

Women and Urban Environments – Volume 1: Feminist Analyses of Urban Spaces

Student Paper Series No. 9

**edited by Mary Ann Beavis
1997**

The Institute of Urban Studies





THE UNIVERSITY OF
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WOMEN AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTS – VOLUME 1: FEMINIST ANALYSES OF URBAN SPACES

Student Paper Series No. 9

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WOMEN AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTS
VOLUME 1: FEMINIST ANALYSES OF URBAN SPACES

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Mary Ann Beavis, editor

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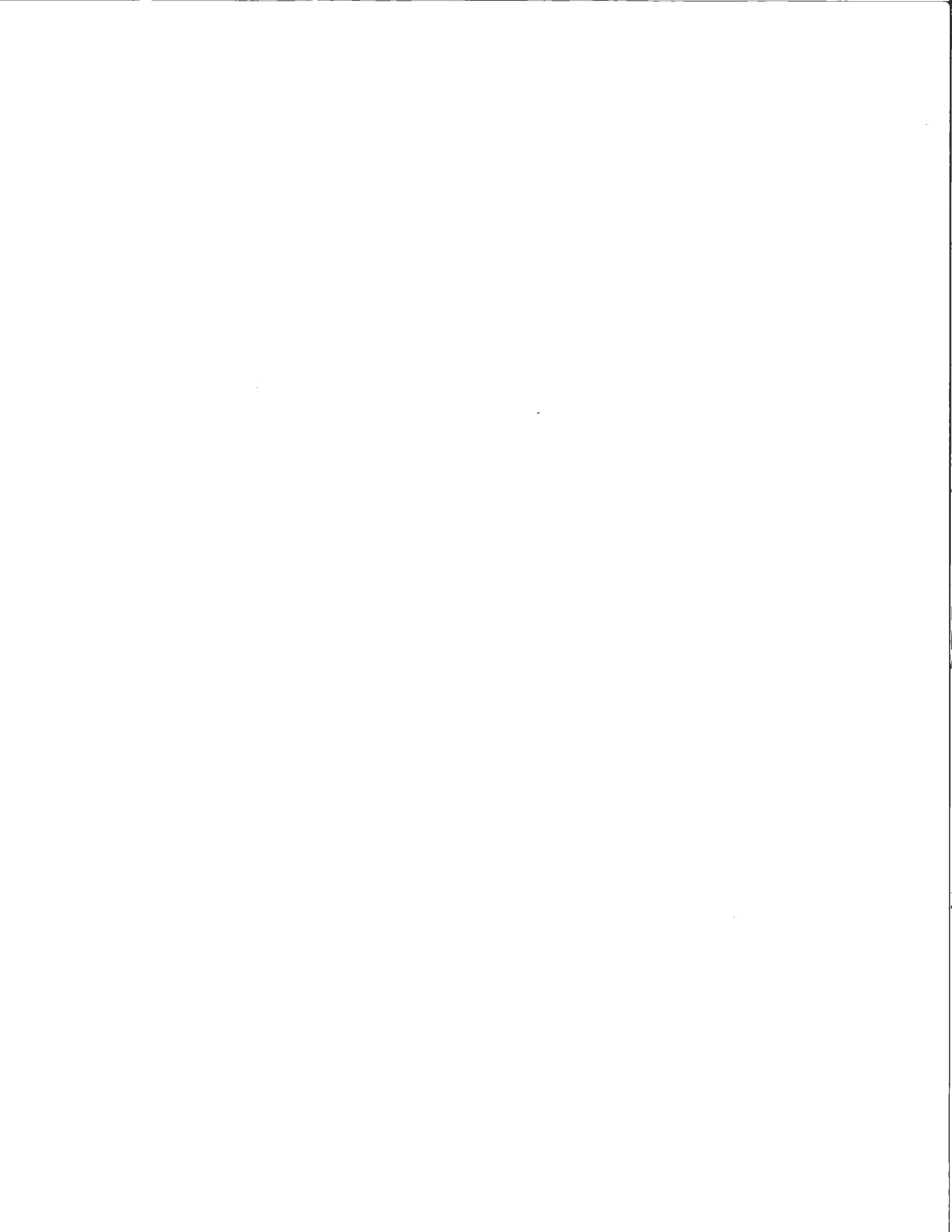
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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 1

Each year, I teach an undergraduate course at The University of Winnipeg called "Women and Urban Environments." The course is based on the following premises: (1) that cities are experienced differently by women than by men; (2) that cities have been built by men for men, and exclude women or limit women's activities and movements in various ways; (3) that women nevertheless have made significant contributions to urban history, design and culture that need to be retrieved and remembered; (4) that a "city designed by women" would be radically different from the cities we know.

The course is explicitly feminist and woman-centred, in that it focuses on: (1) information *about* women; (2) social, economic, political, *etc.* issues that *affect* women, especially those that pertain *specifically* or *primarily* to women, e.g., women's health issues, child care, housing and community design, rape, prostitution, domestic violence, pornography, urban safety; and (3) *critique* of structures and institutions that marginalize women and other human and non-human beings.

The course also endeavours to develop an *eco-feminist* perspective on urban issues. Ecofeminism is an approach to environmental ethics that seeks to integrate the false dichotomies that underlie Western, post-Enlightenment ways of conceptualizing the world: "binary oppositions" such as male/female, physical/spiritual, ideal/real. Ecofeminists argue that both women and nature are oppressed by a patriarchal ideology that associates woman with nature and man with culture, and which defines the latter as superior to the former.

In many cultures, the female is viewed as a lower, more animal form of life than the male. Woman is associated with childbearing, nurture and domesticity, and thus is regarded as "closer to nature" than the male, who is associated with "breadwinning," paid labour and public life. Moreover, nature is conceived as "feminine" (Mother Earth, Mother Nature) as opposed to "masculine" culture/civilization. Ecofeminists celebrate women's culturally-perceived "special" closeness to nature by pursuing environmental activism and earth-centred spirituality. However, ecofeminist philosophers are also critical of the ostensibly "closer" relation of women to nature, which has been used by patriarchy to justify the oppression and domination of both women and nature. Of course, women, as biological beings, are no "closer to nature" than men.

As a feminist approach to environmental ethics and spirituality that exposes the interconnections between man's domination of women and of the environment, ecofeminist analysis has mostly dealt with the "gendered" aspects of male (patriarchal) domination of the so-called "natural world," but it can also expose the ideology behind women's marginalization in cities. One of the most deeply entrenched dichotomies in Western culture is the division between "urban" and "rural," city and countryside, civilization and nature. In this way of thinking, nature is "out of place" in cities, and thus must be segregated (urban parks, gardens, lawns, boulevards), controlled (planted, pruned, sprayed, weeded) and "improved" (introduction of exotic

species, selective breeding, genetic engineering). Similarly, women are segregated (e.g., in the suburbs, social housing, the “pink ghetto”), controlled (e.g., by the threat of harassment or attack, by economic disadvantage, by fear of ridicule) and “improved” (e.g., by standards of appearance, grooming, dress and deportment).

An ecofeminist perspective is particularly relevant to the study of cities in that the “eco” in “ecofeminist” is derived from the Greek word *oikos* (house or household), which also underlies the modern words *ecology* and *economy*. As mentioned above, women have traditionally been associated with the cultural and built spaces of the home and the household, as well as with nature and the animal world. These patriarchal constructions have been used to marginalize and limit women, but they can be deconstructed by ecofeminists to liberate women’s energy and creativity in both natural and built environments. An ecofeminist perspective is thus appropriate to the study of cities and built environments, as well as to non-urban environments and non-human nature. Ecofeminists often speak in terms of “healing the wounds,” “repairing the world,” “reweaving the web,” recovering “the sacred hoop”—all images of re-integrating the false dichotomies of patriarchal thinking (see, e.g., Plant, 1989). Ecofeminism can thus serve as a framework for identifying women’s roles in urban environments, and for suggesting new ways in which urban life might be organized in order to “domesticate urban space,” to make the city a safe, accessible and healthy place for women, children and men, as well as for other living things.

Students in the Women and Urban Environments course are required to complete an assignment that involves either (1) a feminist (or ecofeminist) analysis of an urban space, or (2) a description of a city (or part of a city) designed by women on (eco) feminist principles. I am always impressed by the effort, insight and creativity brought to this project by students. This publication, and a second volume to be published in 1997, is made up of some of the best student papers submitted for this assignment.

This first volume, *Feminist Analyses of Urban Spaces*, contains a selection of student papers, and excerpts from papers, that address the first alternative listed above. *Carrie Miller* selects a well-known, and somewhat controversial, suburban development in Winnipeg, Linden Woods, for her analysis. Miller finds this urban area—in which she happened to reside at the time—to be deficient from an ecological and feminist perspective, replicating features for which suburbs have been criticized since their genesis shortly after the Second World War (lack of amenities, car dependence, inefficient use of space), and ignoring the needs of women, children and the elderly in the late twentieth century. *Pamela Jarvis* confines her analysis to a residential urban street in the western end of the city, Cavalier Drive. Her “feminist spectacles” enable her to see many ways in which women are placed at a disadvantage by the design of the street and its relationship (or lack of relationship) to other areas of the city. She points out that even the layout of the street reflects the “symbolic universe” of patriarchy. *Karen Paquin* shows that an ecofeminist perspective can serve as a powerful tool for understanding the history and present-day reality of urban parks. She compares the

“place” that parks occupy in cities to the “woman’s place” in the city and in society: confined, controlled, beautified and vulnerable. Probably the most original—and certainly the most daring—of the papers is by *Richard Lupu*. As a man, Lupu felt that it would be difficult to understand an urban place from a feminist perspective unless he literally took on the role of a woman. With help from friends and family, he disguised himself as a woman, and spent an afternoon doing “what girls do,” shopping at a urban mall. His experience of the shopping centre, as well as his visit to an automobile dealership in the same disguise, brought home many of the concepts that he had previously only grasped intellectually in class, and from conversations with female friends. The volume also includes excerpts from papers by Nahani Longpre, on conditions for women in the restaurant industry, and by Michelle Kirkbride, an analysis of a downtown street in Winnipeg.

The papers range in method and style from quite detailed, on-the-ground analyses of urban spaces (Miller, Jarvis, Kirkbride), to a more theoretical, academic study of urban parks (Paquin), to experiential and anecdotal accounts (Longpre, Lupu). Some common themes that emerge include with respect to the urban spaces that they examine include:

- the marginalization of women and nature;
- the lack of attention to the real needs of women and other marginalized groups (children, the elderly, the disabled) in mainstream urban planning and design;
- concerns about safety and sexual harassment;
- gender stereotyping in the urban environment;
- wasteful, dull and outmoded urban landscapes, which disregard contemporary lifestyles and ecological imperatives;
- the ability of a feminist/ecofeminist perspective to enable us to view the city through “new eyes.”

Although, the situation is not uniformly bleak—urban professionals are becoming more aware of issues such as safety and accessibility, and ecologically sensitive landscaping is increasingly practised in urban settings—these papers vividly illustrate that there is ample room for change from an ecological and feminist perspective. Considering that these are papers by undergraduate students, often with little background in either urban studies or women’s studies, they offer a wealth of fresh, creative and stimulating insights into the state of the post-modern Canadian city.

The second volume will include student papers that describe what a city designed by women might be like.

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Excerpts from “Women in the Restaurant Industry” by Nahani Longpre

... Having worked in the restaurant business for the last ten years, as a waitress, a hostess, a bus girl, a dishwasher, and in positions of management, I will call upon my own experience and that of other women who have worked or are currently working in the restaurant industry. ...

An appropriate place to begin is perhaps filling out the application and the interview. A fundamental aspect of getting a job in the restaurant industry, for both men and women, is one's appearance. Whereas men have to look respectable and clean-shaven, the woman server has to be close to perfect. Perfect means that they can't or shouldn't be overweight, ... should have nice skin, no blemishes, no pimples, simply because they are unpleasant to look at during a fine meal. Every other part of the woman should be up to par; she should smell nice, her hair should be long and flowing, and last but not least, her nails should be manicured. ... It is this ideal server that the owner, who is usually a male, hopes will attract more customers and keep them coming. ... like a stripper or prostitute, men will pay and give more money if a woman is nice to look at.

I started at this point because I was an assistant manager at a restaurant in Montreal back in 1990. I knew that when I was hiring a waitress, she had to be good looking, or else my male manager would simply override my decision. ... I once called in a woman who was black for an interview. Thinking nothing out of the ordinary, I hired her. To my utter dismay and disgust, I was told by my East Indian boss (who I thought should have no bias, considering that he was himself the victim of much discrimination and racism) that I could not hire her because she would appear *dirty* to the customers! Well, needless to say, I quit after this blatant disregard for human uniqueness and beauty. ...

So, if one is fortunate (or unfortunate, depending on how one views the situation) to actually have gotten past the first phase, the question now becomes can one make it through the second phase, which I have chosen to call the “checking her out” stage. Like any new job, when a new employee starts, the other employees check out the competition and the “goods.” When a new woman employee begins work, it's as though she's new “meat” to be had. ... Questions start flying around the restaurant about whether or not she's single or married, has children or not, is or is not “available,” does she like to party, what about her sex life, is she gay or straight? ... If she is single or even if she has a mate, usually within a week or two, her male co-workers will begin to harass her. “Can I take you out for coffee after work? Do you need a lift home?” These questions, while on a superficial level are not really harrasing, often have an ulterior motive behind them. From my own experience, it is around this time that the male workers will begin to direct crude jokes at me, begin flirting with me, and constantly ask me out. ... I really don't know what it is specifically about the restaurant business that allows for such a sexual atmosphere, but I can honestly say that the sexual innuendos that go on are mind-boggling ...

To illustrate this point, I will recount a story of blatant sexual harassment that was completely disregarded for what it was by the owners of the restaurant, even the woman co-owner. In 1991-92, I was working at a Winnipeg restaurant as a waitress. The cook and I did not get along because of the way he approached me day in and day out. His remarks were often sexual, commenting on my breasts, or disrespectful; he called me a bitch on several occasions. In one of our many fights, I turned to leave the kitchen, when I heard him say something to me. As I turned around to face him to see what he had said, he was unzipping his pants and trying to take out his penis, while motioning to me to give him oral sex. When I told the management of this event, they shrugged it off and plainly stated there was nothing they could do because they couldn't find a replacement. I threatened to call the labour board, but was told that I would probably be let go because there was simply nothing they could do. ... I needed the job badly, and like many women in the same situation, I let it go for fear of my job. Looking back, I regret not following through with my threat ...

In 1988, then 19 years old and single mother, A.F. was working at a suburban Winnipeg restaurant. At the time, the job and tips were the only source of income she made to support herself and her son. Once, she was serving a man a bowl of soup and as she turned to walk away, he pinched her behind. She turned to him and plainly stated that she didn't appreciate being pinched. His empty-headed response was what did she think would happen, wearing a skirt like that. The skirt was in fact below her knees. ... She told the management, and they went to discuss the matter with the customer. They told him that they did not approve of such behaviour in their family establishment and asked him to apologize. He did not apologize, and left without paying his bill. Looking back, A.F. remembers how this embarrassed her and made her feel like a sex object. ...

D.S. is a 24 year old manager at a well-known multinational fast food restaurant. She has been working for the company for ten years, and at the time of this particular incident, she was the manager of the best free-standing restaurant in the city, with over a million dollars in sales per year. She had recently been promoted to an RM2, which meant that she was in charge of two restaurants. She was working 70 to 80 hours a week, and at the age of 23 (at the time), she was exhausted and “had no life.” She had been demanding and begging for a meeting to discuss the responsibilities and problems that other RM2s had been having, since this *new* position had been implemented. Every initiative she took to set up a meeting was ignored, which gave her no option but to seek a demotion. She set up a meeting with her regional and area managers to discuss a possible demotion. The meeting, she was told, was to be at her area manager's home.

When she got to the meeting, her male regional manager was cracking all kinds of jokes and asked her how things were going. She explained her situation and said she just wanted to manage her free-standing store. She thought everything was going fine, when all of a sudden he started yelling, asking her who the hell she thought she was, demanding a demotion and on top of it, asking for the best store in the city. By this time, she was sitting down and he was towering over her, yelling at her, insulting her because she couldn't do the job. She sat there for an hour, crying, listening to him yell and scream, while her female area manager did nothing but watch, afraid to say anything to this man. She didn't even year the last half hour because she was crying so hard. D.S. was granted her demotion, but put in another, less profitable, restaurant.

After the incident, D.S. told her area manager that she was going to call the labour board, but the area manager said to just forget about it—if she did call the labour board, she wouldn't back up her story. With no evidence, she chose to leave the matter. A week later, the regional and area managers did set up a meeting with all the other RM2s, making D.S. feel even more upset about the whole incident.

When asked how this made her feel, D.S. says that it made her feel worthless, “less than,” and very vulnerable and betrayed. ... she knows that had she been a man, the incident *never* would have occurred. She also describes how in meetings, when she expresses her opinions or concerns, she is regularly disregarded and ignored; her bosses will look at the male managers as if she's not there.

The story of D.S. shows how even women in positions of power/management, who are their own bosses, the struggles don't end. Either they are attacked on an emotional level, ... or criticized for their inability to do the job. ...

A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF LINDEN WOODS SUBURB

Carrie Miller

By definition, the suburb is a place apart, a human habitat dependent on the city's prior and adjacent existence (Evenden, 1994). It also represents the most important element of growth in modern expanding cities and is the dominant setting for most middle-class families. But where did the suburb come from, and why is it the most popular residential design plan? The purpose of this paper is, first, to review the history behind the suburb and second, to examine and analyse the suburb of Linden Woods, located in Winnipeg, from a feminist perspective.

The reason I decided to write on this topic stems from a personal experience I had last fall. For the last two years, I have resided in the Linden Woods neighbourhood with my boyfriend, Shane, who owns a vehicle. Hence, I have always used the vehicle for errands and grocery shopping. However, in September, due to a difference in the start of school terms, I was faced with the reality of living alone and not having access to a vehicle.

In September, I quickly learnt that accessibility is not at the root of the suburb. If I needed groceries, I had to set aside two hours of my day so that I could walk to the closest Safeway at Grant Park Shopping Centre. If it was a nice day, the walk there would take about 30 minutes; but, because I would have a full knapsack and several carry bags, the walk home would take about 45 minutes. Fortunately, I am in good shape and did not have any children to take with me; otherwise, this task would have been impossible.

During this period, I also realized what it is like to be a prisoner in your own home. Several times I attempted to go for a walk at night; but, because there was nobody on the streets or sidewalks, I feared for my safety and remained indoors. Prior to taking the course, Women and Urban Environments, I had never questioned the plans or design features of our cities. However, now I have a hard time understanding where the ideas came from.

WHERE THE SUBURBS CAME FROM

The end of the Second World War was the starting point for the suburbs in Canada. The government recognized that major changes would be taking place in the economy, and that people returning from the war would need places to live and work. The new houses and communities were derived from the plans of three urban designers: Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright (Lorimer, 1977). Each had their own unique design, and Canada's postwar suburbs were a crude mixture of the three planning concepts.

E.G. Faludi was the first Canadian planner to propose neighbourhood design. In 1945, he designed Thorncrest Village, a housing development of 100 acres on the outskirts of Toronto (Lorimer, 1977). Two elements were prevalent in his design: low-density housing with lots of green space and commercial uses

outlining the neighbourhood. Faludi also introduced building controls, which gave building companies the exclusive right to approve houses and building materials in the neighbourhoods.

Faludi's approach was later elaborated on by Humphrey Carter. In a 1948 book entitled *Houses for Canadians*, Carter described what he thought community planning should consist of, and his ideas were replicated for some time. However, it must be mentioned that during this period, house building was a diversified industry. It comprised many small businesses that each produced ten to fifteen houses per year (Lorimer, 1977). Then, in 1950, E.P. Taylor and Don Mills radically changed the housing industry and reduced it to a few corporations.

Don Mills was Canada's first suburb, and it was based on four innovative design elements. First was the neighbourhood principle, which saw the community split into four neighbourhoods surrounding a central shopping centre. At the centre of each neighbourhood was an elementary school. The second and third elements were to separate vehicles and pedestrians and build lots of green spaces. The fourth concept was that all houses would have to be designed by architects and approved by the building companies. With some minor changes, these principles still exist and dictate the design of suburbs today.

Ironically, at the same time that much of the Don Mills suburb was being built, problems apparent in today's suburbs were being discussed. The high cost of the new suburban houses made them unaffordable for the majority of Canadians. People also began to realize that there were many amenities missing in the suburbs, and if you wanted to go anywhere, you had to drive. Therefore, it appears that planners were not listening then or now, because they still continue to recreate the same inefficient suburb.

LINDEN WOODS—BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Linden Woods is located in the southeast portion of Winnipeg, between Waverley Street and Kenaston Boulevard. The area was developed approximately ten years ago by Genstar Corporation, and at that time was surrounded by a lot of controversy. The development required that the city extend basic services like water, sewer, garbage collection and street maintenance. Subsequently, it has been estimated that each home built in a new unserviced area of Winnipeg costs taxpayers \$43,000 (Hammond, 1990).

Linden Woods consists of approximately 800 lots, with houses ranging in price from \$135,000 to \$500,000. Obviously, your average family cannot afford to reside in this area. The majority of Linden Woods residents are high-income families, in which both adults work outside the home. Also located on the north side of the neighbourhood are several gated condominium communities and an apartment complex called Linden Woods Village. I have chosen to include two seniors' apartments and a church that are located on the north side of the neighbourhood in my analysis. I am not sure if they are technically part of the neighbourhood, but they are located in such close proximity that I felt they were important to include (Figure 1).

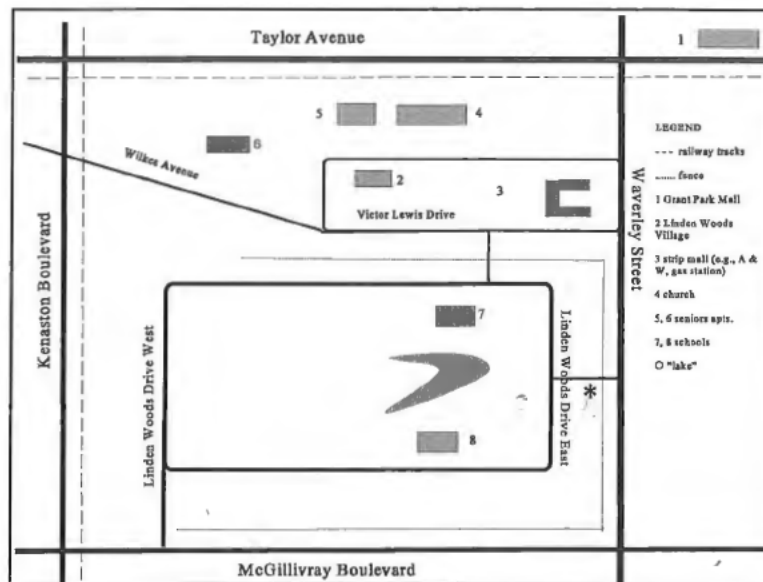


Figure 1: A Map of Linden Woods

Within the neighbourhood of Linden Woods are two elementary schools, which offer kindergarten to grade six education. At the centre of the neighbourhood are two "lakes" (i.e., sewage retention ponds), which are surrounded by several walkways and benches. A brochure published by Genstar lists features such as shopping centres, recreational facilities, health care facilities, schools, community clubs/associations and public transit, as well as citing "strict architectural control to ensure compatibility of housing design" (Genstar, n.d.).

LINDEN WOODS—FEMINIST ANALYSIS

Atelier Heamavihio has identified five design principles that are essential to the success of a neighbourhood. These principles will be used to examine and critique the Linden Woods suburb. The reason that I have chosen these principles is because they strongly reflect what I would like to see, both from a feminist and environmental viewpoint, designed into our cities' suburbs (Nelson and Faulkner, 1996).

Both feminists and environmentalists value diversity. The first principle identified by Atelier Heamavihio is mixed uses, which includes a blend of houses, commercial uses such as convenience stores, and services for the community such as daycare. The effect of these elements is that they help to make the neighbourhood more pedestrian-oriented and encourage activity around the clock. Unfortunately, Linden Woods lacks every one of these elements.

Linden Woods contains one type of house, which only takes on a different appearance by moving



Photo 1: the "one type" of home that dominates the Linden Woods neighbourhood.



Photo 2: The deserted and dead streets of Linden Woods (picture taken at 4 p.m.).

windows and doors (Photo 1). The development company, Genstar, maintains exclusive control over what can and cannot be built in the area. Therefore, every house must conform to their vision, and no individuality is allowed. Also, because every house is new, there is no mix of incomes within the area. Areas with new buildings or houses tend only to support people with high incomes, and in Linden Woods, this is the case.

Instead of mixing apartments and condominiums in with the houses, the planners designed these on the edge of the neighbourhood. It would be better if the apartments, especially the seniors' apartments, had been placed within the main neighbourhood, creating natural surveillance. Seniors tend to be home during the day, and if parks and schools were located close to their homes, the seniors would be an excellent source of surveillance.

The area within Linden Woods has been strictly zoned for residential buildings and therefore no commercial or retail stores may be built in the area. This has led to deserted and dead streets during the daytime when everyone has gone to work (Photo 2). If the area had a diversity of uses, people would be using the same streets and facilities at different times of the day and for different reasons, thereby creating surveillance and safety. The only commercial services in the area are located at the north corner of Waverley and Wilkes. Due to the location, many people are not able to walk to them, and will use their vehicles to go elsewhere.

An essential service that I was surprised not to find in the Linden Woods neighbourhood was a daycare. Considering the number of families and working mothers and fathers, it would seem that a daycare would be a priority. Therefore, I assume that most working parents drive their children to a daycare located outside the neighbourhood. This requires extra travel time in the vehicle to transport children and then to go to work. If the seniors were integrated into the community, they could be a valuable source of volunteers at the daycare.

The suburb was not designed to accommodate mothers working outside the home, but for women to stay home and take care of children, while the men go off to work. Consequently, urban centres tend to be thought of as men's domain, and the suburb, women's. However, because more and more women are taking on non-traditional roles, the workplace, home and daycare should be integrated to allow for easier access.

The second principle is walkable size; Heamaviho defined this as no more than a quarter-mile radius. From an ecofeminist perspective, walkability decreases the need for less sustainable forms of transportation such as the private vehicle. This radius translates into a five-minute walk from anywhere in the neighbourhood to the neighbourhood centre. In Linden Woods, the streets are not designed to promote walking and the distance from the majority of the houses to the neighbourhood centre (i.e., the "lakes") would take one about twenty minutes to walk. Therefore, without social interaction taking place on the street,



Photo 3: A view from the bus stop to the seniors' apartments located on Wilkes.



Photo 4: Wilkes Street, which many seniors must use to gain access to the transit system.

groups in society that are less likely than middle-aged men to have access to a vehicle. Once again, I would have to give Linden Woods a poor grade in this category. The transit situation is probably one of the most frustrating for myself. There are two buses which run through the Linden Woods area, but they are very restricted. For example, the 64X Linden Woods East bus route only operates two buses in the morning at 7 a.m. and then three buses in the evening at about 6 p.m. Obviously, one can see that this bus route was designed for people who work in the downtown area. From an environmental point of view, this is an excellent idea; however, the design of Linden Woods' streets does not help to maximize bus ridership.

New residential communities are often designed to restrict traffic flow and to isolate homes from major roadways, and Linden Woods is no exception. The street layout causes backtracking, which increases walking distances to the bus stops and distorts the actual distance by making them appear longer (Figure 2). Therefore, because the bus route only runs along the major route, in this case Linden Woods East, a large portion of the neighbourhood is located outside of the 400 metre walking distance that is recommended by Winnipeg Transit. Research has shown that transit users value walking distance to the bus stop twice as much as vehicle travel time. Therefore, it is essential that walking distances be kept to a minimum to increase and maintain bus ridership.

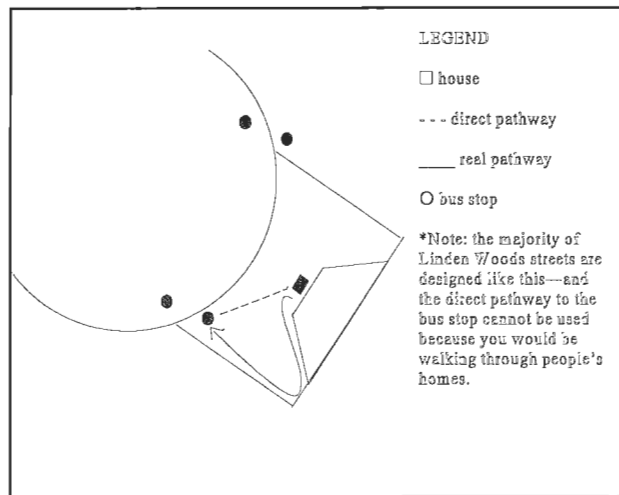


Figure 2: Street layouts which cause back-tracking and distortion

Another unfortunate aspect of the Linden Woods bus route is that the hours of operation are not appropriate for women who may stay home or work outside the home. It is common knowledge that fewer women than men own vehicles, and if a family owns one vehicle, the man is typically the user. Therefore, if the woman has errands to run or does not work downtown, it is almost impossible to accommodate her travel



Photo 5: A Linden Woods park and lake.



Photo : The fence surrounding Linden Woods on Waverley.

needs. As for myself, I ride the 78 Waverley bus route every day to the University of Winnipeg. The problem I have noticed with this route is that it only runs every half hour on the north side, but it runs every ten minutes on the south side. The reason for this appears to be that the bus functions to take University of Manitoba students to and from Polo Park and other connecting routes. Therefore, if I miss a bus, I have to wait half an hour before the next one, and considering that there are no bus shelters on my stretch of the route, I am often tempted to return home and not venture out. Many times, when it has been nice out, I have walked to Grant Avenue and caught a bus there, but, again, this walk takes at least 20-30 minutes.

There are also two seniors' apartments located on the north side of Linden Woods, and because seniors tend not to have access to a vehicle, they rely on the transit system. Unfortunately, no bus route runs down Wilkes Avenue, and the seniors are forced to walk a substantial distance to catch the bus (Photo 3). I have tried to capture the distance of the walk in photos, and considering the distance I have to walk to catch the bus, I cannot imagine having to walk the distance they do. Also, the street which they have to walk along does not have any sidewalks and is very unsafe (Photo 4).

The streets within Linden Woods are also not designed to accommodate pedestrians. The only sidewalks in the neighbourhood are located long the major route way, Linden Woods Drive, and none of the adjacent residential streets has sidewalks. Again, this deters people from walking, because they are forced to walk on the street and risk being hit by a car. The absence of sidewalks also does not provide the opportunity for children to play or ride their bikes safely.

Another bizarre thing I found within the area was that the walking paths designed around the "lakes" were not accessible by sidewalks within the neighbourhood (Photo 5). Therefore, in order to go for a nice leisurely stroll, you would have to drive your vehicle to the park so that you could take a walk. Thus it is not surprising to find that the vehicle and garage have taken over the house in the majority of these new suburbs (Photo 1).

Another element that I feel deters people from walking or biking is the "fence" which encloses the entire Linden Woods neighbourhood (Photo 6). This fence creates only three routes into and out of Linden Woods, and if you do not live close to one of these access points, leaving the neighbourhood by walking or biking can be a difficult and time-consuming task. There have been many times when I have seen people drive someone to the bus stops on Waverley. Aside from the deserted streets, the fences also play a role in safety, because they limit one's escape routes. If somebody decided to try and pull you into their car on Waverley, there would be nowhere to run and hide. Therefore, the fence acts as an obstruction to one's safety.

The fourth element required in a successful and feminist-designed suburb is the need for scattered public facilities. Heamavihio contends that scattering public facilities like police/fire stations, libraries, schools,



Photo 7: A deserted and unused park in Linden Woods.



Photo 8: One of the schools with a "lake" located directly behind.

parks and churches provides an opportunity for movement within the neighbourhood and thereby increases safety—an issue that figures prominently in feminist urban research (e.g., Weisman, 1994, pp. 71-72, 79). Linden Woods only contains three of these public facilities: two schools, two parks and a church.

The two schools are located on opposite sides of the neighbourhood, but they do not promote neighbourhood movement. The majority of the children who attend the schools live in the Linden Woods area, but not within walking distance. For example, I have a friend who is a single mother with a seven-year-old boy and lives in Linden Woods Village. As a result of the walking distance and the fact that there are insufficient sidewalks, she drives her son to school every day. The damage that is being caused to the environment must be incredible, when you consider how many other mothers and fathers must be doing the same thing. The consequences of this are that the streets are not being used efficiently to promote interaction between residents, and children are required to travel to and from school in a vehicle. Consequently, the idea of playing and visiting with friends after school becomes non-existent.

The two parks in the neighbourhood are also located on opposite sides of Linden Woods. Park 1 is situated at the main entrance leading into Linden Woods, and is close to the “lake.” However, as I just explained, no sidewalks lead to this area and one must drive their children to the park if they want to play. Park 2 is located in a section of the neighbourhood where there is very little development (Photo 7). As can be seen in the picture, no children were playing in this park, and when I approached it, the absence of footprints in the snow indicated that no children had used this playground for some time.

One of the things that worries me about the position of the schools and of Park 1 is their close proximity to the “lake.” Safety was obviously not a priority when these facilities were being planned. Children outside during recess time or after school can easily walk to the “lake” and play on the ice, and, during my venture through the neighbourhood, there were footprints that indicated children had been playing on the “lake” (Photo 8). Considering that these “lakes” are retention ponds that house a lot of microorganisms, the temperature of the water underneath the ice is probably higher than normal and prone to cracking and breaking. The idea of placing these “lakes” beside schools, without a fence around them, is unbelievable.

The church in the neighbourhood is located on the north side of Linden Woods and once again, this has caused a dependency on the private vehicle to travel to church on Sundays. Unfortunately, I do not attend church in the area on a regular basis so I am not sure if the church facilities are used regularly for community activities. However, if the neighbourhood were trying to foster a friendly atmosphere, I would hope that the facilities would be used regularly to promote community activities.

The fifth and final element important for a successful suburb is contextual responsibility. This ensures that the area and housing reflect what is needed. From a feminist standpoint, the housing in the Linden Woods neighbourhood is not a representation of what is needed. The houses in the area are all massive two-

storey structures designed for stay-at-home mothers. Considering that the majority of women in this neighbourhood work outside the home, these large, spacious homes only create more work for them when they return home at night (Photo 9). Wall-to-wall carpeting means hours of vacuuming, and since most of the housework is still done by women, this can result in absolute exhaustion. The houses are also energy inefficient. For example, the large picture windows create patterns of heat loss and gain that have to be compensated for by excessive heating or air conditioning.

The large homes in Linden Woods are also accompanied by large yards that are ecologically and socially unproductive. These wide and long yards offer no opportunity for mixing between buildings and the street. Consequently, the front yards and the streets tend to be deserted at all times. Therefore, in order to promote neighbourliness and social interaction, the street and yards should be reduced and benches located in various settings. The yards of these homes also require a substantial amount of energy and water. They continuously need to be mowed and watered in the summertime. Another energy inefficient feature that I notice about these home was that many of them have heated driveways, which melts the snow and keeps the driveways clear. The need for this feature is a puzzle to me.



Photo 9: The massive size of the average home in Linden Woods.

CONCLUSION

After reviewing the history of the suburb and analysing Linden Woods, I still do not understand current planning practices. From the very beginning, suburbs like Don Mills were experiencing problems of empty streets and unfriendly neighbourhoods. Today, we continue to build these suburbs in exactly the same way, and the same problems are surfacing. Obviously, major changes need to occur in the planning profession, which has been dominated by men, to ensure that in ten years we are still not building these “empty bedrooms.” I think that many feminist values like diversity, accessibility, safety and ecological sustainability should be reviewed and incorporated into the planning and design of future neighbourhoods. After all, we can't do much worse!

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Figure 1: "A classic example of how society places men and women in their societal roles."

AN ANALYSIS OF AN URBAN STREET FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Pamela E. Jarvis

In the everyday travels of life, people do not take the time to stop and get to know their surroundings. Nor do people realize how these surroundings affect their lives. People merely drive or walk down streets, passing by buildings full of people, by different types of businesses and past other connected streets, to get to a specific destination. The streets people utilize have fundamental effects on the operation of their everyday lives. More importantly, the specific design of the streets they travel have adverse and/or positive effects on their lives.

One group in society that is affected by the streets they encounter is women. Women of all ages are primary users of city streets and yet, most women do not realize that the streets they use affect them in a negative manner, thus affecting other people in their lives. The reason that streets have negative effects on women's lives is that they were not, and still are not, designed to meet the real needs of women. The most advantageous way for women to realize and understand the effects of urban design on their lives would be to analyse the streets where they live. By doing this, women would become more aware of the various types of limitations today's urban environments place on them. In turn, this might result in women becoming more active in the planning and implementation of new areas within cities and/or in new developing cities. Therefore, in order for myself and for my fellow women to understand the impact of city design on our lives, I will undertake an analysis of the street I live on, Cavalier Drive.

Before one can go into an in-depth analysis of any urban setting, it is important to give a general description of the area. By doing this, readers are able to form a mental picture of the urban area, thus facilitating a comprehensive understanding of how the urban environment affects their lives. For this analysis, photos are provided in an Appendix. The reader will be asked to refer to specific photos throughout the analysis.

Cavalier Drive is a street in Winnipeg, Manitoba. More specifically, this street is located in the St. James Assiniboia–Crestview area. Cavalier Drive is one of the main arteries of the Crestview locale. It connects other residential streets to the life of the city.

As I travelled down the street that I have lived on for approximately five years and started really to think about the design of the street, I began to notice fundamental design flaws. These flaws are not only disruptive to my life, but are disadvantageous to children, the elderly and other women. These flaws involve the length of the street, the intersections and the pedestrian crosswalks.

As I travelled the length of Cavalier Drive, it became apparent that the street is simply too long. The distance from one end of the street to the other is approximately 1.9 km. For those with access to a vehicle, it takes approximately three to four minutes to drive the length of the street. However, for the average person

to walk the length of Cavalier Drive, it takes approximately thirty minutes. This is a cause for concern.

The first obvious problem is that it takes too long to walk down Cavalier Drive. The average pedestrian, whose walk is uninterrupted by errands, distractions or inclement weather, still has to allow thirty minutes to reach the other end. Now, if you are an elderly person, a shopper carrying groceries home, a parent with children or the like, it could end up taking twice the amount of time to traverse Cavalier Drive. Most of the people that would end up having to walk under such conditions would be women. The extra time needed to travel Cavalier Drive would impinge on the amount of time needed to accomplish other daily tasks, which, in turn, would affect other people who may be depending on these women—employers, families, *etc.*

A second problem again involves the length of the street. Streets need to be short for the convenience of everyone in society. As Jane Jacobs, the author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, points out, if a street is too long, then people become isolated from other streets. Although numerous streets intersect with Cavalier Drive, people that do not live on these streets rarely, if ever, take the opportunity to explore them because it would interfere with reaching the destinations they have in mind. Jacobs also contends that people need the opportunity to turn corners. If people are not able to turn corners, they do not encounter many different views, which results in the feeling among the street users that they are not going anywhere. Thus the design of Cavalier Drive it makes people feel that it is taking longer than it actually does to travel the street, due to its visual uniformity. Since Cavalier Drive is a main artery in the Crestview area, city planners should have made the street shorter and allowed intersecting streets also to serve as major arteries in order to bring more diversity to the area.

Intersections play a vital role in the flow of the Cavalier Drive. Cavalier Drive has four main intersections. This is due to the length of the street. The first intersection, which directs a person onto Cavalier Drive, is Portage Avenue at Cavalier. This intersection is regulated by traffic lights (Photo 1). The second intersection is located at Ness Avenue and Cavalier Drive and regulates traffic with a three-way stop (Photo 4). The third intersection is located at Hamilton Avenue and Cavalier Drive, and regulates traffic with a four-way stop (Photo 6). The fourth intersection is located at Saskatchewan Avenue and Cavalier Drive and regulates traffic with one stop sign to turn left onto Saskatchewan Avenue, and one yield sign to turn right onto Saskatchewan Avenue (Photo 10). These intersections are vital to the safe flow of automobile traffic on and off the street. However, these intersections do not meet the needs of pedestrians on the street who may want to cross over to one side or another. The only intersection along the entire length of Cavalier Drive which allows for safe pedestrian crossing is the "first" intersection located at Portage Avenue and Cavalier Drive (Photo 1). The second pedestrian crossing is not located in conjunction with any other street; it has been merely placed immediately just after a strip mall (Photo 2). It is obvious that this pedestrian crossing was only put in place for the benefit of the merchants in the strip mall, who, to some extent, rely on pedestrians passing

their establishments. The third pedestrian crossing is located in conjunction with a sidestreet called Morgan Crescent. At first glance, the primary reason for this pedestrian crossing appears to be that there is an elementary school located just a little way down this street. However, this crossing also benefits the businesses located near the crossing (Photo 5). Again, it is usually women of all ages, children, and/or women with children who use these pedestrian crossings.

These crossings are too far apart, and are nonexistent past Morgan Crescent. This only results in unsafe conditions for the pedestrians who are regular street users or who may need to cross the street. Due to the lack of adequate street crossings, most people jaywalk to cross Cavalier Drive. This brings up issues of safety for all involved.

Another issue arising from pedestrian crossings on Cavalier Drive is the crossing signs (see Figure 2). These crossing signs depict a male figure; although most women may not feel that it harms them in any way, it does. This image indirectly reinforces male dominance over women by depicting the male as normative, and by telling women when and where they may do something—in this case cross the street. Instead of using this masculine image for pedestrian crossings, the image of an X, for cross, should be used. This symbol is gender neutral and does not give off indirect messages to its users.



Figure 2: Pedestrian crossing sign.

Society has predetermined where men and women should be located in all aspects of life. And this holds true in the design of urban streets. "The superior coordinates—top, right, and front—are associated with male; the inferior coordinates—bottom, left, and back—with female." (Weisman, 1992, p.11; see Figure 3). This type of thinking becomes apparent when one looks at the design of Cavalier Drive. At what can be labelled the top/front of Cavalier Drive, there is a strip mall on the left and a nationally recognized bank on the right. The top/front of the street is a part of the public sphere of life (business), which is mainly where society tends to place men. As one moves down the street, residential area begins to become dominant. However, when one reaches the intersection of Ness Avenue and Cavalier Drive, male dominance takes over again. This is because the three-way intersection does not include the left-hand side of the street; therefore, the right-

hand side expresses the power—the power to control. The street then continues with residential area, but not long. When one reaches the pedestrian crossing at Morgan Crescent and Cavalier Drive, a small-scale strip mall is located on the right-hand side (business) and an apartment complex is located on the left (residential). As one continues through the intersection of Hamilton Avenue and Cavalier Drive, residential area prevails on the left-hand side. However, on the right-hand side, there is a Lutheran church. Society tends to see religion as a power which is bestowed to men; thus, with the design of Cavalier Drive and with the church being located on the right-hand side of the street, this belief is implicitly reinforced. The remainder of Cavalier Drive consists of residential area at the bottom/back of the street. Society places women in the private sphere of life, and tends to believe that women should be in the home. Thus, as one can see, the “bottom, left, back” spatial coordinates are associated with housing, women’s traditional “location.” The setup of Cavalier Drive and the placement of businesses and residential area along the street only reinforces the “roles” society has constructed for men and women to play.



Figure 3: Example of gender symbolism in signage.

Another aspect of the design of Cavalier Drive is the various shapes the street takes on throughout its course. Men tend to be associated with straight-hard shapes, while women are associated with curved-soft shapes. If one looks closely, these shapes can be found in the design of Cavalier Drive. For instance, in areas that consist of intersections, crosswalks, and/or businesses, the street takes on a straight-hard pattern. However, in areas that are primarily residential, the street tends to form soft bends/curves. Thus, the design of the street itself transmits a sexist message that reinforces cultural stereotypes about where men and women should be in society.

Cavalier Drive has two strip malls. The first strip mall is located on the left-hand side of Cavalier Drive, near the Portage Avenue and Cavalier Drive intersection. This strip mall is home to a variety of different businesses. From Portage Avenue down Cavalier Drive these businesses include: Canada Trust, Pizza Hut, Singleton's Hair Care, Mail Boxes etc., Joey's Only Seafood Restaurant, Sun Chiropractic, the Metro One office, Subway, Ranger Travel and Insurance, McGavins Bread Store, Wicker and Things, Grower Direct, a

vacant space, Mr. Video, and finally, Princess Auto. On the right-hand side of the street, one encounters a CIBC bank on the far right along with a vast parking lot and a K-Mart closer to Cavalier Drive (Photo 2). The second strip mall is located about halfway down Cavalier Drive on the right-hand side. The businesses in this strip mall include: a vacant space, Mac's Convenience Store, Johnathan's Dry Cleaning, Dairy Scoop, a Diamond Image, IGA Grocery Store, Video View, Aloha Tanning, Hamilton Dental Centre and Cavalier Moon Restaurant. Also in this area is an Esso gas station (Photos 12 and 13).

All these businesses provide a great array of different uses to the residents of the area. However, their actual importance to everyday life is questionable. In this area there are a lot of women, especially women with children; however, the businesses that are in reach do not seem to cater to their fundamental needs. It is also apparent that simply due to the length of the street, it would be a waste of time for anyone to use these businesses if travelling by foot.

One type of business that is missing from all of the ones provided is a day-care. In fact there is no known day-care within the general area. This proves to be a fundamental problem in my mind. The area is highly residential; therefore, children are a vast presence in the area. Now, women in today's society tend to be the primary care-givers of children; however, most women now work. Therefore, should there not be a facility to provide adequate child care to meet the needs of working women? A day-care in any one of the strip malls would be ideal.

I find other problems with the general place where certain businesses are located on Cavalier Drive. For instance, the "front" of the street is equipped with two banks; however, the "back" of the street does not have the convenience of a close-by bank. There used to be a Bank of Montreal located in the second strip mall, but it closed down. Therefore, residents located near Saskatchewan Avenue do not have adequate access to a banking institution to make bill payments or other basic transactions that may need to be done during the day. In conjunction with this, the banks are mainly only open during the day when many women do not have access to appropriate transportation to these facilities for various reasons.

Cavalier Drive is also equipped with a small grocery store. This service is worthwhile for the residents of the area; however, there is an affordability problem. Businesses all must make a profit, and this is noticeable when one shops at the IGA Grocery located on Cavalier Drive. It seems that the IGA owner realizes that he is providing a service to people in the area, and that this service is not provided by any other establishment in the close vicinity. There is a Safeway farther down Portage Avenue; however, it is not accessible on a daily basis without appropriate transportation. The pricing at IGA tends to be inflated since it is the only grocery service for pedestrians in the general area. Another business that is a problem for the people who reside along Cavalier Drive is the gas station located at the corner of the intersection of Hamilton Avenue and Cavalier Drive (Photo 13). This is not an appropriate location for a gas station. It is located

directly across from an apartment complex (Photo 11). The gas station opens early—approximately six o'clock a.m. and continues operation to approximately 10:00 p.m. The gas station is loud and tends to wake up surrounding residents—men, children and women. It also generates unwanted traffic and gas fumes in the surrounding environment. A gas station should not have been placed in this area for the above reasons and because of its unattractive and the potential for possible health risks due to the dust and fumes. And health of the family is often primarily the concern of “nurturing” women.

The rest of the businesses located along Cavalier Drive do not really provide essential needs but luxury services. These services do not play an important role in the everyday lives of anyone within the area. However, it should be acknowledged that these businesses do generate a small amount of diversity and provide different appearances to the area. When people decide to establish a business in an area, the potential business people should understand and know who the primary users of the area are, and make sure that the service they are providing meets the needs of these users.

Transportation plays a vital role in city life. People travel by means of the of their own vehicles, on foot, by bicycle and/or by public transportation. Transportation is a concern to everyone in society; however, "Transportation is a major concern for women, since women have less access to cars. Easy, safe, and pleasant walking and cycling conditions and public transportation are therefore of particular interest" (Eichler, 1995, p.17). In this portion of the analysis, I will mainly be concerned with public transportation availability on Cavalier Drive. Throughout the analysis thus far, I have mentioned that people, mostly women, travel Cavalier Drive on foot due to the lack of access to their own vehicles. However, women are also obliged to walk due to the irregularity of public transportation.

Three bus routes travel some, but not all, of Cavalier Drive. One of these routes is the Crestview-Portage Express, numbers 11, 21, or 22, which travels from the intersection of Portage Avenue and Cavalier Drive to where Lumsden Road meets Cavalier Drive (Photo 1 to Photo 8—turns at far corner house). Another route is the Ness Express, number 24. This route travels from the intersection at Ness Avenue and Cavalier Drive to the intersection at Hamilton Avenue and Cavalier Drive (Photo 4 to Photo 6). The third route is the Crestview, number 83. This route is a feeder route and only travels from Hamilton Avenue and Cavalier Drive to Saskatchewan Avenue and Cavalier Drive (Photo 6 to Photo 10).

Although there seems to be adequate public transportation service along Cavalier Drive, it is problematic. These bus routes provide more than adequate service during peak hours of the day—morning 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and evening 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; however, in between these times, service deteriorates. And for the Crestview (no. 83) route, service ceases just after 7:00 p.m. The people inconvenienced during the hours of sparse operation tend to be women. If a woman is a home-care provider, her errands are usually accomplished between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.; thus, if she relies on public

transportation from Cavalier Drive, she has to schedule her day around the transit system. And we all know that the transit system can be unreliable, thus generating more problems in the lives of women.

The transit system also creates additional stress if there is a long wait to catch a bus. The problem with the bus routes that travel Cavalier Drive is that they do not run at separate, varying times, but run and meet each other at the same time. Thus if a woman misses one bus, she does not usually have the opportunity to catch one of the other routes that may lead her to the desired destination. The reality on Cavalier Drive is that "Fewer women than men own cars, and more women than men are regularly found trapped on the transit system" (Eichler, 1995, p.132). Being dependent on the public transportation system to move around the city can be stressful and this stress is usually experienced by women in society, which in turn results in stress in the lives of people within the larger community.

Again, as Jane Jacobs contends, sidewalks play a fundamental role in the design of an urban street. These small strips of pavement have many uses for the people that live on the street and in the surrounding neighbourhood. The sidewalks along both sides of Cavalier Drive were designed to provide pedestrians with an area to walk along without the threat of traffic. They were meant to allow people to move freely up and down the street. However, this goal has not been achieved. The left-hand side of Cavalier Drive has one continuous sidewalk with only a few breaks to allow other streets to merge with Cavalier. However, the right-hand side of the sidewalk has numerous breaks to allow for the intersection at Ness Avenue and Cavalier Drive, for the numerous other merging residential streets, and for the turn-ins to the businesses along the street. These breaks in the sidewalk engender up questions of safety for the users of the sidewalk, because the users can easily become entangled with the traffic which the sidewalk is supposed to avoid.

A specific design flaw worth noting has to do with with the basic structure of the sidewalk. The sidewalk along Cavalier Drive has serious flaws that make travel on the sidewalk unsafe. The elderly, women with strollers and wheelchair users have a difficult time using the sidewalk, because where the sidewalk meets the street, the sidewalk does not level off to the street—there is a six-inch drop to the street on both sides. Thus, these users have a difficult time using the sidewalk, which in turn results in these potential sidewalk users avoiding the sidewalk all together.

Safety is a major issue for any city street, especially for Cavalier Drive. For there to be a sense of safety on a street certain criteria need to be met. Regular contacts among the users of the street are needed to produce a sense of security. This contact needs to occur at different times of the day and evening in order to produce an overall feeling of safety. During the day, people come into some degree of contact with others who are using the sidewalk. At times, pleasantries are exchanged by passers-by saying hello, but most of the time, people ignore each other. Contact on Cavalier Drive is minimal and people seem to avoid each other. During the evening hours, contact dwindles even more. There are not many sidewalk users at this

time, and who are out tend to be loud teenagers who make other children and adult users extremely uncomfortable. Others who use the sidewalks during the day and evening are usually waiting for public transportation or are on their way to another destination. This is true especially at night, because most of the businesses are closed except for the restaurants located near Portage Avenue. As well, there are only two pay phones on Cavalier Drive: one at Portage Avenue and Cavalier and another at the Mac's Convenience Store (Photo 1 and Photo 12). The lack of pay phones raises the concern that there is not adequate potential to phone for help for people in trouble at any time of day. With the lack of pedestrian traffic throughout the day and evening and only two pay phones on the street, the feeling of street and sidewalk safety is not present at a comfortable level.

Another safety concern about Cavalier Drive involves the lighting system. Lighting is not an issue during the daytime for obvious reasons, but it is in the evening/nighttime hours. Cavalier Drive at and near Portage Avenue is well lit, you can see everything around you; however, as you travel down the street lighting becomes sparser. The lack of adequate lighting as one travels down the street is a cause for fear among all users. However, this fear is usually highest among women, because of the perception that women are more likely to be assaulted than any other group in society.

Another issue associated with idea of sidewalk safety and contact is the assimilation of children. Children are often regular users of city streets, with their mothers or with other children. However, one does not see many children along Cavalier Drive. When children are out, they are usually coming home from the Junior High just down Ness Avenue or for the elementary school on Morgan Crescent. The sidewalks are unsafe for children to play on or near. This is because of the traffic on the street and the lack of "eyes on the street" to watch the children play. Although Cavalier Drive is lined with housing, most of the homeowners do not let their children in the front yards. The children play in the back, so this is where the majority of the adults are watching. They are not watching children who might be playing on the sidewalk. Therefore, the issue of security is raised. This is a major concern for women, because they are the primary care-givers and thus the watchers of children. And mothers are concerned with the safety of the children on city streets.

Another amenity that Cavalier Drive and the immediate surrounding area lacks is the park. Parks are vital to neighbourhood life. They add diversity and bring people of the area together. Cavalier Drive has some open space, but it looks neglected and there appears to be no real reason why this open space exists (Photo 3). In the summer, teenagers can be found throwing a football or playing catch in this open area, but is not very safe due to the amount of traffic that passes by this area. Women with children tend to be the primary users of city parks. If there are no parks nearby, and if the street is not safe for children to play on, then there is a serious neighbourhood design flaw needs to be addressed. Women and their children become isolated from other people in their neighbourhood. They are not able to form contacts with neighbours, which results

in the lack of security on the street and difficulty in assimilating their children into urban life. If a city street is not the best place for people to come into contact with each other, then a park is a viable alternative.

Neither of these opportunities for contact is available on Cavalier Drive.

The final source of concern is located in the area of Saskatchewan Avenue and Cavalier Drive (Photo 8 to Photo 10). This area is what Jane Jacobs calls a border vacuum. Saskatchewan Avenue is lined by a rail road track, which creates a sense of nothingness. There is no diversity at this end of the street. The only people who use this area are the ones who live there. When diversity is lacking in an area, there is usually a likelihood of increased incidence of crime. This is because there are few people watching the area. Along with the lack of surveillance, lighting in the evening is sparse, which creating pockets of nothingness—blank spaces of darkness. This in itself welcomes crime. Crimes that may occur include: assault, vandalism, robbery and break and enter. The presence of a border vacuum again produces concern for women. The bottom/back portion of Cavalier Drive is all residential, which is where the majority of women are located. Thus, there is the potential for residents to be concerned about safety and security within their own homes.

The environment around us has a direct effect on how we perceive the world. What women need to realize is that, "our struggles for equality take place within a built environment that has been quite literally man made" (Eichler, 1995, p. 26). Because of this reality, the basic design of cities is an impediment to women ever achieving full equality. Like urban design in macrocosm, the design of Cavalier Drive is disadvantageous to women. The design of the street overlooks women's needs for spiritual, social and physical space. The length of the street, its shape, its appearance (all photos), the location of businesses, the intersections, the lack of pay phones, the dearth of crosswalks, the lack of a park, the design of the sidewalk and its uses, and the inadequacy of transportation all place women at a disadvantage. These elements of the street produce negative effects ranging in severity for all women—including those who do not live on or near Cavalier Drive. Major issues of concern to women that emerge from the analysis include: time, security/safety for both their children and themselves, lack of contact with others which isolates them, the idea of being trapped on the public transit system and so on. I believe that the design of Cavalier Drive reinforces the sexist and dominant roles of men relative to women in society.

It is hard to know what to do to change the design of existing city streets that do not meet the needs of all their users. What we can do is become active in our local area and make suggestions and take a stand when developers move in to construct new city streets, neighbourhoods and/or new cities. If we merely stand by and let things happen with respect to city design, we are only condoning and submitting to the roles that society has delegated to us, which contributes to our own inequality and marginalization. The first logical step for women who want to implement urban change is to become aware of how their environment directly affects their lives and of how the street where they live reflects and contributes to their "place" in society.

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APPENDIX

INTRODUCTION

When looking at the following pictures, try to see the length of the street. The pictures go in sequence, either looking down or up the street; therefore, there is some overlap.

As well, when looking at the pictures try to take notice of the shape of the street—when it is curved and when it is straight.

In addition, pay attention to details— the pay phone, the businesses, the intersections, the crosswalks and the like.

Finally, I ask you to take note of the figure provided at the beginning of this analysis (Figure 1). It is a classic example of how society places men and women in their societal roles. The man is located on the right, he is driving the car and his eyes are covered; thus, giving off the idea of power because of these elements. The woman is located on the left, she is merely a passenger with the dog in the car, and her eyes are uncovered. These elements give the feeling of vulnerability and submissiveness of the part of the women. Although some may see this picture as just a cartoon, it reinforces where men and women are placed within society and in turn, within cities.

By looking for and paying attention to all of these criteria you will hopefully be able to see and understand to a greater extent the content of my analysis of Cavalier Drive.



Photo 1: Portage Avenue and Cavalier Drive intersection.



Photo 2: Looking down Cavalier Drive from the intersection of Portage Avenue and Cavalier Drive. The first strip mall can be seen on the left, and on the right, the corner of the K-Mart. The second pedestrian crossing can be seen at the back of the photo.



Photo 3: Looking down Cavalier Drive. Residential housing on the left, and open space on the right.



Photo 4: Looking up Cavalier Drive at the intersection of Ness Avenue at Cavalier Drive. One of the stop signs on this intersection can be seen in the distance. Residential housing is on both sides of the street.



Photo 5: Looking down Cavalier Drive towards the second strip mall. The third pedestrian crossing can be seen in this picture.



Photo 6: Looking up Cavalier Drive. The intersection of Hamilton Avenue and Cavalier Drive can be seen, along with the apartment complex to the right and gas station to the left.



Photo 7: Looking down Cavalier Drive. Residential housing on both sides of the street.



Photo 8: Looking up Cavalier Drive. Lumsden Avenue is located at the far corner. Residential housing is on both sides of the street.



Photo 9: Looking down Cavalier Drive towards Saskatchewan Avenue and Cavalier Drive intersection. Residential housing is on both sides of the street.



Photo 10: Intersection of Saskatchewan Avenue and Cavalier Drive can be seen. Residential housing on both sides of the street.



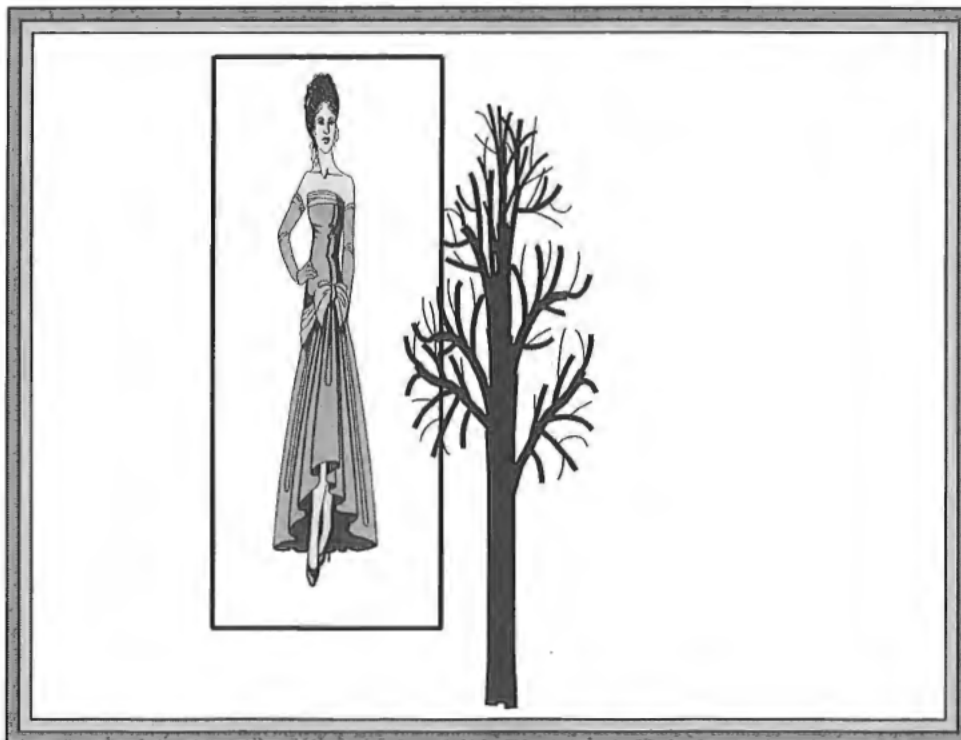
Photo 11: Apartment complex.



Photo 12: Second strip mall on Cavalier Drive.



Photo 13: Gas station and the second strip mall on Cavalier Drive.



"There are a few frail and small trees along the sidewalk to go hand-in-hand with the frail and small mannequins in the store windows" (Kirkbride).

Excerpts from “Ecofeminist Analysis of Graham Avenue” by Michelle Kirkbride

Ecofeminism . . . mirrors a definition by Tzeporah Berman. It means a “theory, a life practice and movement for social change which validates the connection of nature and gender oppression” (Berman, 1995, p. 1). Ecofeminist principles are not prevalent in many of our cities’ planning procedures. This is quite evident on Graham Avenue, a street in downtown Winnipeg, Manitoba. This is not to say that Graham Avenue is an example of a bad urban area. In actuality, it reflects a few exceptional planning principles and progressive urban features. Despite the few exceptions, Graham Avenue is dominated by large buildings, grey areas and retail stores including Eatons and The Bay.

Graham Avenue starts at The Bay on Vaughan and runs to Main Street. It is a relatively short block with many streets intersecting it. I observed Graham Avenue at 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. Graham is a mixture of some important urban features and many problems with the urban landscape. . . .

. . . For all its dullness, strain on the environment and lack of people, Graham Avenue is relatively safe. On my observational tour of Graham, I took along the safety audit kit provided by Winnipeg’s Safe City Committee. According to the safety audit, the street rates well on a variety of features related to urban safety. The first was lighting, and it rated very well. There were many relatively bright street lights, no lights out, and, of great concern to women, the alleys were lighted. None of the lights was obscured by trees (there are no trees!) and the sidewalks are bright. For women, who are often the object of urban violence, lighting is very important in warding off an attack or recognizing a dangerous situation. The lack of green space helps, in one respect, to provide clear sightlines, but these are often blurred by tall buildings. In fact, the buildings are worse than trees, because they are taller and more effective and obscuring what lies ahead. The alleys, a potential place for attackers, are wide and short, making it easier to see and avoid potential problems. The audit kit offers suggestions to make sightlines easier; angled corners would be a definite benefit to Graham Avenue, and are already in place at the Shoppers Drug Mart. It has an angled corner, which improves visibility.

An important component of urban safety is isolation. . . . there is often no reason for people to use the street, so not surprisingly, people don’t. After 10 p.m., there are virtually no people around, and no places open for people to run into for safety. There are no signs directing a person to a safe place, and very few public telephones to use in case of emergency. As well, there is no one patrolling the area. People are for the most part anonymous and not interested in others on the street. However, with the short blocks and wide alleys, there are many opportunities to turn corners.

The safety audit kit asks that the land is used for, and as I have already stated, it is used for stores, offices and parking lots. This is good for the daytime hours, as there is always a place to get help, but after 8 p.m., even the tattoo store is closed, making help harder to come by.

An important component of urban safety is the “feel” of the area and its maintenance. If, as Jane Jacobs suggests, the street is lively and warm, with a mix of people, and if it is well maintained, it feels safer. Urban “slums” and dangerous areas are usually assumed to be run down and dirty. Graham Avenue is not. The street is well cared for, and there are minimal graffiti. .

. . . There were no blatantly sexist or racist slogans, and no signs of vandalism, which gives the street the appearance of safety, even after hours. For the most part, there is simply nothing to do after business hours, so the street is avoided. . . . The street is relatively safe, but dull. Without sacrificing its safety—in fact, increasing it—the natural environment could be incorporated into the streetscape and help to keep people there in order to maintain a greater sense of street life. . . .

Aside from the Women’s Health Clinic and cultural icons such as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet building and the public library, women appear on the street in traditional roles. Women are the main cashiers in the department stores, and many are secretaries in the office buildings. In the *three* bridal shops that line Graham Avenue, the mannequins are all thin, leaving the impression that people larger than a stick do not marry. These exalt women in the traditional role of bride.

Women and nature are also relegated to “trophy” roles in the streetscape, as there are a few frail and small trees along the sidewalk to go hand-in-hand with the frail and small mannequins in the store windows. This gives the impression that men can control the role they want women and nature to play in their surroundings. . . . women and the environment play a subordinate role. . . .

There are things that could be done to Graham Avenue to improve its “patriarchal” structure. At least one of the parking lots could be turned into a small park, which would help bring more people onto the street, enhancing safety and creating a livelier atmosphere. This would ameliorate the natural environment and perhaps help to absorb vehicle emissions and provide some much-needed oxygen.

Adding a residential building would help to attract different types of people to the street and provide a reason to use it after office hours. This would give women more reason to use the street and lighten some of the dullness of the area.

In conclusion, Graham Avenue keeps women and nature in their traditional roles. Men are the dominant force, and women and nature are “in their place.” The street has too many parking lots, too many stores and too many large buildings. . . . the structures are planned for the business sector, without reference to women, children or nature. Graham Avenue has a few redeeming features—the clinic, the library, wide alleys and sidewalks—but for the most part, it is a street planned with thought only to the business sector at the expense of everyone and everything else. It is a typical downtown urban street, with the potential for vast improvements. I hope that some of these improvements will be made, and that urban design will start incorporating respect for all of humankind and nature.

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Photo 1: Empty benches on Graham Avenue



Photo 2: One of the bridal shops on Graham Avenue.

ECOFEMINISM AND URBAN PARKS

Karen Paquin

At first glance, it seems difficult to give a critique of city parks and greenery. They are an integral part of any city landscape. The natural elements of the city landscape help to moderate the oppressive skyline of concrete and glass that dominates most urban centres. The presence of nature among the artifices of human culture seems to be a hopeful sign for those who want to create a more ecologically sound city.

Yet parks and green space are not necessarily beneficial to cities simply because of the fact that they are allowed to exist. The creation of parks is influenced by the dominant male ideology which views the oppression of women and nature as givens in our society. The effects of gender and science have worked together to create parks that are inhospitable to women. Parks are areas of urban land in which non-human life forms are shaped and moulded to grow and develop in highly structured ways. For scientists, parks can be seen as an outdoor test tube.

Looking at parks from an ecofeminist perspective allows new insights into the development of parks, and the consequences of their creation for women specifically. The question of how parks can be changed to be more receptive to women is complicated, but a few ideas will be briefly suggested.

GENDER AND SCIENCE

"We who have been born into this civilization have inherited a habit of mind" (Griffin, 1989, p. 7). This "habit of mind" that we have acquired is a gendered way of looking at the world. Understanding the social construction of gender is crucial to understanding all aspects of human relations, political and social structures, and our relationship with the world around us:

In virtually every culture, gender difference is a pivotal way in which humans identify themselves as persons, organize social relations, and symbolize processes. And in virtually all cultures, what ever is thought of as manly is more highly valued than what is thought of as womanly (Harding, 1986, p. 18).

Therefore, aggression, hierarchical decision-making processes, rational thinking and the importance of culture are defined as masculine and are highly valued in our society. Passivity, inclusionary lateral decision-making processes, emotion and respect for nature are defined as feminine and considered ineffective principles on which our society should operate. This is evident in the way our political institutions are structured, the excess of war and competition in our society, and the ecological disasters which threaten our planet.

The gender differences of men and women are based on biology, but are not biologically determined. That is, we expect males and females to have different values and different ways of interacting with the world. Males and females are taught to be women and men. And because women have a different set of values than

men, they are considered inferior to men. Virginia Woolf stated that “though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes” (Collard and Contrucci, 1988, p. 40). Women have been taught that there is something wrong with their eyes, which requires them to wear the glasses of men.

Scientific rationality has helped to reinforce and promote the dominance of masculine values in our society. The dominant White Western male rationality has been based on “linear, dichotomized thought patterns that divide reality into dualisms” (Ruether, 1989, p. 148). The dualisms that exist in our society of man/woman, man(culture)/nature, emotion/reason, are used as the foundation of science. Science, then, further exploits these socially constructed dualisms as “natural.”

The use of scientific method has been disastrous to all life forms, human and non-human alike. Scientific method “focuses on one aspect of nature, isolating it from all else, . . . impinging on it and measuring everything that happens to it” (Suzuki, 1987, p. 1). By isolating aspects of nature, we fail to take into account the impact a small decision may have in a broader ecological context. For example, a scientist may introduce an exotic tree from a tropical area into a nearby locale as an experiment to see how well the tree can do in its new surroundings. This is a completely legitimate experiment from a scientific point of view. Yet this experiment fails to address the possibility of disastrous consequences for the trees native to the area.

ECOFEMINISM

Ecofeminism is grounded in an interpretation of history that sees parallels between the denigration of women and nature (Sells, 1991, p. 72). Ending the oppression of women is intrinsically linked with ending the oppression of nature; one will not, or cannot, occur without the other.

There is some argument among ecofeminists as to how we should treat the relationship that women and nature have been given in our culture. Some ecofeminists believe that women’s ties to nature should be accepted and celebrated. Others believe that women’s alleged closer ties to nature are only cultural and institutional constructs, and should be analysed and criticized as such. This discussion is not crucial to this paper. What does matter here is that women *are* culturally associated more closely with nature than men, and in this culture, a connection to nature has helped strengthen women’s inferior position to men’s. This has affected the way in which cities, parks and women are influenced by each other. According to an ecofeminist approach, any attempt to better women’s experiences within the city must be accompanied by a shift in which we view nature’s place in the city as well. In our gendered political system, neither women nor nature ever rank very high on the agenda.

Why have women and nature been grouped together and then debased in our culture? Part of the blame can be put on social scientists’ “glorification of the hunt” that author Andrée Collard examines. By glorifying the hunt as a major evolutionary step we are able to “justify a culture of brutality towards, and rape

of all that is considered “fair game” (Collard and Contrucci, 1988, p. 34). Women and all aspects of nature are considered “fair game” in our masculine culture. Collard goes on to say further that when we think of something as “prey” there is no attachment to it. This emotional detachment allows for objectification, which is the “basis of the hunting system” (ibid., p. 39).

Mary Daly outlines four methods which are “essential to the games [or hunts] of the fathers” in the quest to maintain and reinforce the dominance of man. Daly’s examples are as follows:

1. The erasure of women (e.g., of witch-burning in patriarchal scholarship).
2. Reversal (e.g., patriarchal creation myths where the female is produced from the male—Eve is created from Adam, Athena from Zeus).
3. False polarization (e.g., male-defined “feminism” against male-defined “sexism” as it is played out in the media).
4. Divide and conquer (e.g., token women placed in patriarchal professions to “kill off” feminists) (Daly, 1978, p. 8).

These four “methods” can be used to describe women’s relationship to urban centres and public parks. Daly’s list can be altered to use examples appropriate to women’s place within cities.

THE ERASURE OF WOMEN

Women are “erased” from cities in numbers of ways. Women’s traditional realm is that of the home, the “private sphere.” Women are erased from the “public sphere” of urban life by the physical divisions found in urban layouts. The ideal home is in the suburbs, far away from the business districts of the urban core. For those women who do live, or have major contacts, within the urban core area, fear and violence erase women’s presence. In Canada, one in four women will be sexually assaulted (City of Toronto, 1990, p. 2). If women experience some kind of attack in the “wrong areas” of the city, they are further victimized by admonishments that they should have known better than to be there in the first place. Women are further erased from urban life by their fears for their physical safety after dark, even those who can be found in the “proper” suburban areas. More than half of Canadian women are afraid to walk in their neighbourhoods after dark (ibid., p. 1). Women are especially vulnerable in parks after dark. Poor lighting, plentiful hiding spots and isolated areas combine to make parks something for women to avoid.

REVERSAL

Within cities, the survival of trees and wildlife depends on human intervention. Designers find room to place trees among buildings, rather than the other way around. Trees have poor growing conditions within

the city, suffering from inferior soil quality, vandalism and spaces which must be “engineered” to allow them to grow (Beavis, 1993, p. 14). It often seems that non-human life has a place within the urban landscape only because of the benevolence of city planners.

From an ecofeminist perspective, the intense control that humans have over the “natural” elements of the landscape parallels and reinforces the domination of women within the urban environment. Women’s spaces within the city have also been engineered by men.

FALSE POLARIZATION

“Man” against “nature” is a “false polarization” addressed in ecofeminist theory. From weed and pest control to the careful positioning of trees and perfectly manicured lawns, city dwellers are in a constant battle with the natural elements that exist within city limits. Instead of working with nature, we fight against it, even though “plants can get along without humans, but we cannot exist without photosynthesis” (Ruether, 1989, p. 146).

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Women have been able to obtain positions on city councils and within city bureaucracies. This is often felt to be a way to help solve the “women” problem for urban areas. Although women may have different priorities and operating methods than their male colleagues, women must function within a system defined by masculine values. Many women who have found success in politics at any level have done so because of their ability to be “one of the boys.”

Added to the predicament of women’s place in the urban political system is the presence of well-meaning programs that, on the surface, seem to help women. For example, the Parks and Recreation Department in Toronto offers free Wen-Do self-defence programs to women (City of Toronto, 1990, p. 2). Although this is a practical program designed to help women feel less vulnerable in Toronto’s parks and streets, it by no means solves the problem. This kind of program implies that violence against women is a normal part of urban life, and that the best thing that can be done is to teach women to fight. It does not address the root of the problem. Still, it seems that the Parks Department in Toronto is paying attention to the problem of violence against women.

CITIES AND THE (EXPECTED) FUNCTION OF PARKS

Cities have been described as “humanity’s greatest works of art” (Colnett, 1993, p. 38). In many ways, cities are the most significant expression of “man’s” triumph over nature. Cities and nature “appear to be incompatible with each other, even antithetical” (Beavis, 1993, p. 3). In our culture, the tension between

human being (or man) and the natural environment is often described in terms of a battle that has been fought. If cities represent our culture's successful war against nature, then it is interesting that cities have as much green area as they do. Despite the inferior status ascribed to anything regarded as natural, mainstream modern city plans demand the presence of green space (Johnson, 1989, p. 149).

Authors Logan and Molotch argue that the commodification of place is a fundamental aspect of urban life (Logan and Molotch, 1987, p. 1). Land and buildings have both exchange value and use value, which stand in contradiction to one another. The way in which the tension between exchange and use value is regulated is the function of the urban political system (*ibid.*, p. 2). Exchange value is defined as the money to be gained from a place, such as rent or property taxes. Use value cannot be defined in monetary terms. It is rather the attachment one may have to an area or a piece of land and the pleasure derived from it (a home rather than a house). In our market-driven economy, most urban parks would seem to have exchange value only if the land was sold to developers. In fact, Jane Jacobs found in her research that parks are rarely economic assets to a community (Jacobs, 1961, p. 117). It would seem, then, that parks have significant use value for urban dwellers.

City planners and citizens' groups began to see parks as essential elements of urban areas by the end of the nineteenth century. Trees, grass and ponds were to "ennoble" a city's inhabitants as well as provide fresh air to breathe (Johnson, 1989, p. 149). The "City Beautiful" movement wanted to recast public spaces according to the "genteel values of beauty, dignity and order" that the upper classes enjoyed away from city centres (*ibid.*, p. 25). The quality of the physical and visual environment was thought to have a major impact on the morals, lifestyles and world views held by a city's inhabitants (*ibid.*, p. 24). Large-scale parks such as Central Park in New York City were created with these ideas in mind (Logan and Molotch, 1987, p. 152).

The existence of parks or important by city planners today. Parks modern cities. Parks offer recreation sensitive natural features and as habitats

Parks and green space have benefits for city residents. Interaction with "natural scenes" has been found to promote relaxation and altruistic behaviour, and improve residents' sense of social responsibility (Beavis, 1993, p. 6). An abundance of natural features and a sense of beauty rank high on many urban dwellers' lists of what they feel is important to city life (Johnson, 1989, p. 45).



"nature" in cities is still considered serve a number of functions in our areas for residents, protection for for wildlife (Johnson, 1989, p. 150).

also been found to have psycho-social

It is certainly unappealing to think of a city landscape completely void of trees, grass and birds, *etc.* Yet despite the apparent benefits to cities, Jane Jacobs the importance parks are given in urban planning. It often seems like Jacobs is arguing that parks are unnecessary and wasteful uses of space within cities in her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. However, what Jacobs is critical of is the presence of green space for its own sake, i.e., park areas which serve no other purpose for an area's residents than to add a different colour to the urban landscape. Jacobs is critical of the idea that the creation of a park will automatically improve the quality of life for those who live in proximity to it. Parks are affected by the area in which they are situated, not the other way around (Jacobs, 161, p. 124). If a community is having problems, the creation of a park is not going to be able to solve them.

If parks are created in areas where there is little input or interest on the part of the area residents, the park will be underused. Jacobs cites underused parks as a major security threat for those who do have contact with the park area (*ibid.*, p. 123). Jacobs also criticizes the notion that city parks are automatically considered the best place for children to play. Jacobs states that there are more adults to supervise children when they play on the streets (*ibid.*, p. 107). As well, Jacobs points out that many gangs do their fighting in parks and on playgrounds (*ibid.*, p. 93).

Even though Jacobs does not analyse parks in terms of what kind of trees and plants are found in city parks, and how they are arranged, Jacobs offers material that can be used by ecofeminists. Jacobs examines the issue of safety in public parks, and safety is an issue all feminist must deal with. Jacobs also lends support to the idea that it is the quality, rather than the quantity of open space that should be the priority for urban dwellers and planners (Beavis, 1993, p. 2).

ECOFEMINISM AND URBAN PARKS

At first glance, it may seem that an abundance of urban parks and green space would be praised by ecofeminists. After all, parks can be seen as "islands of nature" amid the "works of man" (Johnson, 1989, p. 149). Parks may be considered islands, but they are man-made islands. The corralling of trees and grass into a small area of land amid the concrete and glass of an urban centre may exist as a reminder to some of the beauty that exists in the "wild" that can be found outside the city limits. More importantly, park areas in cities serve as reminders of the "nature" that "man" has conquered within our patriarchal culture. Nature is scary to our masculine culture. It can be unpredictable and wild. This undermines the order that city planners and scientists strive for. The only way that nature's presence can be allowed is if it is strictly controlled. By creating a park in which trees are strategically planted and monitored by professionals, the power which nature has been assigned in our culture is once again undermined.

One influence in the creation and design of parks in cities, which should be important to ecofeminists,

is the Judeo-Christian traditions that have permeated Western society. "God the first garden made, and the first city Cain" (Moore, 1988, p. 6). City parks can be seen as an attempt to recreate a part of Eden in the midst of "man's" urban chaos. The very phrase "Garden of Eden," the paradise of Judeo-Christian myth, implies a specific way of interacting with nature. A garden implies order, a specific design which nature must follow, while contained within a specific, bounded location. We are not interested in wilderness, but rather the best way in which to manipulate non-human life forms in an attempt to recreate for ourselves the perfect garden, the "paradise" that humans have been taught, through religion, to seek.

In her examination of patriarchy, Mary Daly critiques the concept of "paradise" which exists in Western theology and religious myth. Paradise is not only what humans lost upon their exit from Eden, but also what is waiting for them in heaven. According to Daly, patriarchal paradise is stagnating and deadening (Daly, 1978, p. 6). Daly outlines her reasons for making this claim as follows:

A primary definition of Paradise is "pleasure park." The walls of the Patriarchal Pleasure Park represent the condition of being perpetually parked, locked in the parking lot of the past. A basic meaning of park is "game preserve." The fathers' foreground is precisely this: an arena where the wilderness of nature and of women's Selves is domesticated, preserved. It is the place for the preservation of females who are the "fair game," that they may be served to these predatory park owners and service them at their pleasure. Patriarchal paradise is the arena of games, the place where women are silenced, where the law is: Please the Patrons (ibid., p. 7).

The idea of women and nature being "fair game" is one that Andrée Collard also emphasized. Although Daly is discussing paradise in terms of its theological importance, her comments about paradise can be applied literally to urban parks and women's relationship with them. For women alone after dark, parks become an arena in which men can pick off their victims at random.

The nature that exists in parks is not allowed to be wild. It is domesticated and coaxed into conforming to the plans of the men in charge. There should be no doubt that the traditional planning of urban parks requires strict control over the vegetation and other "wildlife" that is found there. The creation of urban parks in Canada and the United States has been modelled on the aesthetics of English estates and royal hunting reserves, rather than as a means to preserve the native "wilderness" of North America (Beavis, 1993, p. 15). Literature which describes the process of creating the perfect garden or park speaks of "shaping" the natural environment (Moore, 1988, p. 6). Park planners are still following Alexander Pope's eighteenth century advice to "consult the genius of a place." Instead of allowing an area to develop on its own, gardening experts are advised to "seek an understanding of the potential natural perfection of a site and to assist its emergence, where necessary, by discreet intervention" (ibid., p. 2). The implication is that nature is not perfect unless moulded by human hands.

What can be done about the state of urban parks from an ecofeminist perspective? Certainly, plowing

under existing parks is not the answer. A short-term compromise would seem to be to allow the grass to grow and end much of the weed and bug spraying that goes on in city parks. As well, things such as better lighting, Wen-Do courses and constant patrols of city parks will make conditions there more hospitable to the presence of women. Certainly, women will not be entirely safe in city parks (or on city streets) until we are able radically to undermine the patriarchal values our society rests on. As long as women are considered "fair game" by men, their position within the urban landscape will not change very much.

According to ecofeminist, to end the oppression of women, we must also end the oppression of nature. Once again, it may be helpful to look at the writing of Mary Daly. Instead of the "stagnating" paradise found in patriarchal theology, Daly offers a concept of paradise which is "cosmic spinning and not containment within walls. Rather it is movement that is not containable, weaving around and past walls, leaving them in the past" (Daly, 1978, p. 6).

We must radically alter our view of nature in cities. Nature should not be considered something that can be contained within the boundaries of a park. It should be considered an intrinsic part of our daily lives, rather than something just to visit on week ends. This also includes a radical reorientation of the running of households along ecologically friendly lines. We must recognize that nature is vital to our own survival. Once we begin to live in opposition to the masculinist division of man against nature, we have gone far towards ending nature's, and along with it women's, oppression,

Whether or not one takes an ecofeminist approach to urban problems, the issues of preservation of nature, and the creation of a more ecologically aware city, must become a priority for city planners and citizens alike. Approximately 80 percent of North Americans live in urban areas (Beavis, 1993, p. 2). Urban "insensitivity to nature can lead to the degradation of non-urban ecosystems" (ibid., p. 2). And as cities continue to encroach in areas once considered "wilderness" or "natural," urban sensitivity to ecological problems is crucial. Since "nature" already exists in cities in the form of parks, they are perhaps a good place to try to introduce a reorientation from nature's role in our cities, to cities' roles in nature.

Certainly, ecofeminists are not the only ones to criticize the relationship that now exists between most cities and non-human life forms. Yet ecofeminism, unlike other schools of thought, never loses sight of the fact that women and nature have together been oppressed in our cities. Women's full participation is required significantly to change our relationship with the natural world and urban landscape.

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A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF POLO PARK SHOPPING CENTRE

Richard Lupu

Analysing the world from a feminist perspective is difficult for any man, not excluding myself.

Taking a feminist class might have made me aware of women's issues, but it certainly did not hit home. I listened, I took notes, but I could not relate or understand. However, during the last few weeks I have been moved like I have never been moved before. In order to comprehend the true meaning of feminism, I had to "become a woman," thus I role-played.

On Saturday, March 18, 1995, I took part in my own experiment, by dressing as a woman. My main objective was to observe how women are treated in a patriarchal society and what is expected of them.

Dressing like a woman was much harder than I thought. My female friend Karen and I went shopping for my disguise early that morning, at a local second-hand store. The fact of the matter is that I have always been under the impression that the only reason women spent more time than men shopping for their attire was for pure pleasure, but, in fact, it is that they, as "WOMEN," have to accommodate to the rules of style and appearance.

The first skirt I saw, I was ready to buy. My friend Karen literally ripped it from my hands and insisted we continue to look. Apparently, there are different styles for different-sized women. Larger women (like myself) have to dress more conservatively. While we were looking, Karen was lecturing me on how everything has to match in colour, and at the same time, suit my target age, which was approximately forty-five.

After an hour and a half, we finally settled on a skirt. However, when we looked for shoes, there were simply none in my size. They were all too narrow—I couldn't even fit my big toe in any of them. When Karen had to go to work, she dropped me off at home where my mother was eagerly waiting to dress me up like another daughter.

My metamorphosis into a woman was very time-consuming. My mother insisted that I had to have a matching blouse and overcoat; left to myself, I would have grabbed the first shirt I saw in her closet. Once the "matching" was done, I assumed that the preparation would be easier. By the end of dressing, shaving my face, painting my finger nails, putting on cover-up, blush and mascara, I realized I was wrong.

My first lesson as a "woman" was about the impracticality of women's appearances. I simply cannot comprehend why society dictates that a woman should wear makeup, or follow strict fashion rules. Normally when I wake up in the morning, I shower, brush my hair, brush my teeth and pick out my clothes (my criterion for picking out my clothes is, "If it's clean, wear it!"). I do this all within 35 minutes. Is this fair to women?

As noon came, I was ready to "hit the pavement" as a new-born woman. Although I was not about to do this alone, for a female friend of mine, Laurie, decided to accompany me, and play the role of my companion. Later in the day, she ended up playing the role of my daughter.



Photo 1: At the entrance to the mall.



Photo 2: "Blending in."

Laurie and I decided to go to a typical suburban shopping mall in Winnipeg called Polo Park; for that is what we girls do: "We shop." My biggest fear was whether or not I looked like a woman. I realized that my feminist analysis would be ruined if I stood out and looked like a cross-dresser.

Throughout the rest of this paper, I will share my experience by guiding you through a series of photos.

* * *

In Photo 1, you will see a young couple and myself entering the mall (the young couple is Laurie's brother and his girlfriend, who hitched a ride with us). Laurie is the photographer. For the most part, Laurie and I wandered around the mall on our own, and the couple went in a different direction.

As I stated previously, Laurie and I took the role of being daughter and mother. This made my role more convincing, for it was easy for people to classify me as her Rumanian mother who did not speak English (I am of Rumanian heritage and speak Rumanian). This enabled Laurie to speak for me.

As we entered the mall, Laurie whispered, "You're walking like a man." I was walking like a man? What does that mean? Could society actually shape the way people walk? I thought the way you walked was innate. How do you walk like a woman? After attempting several times to walk like a woman, she told me to stop before I brought attention to myself.

After my experience, by talking to a feminist, I found out why women walk like women and men walk like men. Apparently, due to the fact that we live in a patriarchal society, men are generally more confident and feel that they are in charge. This confidence feeds their egos (not excluding my own), and, as men feel invincible, this is reflected in their walk. We men take up more space, and for the most part our egos are too big for us to be concerned with safety in public spaces, which is why I cannot address the important women's issue of safety. As a man with such an ego, I did not feel unsafe as a woman, perhaps uncomfortable, but not unsafe. The day we chose to do this experiment was Manitoba's 125th anniversary, which the mall was celebrating by holding many different shows.

* * *

The first thing we did was watch a show with other people to see if I could blend in. As you can see from Photo 2, people did not seem to be uneasy around me, and generally accepted me as part of the crowd.

Zellers was the only store we went into that accommodated my large female physique (Photo 3). However, the clothes available in my size were very unappealing according to societal norms. I was told afterwards by my mother that there are a few women's "plus" stores that accommodate larger individuals, but the majority cater to the needs of the thin women.

As a male, I never realized the amount of pressure society puts on women to be "thin and attractive" so that can be put out on display for "the patriarch." As a relatively large man, I have never had any trouble



Photo 3: Shopping for clothing.



Photo 4: Me and a "thin half-naked mannequin."

walking into any store and being fitted for clothes. In my guise as a woman, I tried a fashionable shoe store. Just like the second-hand store, it did not have shoes in my size.

Photos 4 and 5 show “thin half-naked models” out on display. As a man, when I walked by these displays I had been fairly desensitized to them. As a woman, it became a reality that this is the way women “should be,” and I was unable to find my size.

In contrast, I did not find any male mannequins that were not fully clothed. Photo 6 shows a typical (fully dressed) male mannequin.

* * *

The Mannequin store (Photo 7) is a clear example of what society expects women’s appearances to be. The name alone implies that women’s bodies should be shaped like the artificial “mannequin.” When we walked in, the sales women automatically assumed that we were shopping for my thin “daughter” Laurie. I guess I’m just too fat!

Photo 8 was taken in a aesthetician’s store called Milieu. This store shows how important looks are in society, since it is devoted entirely to cosmetics.

Cosmetic application is an art in itself. Women must be able to choose makeup that matches their complexion, hair style, bone structure, *etc.* Trying to figure out all the right combinations of colours presented in this photo is like trying to win a lottery, in my view.

* * *

After visiting the supermarket (Photo 9) and sports store (Photo 10), I began to wonder what makes certain domains “feminine” or “masculine.” The supermarket’s flower department was geared towards women, while the sports store was geared towards men. The bright neon light in the background of Photo 9 spells out “fresh and fancy,” which is clearly a “dainty” title that most men wouldn’t be caught dead using in their vocabulary.

Most of the advertising and products in the sports store were male-oriented, with the exception of a small women’s clothing area, which, by the way, was stereotypical in nature. Apparently the main athletic activities that women engage in are aerobics and tanning on the beach, so of course spandex and bathing suits are their main sporting attire.

The flower department is probably considered “feminine” because of the association of hothouse flowers with nurture. These flowers must be nurtured, so that they can grow into beautiful, cascading blooms. Women have always been “closer to nature,” especially in the past (in the industrialized world); in the Third World, women are still the main agricultural providers for their households. This is why we refer to nature as “Mother Nature” and the planet as “Mother Earth.”

Sporting goods stores cater mostly to men because of the patriarchal values embedded in society.



Photo 5: Portrayal of women in a typical lingerie store; more "thin half-naked mannequins."



Photo 6: Fully clothed male mannequin.

As mentioned earlier, men feel invincible or tough to a certain degree. This toughness is equated in our culture with the primitive, and with dominant males in the Animal Kingdom. Since women are marginalized and have less opportunity to move into managerial positions, the male "Big Wigs" invest in male-dominated sports which are promoted in these (usually) male-owned stores.

It is not uncommon for men to say to a friend when playing a sport, "You play like a girl!" I have heard many men say that because men are generally physically stronger, male-dominated professional sports are better.

* * *

Photo 11 might be interpreted as showing my "feminine" nurturing side in a pet store. It did not happen too often, but the woman looking at me skeptically in the photo might have suspected that I was a man.

It was quite clear that in this pet shop there was not very good accommodation for the disabled. The aisles were cramped and there was not room for wheelchair access. I might not have noticed this if not for a person in a wheelchair who could not get through. Feminists work towards equal rights not just for women but for all marginalized groups. We know that disability rights have a long way to go if a simple thing like wheelchair access is not accommodated in many businesses.

* * *

Photo 12 (novelty shop) is an indication that women's issues are becoming more diffused in society. Women are willing publicly to take a stand against the sexual expectations and desires of men. The shirt is a prime example of men's reactions towards women's stance on sexuality (Forlanski, 1995).

Photo 13 (same shop) is an example of the patriarchal belief that bigger is better in male competition to win the attention of women. Feminism doesn't judge men on their "size," but rather on their intellectual and emotional qualities. The photo typifies men exploiting *themselves* in order to exploit women's sexuality (Forlanski, 1995).

* * *

Through the types of clothing, mannequin displays, makeup boutiques and many other products that I observed from the vantage point of a "woman," the mall illustrated to me what is expected of women in our patriarchal society. What I did not get out of my experience in the mall is how women are treated by men, since the majority of stores in the shopping centre were geared towards women, with women employees. For the most part, we were treated with respect.

To observe how women are treated in a much more overtly patriarchal institution, we decided to go to a car dealership.

* * *



Photo 7: "Mannequin" shop.



Photo 8: Makeup boutique.



Photo 9: Floral department in supermarket.



Photo 10: Women's department in sporting goods shop: tanning and aerobics.



Photo 11: Showing my nurturing side in a pet shop; note woman's sceptical glance.



Photo 12: T-shirt reads: "I suffer from S.R.H. (Sperm Retention Headache)."



Photo 13: "Bigger is better."



Photo 14: Outside car dealership with "daughter" Laurie.



Photo 15: Me with the "feminine" Escort (LX).



Photo 16: Me in the high performance car: "Sometimes being a bitch is all a woman has to hold onto!"

In the past it has not been uncommon for me to hear from my female friends that they are not spoken to with respect in male-dominated spaces such as car dealerships. My usual reaction to them was, "I'm sorry to hear that." I was trying to be sympathetic, but it certainly did not hit home. Like most men, I tended to brush such things off, especially as they did not affect me.



My visit to a nearby car dealership (Photo 14a with "daughter" Laurie and Photo 14b, alone) allowed me to see for the first time to see what my female friends were actually talking about.

When we walked in, we started looking at cars with the expectation that a salesman (all were men) would approach us, looking interested. When several men walked in, the salesman immediately began to show them the cars on display.

We waited for *twenty minutes*, observing over our shoulders how the salesmen treated the men. They gave these people respect, giving them a tour around the showroom. They spoke as if the men were knowledgeable and serious customers.

My daughter (Laurie) and I finally *approached* a salesman. Laurie indicated that she was interested in a Ford Escort, and that her price range was \$17,000 to \$20,000 (the range for any type of Escort). He obviously then concluded that we were serious customers, since we knew up front what our price range was. The first thing he said—or better yet, the first thing he asserted—was, "You're not looking for the high performance Escort (GT), you're looking for the Escort (LX)." In other words, he was saying that she was not looking for a higher-powered "male" car, but rather she was looking for the safer "female"-type car. I could not believe the nerve of this guy! Who the heck is he to tell us what we are looking for?

He continued with the inspection of the LX, speaking to us like we were children. The only technical thing he said was that the car had a 1.9 litre engine. All he really did was list the safety features: anti-lock air brakes, airbags, *etc.* With the male customers, the first thing he did was pop the hood, not point out the automatic door locks, for all men know about engines (I don't). He treated them as equals.

Photo 15 is the "feminine" Ford Escort (LX) (note: a lot of room for a baby seat).

Photo 16 shows me jumping into the high performance Ford Escort (GT) right after his sales pitch (just to tick him off!).

No wonder women have to work twice as hard as men to earn managerial positions. Patriarchal institutions like car dealerships simply do not respect women's capabilities.

I have never considered myself to be sexist, but at the same time I never really understood what women have to put up with every day. My “female experience” has finally allowed me to view things from a different perspective, and at the same time to be more sympathetic to a feminist perspective.

Recently, I went to see a Stephen King movie called *Dolores Claiborne*. After being a “woman for a day,” I was able to interpret the movie not only from a male’s perspective but also from a woman’s perspective.

In one scene, Dolores goes to a bank to withdraw her money so she can send her daughter away to school to get her away from her abusive father. At the bank, the male banker says (I’m paraphrasing), “Sorry, but your husband already came by this morning and emptied the account.” Dolores cannot understand how this is possible. She says, “Only my name is on this account and I have the bank book!” He replies, “Yes, Ma’am, but he said the bank book was lost, which isn’t uncommon. I just followed STANDARD BANK PROCEDURE.” She argues, “That’s bullshit! If I came by this morning to empty *his* account you would for sure call him up to let him know! It’s because I’m a woman, isn’t it?” The banker stands in silence. (I felt a big chill creep up and down my spine).

Equality among people will only come when people like feminists continue to take a strong stand on what they believe. People can be convinced to adopt feminist values! I have!

Perhaps Dolores Claiborne said it best: “Sometimes being a bitch is all a woman has to hold onto!”

AND THAT IS EXACTLY HOW IF FELT WHEN I JUMPED INTO THE HIGH PERFORMANCE CAR!

REFERENCES

Forlanski, _____. 1995. Personal conversation with feminist friend.

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