

Mgr. Michaela Fikejzová

Autorka působí jako doktorandka na Fakultě humanitních studií Univerzity Karlovy. Ve své dizertaci se zabývá expresivistickým pojetím nově vzniklých nadávek. Jejími hlavními oblastmi zájmu jsou intersekce filozofie jazyka a genderových a mediálních studií. Jako (spolu)autorka publikovala několik studií zabývajících se reprezentací žen a trans* osob v mediálním prostoru.

“She’s such a Karen!” On the Epistemology of Slurs

“Karens have become prolific in modern society. It’s not just a name, it’s a modus operandi... a lifestyle,” is the introductory line of an article on *Daily Squared*, which celebrates Wikipedia (editors) for finally recognizing “Karen” as a pejorative term (Ariana, 2022). “Karen”, as a term and possibly a slur, has indeed become prolific if not in modern society, then at least on Twitter, along with, for example, “Becky”.

The philosophical study of slurs, in general, is a burgeoning field, nevertheless, expressions such as “Karen” are rarely the subject being studied, as their position as slurs is highly unstable. Most philosophers of language focus on the long-standing slurs, be it ethnic or sexist slurs. I am intentionally not giving examples as they won’t be the subject of this paper and, therefore, I do not see a reason to explicitly introduce harmful terms. Because of the lack of theoretical attention to so-called “novel” slurs (Jeshion, 2021), the epistemology of slurs, which is not based on long-standing oppressive use of the given term, as is usually the case of ethnic slurs, is also quite underexplored theoretical discipline.

This paper aims to examine the ways in which a term is established as a slur, more specifically it focuses on novel, allegedly sexist, slurs, such as “Karen”, “Becky”, or “TERF¹”, through the lenses of feminist philosophy of language (especially Jeshion, 2013a, 2013b). Following up on works analyzing the usage of sexist slurs such as “slut” or “bitch” and their subsequent reclamation by the feminist, activist, or women’s communities (Cepollaro, 2017; Herbert, 2015; Jeshion 2020; Popa-Wyatt, 2020), I am arguing for the case that they should be, in fact, considered slurs, even though they have different properties than slurs such as “slut”, for example, “Karen” and “Becky” are proper names and “TERF” is an abbreviation of a descriptive phrase, both of which may be used in the arguments against these terms being slurs (e.g. McKinnon, 2018; Allen et al., 2018). Through examining the power relations in model situations, when these slurs are employed, I aim to map (i) the limits of the slurring effect, (ii) the sexist aspect of such slurs, and (iii) the nuances of the reclamatory act of such slurs.

¹ Trans-exclusionary radical feminist

Literature

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