

**Title: Bearing Witness: Auto/biographical Portraiture as Testimony**

In this poster, I examine auto/biographical portraiture as medium through which to theorize women's experiences of sexual trauma and the potential healing power of sharing personal experience narratives. In doing, so, I align with scholars who contend that auto/biographical photography is a performative act that provides a way to grapple with aspects of personhood that may be rooted in difficult and/or traumatic experiences (Spence 1996, Nuñez 2013, Shaughnessy 2015). I draw also on scholarship that understands shared storytelling as a valuable strategy through which to "call attention to the vulnerabilities" that some women may "endure in silence and shame" (Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013, 24).

To frame my poster, I draw upon my doctoral research and my experience as photographer who has made portraits with women as a way to explore their experiences of sexual trauma and issues related to body image. My central focus is to investigate what auto/biographical portraiture making might reveal about the relationship between embodied subjectivity and the effect of trauma. For this reason, portraits do not specifically depict traumatic events but rather represent the effects of such experiences. Auto/biographical portraits, in this manner, can be understood as a form of trauma art, which Jill Bennett claims functions as a "catalyst for critical inquiry or deep thought" (2005, 7). Adding to that I assert that the process of making auto/biographical portraits can be healing and empowering for some women who have experienced sexual trauma.