

# A FemmeNist ManiPedifesto

Kari Lerum<sup>1</sup>

Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies  
2015, Vol. 15(2) 156–162  
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DOI: 10.1177/1532708614562886  
csc.sagepub.com



## Abstract

This is an autoethnography about the role of nail salons in relation to my own evolving feminist and femme consciousness. Through a story of desire, grief, isolation, and recuperation, I explore the ways that the development of my sexual and gender identities relies on women's intimacy within and across lines of commodification, race, class, and sexuality. In so doing, I attempt to reconcile my desire for high femme signifiers with working-class, anti-racist, and anti-colonialist solidarity, to articulate what I term a *FemmeNist consciousness*.

## Keywords

gender identity, femme, feminism, intimacy, workers rights



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## Getting Gay

I became a feminist at 20, but it was not until a decade later—after I “Got Gay” as my daughter now likes to say—that I worked up the nerve to enter a nail salon.

It was on my 30th birthday and my girlfriend bought me a manicure as a present. She was not my first girlfriend, and she actually was more boy than girl with her handsome looks, Carhartt overalls, and occasional use of male pronouns, but with her, I had my first full-on lesbian relationship. The kind that could not pass as just friends, nor did I want it to.

This meant that everyone, including all of my friends and eventually all my family members, would need to be notified of this new il(legit) relationship. This consequently also required an identity shift. It was like a two-for-one-deal: Fall in love and not only do you get the benefits of coupledness; your location on the sexual hierarchy also changes. Except that this add-on feature—being relocated

to a lower human rung—was a required punishment. As Gayle Rubin explained in her classic article, “Thinking Sex,” this is part of the deal:

Individuals whose behaviour stands high in this hierarchy are rewarded with certified mental health, respectability, legality, social and physical mobility, institutional support, and material benefits. As sexual behaviours or occupations fall lower on the scale, the individuals who practice them are subjected to a presumption of mental illness, disreputability, criminality, restricted social and physical mobility, loss of institutional support, and economic sanctions. (Rubin, 1984, p. 279)

A handful of good old hetero-stable<sup>1</sup> friends were supportive of my Lesbo change; another set of secondary friends assured me that they were “ok” with my switch to the other team even though they were puzzled and maybe even scared. (For the record, this category of people reacted similarly when I declared my feminism.) And then, there were some who knew me well and others who did not know me at all (random people on the street?) who became hysterical about and even hostile toward my new romantic union. But regardless of people's feelings about the situation, similar to my commitment to feminism, it was a shift that would stick.

I moved in with my girlfriend, her teenage daughter, and their cute young butch roommate who was dating a former girlfriend of my girlfriend. So this meant that the former

<sup>1</sup>University of Washington Bothell, WA, USA

### Corresponding Author:

Kari Lerum, University of Washington Bothell, Box 358530, 18115  
Campus Way NE, Bothell, WA 98011-1713, USA.  
Email: klerum@uwb.edu

GF—a pretty, petite, feminine woman—was also part of my new socialscape.

One of my early lessons about Super-Lesbian Powers—of which there are many—was learning how to be friends with (and sometimes even live with) your ex’s and your girlfriends ex’s. The iconic 90s Lesbian film “The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love” even carried this storyline. Since I was new to the tribe I had not yet received this particular power. So this film became one of my holy texts. I am still studying it.

Anyway, the prospect of getting my nails done paled in comparison with some other adjustments into my new lesbian cultural adventure. Nail salons were more like a detour along the way; not the focus of the trip, but critical because it provided an alternative route to entering the lesbian nation.

As many newly lesbian or queer identified women will attest, part of the exhilaration of abandoning the institution of heterosexuality is the realization that we are no longer bound by feminine socialization and appearance expectations. Once gender expressions are chosen rather than compulsory, some cisgender queer women turn away from traditional femininity forever, shedding its remnants (nylons, heels, lipstick, serving others with a smile) like a former political prisoner: with a shudder and a vow to never return to a state of gendered incarceration.

But the emancipated gender presentation of a newly budding lesbian does not necessarily come easily. For many, it feels liberating to enact and/or display a more masculine presence and attire, or to queer one’s gender presentation with a mixture of both masculine and feminine signifiers. Others opt for even more feminine expressions than previously expected or imagined, diving into the belly of the beast in search of gems to salvage and hotglue to one’s outfit.

After some initial play with butch presentations (chain wallet, motorcycle jacket and boots, and even one attempt at man drag), I found myself increasingly attracted to highly and even stereotypically feminine tropes. As I had actually long adored femme signifiers, especially those that signaled sexual power (thank you Madonna and Adam Ant!), it was exciting to think about fostering more of that power for myself.

But until I got gay, I had to hold back; there was no space for that kind of sexy powerful femininity in my existing communities. For the religious, the sexy femme was too immoral; for the Midwesterners, too flashy; too objectifying for the feminists, and overall just too much for the heterosexuals. While my schooling in 1980s feminism had brought needed critique of feminine socialization, and my participation in Seattle “grunge” street and bar cultures in the 1990s made me more badass, it was my experience in turn of the century West Coast queer cultures that gave me the confidence and the welcoming space to become femme.

## Femme Baptism

We (me, my GF, her daughter, the roommate, her GF, and an assortment of wayward teenagers on weekends) all lived in a three-bedroom rental house (counting the dining room) with peeling yellow paint. We shared an absent greedy landlord with the apartment building across the street. In our carport out back, we often found people sleeping or shooting up. Around the corner was a café, a vintage thrift shop, a convenience store for beer and toilet paper, and a cheap nail place.

I had eyed that nail place (“salon” seems too fancy for what it was) many times over the previous months before my thirtieth birthday.

At age twenty-one, I had similarly eyed another establishment. Sitting in a car with three straight friends, we parked outside a dyke bar and watched women dressed in leather chaps arrive on motorcycles. We wanted to enter but were scared as shit. What would happen to us? Who would we (I) become? We sat in that car for over an hour debating whether or not to step inside. In the end, we chickened out and drove away. My entre into lesbian space would be deferred for another several years.

When I was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, there were two kinds of people who had their nails done: women who smoked and gambled in Las Vegas, and women who starred in Robin Leech’s “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” No one in my close circles ever had their nails done, though we did sometimes paint them ourselves.

Today, it seems that nail salons are everywhere, mainstream, a dime a dozen. As sociologist Millian Kang documents in her ethnography of New York City nail salons, the ubiquity of this industry is part of a nationwide trend.

Manicures, once mostly performed by women in the privacy of their own bathrooms, are now increasingly bought and sold. Nail salon growth began in the 1980s and took off exponentially in the 1990s. According to trade industry sources, the number of nail salons in the United States grew from 32,674 in 1993 to 53,615 in 2003, a 67 percent increase in a decade. (Kang, 2010, p. 219)

But from my view in the mid-late 1990s, nail salons were still as rare as a ruby and on the far margins of my humble-pie-Midwestern-Lutheran-rooted, white-middle-class-college-educated, anti-patriarchy, fight-the-power life.

So I decided that for my 30th birthday—which signified for me the transition into real adulthood as well as my first birthday as an out Lesbian (actually at that point I preferred the title of “Big Ol’ Dyke”)—I wanted to do something really different. Daring. Something fancy, sexy, and outrageous all at once to mark my momentous transformation into a person free of concerns about status, appearance, or fitting in anywhere.

I decided to get my nails done.

On the morning of my birthday my GF and I walked around the corner from our house, entered that nail place, and I asked for my first manicure. I remember thinking that the woman who did my nails was probably of Korean descent, but at the time I did not know that she was part of a wave of new Asian immigrant-owned nail salons. The manicure cost ten U.S. dollars, plus a two dollar tip. I felt both embarrassed and liberated. It was so easy. And so cheap! I got it with a short cut and clear polish.

Ok even though I want this to be a story about throwing caution to the wind and not giving a fuck about what people thought, of course, I was highly conscious of getting the right kind of manicure. The kind that signified both that I cared about my appearance and that I wasn't a pillow princess. For god's sake I had been studying lesbian magazines for years now and knew that short clean nails gave you higher status in the Lesbian Nation.

And you know what? Never before had my cuticles looked so clean. I felt extravagant and emancipated and humbled all at once. I thanked my manicurist profusely. She looked at me like I was looped. What's the big deal?

But for me, it was huge. I was just getting used to the idea that I was not just female, or lesbian, or feminist, but also *femme*. It was only recently that I had ever considered myself *femme*, and even then, it was basically a default identity—declared simply due to the obvious contrast with my butch GF. But this public professional manicure ritual made my new identity reach beyond just my individual relationship with one butch woman—to a broader *femme* community. It felt like I had been baptized *femme* (or at least inducted into the nail salon sect of *femme*).

For the next week, I could not stop staring at my hands. I was amazed at how good they looked. Polished. Civilized. Hot—in a coded lesbian sort of way.

It was another several years, and under very different circumstances, before I re-entered another place like this.

## Prodigal Femme

Over the next several years, My GF and I had created a lovechild, of my urging and her birthing; I completed a Ph.D., landed a good job, and we bought a nice ranch-style house on a quiet street without any houseless people or public drug users. My income and our living conditions had finally stabilized, and parenthood blew my mind with its daily joys and challenges. But years of accumulated stress and tension had eroded the relationship beyond repair. Though there were several factors at play, I began to recognize myself within health statistics about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people who experience mental and physical health disparities.

Homosexual and bisexual individuals more frequently than heterosexual persons reported both lifetime and day-to-day

experiences with discrimination. Approximately 42% attributed this to their sexual orientation, in whole or part. Perceived discrimination was positively associated with both harmful effects on quality of life and indicators of psychiatric morbidity in the total sample. Controlling for differences in discrimination experiences attenuated observed associations between psychiatric morbidity and sexual orientation. (Mays & Cochran, 2001, p. 1869)

The GF and I separated and I tried to forge a new life as a single lesbian mom with a five-year-old girl, navigating excruciating co-parenting, economic setbacks, isolation, and depression. Painfully, I discovered that when couples split, people take sides, even those presumably with Super-Lesbian Powers.

One of my good old hetero-stable friends who was supportive of my earlier shift into dykedom and who also stuck with me through this break-up told me about a place nearby where she recently received a pedicure. "It's so worth it," she said. "My feet were killing me and they made them feel so much better. And it's cheap. You should go!"

I had driven by this place a thousand times before but never before noticed it.

Out of desperation for both connection and distraction, I entered. It was lively and loud, like the working-class living rooms of some of my extended family and childhood friends. Blaring TVs inside competed with car stereos outside. It was run and operated by Vietnamese men and women and patronized almost exclusively by Black working poor women.

The owner, a Vietnamese man in his thirties, was known for his ability to paint elaborate nail designs. His place was always full of humanity, including the children, lovers, and friends of those purchasing their tiny pieces of wearable elegance. People laughed, bantered, gossiped, and consoled; they lived out loud.

After my first visit I was hooked. I started going regularly, always for my feet, never for my hands, always for my sanity. I was almost always the only White person there. I remained mostly silent, finding strange solace in sinking into the scene as an irrelevant presence, observing other people's lives, fashion choices, and dramas instead of my own.

But despite my attempts at invisibility, the workers and even some of the clients took pity on my large, calloused, claw-toed feet, telling me after a few visits that they could see an improvement, but that it would take time. "Just keep coming back," they said.

I knew that their care about my feet was a good business strategy, but as an obvious outsider, I felt heartened to be invited back again. And again.

Though I had long ago declared myself agnostic and most definitely post-Christian, they made me feel like a prodigal *femme*, taking care of my feet like that.

## New Intimacies

My daughter and I eventually moved into a two-bedroom apartment, a considerable size improvement over the studio cottage I had been renting since my big lesbian split. Our new dwelling was also in a more upscale neighborhood with a mixture of old-gentry families, upwardly mobile singles, and divorced dads and moms like me clawing to stay middle class.

By then, I was also in full-on-mad-love with a new girl who unfortunately lived three time zones away on the opposite coast. While she was a longtime feminist as well, she loved my feminine styles, found my newfound love of fashion magazines endearing, and did not care how long or what color my nails were. She wanted me to be happy.

After settling into my new life, I searched for my new nail place; one where I would ask for the whole shebang, both feet and hands. I needed a place that I could afford but which also reflected my new life desires: trying on new forms of femme, gently dipping back into a full life, and looking good for my lover who was and is on the masculine side of the gender spectrum.

There were two main salons in my new hood: neither featured TVs or elaborate nail art.

One was pricey and felt exclusive with velvet brocade loveseats and workers who appeared to be Eastern European immigrants. Soft classical music played in the background (today they have individual iPod stations on every chair, so the entire place is silent save whispers about desired salon services). Old moneyed White women and their daughters and granddaughters spend hours there, getting their hands, feet, and bodies pampered in quiet, sensual luxury.

The other contender was smaller, brighter, friendlier, and less expensive; soft contemporary music played; the workers were all Vietnamese immigrant women; many clients were White women wearing yoga or running pants.

Both were more than just places to get my nails done. They were salons. Because I always received cold quizzical looks when I entered the first one, and because at the time, I too was doing a lot of yoga and running, I chose the latter.

Over the coming months, and then years, this salon—and in particular, its workers—became a source of recuperation, connection, and revitalization for me. The impact that the workers had and continue to have on me goes beyond the aesthetic gratification and the physical comfort of being pampered. It was clear early on that something intriguingly intimate was occurring for me in this public setting for pay. Viviana Zelizer's theorization of intimate labor is helpful for understanding the intensity that one can feel with commodified intimate laborers, such as nail salon workers:

We can think of relations as intimate to the extent that interactions within them depend on particularized knowledge

received, and attention provided by, at least one person—knowledge and attention that are not widely available to third parties. The knowledge involved includes such elements as shared secrets, interpersonal rituals, bodily information, awareness of personal vulnerability, and shared memory of embarrassing situations. The attention involved includes such elements as terms of endearment, bodily services, private languages, emotional support, and correction of embarrassing defects. (Zelizer, 2010, p. 268)

Do not get me wrong. Not all nail salon connections involve intense and beautiful connections between workers and clients. And tempting as it might be to write a lesbian pulp fiction novel on the subject (what with all those women rubbing their hands on other women) nail salons are unfortunately not hotbeds of lusty lesbianism. Nail salon work can be full of occupational hazards (toxic fumes, back pain, close encounters with foot fungi), racism, classism, fears about immigration status, and stupid, rude clients. From both the worker and the client perspective, it might not have any more intimate meaning than any other standard service work exchange. But for me, the connections I have experienced since my initiation into nails salons have often been surprising and critical to my identities and well-being. The workers in these establishments have bathed and scrubbed my aching feet, massaged my shoulders, returned my sometimes tearful eyes with empathy, validated my love of aesthetic beauty, given me a time-out from everyday life, and helped me feel whole. Many of the workers are also mothers, and we often exchange inquiries about each others' children. Sometimes, I bring my daughter in and they do her nails as well; meanwhile, I have never met their children much less ever done their nails.

I will always remain indebted to these particular women (and by extension, essentially all nail salon workers). And my interactions with them have fed both my femme identity and my FemmeNist consciousness.

## Toward a FemmeNist Consciousness

Originally, I imagined this ManiPedifesto as a diatribe against anti-femme discrimination, expressing my righteous rage at old school feminists and second wave lesbians who collude with patriarchs and right-wingers to either manipulate, disparage, or extinguish femininity. I envisioned performing my ManiPedifesto as spoken word—Sister Spit style—rapped over a Beastie Boys beat because after all *we have to fight. For the right. To look good for the parrrrty.*

And: I wanted it, and me, to embody the revolutionary sexiness of Maya Angelou.

Does my sexiness upset you?

Does it come as a surprise

That I dance like I've got diamonds

At the meeting of my thighs? (Angelou, 1994, p.165)

But in writing into the nuances of this story, I have arrived at a set of conclusions that I think are both *more* and *less* sexually provocative than I had originally planned. My conclusions below are centered on the organizing principle of a socially produced consciousness.

### *Femme Consciousness Is Socially Produced*

Identity and consciousness are never formed in isolation; they are socially produced. This is not a new idea—especially for those of us schooled in theories of Symbolic Interactionism—but sometimes it gets lost in the midst of intrapersonal identity explorations. The idea of the *social self* includes the ways that beliefs, values, politics, and habits are inspired and shaped by our friends and colleagues in feminist and queer subcultures. But, this is also about how consciousness (our ability to see and understand the world around us) is produced through the current historical moment; through connecting the dots between values, politics, and our cumulative experiences with a broader array of individuals, ideologies, and institutions. As founding social psychologist, pragmatist philosopher, and women's suffrage supporter George Herbert Mead proposed, consciousness is itself a product of social relations.

Consciousness arises from the interrelation of the form and the environment, and it involves both of them. Hunger does not create food, nor is an object a food object without relation to hunger. **When there is that relation between form and environment then objects can appear which would not have been there otherwise . . .** (Mead, 1934/1962, p. 333, emphasis added)

How does Mead's early 20th century philosophy assist with the articulation of a 21st century feminist femme (which I am terming *FemmeNist*) consciousness? There could be as many femme consciousnesses as there are self-identified femmes. But for my own vocalization of a *FemmeNist* consciousness, I want to highlight how my own socially produced-but-nevertheless-delicious hunger of achieving femme presentations is supported and constituted across various setting and within layers of power relations. In expressing a Mead-inspired *FemmeNist* consciousness, what "objects" might "appear which would not have been there otherwise"? The following are a list of objects and/or social relations that have become visible to me—due to my interactions in the nail salons as well as in everyday life—over the past several years related to femme identities. Below I offer three *FemmeNist* consciousness comments in

relation to: femme power vis-a-vis butch and trans individuals; nail salon intimacies; and local and global inequalities. I then conclude with my *ManiPedifesto*.

*Femmes have less power; femmes have more power.* There is a common story in many lesbian communities that femmes have more gender privileges than butches. This is sometimes true, and sometimes false, depending on the social context and the positionalities of those involved.

There is some truth to the notion that femmes have more social power and gender privilege than butches. This is apparent, for example, when hetero women are unable to make eye contact with my butch partner, presumably out of fear or discomfort. I have noticed that these sorts of profemme/anti-butch dynamics are also more likely to happen in female homosocial and heteronormative environments (e.g., nail salons, shopping centers, public bathrooms), as well as work environments with traditionally gendered dress codes. At the same time, it is important to recognize that this relative privilege is more likely to happen for femmes who pass as both cisgender and heteronormative, especially if they can also pass as White and/or not poor. Femme privilege is rarely or never offered to femme transwomen who do not pass in these environments nor is it extended to feminine men or even to butch women who try on feminine aesthetics from time to time.

The notion that femme women have more power than butch women can also be seen as false in the sense that all of us who are coded as female either by genitalia or gender receive a multitude of disadvantages nearly everywhere. Because most places in the world still operate within ideologies of male supremacy, just existing in either a female or feminine body is a life and occupational hazard. Expressions of eye-catching, bold, queer femininity (including fancy nails) can make us targets of even more misogynist discrimination and harassment. Femme transwomen know the hazards of unflinching public femininity too well. In the words of Julia Serano:

In a male centered hierarchy, where it is assumed that men are better than women and that masculinity is superior to femininity, there is no greater perceived threat than the existence of trans women, who despite being born male and inheriting male privilege "choose" to be female instead. By embracing our own femaleness and femininity, we, in a sense, cast a shadow of doubt over the supposed supremacy of maleness and masculinity. (Serano, 2007, p. 15)

Given systemic cultural misogyny it is also common – as my partner and I have noticed – for some straight men to address her, as the more masculine partner, with more direct eye contact and respect. This is consistent with studies documenting the increased work opportunities for some transmen who transition within the same employment sectors. As long as they are perceived as White men (with bonus

points if they are tall), (white) transmen receive considerably more on-the-job respect after they start passing as cis-gender men (Schilt, 2006).

*Nail salons produce intimacies between women across race, class, sexuality.* The intimate physicality of nail salon work—as it is with other forms of intimate labor between women including domestic work, massage work, and other forms of body/aesthetic work—can produce new forms of social connections across difference.

But, as Gordon Allport (1954) showed in his classic analysis of racial integration in the military, it takes more than just close physical proximity to form equitable relationships across racial difference (it also requires elements such as equal status and common goals). Similarly, the interracial connections between workers and clients as well as among clients in nail salons do not automatically produce an anti-racist utopia. In fact, scholars have shown that the development of intimate, emotional ties between workers and clients can actually “mask unequal power relations and exploitative conditions in various industries . . .” (Kang, 2010, p. 227).

Yet within the context of intimate labor there can also be opportunities for radical social justice work. As Kang (2010) writes,

While intimacy heightens the investment of customers in certain services like manicures, it does not necessarily increase concern for, or commitment to, the service providers. At the same time, intimacy makes it harder to separate the service from the provider. By making the service itself more precious to customers, the dynamics of intimate labor can also foster greater valuation of the service worker and potentially leverage organizing efforts. (Kang, 201, p. 229)

I also like to think of nail salon work within Adrienne Rich’s conceptualization of a lesbian continuum—in other words, “women-identified experience” that involves a “primary intensity” (Rich, 1986/1996, p. 135). I am fairly certain that Rich did not have nail salons (or any other form of remunerated reproductive labor across multiple lines of privilege) in mind when she conceptualized the lesbian continuum. And I am also not suggesting that either the workers or the clients in nail salons would or should recognize their interactions as a project of women’s solidarity. But for me, this is also a layer of consciousness that I bring to these settings.

In addition, after many years of experiences in nail salons, I have found new opportunities for camaraderie with working-class women and women of color who also are clients. Just as when I became a mother I found new points of commonality with many straight women, after becoming a participant in nail salon cultures I found more opportunities to strike up (nail-centered) conversations with women across lines of race and class. These conversations not only

sometimes happen in the salon but also occur in other locations (gyms, grocery stores, buses). Do conversations about nails eradicate racism and oppression? No. But they do provide opportunities for positive social connection across lines of race, class, and sexuality.

*Femme identities are constituted in part by local and global inequalities.* Feminist scholarship has long documented and critiqued the ways that both paid and unpaid reproductive labor is gendered, classed, and racialized (Dill, 1994; Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992) but little has been written on how reproductive labor such as nail salon work is also critical for constructing and reinforcing the gender (class and race) of customers. Jane Ward’s (2010) conceptualization of “gender labor” is useful here. In her study of relationships between femmes and transmen, Ward describes the interactive gender labor that femmes perform to co-produce masculine identities for transmen. In a similar fashion, manicurists also perform gender labor, reaffirming the femininity of their female customers (e.g., complimenting their pretty appearance), while also working to maintain the masculine identities of their male customers (e.g., by not asking them to pick out a nail color).

The structure of nail salons is also interwoven inextricably with the experiences of racial-ethnic minority women impacted by global economic restructuring. As Kang (2010) writes,

The juxtaposition of a highly skilled and highly paid advanced service sector against the low-skilled and low-wage ethnic labor market in “global cities” creates the conditions for the emergence of proliferation of Asian immigrant-owned nail salons in multiple sites. Lack of fluency in the English language, inability to transfer credentials earned in other countries, and discrimination in the mainstream labor market based on race, gender, and immigration status contribute to Asian immigrants clustering in this ethnic-dominated niche. (Kang, 2010, p. 219)

The gendered ethnic enclaves found in the nail salon industry can also be found in a multitude of other (femme) identity-based industries that rely on a ready supply of cheap labor. Not only might these industries perpetuate a range of interpersonal and global inequalities the consumerist hunger that feeds the trend of “fast fashion” often intensifies labor exploitation and environmental degradation (Cline 2013).

In sum, it can take a lot of work—and a lot of workers—to produce just one femme presentation. Nail salon workers are one part of the team, and the entire system is dependent on layers of unequal global and local power relations. In recognizing these potential hazards, it is understandable that some social justice-minded femmes distance themselves entirely from the beauty and fashion industries. But, this has not been my path.

## My ManiPedifesto

So where is my point of resistance now as a lesbian femme feminist who is now a 40-something, monogamous, happily married, economically secure, tenured professor with a thriving kickass teenage daughter (who now has four mothers!), and improved Super-Lesbian powers?

For me the problem now goes far beyond my early concerns about looking like either the ladies of Dynasty or The Dukes of Hazard. It does include, however, the fight for the right to be taken seriously as someone who is simultaneously feminist, lesbian, and feminine, and who also has an appreciation of sexy-artsy clothes, occupations, and expressions. The daily anti-femme snarkiness from patriarchy and select feminists (stop with the patronizing protectionism, slut shaming, and fashion policing already) continues to make me want to drive my nails into any available skin. Anti-femme bias is part of an overall system of anti-woman/anti-feminine oppression, and is perhaps especially painful for those of us who have diamonds at the meeting of our thighs.

But the crux of my ManiPedifesto is not just this. It is also a FemmeNist call for more kindness, connection, and respect with and for all workers, especially those who perform intimate gender(ed) labor, nurture bodies, and sustain human dignity. It is a reminder of how all of our lives are intertwined. It is an invitation to appreciate the ways that our identities and well-being are reliant on the embodied work of laborers across the globe. It is a solicitation for heightened consciousness about both the opportunities for connection and for exploitation in the service industries. It is a bid for supporting local businesses (hello—nail salons are almost always locally run businesses!) And finally, it is a summons for standing up for fair wages, occupational safety, and easier pathways into new jobs if people so desire. Get behind all of this, dear femmes and lovers of femmes, and I think that we all can win.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Note

1. In recent years, the term *heteroflexible* has become common in the United States, referring to individuals who generally practice heterosexuality but who occasionally dip into the pleasures of the other side. I use the term *hetero-stable* here to refer to those who also may or may not personally appreciate homosexual pleasures but in the end also recognize and resist their own everyday heterosexual privilege and fight for sexual rights of others regardless of whether or not this will get them laid.

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## Author Biography

**Kari Lerum** is an Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences and Cultural Studies at University of Washington Bothell, and Adjunct Professor in Gender, Women, & Sexuality Studies at University of Washington Seattle. Her articles have appeared in journals such as *Anti-Trafficking Review*, *Gender & Society*, *Journal of Sex Research*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, and *Sexuality & Culture*. Her recent research has critically evaluated popular discourses about the “sexualization of girls,” and discourses and policies about sex work and human trafficking; her current research includes a community-based project with transgender sex workers in the Seattle region.