



The Monthly Rag

Light to You by the Feminist & Gender Studies Student Advisory Council and Edited by Kadesha Caradine (FGS '16)



Barbie's 2016 Makeover By Corrina Leatherwood ('18)

This month, the cover of *Time* featured an all too familiar face. Her blonde hair and blue eyes stare out in profile. Silhouetted by the dim light, Barbie's new body is revealed. Her new figure is filled out and curvy, transformed from the sticklike and downright impossible proportions she

has sported for the last 50 years. It is safe to say that this makeover is long overdue. The caption asks, "Now can we stop talking about my body?" The subheading follows, "What Barbie's new shape says about American Beauty."

In "Barbie Gets a Groundbreaking Makeover," Caroline Bologna introduces the new Mattel "Fashionista Barbie" line, which includes not only curvy Barbie but petite and tall Barbie as well. This new collection will feature new skin tones and hairstyles for Barbie to sport, as well as a variety of new careers. On *Barbie.com* the story of the "evolution of Barbie" is presented, promising new possibilities for "imaginative and empowering roles." This vocabulary is clearly borrowed from the ongoing critiques Barbie has sustained over recent decades. Most notably, she has been criticized for her unrealistic body type. Numerous psychological studies have shown that the physically impossible proportions of Barbie have highly detrimental effects to the body image of young consumers. This is reflected in Barbie's "plummeting sales" in recent years.

Since her inception in 1959, Barbie has been marketed as "intentionally ambiguous" so that kids could identify with her and create narratives for themselves. However, Barbie has historically been anything but ambiguous. Barbie has been blue eyed, blonde haired, upper-middle class, and distinctly American. According to Karen Goldman in "La Princesa Plastica: Hegemonic and Oppositional Representations of *Latinidad* in Hispanic Barbie," Barbie reinforces hegemonic narratives about what it means to be beautiful (442). Although Mattel has marketed "ethnic" and "worldly" dolls, they are often clearly labeled as "other," or assimilated to look indistinguishably white (443). This sends the message that there is one way to be beautiful, and that ideal is literally unattainable for many minorities. For the first time in Barbie's history, Mattel's new line makes a concerted effort not to create "other" marginalized groups. One of the most popular children's toys in the world is beginning to actually reflect the children who use them.

According to Bologna, focus groups indicate that children are playing with the doll that look most like them, possibly perpetuating Barbie's intentional ambiguity. What Goldman describes as "the language of infinite possibility" is also articulated in Barbie's new career paths (including the career of the year—Computer Programmer), hair, and faces. Notably, several Black Barbies feature varying levels of curly hair, distinct from the straight-haired Black Barbie's of 2015. Another Barbie is featured with a short haircut, shaved on the sides. Long, straight hair has often been tied with hegemonic femininity, and these examples offer a huge departure from the dominant narrative. These new dolls offer new ways to be powerful and new ways to be beautiful. Much like the dolls themselves, what consumers and parents of consumers do with this makeover is what will foster change moving forward.

Why Kanye Doesn't Play with Anal Play By Rani Corak ('18)

The outrageousness of Kanye West's most recent public fight with his ex-girlfriend Amber Rose has caught a lot of attention. In response to harsh words exchanged between Kanye and her ex-boyfriend Wiz Khalifa, Rose tweeted "Awww @kanyewest are u mad I'm not around to play in ur asshole anymore?"

#FingersInTheBootyAssBitch." This was a dig obviously meant to undermine Kanye's masculinity as a straight-identifying man (because anal-play is strictly a homosexual act, right?). Kanye responded, "Exes can be mad but just know I never let them play with my ass...I don't do that...I stay away from that area all together," clearly reassuring Rose and the rest of the world of his masculinity and heterosexuality.

In a society that correlates anal sex with homosexuality, the suggestion that Kanye participated in and enjoyed receiving anal pleasure called his sexuality and masculinity into question. As stated by Chong-suk Han points in "Sexy Like a Girl and Horny Like a Boy," "The notion of masculinity is socially constructed, with the very definition of what is and is not masculine constantly negotiated and altered" (225). The construction of masculinity is a power play that only maintains its dominance by consistently belittling what it is not: feminine. A large part of being masculine is having sex with women, so men who sleep with men cannot be masculine. Hence, insinuating that Kanye was gay because of his sexual preferences belittled his fragile masculinity and caused him to issue a retaliation assuring everyone that he "stays away from that area all together."



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Ariel Winter and the Sexualization of Teenage Girls By Njeri Summey (FGS '17)

Eighteen-year-old Ariel Winter, best known for her role as Alex Dunphy in the ABC television show *Modern Family*, recently made headlines for arriving to the Screen Actors Guild Awards in a dress that bared scars from her recent breast-reduction surgery. Fans publicly inquired whether the exposure was accidental, and Winter answered through her Twitter account: "Guys there is a reason I didn't make an effort to cover up my scars! They are part of me and I'm not ashamed of them at all. :)" Although Winter has cited physical discomfort due to the size of her breasts as a reason for getting the surgery, the reason that she has spoken on most is the overt sexual attention that she has received from the media surrounding her breast size and body. It's important to note that Winter just turned eighteen at the end of January and debuted her surgery scars this past Sunday, which tells us that the majority of the body ridicule and comments that she's received occurred when she was underage.



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