community, especially at the intersection of my identities as a Brazilian gay young adult. Thank you to Professor Catherine Wright for guiding me towards autoethnographic critical writing; to the dearly missed Professor Hemangini Gupta, who gifted me with the opportunity to explore feminist and queer critiques of technology and data through art in her “Gender, Technology, Future” course in 2021; to Professors Carly Thomsen and Laurie Essig, who continue to put up with my queer shenanigans; and to many others, students and faculty alike, who have contributed to the becoming of this work. If you want to see what I will be getting up this summer, you can follow the project’s Instagram page @ meatmarketdotcom and a website is coming soon!



meat

markets

Power. Sex. Gender.

WordSlut

By Daisy Kulina and Lily

Oudommahavanh

This year, Valentine's day brought American author, linguist, and writer Amanda Montell to Middlebury to share insights gained from her book, *Wordslut: A Feminist Guide to Taking Back the English Language*. Also the author of the book *Cultish: The Language of Fanaticism* and the creator of the popular podcast "Sounds like a Cult," Montell has established herself as a strong voice in feminism and linguistics since she graduated from New York University in 2013.

Captivated by Montell's bubbly, witty, feminist persona, Middlebury students were invited into Montell's timely conversation around women and language. Discussing insults aimed at women, the pronunciation patterns, and mannerisms that women have been scrutinized for, Montell reveals how female voices have constantly been suppressed, minimized, and discredited. In her comprehensive approach to this issue, Montell highlights how language is often the basis for the preservation of the patriarchy. Whether it be a matter of respect for women in academia, gendered stereotypes in popular culture, or the way bodies are regarded

in everyday life, the English language keeps women from success, power, and autonomy.

In *Wordslut*, Montell discusses the power of "taking back" charged words that have been used against women for decades. During her presentation, she displayed a plethora of slurs that were created over time, walking the line of both damaging and outright ridiculous. While the audience had a good laugh, this showed simply how many different ways societal patriarchies have found to insult others by implying that femininity and womanhood are somehow lesser. As the main point of her book, Montell also spoke to



Amanda Montell

the importance of reversing the societal implications of these very phrases. By owning the hurtful language used to simultaneously harm women and reinforce gender stereotypes, the power of those words can be taken away and crafted into something better. One easy way Montell suggests to achieve this is to use the vocabulary playfully between friends. By doing so, this both shifts and lightens the meaning of the term, helping to remove the stigma around it. Through simple yet powerful actions such as this, step by step, charged language intended to shame women and femininity will be taken back and turned into a much more positive set of vocabulary by the very people it used to harm.

wordslut
/wɜːdslʌt/
a feminist guide to
taking back the
english language
amanda montell

Nonwhite and Woman: Reading by Daleelah Saleh

By Andrea Lopez '25



March 31st marked the last day of Women's History Month. In honor of this, the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House celebrated women's experience with guest speaker Daleelah Saleh '23. She was a contributor to *Nonwhite and Woman*, edited by Darien Hsu Gee and Carla Crujido. This book is a collection of micro essays written by women of color about their daily life experiences. Although "micro," these essays are impactful as they present diverse experiences from women of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. These essays highlight the struggles and experiences that women of color face on a daily basis.

They speak to complex issues such as migration, identity, colorism, beauty standards etc. while also celebrating culture and heritage.

Daleelah also read one of her own essays, "Ramadan."

"But a sense of grounding washes over me, rooted in the thirst and hunger I've felt all day, and the relief I now feel after having broken my fast. Ramadan shifts my focus and abundance. A year later [in the pandemic], there is so much I have lost, and yet I know there is so much to be grateful for. These two truths exist for me simultaneously."

I found the interchangeable use of English and non-English languages in the anthology very powerful because they express people's transnational identities. Attendees such as Nerjes Azzam '25, were appreciative of this representation. "I was honestly engulfed with sheer joy as I had never seen my family name in any local publication, or ever really. So seeing that representation was just very important and almost healing to me." I recommend that people of all backgrounds read *Nonwhite and Woman*.



Above: Daleelah Saleh

Liza Obel-Omia '23 Awarded Fraker Prize

A time-honored tradition, the Fraker Prize is given out in memory of Allison Gwen Fraker '89, a passionate feminist, who was instrumental in establishing the Women's Studies Program. This year, Liza Obel-Omia '23 garnered the award for her paper titled "The Importance of Gender in Elementary School Classrooms,"

for Professor Carly Thomsen's Feminist Engaged Research class. In this work, Liza argued that "traditional curriculum [in elementary school] is not accurately addressing topics that impact students daily." Add to that the

"[c]onservative rhetoric [that] positions gender studies as infiltrating innocent classrooms." The sorts of knowledge produced by Gender Studies and Critical Race Theory have therefore come under attack in state legislatures. "The idea that children do not need to be taught about gender prevents

children from learning about information that directly affects every person."

In her paper, Liza asked the following questions: What knowledge do children ages nine and ten have about gender? Where do they obtain that knowledge? What is the place of the classroom in the development of knowledge?



Above: (left to right) Professor Carly Thomsen, Liza Obel-Omia, Professor Laurie Essig and Professor Catharine Wright

Specifically, what lessons about gender could be taught to benefit students? To answer these questions, she reviewed the literature surrounding the importance of teaching gender in elementary education as well as queer teaching blogs by two K12 educators. She also looked

at what teachers in classrooms were saying and went into classroom in Addison County schools herself.

Liza's literature review revealed that "especially for students who do not identify as straight, having teachers and administrators who acknowledge their presence in school

can change their lives and make schools safer spaces. [...] If students are not taught gender studies in elementary schools, they are losing out on knowledge that could make schools better learning places, as students

are able to focus on learning when they feel supported and

included."

For her work in the classroom, Liza developed 5 lesson plans informed by gender studies on how to teach 4th and 5th graders the concepts of gender instability, binaries, intersectionality, and consent.