



The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology

Edited by
Eileen L. Zurbriggen
Rose Capdevila

palgrave
macmillan

The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology

“*The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology* is a rich treasure trove for feminist psychologists regardless of their specific interests, and for political and social psychologists regardless of whether they know much about feminist psychology. It offers insightful, sophisticated analyses, using intersectional approaches, to understanding many contemporary social and political issues (interpersonal violence, surveillance, and social media to name only a few). At the same time, it offers exceptionally useful introductions to many topics by centering the ways that gender and power construct and are constructed within different domains (interpersonal interactions, media representations including on social media, within policy settings, and more).”

—Abigail Stewart, *Sandra Schwartz Tangri Distinguished University Professor of Psychology and Women’s and Gender Studies, University of Michigan, USA*

“*The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology* brings together an impressive array of chapters showcasing the incisiveness and importance of feminist psychologies that foreground power relations in their analyses and applications. The book features key feminist writers from around the world, tackles a broad range of topics and approaches, and highlights the necessity of careful, reflexive scholarship aimed at understanding gender and psychology. It should be standard reading for psychology students, academics, and practitioners.”

—Catriona Macleod, *Distinguished Professor of Psychology and SARCHI Chair of Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction, Rhodes University, South Africa*

“This book is all you will need for any equalities-based teaching in and around Psychology. It testifies to the vitality and significance a sustained feminist commitment brings to critiquing oppression and supports practices of resistance to oppressive gendered discourses in Psychology. Authors are experts in their fields and the volume spans key current issues and debates facing psychology, psychologists and all who use or are subjected to psychology. It will be a core text for my teaching and as a collection is a unique resource.”

—Erica Burman, *Professor of Education, Manchester Institute of Education, School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester, UK*

“Intersectionality is a cornerstone of contemporary feminist psychology, and power analysis is crucial to intersectionality. Yet as intersectionality has diffused into many areas of psychology, the power analysis has often been lost. This book is a healthy corrective, with its emphasis on and elaboration of the centrality of power in the psychology of gender. It is a must-read for any psychologist who aspires to apply an intersectional approach in their work.”

—Janet Shibley Hyde, *Professor Emerit of Psychology and Gender & Women’s Studies, University of Wisconsin—Madison, USA*

“I am delighted to endorse this luscious collection of transnational essays on power and gender in psychology. Written in the ink of intersectionality and feminism, taking seriously racial capitalism, hetero-patriarchy, local context and herstories, disability and reproductive justice, these essays crucially center questions of power and gender just at a time when right wing/fascist regimes rise across the globe endangering women, femmes and trans folx, rolling back gender justice movements.

This book erupts just when it is needed—to be taught/read/critiqued/extended in schools and community settings; in clinics and kitchens; in bedrooms and childcare settings; in butcher shops and hair salons; in libraries, welfare offices, immigration centers and in the bathrooms of religious spaces; on line and in music... wherever gender is being performed and transformed/silenced and flaunted/re-imagined and queered through a radical intersectional lens, structurally and intimately.

This volume embodies and enacts, educates and provokes, both resistance and re-imagination. It offers a provocative pajama party—yes take it to bed—of scholars and practitioners around the globe, asking hard questions of gender, abuse, power, trafficking, bodyweight, parenting, bodies, madness, sports, aging, surveillance, work and home. Just when regimes around the globe are demanding that we SHUT UP about hetero-patriarchy, racial capitalism and ruthless misogyny, this volume is a gorgeous and intentionally unsettling refusal.”

—Michelle Fine, *Distinguished Professor of Critical Psychology and Women/Gender Studies at the Graduate Center, CUNY, USA and Visiting Professor, University of South Africa, RSA*

"*The Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology* is a much-needed intervention to acknowledge and credit feminist scholarship and analysis across multiple domains of study. Its contributors name feminist scholarship as foundational to understanding these domains and they engage its urgent analytic and applied value with rich nuance."

—Bonnie Moradi, *Professor of Psychology, Director, Center for Gender, Sexualities, and Women's Studies Research, University of Florida, USA*

"Women are everywhere in contemporary psychology but feminist analyses have been repeatedly and systematically marginalized. In response, this useful volume insists that power is a verb with many gendered meanings. Its diverse chapters present all psychologists with chewy argument for feminist psychology that resists being swallowed by the psychology of gender."

—Peter Hegarty, *Professor in Psychology, The Open University, UK*

"A stunningly expansive collection of field-leaders and emerging voices who represent the vanguard of critical approaches to power, psychology, intersectionality, and social transformation. Both theoretically rich and deeply accessible, Zurbriggen, Capdevila, and their contributors show how feminist psychology can redefine the terms of engagement at this pressing moment in human history, social science, and global democracy. This volume will be the definitive resource for feminist political psychology for at least a generation."

—Patrick R. Grzanka, *Professor and Dean for Social Sciences, University of Tennessee, President (2023-2024), Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, USA*

"Hallelujah! A significant and timely collection that addresses the core issue of gender construction that psychology largely glosses over: Power. Who has a right to be heard? Who has standing as a citizen? How is gender constructed as a means to control access to power and autonomy? This book is a game-changer and should be in the hands of every gender researcher in the psychological sciences. Now!"

—Stephanie A. Shields, *Professor Emerita, Psychology & Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, USA*

"As a scholar of objectification for 30 years, I've bemoaned how our individualist-centered field and broader neoliberal cultural framing of gender reduces research and intervention to the rigged game of "empowerment feminism." Our current political climate demands that we replace this essentializing, divisive approach with one that centers power dynamics. Enter Zurbriggen and Capdevila's outstanding volume, with feminist psychological science and theory, across a vast array of sites where gender and power intersect, to provide a truly empowering foundation for the collective action necessary to create a more equitable society."

—Tomi-Ann Roberts, *Professor of Psychology, Colorado College, USA*

"Zurbriggen and Capdevila animate the elephant in the feminist room: power. By expertly bringing together diverse understandings of power and feminisms, their handbook offers valuable background and insights across a representative array of topics central to constructing a complex, intersectional, useful psychology of women, gender, and sexuality. Researchers and theorists, practitioners, activists, and the simply curious are sure to be drawn into this wide-ranging, scholarly resource."

—Janice D. Yoder, *Academic Affiliate Professor of Psychology and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, USA*

"Across a wide variety of social, personal, and physical domains, gender and power are metaphors and models for each other. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology*, a geographically and generationally wide range of authors explore these connections in a wide range of topics, fields, and disciplines both traditional and innovative—including the complicity of psychology. The book is an encyclopedic guide to concepts, theories, examples, and strategies to change how power and gender are linked, in everyday life as well as academic disciplines. References and suggestions for further exploration abound."

—David G. Winter, *Emeritus Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan, USA*

"*The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology* is not only an extraordinary achievement, but a gift to scholars and practitioners. Impressive in its sweep and range, it brings together the best of contemporary research on gender and psychology, is not afraid to ask challenging questions, and keeps power centre-stage in all its interrogations—from new technologies to mental health, to sexual harassment to work and care. An absolutely essential contribution that will be a source-book for years to come."

—Rosalind Gill, *Professor of Cultural and Social Analysis, City University London, UK*


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Editors

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Editors

Eileen L. Zurbriggen 
University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA, USA

Rose Capdevila 
The Open University
Milton Keynes, UK

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Foreword

Power is arguably the most central force with which any feminist theory of gender must contend. And yet, even though most feminist psychologists would likely acknowledge the centrality of power, this centrality is easily undermined by Psychology's decontextualizing and individualizing tendencies—the very tendencies that were the original targets of incisive feminist critique in the 1960s and 1970s. When gender is extracted from context and equated with identity, or treated as a variable, its primary role as a signifier of relationships of power is obscured. In a word, despite the work of feminist and other critical scholars, hegemonic Psychology has remained fairly unconcerned with theorizing the operation of power, including its own.

This incredibly wide-ranging volume restores the centrality of power to the psychology of gender. It is spearheaded by two feminist psychologists—Rose Capdevila and Eileen Zurbriggen—who have long been concerned with gender and power, especially as expressed through political activism and in the political arena. I first met Rose and Eileen in 2010 when they co-edited a special section of *Psychology of Women Quarterly* on the relationships between feminism, psychology, and political life, to which I contributed. Now, in this volume, they team up again to foreground how feminist psychologists tackle the gender/power nexus in areas ranging from home to schools to work, from sports to social media, from sexual harassment to mental health, and across many many more domains. Contributors also place gender solidly in its intersections with race, class, and other categories of analysis to render nuanced accounts of how differences among bodies have been used to structure access to both symbolic and material power.

Although Michel Foucault is not noted for his sustained attention to gender, feminist scholars have benefited from his theorization of power as dispersed in multiple constellations of unequal relations. That is, power is not only the domination of one group over another (e.g., men over women, as in patriarchy), but is ubiquitous and flows in many different directions. This volume highlights and unpacks these flows of power and gives shape and form to how Psychology itself enforces, creates, and reinforces power relations that have wide-ranging, deep, and often highly damaging effects from the individual to the global levels.

As a critical, feminist, historian of psychology I am centrally concerned with excavating the conditions under which psychologists have not only created and actively maintained unequal and unjust relations of power, but also the conditions under which feminist psychologists have successfully challenged and shifted these relations. This volume stands as an unprecedented and invaluable compendium documenting feminist psychologists' concern with, and deployment of, power. It provides a wonderful opportunity to ask the questions: Where does the power of feminist psychology lie? And what should we do with it?

Halifax, Canada
June 2023

Alexandra Rutherford

Preface

In 1994, Lorraine Radtke and Henderikus Stam published their edited volume *Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice*. Chapters were written by a diverse set of internationally known scholars from the humanities and social sciences, who collectively argued that gender and power are inseparable, with gender actually constructed through practices of power. Their volume was ground-breaking at the time so it is surprising that, in the nearly 30 years that followed, no other handbook has directly focused on the intersection of power and gender, and especially not within psychology.

With the publication of this handbook, we seek to make such a contribution. *The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology* provides a timely and up-to-date overview of how power plays out in relation to psychology and gender, by presenting work from a distinguished international array of feminist scholars reviewing existing research and fostering new theoretical insights. It provides an innovative approach to the conceptualization of traditional psychological sub-disciplines through engagement with a wide range of “real world” concerns: understandings of history and politics, institutions and settings, and bodies and identities. Moreover, it endeavors to challenge more traditional areas of psychological attention such as families and development, mental and physical health, violence and abuse, communication, and technology. The handbook concludes by focusing on the implications and applications of concerns that have more recently surfaced around backlash, postfeminism, and the female body.

In keeping with the feminist project of highlighting our herstory, we recount here some of the back story regarding the publication of this volume. The co-editors first met as part of the Feminist and Political Psychology Task Force of Division 35 of the American Psychological Association (APA), where Rose served (with Rhoda Unger) as co-chair and Eileen was a contributing member. Joan Chrisler (a contributor to the present volume) was president of Division 35 at that time and encouraged the formation of the task force. Its purpose was to investigate possible areas of overlap between feminist and political psychology, identify gaps within each, and determine ways in which each could inform the other. In the service of those goals, the committee met in Boston for two days in August 2006 and again at the 2007 APA convention

in San Francisco where the task force presented a symposium titled *Feminisms and Political Psychology: New Analyses and Insights*. Several years later, Eileen and Rose co-edited a special issue on feminist and political psychology which was published in *Psychology of Women Quarterly* in 2010 (under the editorship of Jan Yoder) and included contributions from many of the task force members.

When the opportunity arose to propose a handbook on power, gender, and psychology, it seemed like a natural extension and updating of our prior work as editors of the special issue. We had enjoyed working together previously and wanted to further the goals originally articulated by the task force. For this new project, our goal was to encourage authors to center the concept of power even more explicitly (than had been done in the special issue), while simultaneously broadening our scope to include many more sub-fields of psychology as well as many more phenomena and domains that could benefit from a psychological analysis. We note with pleasure that we were able to recruit two of the contributors to the prior special issue (Elizabeth Cole and Lauren Duncan) as authors for the current volume and were delighted when a third (Alexandra Rutherford) agreed to write the forward. We were similarly delighted when both Joan Chrisler and Lorraine Radtke agreed to contribute. Sadly, Rhoda Unger—the inspiration for our special issue and a generous mentor to us both—passed away in 2019. Were she still with us, we hope that she would be pleased and proud of the work presented herein.

We wanted to make special note of some of the challenges we faced in bringing this volume to fruition. Like many recent projects, this handbook became entangled in the complications and implications of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. A book on feminism with a total of 33 chapters and 60 authors, the vast majority of whom were women, was bound to be affected by the heightened requirements around caring and home schooling. For this reason, we are proud (and a bit relieved) to have managed to bring together these tremendous contributions—each taking an intersectional approach to feminisms which attends to and theorizes diversity and othering within gendered areas of inquiry.

We are grateful to our contributors and editor(s) for their patience as we slowly brought this volume to the finish line. I (Eileen) would also like to thank the many brilliant and creative feminist scholars who have been an inspiration to me (and others), including Sandra Bem, Abby Stewart, Janet Hyde, and Rhoda Unger, as well as the incomparable David Winter, who first introduced me to the psychological study of power. Alyssa Zucker and Aurora Sherman provided vitally important emotional support and productive writing sessions; I am deeply grateful for both, as well as for their friendship. I send heartfelt thanks to my ROTG colleagues for their advice and support dealing with the multitude of personal/political entanglements that seem to endlessly arise. Finally, I am especially grateful to Scott for his optimism, his enthusiasm, and his selfless willingness to (repeatedly) pull extra childcare duty to give me time to work on this project. You make my life brighter, every day. I (Rose) would also like to thank the feminist community which has encouraged and inspired me with their ideas and their kindness, in many different spaces including POWES and the journal *Feminism & Psychology*. I would thank my amazing colleagues Lisa Lazard and Claire Cooper who make going to work something to look forward to.

And, always, I am forever grateful to my fabulously understanding family David, Jess, and Julia Swapp for the constant support and tolerance of my late nights and interrupted weekends. You mean the world to me.

The production of this book has certainly been a ride. From the initial shared enthusiasm for the project and the possibility of working together again, to the intellectual delights of brainstorming topics and structures and introducing each other to the work of scholars that we weren't previously familiar with, to the shared editorial work of assisting authors in sharpening their arguments and polishing their delivery, right on through production processes such as the organization of files and meta-data and the design of a beautiful cover, our work together on this project, and our regular Wednesday meetings where we worked through the predictable and less predictable challenges, have been a genuine pleasure. Even in the best of times, we couldn't imagine a better feminist collaboration, but when considering the monumental challenges that each of us (and the vast majority of our authors) experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, we both feel grateful to have had a partner with extraordinary patience, good humor, problem-solving skills, and compassion. I (Rose) appreciate Eileen's gentle and thoughtful feminist sensibility and approach to the contributions of the authors in this volume, in which I include myself, and I (Eileen) am so grateful for Rose's optimism, good cheer, and editorial virtuosity. We both offer heartfelt thanks to all the members of our feminist networks, without whose support and contributions this handbook would not exist.

Santa Cruz, USA
Hertfordshire, UK

Eileen L. Zurbriggen
Rose Capdevila

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Notes on Contributors

Christina Hsu Accomando is a Professor of English and Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, in the USA. She is the editor of *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study* (Macmillan) and the author of “*The Regulations of Robbers*”: *Legal Fictions of Slavery and Resistance* (Ohio State University Press). Her scholarship focuses on the law and literature of US slavery and resistance, including the work of Harriet Jacobs and Sojourner Truth, as well as contemporary issues of race, gender, and the law.

Glenn Adams is a fellow in residence at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Stellenbosch University, South Africa. In July 2023, he will return to his position as Professor of Psychology at the University of Kansas, USA, where he serves as Interim Director of the Kansas African Studies Center. He worked for three years with the US Peace Corps as a secondary school mathematics teacher in Sierra Leone before completing his Ph.D. in Social Psychology at Stanford University. His graduate training included two years of fieldwork in Ghana, which provided the empirical foundation for his dissertation and subsequent research on cultural-psychological foundations of relationality.

Courtney E. Ahrens is a Professor in the Psychology Department at California State University at Long Beach in the USA. Her research focuses on sexual assault and intimate partner violence with a specific emphasis on help-seeking and disclosure. She regularly collaborates with colleagues in the USA and abroad on research projects and applied efforts to prevent and address sexual assault. She is also actively involved in training faculty on responding to student disclosures, running a sexual assault resistance program, and overseeing outreach and education efforts on her own campus.

Kristin J. Anderson is a Professor of Psychology at the Center for Critical Race Studies at the University of Houston–Downtown in Texas, in the USA. She is a social psychologist who studies prejudice, discrimination, and backlash against progress toward equality. She is the author of *Enraged, Rattled, and Wronged: Entitlement’s*

Response to Social Progress (2021, Oxford) and *Modern Misogyny: Anti-Feminism in a Post-Feminist Era* (Oxford, 2015). You can find her on Twitter @mouthyfeminist and at www.kristinjanderson.org.

Natasha Bharj is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology and the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program at Ithaca College (USA). Her research is interdisciplinary, with a particular focus on applying decolonial feminist theory to sexuality studies.

Heather E. Bullock is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Center for Economic Justice and Action at the University of California, Santa Cruz, USA. Her research focuses on women's experiences of poverty and homelessness, and how classism, racism, and sexism influence policy attitudes and the treatment of low-income women and their families. Her most recent book is *Poorly Understood: What America Gets Wrong about Poverty* (co-authored with Mark Robert Rank and Lawrence M. Eppard). She served as an APA/AAAS Congressional Fellow with the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions—Democratic Office.

Rose Capdevila is Professor of Psychology at the Open University (UK). Her research takes an intersectional feminist approach to gender in digital spaces. She also has an interest in the history of UK feminist psychology and is a member of *Psychology's Feminist Voices* international team. She has been co-editor of *Feminism & Psychology* and is past chair of the Psychology of Women & Equalities Section (PoWES) of the British Psychological Society. She was co-editor of the award-winning *Handbook of International Feminisms: Perspectives on Psychology, Women, Culture, and Rights* and in 2022 co-authored *A Feminist Companion to Research Methods in Psychology*.

Joan C. Chrisler Ph.D., is Professor Emerita of Psychology at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut (USA), where she taught courses on gender, social, and health psychology. She has published extensively on women's health and served as the founding editor of the journal *Women's Reproductive Health*. She was honored for her work on older women's issues with APA Division 35's Denmark Award for Contributions to Women and Aging. Her most recent books are the *Routledge International Handbook of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health* (Routledge, 2020) and *Woman's Embodied Self: Feminist Perspectives on Identity and Image* (APA Books, 2018).

Elizabeth R. Cole is University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor of Psychology, Women's and Gender Studies, and Afro-American and African Studies, and the Director of the National Center for Institutional Diversity at the University of Michigan, USA. Her scholarship applies intersectionality theory to social science research. She is a Past President and Fellow of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. She received the Committee on Women in Psychology Leadership Award from APA. She has served as the Associate Dean for Social Sciences and the Interim Dean of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Sarah Camille Conrey is an Adjunct Instructor in the Psychology Department at Monterey Peninsula College in Monterey, California, USA. She received her Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2022, and her J.D. from UC Law San Francisco (formerly UC Hastings) in 2012. Her research interests center on how surveillance technologies interact with institutions, individuals, and social inequality, including the role of surveillance in the criminal legal system, and factors that shape public attitudes toward surveillance.

Elizabeth A. Daniels is a Professor and Director of the Centre for Appearance Research at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. She has a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of California Santa Cruz and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Sport Psychology at the University of California Los Angeles. She is a founding member of the Center for Critical Sport Studies at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. She studies sexual objectification, body image, and girls' sport participation. Her research has been featured in national media, including *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*.

Charlotte Dann is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Northampton, UK. Her work attends to relational concerns of families, gendered issues, and identity, as well as inclusion in Higher Education. She is on the editorial board for the *Psychology of Women & Equalities Review*, and a committee member for the *British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women & Equalities Section*. She co-leads a research group—Diversity, Community & Identity—supporting academics across their career with research and impact. She is currently working on a book taking a feminist approach to developmental psychology.

Sam de Boise is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Music, Theatre, and Art at Örebro University, Sweden. He obtained his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Leeds in 2012 and since then his research has focused on men, affect and embodiment, music and gender equality as well as music and extremism among the contemporary far-right. He is the author of *Men, Masculinity, Music and Emotions*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, and is managing editor at *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*.

Jessica Drakett is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Leeds Beckett University, UK. She is a critical Feminist Psychologist whose interests lie in the areas of social, organizational, and cyberpsychology. Her research explores the gender gap in technology from a feminist poststructuralist standpoint, with a specific focus on organizational and Internet humor (in particular, Internet memes).

Lauren E. Duncan is the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Psychology at Smith College, in Northampton, MA, USA. She obtained her Ph.D. in Personality Psychology and a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She teaches courses in the Psychology of Women and Gender, Political Psychology, and the Psychology of Political Activism. Her research focuses

on individual motivation for participation in collective action, particularly among women and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Sonja Ellis is Associate Professor of Human Development at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. She is a lesbian feminist at heart, but her research spans a wide range of perspectives and methodologies. Over a career of more than 20 years, she has published widely in the field of LGBTIQ+ Psychology. She is lead author of the textbook *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, and Queer Psychology: An Introduction* (2nd Edition). Her recent research projects have focused on inclusivity in sexuality education, and cervical screening among non-heterosexual women in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Adrienne Evans is Reader in Media in the Centre for Postdigital Cultures, Coventry University, UK, where she leads the Postdigital Intimacies cluster. Her research focuses on intimacy in the context of a postfeminist sensibility. She is interested in exploring how digital feeling shapes expectations of the “good life,” well-being, and positivity, while also seeking to generate more inclusive, equitable, and feminist-inspired ways of being in the world. She is co-author of *Technologies of Sexiness* (2014), *Postfeminism and Health* (2018), *Postfeminism and Body Image* (2022), and *Digital Feeling* (2023), and PI of the AHRC network Postdigital Intimacies and the Networked Public-Private.

Louise Folkes is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. Her research interests are broad and cover a range of areas including: social class inequalities and identities; higher education inequalities; and poverty, inequality, and social welfare. Much of Louise’s work focuses on the application of sociology to the “real world” and engaging with communities in participatory ways.

Klara Goedecke is Associate Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies at Karlstad University, Sweden. Her research focuses on men, masculine positions, friendships, and the gendered politics of emotions and consumption in neoliberal times. She is the author of *Men’s Friendships as Feminist Politics? Power, Intimacy, and Change*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, and the co-editor of *Close Relations: Family, Kinship, and Beyond*, with Helena Wahlström Henriksson, Springer, 2021.

Jennifer M. Gómez is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work and a Faculty Affiliate at the Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health at Boston University (USA), and a Board Member and Chair of the Research Advisory Committee at the Center for Institutional Courage. Her book, “The Cultural Betrayal of Black Women & Girls: A Black Feminist Approach to Healing from Sexual Abuse” (American Psychological Association; 2023), provides individual, interpersonal, and structural strategies for healing.

Jeff Hearn is Professor Emeritus, Hanken School of Economics, Finland; Senior Professor, Human Geography, Örebro University, Sweden; and Professor of Sociology, University of Huddersfield, UK. He is co-managing editor, *Routledge Advances in Feminist Studies and Intersectionality* book series, and a co-editor of *NORMA: The International Journal for Masculinity Studies*; and was (co-)chair,

RINGS: International Research Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies 2014–2020. Recent books include: *Age at Work*, with Wendy Parkin, Sage, 2021; *Knowledge, Power and Young Sexualities*, with Tamara Shefer; and *Digital Gender-Sexual Violations*, with Matthew Hall and Ruth Lewis, both Routledge, 2022; and the co-edited *Routledge Handbook on Men, Masculinities and Organizations*, 2023.

Sally Hines is a Professor in the Department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield, UK. She is the author of *Transforming gender: Transgender practices of identity, intimacy and care* (Routledge, 2007) and *Is gender fluid? A primer for the 21st century* (Thames and Hudson, 2018).

Rebecca L. Howard Valdivia is a Ph.D. student in the Social and Cognitive Psychology program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the USA. She received her M.A. in Psychological Research from California State University at Long Beach in 2020, where she also received a university achievement award for her research, scholarly, and creative activity. Her research interests focus on sexual violence, particularly the role of betrayal in survivors' experiences with trauma.

Katherine Hubbard is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey (UK). Her research is interdisciplinary, including sociological, psychological, and historical components. She specializes in gender and sexuality studies and the history of psychology. Her work takes a distinctive queer feminist approach which centralizes inclusivity and affirmative action. Her first book was *Queer Ink: A Blotted History Towards Liberation* (Routledge) and she is currently writing *A Feminist Companion to Conceptual and Historical Issues in Psychology* (OU Press).

Jessica B. Kirby is an Assistant Professor of Health Sciences at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) in the USA. She has a Ph.D. in Sport and Exercise Science with emphasis in Social Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity from the University of Northern Colorado. She is the Director of the Center for Critical Sport Studies at UCCS. She also directs the Mountain Lion Strong program which provides student-athletes comprehensive psychoeducation and resources to support mental wellness and resilience. Her research focuses on understanding sport and physical activity experiences that improve mental wellness across the lifespan.

Andrea LaMarre Ph.D., is a Research Associate at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Canada. She worked as a lecturer in critical health psychology at Massey University, in New Zealand, from 2019 to 2023. Her program of qualitative and arts-based research has primarily focused on eating disorders and recovery, with an emphasis on situating recoveries within the contexts of people's lives and broader social systems. She has published over 45 articles in peer-reviewed journals and is an editorial board member at the *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *Body Image*, and *Psychology & Health*. She is currently focused on community-based research in the eating disorders field, including in peer support and early intervention spaces.

Lisa Lazard is a Professor in the School of Psychology and Counselling at the Open University, UK. Her research interests include gendered identities in digital cultures, sexual harassment, and gendered violence. She currently conducts research on both intersectional victim politics arising from the galvanization of the #MeToo movement in 2017 and digital gendered practices in online work environments. Her academic interests have facilitated her long-standing involvement with the Psychology of Women & Equalities (POWES) Section of the British Psychological Society, UK. She is currently Chair for the POWES section.

Jade Sophia Le Grice is from Aotearoa New Zealand and belongs to the Te Rarawa and Ngāpuhi tribes. She is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland (NZ) and researches the social and cultural contexts of Indigenous lives. She explores how colonial pressures affect Indigenous people and the unique ways that Indigenous people know and understand the world. Her current research focuses on preventing sexual violence, promoting youth well-being, and improving sexual health. She is inspired by Māori people working together in their communities and their desire to create a better future. Her work informs academic publications, psychology curriculum, and health policies. She is also a member of several organizations that advocate for Indigenous people and ending sexual violence.

Michael P. Levine Ph.D., FAED, is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Kenyon College, Ohio, USA. His focus in the field of eating disorders is the intersection between sociocultural risk factors and prevention. He is co-editor with Dr. Linda Smolak of the two-volume *Handbook of Eating Disorders* (Wiley & Sons, 2015). In 2021, he and Dr. Smolak published an extensively revised, expanded edition of their 2006 book *The Prevention of Eating Problems and Eating Disorders* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis). In addition, he has authored, co-authored, or co-edited 9 books/curriculum guides on prevention, as well as approximately 115 articles, book chapters, and book reviews.

Abigail Locke is a Professor of Critical Social & Health Psychology and Head of School of Psychology at Keele University, UK. Her research focuses on parenting identities and she has published on a wide range of topics including stay-at-home-dads, mothering identities, parenting advice, and digital families. She uses advanced qualitative research methodologies to approach her work and has particular expertise in Critical Discursive Psychology. She is the Co-Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Health Psychology* as well as sitting on the editorial boards of the *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *Journal of Gender Studies* and *Feminism & Psychology*.

Alison Mackiewicz is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Aberystwyth University, Wales (UK). She leads on the BSc Psychology with Counselling having qualified as a counselor and psychotherapist specializing in Transactional Analysis; she also has her own private practice. Her research explores gender and sensitive issues, including young women and extreme alcohol consumption, and couples' survivorship strategies and relationships in the context of uro-genital cancers. Current projects include well-being and mental health in Ceredigion, Wales, and therapy group work with veterinary

staff (a population with high suicide rates). She has various publications, including book chapters and journal articles.

Helen Malson Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of social psychology and works for Monash University, Australia. Her research takes a critical feminist perspective to explore issues of gender, discourse, and power, focusing, in particular, on eating disorder and eating disorder treatment issues. Her publications include *The Thin Woman: Feminism, Post-Structuralism and The Social Psychology of Anorexia Nervosa* (Routledge, 1998) and, with Dr. Maree Burns, *Critical Feminist Approaches to Eating Dis/orders* (Routledge, 2009) as well as over 60 journal articles and chapters. Helen is a former Consulting Editor of *Feminism & Psychology*, a recent Past Chair of the Psychology of Women and Equalities Section of British Psychological Society and, until recently, a co-director of the Eating Disorders Health Integration Team, Bristol, UK.

Dawn Mannay is Professor of Creative Research Methodologies at Cardiff University, Wales, UK. Her research interests include class, gender, education, and inequality, and she employs creative participatory methods in her work with communities. Dawn's recent books include *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods* (co-edited with Luc Pauwels, Sage, 2020); and *Creative Research Methods in Education: Principles and Practices* (co-authored with Helen Kara, Narelle Lemon, and Megan McPherson, Policy Press, 2021). Dawn is committed to moving beyond academic publications to generate policy and practice impacts and draws on film, artwork, and music to engage with diverse audiences.

Amana Rocha Mattos is Professor at Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and coordinates the research group DEGENERÁ—Núcleo de Pesquisa e Desconstrução de Gêneros.

Mandy Morgan is a Professor of Feminist Psychology in the School of Psychology at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand. She has interests in theoretical debates concerning the relationships between feminism, poststructuralism, and psychology. As well as these theoretical interests, she's involved in a program of studies on the ways that domestic violence service and intervention providers and clients understand their experiences.

Tracy Morison teaches health psychology at Massey University, New Zealand. She is an Honorary Research Associate of Rhodes University's Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction, and *Feminism & Psychology* co-editor. Her research spans the areas of feminist, critical, and health psychologies. Her latest research focuses on developing reproductive justice theory through transnational research on Long-Acting Reversible Contraception. She has written extensively on topics related to gender, sexualities, and reproduction, including the books *Sexual and Reproductive Justice: From the Margins to the Centre* (Morison & Mavuso, eds.), *Queer Kinship* (Morison, Lynch, & Reddy, eds.), and *Men's Pathways to Parenthood* (Morison & Macleod).

Gabriela de Oliveira Moura e Silva is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and is a Research Member of DEGENERÁ—Núcleo de Pesquisa e Desconstrução de Gêneros.

Akemi Nishida is an Assistant Professor in Disability & Human Development and Gender & Women's Studies at University of Illinois Chicago, USA. She is the author of *Just Care: Messy Entanglements of Disability, Dependency, and Desire* (Temple University Press, 2022) in which she examines public healthcare programs as well as grassroots interdependent care collectives and bed-space activism. She uses research and education to advocate for disability justice activism locally and nationally.

Joan M. Ostrove is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Jan Serie Center for Scholarship and Teaching at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA. Her current research examines the qualities of dominant group allies in the domains of disability and race, and the experiences of disabled people during COVID-19. She has co-edited special issues of the *Journal of Social Issues* and *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *Feminism & Psychology*, and the *Journal of Higher Education*, among others. She is co-editor of *Disability Alliances and Allies* (2020).

Ingrid Palmayr is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Her research has been in the field of gender, violence, and displacement. She is the co-editor of *Gender and Migration: Feminist Interventions*, published by Zed Press; *Handbook of International Feminisms: Perspectives on Psychology, Women, Culture and Rights*, published by Springer and *Healing and Change in the City of Gold: Case Studies of Coping and Support in Johannesburg* published by Springer. She is the author of *Gender, Sexuality and Migration in South Africa: Governing Morality*, published by Palgrave.

Ruth Pearce is a Lecturer in community development at the University of Glasgow (UK). She is the author of *Understanding trans health: Discourse, power and possibilities* (Policy Press, 2018), and the co-editor of the collection *TERF Wars: Feminism and the fight for transgender futures* (Sage, 2020).

Carla A. Pfeffer is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University (USA). She is the author of *Queering Families: The Post-modern Partnerships of Cisgender Women and Transgender Men* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

H. Lorraine Radtke is Professor Emerita, Department of Psychology, University of Calgary, Canada (currently residing in The Netherlands). I retired in July 2020 but remain an active academic. I am Associate Editor of *Feminism & Psychology*, a consultant to the editor of *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, and am on the editorial board of *Women & Aging*. My theoretical interest in power and gender first manifested in the 1994 edited volume *Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice* (co-editor, H.J. Stam). Subsequently, I have pursued the significance of power relations through empirical research on mothering, women and aging, and violence against women.

Damien W. Riggs is a Professor in Psychology at Flinders University, Australia. He is the author of over 200 publications on gender, family, and mental health, including (with Shoshana Rosenberg, Heather Fraser, and Nik Taylor) *Queer entanglements: Gender, sexuality and animal companionship* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

Sarah Riley is a Professor in Critical Health Psychology at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand. Her award-winning, transdisciplinary work explores how discourse, affect and materiality shape the possibilities for what people can say, think, feel, and do. She has received funding from ESRC, EPSRC, British Academy, Canadian Social Sciences and Research Council, and the New Zealand Royal Society Te Apārangi. Current projects explore relationships between gender, technology, and bodies. Her co-authored books include, *Critical Bodies* (2008); *Technologies of Sexiness* (2014), *Postfeminism and Health* (2019), *Postfeminism and Body Image* (2022); and *Digital Feeling* (2023).

Rachael D. Robnett is an Associate Professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (USA) Department of Psychology. She is also a faculty affiliate in the UNLV Department of Educational Psychology. She earned her doctoral degree from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Ann Rogerson is a Lecturer for Massey University, Palmerston North, Aotearoa/New Zealand. She currently coordinates Psychology of Women, Gender and Violence, and Social Psychology undergraduate courses and is involved in research in the field of partner violence service provision and the experiences of providers and clients through respectful and caring interventions. Her interests include feminist methodologies, gendered violence, feminist care ethics, and mother and daughter relationships.

Elisabetta Ruspini is a Professor in Sociology at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy. She is the author of *Diversity in Family Life: Gender, Relationships and Social Change* (Policy Press, 2013).

Joanna Semlyen is a Health Psychologist and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of East Anglia, UK. Her research focus is on the health and healthcare experiences of minoritized populations and publishes widely in the area of health inequalities in gender and sexual minorities.

Melina R. Singh is a Ph.D. candidate in Social Psychology with an emphasis in Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, USA. Her interdisciplinary scholarship examines how laws, policies, and regulatory systems disproportionately affect low-income women and mothers of color. Her dissertation investigates how dominant discourses surrounding pregnancy, motherhood, substance use, and child welfare policies are negotiated and challenged by perinatal nurses.

Paula Singleton is a Social Psychologist whose doctoral research on gynecomastia surgery inspired her research interests in critical approaches to gendered embodiments. Her work with Dr. Christine Morton of Stanford University on peripartum cardiomyopathy (PPCM), a rare pregnancy complication which can be fatal, was

used to inform a clinician toolkit to save women's lives. Her recent work includes an autoethnographic paper linking craftivism, feminism, and Barbie. She works at the Open University and at Leeds Beckett University in the UK, as part of the Sex, Sexualities, and Sexual Harm (SSSH!) Research Group.

Carly P. Smith is a US Licensed Clinical Psychologist who has worked in academic medicine, community mental health, and university settings. She enjoys bringing her researcher side into her clinical work and looks for ways to get evidence-based medicine to those it has typically neglected, particularly sexual and gender minorities clients. Her experience studying and teaching about harm and healing in different types of institutions have led her to private practice where she can be a part of the healing more often.

T. Evan Smith received his Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He teaches courses on human development across the lifespan as well as courses that center on diversity and social issues. His research interests include LGBTQ+ identities and experiences throughout the lifespan and the impact of classroom teaching on student attitudes. He directs the interdisciplinary Women and Gender Studies minor at Elizabethtown College.

Lucy Thompson is an Assistant Professor at Michigan State University in the USA. She is originally from the UK, where she worked as a Senior Lecturer at Leeds Beckett University. She works in the fields of critical, feminist, qualitative, and organizational psychology. Her work is interested in understanding the personal-political nexus of institutional violence and trauma. She is also the author of *Feminist Relational Discourse Analysis*; a voice-centered method which captures the interplay of experience and discourse in talk. Her broader interests include feminist psychological perspectives on work and organizations, and institutional perspectives on identities, power, and violence.

Jane M. Ussher Ph.D., is Professor of Women's Health Psychology, in the Translational Health Research Institute, Western Sydney University, Australia. Her research focuses on gendered subjectivity in relation to the reproductive body and sexuality, and the gendered experience of cancer. She is editor of the Routledge *Women and Psychology* book series, and the journal *Women's Reproductive Health*, and author of over 350 papers and chapters, and 12 books, including *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience* (Routledge), *The Routledge International Handbook of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Trans Reproductive and Sexual Health: Justice Embodiment and Agency* (Routledge).

Kristin D. Vierra is a doctoral candidate in the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (USA) Department of Psychology. She earned her master's degree in psychology from California State University, Chico.

Francis Ray White is a Senior Lecturer in Social Science at the University of Westminster (UK). Their research, writing, and teaching are in the area of gender studies, particularly around questions of queer, trans, and fat embodiment.

Megan R. Yost received her Ph.D. in Social Psychology (Feminist Studies certificate) from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her research focuses on how traditional conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity impact sexuality, sexual relationships, and understandings of sexual consent. She is also interested in sociocultural factors associated with stigma and prejudice against LGBTQ+ people and other sexual minorities. Her most recent research examines the experiences of LGBTQ+ Christians who are members of affirming church communities. At Dickinson, she teaches interdisciplinary courses on the psychology of gender and sexuality, and qualitative research methods.

Alyssa N. Zucker is Professor and Vada A. Yeomans Chair in the University of Florida (USA) Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies. She holds a B.A. from Vassar College and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Her scholarship, at the intersection of Psychology and Women's Studies, explores three main areas: discrimination and health, feminist identification and neoliberalism, and sexual well-being and violence.

Eileen L. Zurbruggen is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she is also affiliated with the Feminist Studies department. Her research focuses on the intersections between power, objectification, sexuality, and gender, with an interest in connecting interpersonal interactions to larger social structures and issues such as the media, US presidential elections and foreign policy, and corporate and state surveillance. With Ella ben Hagai, she is the winner of the 2023 Distinguished Book Award from the American Psychological Association, Division 44, for the book *Queer Theory and Psychology: Gender, Sexuality, and Transgender Identities* (Springer/Nature).

Introduction: Feminist Theorizing on Power, Gender, and Psychology



Rose Capdevila and Eileen L. Zurbriggen

The concept of power is inherent in feminist theory, which seeks to understand and redress oppression, subordination, and discrimination related to sex and gender. It has also been an important theme in feminist psychology and the study of the psychology of gender more broadly. However, there has not been a comprehensive overview of the psychology of gender, organized around the theme of power, in three decades. This Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology addresses that gap by presenting the work of a diverse set of authors, each of whom takes an intersectional approach to feminisms and attends to and theorizes diversity and “othering” within gendered areas of inquiry.

Of course, in editing this handbook we stand on the shoulders of giants. It has been almost 30 years since Lorraine Radtke and Henderikus Stam (1994) published their edited volume *Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice*. That volume highlighted the state and the social construction of gender in its theorizing, as it worked to make explicit the link between power and gender. It included contributions from internationally known scholars in social psychology, women’s studies, sociology, management, political science, and the humanities to address questions about the interwoven ways in which gender and power are constructed and how *gender* relations are also *power* relations. Indeed, in their introduction to that volume, Radtke and Stam advanced their claim that “gender relations *are* power relations” (p. 13). In this handbook we pick up that premise in the context of contemporary discourses of, and around, psychology. Recently, feminist critiques of dominant cultural norms concerning gender have been pulled into popular debate in an

R. Capdevila (✉)
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
e-mail: rose.capdevila@open.ac.uk

E. L. Zurbriggen
University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA, USA
e-mail: zurbrigg@ucsc.edu

unprecedented manner. These debates circulate around notions of identity, relationships, structures, and communication and how all of these might serve to sustain transformational change in a politically and economically volatile time. While we have seen some of this in the rise of #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter in some contexts, we have equally witnessed the repeal of abortion rights and attacks on sexual and gender diversity. The future is clearly not secure.

We came to this volume with a background in exploring the relationships among feminism, psychology, and political life both separately (Capdevila, 2000; Zurbriggen, 2008) and together (Zurbriggen & Capdevila, 2010). The invisibility of power in psychology has been critiqued by scholars from many perspectives both within and outside the discipline. We very much concur with this assessment and, indeed, it is a consistent theme, either explicitly or implicitly, in our work. This was one of the key motivations for taking on this project. We wanted to center power in the analysis of gender, but to do so specifically in relation to psychological theory, research, and praxis. Moreover, within that remit we sought for breadth, creativity in approach, and diversity of perspective.

The handbook represents diverse perspectives in many ways. Authors reside in ten different countries, and their career stages range from doctoral student to emeritus professor. We specifically recruited authors from a variety of (sub-)disciplinary backgrounds, and although we requested that everyone center psychological theory in some way in their chapter, different approaches to psychology, and even to the epistemology of psychological inquiry, are featured. While all the authors share some concerns about the tendency in psychology to prioritize individualized responses to power imbalances, diverse understandings of power and different kinds of feminisms are represented. This has resulted in a handbook with a chorus of different voices, something that we consider a strength and hope that the reader does as well.

We believe this collection represents an exciting range of topics and approaches, but we note that some absences and gaps are also present. We had hoped to include chapters on electoral politics and the structures of government, but were unable to find willing authors. It is possible that our stated focus on the use of a psychological lens was off-putting to the many excellent feminist scholars in these arenas, given that they primarily are trained as political scientists. We were also unable to recruit an author for a chapter on institutional media, with perhaps a similar underlying cause, in that many of the feminist scholars in this area are in communications rather than psychology departments.

One of our explicit goals was to make the handbook trans inclusive and we were particularly committed to having a chapter that focused specifically on trans issues. While we were not able to find an original article to meet that brief, we are very pleased that Damien Riggs and co-authors agreed to let us include their previously published paper on transnormativity in the psy disciplines which beautifully fit our aims and goals for the handbook.

To guide the reader in their engagement with this handbook, we provide brief summaries of the sections and chapters. The first section aims to set the stage for what follows. Historically, power has been an important concept in feminist analyses of gender and the chapter [Power/History/Psychology: A Feminist Excavation](#) illumi-

nates that history with its detailed excavation of the relations between history, power, and psychology. Natasha Bharj and Katherine Hubbard highlight each of the three in turn to reveal their entanglement and connectedness. Their chapter concludes with a strong message to feminist psychologists about the necessity of continued reflection on the structures of power. The next chapter takes on this vital reflection through its thoughtful and nuanced engagement with intersectionality. Intersectionality is one of the most powerful concepts for (and beyond) feminist psychology and, as Elizabeth Cole convincingly argues, it should never be impoverished to refer only descriptively to identity. Cole draws particularly on scholarship about women of color organizing to illustrate how an intersectional approach can provide insights into power, privilege, and social justice, and how these work through identities. These two themes, history and intersectionality, weave their way through the remaining chapters, alighting momentarily on some while underpinning central arguments in others.

In the next section (Institutions and Settings), authors examine psychology, power, and gender in three distinct everyday settings: work, school, and home. As Lucy Thompson reminds us in the chapter [A Feminist Psychology of Gender, Work, and Organizations](#), the work environment was one of the very first locations in which psychology was practiced, and there is a long legacy of work within industry and organizations. However, these engagements have been largely apolitical and individualized, resulting in a failure to acknowledge how work-related phenomena are embedded in what Thompson refers to as “intersecting socio-historical relations of power and domination”. Thompson draws on a critical feminist psychology to challenge standard psychological concepts such as “leadership”, “imposter syndrome”, and “interpersonal conflict” making visible the workings of gendered power. These invisible workings of power are also key to Amana Mattos and Gabriela Moura e Silva’s research project with school children in Rio de Janeiro. Drawing on Lacan and Butler, they use the concepts of subjectivation and subjection to examine the function of play in power relations, the exercise of consent, and the notion of the “good” in classroom practices. In doing so, they argue, they are able to track intersectional asymmetries and inequalities in Brazilian society. Finally, Louise Folkes and Dawn Mannay pick up this discussion of intersectional spaces in their research program on white working-class women in Wales. They further examine the tensions between domesticity and paid employment as well as the role of place and stigma. The studies they conducted explore women’s experiences of hearth and home to illustrate pervasive inequalities through complex and nuanced power relationships reminding us, yet again, that the personal is *always* political.

The five chapters in the section on Politics, Citizenship, and Activism explore more explicit expressions of political power: activism, migration, surveillance, poverty, and colonialism. Lauren Duncan provides an active definition of power as consisting of *power to*, *power over*, and *power with*, in order to discuss its role in collective action. Taking a particular, albeit exceptional, individual life of an African American feminist activist, Duncan then illustrates how intersectionality can bring new

opportunities for sense-making around activism. The next chapter picks up on the intersection of gender and race, this time in relation to migration. Ingrid Palmary writes about the ways in which psychological ideas have informed interventions around human trafficking through understandings of trauma. She argues, cogently, that psychological interventions, even when there is evidence of an imperative to help, intersect with gender, race, and migration so that we cannot assume that the interactions will have a positive impact. The political terrain they navigate is raced, gendered, and, therefore, complex. The psychological considerations of gendered power dynamics are again brought to the discussion in the chapter that follows by Camille Conrey and Eileen Zurbruggen through an exploration of surveillance. They argue that although surveillance is a feature of everyday life, the experience of being surveilled can function to reinscribe and reinforce existing power imbalances within society. To illustrate how surveillance can further existing power dynamics, they consider different contexts: prison, public benefits, pregnancy, and social media. One of the factors that impact women's experience of surveillance is financial standing. Heather Bullock and Melina Singh, in their chapter on gender, power, and poverty, provide a detailed exploration of the differential impact of economic hardship. Women, they remind us, experience higher rates of poverty as a result of multiple factors including inequalities, intimate partner violence, male control over access to resources, and low-paid, low-status jobs. They go on to examine the criminalization of poor women, reminding us of the role of surveillance as a disciplinary force. The chapter ends with a call for a responsive psychology that includes the needs and experiences of low-income women. In the chapter that follows, however, Natasha Bharj and Glenn Adams argue that challenging disempowerment is not simply a case of "Dismantling the Master's house". Bharj and Adams' examination of the knowledge and practices in mainstream psychology evidence how colonized spaces are seen, and thus produced, as pathological deviations from Western norms. They consider three decolonial approaches—accompaniment, indigenization, and denaturalization—discussing how decolonial feminist approaches can be useful for addressing both coloniality and androcentrism in psychology and feminism. Together these chapters draw on intersectional approaches to examine how gendered power plays out in more traditionally politicized settings.

One domain in which the field of psychology has historically used power as an analytic lens is in its study of social identities. Similarly, feminist activists have always understood the vital importance of recognizing the body as a primary site for political struggle. Accordingly, in the six chapters in the next section, bodies and identities are centered as authors consider the role that psychology, gender, and power play for individuals and communities. The section begins with a wide-ranging and deeply theoretical examination of men and masculinities by Jeff Hearn, Sam de Boise, and Klara Goedecke. These authors work within the framework of critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM) that they have developed in prior scholarship. Here, the authors outline key concepts within this framework and use them to advance our understanding of two important contemporary issues: the development of egalitarian

masculinities and the rise of misogynistic masculinities including those linked to the “incel” (a portmanteau of the words involuntary and celibate) community and right-wing political movements. In the next chapter, Joanna Semlyen and Sonja Ellis highlight the ways in which people with lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identities are impacted by power and politics. The authors begin with a historical review of the pathologizing lens imposed on LGB individuals by the psychological professions, and then provide a richly nuanced description of the ways in which heteronormativity, “heteroacceptability”, and the gender binary have impacted LGB people. They warn that a homogenization of LGB identity will (in a patriarchal context) necessarily privilege men and masculinity, and they conclude by applying these insights to an analysis of health inequalities faced by sexual minority populations. Evan Smith and Megan Yost provide a complementary analysis of queer identities as they consider the plethora of new identities that have emerged, particularly among young people, in the last few years. These new identities include non-binary gender identities, sexual identities such as pansexual that go beyond the straight/gay binary, and new sexual and romantic identities such as asexual. Smith and Yost convincingly argue that the very acts of defining and claiming these new identities are acts of personal and social power, ones that enable the creation of authentic and healthy lives for LGBTQ+ people, even in the face of an increasingly hostile political climate. A similar argument about the importance of self-definition of gender and sexual identity is made in the next chapter by Damien Riggs, Ruth Pearce, Carla Pfeffer, Sally Hines, Francis Ray White, and Elisabetta Ruspini. Taking a historical view, these authors argue that psychology and related disciplines have, in some ways, played a significant supportive role for trans people seeking gender-affirming care. But this support typically has come at the cost of accepting a narrowly constructed transnormative identity. The chapter summarizes past and current resistance by trans people to the regulatory power of the “psy” disciplines. The final two chapters in this section extend the relevance of gender/sexuality to two aspects of the body that have political and social importance: dis/ability and bodyweight/appearance. Akemi Nishida and Joan Ostrove provide a keenly reasoned critique of ableism in psychology (and beyond), positioning this as an example of “power as control” and analyzing the ways in which ableism intersects with sexism and other forms of oppression. In the second part of their chapter, they explore how disability communities engage with power to resist oppression and envision social transformation. In the final chapter, Helen Malson, Andrea LaMarre, and Michael Levine discuss the ways in which power has been implicated in both psychological and feminist research and theory about bodyweight and appearance. Their deeply intersectional analysis highlights blind spots in past theorizing about these topics and encourages collaboration and reflexivity in the study and treatment of eating disorders. They make a particular call to center the experiences and voices of those who face eating issues and point out the importance of addressing eating disorders as a social justice issue rather than an issue of individual dysfunction or resilience.

The following section (Families and Development) features three chapters spanning a range of developmental stages and tasks. In the first chapter, Rachael Robnett and Kristin Vierra consider the ways that patriarchy affords more power and choice to boys and men, and therefore constrains girls' and women's development. They focus on three domains (identity, academic and career pursuits, and romantic relationships) and advance our thinking particularly in their insightful application of intersectional principles as we consider the impacts of sexism and patriarchy on psychological development. They conclude with a description of an important mode of resistance for young people: critical consciousness (or *conscientização*). Abigail Locke builds on this analysis in her chapter on parenting. She interrogates gendered stereotypes of caregiving and explores the changes that can occur in previously equitable partnerships once children arrive. She concludes with a timely and incisive assessment of parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic, which resurrected traditional (gendered) norms of caregiving that especially impacted mothers. Finally, in her chapter on aging, Joan Chrisler expertly reviews changes that occur with aging as well as stereotypes about elders in order to highlight the ways in which these can (at times) increase opportunities for exercising power and influence but also can frequently lead elders, especially women, to feel disempowered. She concludes with reminders of the importance of being aware of intersectional identities when considering the experiences of elders, of the hope and promise of collective action to improve the status of elders, and of the myriad pathways of individual empowerment available to enhance one's quality of life as one ages.

The four chapters in the next section address the domains of physical and mental health. First is a chapter on women's sport by Elizabeth Daniels and Jessica Kirby. These authors begin by tracing the historical exclusion of girls and women in sport (noting some raced and classed aspects of this exclusion) and summarizing evidence that contemporary media coverage of women's sport is far less frequent than that of men's sport. The remainder of the chapter highlights the concept of empowerment, first noting that (in spite of systemic inequities in access) sport has been a source of resistance to unhealthy gender norms for many women and girls, and then providing a road map for furthering the empowering promise of girls' and women's sport. In the second chapter, Alyssa Zucker provides a cogent and compelling review of research on health disparities for LGBTQ people. Focusing on structural causes of these disparities, Zucker notes that geographic regions with queer-supportive laws and policies have far fewer health disparities, and she concludes with policy and research recommendations. Reproductive rights have long been a focal concern of feminists and an important site of political activism. In their chapter on this topic, Tracy Morison and Jade Sophia Le Grice go beyond the notion of *rights* to provide an in-depth theoretical overview of reproductive *justice* as a movement, theory, and praxis. Key to understanding a reproductive justice framework, the authors argue, is its focus on social justice and its human rights foundation. They then discuss multiple ways in which this framework can be put to work in the service of feminist goals, for example, by supporting the decolonial reproductive self-determination efforts of

Māori people in Aotearoa. The authors conclude by discussing two recent theoretical developments: transnational solidarity and the “queering” of the reproductive justice framework. In the final chapter in this section, Jane Ussher provides a fresh, contemporary take on a long-standing feminist critique of psychology: its pathologizing and medicalizing approach to women’s depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. Arguing forcefully against bio-medical or psychological approaches that place the locus of women’s greater rates of depression within their own (reproductive) bodies and psyches, Ussher instead adopts a social constructionist perspective that roots women’s mental health distress firmly in their experiences of discrimination, violence, and rigid gender roles. She concludes with a call for society to address the social and political context that engenders women’s distress.

Power is an inescapable component of violent and aggressive behavior. In the three chapters of this next section (Violence), authors provide commentary and analysis on gendered violence. In the first chapter, Lisa Lazard summarizes the historical importance, for feminists, of coining and embracing the label “sexual harassment”. She goes on to complicate this achievement with an analysis of the ways in which neoliberal and postfeminist arguments have made it more difficult for women to speak out about sexual harassment. Finally, she argues that an understanding of sexual harassment that assumes a gender binary (with men as perpetrators and women as victims) actually supports the cultural conditions that enable such harassment. Intimate partner abuse is the focus of the next chapter, by Lorraine Radtke, Mandy Morgan, and Ann Rogerson. They organize their carefully articulated analysis around three conceptions of power: power as a property of individuals, power as structural, and post-modern theories of power. The chapter concludes with a carefully reasoned and much-needed deconstruction of the gender symmetry/asymmetry debate in which the authors argue that this debate continues to percolate at least in part because of the field’s tendency to reduce partner violence to individualistic, psychological causes. Finally, sexual violence is addressed by Rebecca Howard Valdivia, Courtney Ahrens, Jennifer Gómez, and Carly Smith. In this thought-provoking chapter, the authors explore the ways in which sexual assault victims are silenced at multiple levels including interpersonal, institutional, and socio-cultural. They argue that by building linguistic reciprocity (the ability to understand survivors’ narratives), we will empower survivors to speak their truths. Building linguistic reciprocity can be accomplished by (among other practices) centering survivors’ needs and knowledge, integrating culturally relevant approaches, and incorporating restorative justice techniques.

The next section (Communication and Technology) focuses on contemporary issues related to technology and social media. In her wide-ranging chapter, Jessica Drakett explores the underrepresentation of women in technology (and other STEM) careers from a fresh angle. She critiques the metaphor of the “leaky pipeline”, argues that many campaigns to increase women’s representation in these fields are shot through with sexist assumptions, and notes the exploitative, neoliberal, and deeply gendered aspects of most current technology workspaces. She concludes with a

balanced assessment of the role that technology can play in feminist activism, and its potential for both resistance and further oppression. Charlotte Dann and Rose Capdevila take a similarly balanced approach in their analysis of young women's use of social media. They note the potential negative impact of practices such as taking and posting selfies, but they provide a nuanced account of the ways in which such practices can also enhance personal authenticity because they provide young women the ability to curate their online self. The authors provide a similarly thoughtful analysis of the practices of online activism and the promotion of celebrity.

Bringing the handbook to a conclusion is the final section on Implications and Applications. This section includes three chapters which address more recent feminist concerns around backlash, postfeminism, and embodiment practices. In the first of these final chapters, Kristin Anderson and Christina Hsu Accomando present an analysis which draws on psychological entitlement to examine power, privilege, and resistance to progressive change. They argue for the importance of entitlement as a mechanism for perpetuating inequality as well as an outcome thereof. Examining the role of entitlement in sexual misconduct, mansplaining, and precarious manhood and how these feed into backlash against women, the chapter points out the crucial contribution entitlement makes to the persistence of sexism and inequality. Echoing this attention to the problem of how and why sexism persists, Sarah Riley, Adrienne Evans, and Alison Mackiewicz present postfeminism as the persistence of sexism. Postfeminism, they suggest, supposes that the achievement of ideal femininity is to be understood as a choice and thus as empowering for young women. They argue that postfeminism also acts to shape our relational lives. In their consideration of young women's female friendships, they discuss the role of these friendships as offering strategies for survival in managing the risks of male aggression. In addition, though, they discuss how these friendships serve to regulate how women are expected to embody a postfeminist sensibility that requires them to work on how they look and to always be happy, thereby reinforcing existing inequalities. While both these chapters interrogate how gendered and other forms of inequality persist in the face of apparent feminist progress, the final chapter serves as a call to arms to transcend the disciplinarity of the categorically female body. In this chapter, Paula Singleton looks at trans inclusive feminist praxis in terms of what it would mean to reclaim the female body. The tradition of feminist therapy centers, the artistic representation of othered bodies by three artists, and the embodied experience of tattooing and body building are examined to consider this reclamation.

Taken together, the chapters in this handbook constitute an extended and nuanced engagement with the variety of ways in which power is gendered, in which gender is suffused with considerations of power, and in which both are implicated in psychological theory, research, and praxis. We thank our authors for their insightful scholarship; they have provided powerful examples of what an intersectional feminist approach to psychology can contribute to understanding the co-construction of power and gender and to addressing the inequities that result.

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Setting the Stage

Power/History/Psychology: A Feminist Excavation



Natasha Bharj and Katherine Hubbard

To talk about the ‘history of power in psychology,’ one might assume that power is a ‘thing’ that can have a history within a particular discipline. To the contrary, in this chapter we aim to challenge this characterization of the nature of power. First, power is not a singular ‘thing,’ an object that one might write a simple history of. Second, history and the ways in which histories are told, is also imbued with power. Third, psychology is not somehow separate from power, but rather power is enacted by it and embedded within it in significant ways.

In our analysis, we draw upon critical feminist psychological work exploring the connections between gender, power, and psychology. This is perhaps best exemplified by Rutherford and Pettit’s (2015) introduction of their edited special issue of *History of Psychology*. Rutherford and Pettit (2015) examine the relationship between feminism and psychology using an ‘and/in/as’ framework. That is, to understand the relationship in varied complex ways is to see feminism and/in/as psychology. The ‘and’ represents the tensions between the political and the discipline; the ‘in’ refers to feminist work within psychology; and the ‘as’ relates to the shared ground of both, and the ways they have worked in conjunction. Such a framework informs our own analysis here as we consider how power/history/psychology are related. Throughout, we caution against the temptation to strip away context and complexity, as is common in psychology as a discipline.

To examine the relations between power, history, and psychology, we borrow the language of *excavation*; slowly and precisely exposing layers to reveal the larger entangled structure at hand. In doing so, however, we do not intend to sever ties

N. Bharj (✉)

Department of Psychology and Women’s, Gender & Sexualities Studies Program, Ithaca College,
Ithaca, NY, USA

e-mail: nbharj@ithaca.edu

K. Hubbard

Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK

e-mail: k.a.hubbard@surrey.ac.uk

between each nor do we see them as distinct objects. Instead, in each section we emphasize a single component and uncover the joints and ties to the other two. Through these analyses we seek to reveal the larger architecture of *power/history/psychology* as a deeply enmeshed system. In the first section where we consider power, we explore the various ways that it has historically been understood by feminists and by psychologists. In the second section, we highlight the ways that history is imbued with power, as well as the implications this has had, and continues to have, on histories of psychology, including feminist ones. Third, we consider the ways psychology itself exerts power, including methodological and institutional practice in psychology generally, and feminist psychology specifically.

It is important to reflect on the positioning of feminist psychology within the structures of power that it seeks to dismantle. We argue that for feminist psychology to avoid the limitations that have been identified within psychology more broadly, there needs to be greater recognition of the complexities of power/history/psychology, and we provide some recommendations in our conclusion. Overall, we argue that realizing the transformative potential of feminist psychology depends upon recognizing and identifying power, even when it is disguised or difficult to see in places and time.

Power/History/Psychology

Uncovering a history of how feminism, psychology, and feminist psychology have conceptualized power is a difficult task. Across these fields the use of power as a construct for analysis or as a lens through which to analyze social phenomena is diffuse and sometimes rife with euphemistic language. Kitzinger's (1991) analysis of power in feminist psychology identified a reluctance to explicitly define power and a tendency to defer to less politicized concepts, such as 'agency.' When power *is* discussed, it is often mobilized as a "rhetorical flourish" (Kitzinger, 1991, p. 112), to make passing reference to feminist analyses of structural power systems without integrating a systematic analysis of power itself. Alternatively, when power *is* defined it is often as a characteristic or mindset of the abstracted self. In the step of our feminist excavation, we reveal and examine the concept of power within feminist psychology, with the acknowledgment that a more rigorous analysis than is possible here is an important avenue for future inquiry.

The difficulty of identifying how feminist psychology defines power can in part be attributed to the lack of a clear definition of power within feminism more broadly. In an extensive review, Allen (2016) delineates between common themes arising in feminist conceptualizations of power. Allen (2016) distinguished between two major conceptualizations of power: firstly, power as a quantifiable entity held in relative degrees by individuals and, secondly, power as the force exerted by broader structures of society. Both liberal and radical feminist theory conceptualize power as relative between individuals, though with distinct perspectives on the nature of power itself. Liberal feminist theory constructs power as a neutral or positive resource that can and should be equally distributed. Alternately the radical feminist approach

problematizes power as the expression of dominance/submission relations between men and women. Conversely, socialist feminism is built upon structural critiques of power as dominance through the appropriation of products of labor. Intersectional feminist theory examines power at multiple levels, unpacking the interacting axes of privilege and oppression that inform both social relations and individual identity (Allen, 2016). Evidently, feminism is not a unified or singular area of thought but is an umbrella term encompassing a variety of perspectives on patriarchal power structures. Therefore, it is important to trace the fissures and joints in understandings of power across feminist perspectives if we want to work toward building a cohesive theory of power in feminist psychology.

Another common problem in feminist theorizing of power is dispute over the possibilities for positive forms of power, particularly when power lies in the hands of women and other marginalized groups (Allen, 2016). Feminist attempts to imagine a positive, non-oppressive articulation of power require a binarist understanding of good and bad forms of power (i.e., power is bad in wrong hands, but good in the right hands). This dichotomy is often modeled as the difference between a dominating and controlling 'power-over' others versus a transformative and liberating 'power-to' assert oneself. Contained within the notion of a feminist 'power-to' is the idea of 'empowerment.' 'Power-to' or empowerment is largely defined as personal-level competency or energy and the capacity to effect change in one's own immediate environment. 'Power-to' is also defined as having the potential to transform oneself and society without the control and imposition associated with the negative 'power-over' (see Yoder & Kahn, 1992). Conceptualizing a positive form of power is useful for feminist action, for example, as a means of justifying liberal feminist striving for 'equal' power, or to reimagine how power or agency might look in radical feminist separatist realities. However, this literature rarely provides a clear explanation of how these exercises of power are conceptually different from 'power-over'/patriarchal power/dominance, beyond the identities of those wielding power and the presumed positive consequences of their efforts. Similarly, such understandings of 'power-to' often operate within a highly individualistic understanding of the self, assuming that the ultimate expression of feminist liberation is the assertion of one's will without the constraints of social connections and obligations (Kitzinger, 1991; Kurtiş et al., 2016). This focus on individual agency leaves the conceptualization of 'power-to' open to single-axis analyses. For example, the notion of empowerment in US second wave feminism as women's entry into the workforce failed to account for women of color's existent positions in the workforce and the harmful consequences they experienced as a result of the re-distribution of domestic labor when white middle-class women gained employment in greater numbers.

Just as feminist psychology is beholden to the various articulations of power in feminism, it has been shaped by its place in psychology; a field that has also produced numerous conceptualizations of power. Similar to the feminist 'power-over'/'power-to' dichotomy, early twentieth-century psychological understandings of power largely focused upon dominance and control as a fundamental aspect of human functioning (for example, will-to-power in Adlerian theory; Griscom, 1992). As Field Theory proliferated in the mid-twentieth century, psychologists such as

Kurt Lewin unpacked relational aspects of power through examinations of dyadic and group power comparisons. In contemporary psychology, since the Cognitive Revolution of the mid-twentieth century, research on power at the individual and cognitive level has soared, with power being articulated through concepts such as self-efficacy, regulatory focus, and motivation (Griscom, 1992). Thus, the most common articulation of power in psychology is in terms of cognitive processes, implying that power is a quantitative capacity that can be measured and manipulated (Overbeck, 2010). Psychological theory has, to a lesser extent, examined the processes by which power is seen as legitimate, such as through system justifying beliefs, and through Social Identity Theory perspectives, which examine power dynamics within and between groups. Across these conceptualizations, as with feminist theory, there is a distinction between power functioning for the purpose of controlling others or the self ('power over') and power expressed as self-determination at individual and social levels ('power to'/empowerment) (Overbeck, 2010).

A notable example of feminist psychological analyses of power is the 1992 special issue of *Psychology of Women Quarterly* on women and power. These explicit examinations of power in a highly influential and arguably mainstream psychological journal makes for an interesting historical case of feminist psychologists doing the work of figuring out power. Two pieces in this issue were particularly influential: Griscom's (1992) history of power in psychology, as reviewed above, and Yoder and Kahn's (1992) editorial introduction explicitly outlining the 'power-over' versus 'power-to' framework. Much of the special issue consists of empirical articles examining power as articulated through strategies for influencing others or one's own situation within this framework. While recognizing that influence strategies are used in larger contexts (i.e., in inequitable social systems), many of these works focus on the use of gendered influence strategies in interpersonal relationships (see Sagrestano, 1992; Friedman et al., 1992; Frieze & McHugh, 1992). These studies trace dichotomies between negatively valued direct/interpersonal/power-over forms of influence and positively valued indirect/intrapersonal/power-to forms, often (but not always) associated with masculinity and femininity, respectively.

More recently, feminism, and feminist psychology by implication, has been critiqued for increasingly individualist understandings of 'power-to' as a separate and desirable form of power that should be the end goal of feminist work. A prominent example of this individualizing work is the infamous '*Lean In*' by Sheryl Sandberg (2015), which echoed second wave feminist advocacy of individual agency by encouraging women to strive for personal power within existing organizational structures and identified women's beliefs and sense of self-efficacy as both cause of and solution to unequal access to power. This individualizing model of empowerment is highly problematic and, while feminist psychologists have explored the individualist bent of this work, greater attention is required to resolve the *lean-in* to individualism within the field. Key to such efforts is recognizing the wider contexts in which people are situated. Indeed, some feminist psychologists have been long making arguments against individualistic understandings of power, for example, Kitzinger (1991) decried individualist notions of power as not only troublingly narrow but overtly harmful:

The notion of the free, autonomous, self-fulfilled and authentic woman possessed of a personal power innocent of coercion - an ideal which informs most feminist psychological engagement with the concept of power - is simply an individualist myth which actively obscures the operation of power. (p. 124)

hooks (2013) similarly claims that such individualistic perspectives disconnect gender from power and so function to prevent critical feminist organizing. Decolonial feminists also offer analyses of individualistic and neoliberal understandings of empowerment and agency as based in colonial Western models of the person abstracted from context (Kurtiş et al., 2016). This individualistic model of the person so prominent in psychology, therefore, requires decolonization, but this cannot be enacted in psychology as a whole unless feminist psychology confronts its place within histories of colonialism.

Relatedly, the individualist subject often envisioned by psychology is also implicitly male, meaning that feminist psychology can also find itself unintentionally reproducing androcentric forms of knowledge. Hare-Mustin and Marecek (1986) identify the androcentrism implicit in the concept of autonomy and its centrality in understandings of human wellbeing. To counter this, they deconstruct understandings of autonomy to show its essentially relational nature and how it is embroiled in power relations. They question the desirability of autonomy by reviewing critiques of its emphasis in psychotherapy (that it encourages selfishness, that it is unattainable to all except the more privileged few) and examine the potential pitfalls of autonomy for men—for example, as a possible barrier to intimacy.

The valorization of individual agency and self-expression is also evident in feminist psychological work on women's sexual agency. Much of the discourse on women's sexual agency emphasizes self-expression and individualized cost-benefit analysis of autonomy within relationships (i.e., only one person can be fully agentic in an exchange). Rutherford (2018) examines the construction of young (white, middle-class) women as ideal neoliberal subjects; neoliberal values of agency, self-expression, individual responsibility, and self-expansion are promoted through 'post-feminist' narratives of empowered heteronormative femininity. Psy-disciplines are implicated in these narratives through their continued construction of abstracted subjectivities and alignment with neoliberal ideology. Rutherford (2018) takes on the case of constructions of sexual agency, arguing that an emphasis on personal feelings of empowerment over material and structural change is a re-articulation of modern concepts of the abstracted independent self. Feminist psychology carries this mantle in terms of valorizing agency as the sole means to sexual satisfaction and wellbeing.

The individualist construction of personal 'power-to' in some feminist psychological work demonstrates the need to closely interrogate how we are conceptualizing power in research. The pressure to conform to contemporary psychology's emphasis on interior, quantifiable cognitive processes, alongside a feminist desire to imagine a palatable form of power to strive for, leaves feminist psychological theorizing vulnerable to an ahistorical and myopic understanding of power as wholly comprised of individual choice, against the liberatory values upon which feminist psychology is built.

Power/History/Psychology

Next, we turn our excavation to history itself to expose how power is embedded in the process of *doing* history, and how this has in turn shaped the history of psychology. In doing so, it is pertinent to recognize the inherently constructed nature of history, which is centrally about storytelling, narrative, and analysis. History is subjective; it is interpretative and written based on the perspective and interests of the historian. Often in psychology, the word ‘subjective’ comes with substantial negative baggage. This baggage consists of accusations of bias, unrepresentativeness, and skewed perspective. In short, it sits at the polar opposite of the heralded ‘objective.’ Here, we wish to recognize the value of subjectivity, not uncritically, but in regard to recognizing the power which sits alongside the writing of history. In doing so, we delve into the (gendered) history of the ‘history of psychology’ as a sub-discipline and show how and where feminist psychology has interjected.

History’s (and we also argue, psychology’s) subjectivity is irremovably tied to power. This includes the basic historical questions related to power: what and who is considered important enough to write history about; who is considered legitimate enough to write such history; what documents and materials are available and sufficiently reputable to write history; how do histories get told and retold? Gender (as well as other key social characteristics such as race, class, and ethnicity) is at the heart of power dynamics at play when answering these questions. Critical scholars, particularly from the 1990s onward, have framed the problem of *his*-story and developed alternative *her*-stories and more inclusive reflexive and radical historical practices. More recent epistemological and philosophical considerations of feminism, gender, and history of psychology have furthered the arena of historical practice in psychology to an even greater extent.¹ Smith (2007) argued that the history of psychology was of particular importance, without which psychology itself would be incomplete. In order to provide further analysis of history, and its inherently subjective qualities, we provide a brief overview of the history of the history of psychology. Here, we examine the ways that gender and power have impacted the history of psychology, and how feminist psychologists have turned the tide away from androcentric narratives.

Psychologists began to account for the discipline’s history just a few decades after its establishment. The first major influential history of psychology was published by Edwin Boring in 1929. His book focused primarily on experimental psychology in Germany and explains how this approach was adopted in the US as the ‘proper’ way to do psychology (see also Rutherford, 2015). One of the most cited early histories of British psychology is Hearnshaw’s (1964) book on the ‘short history’ of British psychology between the years 1840–1940. Hearnshaw (1964) wrote this book for

¹ Alexandra Rutherford’s work is prominent in this endeavor. Her work, alongside colleagues, has greatly advanced this area and has introduced reflexivity and deeper theoretical interrogation into the history of psychology in recent years (see, Rutherford, 2020; Rutherford & Davidson, 2019; Rutherford, Vaughn-Blount et al., 2010; Rutherford, Vaughn-Johnson et al., 2015 and the Psychology Feminist Voices project <https://feministvoices.com/>).

both students and the general reader, which he argued was especially important as psychology was becoming increasingly influential and in the 'public eye' (1964, pp. v–vii). These early comprehensive histories map the structured institutions, the retirements, the appointments, and the most cited studies of famous psychologists. These styles of history are also usually written by psychologists *for* psychologists (even if the public was thought to be interested in such texts), as they are essentially the internalist celebratory accounts of 'great men' (Young, 1966, see also Furumoto, 2003).

The 1960s was a period of particular growth for the history of psychology. There was great optimism about the development of the history of the behavioral sciences broadly, gains in greater status as a sub-discipline, and aims to establish it more firmly within academia (Young, 1966). In order to achieve this, Young (1966) argued that practitioners needed to become more self-critical and cited Stocking's (1965) work on presentism as the one 'hope for the historiographical sophistication of historians of the behavioral sciences' (p. 19). Young's hope for greater critique and the establishment of the history of behavioral sciences, including psychology, was fruitful. Hegarty (2013) argued that such a shift in understanding from the works of Kuhn, Popper, and Stocking in psychology's history caused a move 'away from past as accumulation of fact about the timeless individual subject' (p. 7). The past had to be viewed as more than 'locked in time' and instead be analyzed within its social context, echoing growing social constructionist approaches in psychology from the 1960s onward.

In the 1970s, Gergen (1973) explored constructionism and the association between the social and historical and in doing so argued that social psychology was in effect an 'historical inquiry.' He argued that theories of behavior from social psychology were so context based that they were unable to remain stable throughout time. This perspective allowed for the instrumental use of history to critique core aspects of disciplines. These more critical perspectives were in many ways reflective of wider societal changes afoot, such as the gay liberation movement and the anti-psychiatry movement. Other social movements at the time also reflected social shifts which impacted psychology as well as society more broadly; the process of (geo-political) decolonization was underway, as was the sexual revolution along with, of course, the movements for women's liberation.

US second wave feminism in the mid-twentieth century unsurprisingly influenced the workings of psychology and interest in the work of Naomi Weisstein (1968, reprinted and expanded in 1971) grew. In *Psychology Constructs the Female* (1971) Weisstein argued that psychology characterized women as emotionally unstable, weaker than men, nurturing and intuitive rather than intelligent. This characterization, she argued, was a result of the lack of understanding of the social contexts in which people live. Consideration of gender across various contexts and in relation to people's emotional lives has been particularly prominent in the later historical accounts by Stephanie Shields, for example, in her exploration of late nineteenth-century psychology (Shields, 2007).

In the 1990s, further constructionist accounts of psychology emerged. Danziger (1994) played a particularly key role in the development of these accounts of the history of psychology. He argued that there was a lack of recognition of the socially

constructed nature of psychological knowledge, particularly with respect to psychological methods. In historicizing several common characteristics of psychology, including the increase of the use and trust in statistics and group data, and the development of personality as a topic of study, Danziger (1994) helped reveal the role of power within psychology. By legitimizing and creating scientific methods to study constructed topics, such as personality (which he argued was founded in the mental hygiene movement), psychologists had managed to maneuver themselves into the (powerful) position of staking claim of expertise about these topics. The methods associated with such expertise in psychology are also often gendered in various ways (Hubbard & Bharj, 2019). Indeed, ideas of what constitutes rigorous science have been haunted by gendered notions in psychology (see Eagly et al., 2014; Rees, 2011), evident even in feminist spaces (Donnelly et al., 2022).

It was during this time that feminist approaches to history began to reclaim forgotten (or deliberately untold) aspects of psychology's history. Cherry (1995) used a feminist framework to consider forgotten aspects, or what she calls 'the stubborn particulars,' in psychology (more on this in the following section). Morawski (1994) described work with a focus on gender and feminism in psychology as 'liminal' and highlighted the role of reflexivity when doing histories of psychology. The recognition of the presence of women in psychology in the past was central to this development (Morawski & Agronick, 1991). Feminist approaches in psychology therefore moved from a re-placing project to a reflexive one which positioned women's history as central.

The women involved in psychology from its earliest days have only in the last few decades of the twentieth century began to be 're-placed' into the history of psychology (Bohan, 1990; Furumoto et al., 1986; Morawski & Agronick, 1991; Rutherford et al., 2015; Scarborough et al., 1989). The venture to write women's history in psychology is ongoing, a major contemporary project being *Psychology's Feminist Voices* (see feministvoices.com). It is important to note that the early histories of psychology were written by men psychologists, largely for men psychologists, about men. Significant action has since been taken to not only acknowledge the women within such histories but to also use feminist analysis and critique to examine the process of doing history itself. In more recent years, further efforts have also been made to begin to account for more varied gendered experiences beyond cis gender binaries (e.g., Barker & Scheele, 2019; Hegarty et al., 2018; Riggs et al., 2019; see Chapter [Power, Gender, and Aging](#) in this volume).

Thus, the scope of historical perspective has become broader over time (Vaughn-Blount et al., 2009). Instead of merely accounting for the events in the history of psychology, historians of psychology began to ask further epistemological questions, including how gender and power have been imbued in the construction of historical narrative. This approach, Pepitone (1981) argued, was much more informative than the mere biographical accounts of psychologists, which often exclude contextual detail and recognition of social and disciplinary power and privilege.

In the twenty-first century, historians of psychology have continued to broaden the theoretical scope in which they consider psychology by analyzing the narratives traditionally told in the history of psychology. In doing so, the theoretical

scope of psychology has also broadened. Vaughn-Blount et al. (2009) argued that because the history of psychology is so important, psychologists should be encouraged to become psychologist-historians. They contended that being aware of the disciplinary processes and methods of psychology gives psychologist-historians an advantage over historians (without the disciplinary background) who write histories of psychology. This is somewhat in contrast to the views of historians of psychology some decades before; Young (1966) was very cautious about psychologists doing their own history, arguing that for psychologist-historians to tell the history of psychology successfully and avoid presentist insider narratives, they needed to accept that 'the standards of historical scholarship are no less rigorous than the standards of experimental science' (p. 18). However, as we have argued, from a feminist constructionist perspective, scientific practice is as subjective and context based as historical methods, and both are related to power in often disguised ways.

As one would step back from a dig site to examine the assemblage of artifacts as a whole, the history of the history of psychology reveals the connections between gender, power, and the stories psychology tells about itself. The discipline of psychology is not located within a political vacuum. It is instead very much embedded within powerful social (and usually gendered) systems, which influence its practices (to which we next turn attention) and the stories which are told about its practices, forming a partial *history*. To challenge this, we echo Vaughn-Blount et al. (2009) in calling for greater integration between feminist histories and feminist psychology. History as a tool has allowed for the power dynamics of and within psychology to become more apparent (see Morawski, 2012). Zenderland (1997), much like Gergen (1973), argued that the history of psychology has become an 'exceptionally potent weapon' (p. 137) as a method to illustrate that science is not value-free; it has highlighted to psychologists and the public alike the importance of a critical perspective.

Power/History/Psychology

In the previous two sections, we surveyed multiple definitions of power in feminism and psychology and considered how history itself is imbued with power. In this section, we focus our attention on psychology as a discipline, to locate it within converging histories and systems of power. Perhaps one of the most recent and compelling histories of psychology that considers the gendered power dynamics within the discipline is Young and Hegarty's (2019) article 'Reasonable Men: Sexual harassment and norms of conduct in social psychology.' This article charts multi-faceted histories combining (a) the use of sexual harassment as a tool, variable, or manipulation *within* Social Psychology experiments; (b) the later conceptualization of sexual harassment as a psychological object (and efforts by feminist psychologists to move such work forward); and (c) the sexual harassment experienced by women committed by prominent men in social psychology, including Henri Tajfel. Such thick analytical description of sexual harassment within the discipline reveals much about

the ways in which (often gendered) power is enacted, embodied, and experienced and exemplifies feminist historical practices in psychology. Such feminist historical work has led to substantial shifts in the practices of the discipline of psychology. Young and Hegarty's (2019) article, for example, caused a re-consideration of the conceptualization and presentation of eminent psychologist Henry Tajfel and led to deeper discussions of the histories and ongoing issues of sexual harassment in psychology. In response to the paper, the European Association of Social Psychology announced that they would rename their most prestigious lifetime achievement award (previously known as the 'Tajfel Medal') citing the revelation that he "showed reprehensible and unacceptable behaviors toward female members of his lab" (EASP, 2019). Histories, therefore, do not just remain in the past; they impact the present and shed light on how we might envision a feminist future.

As Young and Hegarty's (2019) article shows, like elsewhere, power has historically been abused in the form of sexual harassment within psychology's workplaces. For example, they draw upon Frances Cherry's description of her first faculty position in the mid-1970s:

the days before sexual harassment policies when I would arrive at work to find sexually explicit notes under my door from a colleague in a position to judge my work and the feelings of helplessness, disillusionment and self-blame that would ensue.

(Cherry, 1995, p. 54, also see Young & Hegarty, 2019, p. 460)

It was not until the 1990s that it was possible to articulate harassment in this way and it was in the text *The 'Stubborn Particulars' of Social Psychology* (1995) (quoted above) that Cherry also began to challenge the ways in which histories of psychology were told. In this central text, she argued that many histories of social psychology served to legitimize psychology as a science. Young and Hegarty (2019) highlight how sexual harassment has also been used deliberately as a tool to manipulate participants in the production of psychological knowledge. The histories of psychology can function both as a legitimizing power and as a way in which to expose histories of abuse. In their conclusion, Young and Hegarty recognize that feminists are not exempt from such power dynamics when doing psychology: "...in taking up the "master's tools" of experimental social psychology, feminists do not escape these ethical-epistemological dilemmas of experimentation" (p. 468). The answer to such ethical-epistemological dilemmas, they argue, lies in reflexivity and the recognition of the partial nature of science (see also Morawski, 2005).

In this vein, we argue for the value of recognizing subjectivity and partiality, as well as the contributions that feminist science studies can provide in contextualizing psychology. In doing so, the powers at play are revealed and become the object under study. Discussions of epistemology and methodology frequently set the stage for feminist psychological examinations of power. Most notably, feminist standpoint theory articulates the ways in which power can constrain and afford insight into socio-political structures (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1992). This can inform feminist psychological methodology both in terms of how we interact with our participants and how we understand their experiences. Feminist analyses of power extend to confronting power imbalances inherent to researcher-participant relations

and challenging these imbalances through participatory research methods. Similarly, the pioneering development of qualitative methodologies among critical feminist psychologists speaks to the power differentials set up by quantitative and experimental research; in qualitative research there is an emphasis on the responsibility of the researcher to be transparent and reflexive and to recognize the epistemological advantage of the participant (Wylie, 2004). This is a direct challenge to the image of the abstracted and objective observer promulgated by traditional empirical methodologies in psychology (for an analysis of the gendered nature of this dichotomy see Hubbard & Bharj, 2019).

Despite the liberatory potential of feminist methodologies, there is still a way to go for feminist psychology. Fine and Gordon (1989) problematized feminist psychology's earlier studies of power in methodological terms; power and gender tend to become obscured when feminist psychologists take up a depoliticized positivist method of psychology. They argue that, by virtue of feminist psychology being psychology, "we collude in the sexist and racist stances built into gender and race research that claims to be "power-neutral" but is actually power justifying" (Fine & Gordon, 1989, p. 25). This is achieved through the "flattening, normalizing, and making "scientific" those aspects of "personal" experience that are ideologically constructed and born of inequality" (p. 9). Rutherford and Pettit's (2015) critical history of feminism and psychology speaks to the difficulties of integrating feminist theories and epistemologies with the established practices of psychology. They note that this integration has on occasion resulted in feminist psychologists adopting feminist empiricist methodologies that serve as a way to bridge the two disciplinary traditions, but sometimes diminish the transformative potential of feminist methodologies. However, the loss of transformative potential cannot be solely blamed on constraints imposed by mainstream psychology on feminist epistemology; the history Rutherford and Pettit (2015) describe is an essentially Western and colonial one. Mainstream psychology has promoted abstracted and Universalist ontologies of the human that fail to account for the socio-historical embeddedness of this model of the person (Shweder, 1991). Though feminist psychology as an approach may be arguably more directed toward social justice than other forms of psychology, its transformative potential is dampened if it is built around individualist and colonial representations of the person. Feminist psychologists must unearth and confront the power dynamics within feminist psychology itself if it is to strive for a significant, and more importantly positive, political, social, and disciplinary impact.

Conclusion

Our aim in this chapter has been to excavate the concepts of power, history, and psychology in order to reveal the underlying connections between all three. We have emphasized each in turn throughout the three sections in order to lever them apart without severing ties. In our first section, we sifted through understandings of 'power' within feminism and in (feminist) psychology, finding it to be neither easily defined

nor mobilized. We also argued for skepticism about the use of individualist ‘power-to’ perspectives which appear to uncritically remove power from its situated context. In the second section, on history, we brought to light how the very writing of history is contextually bound by gendered power and positioning. Here, we highlight the *his*-torical nature of the writing about psychology and some of the responses to this gendering, including more recent work which is shifting not only our understanding of the past but also of the present. In the final section, on psychology, we unearth the inner workings of power in the discipline. Here, we gave examples as to how feminist histories have been especially useful in revealing power dynamics within psychology but continue to argue for the further recognition of psychology’s inherent subjectivity and power.

In all, we argue that it is impossible to untangle or isolate power when thinking about history and psychology. Power is inexplicably tied to history, feminism, and psychology and, much like the foundations of a building, it can be sub-stratal in the sense of being both foundational yet obscured. It is important to reflect on how feminist psychology sits within the contextually bound structures of power that it often aims to dismantle. We argue that in for feminist psychology to effectively undertake its liberatory work; we must keep complicated power/history/psychology dynamics within our sights. Specifically, we advise: (1) that concepts of power need to be challenged and understood critically to ensure they do not perpetuate individualistic notions which do little to dismantle structural power issues; (2) that history is viewed critically and used to reflect upon ongoing power dynamics in the present; and (3) that the subjectivity inherent in psychology is recognized and valued, even when it is diminished by those in power.

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Beyond Identity: Intersectionality and Power



Elizabeth R. Cole

In 1989, legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw published an article addressing a puzzling gap in antidiscrimination law. Although laws existed to prohibit employment discrimination based on race, and other laws prohibited discrimination based on gender, Crenshaw observed that in practice Black women who experienced discrimination were sometimes unable to find a remedy in the courts because they were viewed by law as imperfect representatives of either protected class. Because of their *intersectionality*, Black women plaintiffs were vulnerable to unfair treatment based on race, gender, as well as their combination (e.g., prohibitions on braided hairstyles that employers deemed “unprofessional”), even as they found themselves outside the protection of laws designed to recognize and prohibit inequitable treatment based on a single axis. In the thirty years since this article appeared, the concept of intersectionality has become arguably the signal contribution of women’s studies (McCall, 2005; see also Overstreet et al., 2020) and has been taken up in countless publications across many disciplines, including in the social sciences.

Although critical legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw crafted the neologism of intersectionality (1989), in doing so she drew and expanded on over one hundred years of theorizing by African American women “[advancing] the idea that systems of oppression—namely, racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism—worked together to create a set of social conditions under which [B]lack women and other women of color lived and labored, always in a kind of invisible but ever-present social jeopardy” (Cooper, 2015, p. 389). At its root, the concept of intersectionality aims to understand and challenge (Hancock, 2016) the ways that inequality is created and maintained through social categories that I have termed “identity, difference, and disadvantage” (Cole, 2009, p. 170). These typically include (but of course are not limited to) race, gender, sexuality, social class, ability status, and nation. Within this

E. R. Cole (✉)
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
e-mail: ecole@umich.edu

framework, which has implications for theory, research, and political organizing, such categories are revealed to mutually construct one another and work together to shape outcomes (May, 2015).

Yet despite intersectionality's focus on the structural and political processes that create, maintain, and sometimes disrupt social categories, within the discipline of psychology, intersectionality is all too often flattened to refer only descriptively to identity (Bowleg, 2008; Guidroz & Berger, 2009). This chapter aims to address this misrepresentation by foregrounding the role of power within an intersectionality framework in order to reflect on the implications for research in psychology. Throughout, I draw on examples from the literature on women of color organizing, both because this political work is the terrain from which intersectionality theory emerges and which it was intended to explain, and because these activists' work is innately concerned with the complex ways power works through social categories of identity, including gender.

The Role of Power in Intersectionality Frameworks

Importantly, intersectionality was not originally conceptualized as a theoretical or academic framework. Rather, scholar-activists developed this analytic to complicate conventional understandings of race and gender based on what May calls "either/or logics" that tend to erase and distort the experiences of women of color, and they did so in the service of identifying opportunities for collective organizing across difference (May, 2015, p. 4). As such, the concept of intersectionality is primarily a theory about power and inequity. Cho et al. (2013) noted "What makes an analysis intersectional... is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power. This framing—conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by the dynamics of power—*emphasizes what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is*" (p. 795, emphasis added). This means that intersectionality is not primarily concerned with the various permutations of identity (e.g., Black women), but rather the ways that race, for example, may have different meanings depending on one's gender, and these meanings have significant consequences for life experiences, chances, and choices (Feree, 2009). For example, Goff and Kahn (2013) discuss research showing that White undergraduates rate Black women as less attractive than White women, even as they found Black men more attractive than White men. Subsequent analyses showed that both African American men and women were perceived as more masculine than their White counterparts; this resulted in an attractiveness bonus for Black men, and a disadvantage for Black women. Moreover, this disparity has greater significance for Black women compared to men; Monk et al. (2021) showed that the well-known impact of attractiveness on income is greater for African Americans than other groups, and greatest of all for Black women. This means Black women face

the greatest income penalty for failing to adhere to appearance-based norms, which are necessarily highly gendered.

This is not to say that intersectional analyses are not concerned with identity (membership in social groups) and identifications (the significance individuals place on their membership) (Settles & Buchanan, 2014). Rather, an intersectionality analysis presumes that identities are not static, and that an analysis of power is necessary to understand which identities are associated with power, and thus inequity (Tomlinson, 2013). The definition of social categories structures political life, delineates problems and remedies, and constrains (and affords) access to opportunities, spaces, and institutions (and the resources they offer). Categorization differentially positions individuals in these systems, conferring both privilege and vulnerability, but identity is a mechanism within these systems rather than either an outcome or an independent variable with important explanatory power. Sociologists Collins and Bilge (2016) articulated the stakes of these distinctions in their concern that all too often the discussion of intersectionality has come to be about race, class, and gender, rather than racism, capitalism, and sexism (etc.); their insistence that we attend to forms of discrimination and prejudice rather than identities makes clear that an intersectionality framework is primarily concerned with understanding processes of power.

Psychology's focus on identity often leads scholars to invoke intersectionality descriptively, by describing the demographic characteristics of research participants, rather than analytically, by theorizing categories and how they work together to structure outcomes (see Cortina et al., 2012). However, this approach falls back on simplistic, additive models, in which experiences of Black women, for example, might be characterized in terms of Black + woman, rather than defining a unique experience (Bowleg, 2008). Moreover, a focus on demographics cannot recognize, let alone explain, the ways institutionalized structures of power affect life chances and choices, except in the most superficial ways, as in attention to disparities (May, 2015). Thus, research based on comparisons between groups defined in terms of demographics cannot be said to employ an intersectionality framework. Rather, as Bowleg argued (2008), an intersectionality framework entails "the analysis and interpretation of research findings within the sociohistorical context of structural inequality for groups positioned in social hierarchies of unequal power" (p. 323). Yet in psychology, we rarely talk about power, preferring terms such as inequality and disparities, perhaps because they are easier to define and measure. But power and inequality are mechanistically linked, not synonyms. As my colleague, sociologist Alford Young, Jr., explained, "Power is a resource (I think of it as the fuel) for the production of inequality" (personal communication, October 22, 2019).

Although this conceptualization of identity in terms of power and structure is distinctly sociological, intersectionality nevertheless has much to say to psychologists. In the sections that follow, I describe four ways that an understanding of power from an intersectionality framework complicates approaches to social identity commonly taken by psychologists: attention to contexts of power and privilege; transcending the "but for" analysis; recognition of the coalitional nature of social identities; and heeding intersectionality's social justice imperative.

Contexts of Power and Privilege

If the study of social identity is to move beyond a descriptive focus on individuals' locations within a static list of social categories and toward an intersectionality framework, psychologists must deepen their understanding of the social, historical, and political circumstances that have created the conditions under which minoritized groups live today (Bowleg, 2008). This entails attention to how power and privilege structure the relations between groups that are always defined by multiple dimensions of social identity. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins has proposed that the organization of intersecting oppressions can be understood as a "matrix of domination" (2000, p. 18), in which power distributes privilege and disadvantage unevenly across a multidimensional space defined by social identities. Grzanka (2018) describes these dynamics as "fundamentally relational, intertwined, and co-constitutive, as opposed to parallel, independent, or discrete" (p. 588). The contours of this matrix emerge out of historic and ongoing practices and are specific to place and time. Across this matrix power operates in different domains including structural, disciplinary, cultural, and interpersonal (Collins & Bilge, 2016). While the interpersonal domain is of obvious interest to psychologists, an intersectionality framework demands attention to how power works in the other domains as well.

For example, in 1989, psychologist Aida Hurtado published an essay articulating how Black and White women's differential structural positions in relation to White men in the United States created different experiences of subordination even as both groups faced gender inequality. Arguing that "The definition of woman is constructed differently for white women and for women of Color, though gender is the marking mechanism through which the subordination of each is maintained" (p. 845), Hurtado traced the historical consequences of this discrepancy from slavery to the ongoing disparities in the present. As daughters and (for heterosexual women) potential partners to White men, the most structurally powerful race/gender group, White women are subordinated through these relationships even as they benefit from privilege associated with them. In contrast, women of color are largely excluded from intimate relationships with White men and are perceived by them instrumentally, in terms of their labor and "as objects of sexual power and aggression" (p. 846). One implication of this asymmetry is that White women and women of color have very different experiences of gender oppression. Hurtado also discussed the ways this different experience of gender and power created difficulties for Black and White women attempting shared political mobilization. Because White women are subordinated through what Hurtado calls seduction, they may be less comfortable using anger to motivate collective action compared to women of color. Hurtado's analysis attends to both the structural and interpersonal domains of power. Her discussion of anger in response to power inequities illustrates how psychologists might use an intersectionality framework to understand the ways that individuals' positions within the matrix of domination can shape affect, cognition, and behavior.

This matrix-style approach also complicates a simple binary between the oppressor and oppressed, a fact that popular discussions and critiques of intersectionality often misunderstand (Bartlett [2017] provides examples). Most individuals are privileged in some ways, even as they are disadvantaged in others. As an example of the complexity this framing aims to describe, Grzanka (2018) compared the experiences of two college students, one middle-class and African American, the other an Asian American student from a working-class family. While both students may be at risk of stereotype threat, the content and experience of this vulnerability may be distinct. This example demonstrates that attempts to understand the students' shared experiences in terms of "effects of institutional racism on the academic performance of students of color" overlooks their multidimensional locations in relation to power and cannot adequately describe or explain their experiences.

Attention to the complex contexts of power and privilege helps psychologists understand how social identities are lived in relation to other groups, thus resisting the "flattening" of identity described by Guidroz and Berger (2009). For example, research on differences between Black and White women's body image has sometimes reported that Black women are more satisfied with their bodies compared to their White counterparts. This comparison cannot be meaningfully interpreted without consideration of the ways that beauty ideals hierarchically confer relative social power (even if limited) both on individual women, as well as groups of women. Further, men's evaluative gaze also reflects inequities of power, both between men and women, and between diverse groups of men (see Cottom's [2019] incisive analysis, illustrated with autobiographical detail, of how racialized beauty standards confer social capital by excluding Blackness). Thus, all members of society are situated in asymmetrical relation to one another within a matrix of domination defined by categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage; these locations influence perceptions and evaluations of their bodies by themselves and others (Cole & Sabik, 2009). Considering this context, it makes little sense to conclude that Black women's scores on scales measuring body image that were normed on White women indicate the former are somehow buffered from dissatisfaction (Sabik et al., 2010). Rather, one might begin by asking how Black women perceive their bodies and beauty and whose evaluations matter to them.

By taking an intersectional approach, theorizing individuals as located asymmetrically within a matrix of power defined by categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage, such as race, class, age, and sexuality, psychologists, are better able to see the mechanisms of identity and identifications and the ways that identities shape not only affect, behavior, and cognition, but more specifically, responses to inequality including stress and resilience for diverse individuals. Importantly, such an analysis requires that the experiences of a diverse range of individuals be considered.

Transcending the “But For” Analysis

As a discipline, psychology tends to favor parsimonious explanations, which can lead to a preference for investigating social identity categories one at a time. For example, a recent but already highly cited paper about the psychology of racism that appeared in the flagship journal of the American Psychological Association relegated intersectionality to a footnote (Roberts & Rizzo, 2021; see Grzanka & Cole, 2021b, for a discussion of the consequences for this omission). To give another example from my own subfield, a content analysis of personality psychology papers (Cortina et al., 2012) found that those published in gender-focused journals seldom theorized race—that is, included race in the theory, hypothesis, analysis, and discussion (from 1 to 21% across the journals). Similarly, papers that appeared in race/ethnicity-focused journals were even less likely to theorize gender (2–16% across the journals).

All too often this single-axis approach generates studies focusing on individuals who occupy only one minoritized category; for example, studies of women and sexism are most often theorized based on the experiences of White women and tend to rely on predominantly White samples. Although this is less true of studies about people minoritized by race (simply due to the demographic gender gap among African American college students), nevertheless racial discrimination is most often theorized and conceptualized in terms of the experiences of men. This methodological inclination means we understand gender and race only from the perspective of those who are otherwise privileged, that is, those who hold the most power. Crenshaw (1989) calls this a “but for” analysis (e.g., “but for gender [white women] would not have been disadvantaged” [p. 144]). Less obviously, this type of bias in single-axis studies can shape the very questions taken up for study, even as such investigations are framed as *not* explicitly addressing other aspects of identity. For example, Goff and Kahn (2013) observed that the study of discrimination tends to focus on areas such as employment, access to education, and encounters with the criminal justice system, outcomes that are not framed as gendered. However, this focus is consistent with centering the experiences of minoritized men; beginning the study of discrimination from the experiences of minoritized women could lead to greater interest in access to maternal and child health care, for example (p. 374). The cumulative impact of this approach shapes the entire body of extant literature in psychology such that we know very little about prejudice and discrimination, and their impacts, on populations that occupy more than one minoritized status. Centering the experiences of individuals who experience multiple forms of marginalization provides an opportunity for psychologists to add more nuance to the questions they investigate. In many cases, it would also demand reconceptualization of constructs and item development, as in the example of women’s body image described above (Cole & Sabik, 2009).

Another example stems from an interview with bioethicist and psychologist Adrienne Asch (Cole & Luna, 2010). Asch criticized feminists for failing to consider the standpoint of women with disabilities, in particular “their failure to acknowledge the implications of women choosing abortion in cases of fetal genetic anomalies, which [Asch] argued implicitly devalues the lives of people with disabilities, many of whom

are women” (Cole & Luna, 2010, p. 82). By framing reproductive choice from the perspective of women who are privileged but for gender (i.e., women without disabilities), a movement aiming to broaden self-determination for women contributed to the erasure and disparagement of women with disabilities. Importantly, this outcome was not likely to have been what organizers of the movement intended, but from their social location of relative power they did not perceive the impact of their actions. Similar critiques of the reproductive choice movement have been made by women of color. For example, the reproductive justice movement argues that feminist organizations have prioritized abortion rights while failing to address reproductive issues that jeopardize women’s opportunities to have the children they want and to parent the children they have, such as the difficulty of accessing prenatal care in the U.S. medical system and legal policies that separate parents from children. These concerns disproportionately affect women of color (Luna, 2020; Silliman et al., 2004).

The work of the African American Policy Forum’s (AAPF) *Say Her Name* campaign demonstrates what can be revealed by moving beyond a “but for” analysis. Despite the work of organizations such as #Black Lives Matter to draw attention to Black victims of police violence, AAPF’s campaign notes that state violence against men is more likely to receive widespread media coverage and public response and to be held up as emblematic of systematic police brutality against African Americans. Founded in 2014, the project aims to bring attention to the experiences of Black women and girls who have been the targets of police violence “in an effort to support a gender-inclusive approach to racial justice that centers all Black lives equally” (Crenshaw & Ritchie, 2015, p. 4).

Police violence committed against Black women often takes very similar forms to that experienced by men, such as assaults on those living with mental illness, in poverty or on the streets, those involved in the drug trade, and during traffic stops. Certainly, these crimes against Black women represent an injustice and must be made visible. But Crenshaw and Ritchie (2015) note that Black women also experience victimization by the police based on gender and sexuality, and the lack of representation of these victims obscures our understanding of systematic state violence. For example, Black women experience disproportionate rates of domestic violence compared to women of other races; while representing only 7% of the U.S. population, they are the victims of 22% of homicides committed by intimate partners. Yet for Black women, turning to police for protection can result in further victimization. Crenshaw and Ritchie recount multiple cases in which police responding to reports of domestic violence shot and killed women victims in their homes. Black women’s vulnerability at the hands of the police even as they face victimization by partners is missing from the national conversation about state violence against African Americans. As well, the report notes that because of Black women’s traditional roles as caregivers to both the young and old, their murders have a distinctive impact on Black communities. This too remains outside the conversation on police violence.

Moving beyond a “but for” analysis is necessary for psychologists to understand experiences of people who face multiple forms of subordination, and to work against “intersectional invisibility” experienced by those who are considered less prototypical members of their social identity groups (e.g., Black men represent the prototype

of Blackness (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008)). This work is critical to changing disparities in power. As Kimberlé Crenshaw said in her 2016 TED talk, "...we all know that when there is no name for a problem you can't see a problem, and when you can't see a problem, you pretty much can't solve it."

Transcending a "but for" analysis also offers a broader perspective on how discrimination associated with social identities (e.g., sexism, racism) works by allowing us to perceive how it operates through the other identities. For example, in a study of women's experiences in the military, Buchanan et al. (2008) showed that sexual coercion, considered a severe form of sexual harassment, was most strongly associated with psychological distress for Black officers, and had the weakest association for White officers; enlisted women of both races were between these extremes. They interpreted this finding to reflect White officers' stronger perception that they would be protected by their rank and racial privilege. By showing that Black women officers were not afforded the same psychological benefit of rank that their White colleagues enjoyed, this example demonstrates the complex ways that identities intersect to create outcomes within a matrix of domination. It also suggests that an analysis that did not attend to diversity among women could have concluded that sexual coercion harassment was not distressing for women officers.

Finally, a "but for" analysis obscures the ways that all individuals' experiences are shaped by their multiple social locations. In the *Say Her Name* example, the deaths of Black men who were victims of police violence are no less gendered than those of Black women victims, but this can be difficult to perceive if we take the experience of one segment of a subgroup as normative. Similarly, the relative lack of distress reported by White women officers who experienced sexual coercion is no less racialized than that of their Black women counterparts. This line of vision is particularly important in movements for social justice (or what May [2015] terms *antisubordination* [p. 229] a term that emphasizes power) because sometimes strategies framed by a "but for" analysis can reinforce subordination on some subgroups (as in Asch's critique of the reproductive choice movement's omission of women with disabilities; Cole & Luna, 2010).

The Coalitional Nature of Social Identities

Intersectionality begins from the observation that there is diversity within social identity groups; for example, at the simplest level the category "woman" includes racial diversity, just as the category "African American" includes women, men, and nonbinary people. From this perspective, it could be argued that because all social identity categories are in fact, constructed, they are coalitions of a sort (Cole, 2008). This observation reveals at least three important aspects of the way power shapes social identities. First, identities are often ascribed—by both in and outgroup members—in ways that create exclusions (Anthias, 2002). Within social identity groups, a sense of the distinctiveness of the group is associated with loyalty and increased identification (Brewer, 1991). As a result, group members who also have allegiances to other groups

may be treated as outsiders by groups with which they identify (Carastathis, 2013), or they may be rendered invisible and silenced within those groups (Luna, 2016) and this is particularly true for group members with less relative power. Feminist activists have long identified such perceptions as an obstacle to organizing (Reagon, 1983). For example, King (1988) describes how Black women's concerns were not made central to the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, or to labor organizing, despite their significant contributions to all three struggles.

Second, recognition that identities are socially constructed means that "unities and divisions are constructions rather than representing actual and fixed groupings of people" (Anthias, 2002, p. 277). When social identities are conceptualized as constructed through coalitions, it reveals the work of how identities are made, as well as the understanding of similarity underlying the definition of the group. For example, Yuen (1997) traced the genealogy of the term "people of color," revealing the term to be a "political formation created in the crossfire of white supremacy and identity politics" (p. 99). "People of color" represents a racial project in which members of different ethnic groups claim a unified identity and solidarity in a common community and cause.

Third, pairing the understanding that social identities are often defined in ways that are exclusionary with the realization that these definitions are subject to human agency, reveals the possibility of crafting more expansive definitions that challenge relations of power rather than reinforcing the status quo. For example, in an interview, political scientist Cathy Cohen suggested that the identity "queer" could be defined not in terms of one's relationships, but in structural terms as including anyone marginalized by their sexuality. In this reframing, "queer" could transcend a queer/straight binary by including not only people identifying as LGBT, but also women in poverty who have children, or sex workers (Cole & Luna, 2010). In practice, achievement of such a capacious identity is challenging: how do groups construct a shared identity that is broad yet bounded, with internal coherence that is not unraveled by the complex patterns of power and privilege within it?

In a study of the reproductive justice movement, Luna (2016) describes how activists faced exactly this dilemma. The concept of "women of color," ostensibly women lacking race privilege in comparison with White women, had long been poorly defined and contested based on the very diverse experiences of women subsumed under the umbrella term. For example, Native Americans' struggles for sovereignty distinguish them from other groups. Luna found women in this movement navigated internal differences of power and privilege to forge a collective identity as women of color by using two strategies. "Same difference" logic was invoked to establish the shared distinction between women of color and White women; "Difference-in-sameness" logic acknowledged internal distinctions that necessitated continual coalitional work within the organization, so "material differences in experience and varying levels of power are brought to the fore" (p. 777). Luna cautioned that methods of organizing can "both challenge and reproduce precisely those structures and relations of inequality that it seeks to transform" (p. 777). In order for the organization to continue its work, it was necessary to deploy *both* logics in a balanced and flexible way.

I have written elsewhere about how thinking about identities in terms of coalitions can help psychologists achieve a more intersectional understanding of social identities (Cole, 2008). This discussion suggests that psychologists who want to understand social identities need to look at dynamics within groups, both in terms of how psychologists theorize and hypothesize about social identities, but also in terms of the questions they investigate. To understand how groups define the meaning and membership of identities, psychologists need to view identities as historically contingent, changing in response to shifts in political power. McCormick-Huhn et al. (2019) urge psychologists to consider a dynamic model of identity, noting that “Historical context can ... contribute to the dynamic nature of intersectional positions by affecting both people’s experiences as members of a particular group and connections between group membership and structural power” (p. 448). Importantly, the meaning and impact of these historical shifts are determined by human agency and changes in identity come about through social relations. Crenshaw (cited in Carastathis, 2013) argues that organizing based on identity is always negotiated and coalitional. Making these decisions and setting this agenda are forms of power, power that is accessible even to groups that are otherwise less powerful.

Intersectionality’s Social Justice Imperative

Intersectionality was originally theorized as an explanatory tool to support efforts advancing social justice. This commitment persists in contemporary accounts. For example, Hancock (2016) describes intersectionality as a two-fold project including “an analytic approach to understanding between-category relationships *and* a project to render visible *and remediable* previously invisible, unaddressed material effects of the sociopolitical location of Black women or women of color” (p. 33, emphasis added).

To demonstrate the inseparability of the analytic of intersectionality from its social justice aims, Collins (2019) made a dramatic comparison between intersectionality and eugenics. Like intersectionality, eugenics offered a lens to understand the world in the service of making change. Also like intersectionality, eugenics provided an analysis attuned to the ways that social categories are mutually constructed and reinforcing. For example, nationalism often makes claims about the responsibilities that able-bodied persons (typically men) bear to the state, implicitly degrading the citizenship of those with disabilities. This is a gendered logic as well, as (able-bodied) women have a responsibility to reproduce the nation. This hierarchy of humanity lays the groundwork to differentially value other bodies, including on the basis of race. Like intersectionality, eugenics is committed to social change; however, unlike intersectionality which seeks to further antisubordination, it does so in the service of creating and maintaining hierarchies of power. Collins’ comparison demonstrates both that intersectionality cannot be reduced to an intellectual analysis and that it is existentially tied to a praxis of social justice, that is, intersectionality demands enactment to reduce hierarchies of power and privilege.

This position is not without controversy; Collins notes that some academics believe that imbuing a commitment to social justice into scholarship is antithetical to the ideal of social scientists as impartial observers and renders one's conclusions as untrustworthy. Writing about psychology in particular, Warner et al. (2016) identify intersectionality's commitment to social justice as key to its transformative character, noting that in this way it challenges normative paradigms (see also Grzanka, 2020). Some of this resistance may stem from a disconnect between the social justice imperative and some aspects of the discipline's worldview. Tracing the history of the concept of social justice, Thrift and Sugarman (2019) identify disciplinary obstacles to psychologists' attempts to engage social justice in their scholarship. They note that the focus on identity in psychology can obscure inequities created by capitalism, and that psychology's interest in, and emphasis on, the behavior and experience of individuals aligns with neoliberal explanations for injustice.

Conclusion

Psychologists have recently issued calls for the discipline to take intersectionality seriously (Grzanka, 2020; McCormick-Huhn, et al, 2019). These scholars assert that an analysis of power is fundamental to any project deploying an intersectionality framework (see also Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016) and provide examples illustrating how this insight might be integrated in research in the field. In this chapter, I've provided four principles that might shape future research aiming to incorporate these insights: attention to contexts of power and privilege; transcending the "but for" analysis; recognition of the coalitional nature of social identities; and the social justice imperative. Intersectionality provides a tool for theorizing social identity in terms of both lived experience and structural constraint (May, 2015), as it is experienced by diverse groups located across a full range of locations of power and privilege. Within an intersectionality framework, identities come into view as produced in part by social structure and inequality rather than properties of individuals (Cole, 2009); nevertheless, these identities carry both ideological and experiential meaning (May, 2015). Finally, the social justice imperative reminds us that discussions of power cannot be purely academic, or else they are as likely to support hierarchy as to challenge it. Any intersectional analysis of power must be ethical. In this, intersectionality poses a challenge to disciplinary norms in the social sciences, and it is hardly surprising that psychologists' ideological commitments and accepted practices have served to exclude it from the mainstream, including top disciplinary journals (Settles et al., 2020; see also Grzanka & Cole, 2021a). Together these principles hold promise to broaden psychology's interpretation of intersectionality as merely pertaining to "multiple identities" (Grzanka, 2020), a necessary corrective if research in psychology is to be a tool for reducing power disparities and bringing a more equitable society into existence (Grzanka & Cole, 2021a, 2021b).

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Institutions and Settings

A Feminist Psychology of Gender, Work, and Organizations



Lucy Thompson

Histories of global labor relations show that work is a heavily politicized domain, which is patterned by global and colonial power interests (Mohanty, 2003). Critical psychologists argue that “Organizations are ubiquitous in everyday life and are the main instruments of capitalism” (Dashtipour, 2015, p. 79). For organizational scholar Joan Acker, it is precisely because organizations constitute such major sources of income for industrialized nations that studying work and organizations can reveal the practices through which gendered, racialized, and classed inequalities play out (Acker, 2011). Overlaps between global labor and feminist movements reveal rich histories of gendered struggle, which emphasizes the importance of centering multiple and complex “relations between different forms of patriarchy and gendering, modes of domination and colonialism, and uneven processes of globalization” (Basu et al., 2001, p. 943) in analyses of work. With global labor markets and power bases shifting, and the “global race for talent” widening gendered inequities (Boucher, 2016), work and organizations continue to emerge as central governing technologies of local, transnational, and global power.

In this chapter, I argue that feminist psychological perspectives—and those who have worked to develop them—offer valuable ways to engage with important concerns in the domain of work. However, as within other sub-disciplines of mainstream psychology, these perspectives are largely missing from mainstream industrial and organizational psychology. Therefore, I argue that within the mainstream disciplines of industrial and organizational psychology; there is a chronic epistemological exclusion of critical and feminist psychological perspectives and the concerns they address. To illustrate this argument, I trace the largely apolitical and neutral conception of gender within these disciplines and argue that concerns over gendered power in the context of work have been overlooked. In response, I discuss the value of feminist psychological perspectives, offering three critical (re)conceptualizations of

L. Thompson (✉)

Department of Psychology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA

e-mail: aymorluc@msu.edu

gendered work-related phenomena. These conceptualizations resituate concepts of “leadership,” “imposter syndrome,” and “interpersonal conflict” beyond the bounds of individuals and specific organizations, to show how work-related phenomena are situated with/in and through broader relations and histories of power and domination. Finally, I argue that a feminist psychology of gender, work, and organizations offers valuable critical readings of gender and power for future research.

Mainstream Psychological Theories of Work and Organizations

Mainstream organizational and industrial psychology is dominated by North American and European scholarship. Dominant perspectives in North American and European industrial and organizational psychology tend to conceptualize work and organizations from politically neutral standpoints. Over the first two decades of the twenty-first century, critical psychologists have remarked that “very little work from an explicitly critical perspective has been carried out in organizational psychology” (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002, p. 134), and the critical organizational psychology literature is “modest” in size (McDonald and Bubna-Litic (2017, p. 598). Where social and political realms are recognized, mainstream work in organizational psychology takes a restrictive perspective limited to “micro-politics” between individuals or small groups and typically overlooks historical and cultural forces that shape organizational identities and experiences (Dashtipour, 2015). This is the case despite long-standing feminist psychological observations that work organizations constitute critical sites for the enactment and preservation of gendered power and politics (Nicolson, 1996, 2015).

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines industrial and organizational psychology as “the scientific study of human behavior in organizations and the work place” (APA, n.d.). According to the British Psychological Society (BPS), “Occupational psychologists use psychological theories and approaches to deliver tangible benefits by enhancing the effectiveness of organizations and developing the performance, motivation and wellbeing of people in the workplace” (BPS, n.d.). These definitions reflect a far-reaching knowledge production industry, which has its roots in the pursuit of scientific inquiry in organizational contexts.

Islam and Zyphur’s (2009) comprehensive genealogical analysis of industrial-organizational psychology reveals a fundamental lack of critical attention to the power-laden dimensions of work. Historically, organizational psychology emerged from research within the manufacturing industries, with a focus on ensuring corporate and industrial productivity and success. The classic Hawthorne studies, carried out by George Elton Mayo and his research team between 1927 and 1932, aimed to explore whether manipulations of environmental conditions in factories directly affected productivity. Prior to this, early researchers such as Frederick Winslow Taylor had established a focus on improving productivity within manufacturing industries. The

principles for achieving this outcome came to be known as “scientific management” (Taylor, 1911) and involved the reduction and simplification of work into small component tasks. These principles shaped organizational psychology in ways that are still apparent in contemporary mainstream thought, such as the dominance of scientific measurement and a focus on job components, efforts to improve efficiency, and the development of incentives. As such, “scientific management” literature constitutes a long and broad history within the discipline of organizational psychology (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996, 2004).

These approaches are products of modernist projects in mainstream organizational science, which was formed through dominant ideologies of empiricism, individualism, rationalism, and capitalism within economic, technological, and institutional regimes of modernist power (Gergen, 2003; Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996, 2004). In this “modernist parable” (Lawthom, 1999, p. 67), individuals were viewed as coherent, stable, predictable, and able to produce scientific knowledge for the organization, which could—in turn—be interpreted through the rational minds of researchers. Here, individuals were rendered governable and controllable by organizational practices grounded in assumptions of the “rational agent,” such as job design, strategic management, productivity, and performance. For feminist psychologist Rebecca Lawthom, “The relationship between the individual and the organization is predominantly presented as one of coercion rather than conflict. Individuals are treated, measured, assessed, advised, trained and rejected while inadequate environments are left intact” (Lawthom, 1999, p. 69).

Organizational Psychology, Gender, and the Individual

One key area of research that maintains this relationship is the identification and measurement of “individual differences.” Individual differences research heavily informs mainstream psychological perspectives on workplace behavior, motivation, and productivity. In organizations, individual differences are measured as part of selection, recruitment, and development processes, and there has been a wealth of psychological research testing the usefulness and applicability of such measures (Coolican et al., 2007). This research tends to be concerned with the predictive power of individual differences relative to a variety of performance-based indicators. Since gender differences form a major site of study within individual differences research (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990), gender has inevitably been treated as a fundamental predictor of individual differences, leading researchers to seek stable and distinct differences between hegemonic categories of “men” and “women” in terms of generalized behaviors, attitudes, traits, and abilities (Bem, 1993; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990).

Alvesson and Due Billing (1997, 2009) explain that organizational research adopting this “gender-as-a-variable” perspective is mainly concerned with identifying differences between the categories of “women” and “men” in terms of gendered attitudes, values, and the differential effects of organizational structures or processes

on them. They argue that a focus on generalized differences and universal traits upholds gender inequalities by treating gender differences as inherent, stable, and inevitable. More recently, scholars have noted that socially located conceptualizations of gender tend to be ignored, “silenced,” or considered irrelevant in mainstream theories of organizations and management (Jeanes et al., 2012; Martin, 2020). Where gender is considered, organizational theories tend to assume that dominant binary formations of gender map neatly and straightforwardly onto differences in physiological, cognitive, and social characteristics. This tendency to conflate sex and gender has attracted extensive theoretical critique from feminist scholars who argue that gender is a fluid and unstable social construct that is performed and constructed through interpretation and reinterpretation (see Butler, 1990; Burr, 1998; Clarke & Braun, 2009; Gavey, 1997; Kelan, 2009). The conflation of sex and gender not only ignores gender diversity, but also fails to question binary genetic constructions of sex or recognize sexual diversity (see Richardson, 2013, for a critique). This functions to treat “women” as a unitary category to be understood through comparison with men or man-made stereotypes about men and women (Wilkinson, 1991).

Such confluations are also reflected in theories of sex roles and gender socialization, which tend to be concerned with sex role stereotyping and the measurement of gender role attitudes (Condor, 1986). Sex role and gender socialization theories take gender to be a product of early socialization, where gender is conceptualized as a linear developmental process, which has normal, and therefore “abnormal,” trajectories. Those who do not develop along normative lines are labeled as “abnormal,” and commonly pathologized (Tosh, 2011, 2016).

Historically, the regulatory power of binary gender has gone largely unquestioned within mainstream organizational research. Indeed, questions over gendered power are largely absent in mainstream literature on organizational culture (Alvesson & Due Billing, 1997, 2009; Penttinen et al., 2019). Feminist work has argued that the invisibility of considerations around gender and power in organizational culture continues to uphold gender inequalities (Clavero & Galligan, 2021). This is also a problem because apolitical accounts of gender differences typically reproduce hegemonic and cisnormative assumptions about gender identification and expression. This is at odds with rhetorics of inclusion in workplaces, which are increasingly being deployed in efforts to create gender-diverse cultures (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). However, rather than diversifying understandings of how gender can and could be done, such assumptions maintain two very specific forms of hegemonic gender expression, denying possibilities for doing gender otherwise. However, hegemonic gender types are inherently ideological and shift over time and place (Barker & Iantiffi, 2019; Barker & Richards, 2015; Clarke & Braun, 2009). Furthermore, feminist psychological reconsiderations of masculinity point out the psychic impossibilities of hegemonic masculinity, arguing that “ideal” constructions of invulnerable masculinity are better understood as an unobtainable “myth of masculinity” (Gavey, 2019). Therefore, gender types should be viewed not as “truths” about difference, but as powerful socially constructed categories that enhance difference according to imagined and culturally specific values. Accordingly, the power of binary gender lies

in its capacity to organize social relations such that certain gender types come to be positioned as legitimate, superior, and dominant to the detriment of others.

A focus on individual and binary gender differences in mainstream organizational psychology both reflects and neglects the disciplinary power relations through which knowledge(s) about gendered work and workers have been (re)produced: Mainstream psychological knowledge production industries, including professional organizations, publishers, educational institutions, research organizations, funding bodies, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and others, are arranged around these relations. Within these spaces, the systematic avoidance of politicized analyses in favor of individualized explanations has obscured the struggles faced by those who do not—or cannot—inhabit the norms of institutions and organizations. Simultaneously, mainstream organizational psychology has become saturated with taken-for-granted values of scientific objectivity and neutrality, rendering power and oppression all the more unspeakable.

Toward a Feminist Psychology of Gender, Work, and Organizations

The simultaneous exclusion, yet huge potential, of feminist perspectives in the area of organizational studies exists as a point of frustration for many feminist scholars. Bell et al. (2019) use the term “Time’s Up!” to invoke calls from feminist movements such as #MeToo and convey “the urgent need for more sustained engagement with feminism in the study of organization, social relations and work” (p. 5). Similarly, Lewis and Pullen (2018) call for the strengthening of feminist work in organizational studies, arguing: “...we have never needed it more than we do now” (p. 108). These calls speak to a growing sense of urgency around the exclusion of feminist scholarship and the need for feminist theory in mainstream organizational research. I will now consider these exclusions specifically in relation to the discipline of organizational psychology to demonstrate the importance of feminist psychological perspectives in the discipline.

In line with the absence of feminist theorizing within the broader discipline of mainstream psychology (Capdevila & Lazard, 2015; Thompson, 2017), there is a glaring absence of feminist theorizing from the outset of organizational psychology, and feminist analyses of work remain peripheral “special topics” in organizational psychology. Neither “gender” nor “feminism” had been critically theorized when the enduring assumptions that now shape mainstream psychological knowledge were developed. This is largely due to the legacies of colonial power, the position of “women” and “gender” within these legacies, and the constraints this placed on theorizing racialized, gendered, and classed power. Indeed, the assumptions of mainstream psychology developed against a colonial backdrop, which sought to promote the power interests of white, heterosexual, able-bodied men, who were presented as the pinnacle of evolution and civility (Stevens, 2015).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, feminist attention was paid to the project of broadening organizational analysis to the gendered distribution of jobs, wages, and power (Acker, 1992; Mills & Tancred, 1992). These analyses contributed understandings of gendered assumptions and practices embedded in institutions and organizations, and the complex ways in which gender is embedded in the practices of everyday life, work, and family (Acker, 2011). This work underwent further expansion with intersectionality theory. In her considerations of *Degraffenreid v General Motors* (1976), *Moor v Hughes Helicopters, Inc* (1983), and *Payne v Travenol* (1982), Crenshaw (1989) conceptualized work as a key site for the enactment of power and privilege through simultaneous discrimination on the grounds of race and gender. Here, work was identified as a key organizing site for the preservation of historical power and privilege, made possible through reproductions of white patriarchal power.

Early research exploring gender in organizations adopted a “single-axis approach,” focusing typically on white women in management, which “resulted in the creation of theoretical frameworks that did not apply to working women with other marginalized identities, such as women of color and/or low-wage personnel” (Rabelo & Cortina, 2016, p. 182). One consequence of this has been the systematic privileging of white, middle-class women’s experiences and perspectives and, conversely, the silencing of concerns around the simultaneity of gender, race, and class in organizational understandings of gender and power. This is even the case in the “managing diversity” literature (Ahmed, 2012, 2017; Holvino, 2010).

Gill et al. (2017) point out that “Women on boards” has become the “neoliberal feminist topic du jour” (p. 226) under postfeminism, and that this has become privileged over other issues such as low pay. Here, the authors describe a postfeminist sensibility, marked notably by “prominence accorded to ‘choice’, and ‘agency’, emphasis on individualism, retreat from structural accounts of inequality, and the repudiation of sexism, and (thus) the need for feminism” (p. 227). They argue that this postfeminist sensibility is coupled with a particular set of “empirical regularities” that are observable in contemporary beliefs about gender, including a focus on personal empowerment, choice, individualism, and a sense of “fatigue” about gender (Gill et al., 2017). Subsequent work exploring the consequences of postfeminism observes the “taming” of feminisms in various organizational contexts, charting the rise of “moderate feminism,” which embraces individual emancipation and “the recent growth and proliferation of individualized “psy” solutions to gender inequality which focus on disciplining the internal self” (Lewis, 2019, p. 1066).

The proliferation of individualized logics and the accompanying retreat from structural accounts of inequality is arguably reflected in the largely “apolitical” neutrality of mainstream psychological and organizational theorizing. Recognizing that “the problems of occupational psychology are precisely reasons for critical intervention” (Lawthom, 1999, p. 70), I now seek to demonstrate what is at stake when power is left uncontested within organizational domains. To accomplish this, I will reconceptualize three taken-for-granted gendered concepts from the discipline of

mainstream organizational psychology—*Leadership, Imposter Syndrome, and Interpersonal Conflict*—to show how they are tied to broader relations of power and domination and demonstrate the need for critical feminist intervention.

From “Leadership” to Managerial Elitism

Within organizational psychology, individual differences approaches reproduce the assumption that the traits or qualities typically associated with masculinity will facilitate successful leadership. In these theoretical accounts, taken-for-granted models of binary gender are deployed to assert that “women” are inherently incompatible with the role of leadership. This is observable in the assumption that in order to lead; women must display qualities or traits typically expected of men. However, this typically works against women, who come to be vilified as “not men,” but also “not women” either. Critical attention has been paid to gendered disparities in the workplace for these reasons, and in response to the cultural dominance and implications of masculinized leadership ideals, feminist organizational psychologists have argued that notions of the ideal worker must be uncoupled from traditional markers of masculinity (Rickett, 2014).

Critique has also been leveled at the figure of the “great” male leader on the basis that he reflects colonial logics of white male supremacy that have historically afforded men easier access to leadership positions and power. These intersectional and postcolonial critiques have shown that the gendered logics of male rule are also bound up with race and colonial power, arguing that assumptions about “natural” leaders—including the “Great Man”—are inextricably bound to *white* male power and ideology, and thus cannot be considered a “natural” feature of individual men (Mohanty, 2003).

Intersectional feminist and postcolonial critiques show how race, gender, and sexuality are interconnected and situated within colonial legacies of political, cultural, and economic power, which naturalize white, hegemonic, and male leadership. An intersectional feminist reading of these logics shows how the naturalization of hegemonic and colonial male leadership functions to cast the political leadership of “others” as unnatural. Thus, race, gender, and sexuality are inextricably bound and cannot be understood in isolation from one another in considerations of leadership ideals and practices, and their implications.

Given that “leadership” is typically synonymous with management (Clegg et al., 2006), claims of “empowerment” as a logical consequence of leadership should be treated cautiously. Indeed, recent work in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts (Martin de Almagro, 2019) problematizes the construction of rural women as “empowered” under the global *Women, Security, and Peace Agenda*. Martin de Almagro argues that rather than being empowered political agents; women are trained to be responsible managers of neocolonial enterprise(s) once training agencies leave (Martin de Almagro, 2019). These concerns suggest that “leadership” is not an individual practice or a matter of individual capacity, but a politically regulated and

structural phenomenon marked by the promotion of certain kinds of bodies into management positions within certain kinds of spaces, to serve specific purposes. Thus, “leadership” can be better understood as a situated and relational phenomenon, constructed and patterned through the ideological values, needs, agendas, and practices of elitism within specific contexts. A feminist psychology of work and organizations encourages researchers of gendered leadership to consider whether their work is supporting or dismantling practices of elitism, and whether this work facilitates active political agency under neocolonialism.

From “Imposter Syndrome” to Impostering Practices

Relative to the structural and relational politics of leadership is the concept of “Imposter Syndrome” (IS), which typically refers to an individual sense of fraudulence within professional spaces, marked by persistent feelings of self-doubt. IS was originally named “The imposter phenomenon” (IP) and defined as “an internal experience of intellectual phoniness which appears to be prevalent and intense among high achieving women” (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241). This was explained as a consequence of troubled family dynamics, socialization, and sex role stereotyping. While the authors did not propose a singular clinical diagnosis, their analysis was inherently pathologizing: “Women who exhibit the imposter phenomenon do not fall into any one diagnostic category. The clinical symptoms most frequently reported are generalized anxiety, lack of self-confidence, depression, and frustration related to inability to meet self-imposed standards of achievement” (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 242).

Subsequently, research has been developed linking IP to ethnicity, occupation, gender (specifically, recognizing the imposter phenomenon in men), and various measures of psychological distress and well-being (Mak et al., 2019). Within the mainstream psychological literature, IP is largely conceptualized as a fundamental failure of individual rationality, in which “you experience your success as not really *yours*” (Slank, 2019, pp. 205–206). These assumptions are reproduced through Likert-type scales, such as the Harvey Scale (Harvey, 1981; Harvey & Katz, 1985), the Perceived Fraudulence Scale (Kolligian & Sternberg, 1991), and the Clance Scale (Clance & O’Toole, 1987), which encourage individuals to measure self-perceptions based on their agreement with various first-person statements. The result has been a diagnostic expansion of IP within mainstream research and the public imaginary. The power of diagnostic language has pushed understandings of IP even further into the realms of individual pathology through the development of the term “Imposter Syndrome.” Within popular discourse in Europe and the United States, IS has been cemented as a problem residing within the minds of individuals, who are urged to view their chronic self-doubt as a consequence of faulty cognitions and self-perceptions. Recent critiques of rationalism subvert classic understandings of IS, arguing that perceived fraudulence is a rational response to a “culture of genius” within organizations that view intelligence as fixed and innate (Slank, 2019). However, while it has

been (briefly) suspected that these cultures “are ultimately bound up with sexist and racist (and classist) institutions and ideologies” (Slank, 2019, p. 208), this analysis is not elucidated, and therefore, both IP and IS are conceptualized largely as residing in the self-beliefs of individuals.

Given gendered histories of work, organizations, and institutional power, and the dominance of white men in these histories, these conceptions of IS clearly warrant feminist psychological analysis and deconstruction: It is unsurprising from a feminist perspective that women would feel like “imposters” or “frauds” within professional domains that value the ideals of colonial hegemonic masculinity. This is a tension I have been grappling with for almost a decade, which led to my public exclamation in 2016 that “You aren’t an imposter! You’ve just been made to feel unwelcome!” (Stainton-Rogers et al., 2016). Indeed, women have routinely and systematically been positioned as inferior and exploited by these assumptions to ensure the supremacy of white hegemonic masculinity (De Beauvoir, 1953; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988, 1990) and legitimize racialized, classed, and gendered violence (Davis, 1981; Mohanty, 2003). Under these conditions, feelings of self-doubt, depression, and despair can be understood as reasonable responses to violence and injustice. Robinson (2018) uses the term “imposterized” to argue that individualized understandings of IP do not sufficiently account for the experiences of Black women academic faculty members, as “feelings of imposterism are mostly projected upon Black women by the external structures that they must constantly navigate in higher education due to the weight of their dual identities as women and women of color” (Robinson, 2018, pp. 140–141).

These considerations invite a reconceptualization of imposterism that moves beyond individualized accounts of IP or IS and considers power as it plays out relationally through “imposterizing practices.” The reconceptualization presented herein is two-fold, arguing firstly that mainstream conceptions of IS uncritically reproduce the historical individualism of mainstream psychology, viewing power and context as largely neutral, and psychologizing the “problem.” Second, I argue that mainstream concepts of IS fail to account for the complexities of historical power in constructions of institutional legitimacy, belonging, and “otherness.”

The uncritical reproduction of individualism in mainstream conceptions of IS can be contextualized against research contemporaneous with Clance and Imes’ initial study (1978), such as *Men and Women of the Organization* (Kanter, 1977), which regarded organizational power structures as inherently neutral (Acker, 2011). In this work, structures of power in organizational settings were not recognized in terms of their disparate impacts, and individual distress and well-being came to be understood as private, psychological phenomena.

Thus, enduring individualized conceptions of IS arguably reflect a broader historical trend toward individualism in mainstream psychological and organizational scholarship, rather than any objective or individual basis for a “syndrome” per se. Further, the objective belief that women “suffer” from Imposter Syndrome has reproduced “a familiar narrative where women are dispositionally unsuited to the pressures of competition and achievement, which explains why they on average do not succeed

to the extent that their male counterparts do” (Slank, 2019, p. 208). Thus, definitions of imposter syndrome carry several problematic essentialist assumptions arising from individualism. Here, the assumption that women pathologically “suffer” from faulty self-cognitions (Clance & Imes, 1978), reproduces essentialist notions of irrational, unreliable womanhood, which have justified persistent gendered exclusions and violence in institutional domains (Tosh, 2016).

Such essentialist conceptualizations fail to account for gendered discourse as it functions to organize social relations within the context of work. More broadly, these conceptualizations also ignore the socio-political histories and functions of “gender regimes” within broader cultural institutions, such as education, law, government, and the family, which function to institutionalize gendered orders across time and place (Connell, 1987). Furthermore, these conceptualizations do not recognize how narrow gender types are reproduced through a myriad of practices, including work, meaning that gender-based “perceptions” and identities are not an essential quality brought into the workplace by individuals, but an institutional accomplishment shaped by work in specific and hierarchical ways (Alvesson, 2013). Finally, by connecting IP predominantly with gendered disposition, mainstream conceptualizations inherently preclude analysis of imposterism as it becomes patterned through intersecting relations of power and oppression such as heterosexism, racism, classism, and ableism.

The concept of the “interloper” (Johansson & Jones, 2019) demonstrates the contingency of both gender and class in experiences of difference and belonging and “recognizes incidents of felt intrusion as valuable for examining individual experiences as situated within organizational and, more broadly, social relations.” The authors propose the “interloper” as an alternative to “imposter syndrome,” which they argue is a “primarily psychological” concept (p. 2). However, I argue that a feminist psychological reconceptualization of IS constructs the “imposter” as a historicized and socially situated figure, much like the “interloper” described by Johansson and Jones (2019, p. 2). Individualized cognitive and clinical conceptualizations of IS are limited in their explanatory power, *precisely because* they play a key role in producing and reproducing the figure of the imposter without acknowledging this.

The second component of this reconceptualization therefore builds on the first to argue that mainstream concepts of IS do not account for the complexities of historical power in constructions of institutional legitimacy, belonging and “otherness.” This analysis requires us to move beyond individualized accounts of faulty cognitions or self-perceptions and conceptualize the “imposter” as a historicized, socially situated figure, constructed as other to a “legitimate” ideal. Indeed, postcolonial analysis shows how this ideal is reproduced through racist hierarchies, which naturalize white supremacy (Gilroy, 2005), while intersectional feminist analysis shows how this ideal is produced through hetero-patriarchal relations, which naturalize white male heterosexual supremacy (Ahmed, 2017).

Ahmed (2017) argues that, within institutional structures or orders such as universities, hardened histories of colonial knowledge(s) and power function to position those who do not inhabit institutional norms as “diverse.” For Ahmed (2017), “diverse” bodies, including black, brown, trans, queer, and disabled bodies, are

constructed as “strangers” to the institution, and must therefore work harder to inhabit these spaces. “Diversity work” in this sense can be understood as the work done to exist, or to maintain a legitimate existence, when one does not inhabit the norms of an institution (Ahmed, 2017). When institutions construct “diverse” bodies as “strangers,” they construct these bodies as imposters. This analysis articulates a politics of belonging, whereby some bodies are presumed legitimate, and therefore welcome, while others are called into question and constructed as “strangers.” Typically, this positions the “stranger” as other—and often dangerous—relative to institutional norms of whiteness. IS is patterned by these salient markers of identity (Dancy, 2017), and the “imposter” must work to legitimize themselves in order to “pass” through the institution.

A feminist examination of power shows how the figure of the “imposter” is necessary for—and thus produced through—the construction of “legitimate” institutional identities. Those who are in closer proximity to the ideals of whiteness are legitimized as authentic, and able to pass, which necessarily positions those who do not—or cannot—“pass” as imposters. It could be argued that these “authentic” identities function in much the same way as the “myth” of hegemonic masculinity, constructing paradoxical ideals that are psychically unobtainable (Gavey, 2019). However, these ideals nevertheless set up material arrangements of privilege, advantage, and disadvantage. This analysis is now being taken up in broader public discourse and recent reorientations position IS as a “natural reaction of anyone from a working-class, disadvantaged or minority background to the various biases they face on a daily basis” (see Olah, 2019). A feminist reconceptualization of “imposterizing practices” therefore provides a historicized and relational account of (un)belonging, which attends to “hardened histories” of colonialism (Ahmed, 2017) as they function to call into question the legitimacy of those who do not—and cannot—inhabit the norms of institutional spaces.

When institutions call bodies into question, it is incumbent on those studying institutions to understand the logics of power and legitimacy that permit these lines of questioning. A feminist psychology of work and organizations urges psychologists to reorient the project of attempting to “prove” that IS “exists” and instead develop understandings of the processes by which individuals come to be “in question,” and positioned as illegitimate and unwelcome in institutional spaces, such that “imposter identities” become salient and available. This reorientation deconstructs the concept of “Imposter Syndrome” to understand how imposter identities are patterned according to intersecting relations of racism, classism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia, so that “imposter identities” come to be understood as multiple and contingent, based on proximity to institutional norms. Such an analysis aims to open up space(s) to resist the relations of power through which institutional norms and identities are legitimized, idealized, and reproduced and move away from individual-level conceptions of a complex relational phenomenon.

From “Interpersonal Conflict” to Workplace Violence

The final reconceptualization comes in the form of a feminist reorientation of interpersonal conflict in the workplace. The fundamental and grounding tenet of this reconceptualization is that violence is obscured when work is conceptualized as an apolitical or power-neutral domain. Acker’s (1990, 2011) work exposed myths of gender neutrality and identified the intersecting relations of oppression underpinning organizational relations, showing that these are arranged around established regimes of power and inequality. This work identified and illustrated the saturation of work and organizations with broader socio-political power.

Within mainstream organizational research, “work” has been cast as an inherently public domain. As such, theories of workplace phenomena are commonly divorced from theories pertaining to private and domestic spheres. This is in tension with feminist observations of the often-blurred relationship between work and the “private” domain of domesticity (Lawthom, 1999). Theories of work-related phenomena have subsequently been developed in line with idealized goals of functional, efficient workplaces, which are presented as power-neutral spaces (Sanderson, 2017, 2019). This has functioned to invisibilize gender and identity-based power relations as they play out through work, to the point that “in mainstream management and organization research, gender is mainly lacking in research setting and analysis, and many other aspects that affect organizational culture such as power relations, exploitation and control are seldom analyzed in-depth from gender or intersectionality perspectives” (Penttinen et al., 2019, p. 5).

Violence in the *workplace*, therefore, remains under-theorized and has been systematically minimized through terms such as “conflict” and “bullying” (Sanderson, 2017, 2019). Sanderson (2019) argues that constructions of workplace abuse as “bullying” function to reduce violence to juvenile “playground” behavior. Similarly, individualized conceptions of “interpersonal conflict” can reduce patterns of structural and relational violence to the simple matter of “personality clashes” (Penttinen et al., 2019; Sanderson, 2019), minimizing the power imbalances associated with violence, and thereby neglecting the directionality of violence in the context of work.

In response, Penttinen et al. (2019) propose “a feminist research approach on violence as a useful framework to study the complexity of abusive practices and behaviors in organizations” (p. 6). Emotional Workplace Abuse (EWA) is defined as repeated and patterned maltreatment, which can be personal or task-related, including ostracism, belittlement, aggression, gossiping, or ridicule, through which the target is made to feel responsible for the abuse (Penttinen et al., 2019). Key to this approach is the identification of parallels between abuses as they play out in work and domestic spheres, and the central need to understand how workplace violence breaches the public-private divide. The identification of parallels between work-based and domestic violence involves a theoretical situation of EWA within a “continuum of violence,” whereby emotional abuse is understood to be part of a larger continuum of violence, rather than a precursor to “actual” physical violence,

and wherein different “types” of violence are not distinct and separable categories, but part of broader patterns or cycles of violence, often impacting more than one individual and occurring over long periods of time. The authors draw parallels between intimate partner violence and EWA based on the long-lasting impacts of both on personal and family relationships, the barriers to disclosure—such as victim-blaming—and fear of retaliation. Indeed, Sanderson (2017) documents the serious and extensive personal impacts of EWA, arguing that these are akin to those who have experienced domestic violence.

The degree of responsibility and level of blame placed on individuals experiencing violence in organizations then shows how workplace violence breaches the private sphere, wherein violence is viewed as a personal issue and individuals experiencing the abuse are expected to confront and end the abuse themselves (Penttinen et al., 2019). This is evident in organizational distancing, which constructs abuse as a problem that happens at personal and interpersonal levels, and not within organizational conditions. Here, an organizational assumption of neutrality (e.g., in complaints processes) functions to hide the magnitude and directionality of power that shapes workplace violence and shields the organizational and socio-historical conditions that permit violence.

Within the discipline of mainstream organizational psychology, the concept of workplace conflict critiqued by Penttinen et al. (2019) and Sanderson (2019) has come to be normalized as a taken-for-granted fact of organizational life (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019). Consequently, conflict has either been treated as a pathological, dysfunctional problem to be resolved by individuals in the interests of organizational harmony, or as a positive, constructive, and even innovative, force within organizations (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019). The assumption here is that the normative institutional state is harmonious and is disrupted by interpersonal conflict. Organizations are constructed as naturally non-violent spaces in which conflict arises from individuals. Thus, the propensity for violence is laid firmly with individuals. Not only do these assumptions deflect attention and scrutiny away from organizational power, which shapes experiences of violence; they also function to privatize experiences of inherently structural and relational violence and responsabilize individuals for its impacts and management (Thompson, 2021).

A feminist psychology of work and organizations recognizes and names the structural and relational dimensions of violence, which is legitimized within organizational contexts through naturalized practices and discourses about “acceptable” (private) forms of violence and how this should be negotiated (Penttinen et al., 2019). Through the integration of parallel theories from studies of intimate partner violence, a feminist approach to workplace abuse applies broader theories of gendered violence to provide a language to name and describe the scope and magnitude of workplace violence, and its impacts. This application offers a promising route through which to name and connect violence experienced at work to larger patterns of violence, and thus to the institutional and historical logics of power that legitimize this violence. This further serves to illuminate what is at stake when violence is taken for granted by researchers as an inevitable feature of individuals and relationships, and challenges us to center feminist accounts of institutional power and violence.

Feminist Psychological Futures of Gender, Work, and Organizations

This final section will distill the key arguments presented in this chapter and summarize some of the potentials these arguments offer to psychological researchers interested in gender and power in relation to work and organizations. Through a critique of mainstream individualism, I argue for critical analyses of “work” within organizational psychology, which recognize the broader politics, histories, and power tied to gendered work-related practices and labor relations. This is not to dismiss research focused on individuals or within singular organizational contexts. Rather, it is to argue that organizational analysis should not solely reside in these sites, and a failure to recognize the broader socio-political production of “work” and “organizations” functions to decontextualize nuanced analyses. Examining the larger relations of power that function to shape intersecting identities through work also opens up space to question the individualized assumptions that often serve to deflect attention away from power within these spaces and encourages researchers to disrupt this power.

I have also centered the histories and relations of power that shape understandings of taken-for-granted work-related phenomena beyond the boundaries of distinct organizational contexts. These (re)conceptualizations of “leadership,” “imposter syndrome,” and “interpersonal conflict” show how work-related phenomena emerge within and through broader relations of power and domination. This analysis considers the power of individualism in mainstream industrial and organizational psychology and reconsiders “the individual” as the subject of analysis. By examining the assumptions underpinning these phenomena, this analysis has both explicated the processes by which these phenomena come to be individualized and privatized, and examined the broader relations and histories of power that can account for these phenomena beyond the literal realms of organizations. In (re)situating work-related phenomena this way, I contest the classic employee-employer; public-private binaries that characterize mainstream organizational research, so that the complexities of power that regulate these binaries might be interrogated, and the narrow understandings of “work” that reside within these binaries might be loosened.

Finally, by employing feminist inquiry, I echo feminist scholars of the past to call for the foundational importance of feminist theory and analysis to understandings of work and organizations in the future. Such an approach not only serves an appropriate function in this volume through its critical appreciation for the intersectional nuances of gendered power, and its historical critique of “work,” but also provides the necessary political tools for understanding the subsequent violence and exclusions done on the basis of this power, and what is at stake when it is left uncontested. The observation that “feminism provides opportunities for distinctive practices of knowledge production that challenge the patriarchal social formations which characterize academic work” (Bell et al., 2019, p. 4) constitutes a direct call to the disciplines of industrial and organizational psychology to recognize these opportunities, center

feminist inquiry, and attend to what is at stake within the domains of work and organizations.

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“To Be Treated as a Thing”: Discussing Power Relations with Children in a Public School in Rio de Janeiro



Amana Rocha Mattos and Gabriela de Oliveira Moura e Silva

when we are in another's power, we are in great danger.

Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar Book VII*

Forms of oppression do not operate in singularity; they intersect with others.

Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*

How can power relations be discussed in classrooms, articulated with gender and race? Moreover, how do children deal with these issues? This chapter discusses the results of a research project¹ entitled “Processes of subjectification in schools: intersections of gender, sexuality and race,” coordinated by the first author and developed in government funded schools² in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The fieldwork included workshops with students (children and adolescents), participatory observation of these schools' routines, and interviews with teachers and school psychologists. The workshops, facilitated by undergraduate psychology interns, consisted of five weekly meetings with the students, with drawing activities, games, and group activities, which aimed to discuss with the participants themes such as power relations, consent, and interpersonal violence, among other issues present in everyday school life.

¹ The research project is funded by the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, through the Programa PROCIÊNCIA; and by FAPERJ—Fundação Carlos Chagas Filho de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, through a scientific initiation grant. The project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, under the number CAAE 32251620.0.0000.5282.

² In Brazil, about 81% of students (children and adolescents) go to publicly funded schools (which can be municipal, state, or federal-funded schools), and only 19% go to private schools (INEP, 2023). The results discussed in this chapter are part of the fieldwork developed in a federally funded elementary school.

A. R. Mattos (✉) · G. de O. Moura e Silva
Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
e-mail: amana.mattos@uerj.br

In this chapter, we analyze some outcomes of a specific activity named “Persons and Things”,³ which was carried out with seven classes of children in one of the schools, during 2019. This activity, inspired by the principles of the *Teatro do Oprimido* (Theater of the Oppressed), created by the dramatist Augusto Boal (Alencastro et al., 2020), aimed to bring the discussion on power relations to the classrooms, using a game that invites participants to assume active (“Person”), passive (“Thing”), or observational (“Observer”) roles, while interacting with each other. Developing this activity with 8-to-11-year-old children raised interesting issues related to power relations and produced situations that the research team did not expect, such as a specific subjective position of some children who enjoyed the role of “Thing” and wanted to assume this role. Some of the fieldwork situations led us to extend the discussion about processes of subjectivation and subjection, connecting these aspects with gender, sexuality, race, and childhood. The activity also caused participants to reflect on power relations in Brazilian society, requiring us to consider the structural inequalities that are present in Brazilian schools. Moreover, the fact that the participants were children raises questions about the effects of schooling on subjectivities, as well as the importance of play, the centrality of the body, and the relationship with others when thinking about power and normativity in schools.

To discuss these issues and analyze the empirical material, we used a framework drawing on psychoanalysis, post-structuralist gender studies, and intersectional feminism. Considering the concepts of subject, both from psychoanalysis and post-structuralist studies, we understand that the subject is produced within discourses, in relations with others. Subjectivity must be captured through its effects rather than being considered an essence or unit. Therefore, in this text we discuss how the activity “Persons and Things” produced situations and discussions with participants that complexify the question of power relations, including the social context and, also, aspects of subjectivity such as its ambivalence and the idea of a divided or decentralized subject.

We begin the chapter by presenting the research project, the fieldwork, and the activity “Persons and Things” carried out with children in a government funded school. We analyze how play was central in the activity, especially as it was developed with children; then, we discuss how participants subverted the original script of the activity and the centrality of the body in this game, bringing attention to aspects of child sexuality that are not usually considered in schools. We also discuss the role of repetition in the children’s engagement with the game. In order to develop these points, we use psychoanalytic references to underpin the discussion on activity-passivity and subjectification, and childhood sexuality (Freud, 1920/1961). We then discuss the notion of consent in this activity, using Butler’s (1997) concept of subjection. Finally, we discuss the function that the notion of “good” can occupy in activities with children at schools, analyzing its effects and limitations.

³ “Pessoas e Coisas” [Persons and Things] is a dynamic developed by the Instituto Promundo and adapted by the research team of DEGENERÁ—Núcleo de Pesquisa e Desconstrução de Gêneros [Nucleus for Research and Deconstruction of Genders] (UERJ).

The Field Research and the Activity “Persons and Things”

As mentioned above, the workshops with students were part of our fieldwork in government funded schools. In this chapter, we analyze the fieldwork conducted in a school in Rio de Janeiro with middle- and working-class, mostly white students and a nearly equal proportion of boys and girls. The workshops were conducted in 2019 with seven classes of 8–9 and 10–11 year olds (4th and 5th grade elementary school in Brazil). Each class has approximately 25 students in it, totaling 175 participants. The workshops were facilitated by interns who were enrolled as undergraduate psychology students. Each workshop included five weekly sessions of about 90 minutes, with different activities: drawing, reading texts in groups, performance, and games. The main objective of the workshops was to explore the presence of violence and conflicts in interpersonal relations and in the school routine. The activities took place in the classrooms, with the participation of the class teachers and school psychologist, who observed the workshop to provide support to the interns, but did not conduct the exercises.

The interns introduced themselves and the workshop to the students in the first meeting, and the children were invited to participate and share their ideas during the activities. The meetings were intended to stimulate students’ engagement, and however, their participation was voluntary. If any of the children did not want to participate in any activity, they could stay in the classroom drawing, or just observing. A refusal to participate was rare, particularly during the activity “Persons and Things,” about which most of the children were enthusiastic. The workshops were experienced by the students as a “breather” in their intense routine of classes and schoolwork as this school, according to the teachers, is known for having a particularly challenging and content-oriented curriculum. The interns (each workshop was led by two or three interns) were also received with excitement and curiosity by the students, who always had many questions and comments for them.

The game “Persons and Things” was the third activity in the workshops. It consists of a game that aims to put power relations in perspective and promote discussion of their subjective effects. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups by drawing a scrap of paper from a bag. Each bit of paper had a letter on it: P for “Person,” C for “*Coisa*” (“Thing”), or O for “Observer.” The facilitators divided participants into groups, according to the letter on their papers and explained separately to each group that:

- Things do not think or feel, do not make decisions, and have to do what Persons tell them.
- Persons can feel, make decisions, command Things and tell them what to do.
- Observers must observe what is happening in silence, without taking a position during the game.

Once the activity began, the participants interacted with each other according to their roles. The facilitators walked around the classroom to oversee the activity and intervene if any situation got out of hand. The game centers the participants’ bodies

as Persons must tell Things what to *do*. After 10–15 minutes, the interaction ended and a circle was formed to discuss what happened, to share participants' thoughts and to develop ideas about the experience. Facilitators asked the group some questions to stimulate the discussion: *What was it like to be a Person/Thing/Observer in this game? What happened? Do you think that in life some people are treated as things by others? Are there times when we are observers of this kind of situation? When? If you had the chance to choose one of the three groups, which would you have chosen? Why?*

The original script of the game did not stipulate that the roles would be exchanged after the first round. However, as we discuss below, when the activity was conducted with children, they demanded to repeat the game and try other roles, unlike what usually happened in previous studies with groups of adolescents. Thus, in some classes there was another round, with another drawing of the roles to be played by the participants.

The objective of the activity (to promote discussions about power relations in society) was aligned to the main objective of the project and used a game with simple instructions that was easy to run. Like the other activities of the workshop, this one did not have strict guidelines. The game rules were open to unforeseen situations and improvisation by both participants and facilitators. Based on previous experiences of conducting this activity with adolescents in other schools, we hoped that issues related to gender, race, class, generation, and school hierarchy would appear in the groups. These issues did emerge, causing the children to reflect on their own experiences and relate the discrimination of minority groups to the idea of "being treated as a Thing." In one of the classes, for example, during the discussion, one participant affirmed that he "did not think it was good to boss another person around," and that he did not see the point of the activity. In another class, facilitators asked if there are situations in life when some people are treated as things, and participants mentioned the history of slavery in Brazil (which ended in 1888), when enslaved people were treated like things by their masters, who had the role of Persons (as in the game).

This astute observation made by some participants during the activity, linking what happened in the game with Brazilian history which they had been studying that year in class, sparked a thought-provoking discussion. Some students said that whites who used to observe a master treating enslaved people as things without doing anything were similar to Observers in the game played a few minutes earlier. This link is worth highlighting, given the current difficulty in promoting discussion about the participation and responsibility of white people in maintaining racism in Brazilian society. For Gonzalez (2020), a Brazilian black feminist and psychoanalyst, this concealment of white people's participation in racism is present in what she conceptualizes as "Brazilian cultural neuroses," which permanently and violently relegates black people to the position of object in our society. The points raised by the participants in the class indicate that they were addressing the structural problem of racism, which includes the privilege of whites and their responsibility therein. This is especially relevant because the majority of students in the school are white.

The discussion facilitated a rich exchange between students and interns. Participants used the opportunity to comment on asymmetrical power relations in society. Frequently, for example, when asked who was treated as a thing in society, the children answered “women,” and gave examples of men who assaulted women. They used references from television programs or from the news. Family relationships were mentioned in all the classes. During the discussion, children felt free to mention how their parents treat them and give them orders. It was common for them to talk about everyday situations at home, and domestic chores were a theme in all the meetings. One nine-year-old girl said that her father “makes [her] a thing,” because part of her routine was to cook meals with her mother for her father. In her statement, there was no appearance of discontent with this. Some girls talked about doing certain domestic chores for their fathers, and even though they did not name these situations as sexist, the gender bias of the situations caught the team’s attention. At several points during the discussion, the terms *racism*, *sexism*, *homophobia*, and *bullying* were all mentioned by the students. Examples of this were captured and recorded by the interns in the field reports.

G. said that slaves were treated like things (...) We asked them if they see this treatment today and they added that black people are also treated badly, suffering "bullying" because of their color. A; and other students commented on racism and sexism. At many points, they spoke of "racism" and "bullying" as synonyms and a facilitator asked if they thought there was a difference between the two terms or if they had the same meaning. P. responded that he saw bullying as an umbrella, as if racism, sexism, and homophobia were all under bullying. N. disagreed, saying that they had the same meaning. B. answered that racism is prejudice, and bullying is done when someone has prejudice, so the problem is prejudice. (Field report)

Conducting the game “Persons and Things” with children in this school also presented us with some questions and developments that we had not foreseen. The way that participating children subverted and played with the game rules required us to reflect on how repetition, the activity-and-passivity binary, and subjection permeate subjectivation processes in contexts of structural inequalities. We will delve into these aspects in the following sections.

Power, Sexuality, and Play

From 2015 to 2018, the workshops were conducted with adolescents at different schools. The project then shifted its fieldwork to schools with younger children (ages 6–12), which created challenges for the research team, including the adaptation of the activities. “Persons and Things” was one of the activities that we did not think would need modification, and however, its impact on the groups was quite different from our previous experience with adolescents. Some of the adolescents appeared to be uncomfortable with the first part of the game, and the activity usually did not last as long as planned. For some adolescents, interacting with others by giving or taking orders from classmates made them timid, and some of the students did not engage in this first part of the activity. The centrality of the body in the game produced

embarrassed laughter and sometimes disinterest in this part of the workshop. The adolescent students seemed to appreciate the role of Observer because it did not require corporal interaction. The discussion circles, however, produced complex debates about contexts in which participants felt subjugated, “treated like a thing,” or oppressed. They commonly mentioned asymmetrical power relations between genders, races, generations, and social classes. They often indicated how they were treated badly in different spaces (even at school) because they were young, black, poor, and *favela*⁴ residents. Although they were not usually enthusiastic about the first part of the game, they were interested in the second part of the activity, discussing issues marked by power relations in their lives.

On the other hand, in the most recent research with children, the first part of the game was received with great enthusiasm and excitement. Something as simple as the new classroom setup, pushing back chairs and desks and opening up the space for interaction, seemed to bring joy to the children. As did the announcement that the activity would involve play acting in a “make believe” situation with the opportunity to explore the body in the classroom. Participants’ bodies were central in this game since the students were expected to physically interact with each other, exploring the experience of commanding an action (Person), receiving orders to act (Things), or walking around the room, observing (Observer). After drawing a letter, children enthusiastically began to interact with each other.

Conducting the game with children brought up situations that had not appeared in the activity with adolescents. The experience with their bodies was playful for most of the participants. Once the facilitators explained the guidelines, the Persons took the Things as objects: they were backpacks, hanging on the Persons’ backs; were transformed into a mixer, a ladder; or were dragged through the classroom. The Persons also transformed their Things into horses, riding on their backs, or into pets, taking them for a walk. The Persons asked the Things to take unusual positions, or to repeat certain movements. Given participants agreed to play according to the guidance from the research team, the game, and its rules entailed a *consented suspension of consent*. The majority of the children had fun physically interacting and seeing themselves and their classmates using their body in different ways than they usually did in school. Their joy and pleasure in participating in the game provided us with insight into the power dynamics present in the activity. It also required us to consider what we could learn from children’s engagement in discussing power relations from a social perspective: the participants were having fun, yet they connected the role-play and relations of power.

As we described above, during the discussion children linked what happened in the game and the roles played with power relations present in the society. In this sense,

⁴ *Favelas* are regions of high demographic density and low per capita income in large Brazilian cities. The first *favelas*’ emergence is related to the abolition of slavery, which was not accompanied by State policies for the economic insertion of former slaves. The population living in the *favelas* is mostly black, stigmatized, and the educational, economic, and environmental indicators are below average with respect to the rest of the city. In *favelas*, sociability is intense and common spaces and meeting places are highly valued. They are also area of important cultural production and creation (including music, food, architecture, and literature).

the game allowed them to think about situations of oppression and objectification. However, we observed children experiencing the game as playful. What can this tell us about the function of play in power relations? When considered in static terms, we can crystallize power relations into an active pole (who dominates) and a passive pole (who is subjected). Nevertheless, the fieldwork with children raised some analytical possibilities. To explore them we draw on psychoanalysis as this approach conceptualizes the subject not as a self-conscious unit but as constituted through a subjective division, in which passivity and activity are present in the processes of subjectivation, even if unconsciously.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920/1961), writes about children's play, highlighting that unpleasant experiences can function as psychic material for pleasant play, in which children shift from the passive positions of their previous experience to active positions in the play, thus taking on an active role in relation to those prior experiences. Moreover, through play, children can use this activity to exact "revenge" (Freud, 1920/1961, p. 11) on the playmate who replaces them in the passive position in the unpleasant previous experience. This point is helpful for our analysis, as children from all seven of the classes asked facilitators to "repeat the game." Upon treating the Things as manipulable animals or objects and having fun with the game, we can say—following Freud's reflection on passivity and activity in play—that the dramatizations of the children in the role of Persons allowed previous experiences of passivity in their lives to be lived as activities though the game. According to this perspective, it is understandable that afterward many of the children who were Things asked for the activity to be repeated, and for the role reversal so that they could have the Person experience. As we indicated above, the request to repeat the activity "Persons and Things" occurred in all the classes. However, this request was not made in the other activities that rather than role playing, consisted of drawing, reading, or discussing texts.

Freud's (1920/1961) understanding of the function of repetition in play and its relationship with the activity-passivity binary helped us interpret the students' request to repeat the game. Freud wrote about the repetition after observing a boy playing what he called *fort-da* [gone-there], in which the child would repeatedly throw and pull back an object, rehearsing the departure and return of his mother. He argued that the game emulates an unpleasant experience (the separation from the mother) with repetition placing the child in an active position within this situation. Freud assigns a prominent role to the activity-passivity binary in the subjective constitution, as well as in infantile sexuality, as the child's body and subjectivity are being constituted in these experiments, which couple experiences of pleasure, displeasure, and their relationships to others. For Freud, ambivalence is central to such relationships and helps us understand infantile sexuality, according to what Freud calls the sex drive.⁵

In one of the classes, one nine-year-old participant appeared to be comfortable with her role as a Person, giving orders to Things with a pointing finger and loud

⁵ For Freud, the drive is a constant force at work in the organism. The law of the pleasure principle, another important psychoanalytic concept, regulates the drive. This law has the objective of provoking pleasure, which occurs whenever there is a decrease in arousal.

voice. As she was bigger than her classmates, she lifted in her arms the girl-Things, who laughed and appeared to find the interaction fun. After the children's demand to repeat the game, changing the roles, an intern observed that this student went to the corner of the class, under a desk. The intern asked if she was hiding, and she said yes. The possibility of "exacting revenge" in the game, mentioned by Freud (1920/1961), seemed to emerge in this situation, when the role reversal would be experienced. For this participant, the possibility of not being a Person anymore and being treated as a Thing seemed to indicate the possibility of revenge by her classmates. Freud also highlights that there is a sadistic component in the sex drive, and the revenge present in the game relates to this dimension (Freud, 1920/1961), introducing the children's play to the realm of sexuality.

Using role play, the activity "Persons and Things" created opportunities for the participants to experiment with relations of power through laughter and play, providing the opportunity for the researchers to later discuss situations that appeared during the game, connecting them with power relations in society and in their lives.

Consent and Subjection

The game "Persons and Things" invites participants, as described above, to a consensual, temporary, and artificial suspension of consent in the classroom. As this took place in a workshop with the general objective of exploring violence and conflict in schools, it points to a broader discussion about consent in relationships including the consideration of hierarchies and structural inequalities.

Consent is a central issue for feminisms. The discussion about the right to one's own body and the production of sexualized and racialized bodies in such a way that limits their autonomy permeates debates such as those on sexual violence, abortion, reproductive labor, and standards of beauty (Hirschman, 2003). Fernandes et al. (2020) argued that the liberal and legal concept of an individual who consents in a conscious and informed manner, without material or subjective pressure, has nothing to offer to a discussion of consent in "asymmetrical contexts characterized by oppression" (p. 170). They suggest that we reject a liberal and abstract idea of autonomy and individual freedom to discuss consent, as it is not helpful in situations marked by subjection and oppression. For Fernandes et al., consent is lived in relationships, which can be more or less stable, and it may exist as a "transactional currency." Analyzing situations constituted by vulnerabilities, asymmetries, and inequalities, Fernandes et al. affirm that we should consider the *porosities* of consent, i.e., that consent is immersed in negotiations and judgments. Understanding consent and its porosities implies not assuming that there is a static definition of what has or has not been consent to, because situations of vulnerability and social markers of difference can create conditions in which ideals of consent and individual freedom are simply unattainable. Analyzing the arrangements, negotiations, and re-significations made by such subjects allows us to approach agency in contexts of subalternization, a central issue for feminisms.

Fernandes and colleagues (2020) offer important tools for thinking about the bodies of children and women in society. In speaking of the “details of consent,” that is, of moments when limits are blurry, they reflect upon the vulnerability of subjects marked by age and gender differences, in a society where the referents for normality are, respectively, the adult and the male (and the white, we add). Fernandes et al. propose the notion of porosity of consent to reflect upon moments when it is socially permissible for someone who is a member of a structurally oppressed group to be objectified. Individual autonomy, a condition for the exercise of consent as it is understood in many of these debates, would define a specific profile of free individuals. As Mattos (2015) affirms, “Feminists have questioned if autonomy is a gender-neutral concept, since it points to privileges available to a certain class, gender, and race” (p. 332).

Critical perspectives on childhood studies, informed by feminist studies and psychoanalytic theory, have argued that Educational Psychology frequently considers children’s bodies and subjectivities as *tabula rasa*, with the adult taking the position of the expert (Britzman, 2010; Burman, 2017). As we stated above, the liberal idea that consent requires full individual freedom limits discussion on consent with subjects in conditions in which autonomy is not available. In the case of children, we consider consent, with its porosities, can work without adults putting themselves in the position of all knowing in relation to what is going on with them. We should be open to what may come back to us from them in this relationship.

The game “Persons and Things” introduces situations in which asymmetries of power are dramatized and discussed, opening up space for participants to discuss consent in relation to its social and subjective aspects. With respect to the subjective aspects of consent, some children found it difficult to follow the rules of the game in different roles, as we can see in this field report:

At the beginning of the activity, we saw some Things rebelling against the Persons, running away from them. The Persons, in response, quarreled with them [the rebels], ran after them. Other Persons gave orders to their Things to imitate them, and others did almost nothing with their Things.

This reaction took place in the conversations between them, and at times the children appealed for the interns to intervene complaining that Persons were being violent or that Things were not obeying the Persons. This appeal to the facilitators was not often observed in the workshops with adolescents.

To think about consent with its porosities (Fernandes et al., 2020), avoiding the traps of liberal discourses of individual choice appears to us to require a discussion about the concept of subjection. Butler (1997), in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, develops the concept of subjection by understanding it as a fundamental dependence in relation to a discourse that precedes the subject, and paradoxically initiates and supports action. In other words, “the subject cannot quell the ambivalence by which it is constituted” (Butler, 1997, pp. 17–18). For Butler, a passionate attachment to the norm speaks of the constitution of the subject itself. In other words, Butler understands that the subject does not exist as a prior being that

enters into relation with norms. The subject is constituted in relation to normativities, a relation marked by affections.

How then is subjection revised in subjectivities constituted in contexts of structural inequalities? The field material does not allow us to offer a single response to this question; it indicates the complexity of relationships within the school environment. We previously discussed how play was present in the first part of the activity, and how “to be treated as a thing” was not a position of displeasure in all the groups, or for all participants. There were also situations however where the Things questioned, disobeyed, or negotiated the orders they were receiving with the Persons.

In the second part of the activity, the discussion circle, we spoke about what had taken place during the activity. Prompted by questions such as “in what other ordinary situations are people treated as things?”, participants raised many examples observed and experienced in their lives, related to racism, sexism, and school hierarchies. But the examples mostly mentioned by the children concerned family relations: participants mentioned that they were “treated as a thing” by their parents, when they were given orders and asked to do chores; or by their siblings who asked for favors or used them to meet their own needs.

In one of the classes, the theme of being treated “like Things” in school generated an air of outrage and unity among participants, with everyone speaking at the same time and agreeing with one another. They pointed to the teacher, laughing with excitement, some of them rising from their chairs, affirming that she “treated [them] like Things” and made them study. The teacher, who was following the activity in silence until that moment, covered her face as if she were ashamed and defended herself, laughing: “I am also required to teach you!” It was important for the development of the discussion that the teacher joined the game when she was confronted by the class. With her participation, an exchange began about obligations to which students and teachers are subject at school, and the children could speak of the pressure that they felt from their parents and teachers to get good grades in school.

The Matter of the Good

The activity “Persons and Things” was chosen to be part of a workshop with the general theme of violence in schools, because its purpose was to facilitate discussion of power relations. However, as we have discussed, children expressed pleasure in “being treated as Things,” asking to become Things, saying that they liked to be treated poorly. They were not the majority, but the frequency with which these statements emerged in the groups drew the attention of the research team. During the supervision of the interns and analysis of the field reports, we discussed how these situations (considering children’s speech, behavior, and interactions during the game) broke with the expectations we had for the activity. Before any reflection, we expected that the experience of the role of “Thing” would generate displeasure, discontent, or even outrage among all the participants, given that the imposition of

the will of the other “Person” on the participant “Thing” would subjugate their will, subjecting it.

The children’s statements challenging this logic forced us to think about what it said about how we had reflected on the activity, in that we had been surprised by requests from some children who experienced the position of being a Thing as pleasurable. We concluded that the activity silently presumed a “right and wrong” morality, in which the “right” thing would be to reject playing the role of the Thing. What can we learn from this outcome? What considerations are we avoiding if we exclude this data from our analysis?

In her discussion of subjectivation, Butler (1997, p. 14) argues that the power present in subjection is found “in two incommensurable temporal modalities: first, as what is for the subject always prior, outside of itself, and operative from the start; second, as the willed effect of the subject.” This incommensurability is present, according to Butler, in the subject and the problem of agency. For Butler, “A theory of the subject should take into account the full ambivalence of the conditions of its operation” (p. 14). Thus, we understand that to suppose that power is something that is imposed externally on the subject would be one of the pitfalls of theorizing human action, as this supposition does not consider that subjection has a constitutive function in the production of the subject. Butler (1997) also affirms that

Power not only *acts on* a subject but, in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being. As a condition, power precedes the subject. Power loses its appearance of priority, however, when it is wielded by the subject, a situation that gives rise to the reverse perspective that power is the effect of the subject, and that power is what subjects effect. (p. 13, author’s emphasis)

This ambivalence appeared during the game “Persons and Things,” when, for instance, some children wanted to be a Thing, leading us to consider subjection as part of their subject position. We were faced with the objective of the activity and with a given idea of “good” present in it, which was not shared by all of the participants. The implicit orientation of the activity emerges as a moral compass, and we must include our unconscious expectations in our analysis.

In the second portion of the activity, the facilitators were discussing the game with a group and children criticized H., a 9-year-old student, for going too far in his role as a Person, telling him they did not like the way he behaved and why. At the end of the discussion,

H. raised his finger and said that the “lesson of the day”, for him, was that “we should not do to others what we wouldn’t like others to do to us” and apologized to the class. [...] The class seemed happy to accept their classmate’s apology, and the children then said to us: “in the next session it’ll be different!”, presuming that the same workshop would be repeated another day, even though none of the activities had been repeated during the visits. We realized that they wanted to redress their behavior and show they could be empathetic. (Field report)

Some important questions stand out in this excerpt. Assuming that there was a “lesson of the day,” as H. stated, indicates a pedagogical logic present in schools, in which the participants and the project itself are inserted. Conducting this activity in a classroom created expectations that were related to the school environment and its standards and norms. But it is important to hear what, as the participant comments,

was addressed by the activity itself. Moreover, the participants told the interns that, next time, “it will be different!”. Here, the demand to repeat the activity, as discussed above, articulates with the logic of performance present in school socialization, with the search for the “right answer” and with rectification: repeat to correct.

In his seminar on ethics in psychoanalysis, Lacan (1992, p. 303) warns us that analysts should not position themselves within the analytical process as a guarantee that a subject would encounter the good in the treatment—that would be “a form of fraud.” Even though the workshops are not equivalent to an analytic process, Lacan’s observation helps us to think about working with the children at school as, we have argued, unconscious dimensions were present in the process. To occupy a space of promise of access to the good within the other would be a trap. For Lacan (1992, p. 229), “The domain of the good is the birth of power,” power in relation to the other. The position of the master, the one that takes over and imposes what they consider to be “good” for the other, is at the core of power relations, since the idea of good is external to the situation. The workshops in schools were not a clinical activity. However, contributions from psychoanalysis are an important reference for analyzing what emerges as a breakage and discontinuity of expectations (even if unconscious) found in school practices. This helped us to challenge the idea of “good” that initially guided the execution of the activity.

Final Considerations

In this chapter, we have discussed elements of field research conducted with children at a government funded school in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We analyzed how power relations were present in the game “Persons and Things,” carried out with children which raised questions about their subjectivities and subjection in the school context. We discussed three main topics present in the fieldwork: the function of play in power relations; subjection within the exercise of consent, and the notion of “good” within classroom practices. Discussing these topics facilitates the locating of the effects of the fieldwork on the interns who facilitated the workshops. In supervision meetings, interns constantly brought their concern of “not knowing what to do” during the fieldwork, especially when the activity results seemed to oppose their (explicit or unconscious) expectations. Embracing the ambivalence, unpredictability and creativity present in the children’s participation in the activities helped the research team take a less directive approach to the groups, more open to hearing what the children themselves brought.

Telling the children that the activities had no “right answer” produced unexpected responses and behaviors. It also produced interesting discussions on power relations, articulating the activity with their own experience. In this chapter, we developed some of these aspects, assuming a theoretical and methodological perspective that considers subjectivities as being constituted in discourse and in relation to others, which includes asymmetries and inequalities that are present in society.

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‘You Feel Like You’re Throwing Your Life Away Just to Make It Look Clean’: Insights into Women’s Everyday Management of Hearth and Home in Wales



Louise Folkes and Dawn Mannay

The entrapment of women in domestic architectural spaces has long been the focus of classic gothic literature, and these representations can suggest that there is ‘no horror like home’ (Kneale, 2018). Other writing celebrates the everyday placement within and management of hearth and home as an idealized intimate harmony of walls and furniture, where nest-like refuges are built by women, inspiring dreams and poetry (Bachelard, 1994). For Woolf (2012), this assignment of muse and homemaker is one that has facilitated the literary contributions of men, while simultaneously silencing the voice of women artists. Accordingly, literature may be fictional, but it can reflect, refract and remake aspects of lived subjective experience. This conventional legacy of gendered inheritance, the ideology of the women enclosed inside and responsible for the assumed safe space of the home, has also been the focus of sociological and psychological interest.

Contributing to the existing literature, this chapter draws from four studies to consider the ways in which white working-class Welsh women construct gendered identities. The studies were situated in Wales, UK, accordingly, there are geographical specificities. Nonetheless, we would argue, the themes presented have wider applicability to understandings of motherhood, identity, and value beyond these geographical boundaries. The chapter explores how the psychological is inextricably linked to the political and notions of ‘stigma’ and ‘otherhood’ are offered as lenses to understand the everyday experiences of hearth and home in Wales, and the construction

L. Folkes

School of Natural, Social and Sport Sciences, University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, UK
e-mail: folkeslm@gmail.com

D. Mannay (✉)

Social Sciences (Psychology), Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales, UK
e-mail: mannydi@cardiff.ac.uk

of ‘acceptable’ gendered subjectivities. The chapter begins by providing a background to the research studies and exploring the tension between domesticity and paid employment; how gender and class intersect; and the role of place and stigma in forming gendered subjectivities. The studies are then introduced, and their findings are examined in relation to the key themes of this edited collection, psychology, power, and gender.

Domesticity Versus Paid Work

For Sydie (1987, p. 105), domestic labor stands outside of productive labor as the housemaker has no direct relationship to capital, and so domestic labor becomes a ‘hidden source of surplus labour.’ Yet, the labor continues to get done. Writing in 1976 in an edited collection entitled *Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage*, Davidoff (1976, p. 148) warned that sociologists can ‘no longer go on turning their attention to everything but the kitchen sink’; and an understanding of this doing necessitates an exploration of the everyday experiences of women in the management of hearth and home. Housework has now been recognized academically as ‘work’ (Delphy, 1984) but the doing of managing a home is an intersectional space where gender operates in conjunction with other markers of difference such as class, ethnicity, dis/ability, age, and locality. While recognizing the importance of the intersection of ‘race,’ ethnicity, dis/ability, and sexuality, this chapter is primarily concerned with intersections of gender, social class, age, and locality. It centralizes the experiences of white Welsh working-class women and the impact of domesticity on their identities. Alongside gender and class, the chapter explores intersections with age and place as these were pertinent in shaping women’s experiences, particularly generational notions of what the role of a ‘Welsh mam’ should be in family life (Mannay et al., 2018a).

Gender is foregrounded here as orientations to domestic labor are bound with the ‘relationship between the notion of being a [homemaker] and the psychological identity of women’ (Oakley, 2018, p. 184). The salience of gender is evident in Pilcher’s (1994) seminal work, which involved interviews with families of Welsh women, mothers, daughters, and adult-granddaughters between 1989 and 1990. For Pilcher (1994, p. 44), the oldest generation of women—mothers—born around 1915 had been ‘socialized to invest their female identities within the domestic sphere, as dictated by the cultural expectations of the time,’ and even when their husbands had retired from paid employment, they actively resisted the idea of male participation in domestic labor.

The second generation—the daughters—had grown up in a different socio-economic climate and many had entered the workplace. Nonetheless, the responsibility for the domestic sphere still remained with women, even though they recognized that this position was inequitable, and there was an underlying tension with and investment in the connection between being a woman and undertaking women’s work. The third generation—the granddaughters—born in 1967 were influenced

by feminist ideologies and voiced an egalitarian vocabulary, based on fairness and sharing. However, at the point of interview most of this group were still living at home and had not experienced living independently with a partner: in this way their discussions were anticipatory and philosophical.

More recent work suggests that despite the rhetoric of egalitarianism in the third generation of women in Pilcher's (1994) study; women continue to have the main responsibility for housework, even when involved in paid employment. For example, in her interviews with both mothers and fathers on parenthood, Miller (2001) found that in contrast to the presentation of egalitarian gender relations and social arrangements in their talk; the actuality was that everyday practices were inflected by normative gendered expectations in which the woman was centralized as primary care giver and homemaker. Parenthood can present as a catalyst for returning to more conventional gendered role taking (Shahvisi, 2019; Vogler et al., 2008), but these patterns are also embedded in the practices of women's childhood experiences as cross-cultural studies have evidenced that girls are given a larger proportion of family responsibilities and household chores than their male siblings (Page & Jha, 2009).

Paid work then stands in contradiction to women's culturally presumed, innate 'capacity to care,' which centralizes the needs of the family and reinforces gendered norms and assumptions that demand an active display of this 'capacity to care' to achieve a normative femininity (Hollway, 2006). If domesticity is chosen solely over paid employment, it can provide another way to 'become' a woman, outside of the career woman discourse (Walkerdine et al., 2001). Yet, more women are taking up careers in fields that were once male dominated (Parken, 2016) and even when a 'career' is not sought many women work out of necessity (Lloyd, 2016) and do not have the option to choose to be solely a homemaker.

The notion of 'having it all' appears to ignore the often-feminized duties of caregiving and domestic responsibility that working women undertake (Littler, 2018; Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine et al., 2001; Warren, 2003). Accordingly, although there are opportunities for women to work outside the home, the home still demands maintenance—'in so as it [the role of women] has been changed it has been added to' (Winckler, 1987); and often, women take up paid employment that acts as an extension of domestic care work (Littler, 2018; Skeggs, 1997). Younger generations of women can then be seen as more burdened by the 'double shift' (Aaron, 2016), having to engage with both paid work and maintaining the domestic sphere.

Intersections of Class and Gender

Alongside a gender-based approach to the study of the domestic division of labor it is important to acknowledge the role of class. Analyzing data from the British Household Panel Survey, Warren (2003) employed the categories of time-wealth and time-poverty to examine gendered and classed differentiations and found that working-class dual-waged couples were more likely to fall into the time-poverty category than their middle-class counterparts. Furthermore, women in these couples

contributed a proportionally higher share of caring and domestic work than both their partners and women in professional roles, who can often afford to contract out domestic tasks (see also Reay, 2005).

Despite arguably having to undertake more work overall, being able to ‘do’ home well, such as cleaning and caring, and the centrality of the home as a nurturing place can inculcate a sense of respectability and morality for working-class women (May, 2008; Skeggs, 1997). Yet, this is difficult amid wider discourses that construct a deficit view of working-class parenting and home management (Gillies, 2005; Reay, 2013; Wenham, 2016). These discourses of failure ignore the unequal distribution of resources across families, especially in relation to economic and cultural capital (Calder, 2016; Fishkin, 2014). Political discourses of parenting and social mobility are often focused on the most marginalized and poorest in society, devaluing working-class culture as middle-class values are framed as morally acceptable and legitimate (Lawler, 2018; Skeggs, 1997). The problem of social mobility and working poverty is framed as rooted in underperforming parents, who are unable to control their home or their children, rather than the structural barriers that entrench inequality (Gillies, 2005; Reay, 2013).

These suggestions of working-class inadequacy in the everyday management of hearth and home are intensified for young working-class mothers. Although working-class motherhood can be a source of pride and respect, marking an important transition to adulthood, this becomes contaminated by discourses of the young mother, and the threat her reproduction engenders to the social order (Gillies, 2007). Young working-class mothers are subject to stigma and blame in their everyday negotiation of parenting and homemaking (Brady & Brown, 2013) and this is augmented by their treatment in the media. For example, Tyler (2008, p. 17) has documented how in the UK the figure of ‘chav mum,’ a representation of young, low-income mothers, circulates within a wide range of reality television, consumer culture, and print media, enabling a publicly sanctioned wave of contempt for working-class young mothers, which impacts on both public perceptions and social policy.

Place, Gender, and the Imprinting of Stigma

Another consideration is that of place and the ways that histories of place impact on lives in the present. There is an ‘intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships’ (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 84), where spatiality, and indeed locality, is always intertwined with temporality and the history of place and nation. According to the historian Beddoe (2000), the lives of Welsh women have been shaped by nonconformity, religion, industrialization, and a virulent strain of patriarchy. The moral imperative to adopt an English middle-class model of femininity put forward in the English 1847 Report of the Commissions of Inquiry, *The State of Education in Wales*, had a pervasive influence over the identities of generations of Welsh women; and was central in locating Welsh women as inferior, dirty, and immoral (Aaron et al., 1994). As Thrift (1997, p. 160) contends, ‘places form a reservoir of meanings

which people can draw upon to tell stories about and therefore define themselves.' In rejecting accusations of being inferior, dirty, and immoral, the figure of the 'Welsh Mam' has been centralized, and the identities of working-class women in Wales have been rooted within this rhetoric. The 'Welsh Mam' came to represent an archetypal image of the respectable working-class married woman that emerged in the nineteenth century; 'characterised as hardworking, pious, clean, a mother to her sons and responsible for the home' (Mannay, 2014, p. 159).

Understanding the construction of gendered subjectivities and acceptable femininities cannot be separated from notions of power. The psychological is inherently tied up within matrixes of power. For example, experiences of stigma are often conceptualized as individualized, personal experiences of shame and discomfort, and however, this is at the expense of recognizing stigma 'as a material force, a structural and structuring form of power' (Tyler, 2020, p. 9). Drawing on the work of Foucault, power is productive, and stigma in particular can be seen as a productive form of power, or what Tyler (2020) calls 'stigma power.' When considering gendered relations, stigma can act as a site of political and social struggle. For Tyler (2020, p. 8), stigma is embedded within the social relations of capitalism, inseparable from 'histories of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy.'

This is evident in McKenzie's research in St Ann's, Nottingham, UK. St Ann's is an ex-industrial, multi-ethnic community with a publicly funded housing estate that has some of the highest deprivation statistics in the UK and is hyper-stigmatized. McKenzie (2015) contends that women on the estate were aware of how 'others' saw them as 'rough' and 'ready,' with connotations of dirt, aggression, violence, and sexual availability. They discussed how they felt 'looked down upon' and devalued; an example of how stigma reproduces social hierarchies and the power of state-cultivated stigma to induce change in how people understand themselves and others (Tyler, 2020). Despite motherhood being valued in St Ann's and providing a sense of pride to mothers as they coped with the difficulties of life in this neighborhood, the collective 'othering' of working-class women ensured that working-class femininities held little value outside of localized settings. As previously noted, Tyler (2008) exemplifies how class and gender are intertwined in the UK through the abjection of the 'chav mum' and this forms part of the productivity of stigma, as it provides the legitimation for punitive social welfare policies that disproportionately affect working-class women. Gendered, classed, and place-based stigmatization excludes and 'others,' as stigma gets under the skin and is written on the body, demonstrating the psycho-political nature of stigma (Tyler, 2020).

Although stigma and shame can be resisted and negotiated locally, and localized values and gendered identities invested in, wider structures of power such as 'stigma machines' ensure that stigma is maintained (Tyler, 2020). Often this is linked to economic structures and the development of capitalism into its current, neoliberal form (Walkerdine, 2003). In Jimenez and Walkerdine's (2011) work, the de-industrialization of the South Wales Valleys was the driving factor in the collective loss of identity felt by the young working-class men. As gendered (and place-based) identities were so heavily entrenched and intertwined with an economy based on industry, its demise led to collective identity loss but also individual feelings of

shame and embarrassment as the young men navigated service sector employment that was considered to be ‘feminine.’

As neoliberal capitalism demands successful and continual reinvention of the self, ‘the practices of subjectification produce a constantly failing subject who has to understand their position in essentially personal and psychological terms’ (Walkerdine, 2003, p. 241). This can help explain why women in McKenzie’s (2015) research reported ‘never feeling good enough.’ Yet it is essential to extend our understandings beyond the personal and psychological experiences of stigma and shame, to understand how wider practices of stigma power operate and entrench systems of inequality and social hierarchy.

These interlinked themes of gender, class, age, and place will be explored further in the chapter in relation to a sample of white Welsh working-class women’s experiences in the home. The concepts of stigma, identity management, and ‘acceptable’ feminine subjectivities are foregrounded to highlight how the psychological is political in the construction of Welsh working-class notions of femininity, relating to the key themes of this handbook. However, first it is important to provide an overview of the studies in which this data was generated, and these are outlined in the following section.

The Studies

This chapter draws on data from four separate studies conducted with women and their families in Wales, UK. The first was a doctoral study involving nine mothers (aged 30–60) and their nine daughters (aged 9–21) that focused on the ways in which gender and locality impact on the education, employment, and everyday lives of those residing in marginalized areas (Mannay, 2012). The second was a research study that was interested in the everyday practices of young motherhood in relation to wider mediated forms of idealized and stigmatized parenting, which involved six mothers in their twenties who had given birth to their first child between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two, including four women who had previously lived in homeless hostels or mother and baby units (Mannay et al., 2018a, 2018b). The third study focused on the everyday practices of parenthood by incorporating a desk-based analysis of 167 online images that examined the representation of contemporary forms of motherhood in relation to social class and age. The study also included a focus group with four fathers (aged 23–39) whose partners were in their early twenties, and individual interviews with two mothers who had their first child between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three but were ‘new’ mothers again in their forties (Mannay et al., 2018a, 2018b). The fourth was a doctoral study concerned with the ways in which social class, place-attachment, and gender are interconnected within narratives of social (im)mobility and the horizon of participants’ trajectories (Folkes, 2019). This study generated data with twenty-five participants, thirteen of which were women and girls. The sample represented different generations, including primary school children, parents, and grandparents. In all four of the studies, participants

were recruited via community networks, third sector organizations, and snowballing techniques.

Across all of the studies, the authors were interested in the subjective meaning making of their participants and they drew on the qualitative approaches of individual and group interviews and ethnographic observations, interactions, and reflections. The studies featured various forms of creative data production including collage, photographs, maps, and written narratives, which were explored with participants in the associated elicitation interviews. These were mainly organized in participants' homes with participants collating and creating data independently to share with the researcher other than in study three, in which the researcher introduced media images as prompts for the group discussions.

Data production and analysis were conducted concurrently, with emergent themes being explored in later interviews. The visual products created by participants were photographed at the point of data production. These creative outputs acted as tools of elicitation rather than objects of analysis per se; however, they were considered in the analysis to clarify and extend the associated interview transcripts. All interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed applying a thematic framework, allowing codes, categories, and themes to be constructed from the data. The studies also drew on different lenses of analysis, including concepts from the work of Foucault, Bourdieu, and Klein to further interrogate and understand the data.

Ethical approval for all studies was granted by Cardiff University's Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Participants were asked to provide written informed consent to take part in all stages of the research process and the names of people and places were changed.¹ Beyond procedural ethics, we worked closely with participants to ensure that the processes of data production were respectful and centralized the meaning making of the families. As working-class researchers, we shared some characteristics with our participants that enabled us to establish common ground and build trustful relationships. However, we were also careful to ensure that familiarity did not overshadow the research process. Overall, creative methods worked well to quieten the voice of the researcher and provide opportunities for participants to lead conversations about the visual outputs they produced. Our positionality and research design enabled the production of a nuanced data set which is presented and explored in the following sections.

¹ In study one and study four, the pseudonym for place was derived from Welsh language words reflecting the geographical location. In study one, a combination of the words 'hi' (her) and 'stryd' (street) were combined to create the pseudonym Hystryd. In study four, 'Hiraeth' a Welsh word meaning nostalgia, yearning, or longing, which was pertinent to the findings of the study was the pseudonym for the research site. In study one, participants originally selected their own pseudonyms, and however, this became problematic when participants chose the names of other participants. Therefore, in all of the studies participants' pseudonyms were decided by the researcher.

Findings

Participants' accounts covered a range of themes including family relationships, changes in identity, health and well-being, childcare practices and routines, education, employment, aspirations for the future, and reflections on their pasts. However, the findings discussed here focus on participants' subjective experiences of the everyday management of hearth and home. The data presented explores the home as a space within wider spaces of employment and education, ideologies of acceptable femininity and the 'Welsh Mam,' and discourses of class, stigma, and 'otherhood' (Mannay et al., 2018a). These themes are explored throughout the sections that follow as we illustrate how power and psychology intertwine in the making of an 'acceptable' Welsh working-class femininity.

Who Should Do the Dishes?

In conducting the fieldwork, the 'waiting field' (Mannay & Morgan, 2015, p. 758) of spaces before interviews began and the interruptions to these interviews provided an opportunity to explore the times where real lives carry on before they make room for the intrusion of techniques of data production. The neatness and cleanliness of homes was notable and observable actions, as well as women's interview accounts, implicitly suggested that this maintenance of domestic order was achieved by women. For example, in interviews with family groups field notes were made reflecting on the research encounter and these often recorded women 'emptying dishwashers, feeding babies, ironing clothes, making lunchboxes, calling the doctor for a poorly child, dropping children off at school' (Folkes, 2019, p. 73).

In keeping with previous research where women were more likely to gain help with tasks rather than for husbands to agree to accept ongoing accountability (Dempsey, 2000), in these four studies there was an implicit ownership of housework in the data produced with women.² Where husbands, partners, or children took part in housework activities these were often referred to as them 'helping' and being 'as good as gold.' This selective helping is illustrated in this example from an interview with Bella, a married woman and mother.

Bella: 'No he's pretty good, I got to be fair he's pretty good, like if I've got to work if I'm go to work in the morning and (husband's) at home it's clean when I come home... You know like (husband), wouldn't put the washing machine

² There were four men involved in study three and twelve men and boys participated in study four. Their accounts did not feature discussions of housework. However, it is worth noting that the data on housework in study one was shared with young men in a community workshop. Reflecting on their own experiences, they suggested that as working patterns change a more equitable sharing of the domestic sphere could emerge where practices are not fixed in conventional, outdated gendered discourses (see Mannay, 2016b).

on and he wouldn't iron... He's good like that and you know he wouldn't expect me to clean the bath out after him'

Bella worked part-time while her husband has a full-time role which can account for differential contributions to homemaking. However, there is a clear divide in the types of housework undertaken. Furthermore, the repetition of the adjective 'good' in Bella's account situates this contribution as something that is both voluntary and appreciated. This stands in contradiction to the work of women in the home, no women referred to themselves as 'good,' rather housework was presented as a cyclic inevitability, as Bella noted '*whatever you do today, tomorrow you got to do it again.*'

Another working mother and sole breadwinner in the family, Gwennan, discussed housework as '*constant constant constant same old, all the time*' but unlike Bella she overtly positioned the family expectation that she would have sole responsibility for domestic tasks as a source of inequality. Nonetheless, this resistance to inequality was dissipated when causal blame for this disparity was owned by Gwennan who explained that '*it's my own fault.*' The rationale Gwennan offered for this was that she should have asked her partner and children to help and because she did not '*they don't think, that it is their job.*' However, asking in itself is contentious, for as feminist comic author Emma (2018, p. 7) contends, 'when a man expects his partner to ask him to do things, he is viewing her as the manager of household chores,' in this way women are conferred not only the physical load of housework but also the mental load of home management.

Even in cases where partners helped without being asked, this was a source of internal conflict and there were implications about how participants would be viewed by others. There was shame attached to accepting assistance with domestic duties as it undermined doing 'woman' and 'working-class' well (May, 2008). As mother and student Vicky commented, '*Yeah he does help, I'll probably come across as a lazy bitch now.*' Aligning with earlier studies (Pilcher, 1994), women may resist support from partners if it risks their positioning within discourses of acceptable motherhood where housework is a naturalized, feminized activity.

In some cases, a mother's emphasis on keeping a clean home appeared to influence their daughters. For example, Chloe (aged 9) was provided with paper featuring blank cloud outlines and asked to provide suggestions about what would make her community a better place to live. In one of these clouds, Chloe wrote 'look after your house' situating homemaking as a valued activity. The following section explores how these gendered positionings do not simply create a 'second shift' (Aaron, 2016; Hochschild & Machung, 1989) but also define the type of work that women undertake.

Paid Work Versus Housework?

There is a pressure for women to be both homemaker and breadwinner. These neoliberal notions of 'new motherhood' depict a woman who holds down a full-time job, brings up children, and manages the domesticity of everyday life (May,

2008). However, although it was possible to keep the home clean, work and take on a caring role, this was problematized in relation to the difference between taking on these competing roles and doing them ‘properly.’ This is illustrated in the following account from married mother of three, Lesley;

Lesley: I enjoyed it, I did enjoy it, um, but once you, once you’ve had kids it’s really difficult to, well I found it really difficult to go back, cos I only went back part time... um, and you end up sort of, trying to do, what you end up not doing anything fully... so you don’t do your job properly and you don’t do home properly and, so, in the end I ended up, at first I took a career break, and then just finished

Lesley trained and then worked in psychiatric nursing, but later gave up work to care full-time for her children and for her chronically ill mother. There is a tension as Lesley discussed how she enjoyed her paid work role but that with her other responsibilities this became untenable as she could not balance the expectations of these two ‘greedy institutions’ (Morgan, 2016; Salisbury, 2016). Concern and compassion are two characteristics that Hollway (2006) associates with the capacity to care, which is gendered and feminized. In his interview, Lesley’s father Roger positioned his daughter’s decision to leave work and take care of her family as ‘very unselfish’ and described Lesley as a ‘good support’—the selfless good mother—as opposed to a ‘selfish’ mother who does not prioritize the home and care (Skeggs, 1997, 2011; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

However, to be a selfless good mother means avoiding the label of the ‘selfish mum’ as indicated in Roger’s account. In full-time nurse Louisa’s interview, she explained that in managing the home, ‘*you feel like you’re throwing your life away just to make it look clean.*’ However, later she explained how domestic tasks play a role in defining her maternal identity;

Louisa: And the washing up and the hoovering, I like to do it sometimes, because I still feel like I’m doing something for my children, I’m... for where they live, does that make sense, I’m not just going out to work and being a selfish Mum, and earning the money and sitting on my arse and doing nothing

There is an awareness here of the ideal of the selfless mother; a quality that was admired in Lesley’s father’s account; and perhaps of the ‘Welsh Mam’ who prioritizes hearth and home (Aaron, 1994). For Louisa, this doing of household chores is ‘*throwing your life away*’ but it also acts as a protective factor in constructing a ‘psychological identity of women’ (Oakley, 2018, p. 184), one in which she displays a ‘capacity to care’ (Hollway, 2006), and avoids an alignment with the attribute of selfishness. However, this is gendered as ‘*earning the money*’ has, for men, been enough in itself and their engagement with the orthodoxy of productive labor (Sydie, 1987, p. 105) has not required the dual domestic labor of ‘*the washing up and the hoovering.*’ Even with more recent shifts toward notions of the ‘new man’ and the ‘modern man’ (Morant, 1998), studies illustrate the gendered gaps in who takes responsibility for hearth and home (Miller, 2011; Vogler et al., 2008; Warren, 2003).

Nonetheless, Louisa claimed agency in her account, '*I like to do it,*' suggesting an element of choice that was also constructed in other women's interviews.

For example, Lisa explained why she chose not to take up the offer of teacher training and progression and instead maintained a lower paid role as a teaching assistant.

Lisa: It's not worth the, the added stress. I do, I do quite a bit at home, but I do it because I enjoy it, not because I have to do it, and I think if you have to do it, you probably realize you're not enjoying... doing it so much, but *laughs* umm, no, so I wasn't, I wasn't too keen.

Lisa was keen to emphasize that she did 'quite a bit at home' because she enjoys it and not because she has to, constructing a narrative of choice. For Lisa, there was value in having an adequate amount of time to be able to look after the home, which is why she 'wasn't too keen' on embarking on a teacher training course as a means to career progression. Accounts such as these suggest that the home is a nurturing space that is created by women, where cleanliness and order are a signifier of respectable femininity for working-class women; being able to be a good 'Welsh mam' while upholding a job and the home simultaneously (Davidoff, 1976; Mannay, 2016a; Skeggs, 1997). From the last three extracts, we see that Lesley found she had to give up work to meet the expectations of the 'capacity to care' (Hollway, 2006), Lisa rejected career progression, and Louisa spoke of '*throwing your life away just to make it look clean.*' In this way, they were required to negotiate between the 'greedy institutions' of paid work and the invisible labor of the home (Morgan, 2016; Salisbury, 2016), often choosing to prioritize the home and resist the label of the 'selfish Mum' at the expense of their careers.

Narratives of choice occur in these accounts. However, satisfaction is essentially rationalized and accepted in relation to circumstances, so it is important to consider 'obligatory choices' (Bennett et al., 2009) and the ways in which discourses of acceptable femininity and legacies of the 'Welsh Mam' impact on women's everyday lives. There is a socially constructed pressure to be a 'good' caring mother to avoid the gaze of the judging 'other' (Skeggs, 1997); and there are additional layers of judgment for individuals who are both living in poverty and are young parents, which are explored in the following section.

Unacceptable Femininities and 'Otherhood'

Cleaning is often used as a method of achieving a respectable and acceptable working-class femininity by distancing the self from 'dirt' and a discourse of lack (Mannay, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Skeggs, 1997). However, for some women this is more difficult to achieve. Notkin (2014) has used the concept of 'otherhood' to challenge cultural assumptions about single women and childlessness. In her work, Notkin (2014) explores the social and emotional impact of childlessness in the United States in relation to the formation of alternative, 'othered' femininities. However, 'otherhood'

has also been adopted to consider mothers who are positioned ‘outside the normative expectations of idealized forms of parenthood in relation to their class, age, and residence in marginalized areas’ (Mannay et al., 2018a, p. 37). This section considers the experiences of young mothers, and fathers, who have spent time in homeless hostels and experienced being under the gaze and surveillance of those who question their abilities as both parents and homemakers.

Participants discussed how they were monitored in terms of how they cooked, cleaned, shopped, and took care of their children. Some participants who were living in a hostel setting described how workers in hostels had set ideas about what was the ‘correct’ way to be a homemaker, which often conflicted with their own values and plans. These were seen as untenable in negotiating the everyday of parenting once they left the hostel environment and had to parent in the real world. For example, Chelsea described an incident where she wanted to leave her tired child within the remote monitor care of another mother while she went to the local shop, which was only a short walk from the hostel. Chelsea had intended to leave her phone with her sleeping child connected to another mother’s phone in a different room, in the same way that a baby monitor would be used.

Chelsea: I said, what d’you expect me to do, I said, he’s in a cot that he can’t get out of, I said, he can’t hurt himself because there’s nothing in there apart from ... a blanket and she was like ... what are you doing then. I said, well I’m going in there to ask if I can ring one of their phones, for a monitor for my child I said so I can run up the shop. I can get milk and bread, so I can do his dinner, and she was like, no you’ll have to... you’ll have to go and get him so I had to go upstairs. I grabbed him and he’s still f ... he’s falling back to sleep as I’m coming down the stairs and I felt so sorry for him.

For Chelsea, as her child was tired, it was preferable to let him sleep in the remote care of another young mother for this short journey rather than to wake him. However, her capacity to care (Hollway, 2006) was called in to question, and her request and resistance was challenged and denied. When young mothers do not comply, there is the threat of eviction and the removal of their child (Morris, 2018; Roberts, 2021), and in these situations and a myriad of others, they have to agree to a set of ascribed rules for parenting and domesticity which they know will be untenable when they leave the hostel. This demonstrates the stigma power of institutions such as children’s social care that work to make young parents regulate their behaviors as stigma gets under the skin and their activity is surveilled (Tyler, 2020).

Tom, a father who had lived in a hostel with his partner, also discussed this element of surveillance outside of the hostel space, when he visited the local playgroup provision.

Tom: Even the kids are looking at you like, who are you, you know like kids can look at you, and I swear like one time I looked up and every kid was just like that at me staring, I think it’s like what’s a bloke doing in here

For Tom, the incongruity of a man in playgroup was noticeable, even by pre-school children. However, it was not only gender that was an issue here; the 'new man' (Morant, 1998) enables spaces for men to inhabit caring roles, but only some men. As the other three male participants in study three commented, these spaces of acceptable masculinity are only available for 'proper real good dads, prim and proper dads.' As stigma is written onto the body, this did not include fathers who were associated with the semiotic signifiers of poverty and youth, such as energy drinks, smoking, and the 'wrong' clothes and accents, which set them apart as 'defective consumers' (Bauman, 1998, p. 38). In this way, fathers from marginalized locales felt doubly deviant in these feminized and middle-class spaces, and constantly surveilled. As Tom discussed, this surveillance and his subjective reading of the space as exclusionary meant that simple, practiced, and rudimentary tasks of domesticity were impacted.

Tom: When I was doing it I felt all eyes on me, this is fucking um I'm just changing a nappy um obviously I've changed loads, like I done something wrong I don't know what it was, but I made like a proper basic mistake that I'd never done before it's just because I felt so under pressure with all these people watching me like, because I almost felt like they were expecting me to fuck up and then I did

In this account, Tom described a disposable nappy that was put on back-to-front. In this intersection of gender, class, and place, he is marked out as different and also as incapable. For Tom, marginalized yet caring masculinities form a dualism, in the same way that Chelsea was marked out as the wrong kind of parent, 'otherhood' versus motherhood (Mannay et al., 2018a) and in contrast to acceptable, domesticated femininity. These forms of surveillance and low expectation can lead to what has been referred to as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968, p. vii), where the continual positioning as a failing parental subject could impact on parents' confidence and in turn their performance as parents and homemakers. This demonstrates the psycho-political power of stigma as institutions wielding stigma power construct and perpetuate narratives of individualized failure when classed and gendered middle-class norms are not met (Tyler, 2020; Walkerdine, 2003).

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has explored the everyday management of hearth and home. The home has been presented as an intersectional space that draws on gender, class, age, and locality to produce complex and nuanced power relationships. The chapter has set out how these relationships play out and are made visible in the mundane context of the everyday. Underpinning this chapter has been the focus on three key themes: the home as space within wider spaces of employment and education; ideologies of acceptable femininity and the 'Welsh Mam'; and discourses of class, stigma, and 'otherhood.'

For the successful homemaker to prosper, the failing subject is necessarily brought into being, ‘as both are relative constructs, and these positionings are made and remade through mediated forms and everyday interactions’ (Mannay et al., 2018a, p. 37). These constructions of un/acceptable gendered subjectivities are productive and illustrative of wider ‘stigma machines’ which work to entrench structures of inequality, linking the psychological to the political, a key consideration of this handbook. The accounts presented here illustrate how spaces of domesticity continue to be sites of gendered inequality and classed judgment, in which sacrifice, powerlessness, and exertion are often keenly felt yet internalized alongside the invisible labor that continues to constitute activities of homemaking and the continual enactment of care. What is clear from the findings shared in this chapter is that the personal (and thus the psychological) is always political, and constructing ‘acceptable’ gendered identities is a process tied up in webs of power relations where stigma is negotiated and resisted. While it may not necessarily be the case that there is ‘no horror like home’ (Kneale, 2018), ‘acceptable’ and ‘valuable’ gendered identities are always constructed within the matrix of psychology and power.

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Politics, Citizenship, and Activism

Gender, Power, and Participation in Collective Action



Lauren E. Duncan

Power is inherently tied to the practice of activism, in that collective action is intimately concerned with challenging power hierarchies. I define collective action as any action taken by an individual or group that aims to improve the status of a group (Wright et al., 1990). Intrinsic to this definition is a recognition that social groups have distinctive status levels in society; specifically, differential access to power and resources. For example, although women make up 51% of the US population (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.), they comprise only 8% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Hinchliffe, 2021) and 27% of federal lawmakers (Center for American Women and Politics, n.d.).

Collective action is concerned with challenging these status differentials (Duncan, 2018, 2022; Gurin et al., 1980). In addition, collective action may be taken on behalf of members of groups to which the individual does not belong (i.e., ally activism; see Brown, 2015; Grzanka et al., 2015; Iyer & Leach, 2010; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012) and may also be concerned with the preservation of power (more often taken by members of dominant groups; see Blankenship et al., 2017; Duncan, 2010; Van Hiel et al., 2006). In particular, feminist collective action (a prominent form of gendered collective action) consists of actions taken to improve the status of women. If we expand the definition of ‘gendered’ collective action beyond progressive causes and/or the gender binary, we can also consider activism taken by members of conservative women’s groups (e.g., pro-life movements, Concerned Women for America) and even activism concerned with challenging the gender binary (e.g., queer activism). Although some of these activists do not identify as feminists (Schreiber, 2018), their actions are intimately concerned with gender, and so the models we use to understand feminist collective action can be used to understand other, non-feminist, but gender-related collective action. However, most of what I discuss in this chapter will concern feminist activism. In addition to the *practice* of collective action, a consideration

L. E. Duncan (✉)

Department of Psychology, Smith College, Northampton, MA 01063, USA

e-mail: lduncan@smith.edu

of power is essential to the *academic study* and understanding of participation in collective action.

In this chapter, I first define power and discuss how power is implicated in collective action, with special attention paid to the extensive literature in social and personality psychology. I then turn to how the consideration of intersectional identities complicates these models and in doing so, offers new opportunities for research and theory. Finally, I offer a case study of African American feminist activist Loretta Ross in order to illustrate how power and intersectionality may play out in an individual activist's life story. Throughout, my focus is on feminist collective action (and, occasionally, other forms of gendered collective action).

Power Over, Power To, and Power With

Power is often conceptualized as comprising three distinct types: *power over*, *power to*, and *power with* (Allen, 1999). It is useful to think of these three types of power in conjunction with each other in the context of how people become motivated to participate in collective action. Allen (1999, pp. 123–124) defined *power over* as ‘the ability of an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices available to another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way,’ specifically focusing on domination, which is the exercise of *power over* that works to disadvantage other groups. Thinking about subordinate groups in society, they are often subject to domination by individuals, groups, organizations, and social structures (Yoder & Kahn, 1992). For example, until the Equal Opportunity Credit Act passed in 1974, US banks required single women to have a man co-sign loan applications, regardless of the woman's income (McGee & Moore, 2014).

Power to, on the other hand, is often described as empowerment, and is defined as ‘the ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends’ (Allen, 1999, p. 126). Allen describes resistance as a specific form of *power to*, ‘the ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends that serve to challenge and/or subvert domination’ (p. 126). Clearly, members of subordinate or powerless groups in society need to develop *power to*, or become empowered as individuals, before they can challenge the dominant group's power over them. Psychological models of motivation for participation in collective action describe this process in great detail and social psychological research is unanimous in specifying the importance of empowerment in enabling individuals to participate in collective action. As a way of empowering potential activists, social movement organizations not only focus on effective strategies but also on reframing a group's position in society to reflect an understanding of their group's low status in the societal power structure. For example, during the women's movement of the 1970s, women often became empowered (*power to*) by gathering together in consciousness-raising groups, where they discovered the commonalities in their experiences (Orleck, 2014).

Finally, Allen (1999, pp. 126–127) defined *power with* as ‘the ability of a collectivity to act together for the attainment of an agreed-upon end or series of ends’

and solidarity as ‘the ability of a collectivity to act together for the agreed-upon end of challenging, subverting, and, ultimately, overturning a system of domination.’ In this definition, *power with* reflects the empowerment of a group of individuals who can then act collectively to challenge *power-over* structures, but could also encompass coalitions of groups of individuals with shared interests and even dominant group allies. In this way, *power with* completes the process of subordinate challenge of dominant group power by enabling similarly situated individuals and interested groups to join together in their fight. Feminist collectives frequently organize strikes, protests, and other types of demonstrations, embodying *power with*, or collective action (Orleck, 2014).

Power and Collective Action

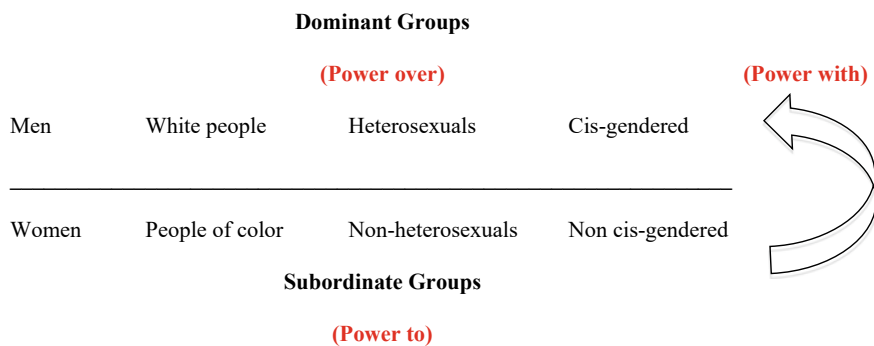
Psychology as a field has developed a good understanding of what motivates individuals to participate in collective action. Over the course of the last sixty years or so, researchers in personality and social psychology have studied the reasons people become involved in collective action and the situational factors that encourage or discourage such actions. The dominant theoretical model in social psychology is best represented by the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Comprising three elements, *identity*, *injustice*, and *efficacy*, this model efficiently summarizes the necessary and sufficient conditions that motivate collective action. Duncan (1999, 2018, 2022) added individual differences in personality and life experiences to this model in order to integrate research in personality psychology with the social psychological models. In general, these models argue that collective action is motivated by a politicized group identity—that is, *identification* with a social group (e.g., based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation) coupled with a critical analysis of that group’s position in the power hierarchy (*injustice*) and a collective approach to challenging that position (*efficacy*). In order to explain collective action that is not explicitly linked to a social group identity, other researchers have identified opinion-based groups (e.g., environmentalists) as another possible type of identity in these models (McGarty et al., 2009). However, identity is also important for these groups, and so in this chapter I include opinion-based groups under the identity label. I now take each of the politicized group identity elements in turn and consider how power is implicated.

Identity. First, in terms of group identification, social groups are defined in society on the basis of power. Some theorists go so far as to argue that social groups are formed *in order to* establish and maintain systems of power. For example, feminist legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon (1988) argued that there would be no concept of gender difference without the necessity of the establishment and preservation of the domination of men over women. In the case of gender, it is only important to distinguish between women and men, girls and boys, when access to power and resources is controlled by members of the dominant group and not the subordinate

one. All social groups can be positioned in terms of their power in society and thus access to power and resources.

This set of social relationships is depicted in Fig. 1. In this figure, groups who have structural advantages with regard to access to power and resources are located above the hegemonic line, and are called dominant groups. These groups possess *power over*, in situations implicating their group. The corresponding lower status groups, which are comprised of everybody who does not fit into the dominant groups, are located below the hegemonic line and are called subordinate groups. These groups are composed of individuals who must develop *power to* in order to improve the position of their group in the power structure. The arrow depicts the process whereby subordinate groups, or those positioned below the hegemonic line, challenge the power of the dominant groups by disputing the hegemonic line. They often do this through collective action, or *power with*, which tends to be the most effective way for subordinate groups to challenge the power hierarchy (Gurin et al., 1980). In addition, note that subordinate groups can be defined with this mathematical equation: Subordinate group members = All people – dominant group members; that is, anyone who does not fit into the narrowly defined confines of the dominant group is a member of the subordinate group.

This narrow definition serves to keep the boundaries of the dominant group clear, easy to define, police, and also serves to limit its numbers. This is plainly illustrated in the case of sexual orientation. Only heterosexual people are members of the dominant



Note. Groups below the hegemonic line tend to vary depending on social and historical context.

For example, in 2022, “non-heterosexuals” consists of queer and LGBTQ+ people (among others) whereas “non cis-gendered” comprises trans and non-binary people (among others).

Fig. 1 The relationship between Power over, Power to, and Power with. *Note* Groups below the hegemonic line tend to vary depending on social and historical context. For example, in 2022, ‘non-heterosexuals’ consists of queer and LGBTQ+ people (among others) whereas ‘non cis-gendered’ comprises trans and non-binary people (among others)

group. All others, including homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, etc. people are considered part of the subordinate group. What defines the subordinate group is lack of membership in the dominant group; even as labels change over time as our understanding of non-heterosexuality evolves, only the subordinate group is affected. The subordinate group is defined by non-heterosexuality and the corresponding lack of access to the power and resources accorded to members of that group. Note that this access to power and resources can be considered what we call *privilege*, and that this privilege is most often built into the power structure and can thus be invisible to both those who benefit from it and those who do not (McIntosh, 1989).

In the collective action literature, social groups are most often the source of collective identity and power. Politicizing a social identity is one very effective way to motivate collective action. In the case of gender, identifying as a feminist is a strong predictor of participation in women's rights activism (Duncan, 1999, 2010, 2018, 2022; Duncan & Stewart, 2007; Liss et al., 2004; White, 2006; Yoder et al., 2011). A feminist identity typically includes an understanding that what happens to 'women' as a group has an impact on 'me,' along with a critical analysis of women's lack of access to power and resources in society and the recognition of the importance of organizing collectively to challenge gender systems. This definition can encompass men and non-binary feminists who share a sense of common fate with women. Specifically thinking about people who identify as women, there are at least four ways in which they can strongly identify with their gender and not identify as feminists.

First, one may identify as a woman and in fact, strongly believe that one's treatment in society is related to one's gender. However, that does not mean that one believes that this treatment is unjust. For example, some women strongly identify with other women, with their gender, and with their social roles, and are content to be treated as if they are gentle, caring, and communal (all traditionally feminine traits). These women support traditional gender roles that position women as subordinate to men (Schreiber, 2008). They may not frame it this way—in fact, they are more likely to say that there are two genders that inhabit two completely separate, distinct, and complementary spheres (e.g., see popular books such as *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*; Gray, 1992). Thus, they would not possess a critical analysis of women's place in the societal power hierarchy, and so lack the *injustice* element necessary for collective action (Duncan et al., 1997).

Second, women may identify strongly with their gender, and even possess a sense of injustice about discrimination that women face, but think that individual solutions are the best way to improve one's situation. Note here that there is a distinct neo-liberal focus on the individual in this framing. These 'I'm not a feminist but' women are particularly likely to be found in strong capitalist systems where neo-liberal beliefs about achievement are the norm. There is a growing literature in psychology that examines neo-liberal beliefs about gender and finds that 'non-labelers' or 'egalitarians' (i.e., women who believe in gender equality but do not identify as feminists) are more similar to non-feminists than feminists in their political behaviors and value structures (Fitz et al., 2012; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010).

Third, one may strongly identify with 'traditional' women as a social group, have a critical analysis of traditional women's position in society, and possess a

collective orientation to changing women's position. However, that analysis argues that feminist challenges to traditional gender hierarchies are the problem and that *feminists* are the dominant group. Thus, in this way of thinking, traditional women are the subordinate group and feelings of injustice and collective action are geared toward challenging what is seen as feminists' hegemonic position in the power hierarchy. Note that the actuality of access to power and resources has little impact on these groups' psychology. What is important in the case of dominant groups who think of themselves as subordinate ones is their own construction of the situation. That is, feelings of injustice are not reserved for objectively subordinated groups in society; rather, simply feeling that one's group is deprived is enough to activate feelings of injustice and thus motivate collective action (Schreiber, 2002, 2008).

Fourth, some women who possess a strong identification with women, a critical analysis of women's position in society, and a collective orientation may not identify as feminists because they choose to identify with a different label, typically one that reflects their intersecting identities in other marginalized groups. For example, African American feminists like Alice Walker, who coined the word 'womanist' in a 1979 short story, began using the term to reflect a feminism that held at its core the experiences of Black women; that is, experiences of womanhood intrinsically tied to their experiences of racist sexism. In many of these cases, the label 'feminist' is seen as privileging the dominant racial identity in its approach to combatting sexism (Brown, 1989).

Injustice. A sense of relative deprivation, or the negative emotion experienced when one recognizes that one's group is unfairly deprived of power and resources (Crosby, 1976), is necessary to motivating collective action. Intrinsic in this definition is the awareness of structural power that positions social groups above or below the hegemonic line. This awareness, also called system blame (Gurin et al., 1980), arises when one rejects the dominant explanations for why one's group occupies a subordinate position in the power hierarchy. For example, feminist system blame means that one rejects the notion that women are inherently ill-suited for positions of leadership in politics and business and instead embraces the explanation that there is structural discrimination that prevents women from attaining these positions. System blame is difficult to develop in societies built on neo-liberal systems that elevate individual effort and reward systems above all other values. For example, the myth of Horatio Alger (i.e., the self-made man who pulled himself up by his own bootstraps) exerts an incredibly powerful force over citizens and immigrants to the United States. The belief that if one works hard enough, one will succeed, fuels the US Republican Party to be sure, but also underlies many of the policies endorsed by the Democratic Party (e.g., welfare reform). Overcoming the societal myth of an even playing field that ignores the hegemonic power structure is necessary to develop a sense of injustice and is probably the most important aspect of politicized group identity development. After all, when one can recognize that one's lack of ability to get ahead is related to the subordinate position of one's group in the power hierarchy, then the solution is not self-improvement, or working even harder, or becoming somehow perfect, but rather, joining with other like-minded people and challenging power on a structural level (*power with*).

Efficacy. *Efficacy* is a term that encompasses the individual belief that what one does can make a difference (self-efficacy) and the belief that the best way to challenge power hierarchies is collectively (collective orientation). *Efficacy*, then, encompasses both *power to* and *power with*. Political self-efficacy is a form of empowerment—that is, it is one’s individual belief that actions one takes in the political arena have an impact. A collective orientation magnifies individual-level self-efficacy to the group level and, in fact, values the actions of groups of individuals as the most likely to make change. Many feminists participate in feminist groups as an effective way to collectively work to change the gendered status quo (Orleck, 2014).

It is clear that power is intrinsically tied to the study, understanding, and practice of collective action. An interpretation of a group’s subordinate position in the societal power structure as unjust and a collective approach to challenging this position involves all three types of power—*power over*, *power to*, and *power with*. I turn now to an explicit consideration of how intersectionality impacts power and collective action.

Intersectionality

Cole (2009, p. 170) described intersectionality as ‘analytic approaches that simultaneously consider the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage.’ Arising out of the observations of African American feminists that groups focused on challenging racial inequalities in society most often prioritized the concerns of men over those of women and that feminist groups most often prioritized the concerns of white women over those of women of color, intersectionality has long been an issue in social movements (Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995; Crenshaw, 1989; Giddings, 1985). The ways in which intersectionality complicates what we know about participation in collective action can be organized according to the three questions that Cole (2009) suggests researchers ask.

First, who is included in the research and who is silenced? Based on this question, researchers should be attuned to differences within groups, paying attention to intersecting identities and how they might affect the stated priorities, strategies, and levels of politicization and participation in collective action of the group. From the point of view of research on collective action, the group is the unit of analysis. Naturally these groups are comprised of people with intersecting identities but unless they form separate activist groups, these differences are typically ignored by researchers and the activists themselves in favor of a common superordinate identity, around which the group is formed. From the point of view of predicting any one particular action, this may be an appropriate strategy to answer a particular research question; however, researchers might want to attend to differences within groups to understand the activism that is not predicted by *identity*, *injustice*, and *efficacy* based on the specified or targeted group membership. Intersectionality also plays out in the lived experiences of activists when they are expected to prioritize the group’s immediate goal or strategy, which is related to that shared group identity, over other

goals or strategies that might resonate with other aspects of their identities. Similarly, once an identity is politicized, not all group members participate in collective action. That is, the path from group consciousness to collective action is complicated by intersectionality because membership in multiple subordinate groups can split attention, resources, and effort if there are other causes in which the individual is simultaneously engaged (Collins, 1991; Dill, 1983).

Second, what role does inequality play? This aspect of intersectionality is intimately tied to the *injustice* element of group consciousness. However, it is important to attend to structural power differences among members of groups because these power dynamics have implications for the group's priorities. That is, typically those members with greater access to power and resources are able to marshal those resources to set the group's agenda and decide on appropriate goals and strategies. These power inequities are reflected in members' intersecting social identities (e.g., race and sexual orientation), but also can be reflected in individual members' education levels, access to material resources, and factors such as sense of entitlement, political self-efficacy, access to activist networks, and relationships with allies or coalition partners. Attending to power differences within the group is important if researchers, or the group itself, wants to represent as many voices as possible within the group or at least understand who is setting the agenda for the group.

Intersectionality is also complicated by the fact that every person possesses multiple social identities. Some of these identities are dominant, and some may be subordinate. Activist groups consist of members possessing different combinations of identities with different statuses. Any one particular member of an activist group will be more or less satisfied in that group depending on how salient their intersecting identities are, and what the goals of the group are. For example, in their research on early second-wave feminism, Gurin et al. (1980) found in a US national sample that white women had lower levels of gender consciousness than they expected, and they argued that it was white women's race privilege, which positioned them in intimate contact with white men, that interfered with the development of a feminist consciousness for many white women. Hurtado (1989) wrote eloquently about the different types of subordination experienced by women of color and white women, arguing that although both groups were oppressed, it was their relationship to white men that determined which type of subordination they experienced. Hurtado wrote that women of color were oppressed through what she called 'rejection' and white women through 'seduction.' In other words, women of color gain little of the benefit afforded to white women through their close personal relationships with white men (women of color are rejected); ironically, this may make it easier for women of color to organize around the rejection of white male sexism. White women, on the other hand, are 'seduced' by their intimate contact with their white fathers, lovers, sons, and other relatives and so it might be more costly for them to challenge white male sexism, regardless of other intersecting identities that they possess (e.g., sexual orientation). But of course women of color also face the problems inherent in multiple social identities. For example, when women of color organize around their intersecting identities of race and gender, they still must contend with other identities—for example, sexual orientation or social class. The priorities and strategies of a lesbian African

American feminist might differ in some ways from those of a heterosexual African American feminist, for example; thus, all activist groups must contend with the issue of intersecting identities.

Attending to intersecting identities clearly complicates research on collective action and pushes researchers to develop new approaches that can embrace this complexity (Cole, 2009). I would argue that one's approach depends heavily upon the research question one is asking. That is, not every question requires the same level of intersectional analysis. For example, when researching or protesting violence against women and girls, it is important to delineate the areas of similarity in experiences with violence that cross different identities (i.e., race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender presentation, age, socio-economic status, region of the country) but also delineate the ways in which differences in experiences may be related to differences in intersecting identities. For example, women and girls (different from men and boys), regardless of ethnicity or sexual orientation, are taught to be especially attentive when walking alone in the dark in a deserted place. However, adolescent and young adult women are more likely than older women to be subjected to excessive public male objectification (Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, 2017). In this case, which intersecting identities are highlighted depends on the research question. The same logic applies to activist groups. Feminist groups on college campuses may be more likely to prioritize activism around physical safety and access to birth control than issues related to poverty and access to education (though this is not universally true). In other words, attention to intersecting identities will help activist groups understand what is left out when only the most dominant voices are heard.

Finally, I want to highlight a point that I have not seen discussed at all in the literature on participation in collective action. In my and my students' analyses of the oral histories of feminist activists, many accessed through Smith College's Voices of Feminism Archive (<https://libraries.smith.edu/special-collections/research-collections/resources-lists/oral-histories/voices-of-feminism>), we have come to notice that every activist we have studied seems to have experienced some sort of advantage in life that allows them to turn their experiences with discrimination or oppression into pro-social collective action. Importantly, I distinguish advantage from privilege here. Privilege is defined as a set of advantages or benefits that are conferred on a group of people based on a particular group membership (e.g., being white, male, heterosexual)—that is, possessing a group membership that is positioned above the hegemonic line. In research, privilege is associated with lower levels of collective action that challenges power hierarchies (Blankenship et al., 2017; Gurin et al., 1980). On the other hand, I define advantage as an individual difference variable—as a personality characteristic (e.g., cognitive flexibility) or life experience (e.g., being raised in an activist family) that allows one to develop group consciousness and/or participate in collective action. These individual differences in personality and life experiences have been modeled in the literature (Duncan, 1999, 2018, 2022) but have not been framed in terms of 'advantages.' This is an area ripe for future research, in that linking these individual differences to empowerment helps us to understand the relationship between the development of group consciousness, empowerment, and participation in collective action (or the ability to challenge *power over*). I make a

start in understanding the role of advantage in the next section, in a case study of the life and experiences of African American feminist Loretta Ross.

Third, where are the similarities? In research on collective action looking for commonalities has been paramount. The field as a whole has tried to delineate the factors that opinion-based and identity-based groups share in their collective action motivation. Van Zomeren et al. (2008) argued that most activism was spurred by politicizing a group identity and organizing collectively. However, researchers should not assume that models that explain the politicization and activism of one group will automatically apply to other groups.

One area in which the field could improve is to make more connections between the activism of subordinate group members and that of dominant group members. There is a growing interest in understanding the motivation of dominant group members to participate in collective action on behalf of subordinate group members in the ally literature, including men who are feminists (Brown, 2015; Curtin et al., 2015; Grzanka et al., 2015; Iyer & Leach, 2010; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012). It would be useful to delineate in which ways the dominant models of subordinate group activism can apply to ally activism (Duncan, 2018, 2022). In addition, it would be useful to understand if and how these models of progressive activism can be applied to understand the activism of groups engaged in more reactionary behaviors. For example, can the SIMCA model be applied to understand the activism of White supremacists or, in the United States, the election deniers who participated in the January 6, 2021 insurrection? Duncan (2010) presented a case study of Ingo Hasselbach, a former East-German neo-Nazi who recanted and now travels around the world speaking out against neo-Nazism. In this case study, Duncan argued that Hasselbach had embraced a group identity (white neo-Nazi) that he politicized (positioning his group as below the hegemonic line) and then organized collectively to participate in collective action meant to improve the position of his group in society. Thus all elements of the group consciousness model applied to Hasselbach's neo-Nazi activism. The major difference was that Hasselbach's sense of injustice was based on a set of assumptions that were not factual (e.g., that the Holocaust was a hoax). The sense of injustice was real, however, and perhaps there are some unique factors at work in reactionary collective action that have not been explored in the research on subordinate collective action. In the gender sphere, we could look at conservative women activists or pro-life activists and explore how members in these conservative groups are similar and different from progressive or pro-choice feminists in their development of group identities and senses of *injustice* and *efficacy*.

Case Study of Loretta Ross

I want to turn now to a specific case study of a feminist activist that can illustrate some of the points made earlier about power, intersectionality, and activism. This case study is taken from an oral history interview conducted by a feminist historian and archived in the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College in the Voices of Feminism collection.

Loretta Ross is an African American feminist whose first adult activism focused on tenants' rights in Washington, D.C. Over the course of fifty years of advocacy, among other activities, Ross directed the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, Sister Song (a coalition of women of color organizations working on reproductive rights issues), and worked for the Center for Democratic Renewal (formerly the National Anti-Klan Network). She now considers herself a human rights activist with a transnational focus. In this case study I will illustrate some of the points made earlier about power, intersectionality, and activism. In particular, I will talk about how the model in Fig. 1 played out in her life, and will highlight the concept of advantage discussed earlier.

Loretta Ross, born in 1953 in Temple, Texas, is a heterosexual African American woman who grew up as a member of a working-class family during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Her father, originally from Jamaica, was an Army weapons specialist and drill sergeant until retirement and then worked at the Post Office starting when Ross was 10. Her mother stayed home to raise her eight children and the family was not very politicized. When she was 11, Ross was beaten and raped by a stranger and during her senior year in high school, she became pregnant by a distant relative and had a baby. Ross was an excellent student (she skipped two grades) and a charismatic leader of her peers. When she was in high school, she formed a drill team that consisted of only students of color in reaction to her observation that all the cheerleaders at her school were white. Although she had not developed any sort of articulated race or gender consciousness at that point, she had a strong personal sense of fairness and took action when she saw injustice. As a senior in high school she had been admitted to Radcliffe College (Harvard's sister school) on a full scholarship; however, her scholarship was rescinded when the College learned of her pregnancy. Ross quickly applied and was admitted to Howard University (a traditionally Black institution) and attended full time leaving her son at home with her mother. During college, Ross became increasingly politicized, reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley and Toni Cade Bambara's *The Black Woman*. When she was 23, Ross was treated by a white male doctor for an infection caused by the defective Dalkon Shield (an early IUD); when the infection worsened, Ross was hospitalized and given a hysterectomy without her consent. Outraged, she sued the IUD manufacturer and they settled out of court; however, her case later spurred a class-action suit.

Intersectionality plays out in Loretta Ross's life in that her life experiences were affected by her race, gender, social class, and sexual orientation. Her advantage has to do with how her father's profession and their living environment shaped her views on race and the mutability of power structures. First, growing up as an African American girl meant that she was subjected to racism and sexism (and racist sexism). Her rape at age 11 was gender-related; perhaps it was also race-related in that her rapist might have seen her as a vulnerable target. The rescinding of the full scholarship to Radcliffe College was also shaped by her intersecting racial, gender, and social class identities. Clearly the type of woman deemed acceptable to Radcliffe College at the time was one who was not overtly sexual, and perhaps was even virginal. This, of course, is completely consistent with the ideals of young white womanhood of the time. Women graduating from the Seven Sisters Colleges were expected to take their

places as the wives and mothers of the standard-bearers of the white male power structure (Duncan et al., 2002). The reality of one of their teenage students being a mother was a clear repudiation of those ideals and combined with the fact that Ross was African American was probably just too much for the College to accept. They might have thought that accepting a ‘perfect’ African American woman would allow them to diversify in terms of race, and maybe even social class, but they were not willing to accept a real, ‘imperfect,’ African American woman.

There are countless other examples of how intersectionality played out in Loretta Ross’s life; most clearly in her choice of causes in which to be active. Her first activism, for tenant’s rights, benefited working-class, single, African American women. These are social identities that Ross also possessed and finding and keeping affordable, safe, and clean housing was a cause that allowed her to politicize these identities. Her work directing the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, similarly has its roots in her identities as a woman of color rape survivor. The relationship between her intersecting identities and her activism is consistent with the psychological literature on motivation for participation in collective action (Duncan, 2018, 2022; van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Interestingly, while working at the Center, Ross received a letter from a group of African American men prison inmates serving time for rape asking the Center for help. These men were interested in learning how not to rape other men in prison and how not to rape women after they were released. Speaking about one particular prisoner, Ross says,

...he was the master rapist in this prison...apparently when he was 18, he raped, sodomized, and murdered this woman. He was 33 now, and he’d gotten hold of some feminist readings, not black feminist readings, feminist readings somewhere, and his argument was that, I believe that rape is a form of power and control, and I want to know how not to be a rapist. He says, I don’t even think gender matters if all you’re interested in is power and control, because I’d just as easily rape men as I do women. (Ross, 2004/2005, p. 123)

After thinking it over for a few days, Ross and the other administrators decided that it was crucial to work on gendered violence from the perpetrator’s point of view as well as help survivors. That is, instead of only working with women of color rape victims, which empowered those below the hegemonic line, it was also important to educate and enlist the efforts of men perpetrators, enabling those above the hegemonic line to see the line and challenge it as well. This kind of innovative thinking was only possible because Ross could identify rape as one aspect of the gendered power hierarchy. In her later work with the anti-racist Center for Democratic Renewal, Ross similarly worked with Klansmen and Neo-Nazis who wanted to leave their organizations and become anti-racists.

...when people called...who wanted to exit hate groups, [they] need to have their lives put back together, because when you leave hate groups, it’s not just like quitting the Kiwanis Club. You’re leaving with a lot of secrets, sometimes secrets about criminal activities. People get assaulted and sometimes murdered for leaving hate groups... And so, even after they’ve emptied their minds and souls of all this information, they still need help. And so, it was part of my—it became part of my job to help them reintegrate back into society. (Ross, 2004/2005, pp. 259–260)

Ross reports an epiphany she had while helping Floyd Cochran, the leader of the white supremacist group Aryan Nations, leave his organization. Because he was such a high profile leader and wanted to make up for some of the damage he had done over the years with the group, she traveled around the country with him so that he could speak out against hate groups and in support of civil rights and gay rights.

And so, finally, on one of our trips, Floyd said, 'Loretta, where's the movement I can join?' I said, 'What do you mean? You can join the civil rights movement.' He said, 'No, no, no. I don't think the civil rights movement is for me.' I said, 'Why not? You don't have to be'—and he actually said, you know, he said something that made me think you had to be black to be in the civil rights movement. You had to be a woman to join the woman's movement. But I'm trying to disabuse him of that stereotype. 'I don't think so,' he said. 'Where's the movement I can join?' So C.T. [a minister who often advised her]...tells me this wonderful story about how Dr. King never meant to build a civil rights movement, he meant to build a human rights movement, so I go trotting back to Floyd and say, 'You're supposed to join the human rights movement.' And then it dawned on us that none of us know anything about human rights, so that's how NCHRE [National Center for Human Rights Education] was thought of. (Ross, 2004/2005, p. 262)

Not every person working on behalf of subordinate groups would have the capacity to see things the way Ross did—that her responsibility was to not only help those below the hegemonic line, but also those above it. I would argue that one of the reasons Loretta Ross was able to see and challenge these power hierarchies in new ways was directly related to two personal advantages she had growing up. First, even though Ross grew up during the height of racial segregation in the United States, the racial composition of her town was mixed, being 20% white, 20% African American, and 60% Mexican American. So Ross never thought about race as black minority vs. white majority—it was more complicated than that. Second, her father held a leadership position in the Army which meant that he gave orders to white men as well as men of color. Witnessing him in his role, Ross never learned that white people had an unquestionable dominant position over people of color. Rather, if a hierarchical command structure could overwrite a racial power structure, then perhaps power hierarchies were created, not natural. Perhaps this advantage allowed Ross to seek out and embrace systemic explanations for oppression and reject biological explanations.

Clearly Loretta Ross is an exceptional individual. I would argue that attending to her intersectional identities and in particular how power is implicated in them, helps us understand how she was able to make connections between her personal experiences and political theories and become an effective activist. Specifically, her unique combination of *social identities* as African American, female, working class, and straight, combined with her *social context* growing up in an integrated town where Mexican Americans were the majority during the Civil Rights Movement, and with her *personal experiences* as a rape survivor, daughter of an Army sergeant, and teenage mother, and her *personality characteristics* as intelligent, open-minded, and empathetic allowed her to develop into a successful activist. Her life story clearly illustrates the importance of power and intersectionality in spurring participation in collective action.

Conclusion

Power is a critical aspect of the practice and study of participation in collective action. It is essential to understand how *power over* (possessed by dominant groups), *power to* (individual empowerment of subordinate group members), and *power with* (groups of empowered people working together to challenge power hierarchies) interact to challenge structural power hierarchies. In terms of gender, women become empowered through their interactions with feminist groups and collectively organize to challenge gender hierarchies. It is important to consider intersecting social identities in the practice and study of participation in collective action because every potential activist possesses a unique combination of dominant and subordinate identities that exerts a powerful impact on behavior and affects their priorities and commitments to causes. Loretta Ross's life story illustrates well how intersecting identities can affect choices of commitments and the importance of attending to individual differences in personality and life experiences in shaping these choices.

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The Gendering of Trauma in Trafficking Interventions



Ingrid Palmary

In this chapter, I will consider the ways that psychology, and its ideas and practices, have been taken up in contemporary research on human trafficking and the consequences and risks thereof. In doing so, I will unpack how gender, race and power figure in the varieties of psychological praxis that have been implemented by migration scholars and practitioners who work in the field of trafficking, and how these shape interventions designed for migrants more broadly. I will argue that considering the intersections of gender, race and power returns us to feminist concerns with the politics of knowledge and representations albeit in new ways given the changing global order (Kiguwa, 2004; Shefer et al., 2006). In particular, I focus on the connections that have been drawn between trauma and human trafficking as an illustration of how psychological ideas shape migration praxis and contribute to its raced and gendered effects. What is clear from the illustrations I use is that the intersections of gender, race, migration and psychological knowledge constantly navigate complex political terrain, and the positive impacts of psychology, even where its helping imperative is evident, cannot be assumed. I argue that, in order to evaluate the impact of psychology on the study of gender and migration, we need to understand better how psychological ideas are being used in practice and what kinds of interventions they render possible.

I. Palmary (✉)

University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park Campus, Kingsway Road, Johannesburg 2092, South Africa

e-mail: ipalmary@uj.ac.za

Trauma Migration and Gender

Psychology has focused a great deal on migrant mental health (see, for example, Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Ellis et al., 2008; Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998; Mollica et al., 1992; Neuner et al., 2004; Schweitzer et al., 2006; Silove, 1998; Steel et al., 2002). But perhaps the area where migration and psychology have had the longest history of overlap is in interventions into trauma. The focus on trauma has meant that this work is often done with the most vulnerable of migrants. Typically, these include refugee communities and, as is the focus of this chapter, trafficking victims. Therefore, although at times I reference migrants and at other times specific migrant groups, it is clear that certain migrants, particularly those who have a claim to particular notions of vulnerability and need, are often the focus of this work. This is appropriate for this chapter as I am concerned with how the attention to mental health mobilized notions of trauma and trauma care and to what effect.

Key debates in the scholarship on migration and mental health have focused on cross-cultural psychology and the appropriateness of psychological idioms of distress when working with migrants (Nichter, 2010). One offshoot of this debate has been the efforts to adjust standardized scales that measure trauma in ways that might better capture its articulation in a variety of cultural contexts, thus making it more appropriate for use with refugee groups. Typical of this body of literature is the review article by Hollifield et al. (2002) who lament the fact that a minority of studies assessing mental health among refugee populations are conducted using psychometric tests that are validated among those populations. In particular, Hollifield et al. (2002) argue for a rethinking of the constructs of mental health assessment in order to establish greater validity when assessing the mental health of refugees. A similar critique has been leveled by Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1994) who note that assessments of PTSD have overwhelmingly focused on US war veterans with little attention to their validity and reliability across contexts even though they are frequently used among migrant populations in the United States and globally (see also Friedman et al., 2007).

However, from the 1980s onwards there has been a more substantive critique of trauma work with migrant and refugee populations that goes beyond questions of validity and instead challenges some of the underlying principles of psychological assessment and intervention altogether (see Summerfield, 2001; Rechtman, 2004). A number of themes have dominated this critique: Firstly, scholars have critiqued the idea that human suffering can be codified and measured in standardized, objective and universal ways and have argued that doing so fails to account for the ways that trauma is mediated by the social meaning of an event. Following this argument, Rechtman (2000) notes:

[E]ven if during the same period refugees have lived through quite the same events, this does not necessarily mean that they have experienced the same trauma. The illusion of a common destiny that would flatten out varying individual fates may be one of the major consequences of collective trauma. (p. 404)

Secondly, a related critique has been that trauma interventions privilege practices developed in the global North (such as many versions of psychotherapy), with indigenous practices being marginalized. In other words, practices of healing, restitution and meaning-making that exist outside the frame of Northern psychotherapy are seldom acknowledged as effective forms of resolving trauma in the way that mainstream psychological interventions are (see Távara et al., 2018) thus participating in a hierarchy of knowledge rooted in the disciplinary power of Anglo/US psychology (Reddy & Amer, 2023). This critique requires that we move beyond a focus on simply making counseling and therapeutic services culturally and contextually appropriate for migrants and refugees and reimagine what constitutes healing (see, for example, Allan, 2014; Baker, 2011; De Vries, 2001; Van der Veer, 1998 among others). By way of example, Blackwell (2005) notes how attempts to make counseling services in the United Kingdom appropriate and meaningful to refugee clients force a rethinking of disciplinary norms. In particular, he notes the importance of understanding and learning to incorporate forms of support that refugees are familiar with rather than imposing mainstream psychological practices. He notes that although Anglo/US psychotherapy may not be common in refugees' countries of origin and may represent something of a 'foreign language', most cultures have forms of narrative-based support that can be integrated into trauma interventions.

While these debates are well-developed in the literature, what is most significant for this chapter, and less well-developed in the existing literature, is the race and gender differences that shape the decisions made about trauma interventions and how these reflect the global hierarchies that determine migration experiences. Thus, I would argue that the critique of trauma needs to go a step further, moving beyond questions of how to make interventions appropriate so that they are more effective to rather consider how our interventions might reproduce and reflect existing global inequalities of race and gender and how these shape who can migrate and under what conditions (see also Allan, 2014; Baker, 2011; De Vries, 2001).

Stemming from this critique, there have been efforts to create a range of interventions with migrant groups that try to expand the remit of what constitutes therapeutic interventions, often including art-based approaches, activism and culturally significant rituals (see Clacherty, 2006; Távara et al., 2018). As these kinds of interventions have broadened their approach, so too has the conceptualization of what constitutes trauma. For example, a key critique has been that the dominant medical approach to trauma works from the assumption that trauma consists of a discrete and isolated event rather than ongoing violence, discrimination and social exclusion. In war-affected communities in particular, violence often occurs in an ongoing everyday way that is not appreciated in psychological constructions of PTSD (Young, 2000). However, much more than this, as countries have developed increasingly repressive and exclusionary immigration laws, migrants often suffer extensive discrimination, racism and social exclusion on an ongoing basis in their country of destination. Recognizing ongoing discrimination and exclusion as an experience of trauma requires increasing attention to systems of global power not typical of psychological praxis. Thus, by shifting the conceptualization of trauma beyond its medicalized and individualized focus, researchers have been able to highlight the trauma associated with racism and

sexism and thus mobilize the concept for socio-political justice (Cromer & Freyd, 2009; Donovan & Williams, 2002).

Despite the success of work that attends to everyday violence and trauma in raising awareness of the impact of injustice, it cannot be assumed that trauma interventions inevitably perform a liberatory function. Much psychological work in colonial Africa has functioned to reproduce racist and sexist ideologies that furthered the colonial project (see Cooper & Nicholas, 2012). For example, the literature on sexual violence has consistently shown that narratives of violence and abuse tend to be considered less credible when the victim is black and female (Donovan & Williams, 2002). Thus, old debates about who is considered to be mad and who is bad (Potter, 2012) resurface and show how race and gender intersect to determine who is considered worthy of what kind of assistance and who requires punishment following traumatic incidents (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2021). Indeed, other authors have noted how trauma has been gendered since its origins in studies of hysteria (Young, 2000) which was considered only present in women and associated with their emotional and physical weakness. The term trauma continued to carry negative gender connotations in the early work on its codification after World War I where researchers assumed trauma was really only likely in young, effeminate men rather than 'hardened soldiers' (Young, 2000). While this kind of critique has been developed in more detail elsewhere what is clear is that trauma has a fluid history that has frequently been mobilized to both challenge and reproduce intersections of gender and race. In the section that follows, I develop this idea further by looking at how the concept of trauma is mobilized in interventions aimed at preventing human trafficking.

Migration Trauma and Its Gendered Effects: An Illustration of Trafficking

In tandem with the raced and gendered history of trauma interventions that have shaped work with migrant populations, trafficking has emerged as a uniquely gendered narrative of migration in the last century. Its gendered history is evident as the term traffic was first used in the early 1900s to refer to those involved in sexually immoral practices such as prostitution (George et al., 2010). The International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic of 1910 was a response to the growing perception that White women were engaging in prostitution outside of England. This was largely a result of women's increased mobility following the development of steam engines and accessible transport as well as the colonial project of European expansion (Allain, 2017). In 1949 the UN advanced the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others thus reflecting a continued emphasis on prostitution albeit with a new focus on women as exploited. In 2000 it was replaced by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

A few points are worth highlighting here. Firstly, the idea of trafficking has been centrally connected to a concern with the sex industry (O'Connell Davidson, 2015). Beyond this, however, it has focused on women's sexual regulation and moral purity and has thus been driven by a complex agenda of protection and control since its inception (Allain, 2017). Thus, it is concerned with movement and gendered concerns about women being at particular risk when they leave home. Secondly, it has a less well-documented, yet inherent, racism whereby in its early forms it was the experience of white women and the fears that they may be selling sex to black and brown men as the colonial project expanded that drove the concern for trafficking (Allain, 2017; O'Connell Davidson, 2015). This peculiarly Victorian paternalistic response represents one of the earliest interventions into the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation and highlights the early racism inherent to the moral purity movements that stemmed from the increasing racial integration through colonization. The ways in which gender and race intersected to bolster the colonial project have been documented elsewhere (Stoler, 2001). However, their continuity and the shifts in discourse and praxis are less well known.

It is important to note that while there are gendered and raced continuities in the legal and policy approaches to trafficking that have emerged since the early twentieth century, there are also some differences. Clearly, the Palermo protocol has removed the overt racism of its predecessors expanding the concern over trafficking to all women without mention of race. Similarly, the concern with women's sexual morality, while still evident in the contemporary responses to trafficking, has now been reframed as a concern for their victimization. In particular, the policy shifts showed increasing focus on the punishment of perpetrators of human trafficking alongside women's rescue. In spite of this shift, the Palermo protocol shows clearly that there was a continued conflation of sex work and moral resistance to it resulting at times in complex alliances between feminist groups and religious conservatives. While a full discussion of this is beyond the scope of this chapter, there has been an ongoing tension between punishment and rescue of women as well as a number of polarized moral positions that have driven both the policy shifts and the interventions into human trafficking (O'Connell Davidson, 2015).

Drawing on the critiques of trauma interventions described above, I would argue that it is essential to focus on the effects that interventions into trafficking have produced by drawing on psychological tropes of trauma. In other words, how have psychological understandings of migrant mental well-being impacted on responses to migration? What interventions have they rendered possible? In this section, I want to draw attention to trafficking responses to argue that there is tension in the way that notions of trauma are drawn on and the risks of these possible notions of trauma and mental health. While this critique focuses on notions of vulnerability and trauma, it can clearly be extended to other areas of migrant mental health work.

While there is relatively little written on human trafficking and mental health, early literature (see, for example, Heffernan & Blythe, 2014; Johnson, 2012) was predominantly focused on making the case for more research into the mental health effects of trafficking or was focused on the growing experiences of frontline workers who intervened in trafficking (see Hom & Woods, 2013). In recent years, a body

of literature has developed that has followed a rather similar trajectory to the study of trauma as a whole. For example, there has been growing work that measures trauma in trafficking victims, with the associated concerns about the validity of measurement already discussed. Overwhelmingly, this literature makes the case for greater mental health interventions with trafficking victims. Unsurprisingly, research has found high levels of trauma symptoms among trafficking victims and therapeutic interventions are increasingly being seen as essential in the response to trafficking. For example, for Cecchet and Thoburn (2014) and Heffernan and Blythe (2014), the documentation of symptomology and the possible interventions that might be implemented for trafficking victims have been their primary focus.

However, it is notable that many of the well-rehearsed critiques mentioned in the introduction have not adequately informed conceptions of trauma interventions with trafficking victims. As important as these discussions are, here I want to focus on the gendered political effects of introducing notions of trauma into trafficking work in order to tease out which of these critiques could be usefully developed when thinking about trauma and trafficking. The analysis for this section comes predominantly from awareness work done in Southern Africa by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners. This includes their early publication 'Eye on Trafficking' which aimed to provide information and advocacy for trafficking interventions in the region.¹ Alongside this, they released a number of awareness campaigns, including YouTube videos, public screenings and poster campaigns. Although these have been written about extensively in other contexts (see Andrijasevic, 2007; Miramond, 2020; Pécoud, 2010) here I will offer a critical consideration of how trauma and associated psychological constructs are mobilized in this work and with what effects. There are a number of critiques that I want to offer of these interventions that resonate with the critical introduction above.

Individualization of Trauma and Its Impact on the Rescue Industry

The first such critique is that the approach to trauma inherent in much of the counter-trafficking advocacy is individualized in ways that eclipse the structural causes of trafficking. Although this has been a well-rehearsed critique of psychology in general, it takes on a particular perniciousness when it comes to how women are represented in trafficking campaigns. The analysis of such campaigns shows that while poverty often features as a cause of women's migration, it is seldom addressed as a solution. What is particularly significant about the focus on poverty is that it is understood as a risk factor for trafficking, sex work, exploitation and for slave-like working conditions. In spite of it being a clear risk factor for women ending up in exploitative conditions, it is significant that it is not seen as a key area for intervention which

¹ See <https://southafrica.iom.int/>.

instead focuses on individuals as the source of exploitation. The following extract indicates some of the style of this argument:

The trafficker is often a male member of a foreign criminal syndicate and trafficked women and children are usually poor and uneducated. (Reddy & Khokhar, 2007, p. 4)

Impoverished African parents are being lured by the traffickers promises of a better life for their children...from the age of seven, rather than being sent to school they are exploited as domestic slaves. (Harrison, 2008, p. 8)

The trouble with such analyses is that the structural conditions that make migration dangerous for women, such as policies that discriminate against the movement of poor people and corrupt and dangerous borders are rendered invisible and the problem becomes one of individual traffickers and victims. Furthermore, these traffickers do not exist in the cities of the global North but rather are men from women's countries of origin and communities. In this way, the problem of trafficking is located in the sending countries and is deemed a consequence of the failings of the people (both the victims and the perpetrators) in those countries.

As such, there are a number of worrying consequences of this way of framing women's migration risks and the violence they suffer when migrating. The first is that the problem is deemed to rest with bad, violent men, usually from the global South who want to exploit naïve women who, to escape their poverty and because of their ignorance about the world outside of their homes, trust these men. This results in a situation where the global inequalities that create the desire and demand for movement such as the exploitation of the global South by the global North is invisible. Similarly, the historical connections through colonialism and how the wealth of the global North has been based on the exploitation of the global South are eclipsed.

Other authors have written about how trafficking has created the myth of the white savior (Heynen & Meulen, 2022). I would extend this argument to claim that it is precisely because of this kind of depoliticization of gendered violence through psychological ideas of trauma as an internal and individualized experience that facilitates this savior complex (see also Augustin, 2008; Doezema, 2013; Hua, 2011). As De Shalit et al. (2014) notes of the rescue industry: '[T]his gendered dynamic is strongly racialized, with Indigenous and racialized migrant women (sex working or not) understood as de facto in need of "saving" in western rescue missions' (p. 389).

This problem is by no means unique to work by IOM and its partners. Rather, a similar phenomenon is evident in the emerging academic literature on the trauma of trafficked women. It is almost entirely focused on the abuses women suffer or the policy developments without due attention to their structural causes. While I would not want to deny that the abuses are real, it is in the response and causal analysis that I differ. Interventions for trafficked women that focus on counseling to deal with the trauma of sexual violence, forced entry into sex work and intimate partner violence have begun to emerge and there is a need to establish the underlying principles on which they are based. For example, in the South African context, Mhlongo et al. (2018) use the Harvard trauma questionnaire and life events checklist to measure symptoms and argue for therapeutic interventions. By design,

the symptoms are therefore reduced to those measured in standardized questionnaires. Evidence exists of trafficking victims experiencing diagnoses of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem and challenges in intimate relationships (Ravi et al., 2017). Similar to the critiques of trauma generally, there is also a growing literature focusing on the appropriateness of scales and assessment techniques for measuring mental health and in some instances calling for more survivor-centered approaches to intervention. But beyond this, we need to ask which experiences are not captured by such standardized measures of distress. These are experiences of discriminatory migration policy that limits the movement and therefore economic opportunities of poor women of color, the lack of state protection and the injustices of global capitalism. In framing women's exploitation as an individual and internal phenomenon, psychological work on trafficking risks reproducing the very notions of trauma as depoliticized, discrete events that require an individualized response. In the next section, I go on to consider the implications of such an understanding for how women who are trafficked are responded to.

Home and Away: Simple Women and Worldly Men

A related consequence of how trauma is seen as something created by evil/naïve individuals, rather than structural economic concerns, is that notions of home are constructed in sanitized and gendered ways. In the desire to protect women from violence associated with their movement, home becomes romanticized and normalized while leaving home is rendered always dangerous. Much of this focus on the dangers of women's migration comes from a sense in both academic and popular literature that migration is particularly dangerous for women. Many studies on gender and migration begin with an assertion that migration is particularly dangerous for women (Donato et al., 2006). Clearly, this theme in the literature stems from a desire to render women's abuse visible and generate support or interventions for women and in many instances, this is likely to be true. However, where this is done without attention to the political context that produces this additional risk, violence against migrant women tends to be constructed as something essential about women—rather than their unequal treatment within gendered migration regimes.

This notion of women's migration being unusually dangerous is accomplished through particular constructions of home and its importance to women. Of course, home has multiple and ambiguous meanings but in this rendering of home, it is a place of safety. It represents the rural, the domestic, and a place of simplicity and refuge for those whom others want to harm. Women away from home are at risk. In the example below, men's migration is driven by malice and the desire to exploit whereas women's migration is driven by vulnerability and victimization.

Refugees from other African countries already in South Africa often arrange for close female relatives to join them. Once these women receive asylum-seeker status, their male relatives force them into prostitution. (Mail and Guardian. (2007) www.humantrafficking.org/updates/759)

While we may be able to see that mobility and exploitation needn't be synonymous, there is in all the advocacy literature that I have reviewed only one example I have found where the anxiety over being away from home comes close to being problematized. It is in one issue of the IOM's publication 'Eye on Trafficking SA' in which there is an unresolved dilemma posed about what it means to be moved. The article describes a hypothetical case where a young woman is kidnapped, blindfolded and driven around so that she does not know where she is. She is then taken to a house next to her own house and forced into prostitution. Her parents living in the nearby house have no idea she is right across the street, and she has no idea that she is right next to her own house. No resolution is given to this story and, aside from the hint that this might raise questions about why it is only those who have moved that matter, there is in no other documents about trafficking anything other than a taken-for-granted assumption that those who move are a risk and a threat. But throughout the policy and advocacy on trafficking, a woman away from home is seen to be disoriented and confused and out of place. She is at risk of abuse because of her movement.

This is not that different from many migration studies where women's movement has been treated as a problem or indicative of a crisis at 'home'. Home in the migration literature is an ambiguous term associated at the same time with violence, safety, stability and mobility. Its association with the well-being of the family makes women's migration a particular source of anxiety. Nevertheless, different conceptions of home are shot through with notions of race, class and gender giving different kinds of homes very different meanings (see Webster, 2005). Consider the following example from another 'Eye on Trafficking' publication:

Potential victims are often so desperate for a better life or for access to some form of income that they become oblivious to traffickers. They are naïve and are unaware of the dangers that they might face from trusting strangers or acquaintances who make them false promises of a better life somewhere else. Women and children are particularly vulnerable in situations where poverty is rife. Women, often the breadwinners of the home in such areas, would usually look for work opportunities outside their immediate environment. This makes them vulnerable to traffickers. (Sihlwayi, 2009)

In the quote, it is the description of homes where women are the breadwinners that are cited as an anomaly that can cause women to leave the home. This notion of home stands in contrast to middle-class notions of home as a place of leisure or consumption (see Webster, 1995) and, in comparison to this middle-class and normalized notion of home, we can lament these women's loss of home.

In video material produced to warn women of the risks of trafficking, these themes are repeated.² In a well-publicized awareness campaign on YouTube and Southern African television, a young rural woman is seen being told about the wonders of urban life by another woman. The dress and style of the potential trafficker clearly show a woman who is more Western in appearance, wearing a business suit, knowledgeable about the world outside of the home and manipulative of the naïve rural woman. Here, home is associated with a simple life; one of poverty but safety and set in contrast

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMEG_MuyCUY.

to the technologies and advancement of the city. Urban icons like graffiti and buses carry warnings like ‘you will be raped’, ‘you will become a sex slave’ in a symbolic ‘writing on the wall’. As in the examples above, it is poor black rural women who are seen to be at much greater risk than others not because of their exploitation and unjust working conditions created by their poverty but because of their own naiveté.

In addition to how women’s trauma is individualized, a second consequence is that women who are poor or rural are deemed to be without agency and unable to know or decide what is best for them (IOM, 2010). Re-trafficking, where women are recruited again into exploitative working conditions after being returned home, is something that is mentioned in a number of reports as an ongoing problem. That this problem exists suggests that home is an ambivalent space for poor women and children. The assumption that to move away from home necessarily involves a loss of some kind (see Malkki, 1992) is a highly gendered one that has been used to limit women’s employment opportunities and justify differential migration policies for men and women. This problem has led to the creation of incentives such as small business loans for those women who have been returned home after being trafficked. This is referred to as ‘community stabilization’ clearly indicating the assumption that a stable community is one that women do not leave (see Sihlwayi, 2009). Thus, their decisions to leave are seen as being always a mistake or a result of their lack of knowledge. Even in cases where women deny that they have been trafficked or insist that regardless of their exploitation their movement was their own decision, this is dismissed in literature as being misguided. For example, in one edition of the ‘Eye on Trafficking’ this is deemed to be an illustration of the ‘Stockholm syndrome’.

After a long period of servitude to the trafficker, some victims become emotionally attached to the trafficker and chose to remain with him/her, even if it means working under exploitative conditions. (Lifongo, 2009)

Later in the same article, it is claimed that:

The trafficker creates mental fear in the mind of the victim in order to strengthen his/her hold on him/her. This mental brainwashing makes the victim live in a state of terror and fear. (Lifongo, 2009)

Thus, women’s own decision-making can be easily undermined by drawing on loosely used notions of trauma. These extracts show the ways in which, through the language of psychology, the decisions that women take—even if they are taken under very difficult conditions—are reduced to being consequences of their weak mental state. Again, the lack of choices they have in the context of repressive and discriminatory migration regimes becomes eclipsed and it is instead their psychological state that is seen to be the reason that they do not want to return home.

Ironically though, the language of rescue and return home is one that does function to obscure other forms of coercion. In most legislation as well as in many of the current activities of the IOM and other organizations intervening with trafficking victims, the recommended solution (after the prosecution of perpetrators) is voluntary repatriation of victims. However, this simply means repatriation paid for by the IOM rather than the ‘less dignified’ (IOM, 2009) version of deportation by the government. It is not automatically the choice of the victim whether they will return to their

country of origin. By framing this return as a compassionate effort to send women home, where home is deemed a place of safety, the coercion that takes place through migration restrictions is eclipsed. The assumption that women who are poor are open to having their labor exploited is not one that I would disagree with. However, as described above, this curiously becomes conflated with a woman being naïve and overly trusting of strangers and as a result making poor choices that require them to be rescued by those who have greater knowledge. Where this greater knowledge is psychological knowledge such as in the case of notions of Stockholm syndrome or ‘brainwashing’ the discipline becomes implicated in undermining the complex decisions that women make under difficult conditions. Through a raced and gendered representation of women as domestically rooted, untraveled and culturally child-like, where they lack the masculine, adult qualities of rationality, risk aversion and reasoned decision-making, the rescue industry can justify making decisions on their behalf. This occludes the ways that poor women’s labor, especially in the Southern African region, has almost entirely been migration-based, through the reliance on domestic workers under apartheid who were required to live with their employers and whose families were not permitted into the city, to seasonal work on farms in rural areas. Worse than this, it makes interventions aimed at limiting the migration opportunities for poor women appear benevolent—even if they mean that women’s opportunities for livelihoods are curtailed in the process.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that trauma work has a complex history that has often been used in contradictory ways. In some cases, the concept of trauma has been used to draw attention to the racisms and sexism that people suffer and to mobilize a social justice response. On the other hand, some versions of trauma work have been used to pathologize and marginalize groups of people who suffer with trauma. What I have argued in this chapter is that the individualization of trauma is key to its depoliticization and works to obscure the political root of distress while also reproducing racism and sexist tropes. This in turn has been reflected in how trauma work has operated on a fine line of punishment and control on the one hand and support and care on the other. As trauma work has become commonplace among migrant groups, it is essential to ask what work, the construct of trauma is doing, for whom and with what consequences. I have argued that in its current form in Southern Africa, it has been mobilized in gendered and raced ways to justify border control mechanisms aimed at keeping women ‘safely at home’ while pathologizing their men as the individual, evil perpetrators. This eclipses the ways in which global inequality creates the conditions for trafficking and in fact reproduces these conditions through programs to return women ‘home’ in the name of compassion.

There is no doubt that meaningful responses to trafficking require a global effort. However, whether these global efforts are ones that respond to the movement of women in ways that open opportunities for safe movement remains to be seen. In

many instances, rather than doing this, they enact a familiar form of coloniality, which slides into rescue rather than opportunities. This rescue industry is rooted in the colonial imagination of an outside (Northern) expert who knows what is best for the trafficking victim and can teach, through psychoeducation, why mobility is to be avoided.

Currently, in much of the trafficking response, trauma has been mobilized to justify limiting women's movement and to locate problems of exploitation in the individual characteristics of men from the global South. The existing literature on how trauma can be mobilized for greater social justice through a recognition of the trauma associated with racism and sexism has not been a key part of trafficking interventions. And yet, given the global politicization of movement and contemporary efforts to restrict the movement of those from the global South, migration work can develop this approach to trauma to create more politically aware responses to trafficking.

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Surveillance and Gender-Based Power Dynamics: Psychological Considerations



Sarah Camille Conrey and Eileen L. Zurbriggen

The gathering of an ever-expanding amount of personal data has become a routine feature of daily life. New forms of technology such as license plate readers or StingRays that mimic cellphone towers are now commonplace and older forms of technology such as surveillance cameras are increasingly widespread and integrated across a range of settings. Surveillance has become normalized, and is incorporated into routinized approaches toward security, efficiency, optimization, communication, and even socializing. As Haggerty (2012) noted, in discussing policing, “[s]urveillance, in its various forms, is now the preferred institutional response for dealing with any number of social problems” (p. 235). Much of contemporary surveillance is not exclusively premised upon suspicion or reserved for a select few, and the extent of the data being gathered and the consequences of this data-gathering are often unclear. However, despite this expansion of surveilled populations, groups with less social power (such as women and people of color) are more often subjected to surveillance. In addition, surveillance operates differently depending on the specific context within which it is being applied.

As surveillance technologies have increased, important questions have been raised as to how they impact power structures in society. Andrejevic (2015) described surveillance as “[t]he coupling of information collection and use with power” (p. x) and argued that “information is becoming an increasingly transformative force, and power is never absent” (p. x). Just as power is never absent in information and surveillance, the same is true for gender. In viewing power as an inherent feature of information and surveillance, it is necessary to examine how gender-based power imbalances in society are impacted by the increased presence of surveillance. The

S. C. Conrey
Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey, CA, USA
e-mail: sconrey@ucsc.edu

E. L. Zurbriggen (✉)
University of California, Santa Cruz, CA, USA
e-mail: zurbrigg@ucsc.edu

power inherent in surveillance can thus perpetuate or even increase gender-based power imbalances in society, which, in turn, have important social and psychological implications.

In this chapter, we first review relevant theoretical perspectives from surveillance studies, the psychology of privacy, and the psychology of objectification. We then explore several distinct domains in which surveillance takes place, focusing specifically on situations in which gender is highly relevant. These domains include: prison and policing, public assistance benefits, pregnancy, trans bodies, domestic violence, and social media. Scholarship from surveillance studies often interrogates the role of power (at multiple levels) but rarely includes a psychological perspective. Many of the examples are from the US context, but the theoretical considerations that they illustrate have broader application. Our goal here is to integrate psychological and surveillance studies theories as we consider the role of gender and power in modern surveillance.

Theoretical Perspectives

Surveillance Studies Theories

Foucault (1975/1995) identified power as being a central feature of surveillance through his application of Bentham's Panopticon prison design to explain the effects of surveillance more broadly. The Panopticon was a prison design in which the location of a central guard tower allowed the guard to view all prisoners at any time, but the prisoners could not see the guard. This made the guard's gaze always possible, yet unverifiable. According to Foucault, this would eventually lead to an internalization of the surveillant gaze, causing prisoners to become self-disciplining and making external forms of discipline or control unnecessary. Accordingly, Foucault argued that surveillance is a tool by which few can exercise disciplinary power over many. The underlying functions and dynamics of the Panopticon were not limited to prisons, and Foucault described how this model could be applied to other settings, such as schools, hospitals, or workplaces. Since its introduction, the Panopticon model has been applied by scholars to describe various modern forms of surveillance, such as online consumer surveillance (e.g., Campbell & Carlson, 2002; Haggerty & Ericson, 2000).

Although Panoptic theory has played a prominent role in surveillance studies, some have argued that relying solely on this theory is too limited and that other theoretical frameworks are more well-suited to understanding contemporary surveillance (Haggerty, 2006; Haggerty & Ericson, 2000). One such framework is lateral surveillance (Andrejevic, 2004), which highlights the fact that surveillance is not always hierarchical, but can instead be horizontal, as when social media users search and review information about each other or when community members watch their neighbors and co-workers for signs of criminal behavior or terrorist sympathies. Another

concept is “sousveillance” (Marwick, 2012) in which the powerless turn a watchful gaze on the more powerful, as when citizens film police officers in the conduct of their duties (Mann, Nolan, & Wellman, 2003). Sousveillance can be incredibly important in reigning in the power of the state, or at least increasing the likelihood of justice for its victims. In the United States, this was seen quite powerfully in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in 2020 at the hands of the police. Active sousveillance by 17-year-old bystander Darnella Frazier did not prevent the murder, but the recording was instrumental in obtaining convictions in the subsequent criminal trials (Corley, 2021).

A broader conceptualization was developed by Haggerty and Ericson (2000) who proposed viewing contemporary surveillance practices in terms of “surveillant assemblages.” Whereas the Panopticon emphasizes the role of centralized, hierarchical power, such as that held by the prison guard over the prisoners, Haggerty and Ericson (2000) pointed to the ways in which contemporary surveillance is largely de-centralized, and not always primarily intended to be disciplinary. Due to its de-centralized nature, the surveillant assemblages approach acknowledges that there is no singular form of surveillance that has been the center of contemporary surveillance, but rather a coming together of varying forms and degrees of surveillance, collectively and in conjunction with other technological advances (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000). These assemblages can involve surveillance by the state, by corporations, by institutions such as schools or hospitals, or by individuals lateral in the hierarchy, and also can involve self-surveillance.

Although the mere act of being surveilled can have important consequences, such as the self-disciplining discussed by Foucault, the applications to which surveillance data are put can have critical implications for people’s life “choices and chances” (Lyon, 2003, p. 13). In their discussion of the surveillant assemblage model, Haggerty and Ericson (2000) described the role of “data doubles” (p. 606), by which individuals are abstracted and reduced into an analog information-based “body” or double, which can then be the basis for making determinations, such as in the distribution of resources, or serve as the target for advertising or government interventions. As Lyon (2003) argued, surveillance data can be used in ways that can create or perpetuate social divisions, which he referred to as “social sorting” (p. 13), largely due to the development of databases that can be searched remotely. In coding and indexing these databases, stereotypes and prejudices can inform categorization and have important consequences, such as by impacting what services or products are marketed to someone or which neighborhoods are policed (Lyon, 2003). According to Monahan (2009), the larger social context within which people and events are situated can be lost in the process of collecting surveillance data, yet the criteria by which data are grouped and analyzed are seen as objective and the technologies by which they are gathered as neutral. When surveillance data are then used to inform practices that affect people and contexts, they can reinforce power imbalances while also making them less visible by virtue of the distancing that occurs in this process, which Monahan (2009) referred to as “discrimination by abstraction” (p. 289).

Critically, although the surveillance of nearly everyone, in some form or another, has become commonplace, surveillance is not equally distributed. The expansion

in populations that are monitored has also been accompanied by an intensification in the surveillance of groups who have long been subjected to surveillance, such as women and people of low socioeconomic status (see Gilman, 2008; Lyon, 2003). The nature, consequences, and purpose behind varying forms of surveillance are not equal, making it necessary to examine how intensified surveillance further contributes to the marginalized status of groups in society and helps maintain power imbalances. Moreover, because individual forms of surveillance can seem neutral or innocuous, it is critical to consider the larger social context within which they operate (Dubrofsky & Magnet, 2015; Mason & Magnet, 2012). Even where it is not the primary purpose, surveillance technologies have the potential to reproduce or even worsen social inequalities, and thus they cannot be separated from the larger systems of oppression within which they are used (Dubrofsky & Magnet, 2015; Mason & Magnet, 2012).

Psychological Theories

Privacy Theories

Surveillance impacts the type and amount of privacy that an individual or community enjoys and theories of privacy can help us gauge the potential psychological impact of surveillance. Although differing in perspective and focus, all of the theories discussed here assert that privacy is deeply social in nature and that privacy is an essential human need.

Empirical analyses of privacy types and needs have supported the view of privacy as a complex and multifaceted social and psychological construct, serving different functions in response to a range of privacy-related needs at the individual, interpersonal, and societal level (Altman, 1976; Dienlin & Trepte, 2015; Pedersen, 1997; Westin, 1967). Westin (1967) acknowledged that solitude (being unobserved by others) constitutes one type of privacy but he argued that there are three additional types: intimacy (seclusion with another person or a small group), anonymity (the freedom that comes from the invisibility of being in a large group), and reserve (limiting disclosure of personal information to others). He also discussed four functions of privacy: personal autonomy (freedom from domination by others), emotional release (“down time” that provides a break from social stresses), self-evaluation (having the opportunity to reflect, introspect, and plan), and protected communication (the ability to set boundaries with others). Altman (1976) framed his theory as understanding the interaction between people and their environment. He highlighted the dynamic nature of privacy (it waxes and wanes) and the psychological distress that occurs when one’s actual level of privacy differs from one’s desired level. He also noted that while the need for some amount of privacy appears to be universal, the strategies for achieving privacy vary across cultures. Finally, Newell (1994) stressed the importance of privacy for the maintenance of our psychological systems (e.g.,

recovering from stress) as well as for their development (self-evaluation, planning, and extending and enhancing the self).

These theories of privacy highlight the social psychological nature of privacy—it is a phenomenon that requires us to understand individuals as they are positioned in larger social groups, rather than considering them in isolation from those groups. Surveillance impacts individual psychology but it also impacts social cohesion. For example, intense surveillance by the Stasi (secret police) in East Germany led to an erosion of social capital and social trust, as people were encouraged to surveil and report on their neighbors, friends, and family members. Even years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, the effects of this erosion of social trust were seen. People living in former East German districts with a higher density of Stasi informants were less likely to vote, participate in a community sports organization, and donate their organs after death (Jacob & Tyrell, 2010).

Objectification Theory

One of the most important theories in feminist psychology is objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), which was developed specifically to theorize the impact of the male gaze (i.e., surveillance) which is directed toward women in patriarchy. The theory proposes that ubiquitous exposure to being watched and evaluated by men causes women to internalize this surveillance mindset, and begin to view their bodies from the perspective of an observer, rather than focusing on the functionality, strength, health, and agency of their bodies. In other words, they experience self-objectification: focusing on how they look rather than what they can do.

The theory is gendered not in the sense of proposing innate differences in psychological processes for men versus women. Rather, the authors argued that anyone who is extensively surveilled, and socialized as to the importance of their outward appearance, would begin to internalize this self-objectifying perspective. Under patriarchy, however, women receive vastly more such socialization and vastly more exposure to a surveillant gaze. Thus, women more than men are predicted to self-objectify. Although a discussion of this theory is absent from the surveillance studies literature, it is highly relevant. Using the surveillance terminology discussed above, self-objectification is self-surveillance that develops as a result of lateral surveillance (surveillance by peers), surveillance by individuals with greater social power (e.g., adult men, work supervisors), and broader societal messaging.

Self-objectification has been found to have many psychological consequences (Ward et al., 2023), including depression (Jones & Griffiths, 2015), anxiety (Kahalon et al., 2018), and lower levels of life satisfaction (Mercurio & Landry, 2008). It is also linked with impaired cognitive performance on a variety of tasks including spatial perception and quantitative reasoning (Winn & Cornelius, 2020), perhaps because self-surveillance consumes attentional resources (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) or activates stereotypes (Kahalon et al., 2018). Other documented effects of self-objectification include loneliness (Teng et al., 2019), anxiety about personal safety (Calogero et al., 2021), having a restricted sense of freedom of movement

(Calogero et al., 2021), and experiencing less vitality and sense of “flow” (i.e., a state of pleasurable and energized absorption in a physical or mental activity; Breines et al., 2008).

Considerations of Gender and Power

Surveillance technologies can be applied or experienced in ways that reflect and reinforce gender-based power dynamics. A person’s subjective experience of being surveilled will likely be informed by their location within gender-based power dynamics, as well as by other relevant factors that involve power, such as race and socioeconomic status. These identity-based power dynamics can also impact the behaviors of those conducting or managing surveillance. For example, Koskela (2012) noted how women’s experiences of being the target of a sexualized gaze likely informs how they experience being the targets of video surveillance, and how camera operators can utilize surveillance as a tool for voyeurism and harassment. Surveillance technologies designed for one purpose can be put to unanticipated uses that perpetuate systems of inequality and oppression, such as when tools developed for communication or consumer tracking and advertising are co-opted in instances of domestic violence or stalking (Mason & Magnet, 2012), or when security systems such as closed-circuit television (CCTV) are used for voyeurism (Norris & Armstrong, 1999). However, such problematic uses of surveillance technologies may be viewed as individual problems, rather than as predictable or logical extensions of their uses that reflect larger societal issues (Monahan, 2009).

Collectively, the gender-specific concerns surrounding surveillance discussed in this chapter are intended to illustrate the ways in which the experience and impact of surveillance can be shaped by gender-based power dynamics, as well as power differentials relating to race, socioeconomic status, and other identities or characteristics. While surveillance is often discussed in general terms, in both public and academic discourses, bringing more specificity is essential in order to highlight the ways in which power and social context bring unique meanings to the experience and consequences of different forms of surveillance. Overly general discussions of surveillance run the risk of being limited to those concerns that affect dominant groups, such as in Gilman’s (2012) observation that for many middle-class Americans the dangers associated with surveillance that come to mind are a “vague sense of unease” (p. 1394), and may neglect to consider the very real risks discussed in this chapter that may be specific to a person’s gender, race, or economic status. In the sections that follow, we provide more specificity, in discussing a variety of domains in which state, corporate, lateral, and/or self-surveillance impact people in ways that depend on gender as well as other identities and social positions.

Prison, Policing, and Security Surveillance

Surveillance has long been a facet of policing, prisons, and security, and, as with other forms of surveillance, aspects of it have become more prominent in recent decades (see Haggerty, 2012). Although police have historically relied on various forms of surveillance, such as undercover policing and informants, there has been an increasing expansion of technology-aided forms of surveillance, and a greater focus on predicting crime through data analytics (Brayne, 2017; Haggerty, 2012). In seeking to identify those who seem likely to commit a crime, there is a risk of reliance on stereotypes informed by larger societal prejudices and divisions, particularly those based on factors such as gender, race, and class (Haggerty, 2012; Norris & Armstrong, 1999). Thus, by focusing greater attention on people who are members of groups that have historically been associated with crime, there is the danger of reifying social inequalities.

For example, Norris and Armstrong's (1999) study of a British CCTV operation found that men were overwhelmingly targeted by camera operators for closer surveillance, making up over 90% of those surveilled. In addition to men, teenagers, people in their twenties, and Black people were disproportionately targeted. Notably, a sizable portion of targets for surveillance were selected in the absence of a clear or identifiable reason and nearly one-third were "surveilled merely on the basis of belonging to a particular social or subcultural group" (Norris & Armstrong, 1999, p. 163). Men, teenagers, and Black people were all much more likely to be targeted without a clear reason, compared to women, people over 30, and White people. Women were rarely surveilled under a "protective gaze" (Norris & Armstrong, 1999, p. 172). For women, more common than protective surveillance was what was referred to as surveillance initiated for voyeuristic reasons.

Indeed, while increased safety and security for women has been touted as one of the potential benefits of CCTV surveillance, Koskela (2002) has pointed out that video surveillance is unable to capture nuance and facilitate the interpretation of situations where gender-based harassment is occurring, such as verbal harassment or threats, whereas it is easily able to identify other, arguably less serious, offenses like smoking in a prohibited area. Certain types of offenses, such as property crimes, may also lend themselves more to gaining benefits from after-the-fact responses from law enforcement based on surveillance footage, whereas a violent crime like sexual assault has such a serious impact on the victim that prevention is of especially great value, compared to (later) detection and apprehension (Koskela, 2012). However, because of the voyeuristic capabilities of surveillance cameras, they can be used as an "active instrument for harassment" (Koskela, 2002, p. 265). As such, Koskela (2002) argued that surveillance can function as another mechanism for objectification and harassment, and in doing so contribute to gender-based power imbalances.

Certain forms of surveillance can also represent unique psychological stressors for men. Like CCTV, stop and frisk policing tends to target men at greater levels than women, particularly men of color (Geller et al., 2014; Norris & Armstrong, 1999; Sewell et al., 2016). For example, research on stop and frisk practices in New York

City indicated that these stops tend to have a fairly high rate of frisking, sometimes involving use of force, despite yielding a low arrest rate (Sewell et al., 2016). Those who were stopped had to cope with not only the experience of a stop and frisk, but also the stress of anticipating a future stop. Men, but not women, in neighborhoods with high frisk rates were more likely to report feeling nervous and worthless and were more likely to experience severe psychological distress. Sewell et al. (2016) hypothesized that one possible explanation for these gender differences could be that women living in neighborhoods with a high police presence had a greater sense of safety. Although (cis) women are less likely than men to be subjected to frisking under these policies, they (along with trans people) are more likely to face what Billies (2015) refers to as *sexual and gender surveillance threat*. This can include sexist or transphobic insults, sexualizing comments about the surveilled person's body, comments about the police officers' own sexual arousal, and inappropriate touching or groping.

In addition to police and security surveillance, surveillance within prisons raises further gendered concerns. Surveillance practices within prisons and jails, such as body searches, supervision while showering or bathing, and the general lack of privacy inherent in correctional institutions, can be especially distressing for the large share of incarcerated women who have experienced past sexual, intimate partner, or caregiver violence (Swavola et al., 2016). Cross-gender body searches, where the prisoner and guard are of different genders, present a unique set of issues, particularly for women and people who are transgender. Female prisoners have been particularly vulnerable to instances of sexual assault during cross-gender body searches (Miller, 2000). Cross-gender body searches may also violate the religious beliefs of certain female prisoners whose religions prohibit cross-gender physical contact with men outside of their immediate families (Gallagher, 2011). Transgender prisoners are vulnerable to abuse or inappropriate conduct during pat-downs and body searches and during classification for gender-based prison assignment (Routh et al., 2017; Stohr, 2015). These searches can also represent a barrier to seeking medical care for transgender prisoners in protective custody, who may be subjected to physical searches when entering and leaving custody to see medical personnel (Routh et al., 2017).

Public Benefits Recipients

According to Gilman (2012), surveillance poses concerns for all Americans, but surveillance and privacy intrusions are qualitatively different for people who are low-income. For example, whereas white-collar workers may have their emails monitored by their employers, lower-wage workers are more likely to undergo intrusive and potentially embarrassing screenings, such as drug testing and video monitoring (Gilman, 2012). Furthermore, the potential impact of these intrusions differs greatly. Whereas high-income Americans might feel uneasy about the privacy violation and worried about the potential for identity theft, low-income Americans often face forms

of surveillance that have more definite and severe consequences, such as loss of their public benefits (Gilman, 2012). These class divisions in the nature and consequences of surveillance must also be viewed in light of the fact that poverty is intimately associated with race and gender and tends to disproportionately affect women and people of color (Gilman, 2012).

These class-based differences in the experience of surveillance are particularly stark when it comes to recipients of public assistance and other public benefits. The majority of adult TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients in the United States are women and people of color (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). Public assistance recipients have historically been subjected to heightened surveillance, even though recipients of other types of benefits involving significant government subsidies (e.g., tax credits for mortgages or childcare) are not (Gilman, 2008). Moreover, levels of public assistance fraud are low and comparable to those in other government programs (Gilman, 2008; see also, Geiger, 2023). The high level of monitoring that public assistance recipients face, then, is likely due to assumptions about public assistance recipients being less trustworthy or deserving (Gilman, 2008; Kohler-Hausmann, 2015).

Gilman (2008) outlined several categories of privacy that public assistance recipients in the United States are deprived of as part of the benefits application and receipt process (public assistance recipients in other countries are also heavily surveilled; e.g., Geiger, 2023). Recipients experience decreased informational privacy, as their personal data are gathered extensively in interviews, application, and in the process of verification and fraud prevention and detection (Gilman, 2008). There is also decreased physical privacy, through fingerprinting and photographing, paternity testing of children if paternity is contested, and invasive home investigations (Gilman, 2008). Additionally, some may be drug tested during their application or receipt process (see Kohler-Hausmann, 2015; McCarty et al., 2016). Fraud tip lines, which have historically not been very effective at detecting fraud, have encouraged community surveillance of recipients, arguably further decreasing their physical privacy (see Kohler-Hausmann, 2007, 2015). Finally, recipients are deprived of decisional privacy, such as through policies like family caps, which disincentivize having children while receiving benefits, or programs that give bonuses to mothers who consent to long-term birth control implants (Gilman, 2008, 2012).

The surveillance of public benefits recipients is not limited to cash assistance programs. Bridges (2011) described the intimate personal details required to be divulged as part of the process of applying for a New York State Medicaid program that provided subsidized prenatal care, ranging from nutritional habits to a “psychosocial assessment” that included questions about applicants’ exposure to domestic violence, plans for future pregnancies, and other potential “risk factors” (p. 129). Applicants were also required to meet with a Medicaid financial officer to demonstrate financial eligibility, which according to Bridges (2011) routinely put women

in the position of having to reveal past illegal means for supporting themselves financially, as well as disclose their immigration statuses as part of providing identification documentation. Moreover, once enrolled in the program, patients were repeatedly counseled regarding their post-birth contraception plans, which Bridges (2011) argued implied that the patient's current pregnancy should have been prevented.

This prenatal care program's enrollment process also enabled continued state surveillance and oversight by virtue of providing the state with information that could potentially trigger involvement with child protective services (Bridges, 2011). The extensive and invasive application process of the New York prenatal care program described above is not an outlier; Medicaid-funded programs offering prenatal care in several other US states require similar disclosures (Bridges, 2011). Programs such as these serve to severely diminish the privacy rights of the poor women who participate in them, and whose participants essentially have no choice but to accept this invasive process as a condition of receiving the prenatal care that they need. As a result, poor women and families are deprived of privacy rights that wealthier women who have access to private prenatal care can continue to enjoy.

Several European countries have incorporated algorithm-based methods of identifying which government benefits recipients to investigate for potential fraud (Geiger, 2023). While automated approaches might initially seem to offer more objectivity than human determinations, digital fraud detection algorithms have been criticized for perpetuating discriminatory patterns and furthering widespread surveillance (Geiger, 2023). As with predictive policing and recidivism risk prediction algorithms used in the criminal legal system, fraud detection programs can contain biases (Amnesty International, 2021; Byfield, 2019; Dressel & Farid, 2018). The lack of transparency in how algorithms are designed and developed through machine-learning can present challenges for oversight and critique (Amnesty International, 2021).

In 2018 it was revealed that an algorithm-based system used in the Netherlands for identifying childcare benefits fraud incorrectly flagged tens of thousands of parents and caregivers, which resulted in significant negative financial and personal consequences for many of the families (Amnesty International, 2021). Non-Dutch citizenship was assigned a higher risk score by the program, and the families accused of fraud were disproportionately from immigrant and low-income backgrounds (Amnesty International, 2021). A recent analysis of a machine learning algorithm used in Rotterdam to identify government services fraud indicated that being categorized as female resulted in a higher likelihood of being flagged for investigation, especially when combined with other factors that were associated with higher risk scores, such as having children, experiencing financial difficulties, and not speaking Dutch (Braun et al., 2023).

Together, the surveillance of public benefits recipients, who are often women, reflects a distrust in recipients' trustworthiness, morality, and ability to make sound decisions about their personal lives (Bridges, 2011; Gilman, 2012). As a condition of receiving benefits which are necessary to meet their basic needs, recipients are subjected to an ongoing monitoring of intimate aspects of their personal lives, which decreases their individual autonomy (Gilman, 2012).

Pregnancy

The surveillance of pregnant bodies reflects the intersection of several social dynamics and forces, including the increase in overall surveillance, the increase in medical and bodily surveillance, the reliance on surveillance as a mechanism of discipline and control, and the highly gendered nature of pregnancy and accompanying gender and maternal role expectations (Conrad, 1992; Cummins, 2014). Compared to many other bodily states or health statuses, pregnancy is already considerably more visible. As Lupton (2012) argued, pregnant women have come to be seen as being on public display for monitoring, criticism, and commentary in ways that would otherwise not be acceptable responses to an adult's body and behavior. Although pregnancy has for some time been accompanied by public attention, scrutiny, and monitoring, as various forms of surveillance have grown so too have these dynamics been intensified (Thomas & Lupton, 2016). Larger societal expectations about selflessness, appearance, and caretaking, which are part of traditional female and maternal roles, may be amplified through these surveillance processes (Thomas & Lupton, 2016).

First, soon after pregnancy occurs, one's body becomes the target of medical scrutiny, monitoring compliance with medical recommendations and searching for signs of problems or abnormality (Conrad, 1992; Lupton, 2012). While many pregnant women may voluntarily seek out or comply with such monitoring as part of their prenatal care, they are sometimes surveilled and disciplined in ways that serve to deny agency and power. One area where this has been particularly problematic is in prenatal illegal drug and alcohol testing and the criminal prosecution that sometimes accompanies being identified as having consumed illegal drugs while pregnant. Public attention to and concern over illegal drug use during pregnancy increased as part of the War on Drugs, and this focus has tended to fall disproportionately on women of color, low-income women, and those who rely on public health services (Bullock & Singh, this volume; Flavin & Paltrow, 2010; Paltrow & Flavin, 2013; Stone, 2015). Flavin and Paltrow (2010) recounted various instances of criminal prosecution of women for using illegal drugs during pregnancy, including incarceration during pregnancy to prevent the mother from continuing to use, and prosecution of mothers whose pregnancy losses were alleged to have been caused by illegal drug use, even despite a lack of medical research definitively confirming such an association. The threat of criminal prosecution or child protective services involvement can pose serious concerns for those struggling with substance use during pregnancy, and even deter some from seeking prenatal health care (Stone, 2015). One study of pregnant women who had used alcohol or illegal drugs while pregnant found that a substantial number of participants interviewed reported having avoided medical care for fear of detection, such as by scheduling appointments for days when tests would likely be negative, missing appointments, or even completely avoiding prenatal care (Stone, 2015).

In summer 2022, the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturned women's constitutional right to abortion, established by the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, enabling individual US states to pass significant

restrictions or effective bans on abortion (Kleinman, 2022). Privacy advocates raised immediate concerns over the large amount of data that consumer technology gathers which could potentially be used by law enforcement to prosecute people seeking abortions: location data could reveal travel to access abortion, internet browser search histories could track searches to buy abortion pills online, text messages could contain conversations related to abortion access, and period-tracking apps contain information that could indicate whether someone was pregnant and if their pregnancy was beyond the state gestational age limits for abortion (Fowler & Hunter, 2022; Ortutay, 2022). These concerns were not merely speculative; in 2017, prior to the *Dobbs* decision, Latice Fisher, a Black woman in Mississippi, was charged with second-degree murder after she experienced a stillbirth and investigators searched her phone and found online searches related to medications that can be used to induce abortion (Ortutay, 2022; Tolentino, 2022).

The surveillance and criminalization of abortion and pregnancy reflects the overlap between larger systems of race- and class-based oppression and marginalization in health care and the criminal legal system. Women of color and poor women, those likely to be most negatively affected by restrictions on abortion access following *Dobbs*, were already disproportionately impacted by laws and practices that surveilled and criminalized aspects of pregnancy, like monitoring for substance use during pregnancy, and face worse health outcomes during pregnancy and higher rates of maternal and infant mortality compared to White women (Goodwin, 2017; Jang & Lee, 2022; Petersen et al., 2019; Simon et al., 2020). Even for people who are not ultimately prosecuted, concerns that law enforcement might access private location, health, and communication data in prosecutions related to abortion and pregnancy could have a Panoptic effect and deter access to reproductive health-related information, communication, and care, widening existing gaps in reproductive health.

Pregnancy also represents a particularly lucrative opportunity for advertisers, who utilize online tracking to generate targeted advertisements (Vertesi, 2014). While online tracking may be adept at detecting pregnancy, it can also fail to detect pregnancy *loss* and add to the pain already experienced by grieving parents when they continue to receive pregnancy-related targeted advertisements (Brockell, 2018). Efforts to avoid this sort of online tracking may result in considerable consumer burdens, and successful avoidance may be limited. Sociologist Janet Vertesi (2014) detailed her efforts to hide her pregnancy from online tracking, which included barring friends and family from posting any content related to her pregnancy, using an anonymized browser for online searches related to pregnancy, and making all of her purchases in cash or online with gift cards purchased in cash. The lengths that Vertesi went to, and the limits on her ability to keep her information private, speak to the lack of meaningful options available to consumers to guard their personal data.

Finally, there has also been an increase in apps that encourage self-monitoring during pregnancy (Thomas & Lupton, 2016). One study of the pregnancy app market indicated that across the different sub-categories of pregnancy apps that were identified, some apps tended to convey pregnancy as a time of risk that needs to be monitored and controlled, whereas in others it was framed as fun and entertaining (Thomas & Lupton, 2016). The risk-oriented apps tended to encourage

self-monitoring in the form of tracking various bodily metrics and symptoms, and alerted users to potential dangers. The few available pregnancy apps targeted toward expecting fathers suggested that fathers were likely to be uninformed and disinterested in pregnancy, whereas those aimed at pregnant women assumed a higher level of expertise and responsibility. Furthermore, the pregnancy apps reviewed largely perpetuated a lack of diversity in terms of gender and family structure and tended to presume that the person using the app is a pregnant woman who has a male partner and that the two of them are the child's biological parents (Thomas & Lupton, 2016). Thus, while encouraging self-monitoring, pregnancy apps can also perpetuate the view of pregnancy as public and necessitating surveillance, in addition to normative views about gendered dynamics surrounding pregnancy and parenthood (Thomas & Lupton, 2016).

Trans and Gender-Nonconforming Bodies

Privacy has been described as enabling individuals to have control and autonomy over when, what, and with whom they share information, thus serving to maintain personal and social boundaries (see Altman, 1976). In certain contexts, surveillance can deprive individuals of autonomy and agency over who has access to their personal information. This poses particular concerns for transgender people, who may have their gender identity revealed by surveillance technologies in unwanted times or places, potentially putting them at risk for harassment. For example, full-body scanners in airports have the potential to expose a person's transgender status, which may carry the risk of being singled out for further scrutiny or harassment (Currah & Mulqueen, 2011; Magnet & Rodgers, 2012). While such scanners are not utilized for the primary purpose of identifying a person's genitalia, the fact that they can have this effect poses hurdles for travel for some transgender people (Currah & Mulqueen, 2011). This example illustrates Monahan's (2009) observation that many technologies are not developed with consideration for all bodies, and that they tend to be biased in favor of young, White, able-bodied, and male bodies.

In addition to heightening opportunities for exposure and decreasing privacy, the use of surveillance data relies heavily on categorization and prediction, which poses problems when such systems encounter bodies and identities that do not fall neatly into established groupings (Conrad, 2009). Data histories for people who are transgender will often contain inconsistencies (Conrad, 2009). This can be particularly problematic given that reclassification criteria for a person's gender on their identification documents may vary across different government agencies (Currah & Mulqueen, 2011). Additionally, a person's gender presentation may differ from their gender classification on certain documents, which risks causing them to be subjected to greater scrutiny, difficulty, or harassment, such as when passing through pre-flight security screenings (Currah & Mulqueen, 2011).

Bodily surveillance practices can also further an emphasis on binary sex and gender classifications. For decades, female athletes have been subjected to testing by

the International Olympic Association and other sports governing bodies to assess whether athletes competing in the women's division met the committee's physical criteria, which over time have shifted from visual and gynecological exams to chromosome-based testing, and now measuring testosterone levels (Elsas et al., 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2020). These practices have been criticized as invasive, lacking in medical basis, humiliating, racially discriminatory, and for requiring that athletes outside of the criteria undergo medically unnecessary interventions to compete (Elsas et al., 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2020). Since 2020, over a dozen US states have passed legislation restricting transgender athletes from participating in girls' and women's school sports, furthering the bodily surveillance of girls' and women's athletics (Hanna, 2023).

Domestic Violence

Intimate partner violence is a highly gendered experience: women experience higher rates than men of severe physical intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual violence, and of being killed by an intimate partner (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV], n.d.). Victims of intimate partner abuse are at a greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, experiencing depression and suicidality, and can also risk losing their jobs for reasons related to their abuse (NCADV, n.d.). Race, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, immigration status, and other factors can impact the nature and experiences of abuse, and someone's ability to access resources and support to escape violence (VAWnet, n.d.).

Power and control have long been identified as integral components of intimate partner violence (Brewster, 2003). Surveillance can function as a mechanism for gaining power and control over victims in intimate partner violence and stalking (Southworth & Tucker, 2007). The advent and increased availability of surveillance technologies have offered more opportunities for intimate partner surveillance (Mason & Magnet, 2012; Southworth & Tucker, 2007). In addition to creating obvious safety risks for victims, such as by enabling current or former partners to know their location, technology-aided surveillance and stalking can "create a sense of [the abuser's] omnipresence" (Woodlock, 2017, p. 592), as well as cause victims to feel isolated, humiliated, and punished, such as when a victim is filmed while in her bedroom or bathroom and then the recording is posted, or threatened to be posted, online, or when intimate photographs taken during the relationship are posted to social media (Woodlock, 2017).

A victim's computer and internet activity can be monitored from afar using spyware software, which can be difficult to detect and remove, or keystroke loggers, which capture all keys typed on a computer and can reveal a victim's computer activity, including passwords (Mason & Magnet, 2012; Southworth & Tucker, 2007). Location can be tracked using low-cost GPS devices, and cameras or webcams can be hidden in a victim's home (Southworth & Tucker, 2007). As Mason and Magnet (2012) have argued, surveillance technologies exist within a larger social context

which includes social and power imbalances, irrespective of their underlying purpose. Thus, they argue that it is to be anticipated that technologies which emerge for one purpose, such as spyware programs developed to monitor consumers, can be co-opted for uses that reflect and further the existing cultural context of violence against women (Mason & Magnet, 2012).

In addition to hidden surveillance technologies, social media can enable the monitoring of a victim's location, activities, and social contacts (Mason & Magnet, 2012; Woodlock, 2017). While victims can remove themselves from social media and change their mobile phone number to avoid harassment, such protections can be limited, such as if a victim continues to be tagged in a photograph posted to social media by a friend or her family and friends are being tracked (Woodlock, 2017). Opting out of these technologies can also contribute to victims' social isolation, which is one of the goals of the abuser (Woodlock, 2017).

The increasingly commonplace nature of certain forms of surveillance may carry the risk of blurring boundaries between normal and dangerous interpersonal behavior, particularly as some amount of surveillance becomes increasingly normalized in dating and romantic relationships (Burke et al., 2011; Levy, 2015). For example, a couple may use a location sharing app to allow monitoring of one another's whereabouts or regularly review one another's social media profiles and interactions and view this as consensual surveillance. One study with college students found that half reported either experiencing or engaging in monitoring or harassing behaviors such as checking a partner's call records or emails or sending excessive text messages or calls (Burke et al., 2011).

Surveillance by entities other than a current or former intimate partner can also facilitate the ongoing stalking and abuse of victims. Websites that track public records and consumer databases can, for free or for a fee, provide a victim's contact information, such as telephones and addresses, which can further facilitate ongoing abuse of victims (Levy, 2015; Southworth & Tucker, 2007). Court records that are publicly available online can provide information about victims who have sought protective orders (Southworth & Tucker, 2007). Such online records enable former intimate partners to quickly and easily find a victim's personal information with a simple online search. Accordingly, Southworth and Tucker (2007) argued that while online posting of public court and records filings may offer some public utility, they can also create further barriers to victims seeking to flee violence.

Social Media and Self-Surveillance

Technologies such as social media can further a focus on self-image and appearance in ways that contribute to greater levels of objectification and self-surveillance. Social media differ from other forms of media in that they are predominantly user-generated, thus providing an opportunity for exposure to potentially objectifying content while also creating the possibility for generating one's own content, which can then be compared to that of others and receive feedback from peers.

Merely viewing media that objectifies women has been shown to increase women's self-objectification (Karsay et al., 2018), and the act of portraying oneself online (e.g., posting "selfies") has also been associated with greater self-objectification (de Vries & Peter, 2013; Salomon & Brown, 2021; Vendemia & DeAndrea, 2021). Images posted to social media are often monitored by peers and evaluated and validated in a quantified manner via metrics such as "likes," which can contribute to self-surveillance (Butkowski et al., 2019). One study found that participants with greater investment in "likes" and positive comments on their Instagram selfies were more likely to engage in body surveillance, which was associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction (Butkowski et al., 2019). Similarly, a separate study found associations between how often participants posted self-objectifying images to their Instagram accounts and their levels of trait self-objectification, as well as the degree to which their self-objectifying posts received more positive feedback compared to non-self-objectifying posts (Bell et al., 2018). These studies reflect a bi-directional relationship between various forms of surveillance, given the relationship between receiving a form of external surveillance, via peer's monitoring and "liking" of images, and self-surveillance (see also Rousseau et al., 2017).

Certain types of beauty apps may also contribute to greater self-monitoring, focus on appearance, and efforts to align oneself with cultural standards (Elias & Gill, 2018). Selfie-modification apps can enable users to make their self-photographs more in line with normative beauty standards, such as by making themselves appear thinner, whitening teeth, and concealing blemishes (Elias & Gill, 2018). Other apps can offer suggestions for beauty routines and products to help users look more "photo ready," or analyze a user's facial symmetry (Elias & Gill, 2018). According to Elias and Gill (2018), such apps are part of a shift toward self-monitoring and tracking, and exist within a broader context of increased gendered appearance surveillance.

Conclusion

Our goal in this chapter was to examine the multifaceted phenomenon of surveillance using theoretical lenses from psychology, feminist studies, and surveillance studies. Through an analysis of particularized surveillance examples, we sought to highlight the ways in which surveillance is gendered, and the ways in which it has a differential profile and impact for people of different genders (and other identity categories). Below, we sketch some considerations for research, theory, and practice in feminist psychology and surveillance studies.

Foucault (1975/1995) described the Panopticon as engendering a sense of constant visibility which enables power to operate. Importantly, the power that surveillance exercises, regardless of whether that is the primary intention of the surveillance, occurs in interaction with existing power dynamics in society. As illustrated by the examples in this chapter, modern surveillance technologies can be used in ways that reinforce, and in some cases amplify, gender-based power differentials. In some instances, such as in the case of the surveillance of public benefits recipients or

in domestic violence contexts, the exercise of power is deliberate. However, even in instances where power and control may not be the primary intention, such as with full-body airport scanners, the negative impacts both reflect and reify power dynamics, and are indicative of the power held by those who design and implement such systems, and the relative powerlessness of those whose needs or considerations are ignored in that process.

While our “data doubles” (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000) may contain unsettlingly detailed accounts of our habits and movements, the uses to which they are put may have the tendency to highlight only certain aspects of our lives and selves and flatten others in ways that reinforce gendered dynamics. For example, when a pregnant woman’s data is gathered online and used to heavily market pregnancy- and baby-related products, this singular, highly gendered aspect of her identity is made most salient. On social media sites, users’ online profiles can create image-centric presentations of their lives that highlight their physical appearances and form the basis for peer monitoring and feedback. The complexity of personhood and identity that people are often deprived of on the basis of their gender can be amplified by virtue of the reductionistic nature of data and the uses to which those data are put.

In addition to having the potential to heighten gendered power dynamics in society, surveillance may also do so with respect to institutions that exercise power over different groups in society. Surveillance can expand the criminal justice system’s ability to monitor groups believed to be suspect and even extend their reach into medical settings and increase the capabilities of public benefits administration agencies to track recipients’ activities. When combined with more overtly disciplinary mechanisms, such as criminal prosecution, such surveillance can generate an exponentially greater degree of power and control over certain groups.

Objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) has not been taken up by surveillance studies scholars, but it is, at its core, a theory about the effects of surveillance and it directly pinpoints the same mechanism as Foucault did when discussing the Panopticon. That is, the effect of ubiquitous surveillance, whether from an unseen prison guard or from the omnipresent and sexualizing male gaze, is identical. It causes the object of surveillance to internalize the perspective of the surveillant, and to monitor, control, and police their own behavior. Objectification theory described the many harms that were predicted to be engendered by this process, and these predictions have been amply supported in hundreds of studies conducted over more than 25 years (Ward et al., 2023). Many of these psychological pathways are doubtless also applicable in other domains in which surveillance occurs, including those we discussed earlier (such as policing, the provision of medical care during pregnancy, and the administration of public benefits), but also in domains such as workplace monitoring and tone-policing in online or in-person communications. We believe that scholarship in surveillance studies would be enriched by a consideration of the deep impact that surveillance has on individuals’ psychological states and the interpersonal dynamics of social groups.

While the various forms of gendered surveillance discussed in this chapter are analyzed in isolation, it is critical to keep in mind how these forms of surveillance may be layered and interact (see Haggerty & Ericson, 2000). A person may experience

several of these forms of surveillance, as well as others not discussed here, resulting in an even greater degree of gender-based power and control. While the interaction of various forms of surveillance poses methodological challenges in terms of examining the net effects on both individuals and society, it nevertheless represents a compelling area for future research.

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Toward an Intersectional Understanding of Gender, Power, and Poverty



Heather E. Bullock and Melina R. Singh

I am the woman you don't see when you walk down the street sipping your Starbucks coffee.

I am the woman you don't see standing in line at the local food pantry.

I am the woman who remains invisible in spaces and at events like the Women's March.

But I am here.

You *must* see me.

You *must* acknowledge me.

You *must* include me.

—Sutton (2017, para. 5–7)

This impactful message, delivered at the U.S. Women's March by Angela Sutton (2017), a low-income African American single mother, highlights poverty's intersections with power, gender, race, social class, and marital and parental status, underscoring the need for greater attention to women's experiences of poverty as well as greater inclusion of low-income women in feminist movements. Yet the 'feminization of poverty' is far from a new phenomenon (Pearce, 1978). Internationally and in the United States, women are overrepresented among people experiencing poverty (Cremer et al., 2022; UN Women, 2022). Globally, it is estimated that 383 million girls and women compared to 368 million boys and men lived in extreme poverty, or less than U.S. \$1.90 per day, by the end of 2022 (UN Women, 2022). In the United States, women have higher rates of poverty than men, with 11.7% of women and 9.2% of men experiencing poverty in 2021 (Sun, 2023).

Higher poverty rates are consistently documented among women with limited societal power. For example, women of color and single mothers are especially likely to live below official poverty thresholds. In the United States, a staggering

H. E. Bullock (✉) · M. R. Singh
Department of Psychology, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA, USA
e-mail: hbullock@ucsc.edu

M. R. Singh
e-mail: mrsingh@ucsc.edu

42.6% of Native American, 37.4% of Black, 35.9% of Latinx, 19.7% of Asian, and 25% of White, non-Hispanic families headed by single U.S. mothers lived below official poverty thresholds in 2021 (Sun, 2023). During this same time period, just 15.5% of families headed by single fathers and 5.4% of heterosexual married families with children experienced poverty (Sun, 2023). Similar patterns are documented internationally, with households headed by single mothers consistently among those most likely to fall below 50% of the median income (UN Women, 2018).

Feminist and critical scholars draw attention to women's overrepresentation among people experiencing poverty, the impact of racism, sexism, and classism in deepening economic hardship, the effects of stereotypes on safety net programs (e.g., cash aid, food assistance, public housing programs), and lived experiences of poverty (Bullock, 2013; Kornbluh & Mink, 2018). Central to feminist analyses is the understanding that "the problems of poverty and inequality are inextricably bound to power-laden economic and political structures" and that these systems, in turn, "determine the allocation of resources and opportunities, who gets what and how much" (Royce, 2019, p. 3). Yet, as Angela Sutton's remarks make clear, women's economic hardship and the experiences of poor and working-class women are often neglected in mainstream scholarship even within feminist movements.

Focusing on power foregrounds structural and relational drivers of poverty, notably gendered inequalities in family and household responsibilities, intimate partner violence (IPV), limited reproductive and legal rights, male control over access to resources and institutions (e.g., education, land, politics), weak safety net programs, unpaid caregiving labor, and women's segregation into low-paid, low-status jobs (Bullock, 2013; UN Women, 2018, 2022). This systemic focus contrasts sharply with individualistic conceptualizations of poverty that emphasize personal responsibility for economic hardship (e.g., lack of motivation, poor money management skills; Bullock & Reppond, 2018; Eppard et al., 2020).

In this chapter, we apply a gendered, feminist lens to the role of power in shaping women's vulnerabilities to and experiences of poverty. In doing so, we consider how societal power structures and processes function to disempower and deepen poor and working-class women's marginalization. To illustrate these relationships, we examine the criminalization of poor women in both the criminal justice and welfare systems, attending closely to intersections of gender, race, and social class. We center our analysis on gender and poverty in the United States, drawing comparisons across countries when possible. To ground our analysis, we begin with an overview of psychological perspectives on poverty.

Psychological Perspectives on Poverty

Contemporary psychology, for the most part, has rejected deficit models that attribute economic hardship to the shortcomings of poor people themselves. Nevertheless, subtle and covert classist biases persist in mainstream psychological approaches,

theories, and methodologies. Overreliance on WEIRD (Western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic) samples means that much of psychological science is based on U.S. White, middle class, college educated samples whose experiences are treated as normative. This bias is illustrated by Rad et al.'s (2018) analysis of three 2017 issues of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS). Over 70% of samples were from North America, Europe, and Australia and although information about gender was reported in 83% of the studies examined, social class was largely absent. Over 91% of studies reviewed did not provide any information about participants' SES, and approximately 60% lacked information about employment and education (Rad et al., 2018). However, inclusion does not guarantee meaningful participation. Non-participatory research methods that are common in psychology may foster distrust and suspicion, encouraging low-income women to limit what they share or keep silent (Dodson & Schmalzbauer, 2005).

Power relations that create and reproduce class disparities remain under-interrogated. For example, relatively little psychological research examines how gendered and classed inequalities (e.g., power dynamics between male landlords and female tenants) are recreated via everyday interactions. Illustrating the power of and need for such analyses, Streib (2011) analyzed the reproduction of class privilege and disadvantage among preschoolers, documenting how interactions between students and teachers reinforced class status. Middle-class children entered preschool speaking up, interrupting, arguing, and requesting teachers' assistance more frequently than their working-class counterparts (Streib, 2011). These class-based behaviors were reinforced by teachers who effectively silenced working-class students, contributing to fewer opportunities to develop language and classroom skills (Streib, 2011). Understanding the interplay of interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional behaviors and practices is crucial to understanding how class status is reinscribed not only among children, but across the lifespan.

Perhaps our most fundamental concern is that as a discipline, psychology continues to reflect broader societal values that problematize poverty and single motherhood but less often scrutinizes greed, hoarding of wealth, neoliberalism, or racialized capitalism. As a result, psychological research continues to dedicate far more attention to poverty than to problematizing wealth or economic inequality. Although a growing body of psychological research documents negative characteristics (e.g., entitlement, narcissism, greed) and unethical behaviors (e.g., taking resources from lower status groups) associated with class privilege, much remains to be known about intersections of class advantage with gender and race (Piff et al., 2018). As we critically interrogate these complex relationships, it is important that entitlement and greed are treated as societally grounded rather than reduced to the personality characteristics of a few "bad apples."

Social Class and Gender: What's Power Got to Do with It?

When poor women's experiences are decontextualized and studied in isolation rather than as part of a broader system of institutions, status hierarchies, and interactions, the relational dynamics of power are erased. Put simply, class inequalities cannot be understood without considering poverty's relationship to wealth, nor can gender and racial inequalities be understood without examining women's relationship to men and diversity across ethnic and racial groups. These relationships are foregrounded in Prilleltensky's (2003) conceptualization of class status as embodying the "power to fulfill basic needs, to restrict access to basic needs, and to resist forces of destitution" (p. 21). Feldman (2019) further explains:

Relational poverty analysis focuses not only on poor people, but also on middle-class actors, economic elites, policy makers, opinion leaders and others who are involved in relations with the poor. Under the relational microscope, then, poverty is defined as a problem of power, as privileged state and non-state actors exert power to the disadvantage of the poor. At the same time, rather than constructing people in poverty as others or pariahs, relational poverty analysis... suggests that the poor have power that they sometimes use to challenge and resist the social interactions reinforcing their impoverishment. (p. 1710)

Importantly, this conceptualization shifts attention away from a narrow focus on people experiencing poverty to the problematization of inequality, power, and class exploitation. Pervasive gender inequalities contribute to disproportionately higher rates of poverty among women than men (U.N Women, 2022). Women hold less power relative to men in all domains, from politics, to the workplace, to the legal system, to the household (Hillard, 2018; UN Women, 2022). These disparities are manifested in women's segregation into low-wage, devalued work, consistently lower pay for comparable work that disadvantages women economically across the lifespan, the gendered division of family caretaking responsibilities, lack of affordable child-care that creates obstacles to working outside the home, high rates of violence, abuse, and harassment, and safety net programs that provide limited protection against economic shocks (e.g., sudden job loss, eviction) and/or the challenges of single parenthood (Bullock, 2013; UN Women, 2018). These gender inequalities contribute to women's poverty, both independently and in concert with each other (Bullock et al., 2020a; Goodman et al., 2009).

Women's lack of economic power is vividly illustrated by the gender gap in earnings and wealth. Globally, women's income stands at just 77% of men's earnings (UN Women, n.d.). On average, women in the United States who work full time outside the home earn just 84 cents for every \$1.00 earned by men (National Partnership for Women & Families [NPWF], 2020). The wage gap is wider among women of color, with Black women earning 64 cents, Latinas 54 cents, and Native American women just 51 cents for every \$1.00 paid to White, non-Hispanic men (NPWF, 2020). White, non-Hispanic women fare better at 73 cents. Collectively, U.S. women lose nearly \$1.6 trillion annually due to the wage gap (NPWF, 2020). Moreover, the median wealth of families headed by women in 2019 was approximately half as much as families headed by men, with women of color faring the worst (Chang

et al., 2021). At the median, families headed by Black and Latinx women owned just 5 and 10 cents, respectively, for every \$1.00 of wealth held by families headed by non-Hispanic White men (Chang et al., 2021). When vehicles are excluded from wealth calculations, these estimates dropped to 1 and 4 cents per dollar, respectively (Chang et al., 2021).

Longstanding wage and workplace inequalities heighten women's vulnerability to economic shocks, a precariousness that is exemplified by the gendered financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pervasive workplace segregation contributes to worse economic outcomes for women than men. Prior to the pandemic, women comprised 46% of U.S. workers but represented 54% of job losses (Madgavkar et al., 2020). High rates of job loss are compounded by gendered inequalities in the home. Women who are employed outside the home are concentrated in sectors of the labor market that have been devastated by the pandemic (i.e., travel and food service, retail, arts, recreation; Madgavkar et al., 2020). Ultimately, the pandemic is predicted to push 47 million more women and girls into poverty globally (UN Women, 2020). As just one indicator, global food insecurity among women rose from 27.5% in 2019 to 31.9% in 2021, more than double the percentage point increase among men during this same time period (UN Women, 2022).

Low income and limited wealth are consistently associated with diminished access to and control over valued resources. Compared to more economically privileged groups, poor and working-class people are less likely to have access to health care (Berchick et al., 2019), high quality education (Flores, 2017), safe, stable housing (Desmond, 2016), nutritious food (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2019), mainstream financial services (Bullock et al., 2020b), and safe workplace conditions (Moyce & Schenker, 2018). Class and gender disparities are particularly overt in the political sphere. More than half of U.S. Congressional members are millionaires, with 10% of the wealthiest lawmakers having three times more wealth than the bottom 90% (Evers-Hillstrom, 2020). In 2023, women continued to be underrepresented in elected positions, holding just 25 and 28.7% of seats in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, respectively.

The extent to which political decisions align with the preferences of economic elites underscores this concentration of power. In their analysis of 1,779 policy issues, Gilens and Page (2014) found that the preferences of affluent citizens had significantly more impact on policy change than the preferences of low-income and middle-class groups. The Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, ending the constitutional right to an abortion in the United States, illustrates the disconnect between elites and public opinion. The decision, which was opposed by the majority of Americans, disproportionately affects low-income women and women of color (Pew Research Center, 2022). Limited access to abortion is further exacerbating longstanding gendered, raced, and classed disparities in access to health care and intensifying the impact of disinvestment in safety net programs that support raising children in healthy, stable living environments (Harned & Fuentes, 2023). Meanwhile, others stand to make significant economic gains, notably private equity investors behind Mifeprex, commonly known as the 'abortion pill' (Levintova, 2023).

Conceptualizing poverty as relational also means considering how more powerful groups (e.g., economic elites, Whites, men) benefit from women's economic precarity and the systems which maintain inequality. Women's unpaid caregiving and household labor is a prime example. U.S. women spend nearly twice as many hours each day on unpaid work as men (4 hours versus 2.5 hours daily; Wezerek & Ghodsee, 2020). Around the world, girls and women contribute 12.5 billion hours of unpaid work each day, contributing at least \$10.8 trillion annually to the global economy (Oxfam International, 2021). This valuable labor fills unmet needs for affordable childcare and gaps in social services and allows men to spend more hours in the paid workforce, resulting in staggering financial losses for women. In 2019, U.S. women would have earned \$1.5 trillion if paid the minimum wage for this work (Wezerek & Ghodsee, 2020). Although the minimum wage is insufficient to make ends meet amidst high costs of living, the more than \$10.8 trillion that went unpaid for women's caregiving and household labor globally still surpasses the combined revenue of the 50 largest Fortune Global 500 companies, including Walmart, Apple, and Amazon (Wezerek & Ghodsee, 2020). Ultimately, women's unpaid labor viciously reinforces the gender wage gap, with low wages and high caregiving demands discouraging work outside the home and undermining employment in higher-paid, time-intensive work. In recognition of the explosion of unpaid care work necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Oxfam International (2021) described women as "the shock absorbers of our societies" (para. 8).

Class-based power disparities extend beyond the material, affecting well-being and the ability to participate in personally and socially meaningful activities (Shinn, 2015). At the most fundamental level, social class influences peoples' freedom to develop their capabilities and pursue their goals (Shinn, 2015). Class differences in educational attainment, employment, and income foreclose opportunities for travel, leisure, and autonomy among poor and working-class groups. The impact of parental income on children's future earnings stands out as one of the most striking examples of how economic status restricts capabilities and life chances. As adults, children from high-income families (90th percentile) earn incomes that are approximately 200% higher than children in poor families (10th percentile) and 75% higher than middle-income children (Pew Charitable Trusts and Russell Sage Foundation, 2015). Although both women and men are advantaged by growing up in higher income families, men benefit significantly more than women in terms of future earnings and mobility (Pew Charitable Trusts and Russell Sage Foundation, 2015). These findings underscore just one of the many intersections of gender and social class.

Social Class, Privilege, and the Minimization of Power Disparities

In tandem with the 'whitewashing' of race and neutralizing of gender disparities, the powerful role of social class as a form of stratification is minimized. Just as 'White' and 'male' are the reference points against which other groups are judged, the experiences of economically advantaged groups remain the unspoken standard.

The tendency to equate the strength of the stock market with overall economic health is indicative of this bias. Although just 14% of U.S. families directly invest in the stock market and benefit substantially from its gains (Ghilarducci, 2020), coverage of the market's ups and downs is presented as universally relevant. Likewise, the field of psychology is largely based on research with people who are White, middle class, and college educated, with findings that are unreflexively generalized to economically marginalized groups (Saris & Johnston-Robledo, 2000).

One harmful consequence of this bias is that privileged life trajectories are overvalued and treated as 'normative,' while other pathways are devalued. Despite the fact that just 37.9% of Americans over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree, college attendance is widely characterized as a 'rite of passage' before embarking on a career and starting a family (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Higher income groups are significantly more likely to attend and complete postsecondary education. Among the graduating high school cohort of 2009, approximately one-third of students from the lowest quintile enrolled in postsecondary education within one year of completing secondary school and were still enrolled or had earned a credential or qualification by 2016, compared to 79% of students from the top quintile (Fein, 2019). The effects are far-reaching. For example, on average, women with baccalaureate degrees have children seven years later than those who do not hold this degree (Bui & Cain Miller, 2018). Explaining these differing trajectories, Rackin (cited in Bui & Cain Miller, 2018) explains:

[Higher socioeconomic groups] just have more potential things they could do instead of being a parent, like going to college or grad school and having a fulfilling career... Lower-socioeconomic-status people might not have as many opportunity costs — and motherhood has these benefits of emotional fulfillment, status in their community and a path to becoming an adult. (para. 4)

Nevertheless, different education and parenting trajectories are often dismissed as 'lifestyle choices' and explained in terms of classist stereotypes (e.g., disinterest in education, limited intelligence, lack of ambition). Intersecting classist, racist, and sexist stereotypes portray low-income women as sexually available, neglectful parents who prefer welfare to employment and school, and low-income men as 'deadbeat' dads who would rather earn money illicitly than pursue an education and mainstream career (Bullock, 2013).

A network of interrelated beliefs about personal responsibility, individual merit, and opportunity minimizes the role of structural inequalities in shaping life chances, amplify the perception that class boundaries are permeable, fuel overly optimistic expectations for upward mobility, and bolster the belief that social class is an earned rather than ascribed status (Davidai, 2018; Eppard et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2018). The effects of these beliefs are far-reaching. Endorsement of meritocracy, for instance, is associated with denial of economic inequality, overestimation of racial, gender, and socioeconomic equality, and reduced support for policies to reduce disparities (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010; Madeira et al., 2019). As a result, poor and working-class groups, particularly those of color, are blamed for their difficult economic circumstances while the middle class and elites are praised for their perseverance and

hard work. Stereotyping and dehumanization, in turn, reinforce economic disparities via discrimination and reduced support for public assistance programs (Sainz et al., 2020).

Cross-national analyses of perceived mobility document the dominance of these legitimizing beliefs in the United States. When Alesina et al. (2018) asked a cross-national sample to estimate the likelihood that a child born in the bottom quintile would move to a higher income quintile as an adult, Americans overestimated the likelihood of doing so relative to the actual national rate of intergenerational mobility, while Europeans underestimated upward mobility in their respective countries. Across all countries, less perceived upward mobility was associated with greater support for redistributive policies (Alesina et al., 2018). However, it is not only upward mobility that is misperceived; Americans also underestimate the likelihood of downward mobility and overestimate the degree of economic equality (Davidai, 2018). These biases extend to U.S. racial economic progress, with respondents in one study underestimating the size of the 1963 Black–White wealth gap by approximately 40 percentage points and the scope of the 2016 gap by approximately 80 percentage points (Kraus et al., 2019).

Even rising income inequality does little to deter endorsement of meritocratic and individualistic beliefs. Analyzing 25 years of international survey data from the Western/Global North, Mijs (2021) found that residents of Western countries with high rates of income inequality were more likely to explain economic ‘success’ in individualistic terms (e.g., hard work, persistence) and less likely to endorse structural factors (e.g., inheritance, connections). Mijs (2021) theorizes that country-level inequality conditions perceptions and experiences, such that economic ‘success’ is increasingly viewed as the outcome of meritocratic processes. These effects extend beyond social class to gender and racial inequality, with belief in meritocracy contributing to denial of sexism and racism (Knowles & Lowery, 2012; Madeira et al., 2019). Belief in meritocracy also obscures the fact that people do not ‘compete’ on a level playing field and the many factors (e.g., disability, food insecurity, health) that influence outcomes. That groups who hold greater power are often stronger supporters of meritocratic beliefs and more likely to attribute poverty to personal failings than groups with less power is yet another barrier to recognizing the structural nature of privilege and disadvantage (Bullock & Reppond, 2018; Eppard et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2018).

It is against these powerful headwinds that low-income women such as Angela Sutton push to be heard and feminist scholars seek to draw attention to the structural and relational dimensions of class, gender, and race. We now delve more deeply into the power inequalities and institutional structures that heighten women’s vulnerability to poverty and criminalization. We focus on gendered criminalization as a “systematic process unique to women that magnifies the relationship between ongoing societal victimization and eventual entrapment in the criminal justice system” (Arnold, 1990, p. 154), attending closely to how intersections of gender, race, and class marginalization render low-income women disproportionately vulnerable to surveillance and social control.

Criminalizing Poverty and Motherhood: Intersections of Gender, Class, and Race

The welfare system and the criminal justice system in the United States are becoming ever more tightly interwoven... Many people...treat the welfare and criminal justice systems as analytically distinct. As a practical matter, however, the systems now work in tandem. (Gustafson, 2009, p. 643)

There are considerable synergies between the welfare and criminal justice systems, with both surveilling and regulating the behaviors of people experiencing poverty. From highly monitored public assistance programs to the regulation of public spaces and use of surveillance technology that is commonly employed in poor neighborhoods (MacMillan, 2023), low-income groups have never enjoyed the same degree of privacy that middle class and economic elites take for granted (Bridges, 2017; Jashnani et al., 2020; Piven & Cloward, 1993). Classist stereotypes associate low-income status with criminality (Smith et al., 2010), and income and educational attainment, two markers of social class and power, influence the likelihood of being arrested, severity of charges, and length of sentence (O’Neill Hayes & Barnhorst, 2020). Poor adults are three times more likely to be arrested than their non-poor counterparts, with people earning less than 150% of the federal poverty line 15 times more likely to be charged with a felony than those with incomes above this threshold (O’Neill Hayes & Barnhorst, 2020). Prior to their arrest, it is estimated that 72% of incarcerated women were poor (O’Neill Hayes & Barnhorst, 2020) and the majority were arrested for low-level offenses that are disproportionately enforced among low-income groups (e.g., ordinance violations, public disorder, minor property crimes; Swavola et al., 2016).

Both carceral and welfare systems are highly gendered, raced, and classed, with women of color overrepresented in both systems. As of 2021, nearly one million women are under control of the U.S. Corrections System, with about 170,000 incarcerated in jails and prisons, 100,000 on parole, and over 700,000 on probation (Monazzam & Budd, 2023). Although more men than women are incarcerated, women’s rate of incarceration has increased by over 500% in the past four decades, more than double the growth rate among men (Monazzam & Budd, 2023). A similar number of families (about 1.1 million), primarily headed by single mothers, receive cash assistance via the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF; Congressional Research Service, 2020). Women and children are the primary recipients of cash assistance, although restrictive ‘welfare reform’ policies (e.g., time limits, work requirements) have limited participation. In 2020, for every 100 eligible families living in poverty, only 21 received cash assistance from TANF, down from 68 families when TANF was first enacted in 1996. Although crucial, this support is meager, leaving family incomes at or below 60% of the poverty line at a time when poverty rates in the United States increased for the first time in five years (Shrivastava & Thompson, 2022).

Considering these systems together lends insight into intersections of gender, social class, and power. Feminist scholarship demonstrates how both systems reflect

and reinforce power dynamics and regulate the behaviors and opportunities of poor women, especially low-income mothers of color (Bridges, 2017; Goodwin, 2020; Roberts, 2017). We explore these synergies in three areas: (1) welfare surveillance and criminalization; (2) the regulation of pregnancy and reproductive autonomy; and (3) the revictimization of domestic violence survivors. In doing so, we illustrate how criminalization extends beyond arrest, prosecution, and incarceration to practices and policies that surveil, stigmatize, and punish women for violating normative gender expectations (Fine & Carney, 2001; Gustafson, 2013; Roberts, 2017).

‘Disciplining’ Poor Women and “Treating Crimes of Need as Crimes of Greed”

To receive public assistance, women experiencing poverty have long endured invasive monitoring that both assumes criminality and reinforces traditional gender roles (Maréchal, 2015; Roberts, 2017). ‘Man-in-the-house’ rules stand out as one of the most overt examples. Until ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1968, welfare recipients’ homes were routinely searched for evidence that an able-bodied man lived in the home, regularly visited, or was in a sexual relationship with the female head of the household (Piven & Cloward, 1993). Regardless of actual contributions to the household or relationship to children, male presence alone was sufficient to constitute a ‘substitute father’ whose (alleged) wages justified the denial of welfare benefits. Although this rule was overturned, current welfare policy continues to promote heterosexual marriage as a solution to women’s poverty, and blatant surveillance of welfare recipients persists via finger imaging, drug testing, paternity identification, criminal background checks, and facial recognition software (MacMillan, 2023; McCarty et al., 2016). Mothers receiving TANF benefits are closely monitored for indicators of welfare misuse, with undisclosed earnings, missed meetings with caseworkers, or non-compliance with mandatory work requirements potentially resulting in partial or full-family sanctions (i.e., partial or complete loss of benefits temporarily or permanently; Bullock, 2013).

Reflecting institutionalized racism, classism, and sexism, welfare ‘discipline’ is not distributed or enforced uniformly across families or states. In states with higher percentages of people of color, TANF benefits are lower and program rules are more restrictive (e.g., stricter work requirements, time limits; Pipnis, 2017; Shrivastava & Thompson, 2022). African American welfare recipients are consistently sanctioned at higher rates for program non-compliance than their White counterparts. Caseworkers wield considerable discretion when applying sanctions, contributing to this disproportionate impact. Matching county-level caseworker demographics with individual recipient data, Pipnis’ (2017) analysis of sanction rates illustrates the pervasiveness of racial bias. Among Black TANF recipients, greater county presence of White caseworkers was associated with a higher likelihood of leaving TANF due to

sanctions (Pipnis, 2017). For White recipients, this association only held for sanctions related to work requirements, indicating that African Americans are penalized for a broader range of infractions. Commenting on the rise of punitive measures, including sanctions, Gustafson (2009) observes that “the public desire to deter and punish welfare cheating has overwhelmed the will to provide economic security to vulnerable members of society” (p. 644).

The scrutiny and presumption of wrongdoing endured by poor women in the welfare system can result in criminal justice system involvement. Indeed, participating in public assistance programs renders low-income women vulnerable to criminalization. Information gleaned from background checks and home visits conducted during the TANF application process can trigger criminal investigations, and minor infractions (e.g., misreporting income, collecting benefits for children who have moved out of the home) may be prosecuted as felony offenses rather than civil penalties (Gustafson, 2009). Police can access Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) records to locate recipients with outstanding warrants, and public housing residents are subject to warrantless searches for non-criminal complaints and increasingly monitored by security cameras with facial recognition software (Dolan & Carr, 2015; MacMillan, 2023). Furthermore, women who participate in housing voucher programs (e.g., Section 8) report racialized harassment and surveillance from middle-class neighbors searching for reasons to justify low-income families’ evictions and, in some cases, criminal investigations (Ocen, 2012).

Poor women, particularly women of color, are disproportionately affected by criminal justice involvement regardless of whether they receive state assistance. Not only are poor women more likely to be arrested and incarcerated, but economic need is at the core of the most common offenses for which women are incarcerated. More than twice as many women than men report economic motivations for criminal activity (American Civil Liberty Union of Virginia [ACLU Virginia], 2018) and prior to incarceration, women in prison earned 42% less than non-incarcerated women (Sawyer, 2018). With a network of barriers restricting poor women’s participation in the primary labor market, illegal activities such as selling drugs and sex work are among the few ways to make ends meet. Much of the psychological research examining women’s drug-related criminal activity focuses on the role of addiction and mental health, neglecting economic precarity and caregiver responsibilities as important motivators and obscuring structural barriers to women’s financial security (Barlow & Weare, 2019; Moe, 2006). Penalizing poor women for such activities falls into the trap of “treating crimes of need as crimes of greed” (Gustafson, 2013, p. 330).

Incarceration itself is a significant driver of poverty. Not only is poverty a major risk factor for criminal justice involvement, but having a criminal record further undermines the ability to secure housing, obtain employment, pursue education, care for children, and access public assistance (ACLU Virginia, 2018; Bach, 2022; Goodmark, 2021). For example, federal law bans individuals with felony drug convictions from receiving SNAP benefits or living in public housing. Since a greater percentage of women than men are incarcerated for drug offenses and single mothers experience higher rates of poverty and food insecurity than single fathers and married

couples, women and their families are disproportionately harmed by these policies (Monazzam & Budd, 2023; Network for Public Health Law, 2020).

Feminist scholars view poor women's 'routine' survival strategies, including illegal activities, as evidence of deep-rooted systemic inequalities rather than criminality per se, noting how seemingly gender-neutral practices and policies deepen poor women's marginalization and leave many with few 'legitimate' means of supporting their families. For example, SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase many basic necessities (e.g., diapers, toilet paper, laundry detergent, medicine, baby formula), fueling the growth of underground markets in low-income neighborhoods. To target illicit sales of such items, South Carolina proposed stricter penalties for selling and possessing stolen baby formula valued over \$100, effectively criminalizing low-income mothers' "desperate acts of shoplifting" as felony larceny punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and five years in prison (Gustafson, 2013, p. 334).

'Pregnancy Crimes' and the Regulation of Poor Women's Reproduction

Social class and race powerfully shape perceptions of and responses to women's reproductive decisions. While White middle-class pregnancies are generally greeted with enthusiasm, low-income women, particularly mothers of color, are discouraged from having children and stereotyped as deficient parents (Roberts, 2017). Examining these intersections, Downing et al. (2007) found that low-income women of color were more likely than their White middle-class counterparts to report being discouraged from having children by health care providers. Such interactions are part of a broader network of practices and policies that seek to limit poor women's childbearing, criminalize reproduction and pregnancy, and punish women who do not meet White, middle-class 'standards' of motherhood (Amnesty International, 2017; Reppond & Bullock, 2020). For example, the practice of shackling incarcerated women during labor and police use of force (e.g., chokeholds, tasers) against pregnant Black women are indicative of systemic lack of concern for the well-being of marginalized women and their children (Goodmark, 2021; Ritchie & Jones-Brown, 2017).

Low-income women in the United States face numerous threats to their reproductive autonomy. In addition to coerced sterilization and welfare 'family caps,' which restrict funding for recipients who have another child while receiving benefits, pregnant women can also be criminally prosecuted for actions perceived as 'risky' to fetal well-being (Bach, 2022; Goodwin, 2020). By focusing almost exclusively on access to contraception and pregnancy termination, mainstream reproductive rights advocacy "fundamentally misreads reproductive health and the social contexts in which women live their lives," rendering invisible sites of state intervention and the full spectrum of women's reproductive health (Goodwin, 2020, p. 12).

So-called ‘pregnancy crimes,’ which range from equating maternal substance use with child abuse to laws penalizing miscarriages and stillbirths, have proliferated over the past few decades. Currently, 38 states allow homicide charges for causing a pregnancy loss even in the earliest stages of pregnancy (Pregnancy Justice, 2022). Although the majority of these laws explicitly preclude charges from being brought against the pregnant person, disparate enforcement reveals their covert functions as tools of gendered, racialized, and classed social control and punishment (Goodwin, 2020; Lollar, 2017). Responses to the pregnancies of Regina McKnight, an unmarried, unhoused Black woman and Brianna Morrison, a married, middle-class White woman, powerfully illustrate how culpability for fetal harm can shift according to the mother’s race and class status. After doctors submitted her medical records to police without her knowledge or consent, Regina McKnight was arrested and convicted of ‘homicide by child abuse’ even though the state could not prove that her drug use caused the stillbirth (Goodwin, 2020; Proehl, 2013). In comparison, Brianna Morrison became pregnant with sextuplets after taking a fertility drug associated with risky birth outcomes. Declining medical advice to selectively reduce her pregnancy, only one of Morrison’s babies survived. While McKnight was sentenced to twenty years in prison for ‘risky’ behavior during pregnancy, Morrison’s decision to continue an unviable pregnancy was widely supported (Goodwin, 2017). McKnight’s conviction was unanimously overturned in 2008 after she had spent a decade behind bars.

Criminal penalties target behaviors stereotypically associated with poor women of color rather than the full range of behaviors that are correlated with fetal harm. Pregnancy Justice (2021) identified over 1,700 cases in which pregnant women were subject to state action since 2020, updating their seminal examination of pregnancy arrests between 1973 and 2005 (Paltrow & Flavin, 2013), which found that 84% involved allegations of illegal substance use. Of these cases, approximately 71% involved low-income women and more than half of those targeted were Black (Paltrow & Flavin, 2013). In 2015, it was reported that nearly 500 women in Alabama had been prosecuted for violating a chemical endangerment statute in recent years. The majority of these women were poor (Goodwin, 2020). Although the effects of substance use during pregnancy are comparable to inadequate nutrition and lack of prenatal care, the deleterious consequences of food insecurity among mothers and health risks associated with poverty are met with far less moral outrage (Lollar, 2017).

Low-income women’s disproportionate vulnerability to pregnancy-related surveillance and criminalization is largely related to their greater use of public assistance and state services. Whereas middle-class women both expect and experience privacy in medical settings, poor women receiving care in public clinics and hospitals, such as Regina McKnight, must forfeit privacy (Bridges, 2017; Lollar, 2017). Participants in subsidized health programs are commonly asked invasive questions about their intimate relationships, sexual histories, parenting, and substance use and are required to undergo drug testing. Black and Latina women are also more likely than White women to have information about drug use documented in their medical records and reported to social services, discouraging prenatal care access and amplifying potential carceral consequences (Bach, 2022; Kerker et al., 2006).

Ultimately, the functional denial of privacy rights means that poor women do not have “a space free of state power” regardless of whether or not they receive public assistance (Bridges, 2017, p. 10). If harm occurs during pregnancy, documented ‘wrongdoing’ (e.g., substance use, non-compliance with medical advice, partner abuse) can be used to build criminal cases against poor mothers. The classed and raced nature of ‘pregnancy crimes’ illuminates low-income women’s disempowerment in the healthcare and legal systems, casting doubt on claims that the prosecution of mothers lies in protecting unborn children (Bach, 2022; Bridges, 2017; Goodwin, 2020). Without a constitutionally protected right to an abortion, laws restricting abortion access (e.g., banning abortifacients, penalizing doctors who perform terminations, prohibiting reproductive telehealth) place vulnerable women at even greater risk of surveillance and punishment. Despite anti-abortion advocates denouncing efforts to criminally penalize people who obtain abortions, lawmakers in Oklahoma and Arkansas recently proposed amending state abortion bans to allow for such prosecutions (Rose, 2023). Moreover, privacy experts warn that data collected by technology companies via phone apps and browsers (e.g., Google searches, health histories, geolocation data) could be shared with police to identify potential violations of anti-abortion laws (Dale, 2022).

Disempowering and Revictimizing Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

With more than 500,000 incidents occurring annually, intimate partner violence (IPV) accounts for 15% of all violent crime in the United States (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Black women, Native American women, and low-income women are overrepresented among abuse survivors and are disproportionately likely to be killed by an intimate partner (Petrosky et al., 2017; Richie & Eife, 2020). Domestic violence is a frequent precursor to women’s involvement with the criminal justice system, with the majority of incarcerated women reporting physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse by an intimate partner (ACLU Virginia, 2018; Richie, 2012). IPV survivors, particularly poor women, are often coerced to participate in drug sales, sex work, theft, and fraud, with abusers sometimes pressuring women to accept responsibility when caught (Barlow & Weare, 2019; Crenshaw, 2012). Ultimately, poor women are subjugated by both ‘private’ violence from intimate partners and ‘public’ violence from state actors, policies, and practices.

State responses to IPV that prioritize arresting and prosecuting perpetrators exacerbate the risk that marginalized women will be treated as criminals rather than victims. Passed in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) made domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking criminal offenses (Goodmark, 2021; Richie, 2012). Despite VAWA’s goals of ensuring that abuse is taken seriously by police, prosecutors, and judges and that abusers face criminal penalties, criminalization puts low-income women in further jeopardy through increased interactions with

law enforcement that may or may not be welcomed (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Goodmark, 2021; Kim, 2018; Richie & Eife, 2020).

Women who defend themselves against abuse or seek protection from law enforcement risk being criminalized under mandatory policies that require officers to make an arrest when responding to a domestic call. Since VAWA's adoption, the number of women arrested for domestic violence has increased by more than 500% despite evidence that most women use violence in self-defense or were arrested because abusers falsely claimed victimhood (Goodmark, 2021; Javdani et al., 2011). Classist and racist stereotypes regarding physical strength and aggression contribute to low-income women of color, particularly Black women, being misperceived as perpetrators by police (Rajah et al., 2006; Richie & Eife, 2020). In addition to mandatory arrests, 'no-drop' policies allow the state to prosecute domestic violence cases against survivors' wishes and penalize those who do not cooperate (Goodmark, 2021). These practices disempower survivors by reducing decision-making power and deepening hardship. Women arrested for domestic violence experience difficulty securing employment and housing, may lose custody of their children, and typically become ineligible for survivor services and resources (Crenshaw, 2012; Richie, 2012). Fear of these negative consequences contributes to reluctance to report abuse or downplay its severity (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Goodmark, 2021).

Gendered criminalization is also evident in 'failure to protect' laws. Child Protective Services (CPS) may be automatically contacted in domestic violence cases, increasing the likelihood that mothers will be charged with neglect or abuse. 'Failure to protect' encompasses a range of offenses, including 'allowing' children to witness abuse, inability to stop an abusive partner from harming a child, and inability to seek timely medical attention (Fine & Carney, 2001; Goodmark, 2021; Singh, 2017; Stanziani & Cox, 2021). Further eroding survivors' autonomy and reinforcing blame, CPS caseworkers and judges can demand that unless women separate from abusive partners or take steps to leave (e.g., by filing protective orders), they will lose custody of their children (Goodmark, 2010). As with 'fetal harm' policies, 'failure to protect' laws neglect the contextual dynamics of 'wrongdoing,' the potential risks of leaving abusers (e.g., more severe violence, loss of financial support), and the trauma of family separation (Goodmark, 2010; Singh, 2017).

Tellingly, the vast majority of 'failure to protect' cases involve low-income women (Singh, 2017). Together, low-income status and survivor status violate idealized conceptualizations of mothers as "always powerful, always present, and always nurturing," (Fine & Carney, 2001, p. 403). Marginalized women are especially likely to be labeled as 'bad mothers,' resulting in enhanced surveillance and heightened risk of losing their children (Reppond & Bullock, 2020). Domestic violence should be taken into account in cases of child abuse and neglect, but too often it is interpreted as evidence of maternal unfitness rather than as a mitigating factor (Singh, 2017; Stanziani & Cox, 2021). Troublingly, women's legibility as 'real' victims and as 'good' mothers is contingent on race and class privilege, revealing yet another dimension of state control and poor women's limited power.

Concluding Thoughts

Rejecting the deeply held belief that class status is a reflection of individual merit, our analysis of gender and social class calls for the eradication of longstanding disparities in power and access to resources. Women's poverty is situated at the nexus of interlocking systems of sexism, racism, and classism, making clear the crucial role of power "in experiencing, inflicting, and repulsing poverty" (Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 22). Synergies between the welfare and criminal justice systems tell us a great deal about the relationship of social class to institutional power and the state's considerable power over low-income women and their families, especially single mothers of color. Approaching these interactions as classed, raced, and gendered deepens our appreciation of the circuits through which dispossession and privilege accumulate and how social class and its intersections with other identities are co-constituted (Bullock et al., 2020a; Fine, 2014).

For psychologists, challenging class, gender, and race disparities is daunting, in part because doing so requires working across levels (e.g., interpersonally, institutionally), contexts (e.g., the workplace, politics), and institutions (e.g., the criminal justice and welfare systems). This multilevel work necessitates an intersectional lens that remains non-normative in psychological research and practice. Yet, insights gained from psychological research are crucial to debunking legitimizing ideologies, challenging power inequalities, and developing multidimensional interventions and policies that advance systemic change and foster equality. Maximizing our impact will require turning outward to work in partnership with low-income women to amplify their perspectives and experiences. It will also require turning inward to critically interrogate how the gender, class, and race positionality of psychologists shapes what we consider 'knowledge,' how our research questions and methodologies can inadvertently reinforce the status quo, and psychology's role in maintaining dominant power hierarchies. It will also mean challenging treatment of middle-class status as normative or 'universal,' problematizing ideologies that sustain class inequality, and considering intersections of both privilege and disadvantage. With more than three-quarters of all wealth held by just 10% of the population, our goal must be 'changing the game,' not simply 'leveling the playing field' (Stone et al., 2020).

Women's overrepresentation among people experiencing poverty in the United States and around the world should transform our understanding of gender, status, and the distribution of power. Practices and policies that punish single motherhood, deepen the hardship of surviving abuse, and criminalize poor women stand out as especially pernicious, revealing interlocking systems of classism, sexism, and racism. In their comprehensive poverty-reduction platform, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival (2020) proposes a wide range of economic and carceral reforms that range from expanding voting rights, to equal pay for equal work, to requiring that the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share of taxes, to addressing ecological devastation that restricts access to clean air and water, to police and criminal justice reform. Feminist scholarship makes clear that gender and women's unique vulnerabilities to poverty must also be at the forefront of this

advocacy. For psychologists, this will mean centering the experiences of low-income women, prioritizing the social, racial, and economic justice implications of our work, and embracing an activist psychology that serves the public interest. Only then will low-income women like Angela Sutton and her experiences be welcomed, and valued in our organizing, scholarship, and policy advocacy.

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Dismantling the Master's House with the Mistress' Tools? The Intersection Between Feminism and Psychology as a Site for Decolonization



Natasha Bharj and Glenn Adams

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. ... And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.

—Audre Lorde (1984, p. 110)

Discussions of feminist methodology frequently invoke Audre Lorde's (1984) famous statement that, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Within mainstream feminist work, scholars often use this statement to highlight how deeply androcentrism is embedded in the way we think about the world. Androcentrism is the centering of masculinity and men's experiences as the normative standard of human nature, and as such femininity and women are positioned as the aberrant "Other" (see Hegarty et al., 2013). Thus, if the tools for liberation are similarly infused with androcentrism, feminists require an entirely new and oppositional set of tools to dismantle the power of the master. For this, feminists draw upon epistemic tools to challenge power; feminist epistemologies emphasize researcher reflexivity, awareness of positionality, a participatory ethos, qualitative methods, and commitment to social justice (Hesse-Biber, 2013). For example, Feminist Standpoint Theory interrogates systems of power that not only push individuals and groups to the margins of society through material subjugation, but that also maintain power through denying legitimacy and voice to those marginalized groups. To challenge this, we can examine spaces of marginalization as productive sources of insight about

N. Bharj (✉)

Department of Psychology and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY, USA

e-mail: nbharj@ithaca.edu

G. Adams

Department of Psychology and Kansas African Studies Center and Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS), Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

e-mail: adamsg@ku.edu

reality, articulated as epistemic “advantage” or “privilege” (Wylie, 2003). Feminist scholars have used epistemologies such as standpoint theory to challenge androcentrism embedded within the assumptions and practices of Psychology as a field (Hegarty et al., 2013). In this chapter, we examine *coloniality* within Psychology and how feminist praxis can (or cannot) be a useful tool for challenging colonial power manifested in psychological work. Whereas colonialism refers to a discrete historical period or event with a definite conclusion, decolonial theorists emphasize that manifestations of coloniality persist long after the formal end of colonial rule (e.g., Grosfoguel, 2002; Mignolo, 2011). This includes the continued exploitation and extraction of resources in colonized spaces and “the colonization of the mind, patterns of knowledge, and social structures of indigenous peoples” (Segalo & Fine, 2020, p. 5). In this chapter, we are primarily concerned with coloniality as it refers to ways of thinking, feeling, and being associated with European global domination. Decolonial perspectives identify coloniality as the inherent “dark side” of Eurocentric modernity (Mignolo, 2011). In contrast to connotations of modernity as the leading edge of human cultural progress, decolonial theorists emphasize the extent to which the modern global order is the product of ongoing colonial violence. From this perspective, one cannot properly understand modernity—and associated individualist ways of being—without an appreciation for the coloniality that produced it. Decolonial perspectives can thus illuminate the extent to which knowledge and practice in mainstream psychology reflects and reproduces epistemic violence associated with Eurocentrism and the interests of White supremacy.

In thinking about the degree to which feminisms can contribute to the project of decolonizing psychological science, we must also examine the ways in which coloniality is embedded in some forms of feminism itself, and feminist psychology by extension. Therefore, we will review the ways that Western¹ feminist thought has been mobilized to perpetuate colonial and heteropatriarchal power and outline decolonial approaches that can challenge these patterns.

A decolonial feminist perspective resonates with the less famous continuation of Lorde’s quote, which implicates the mistresses of the house in the use of the master’s tools and preservation of the master’s power. This quote suggests that Lorde intends “master” to refer not only to gendered forms of domination along sexual difference, but also to racial forms of domination associated with colonialism and enslavement. From this perspective, the problem with the master’s tools is not only that they reflect and serve the interests of an androcentric power, but also that they reflect and serve the interests of White racial and colonial power. Accordingly, one will not tear down the master’s house by exchanging the tools of the master for the tools of the mistress, who perceives the liberation of others as a threat to the degree of protection that she is afforded through proximity to the master. More plainly, the implication is that

¹ Decolonial and post-colonial scholarship uses a range of terms to characterize global power structures and relations between colonizing and colonized spaces. These include dichotomies such as Global North/South, Western/Eastern, and minority/majority World. Since these relations are always socially and historically situated there is no one term that can sufficiently capture these nuances, so throughout this chapter we switch between terms to reflect common usage in the literature being discussed.

one cannot use feminist psychology to revolutionize psychological science without first addressing the epistemic violence associated with hegemonic forms of both psychology and feminism.

Finally, we will present decolonial feminist approaches as a tool for addressing both coloniality and androcentrism within feminisms, psychology, and feminist psychology. We will review some examples of decolonial and feminist scholarship from around the world and consider how these could be applied to psychological science. Our intention is to present these strategies as the starting point for larger conversations and work around the intersections of feminism, psychology, and decolonial thought that are beyond the scope of this chapter.

Coloniality and Imperial Power

The concept of coloniality, as referenced above, extends our understanding of colonialism to include power over knowledge production and the ability to mobilize this knowledge as a means of creating/maintaining hierarchies and oppression (i.e., *epistemic violence*). Histories of colonial encounters document the epistemic violence that resulted when colonizers first encountered, for example, unfamiliar patterns of gender and sexuality such as conventions of modesty in appearance in the Middle East. Rather than see these unfamiliar patterns as merely different and equally viable alternatives, the tendency is to understand difference as deviance from normative (descriptive and prescriptive) standards and as evidence of cultural backwardness and (extreme) patriarchal oppression (Ahmed, 1992; Jarmakani, 2008). In thinking about decolonial approaches, such as those adopted in *The Hub for Decolonial Feminist Psychologies in Africa*, Kessi and Boonzaier (2018) emphasize that “a decolonial agenda for psychology [is] one that highlights the connections between psychological knowledge production and the reproduction of oppressive power in its various forms.” (p. 304).

One example of such an ethnocentric psychological knowledge production is the proliferation of models of attachment that assume nuclear families and focus exclusively on dyadic mother–child relationships (Williams et al., 2002). This narrative of “normal” development and attachment pathologizes other forms of kinship and care-giving relationships that are common across many settings around the world (Adams et al., 2012; Osei-Tutu et al., 2018, 2021). Implicit in these ways of knowing is a centering of Western ways of being as normative and a construction of other ways of being as pathological deviations from this norm. Further, practitioners, such as community counsellors, are limited when non-local forms are centered in psychological science at the expense of ways of being that are better suited to local contexts (Osei-Tutu et al., 2018).

Pathologizing representations of colonized settings are reminiscent of the concept of Orientalism (Said, 1978). They constitute not only a stereotypical portrayal of allegedly backward Others, but also a construction of the progressive Self against those backward Others. Mohanty (1988) provided a particularly powerful statement

of this point when discussing the pitfalls of a global sisterhood model of women as an undifferentiated category:

A homogeneous notion of the oppression of women as a group ... produces the image of an 'average third-world woman'. This average third-world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). (p. 64)

She contrasts this with “the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the ‘freedom’ to make their own decisions” (Mohanty, 1988, p. 65). Post-colonial feminists have long critiqued Western feminists that have, unwittingly or not, reinforced this dichotomy between liberated Western women and the oppressed “third-world” women (Mohanty, 1988, 2003; Narayan, 1997). The violence of such Orientalist representations becomes even more evident when one considers the extent to which they served as motivation or justification for imperialist intervention. Indeed, scholars note how middle-class Victorian feminists were enthusiastic supporters of the British colonial enterprise as the “white women’s burden” (Burton, 1992)—a version of the understanding of the colonial relationship as a necessary intervention of “white men...saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak, 1988, p. 297). In addition to explicitly (ethno)nationalist motivations, the complicity of early liberal bourgeois feminists in colonialism had its basis in the sense of Victorian womanhood as emblematic of moral superiority, a sense that aligned well with rhetorical constructions of empire-building as a civilizing mission.

Expressions of imperial feminism extend beyond the era of European empire-building into contemporary politics. A particularly powerful example is the U.S. response to the 9/11 attacks, when the Bush administration pushed for military intervention by emphasizing not only the “war on terror,” but also Orientalist constructions of the oppressed Afghan woman and oppressive Afghan man. In this example, US nationalist rhetoric employed colonial stereotypes, under the guise of feminism, to justify the violence of the “war on terror” and to obscure the effects of this war on Afghan women themselves (Hunt, 2002). This example of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan is a clear case of what Farris (2017) refers to as *femonationalism*: the participation of feminisms in demonization of Muslim men and the use of feminist themes in Western military encroachments into Muslim-majority nations. Farris (2017) illuminates how femonationalist discourses and media representations reproduce constructions of Muslim men and women (and White men and women by contrast) in ways that are reminiscent of colonial discourse. Not only is this epistemic violence used to justify military violence, the reinforcement of this Self/Other binary widens the gaps between feminists, making it harder for true solidarity and allyship to form and address the actual struggles faced by women in Afghanistan and across the globe.

Decolonial Approaches to Psychology

Psychology, like many other disciplines, has become increasingly concerned with the question of whether psychology can be decolonized and, if it were, what kind of psychology would emerge from the process. In their own special issue of *Feminism and Psychology*, Macleod et al. (2020) chart other recent special issues and books in which psychologists have taken up the project of decolonizing psychology through the application of decolonial theory in empirical and theoretical scholarship. One such example is the 2015 special section in the *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* on the topic of “decolonizing psychological science.” In their introduction article, the guest editors (Adams et al., 2015) drew upon the work of liberation psychologist Martín-Baró (1994) in outlining three approaches to decolonization that were evident in submissions: *accompaniment*, *indigenization*, and *denaturalization*. These approaches provide a useful framework for thinking about the tools available in feminist and decolonial theory. In these next sections, we provide examples of these approaches and consider the challenges in applying them to psychological science.

Accompaniment Approaches

In the accompaniment approach to decolonization, researchers from colonizing and colonized spaces work alongside each other in struggles for social justice. According to Watkins (2015) the etymological roots of *accompaniment* refer to breaking bread together with others. She quotes Dr. Paul Farmer, who observes that

To accompany someone is to go somewhere with him or her, to break bread together, to be present on a journey with a beginning and an end. ...Accompaniment is about sticking with a task until it's deemed completed—not by the accompagnateur, but by the person being accompanied. (Farmer, 2013, p. 234, as cited in Watkins, 2015)

Writers who invoke *accompaniment* often trace it to the work of Archbishop Oscar Romero (Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2013), and one can see elements of the strategy in Latin American perspectives of liberation social science more generally (e.g., Fals Borda, 2001). The strength of accompaniment approaches—the primary sense in which they contribute to decolonization—is through their participatory ethos to research and scholarship.

Accompaniment approaches seek to democratize an otherwise authoritarian research process, to bridge the hierarchical separation in mainstream work between the expert researcher and the supposedly less knowledgeable people they research. This is necessarily maintained through the sharing and redistribution of resources, so as to remedy structural power differences between research partners. In this way, there is an easy fit between accompaniment approaches to decolonization and feminist methodological approaches; both imagine knowledge-making as a social process. An exemplary application of the accompaniment strategy comes from the feminist

liberation psychology approach of Grabe (2018). Drawing on the concept of “conscientización” (Freire, 1970), a *feminist* liberation psychology approach encourages researchers to adopt a scholar-activist role through employing participatory action research practices that place equal, perhaps more, value on participant voices as on empirical research output (Grabe, 2018). Lindorfer and Weinberg (2018) also apply this approach in their research among survivors of war-time rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They outline some ethico-methodological choices that characterize the work of scholar-activist research: critical reflexivity and researcher humility as crucial for accompanying feminist partners, prioritization of stress- and trauma-sensitivity in the selection and implementation of data collection, and the creation of a large interdisciplinary research team that acknowledges and values community relationship building. These methods help to decolonize the research process by challenging conventional constructions of the researcher as an objective, politically and morally detached, and authoritative outsider.

The potential risk of accompaniment approaches lies in the role of the “expert outsider” identities that researchers bring to their work. The position of expert outsider creates the potential for what Cole (2012) referred to as the “White Savior Industrial Complex.” This term refers to the vast, often monetized, networks of White American (and European) volunteers who wield their racial privilege ostensibly to provide support and aid but who end up, in reality, upholding systems of domination and harmful international policies. Beyond the White Savior Industrial Complex, the expert outsider perspective affords an interpretation of local patterns in an ethnocentric light.

Discussions of femonationalism constitute extreme cases of the problems associated with the expert outsider perspective of accompaniment approaches. These problems are especially likely to arise when expert outsiders operate from a universalistic, “global sisterhood” model that whitewashes over cultural difference and assimilates the category of woman to White/Western sensibilities. Accompaniment approaches to decolonization address these potential shortcomings through an emphasis on researcher humility and deference to local knowledge. Humility and reflexivity are requisite parts of *epistemic responsibility*; the imperative to recognize where our social power produces ignorance (Medina, 2013). Rather than taking a place in the vanguard leading “junior” siblings to sexual or gender liberation, successful implementation of an accompaniment decolonial approach requires that feminist psychologists from hegemonic centers walk alongside, listen to, and learn from people from marginalized spaces in the struggle for liberation.

This collaborative approach aligns with feminist epistemological understandings of knowledge production as a communal practice, not as the product of isolated and self-sufficient individuals. Whether working in collaboration with others or alone, we are inherently situated within our social contexts and thus so is the knowledge we produce. Grasswick (2004) suggests that an “individuals-in-communities” model captures the epistemic subject as essentially relational. The “individuals-in-communities” model frames thinking as conducted through multiple interactions;

knowledge emerges through interactions between individuals and their communities,² in that “social and political relation can affect one’s ability to know and the content of one’s knowledge” (Grasswick, 2004, p. 87). And, importantly, “good knowing” is practiced through interactions between communities, to provide deep epistemic insights from multiple standpoints. Thus, feminist epistemology and the accompaniment approach promote an interrogation of social power structures as central to positive critical engagement across communities. To critically engage with each other, we must expose and challenge power structures that differentially grant epistemic authority and access to resources. Unless larger structural change is enacted, redistribution of resources is often in the hands of those in power—giving researchers from wealthy and privileged spaces the ability to impose their own agenda even when collaborating with others, as opposed to true accompaniment which involves more equitable sharing of ideas. To the extent that implementations of the accompaniment approach draw inspiration from engagement with local knowledge, they resemble a second decolonial approach known as *indigenization*.

Indigenization Approaches

In indigenization decolonial approaches, researchers in marginalized settings reclaim local knowledge that resonates with local realities and better serves local populations, to counteract the imposition of hegemonic global science and psychologies. The indigenization approach resonates with conventional understandings of *decolonization*—people in formerly colonized settings confronting and liberating themselves from oppressive foreign rule (Adams et al., 2015). In the context of feminist work, indigenization approaches are evident in a variety of perspectives—Black feminisms, women of color feminisms, third-world feminisms—that examine the intersection of gender and racial oppressions. In addition to illuminating and disrupting the imperialism of hegemonic Western feminisms, scholars working in these perspectives have attempted to articulate varieties of feminism that reflect the interests and experience of people in marginalized settings. Although indigenization approaches have become increasingly influential in feminist work, they are relatively rare in feminist forms of psychology. Instead, and like psychology in general (Henrich et al., 2010), the knowledge base of feminist psychology rests largely on work by researchers positioned in and concerned with the Global North (Macleod et al., 2014).

² In this we are using the term “community” fairly loosely, and in line with our reading of Greenwick’s (2004) conceptualization, to capture communities as networks of individuals and groups with some shared goals and perspectives, who may or may not share physical space or social identities, as well as the more traditional conception of communities as groups of people living in close proximity or coming from the same background. Regardless of the type of connection that characterizes a community, “these connections are always partial” (Greenwick, 2004, p. 101) and so we can never fully represent the homogeneous and shifting nature of a community.

A primary strength of indigenization approaches is to normalize local ways of being that mainstream psychology has portrayed as abnormal deviations from modern standards. Rather than treat local ways of being as backward and pathological, indigenization approaches illuminate how these ways of being constitute healthy adaptations to local conditions or time-tested solutions to local problems. As such, they may offer plausible alternatives to the heteropatriarchal domination associated with Eurocentric global modernity. For example, Dutta's (2018) work on counter-narratives to gendered and sexual violence in the Garo Hills of Northeast India employs a liberation psychology conceptualization of voice and agency to challenge hegemonic conceptions of what resistance to sexual violence must look like. Transnational feminist scholars have documented the colonial constructions of agency and resistance that are confined to individual verbal testimony within legitimate (read: colonial) institutes and frameworks (Hua, 2011). Rather than exporting colonial, neoliberal conceptions of agency Dutta (2018) "encounter[s] agency in the everyday struggle of women and resistance in the retelling of everyday and acute incidents in ways that perforate concrete silences of hegemonic discourse" (p. 199). Conceptualization of agency and voice in this framework are inherently relational and community driven; "voice [is] a critical cultural capacity that one comes to have as the result of and despite one's racialized, gendered and class-based locations" (p. 182). Another example is Muslim Feminist work on veiling practices of Turkish-origin women living in Amsterdam (Lorasdađi, 2009). This work challenges constructions of veiling practices as emblematic of extreme patriarchal oppression by documenting women's expressions of empowerment associated with the practice of wearing headscarves. Ali-Faisal (2020), who adopts a similar three-part framework as the one outlined in this chapter, presents privileging the voices and knowledge of Muslim scholars as one response to the Islamophobic and Orientalist conceptualizations of Muslims in psychological research. Rather than exporting research instruments and imposing colonialist assumptions in research on Muslim populations, Ali-Faisal (2020) argues that psychology should prioritize anti-patriarchal Islamic scholars and Islamic feminists in the knowledge production process. In addition to subverting the image of Muslim women still perpetuated in psychology (including feminist psychology) the application of anti-patriarchal Islamic scholarship would aid psychologists in better addressing important issues and diversity within Muslim communities and spaces (Ali-Faisal, 2020). For further illuminating discussions of indigenization approaches more generally, see debates about Africanization as a foundation for decolonizing psychology (Long, 2017; Nwoye, 2015; Ratele, 2017; Ratele et al., 2018).

Besides illuminating the value of practices that hegemonic perspectives portray in pathologizing terms, indigenization approaches also offer alternatives to the Eurocentric constructions of gender and sexuality that colonial power elevated to the status of just-natural standards for all humanity. Scholars from spaces around the world have noted how different cultural communities constructed gender in terms that transcended categories of male and female and allowed for more fluid, less essentialist understandings of sexual categories and identities (Lugones, 2007; Oy wum , 1997; Rifkin, 2010; Smith, 2010). This variation in constructions is not limited to gender and sexual categories, but also extends to the *meaning* of gender and sexual

categories. This point is often evident in kinship systems that organize residence and resources outside of heteronormative nuclear formations (Rifkin, 2010) or that emphasize age rather than gender as the basis of authority (Oyěwùmí, 1997).

Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the decolonial feminist approach of Lugones (2007, 2010). In her discussion of the coloniality of gender, Lugones (2010) makes the provocative assertion that because colonial powers did not regard colonized peoples as fully human, the categories of man and woman did not apply to them. As she puts it, “‘colonized woman’ is an empty category: no women are colonized; no colonized females are women” (Lugones, 2010, p. 745). The important point here is to illuminate the coloniality associated with hegemonic conceptions of gender categories—specifically, concepts of man and woman—that inform even some versions of feminist psychology. Instead, an emphasis on the coloniality of gender suggests the counterintuitive imperative that decolonial feminist work never starts with (hegemonic constructions of) gender in mind.³ Indeed, variability in constructions of gender is observed across the world, including in the European and North American spaces that dominate psychology. Yet psychological research has been critiqued for reifying cissexist and Eurocentric gender systems, as well as heterosexism, by failing to represent gender diversity in theory and methodologies (e.g., by only providing binary or limited gender identifiers in research) (Ansara & Hegarty, 2014; Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Lindqvist et al., 2021).

A potential limitation of indigenization approaches to decolonization is what one might refer to as *romantic reification*. In the search for local alternatives to imperialist or (neo)colonial constructions of sexuality and gender, scholars often engage in the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983): legitimizing interpretation of local patterns—including patterns of gender or sexuality that reproduce heteropatriarchal oppression—as longstanding cultural forms rather than products of colonial history. Social justice movements within colonized spaces can also be suppressed when patriarchal and otherwise oppressive pre-colonial structures are characterized as identity defining, and therefore off limits to social change. Narayan (1997) documents this in the instantiation of patriarchal practice as “tradition” by anti-colonial Indian nationalists. Accusations of Westernization are complemented by myths of cultural continuity in which some Western practices are selectively accepted/rejected—for example, Western technology and consumerism are integrated into Indian everyday life, while feminism (grassroots or otherwise) is rejected as Westernization. Feminisms in colonized spaces can themselves be subject to romantic reification through homogenization or assumptions of universality; we can no less talk of a singular “African” feminism as we could a “European” feminism, or universal feminism in any space, given that feminism as a larger movement is always characterized by pluralities of thought (Goredema, 2010).

³ This point is reminiscent of Williams et al. (2002), who argued that much of feminist psychology assumes gender as a primary social and identity category. This assumption disregards Black feminist work on intersectionality and it reproduces problematic notions of universal womanhood/sisterhood that constitute assimilation to Eurocentric standards. What a decolonial analysis adds is recognition that claims about gender as a primary organizing principle of social life reflect a history of colonial imposition.

Another potential danger of indigenization approaches to decolonization is the extent to which they can provide superficial cover for imperialist methods. One way this can happen is when researchers adopt something akin to an add-on model of diversity and inclusion. In this version, hegemonic knowledge forms appropriate work by Indigenous researchers or scholars from the Global South—regardless of their proximity to colonial thought—in ways that serve to maintain, rather than fundamentally transform, hegemonic understandings of gender, sexuality, or mind in general. Another way this can happen is what Grosfoguel (2016) refers to as epistemic extractivism: the appropriation of local knowledge, whether by expert outsider or Indigenous researcher, for global intellectual consumption without due recognition or consideration to the local sources. Attention to this process is necessary to avoid reproducing colonial narratives of discovery, as if current inclusion of Indigenous scholars represents an initial contact with knowledge forms rather than an attempt to redress epistemic violence (Quijano, 2005). This extractive model of indigenization, wherein Western scientists look to abstract or distill “useful” (to colonial interests) or “real” knowledge away from its context is itself a form of colonialism (Harding, 2008).

Harding (2008) suggests working within multiple, contextualized knowledge systems, in which Indigenous knowledge is one of many knowledge systems, as a remedy to ethno- and andro-centric psychological science. Similarly, de Sousa Santos et al. (2007) conceptualize decolonial knowledge as that formed through ecologies of knowledge, inter-knowledge, and ontological pluralism. Alcoff (2007) asserts that the decolonization process must involve commitment to epistemic justice, in that we must hold Psychology—and especially feminist psychology—accountable to a substantive and active model of epistemic justice. Alcoff’s (2007) model of epistemic justice frames ignorance about and neglect of majority world voices and experiences as a purposeful colonization of epistemic space, and so the lack of representation in feminist psychological work can be understood as both product and reproduction of coloniality. Epistemic justice also entails the thoughtful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge so as to acknowledge and avoid reproducing histories of suppression and exploitation. Part of this acknowledgment of histories of epistemic violence means coming to terms with indigenous rights to protect, control, and withhold knowledge as hegemonic feminist psychology looks to diversify (Alonso, 2007). Many Indigenous communities have implemented mechanisms for reviewing and controlling research efforts, for example through tribal Institutional Review Board counsels and national-level regulations on data use in the US (Alonso, 2007; Friesen et al., 2017; Gone, 2022). In addition to respecting control, the indigenization of feminist psychology necessitates not only the inflow of Indigenous knowledge, but the redistribution of resources toward Indigenous and majority world spaces and away from hegemonic spaces, e.g., through more equitable citation practices (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018). The decolonizing project therefore aligns with existing feminist psychological goals toward better distribution of scholarly work and resources (Macleod et al., 2014). An effort to turn a critical eye toward hegemonic forms of psychology constitutes the third approach: decolonization as *denaturalization*.

Denaturalization Approaches

Implicit in the focus of many indigenization approaches is both a conception of colonization as imperialist imposition and a corresponding conception of decolonization as a struggle by people in colonized settings against this imposition. However, the (epistemic) violence of colonialism is not limited to colonized settings. Instead, the epistemic power of hegemonic psychology extends to include the application of hegemonic forms as a prescription for everyday life in Euro-American centers of global power.

As multiple critics have noted, standard knowledge in psychological science tends to rest upon the foundation of research in settings that are Western, educated, industrial, rich, and (supposedly) democratic—in a word, WEIRD (Henrich et al., 2010). Researchers in these WEIRD settings typically observe individualist habits of mind or ways of being that Markus and her colleagues referred to as independent *selfways*, i.e., socio-culturally constructed patterns and understandings of what it means to be a person in a specific context (Markus et al., 1997). These independent selfways could (or should) be regarded as particular forms of life adapted to specific contexts, often afforded in WEIRD settings but not limited to these spaces nor representative of all groups living there. However, psychological science tends to interpret these independent selfways as natural features of the human organism. This interpretation is disseminated as standard knowledge; and thereby contributes to the colonization of everyday life and societal institutions by promoting an individualist conception of human nature. In this context, psychological scientists can contribute to decolonizing psychology by denaturalizing the individualist habits of mind and ways of being that hegemonic knowledge forms portray as natural features of the human organism.

An important set of tools for this purpose comes from the “modernity/coloniality research program” (Escobar, 2007) associated with emerging perspectives of decolonial theory. This indigenization approach to decolonization treats local knowledge as resource for “Theory from the South” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; de Sousa Santos, 2014). Whereas dominant disciplinary knowledge typically frames the Global South as an intellectually barren site for the application of general theory, the idea of Theory from the South holds that marginalized settings of the Global South provide a privileged epistemic standpoint for understanding the global modern order.

A first step in the process of denaturalizing is to illuminate the coloniality of modern individualist habits of mind and ways of being (Adams et al., 2018). The coloniality/modernity of individualist selfways is evident in their origins: specifically, the violent appropriation of wealth via plunder and enslavement that created the affluence that made possible the sense of freedom from constraint and abstraction from contexts that characterize individualist selfways (Adams et al., 2018). Simply put, decolonial perspectives highlight the extent to which individualist selfways are implicated in colonial violence. The second step is an examination of how these fit into the broader coloniality of knowledge; imperialist imposition of individualist selfways on other settings is achieved through the elevation of modern/colonial individualist selfways as natural standards of humanity in hegemonic psychological science.

Denaturalization approaches to decolonization resonate strongly with scholarship and research that draws upon feminist standpoints to illuminate and disrupt the androcentrism of hegemonic psychological science. One of the most important contributions of feminist scholarship has been to illuminate how the implicit conception of the human that informs hegemonic perspectives of law, medicine, and social science is not a general person, but instead has male gender (see Harding, 1986; and Hegarty & Buechel, 2006). From this epistemic standpoint, many of the tendencies that scientists have portrayed as “just natural” features of the human organism are instead more specifically products of maleness.

A particularly pertinent case in point concerns the independent selfways that inform conceptions of human nature in hegemonic psychological science. Just as critical and decolonial cultural psychology perspectives locate the roots of these selfways in the cultural affordances of WEIRD settings, feminist psychologists have highlighted the extent to which these constructions of self resonate with male positionality. Accordingly, a decolonial feminist psychological approach has the potential to denaturalize both the androcentric and Eurocentric modern individualism that informs hegemonic psychological theory and method.

Decolonial feminist psychology has liberatory promise to the extent that it can challenge and overcome coloniality and androcentrism embedded into dominant forms of feminism, psychology, and feminist psychology. To the extent that feminist psychology is feminist, it inherits conceptual resources for decolonization, like intersectionality and standpoint theory, which emphasize the importance of researcher positionality and other expressions of a relational ontology. To the extent that feminist psychology is psychology, it inherits concepts and methods—especially positivist empiricism, over reliance on quantification, and experimental methods—that abstract phenomena from their context and reproduce the coloniality of knowledge and being. For example, Rutherford and Pettit (2015) have critiqued the androcentric implications of methodological individualism in (feminist) psychology. Although feminist scholarship provides inspiration for denaturalization approaches to decolonization, Rutherford and Pettit (2015) suggest that hegemonic perspectives of feminist psychology fall short of their emancipatory potential to the extent that they (often unwittingly) draw upon and impose modern/colonial constructions of the person inherent in psychological theory and method. Thus, we require a critical lens turned inwards in order to reconstruct a feminist psychology that can be integrated with decolonial approaches and used to challenge the material and epistemic power inequities in psychology. As Kessi and Boonzaier (2018) assert: “a decolonial feminist project for psychology centers questions of institutional racism, embodiment and space, identity-related impact of colonization and dispossession. These calls have to do with the psychological, symbolic, and material impact of segregation and exclusion from access to resources and centers of power” (p. 305).

For analytic purposes, we have presented these approaches to decolonization as separate strategies. However, successful articulations of a decolonial feminist psychology are likely to reflect a combination of these approaches. A decolonial feminist psychology will have the participatory ethos and commitment to local engagement associated with accompaniment approaches to decolonization. It will

take inspiration from place-based knowledge and marginalized, majority World ways of being associated with indigenization approaches. It will draw upon these engagements with marginalized majority World settings as a standpoint to denaturalize the modern/colonial habits of mind and ways of being associated with hegemonic psychological science. In the process, it will illuminate alternative habits of mind and ways of being, rooted in relational ontologies and epistemologies which better resonate with the emancipatory agenda of feminism.

Conclusion

Feminist and decolonial approaches share emancipatory aims. Both perspectives have an orientation toward social justice and a concern for counteracting oppression. Both perspectives note that hegemonic psychological science has an epistemic location in the experience of the powerful and acts as a tool to reproduce domination. Both perspectives draw upon experience of people in situations of marginalization as a resource to re-imagine psychology for use as an emancipatory tool.

Despite these similarities and shared aims, we have noted that decolonial and feminist psychologies prioritize different commitments that sometimes put them in opposition. On the one hand, feminist scholars have noted the potential for national leaders to reproduce patriarchy and heterosexism as a strategy to re-assert and defend post-colonial masculinity perceived as precarious in the aftermath of colonial domination (Narayan, 1997). On the other hand, decolonial scholars have noted the potential for hegemonic global feminist movements to operate in imperialist forms, such as femonationalism, that support neocolonial intervention to impose particular understandings of gender and sexual liberation (Farris, 2017).

The possibility that manifestations of coloniality haunt some forms of feminism brings us back to the quote with which we opened the paper: the idea that dismantling the master's house requires tools beyond those in the master's or mistress' toolbox. More specifically we propose that some forms of feminism, psychology, and feminist psychology are inadequate for the task of decolonizing psychology if they reflect and reproduce the coloniality and androcentrism of knowledge associated with ontological and methodological individualism. This issue perhaps is most readily apparent with respect to conceptions of liberation or empowerment associated with the emancipatory aims of feminist psychology. Stated in those terms, hegemonic feminist psychology may fail to reach its emancipatory aims—including the task of decolonizing psychology—to the extent that it uses neoliberal understandings of subjectivity that construct liberation and empowerment as abstraction from context and freedom to pursue authentic personal fulfillment independent of social constraints, as opposed to liberation in collective and structural terms (Rutherford, 2018).

We look to decolonial feminist psychology to draw upon habits of mind and ways of being across global settings as epistemic resources for decolonizing both

psychology in general and hegemonic feminist varieties of it. The keys to a decolonial feminist approach are the relational ontologies and epistemologies that not only inform everyday life in majority World settings, but also have been a prime contribution of feminist work. In some ways, then, the message of a decolonial feminist psychology is not so much a critique of feminisms in general as it is a return to foundational ideas of feminist thought.

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Bodies and Identities

Men and Masculinities: Structures, Practices, and Identities



Jeff Hearn, Sam de Boise, and Klara Goedecke

Since the mid-1970s there has been a substantial scholarly interest in critical, feminist, and gender research on men and masculinities, sometimes referred to under the umbrella term, Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM) (Hearn & Howson, 2019). CSMM involves the critical gendering of men, “naming men as men” (Collinson & Hearn, 1994, pp. 5–8; Hanmer, 1990, pp. 37–38), while simultaneously deconstructing masculinities and men. Critical analysis of men and masculinities involves a double move, whereby material social realities and inequalities are recognized, but at the same time assumptions around and constructions of men and masculinity are taken apart rather than essentialized. While much has been written by, for, and about men, the recognition of men as gendered subjects and the influence of gender on men’s own writing was only recognized following the Women’s Liberation Movements. Much of this work has been located within gender studies, sociology, or cultural studies, but there is also a substantial critical literature that is psychological, social psychological, and identity-related in orientation, and in turn orientated to problematizing men and masculinity. Specific empirical studies range across many social sites, including family, work, violence, sexuality, sport, and politics. Reviewing such research necessitates attention to both individual

J. Hearn (✉)

Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: Jeff.Hearn@oru.se

Human Geography, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden

Sociology, University of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, UK

S. de Boise

School of Music, Theatre and Art, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden
e-mail: Sam.deBoise@oru.se

K. Goedecke

Karlstad University, Karlstad, Sweden
e-mail: klara.goedecke@kau.se

men and masculinities, and men and masculinities more collectively, varying across contingencies.

In this chapter, we review some of this work, drawing on extensive empirical and theoretical studies, and with an orientation toward the psychological and social psychological. This includes attention to gender relations and power dynamics, social structures, intersectionality, bodies, practices, and identities, both individual and collective. More specifically, the chapter is informed by engagement with the following questions: are masculinity, masculinities, and men a problem? If so, how? Indeed, there has long been concern with the problems men create and the problems men experience, for example, in relation to risk-taking, violence, and health (Hearn & Pringle, 2006). The final part of the chapter takes up more focused studies of two important contemporary issues: first, more egalitarian masculinities, and, second, various non-egalitarian masculinities, such as incel and far-right masculinities, both online and offline.

In reviewing these issues, we refer to men as a social category, in terms of those who define themselves and are defined by others as such, rather than as a bio-essentialized ontology. In other words, men are not assumed to have an essential being defined by their biology. The social category of men is formed within gender hegemony—whereby gender categories and relations are taken-for-granted as given—in concrete everyday and institutional life, in interplay with other social relations and divisions, within which men act, agentically, both individually and as collectivities. To analyze and engage politically with this means both naming the social category of men, as a lived social reality, and deconstructing that category. Masculinities refer to patterns of gender practice that are structured, institutionalized, relational, embodied, dynamic, contested, intersubjective, performed, and performative. Masculinities are constructed *in relation to* societal definitions of men and males within gender orders, and while analytical distinctions can be made between people called men and males, such distinctions, as well as the term masculinity itself, are sometimes not unproblematic. Masculinities can be performed and sustained by men, women, and further genders, and can be understood as comprising signs, discourses, practices, and performances, that obscure contradictions.

Historical-Theoretical Overview

From Masculinity to Masculinities: Psychoanalysis, Anthropology, Sex Roles

Modern analyses of masculinity can be traced back at least to the psychodynamic psychologies of Freud and Adler, each of whom had a different interpretation. Freud (1917/1993) saw identification with parents who shared an outwardly similar sex to the child as key to the formation of either masculine or feminine characteristics; thus, those boys and men who identified with their mothers were likely to become too

feminine or even overcompensating as too masculine. However, Adler (1927/1992) saw the self as composed of both masculine and feminine components existing in varying degrees within each individual's psyche.

Indeed, in many ways, modern debates on masculinity have been fundamentally psychological, and often individualistic, since their inception. Psychoanalytic approaches have argued that adult character was not predetermined by the body but was constructed through emotional attachments to others in a turbulent process of growth. This involved a variety of psychological and social psychological processes, including the Oedipus complex; the gendering of the active and the passive; and the impact of the (socially masculinized) superego (Connell, 1983, 1994).

Subsequently, anthropologists such as Malinowski (1927, 1932) and Mead (1935/1993) emphasized cultural differences in such social processes and the importance of different social structures and norms between different societies. By the mid-twentieth century, these ideas had crystallized into the concept of sex roles, whereby gender is enacted through relatively fixed, socially approved ways of being female or male. In some cases, psychoanalytic ideas have also been used in other contexts and applications, for example, in cultural studies of masculinity and the exploration of cross-cultural differences and consistencies in the achievement of "manhood" (Gilmore, 1990).

As a consequence, in the 1960s and 1970s, masculinity was understood mainly as an internalized role, identity, or (social) psychological disposition, reflecting a particular (often US, Western) cluster of cultural norms or values acquired by learning from socialization agents (e.g., Eagly, 1987). In masculinity–femininity (m-f) measurement scales, certain items were scored as "masculine" (such as "aggressive," "ambitious," "analytical," "assertive," and "athletic") compared with other items scored as "feminine" (such as "affectionate," "cheerful," "childlike," "compassionate," and "flatterable"). The most well-known of these scales are various formulations of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974). Masculine and feminine characteristics were initially seen as mutually exclusive, then in later formulations as overlapping, related to, sometimes determined by, a priori sex, while being socially learned behaviors. However, while in many senses m-f and sex role approaches to masculinity can be a social antidote to purely biological approaches, they can be seen as (re)producing essentialism, psychologism, and individualism. To put this simply, such approaches have the advantage of allowing consideration of the social, but their disadvantage is that they do not attend sufficiently to social contextualization and social construction.

M-f and sex role approaches to masculinity were critiqued in the 1970s and 1980s for obscuring differences between cultural ideals and practices, ignoring the fact that the people assessing sex roles were themselves differentially gendered, lacking a power perspective, being biased from relying on mostly student samples in their construction, and being ethnocentric, especially US-centric (Eichler, 1980). Across cultural and historical contexts, there were variations in men's behavior and in social expectations of men, so there was no way of defining what counted as a male role. Importantly, both psychologically-framed m-f scales and more socially-derived sex role theory bring together an ambiguous mix of essentialism and context-specific

assessment and measurement of gender. Since the 1980s, masculinity scales have been refined, in terms of, for example, gender orientation, age, cultural context, and ethnic sensitivity (Levant et al., 2020; Luyt, 2005; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). Interestingly, both the psychoanalytic and the social psychological can be seen as presupposing or explaining “a relatively fixed and unitary ‘normal’ masculine personality, the result of a successful oedipal resolution in its psychoanalytic variant, the result of successful ‘sex-role’ learning in its social psychological one” (Jefferson, 2005, p. 215). These traditions—psychoanalytic, anthropological, sex role, and m-f scales—can be said to provide a backcloth to recent debates (cf. Connell, 1995, p. 5).

From Masculinity to Masculinities: Patriarchy and Power

At the same time as sex role theory and m-f scales were being critiqued, men were being analyzed societally, structurally, and collectively through various feminist theorizations of patriarchy. Such theories of patriarchy have emphasized men’s structural, social, power, and often dominant, relations to women, in terms of, for example, biology, reproduction, politics and culture, family, state, sexuality, economy, and combinations thereof. By the late 1970s, however, some feminist and profeminist critics were suggesting that the concept of “patriarchy” was too monolithic, ahistorical, biologically determined, and dismissive of women’s resistance and agency.

The two broad sets of critiques around masculinity/male sex role and patriarchy in many ways laid the conceptual and political foundations for a more differentiated approach to masculinities. Building on critiques of both sex role theory and deterministic social structural accounts, social constructionist perspectives highlighting complexities of men’s social power, of different scales and scopes, have emerged. In debates on masculinities, the work of Raewyn Connell and colleagues (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1995) has been central, framed in relation to theorizing patriarchal relations, with the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” seen as a political category, an aspiration never to be fulfilled. This thinking developed from research on the relations of patriarchy and capitalism, the reproduction of class and other inequalities in education and schooling, conceptualizations of body and practice, and derived inspiration from gay and some queer scholarship that critiqued heteronormativity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The hegemony at issue in relation to masculinities is hegemony in the patriarchal system of gender relations.

The first substantial discussion of the idea of “hegemonic masculinity” was in the paper “Men’s bodies,” originally published in 1979, and republished in 1983 (Connell, 1983). It discussed the social construction of the body in boys’ and adult men’s bodily practices. In discussing “the physical sense of maleness,” Connell marks out the importance of sport as “the central experience of the school years for many boys” (1983, p. 18), emphasizing the practices and experiences of taking and occupying space, holding bodily tension, skill, size, power, force, strength, physical development, and sexuality. In addressing the bodies of adult men, the

differential importance of physicality within work, sexuality, and fatherhood were noted. Psychological and social dynamics of masculinity were foregrounded, integrating psychodynamics in analysis of patriarchal relations. Connell stressed that “the embedding of masculinity in the body is very much a social process, full of tensions and contradiction; that even physical masculinity is historical, rather than a biological fact. . . . constantly in process, constantly being constituted in actions and relations, constantly implicated in historical change.” (p. 30). Later, Connell (1995, p. 77) went on to define hegemonic masculinity as “. . . the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.”

In identifying forms of domination by men, of women, and of groups of men categorized as “subordinate” or “marginalized,” the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been notably successful, with many theoretical, empirical, and policy applications (see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Among the most significant has been Messerschmidt’s (1993, 1997) work on masculinities, crime, and violence. Increasingly, different masculinities have been interrogated not as singular, but plural—as in hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalized masculinities. Here, complicit masculinity refers to masculinity practices whereby men benefit from the social dominance of men, while not actively seeking to oppress women; subordinated masculinity refers to masculinity practices that are subordinated by virtue of gender and/or sexual positioning, identity or expression, for example, gay masculinity; marginalized masculinity refers to practices in which the gender order interacts with other social orders, especially socio-economic, ethnic, and racialized order, as, for example, with black masculinities.

Much work has emphasized multiple masculinities both as ways of being men and as forms of men’s collective and individual practices. There has been strong emphasis on interconnections of gender with other social divisions, including age, class, disability, ethnicity, nationality, racialization, and sexuality. For example, relations of gender and class can mean different class-based masculinities both challenge and reproduce gender relations among men, with both cooperative and conflictual relations between men, and between women, men, and further genders (de Visser & McDonnell, 2013). Such relations are complicated by contradictions and resistances: intrapersonally, interpersonally, collectively, structurally. Much empirical research on men and masculinities has been produced within the global North. However, increasingly non-Western and global perspectives have become significant, as reflected in rethinking hegemonic masculinities in relation to global capitalism, and questions of geography, place, and space (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

To summarize, some of the key features of the framework developed by Connell and colleagues for examining masculinities that have become much more mainstream are as follows. First, the framework builds upon the critique of sex role theory (e.g., as theoretically inconsistent and not dealing with power relations sufficiently), moving to the use of a power-laden, plural notion of masculinities, and recognizing social structures rather than an individualized concept of masculinity. This places as central the insights of feminist, gay/queer scholarship, and sexual hierarchies more generally,

including relations between men and women, and between men. More specifically, the distinctions made between hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalized masculinities operate at different levels of analysis, notably, institutional/social, interpersonal, and intrapsychic psychodynamics aspects of masculinities. In addition, this framework emphasizes transformations and social change; contradictions, ambivalences, and at times resistances; intersections of gender/masculinity with other social divisions; and geopolitical locationality.

Having outlined a major and dominant approach to masculinities (plural), as opposed to masculinity, male, or masculine (singular), it must be emphasized that the term, masculinities, has been used in many, sometimes very different, ways; this can be a conceptual and empirical difficulty (Clatterbaugh, 1998). The concepts of masculinities and specifically hegemonic masculinity have assisted researchers, activists, commentators, and policy-makers in having a conversation about “something,” but not always about the same thing. Definitions and usages of terms have varied, and not all usages are consistent with the masculinities framework outlined here.

Debates on masculinities have raised many more general questions and critiques. These include the dangers of possible idealism and relativism; uncertain connections between cultural representations, everyday practices, and institutional structures; the relations between contrasting and dominating ways of men, notably tough/aggressive/violent, on the one hand, and respectable/corporate/controlling of resources, on the other hand; the implications of broad-based historical, (de/post)colonial and transnational critiques; and the impact of queer, trans and non-binary critiques, as around heteronormative dichotomies. These multiple critiques also provide grounds for deconstruction of the taken-for-granted category of “men.” In noting such questions (Donaldson, 1993; Demetriou, 2001; Hearn, 1996; Howson, 2006; MacInnes, 1998; McMahan, 1993; Moller, 2007; Schippers, 2007), we recognize the need for specification in terminology on masculinities, such as between psychodynamics, practices, structures, discourses, and identities, as well as an openness to taking on board diverse theoretical approaches.

Further Psychological Threads

As noted, psychoanalytic approaches—of different kinds—have been influential in both the early development of theorizing masculinity, and more critical approaches to masculinities. In the UK and elsewhere, object relations theory (following Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott) became influential by the 1980s (Frosh, 1994; Metcalf & Humphries, 1985). This was partly linked to moves from group-based consciousness-raising to feminist therapy, (pro)feminist group therapy, and individual psychoanalytic work. An insightful commentary on these issues was Ian Craib’s (1987) discussion of the contrast between Nancy Chodorow’s (1978) model of masculinity, which tended to emphasize its “bullying,” over-compensatory nature,

with an over developed superego, against Luise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach's (1983) version of more "fragile" and under-developed masculinity.

Meanwhile, consciousness-raising and materialist analysis, rather than psychoanalysis, were evident influences in much writing on men and masculinities. Consciousness-raising has influenced analysis of men's relations to patriarchy, particularly the critique of Marxism through materialist critique and its neglect of reproduction in favor of production (Hearn, 1987), collective memory work (Pease, 2000), and critical life history work (Jackson, 1990). The *critical* auto/biographical turn represents another strand of theorizing on men and masculinities following the logics of consciousness-raising. In epistemological terms, such approaches raise questions of how men's/male subjectivities may be construed and reproduced as "objectivity," despite the historical and political situatedness of knowledges.

Poststructuralist, Discursive, and Psycho-Discursive Critiques

Another major influence, from the late 1980s, on the construction of men's selves, identities, and subjectivities has come from feminist poststructuralist, ethnographic, and discourse analyses of men's talk and self-(re)presentations, providing close-grained descriptions of multiple, internally complex masculinities. Some of these could be labeled critical discourse analysis, others more psychoanalytical-orientated discourse analysis. These represent both development and critique of the masculinities framework as developed initially by Connell and colleagues.

Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (1999), striving to understand how norms are taken up, enacted, and negotiated in men's lives, identified three specific imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices in negotiating hegemonic masculinity and identification with the masculine positions: heroic, "ordinary," and rebellious. The first in fact conforms more closely to Connell and colleagues' notion of complicit masculinity: "... it could be read as an attempt to actually *instantiate* hegemonic masculinity since, here, men align themselves strongly with conventional ideals" (emphasis in original) (p. 340). The second distances itself from certain conventional or ideal notions of the masculine; instead "ordinariness of the self; the self as normal, moderate or average" (p. 343) is emphasized. The third is characterized by its unconventionality, with the imaginary position involving flouting social expectations. With all these self-positionings, especially the last two, ambiguity and subtlety, even contradiction, are present in self-constructions of masculinity, hegemonic or not. Indeed, one feature of the hegemonic may be its elusiveness: the difficulty of reducing it to a set of fixed positions and practices (Connell, 2001; Speer, 2005).

Key interventions in these debates include Tony Jefferson's (1994) explication of psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and discourse analysis in theorizing masculine subjectivity—clearly influenced by Wendy Hollway's (1989) writing and precursor to their joint work. Since the late 1980s, Jefferson has written, within the field of criminology, on the need to go beyond what he calls "the social break with orthodoxy:

power and multiple masculinities” (2005, pp. 217–218). Rather, he has favored feminist poststructuralist engagements with feminist psychoanalytical theorizing: “the psychoanalytic break with orthodoxy: contradictory subjectivities and the social” (pp. 218–219). Arguing that Connell has not realized her project of “grasp[ing] the structure of personality and the complexities of desire at the same time as the structuring of social relations, with their contradictions and dynamisms” (Connell, 1995, p. 20–21), Jefferson has made a clear distinction between “the social break with orthodoxy: power and multiple masculinities” and “the psychoanalytic break with orthodoxy: contradictory subjectivities and the social.” Accordingly, he placed himself against accounts of crime founded in more structuralist analysis and the accomplishment of gender in social practice, notably those of James Messerschmidt (1993, 1997), and those which he characterizes as of “a purely discursive turn” (Collier, 1998) which may be interpreted as playing down social structures. He re-emphasizes why it is *particular* men that do particular crimes, via pre-discursive psychodynamics that are located more deeply in the body, albeit socially constructed, and the need to acknowledge contradictory subjectivities of individuals within social contexts. This combination of psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and discourse analysis employed by Jefferson has similarities to the combined or composite theoretical perspectives used in some media and cultural analyses (e.g., Nixon, 1997).

The example above illustrates wider moves toward accounts of men and masculinities that span macro–micro, structure–agency, and material–discursive analyses (Bourdieu, 2001; Chambers, 2005; Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2003; Hearn, 1998, 2014). Indeed, distinctions between more micro, poststructuralist and more macro, structuralist, or materialist critiques around men and masculinities are not always so clearcut (Speer, 2001, p. 111; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Working Across Boundaries: Material–Discursive Analyses

Over the last 20 years, many further perspectives have gained ground in CSMM, including: de/postcolonial, critical race, body, violence, queer, transgender, posthuman, new materialist, affect, science and technology studies (STS), studies of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and ecological/environmental studies. Many of these moves can be understood as part of material–discursive analysis, which is a type of analysis which considers the institutional, structural, societal, material, and discursive contexts and constitutions of men’s practices and masculinities. Many of these developments have paralleled broader feminist debates, not least because of the strong presence of feminist scholars in CSMM.

Working across the material–discursive boundary has also become increasingly important, indeed obvious, in comparative, global, transnational, and de/postcolonial research and analyses (Hearn & Pringle, 2006; Hearn et al., 2015; Ratele, 2014, 2016). Such approaches make clear the diverse historical social structures operating transnationally between and across societies and national and regional levels, while connections are made to levels of individual psychology, identity, and practice. These

matters are placed within geopolitical change, such as around the environment, globalization, and neoliberalism (Enarson & Pease, 2016; Garlick, 2016). Intersections of social divisions have been very important in theorizing within critical race studies, postcolonialism, transnational studies, and kindred fields (Morrell & Swart, 2005; Ouzgane & Coleman, 1998; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Pease & Pringle, 2002; Ruspini et al., 2011). Men and masculinities are formed societally and transsocietally across trans(national)patriarchies (Hearn, 2015). Examples here are the impact of history, geography, and social, cultural, and discursive dynamics on experiences and constructions of migration and refugees, racism, nationalism and xenophobia, and transnational popular culture online/offline.

We now turn to this interplay of the material and the discursive, the material-discursive, by way of two more specific, contrasting contemporary developments: first, toward more egalitarian masculinities, and, second, toward more inegalitarian masculinities.

Two Contrasting Contemporary Developments

“New,” Egalitarian Masculinities and Masculine Positions

Parallel to imageries of men as hard, competitive, rational, unemotional, and violent, other imageries appear. Various scholars have in recent years indicated a “softening” of masculinity (Anderson, 2009; Forrest, 2010; Roberts, 2013). The empirical support in Western contexts for this has been based on men’s and boys’ perceived increasing comfort with displays of physical tactility with other men, media images of fathers active in childcare, and men who define masculinity in terms of “showing” emotions previously theorized as antithetical to Western constructs of masculinity. Scholars have sought to capture developments in how masculine positions are performed and formulated using terms such as “new,” “egalitarian,” “alternative,” “caring,” “inclusive,” “non-dominant,” “hybrid,” or “postfeminist” men or masculinities (Beynon, 2002; Gill, 2014; Hanlon, 2012; McCormack & Anderson, 2010). What these diverse scholars attempt to capture are changes in expectations, ideals, and to some extent practices in, for example, family life and personal relationships (Goedecke, 2022; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; McQueen, 2017), along with changes in how men are represented (Becker, 2014; Nixon, 1997) and men’s views on equality and homophobia (Barrett, 2013; Bridges & Pascoe, 2016).

Those emphasizing change have not necessarily advocated a wholesale rejection of patriarchal norms but rather “a co-existence of persistence and change ... [leading] contemporary masculinity to be somewhat attenuated or softened” (Roberts, 2013, p. 672), but the general explanation offered is a notion of change from “worse” to “better.” Other scholars are more skeptical on how far such practices represent “change,” and are instead critical of a depoliticized tendency to argue for historical novelty (de Boise, 2015; de Boise & Hearn, 2017; O’Neill, 2015). Understanding

power as normative and productive, ever-changing and adaptable (Foucault, 1990), it follows that even “new” and “alternative” positions and behaviors that do not overtly oppress, forbid, or violate must be scrutinized as expressions and products of power.

“New” masculine positions must thus be discussed critically to examine whether they indicate actual change in gendered and other power relations or whether such changes are superficial and are merely ways to make existing gendered power relations more legitimate. Such notions of “new” men have been analyzed as delineated, typically by gaining meaning from being compared to “old” men, associated with tradition, patriarchy, and authority. Indeed, the idea of the “new man” has existed in some form since at least the 1700s, often invoked during periods of social change without necessarily changing uneven distributions of economic or political power (Kimmel, 1987). “New” or egalitarian positions, seen by some as enlightened, modern, and progressive, involve construing other(ed) positions as lesser: a process often referring to divisions along lines of class and race.

Such processes of projecting oppressiveness onto othered groups have been noted by Australian, European, and US researchers (Barrett, 2013; Bridges & Pascoe, 2016; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994; Nordberg, 2005). Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Michael Messner (1994) critically discuss the “new man” in the US context and argue that he is produced through differentiation with, for example, Mexican immigrant men, a distinction built on racist and classist biases and obscuring of class, race, and gender privileges. The creation of new men should, they argue, be viewed as “strategies to reconstruct hegemonic masculinity by projecting aggression, domination, and misogyny onto subordinate groups of men” (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994, p. 215).

Drawing similar conclusions about anti-homophobic statements among Australian men, Timothy Barrett (2013, p. 71) nevertheless points out that rejections of homophobic positions and behaviors “have a political significance at the level of stated attitude.” Changes in opinions and attitudes, such as Barrett’s interviewees’ wish to position themselves as “tolerant” of homosexuality, are not meaningless, but their significance is unclear, and changes in practice are more difficult to find. This has also been discussed in research about fathering, where “new” fatherhood ideals have been shown to proliferate, especially in the middle classes in the Western world, but where most of the hard, repetitive, thankless work of parenting still falls to mothers.

These debates are mirrored in those concerning men and feminism. Men’s (relations to) feminism have been described as “oxymoronic” (Kahane, 1998, p. 214) and “wretched and intractable” (Nelson, 1987, p. 153). Yet, there are multiple examples, historical and contemporary, of men opposing their own gendered privileges and supporting the case of feminist women, and Bob Pease (2000) suggests that men are not only able but obliged to contribute to feminist analyses. Two often-discussed problems are: men’s gains from patriarchy, and their lack of experience needed to formulate feminist thought. Men gain power and advantages from living in a patriarchal society, by virtue of the “patriarchal dividend” (Connell, 1995). Denouncing this—in an absolute way—is only partly possible, as it is given by others reading the person as a man, and the status that accrues, as well as how the individual behaves.

Even feminist men gain from being men, which might undermine their feminism. However, pluralist accounts of men show that the patriarchal dividend is unequally distributed among men, as from various racialized and classed groups, which complicates the argument. Also, patriarchal dividends from being a man in patriarchal society are accompanied by uneven costs, such as health problems, ineptitude in relationships, violence, and incarceration, according to class and racialization, for example. In this view, men's feminism becomes less of an oxymoron, as feminism provides theories and methods for men to confront certain undesirable realities.

Some feminists, emphasizing experience as the base for feminist knowledge and positions, argue that men as a group lack the experiences of gendered subordination, exploitation, and sexual threat and violence that form the base of any feminist consciousness. The centering of experience is important to the evolution of feminist theorizing, knowledge, and analyses of the radical feminist movement but also to feminist epistemologies, which have often discussed women's standpoints as central to feminist thought. However, as Harding (1998) points out, experience is an important source of knowledge but not a short-cut that automatically leads to understanding. Feminist epistemologies hold potential of learning from and listening to others' experiences. This should theoretically make it possible for men to learn from others' experiences and produce feminist knowledge, through strenuous work.

The growth of intersectional and queer theorizing during the 1980s and 1990s, along with poststructuralist gender theories, has complicated many of these arguments. As Cary Nelson points out, discussing "men's" relations to "feminism," "appears to fix[ate] [...] relationships that are plurally and unstably constituted and immensely contextual" (1987, p. 153). Pease argues that poststructuralist understandings and tools, such as developing alternative discourses about what it means to be a man, how to relate to sexuality and to women, may assist in constructing new masculine positions. The question of whether changing gender relations is in men's interests will have to be reformulated; he suggests men's interests are themselves formulated within patriarchal discourses, and that men can reposition themselves and formulate their interests differently (Pease, 2000, p. 142). Poststructuralist perspectives emphasize differences between men along lines of race, sexuality, and class, as well as problematizing taken-for-granted connections between male, masculine, masculinity, and men (Halberstam, 1998), that is, meanings of masculinity may change when not performed by cis men. While such masculine performances may undermine normative articulations of masculinity as well as gendered power relations, they could also reproduce connections between masculinity and power (Nguyen, 2008). This renders arguments about men's positions, costs, gains, and experiences more complex still.

Studying "new" or feminist men or masculine positions is an interesting but complex endeavor. Rhetorical allegiance to feminist or egalitarian values may rely on distinctions between different groups of men, which need to be deconstructed and whose political, material, and discursive consequences need to be studied in themselves (Bridges & Pascoe, 2016; Nordberg, 2005). Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994) propose that analyses of masculinities should start in the lives of subordinated groups of men. Such a *modus operandi* would mean that research would be conducted using new groups of men's lives as points of departure, that intersections

would automatically be the focus of the research, and that such a focus would be less about lifestyles and instead concern power and politics.

Angry White Men? Alt-Right, Incels, and Anti-Feminists

In direct contrast to the notion of softening masculinity, recent years have seen increased use of the notion of “toxic masculinity,” even if, like notions of role, the term does not in itself highlight how masculinity needs to be understood as formed in gender power relations. Contemporary media and policy debates around masculinity have often been related to changes in economy, labor markets, loss of or threat to entitlement, and even feelings of powerlessness, alongside positionings of power. Such themes have been offered as an explanation for the rise of the far-right in global Northern countries (Ging, 2019; Gotell & Dutton, 2016; Grant & MacDonald, 2020; Kelly, 2017), as well as a more general resurgence of misogynistic, masculinist, and anti-feminist movements.

Attention has focused particularly on participation in the so-called “Alt”-Right movement, beginning around 2012, and tending to attract young, white, relatively affluent men from both Anglophone and non-Anglophone nations. Their most visible manifestation has been the “tiki-torch” marches in the United States in 2017, peaking after the death of anti-fascist protestor Heather Heyer at a counter protest in Charlottesville the same year. Here, white men in their late 20s to 40s visibly made up the core of protestors, as well as media spokespeople. The Alt-Right is xenophobic and anti-feminist, with strong links to white nationalist movements. Its popularity has generally been attributed to the architecture of user-generated content as part of Web 2.0 and the “culture wars” backlash against a perceived political correctness (PC) which President Trump successfully harnessed during the 2016 US election (Winter & Mondon, 2020). As Nagle (2017) argues, the appeal of the Alt-Right is indebted to gaming culture and similar contexts where young men and boys are prevalent. Indeed, one of the first orchestrated campaigns linked to the emergence of the Alt-Right was directed against two prominent feminist gamers: the 2012 “gamergate” movement. The term “manosphere,” which has supported the Alt-Right’s development, has been used to capture the essence of online spaces which are so vitriolically misogynist, they become largely the preserve of men (Ging, 2019).

It is appealing to frame young men’s ideas of being inherently subversive through their rejection of a more general cultural zeitgeist against “PC culture,” as an anti-feminist backlash (Faludi, 1992) indebted to the rise of Web 2.0. However, younger men tend to be more drawn, quantitatively, to radical political movements of almost every shape (Immerfall, 1998; Messner, 1997), and white nationalist groups attract men in far greater numbers than women. Xenophobic and racist movements have often increased during economic crises and far-right movements have always had direct links with a patriarchal conservatism and essentialist notions of gender. This means that there is often a good deal of overlap between anti-feminist and far-right movements by virtue of the types of behaviors that fascist movements emphasize

(Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2012). Empirical studies, based on big data, have shown significant overlap in the users of anti-feminist and white nationalist communities (Horta Ribeiro et al., 2020; Mamié et al., 2021) as well as the importance of essentialist ideas of masculinity on white nationalist forums (Sunderland, 2023).

Far-right movements have often made recourse to an idea of some “eternal masculine” (Ferber, 2000) whereby the idea of strength as a form of moral right, indelibly linked to masculinity, is desirable as a male character trait (Mosse, 1996). By extension, essentialist beliefs around the inherent immutability of masculine and feminine characteristics entail notions that being able to physically “protect” women (often as wife or mother) is what men should strive for. This encompasses notions of hierarchies between men dependent on their relationship to heterosexual reproduction and physical strength, most clearly in the language of “alpha” and “beta” males in their web-fora (Ging, 2019); everyone in Alt-Right circles wants to be, or claims to be, alpha male. Such individuals tend to prioritize group dominance behaviors and espouse notions of demographic threat to white populations (Forscher & Kteily, 2020).

To this end, the explanations for the popularity of the Alt-Right among young men are no different from theories about men’s attraction to previous far-right incarnations. This suggests that technologically deterministic arguments about social media as the main driver behind the popularity of the current far-right are wanting. The current incarnation invokes many of the same ideas as Mythopoetic and Promise Keeper movements of the 1990s (de Boise, 2023) which play off of broader forms of cultural misogyny. As Faludi (1992) noted, visible gains made by feminist movements are often met with a rise in counter-progressive tendencies. However, against economic determinism, it should be noted that anti-feminist movements have existed in some form since the early 1900s and their recent resurgence as a global political force has occurred across the world (Chowdhury, 2014; Johansson & Lilja, 2013; Wojnicka, 2016) rather than only where the 2007/2008 global recession hit hardest. Transnational cultural factors surrounding notions of masculinity undoubtedly in part shape the form that Alt-Right politics take and its success among young men at this point in time. In this respect, the specific historical conditions which have seen the increased visibility of feminist arguments online at a time of profound technological change where male-dominated subcultures have flourished online (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016), should be taken into account.

However, while conservative “culture warriors” and anti-feminist tendencies have a long history, incel (“involuntarily celibate”) subcultures represent a contemporary online manifestation of misogynistic violence not easily explained by concepts of patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity alone. Incel-subcultures have been defined largely through a self-belief that they are on the lowest rungs of any imaginary sexual hierarchy and embrace an inward-directed self-loathing at their perceived inability to fulfill normative expectations of masculinity (Ging, 2019). This has resulted in self-harm, including suicide, and also violence, specifically toward women (Grant & MacDonald, 2020; Scaptura & Boyle, 2020). Such online communities have exacerbated problems of self-harm and suicide more prevalent among men in many societies.

The concept of “aggrieved entitlement” (Kimmel, 2013) has sought to explain the motivations of white men, in particular, participating in white nationalist groups in the twenty-first century. Young men’s tendency to become involved in “identitarian” movements is explained as stemming from notions of socialized privilege that are implicitly an extension of patriarchal norms. This suggests that “masculinity” is not a structural position-taking at all but operates as an imaginary construct which leads to feelings of rage stemming from an ideal that becomes an obstacle to personal fulfillment. Again, notions of masculinity, in the singular, as either aggrieved entitlement or “cruel optimism” (Allan, 2018, p. 175) suggest a caricature of how men experience gendered socialization. While incels and the Alt-Right spring from similar worldviews, the way in which they express gendered behaviors is often, though not exclusively, very different.

Crucially, both cultures are similar in their identification of a feminism which they see as having become a dominant ideology and unfairly giving women more sexual freedom, control, and choice. They also divide men into “alpha” and “beta” subcategories (incels refer to alphas as chads) and the rise of both cultures can be attributed to belonging to the same user-spaces such as 4Chan and 8Chan. They differ inasmuch as, despite popular opinion, incels appear to span different racial groups and political persuasions¹ whereas Alt-Right adherents are more deeply steeped in white nationalist and right-wing ideologies (Hawley, 2017). Furthermore, incels self-identify as “beta males” and often emphasize their lack of sexual success as related to their own weakness in the face of a society which privileges strength. Alt-Right proponents, by contrast, identify as dominant and treat society as privileging weakness as a result of feminism.

These differences speak to one particularly important issue in the face of the current anti-feminist and misogynist backlash; namely the way that online misogynist, Alt-Right, and incel cultures use psychological arguments and the genuine social problem of taking men’s mental health seriously as a tool to appeal to young men especially. Jordan Peterson, a clinical psychologist from Canada, whose best-selling *12 Rules for Life* became a touchstone within the Alt-Right and among young men generally, blends self-help advice with anti-feminist and conservative polemic. In part, its success can be located in the more general neoliberal imperative which emphasizes mastery over one’s emotional life as a project for which the individual is solely responsible (see Illouz, 2007). However, the book also draws from Jungian notions, which treat order as masculine and chaos as feminine (Peterson, 2018) while arguing for men to reclaim the former. In this respect, his method builds off of similar tactics to those adopted by Mythopoetic men’s movement writers such as Robert Bly, in appealing to the notion of strength and domination as inherently masculine virtues while dividing the human psyche between masculine and feminine components (de Boise, 2023). While the book clearly resonated due to its simple self-help guidance

¹ A poll carried out by moderators of incel.co in 2020 found that 55% identified as white Caucasian but 45% identified as another racial(ized) category. Though the accuracy of this poll is obviously dubious and cannot be treated as fact, it gives some indication as to ethnic and political diversity. <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/online-poll-results-provide-new-insights-incel-community>.

(e.g., treat yourself as you would advise others to do), it lays the blame for what Peterson argues is men's denigration and men's mental health problems generally, at the feet of left-wing liberalism, feminism, and increasing cultural "decadence."

Similarly, more recently, social media influencer Andrew Tate's popularity among young men cannot only be explained in terms of his extreme misogyny, which is well-documented, but must be understood through the perspectives of his followers as focusing on men's mental health issues (Ging, 2023). Tate's arguments, as with Peterson, rely on the same kind of combination of firmly gendered, rationalist solutions—self-mastery through the application of will alone—with quasi-sociological assertions about how men are disadvantaged in society because they do not feel powerful. These arguments appeal because they provide easy targets and straightforward solutions. Nevertheless, they do a huge disservice to men in their denigration of the gains made in addressing men's mental health as a result of feminism, as well as neglecting the disproportionate power and wealth accumulated by men worldwide.

Concluding Discussion

Given these emergent, clearly gendered, forms of misogynistic and white nationalist violence, tendencies toward explaining a singular masculinity or various masculinities as either "softening" or "toxic," or as more egalitarian or definitely not so, may create some confusion. How can men be becoming "softer" according to some, and, on the other hand, increasingly attracted to more extremist ideologies? The co-existence of both discourses speaks more broadly to theoretical and conceptual issues in how to define masculinity in the singular, namely, that multiple contradictory ideas about what masculinity is and how men should behave may exist in a given society. This is indeed a central tenet of hegemonic masculinity.

Yet against hegemonic masculinity theory, these diverse supposedly "softer" or toxic behavioral patterns do not necessarily map neatly onto structural inequalities or intersections of class, race, or sexuality; arguably, how men are labeled by such intersections is increasingly fragmented in academic discourse and public perceptions. Theories which pin down masculinity into neat, discrete traits, which offer taxonomies of different types of masculinities in the plural, or resort to apolitical discussions of archetypes, are inadequate in helping to think through complex intersections of power and privilege. While masculinity may operate as an imaginary discursive construct which may motivate some men's attachment to certain ways of behaving, it is less useful as a way of explaining empirically why men do what they do.

In this case, it is more useful to think of the "hegemony of men" (or even *hegemonies*) (Hearn, 2004, 2012) rather than only hegemonic masculinity or to proclaim a wholesale and one-way shift in the architecture of some cohesive historic bloc. The social category of "men" is far more hegemonic than a particular form of masculinity, hegemonic or not. Focusing more explicitly on the hegemony of men seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by

the gender system, and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices. Critique by way of examination of the hegemony of men can bring together feminist materialist theory and cultural deconstructive queer theory, as well as modernist theories of hegemony and ideology, and poststructuralist discourse theory.

To conclude, it is necessary to both name men as men, as both a powerful societal structural reality and a social category, and de-naturalize and deconstruct men, to make the familiar strange—just as postcolonial theory deconstructs and de-naturalizes the white subject. There can be dangers in focusing primarily or only on masculinities, and de-naturalizing masculinities in such a way that men are re-naturalized. Studies of men and masculinities need to be placed within political, economic, societal, and biological/natural/ecological analysis, while also giving attention to the importance of the psychological, the social psychological, and matters of identity. Thus, the psychological may be contextualized and elaborated in the process of deconstructing men and masculinities, and their material contexts and constitutions.

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Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Identities



Joanna Semlyen and Sonja Ellis

Psychology has a long history of pathologizing LGB¹ identities. Prior to the 1970s, psychologists variously considered lesbians and gay men to be the product of congenital defects, arrested sexual development, or disturbed upbringings (Kitzinger, 1987). The majority of psychological research at the time focused on whether or not “homosexuals” are sick, how homosexuality can be diagnosed, and identifying potential causes of homosexuality (Morin, 1977). Until the (partial) removal of homosexuality for the DSM in 1973, homosexuality—for both men and women—was considered a mental illness.

Through much of the twentieth century, psychology (and allied medical disciplines) focused on finding ways to “cure” LGB people of their homosexuality. Known as “conversion therapy,” a range of clinical practices (e.g., hypohalotomy; electroconvulsive therapy; emetic drugs) were used by health professionals to coercively make LGB people act and identify as heterosexual (Dickinson et al., 2012). Although these practices were largely phased out in clinical settings by the 1990s, other forms of conversion therapy (e.g., exorcism; ex-gay ministries) have persisted. While contemporary psychological therapy has come to embrace LGB identities and extend support to those experiencing challenges in, for example, coming out or in their same-sex/gender couple relationships the historical legacy of pathologization and the prevalence of heteronormativity has often rendered therapy less than ideal. The majority of psychological therapies are individualistic and center on the idea

¹ In this chapter, we use the term LGB sexualities as a shorthand for non-heterosexual people. This is intended to include all people who are non-heterosexual, not just those who choose to use the specific labels “lesbian,” “gay,” or “bisexual.”

J. Semlyen (✉)

Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK
e-mail: J.Semlyen@uea.ac.uk

S. Ellis

University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand
e-mail: Sonja.Ellis@waikato.ac.nz

that power lies within us, and through introspection we can be empowered to overcome oppression (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993). For LGB people, this internalized construction of power gives us some access to self-determination but ignores the ways in which the power of LGB people can only exist within the framework of heteronormativity. Many therapeutic models and approaches are constructed around heteronormative principles that are problematic when applied to same-sex/gender relationships and families. Many types of couple therapy assumes gendered interactions derived from stereotypical relating between men and women that may not apply in same-sex/gender relationships; whereas other approaches (particularly those underpinned by psychotherapy) comprise deeply pathologizing models of same-sex/gender couple relating (Hodges, 2010). Similarly, most approaches to relationship and family therapy are constructed around conventional understandings of “marriage” and “family” (Hudak & Giammattei, 2014). While occasionally the language may be changed to fit, assumptions about interactions within the family group still orient to normative, heterosexual ways of relating; disregarding the ways in which family dynamics might operate differently in same-sex/gender headed families.

In tandem with (and partly as a result of) psychology’s pathologization of LGB identities throughout the twentieth century LGB people and same-sex/gender couples faced sociolegal exclusion. Male homosexuality was illegal until 1967 in the UK, 1986 in New Zealand, and much later in some USA and Australian states when the sodomy laws were repealed. Although the modern gay rights movement had been visible and active since the 1969 Stonewall riots, it wasn’t until around the year 2000 that rights-based issues such as same-sex/gender marriage and protection from discrimination gained traction resulting in legal recognition and inclusion. However, the path to recognition of same-sex/gender marriages was hard won given the level of resistance from those who felt that marriage should be the sole right of heterosexual couples. In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex/gender marriage. While others including Canada (in 2005) followed, some countries such as New Zealand (in 2004) and the UK (in 2005) opted for lesser—or at best, different in name only—version of marriage known as civil partnership/union. Although it was claimed at the time that this constituted “marriage equality” the institution of an apartheid system of marriage that distinguished same-sex/gender couples from other sex/gender couples ensured that heterosexual marriage retained its status as the “gold standard.” This resulted in the legally instituted maintenance of heterosexual relationships as having a privileged status over same-sex/gender relationships. In some other jurisdictions (e.g., Australia and the USA), the passage to marriage equality was much more complicated. In both Australia and the USA, the status of same-sex/gender marriage (and similar legal arrangements) was for many years determined at a state level. A strong right-wing Christian presence and other factors in some states meant that the legal recognition of same-sex/gender couples was not well supported, leaving inequalities between different state-level jurisdictions. It, therefore, wasn’t until a Federal ruling in the USA in 2013, and a plebiscite (referendum) in Australia in 2017 that marriage equality was fully recognized in those countries. The privileging of heterosexuality in this way has also been evident

in discussions around more recent issues such as the right to include LGB identities and same-sex/gender relationships in education; notably sex and relationships education (see Ellis, *in press*, for a more detailed discussion of both these issues).

The sociolegal recognition and inclusion of LGB identities has contributed to an increased level of inclusion of LGB people and same-sex/gender relationships in society more generally. Although there are still pockets of resistance where social prejudice exists, LGB identities have become normalized (at least in western societies) and LGB people enjoy a level of sociolegal inclusion that has never before existed. However, even in the western world this level of inclusion is not experienced by all. The existence of continued victimization against some LGB people, and the more subtle versions of discrimination including the appropriation of “gay” culture, indicates that the privileging of heterosexual identities and “lifestyles” is still very much present (Ellis, *in press*). These power dynamics are, however, not universally applied to all LGB identities/people. Axes of power around gender, culture, class, and affluence impact the subjectivity of LGB people individually and collectively. Invariably it is white, middle-class, male, cisgender, and heteronormative LGB people who most experience the benefits of social inclusion of LGB identities. In this chapter, we use both an historical and contemporary lens to explore the way in which LGB identities are impacted by heteronormativity and politics (e.g., liberal humanism; neoliberalism) which shape what it means to be LGB.

Heteronormativity: The Perpetual Problem

Throughout history, heteronormativity has been the dominant force of marginalization of LGB sexualities in that heterosexuality is taken as a universal given (Kitzinger et al., 1992). Heteronormativity (Warner, 2000) may be viewed as the reinforcement of certain beliefs about sexuality that legitimize and privilege heterosexuality within social institutions and policies (Cohen, 2005). Despite positive social change in western societies aimed at inclusivity, there is a dominant perception that heterosexuality is both the norm and the (most) natural form of sexuality, positioning LGB sexualities as “other.” The othering of LGB sexualities has historically been manifested in the positioning of LGB sexualities either as pathological perversions or as alternative lifestyles (Kitzinger et al., 1992). This is accomplished by what has variously been called “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich, 1980) or “presumptive heterosexuality” (Butler, 1990); the idea that everyone is assumed to be heterosexual unless otherwise stated.

The normalization of heterosexuality is maintained by a patriarchal and heteronormative society that privileges men over women and heterosexuality over other forms of sexual expression. This is reinforced by biological determinist and pronatalist assumptions of sex as inevitably procreative (cf. Hayfield et al., 2019), and the reification of gender as binary and unproblematically mapped onto biological sex. As a result of this inherent heteronormativity, academic theory and research around

LGB sexualities as well as grass-roots activism have often been characterized by resistance.

Perhaps the greatest source of resistance historically came from lesbian feminists who identified male domination and the institution of compulsory heterosexuality as underpinning the marginalization—and having a marked impact on the lives—of women and lesbians (Kitzinger, 1996b). As Adrienne Rich (1979) highlights:

lesbians have been forced to live between two cultures, both male-dominated, each of which has denied and endangered our existence. On the one hand there is the heterosexist, patriarchal culture... on the other hand there is homosexual patriarchal culture, a culture created by homosexual men, rejecting such male stereotypes as dominance and submission as modes of relationship, and the separation of sex from emotional involvement. The male “gay” culture has offered lesbians the imitation role-stereotypes of “butch” and “femme”, “active and passive”, cruising, sado-masochism, and the violent, self-destructive world of “gay bars”. Neither heterosexual culture nor “gay” culture has offered lesbians a space in which to discover what it means to be self-defined, self-loving, women-identified, neither an imitation man nor his objectified opposite. (p. 225)

Adrienne Rich was writing at a time when heteropatriarchy was at its strongest. Every aspect of life centered on the privileging and prioritization of men’s needs and desires, whereby women were relegated to domesticity. Within this framework, lesbians were seen as deviant and out of necessity they developed communities that centered on women and therefore were (largely) independent of men, including gay men (Murray, 2007). This was a time when the priorities and interests of lesbians and gay men were divergent; the worlds of gay men centering on connecting sexually with other men, while many—primarily white, middle-class—lesbians (as women) were focused on achieving emancipation for women. Although gay men were socially marginalized due to their sexuality, lesbians were marginalized (and disempowered) through being both women and lesbian. As the AIDS epidemic (pandemic) unfolded in the 1980s, there was a shift in power relationships with gay and bisexual men being vilified through AIDS-related stigma (Herek & Glunt, 1988). While lesbians were not implicated in the proliferation of HIV, AIDS-related stigma provided a vehicle to mobilize pre-existing prejudice against same-sex/gender relationships (Herek & Capitanio, 1999), intensifying that prejudice and shoring up the power and privilege of heterosexuality. For this, and other reasons (e.g., the waning popularity of lesbian feminism) lesbian and bisexual women joined their male counterparts in a struggle for social and legal recognition. So, the axis of power shifted from challenging male power and dominance to challenging heterosexual power and privilege.

As well as being marginalized in a male-dominated world, lesbians have historically been marginalized in relation to heterosexual women (Murray, 2007). In particular, despite lesbian feminists being active supporters of the wider feminist movement, lesbians frequently found that within mainstream feminism heterosexuality was assumed and that lesbian agendas were sidelined (Kitzinger, 1996a). While often perceived to be split along sexuality lines (i.e., heterosexual vs lesbian) the tensions centered on differing values and political priorities resulting in the marginalization of lesbian concerns (Kitzinger et al., 1992). Consequently, issues such as the right of lesbians to be socially and legally included were often subordinated to the agendas

of heterosexual feminists around liberation from men's control of their bodies and lives.

Psychology itself has been—and largely continues to be—a constant source of the perpetuation of heteronormativity. While explicit pathologization of “homosexuality” has become increasingly rare over time, since the mid-1990s psychology as a discipline has been heavily criticized for its heterosexual bias and omission, or at best marginalization, of LGB content (e.g., see Barker, 2007; Kitzinger, 1996a; Peel, 2001). For example, in a piece titled *The Token Lesbian Chapter*, Kitzinger (1996b) outlined the many ways in which Feminist Social Psychology routinely exhibited heterosexual bias through no more than a tokenistic inclusion of lesbian perspectives and concerns. However, little has changed in the last 25 years. Discussion of LGB perspectives and concerns are rare in mainstream psychology and are primarily relegated to the “specialist field” of LGBTQ psychology. Even then, most of the work comprises research on LGBTQ+ (or other variations of this initialism) people/issues as a *collective*, without regard for differences among and between the constituent groups within this collective. Furthermore, in lifespan development, where more comprehensive inclusion might be expected, topics like same-sex relationships, same-sex parenting, and LGB aging are still largely absent. For example, in the leading textbook *Adolescence* (Santrock, 2019) discussion of LGB youth is relegated to a subsection of the chapter on sexuality titled “minority youth.” Despite increasing evidence of the prevalence of sexual fluidity among young people (e.g., see Katz-Wise, 2015), LGB sexualities are still presented as the domain of a small minority of individuals pitted against a large heterosexual majority. Furthermore, in applied domains such as sexuality education, heterosexuality is discussed in relation to sexual behaviors and outcomes (i.e., as visibly sexual) whereas LGB sexualities are invariably discussed solely in relation to identity and therefore as desexualized (Ellis & Bentham, 2021; Quinlivan, 2018).

Due to the prevalence of heteronormativity, a focus on LGB sexualities is often seen as a niche field and therefore neither well-resourced with researchers nor funding. Consequently, there is only capacity to focus on a limited range of topics at any one time; and prioritization is necessary. With the passing of lesbian feminism, research that specifically focuses on lesbians is scarce; and work focusing on gay men and bisexuals is very limited. With an increased visibility of trans and non-binary gender, and the need to prioritize work in this area—particularly where it relates to ensuring equity and social justice for trans and non-binary people—there has been a noticeable decline in research focusing specifically on sexualities. Nevertheless, the focus is still on resistance to (cis)heteronormativity.

Liberal Humanism

With a gradual move away from a pathological model of LGB sexualities, from the mid-1970s psychology began to move toward a conceptualization of LGB sexualities within a liberal humanist framework. Within this paradigm, same-sex/gender

relationships became framed as individual lifestyle choices, personal manifestations of self-fulfillment, and loving interpersonal relationships by “human beings of equal worth and dignity to heterosexuals, contributing to the rich diversity of humankind” (Kitzinger, 1987, p. 44). Despite its (arguably) more positive connotations, a liberal humanist approach was not well received by all lesbian feminists. Marginalized both within society as women, and within feminism as lesbians, many lesbian feminists were critical of the liberal humanist approach for privatizing and depoliticizing (lesbian) identity by reducing it to a matter of “personal choice” and “sexual/emotional fulfilment” (Kitzinger, 1987). The problem they saw with liberal humanism was that it rendered invisible discourses of lesbianism as a source of empowerment or resistance to heteropatriarchy and denied (some) lesbians the opportunity to define themselves in sociopolitical terms (Crawley & Willman, 2018).

The key agenda of a liberal humanist approach has been the normalization of LGB sexualities within psychology, and within society more generally. In the “gay-affirmative psychology” of the late twentieth century, this was accomplished through a plethora of research demonstrating that lesbians and gay men were “just as” normal, well-adjusted, etc., as heterosexuals. While this approach was critical in the fight for social justice (e.g., in lesbian custody cases; in effecting legal recognition) it upheld heteronormativity by setting heterosexual norms as the benchmark against which LGB people and same-sex relationships were evaluated (Clarke, 2002). This more normalized approach was also problematic for lesbians, as it once again prioritized the agendas of gay men (as men) over those of lesbians (as women). What had, historically, been a lesbian and gay community with social groups and events focused on lesbian interests and a “gay scene” primarily focused on gay men over time became an LGB (and more recently LGBTQ+) community centering on gay male-dominated commercial environments in which lesbian and bisexual women were heavily marginalized. The increased visibility afforded lesbians and gay men by liberal humanism and gay-affirmative psychology facilitated the rise of the bisexual movement in the 1990s (see Ellis et al., 2020 for a detailed overview). Like lesbians and gay men before, bisexuals argued that a dichotomous approach to sexuality (i.e., “heterosexual” vs. “homosexual”) had rendered bisexuality invisible. This bisexual activism paved the way for the popularization of bisexuality through a heterosexist branding of bisexuality—for women in particular—as “sexual adventurousness” or the promotion of same-sex relating as an addition to primary relationships with other sex/gender partners (e.g., see Diamond, 2005; Jeffreys, 1999; Wilkinson, 1996). This shift signaled a move away from a politics centered on community, the creation of history and culture, and political resistance to male dominance (Jeffreys, 1999) to one centered on personal pleasure and sexual fulfillment. However, rather than transferring power to LGB sexualities, it reinstated the very heteronormative framework it sought to challenge.

Heteroceptability

While the narratives of *rights to be* abound in LGB lives, the creeping privileging of white, middle-class, and heteronormative lifestyles determines the “hetero[sexually ac]ceptable” *ways to be*. Specifically, the *ways to be* to be accepted in a heteronormative society. Thus, we find, LGB sexualities are *othered* through their non-conformity to the dominant heterosexual scripts. They are more readily embraced where certain ways of “being gay” intersect with other dominant values in western society, particularly pronatalism.² So, for example, the lesbian couple who are parents and live a suburban lifestyle are more likely to be included than are lesbian couples who live a butch, working-class lifestyle that centers on child-free behavior. In this respect, the extent to which LGB sexualities are included or excluded is contingent on adherence to white, middle-class norms and affluence. For example, the social desirability of the wealthy (usually gay male) celebrity is clearly evidenced by the successful out gay lives lived by those embraced by the media and the masses (e.g., Elton John; Adam Lambert). Transgressions of gender norms here are seen as fun and entertaining.

In both these examples, we see that money, and class, are both important features of heteroceptability. Money is inherently and unquestionably linked to power. In a world where LGB identity/sexuality confers poorer mental health (King et al., 2008; Semlyen et al., 2016) and poorer employment rights (Badgett, 2020), the power of money in the neoliberal world creates ways, means, and places to be “acceptably gay.” In the early 2000s, Duggan (2002) coined the term “homonormativity” to refer to the way in which normative ways of being “gay” do not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions, instead privatizing and depoliticizing gay culture. Essentially, this comprises the assimilation of LGB identities (and ways of being) so that they reflect the domesticity and consumption of mainstream heterosexual lifestyles (home ownership, a well-paid job, children, and marriage), and thus conferring advantage (Casey, 2011).

Frequently, this is about blending in. For example, the lesbian couple who present themselves in a conventionally feminine way can be read as heterosexual—assumed to be friends or sisters. Conversely, lesbian women who present in less conventional, non-feminine ways are quickly othered; labeled as “butch” or assumed to be trans. Underpinned by heteronormativity, heteroceptability privileges specific ways of being LGB, subversively forcing LGB people to adopt a very narrow, normative model of identity to gain acceptance and avoid accusation of disruption, and the subsequent societal effect of such transgression. Policing of LGB identities is therefore controlled and shaped by heterosexual framing (Butler, 1996), and a heteronormative society has the power to regulate who may or who may not be included from the LGB population, through the sanctioning of certain ways of being LGB and excluding others (Herz & Johansson, 2015).

Where heteronormativity imposes norms upon sexuality, it is difficult to look at this separately from gender as they are intertwined and interlinked. Moreover, these gendered norms, defined through the linguistic terms hetero- and homo-, are

² The ideology that promotes the reproduction of human life.

centered on a binary notion of gender, one that is rigid, aligns sexual orientation, gender and sex and one that privileges gender conformity. LGB identity representations are accepted or rejected contingent on societal constructions of gender norms under heterosociality. Performances of gender are therefore policed to ensure conformity to heteronormative understandings of gender (Butler, 1990). Historically, LGB identities/sexualities were not considered acceptable as they appeared to transgress taken-for-granted norms of what it meant to be a “man” (and therefore masculine) or a woman (and therefore feminine). Within this heteronormative framework, the existence of hegemonic masculinity (being strong, stoic, muscular, and dominant over women) means that men’s conformity is more heavily policed than is women’s conformity to feminine gender norms. This is one of the reasons that historically gay men struggled more than lesbian women to be “accepted.” However, the emergence of alternative male discourses which imply a “softer” form of masculinity (e.g., the sensitive new age guy; the metrosexual) over recent decades has afforded a wider range of ways to *do* man that gay men have been more readily seen as heteroacceptable. Heteronormativity, through its gender binary lens, also then recreates the power asymmetry valuing men and masculinity over women. Divergence from these gender norms and any negative feelings from society toward any flouting or deviating from this gendered norm is the significant underlying issue of homophobia. The lesbian experience is itself subject to greater oppression, first as a woman and additionally as non-heterosexual (Rich, 1980). For true acceptance, beyond heteroacceptability, complex, and multi-faceted systems require dismantling.

Identity Politics

With the decline of second wave feminism in the 1990s, a new century heralded the dawn of a new era, characterized by a postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2017). While the 1990s had been dominated by “lesbian chic,” an assimilationist politics that reinforced gender normativity (i.e., lesbians were readily accepted if they looked “straight”), the first decade of this century saw the emergence of a new incarnation of same-sex sexuality: Heteroflexibility. Ditching the 90s stereotype of the “lipstick lesbian” (a conventionally feminine lesbian), the dominance of heterosexuality was reinstated through the creation of the “heteroflexible” woman widely depicted in media as a presumed heterosexual woman who willingly experiments with same-sex sexuality (Diamond, 2005); constructing lesbian sexuality as a trendy add-on to primary relationships with men (Jeffreys, 1999; Wilkinson, 1996). Read by many as the normalization of lesbianism in mainstream culture, feminist writers were quick to highlight that these were in fact marketized versions of lesbianism constructed and produced for the heterosexual male consumer (Diamond, 2005; Gill, 2008). Today, lesbianism has come to exist within a postfeminist sensibility in which feminine appearance is maintained and non-heterosexually palatable expressions of lesbian

desire are marginalized (Farhall, 2018; Gill, 2017). This is evident in the disappearance of the so-called butch lesbian. The rules of exhibiting “lesbian behavior”—regardless of identity—have afforded the perpetuation of heteronormativity through, for example, the use of heterosexist language (e.g., “girls” or “babes”) in commercialized gay spaces (Gill, 2017) and the normalization of (certain types of) lesbianism within mainstream culture.

Rather than remaining simply as a feature of screenplays designed to appeal primarily to heterosexual men; heteroflexibility has been co-opted by, and played out in, young women’s sexual behaviors and attitudes. Aptly depicted in Katy Perry’s 2008 hit song “I kissed a girl” experimenting with lesbianism became the epitome of heteroflexibility; and engagement in public displays of suggestible lesbian acts (e.g., intimately kissing other women at parties) to demonstrate bravado, or to attract male attention, became a normalized part of the heterosexual repertoire (Yost & McCarthy, 2012). Over the last decade a new manifestation of heteroflexibility has emerged in the form of the so-called girl crush. Characterized by an intense non-sexual admiration of women, the girl crush conflates lesbian desire with platonic love and therefore trivializes sincere same-sex attraction, positioning it as akin to appreciation and aesthetic value, emotions commonly constructed as less important or meaningful than sexual desire and romantic love (Farhall, 2018). Further demonstration of continued infantilizing of women and dismissal of female sexuality is the absence of “woman-crush” in this phrasing. Gay male sexuality has been appropriated in the service of heterosexual masculinity. The popularization of terms such as “man crush” and “bromance” allegedly soften the rigid boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, enabling males to exhibit socio-emotional connections with other men (Robinson et al., 2018). This legitimizes homosocial relating among *heterosexual* men conflating gay male desire and platonic love. In all these instances, the power of heteronormativity to subvert and appropriate LGB culture is demonstrated. The upshot of this is that LGB identities become simply a commodity through which heterosexuality gains more power and privilege at the expense of non-heterosexual ways of being.

Over time there have also been significant shifts in the way LGB identities are constructed. While the initialism, LGB (and variants thereof) have been—and in many instances still are—used; sociopolitical changes have seen specific labels fall out of favor for a range of reasons. For example, the term “lesbian” has proved unpopular with younger generations initially for its association with feminism, and more recently for a range of reasons (e.g., see Ben Hagai et al., 2022) including that it does not describe the lived realities of young people. With increased capacity for self-identification and an increasing prevalence of sexual fluidity (e.g., see Katz-Wise, 2015) categorical labels relying on strict definition, and underpinned by normative constructions of gender, are seen as somewhat inadequate; hence the shift to more openly defined terms such as “queer.” Furthermore, over time the term “homosexual” (common in the mid-twentieth century) has been replaced with the acronym of LGB (lesbian gay and bisexual) and subsequently has grown in an additive way to become LGBT, then LGBTQ and subsequently morphed into a range of variants (e.g., LGBTQIA) to encompass an ever-increasing range of sexualities and genders. While

reflecting a shared experience of marginality in relation to heterosexuality, the arbitrary grouping together of a set of disparate identities assumes a level of homogeneity and shared lived experience that does not exist. A diverse range of “identities” have been subsumed under the various iterations of this initialism conflating and obscuring the intersectionality that exists within constituent identities of this initialism.

In recent years, there has been a sea change in identity politics where, particularly (but not exclusively) among young people, LGB identities are being regarded as somewhat passé (e.g., see Tate, 2022). In an increasingly gender diverse world characterized by a “queer,” or what some (e.g., Savin-Williams, 2005) have referred to as a “post-gay” approach to sexuality, the popularity of the “bisexual” label has waned with “pansexual” and “queer” sexualities emerging as popular alternatives. While historically bisexuality challenged the heterosexual-homosexual binary, with the foregrounding of gender diversity “pansexual” and “queer” are favored over “bisexuality” for their propensity to breakdown the gender binary that underpins both LGB identities and heteronormativity itself. There are many ways that this plays out and later in the chapter we demonstrate one example of this in an LGB health context.

Identity, Power, and Privilege in Practice

In contemporary western societies, one of the ways in which LGB identities are marginalized is in the appropriation of gay culture for commercial gain. One example of this is the proliferation of (usually) annual “Pride” events. Historically, pride events were part of a protest movement focused on arguing for rights and equality, reinforcing LGB identity, and providing a platform for LGB people to have a voice in a society where they were heavily marginalized. Over recent decades with the assimilation of LGB sexualities into mainstream society, Pride has been stripped of its roots as a protest movement and hijacked by a neoliberal agenda in which commercialization takes center stage in an effort to attract the lucrative pink pound/euro/dollar. Essentially, it has been transformed into an event supposedly celebrating LGB identity but instead promoting diluted liberal notions of “love is love” and “pride is for everyone” (HRC, 2019; Nölke, 2018). Its focus as a “lifestyle” event or “party in the park” speaks to a privileged LGB (and ally) consumer identity that is raced, gendered, and classed. While framed as “inclusion” it is devoid of any discussion of which LGBTQ+ identities, communities, and sociopolitical issues are excluded (Conway, 2022). In the same way, gay villages are treated as “theme parks” for heterosexuals (e.g., heterosexual women on “hen nights”) at the expense of LGB people trying to find belonging and a space free from heteronormativity. Even the gentrification of once gay villages/neighborhoods, the promotion of gay retirement villages and the existence of gay-exclusive resorts indicates the enormous commercial value of gay places/spaces in a heterocentric and neoliberal world. In this respect, gay culture is reduced to a commodity that can be exploited for monetary gain, benefitting the corporate world rather than advancing the needs of LGB people.

The privileging of heterosexual identities is also evident in education and practice around sexual health. Despite its evolution to be more inclusive of “diverse sexualities” and LGB identities, in most instances sex and relationships education still orients to conventional heterosexual narratives of monogamy and procreation. While this practice has been criticized for not representing the sexual realities of youth in the twenty-first century (Ellis & Bentham, 2021; Svendsen, 2012), it exemplifies the way in which heteronormativity affords power to heterosexual perspectives and experiences at the expense of LGB ones. Some clear examples of this are the way in which pregnancy prevention (an issue largely irrelevant to same-sex/gender relationships) and condom use (an issue irrelevant to “lesbian” sex) are prioritized over more inclusive discussions of sexual practices and “risk” that are independent of sexual identities. Where consideration has been given to LGB perspectives these often comprise tokenistic inclusion (e.g., see Ellis & Bentham, 2021). Furthermore, certain sexual identities—particularly lesbian identities—are heavily marginalized through the relative absence of sexual health information specifically oriented to woman-to-woman sex.

Health is an important context to explore health knowledge as a place of power asymmetry. Where literally what we know (evidence) can guide successful clinical care (treatment), health actually is a site of contest for LGB populations. A growing body of evidence shows that lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations are disproportionately affected by many national priorities for public health such as tobacco, alcohol, and drug use and LGB populations are known to have demonstrably poorer mental health (King et al., 2008; Lick et al., 2013; Semlyen et al., 2016, 2020; Simoni et al., 2017) rendering addressing LGB health a public health imperative (Semlyen & McManus, in press) and LGB health inequalities data essential.

Identity, Power, and Intersectional Considerations

Health service commissioning must consider LGB people as part of their service development but in so doing need to retain a nuanced understanding about the different views and needs of lesbian identified women, bisexual people, and gay men. Conflating all health needs as the same, under the umbrella of LGB, or LGBTQ+ as is commonly used at time of writing, risks the very real possibility that some groups are left behind. Sexual health services are a good example of this. Often LGB health is conflated with sexual health, and that sexual health itself is conflated with HIV services for gay men meaning that no other aspects of sexual minority health are considered, and services are never created or withdrawn (e.g., cervical screening clinics for lesbians only).

In the same way, LGB or LGBTQ+ are used to refer to a supposed homogenous group of people but there are multiple intersecting identities within this group. An intersectional perspective recognizes disadvantage but does not place it within a single axis framework (Crenshaw, 1989). Multiple minority identities, conceptualized as intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989), suggest that living with

multiple marginalized identities can be multiplicative (Aranda et al., 2015) and we see this borne out across sexual minorities who are ethnic minorities (Semlyen & Ellis, 2020) as well as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

These differences exist across a range of health outcomes. Gay and bisexual men have other, differing health inequalities to sexual minority women, for example, they have higher rates of certain types of cancer: anal (Goldstone et al., 2011) and skin (Blashill & Safren, 2014). Conversely, lesbian and bisexual women have higher risk of breast, cervical, ovarian, and lung cancers compared to heterosexual women (Clavelle et al., 2015) reflecting particular and different health risk behaviors undertaken by different subgroups such as smoking, tanning, exercise, and substance (mis)use. We know that there is a relationship between living in hostile social, home, and work environments and impoverished health so the observed differences in sexual minority health across gender reflect different pathways to poor health in these populations. These differences may represent different received psychosocial stressors for men and women and across lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities and they certainly represent widely observed differences between men and women's health.

The importance of intersectionality as a lens to interrogate the complex underpinning of multiple intersecting and additive disadvantage is crucial if we are to understand the interplay between power, gender, and sexuality. Looking at health outcomes and health behaviors as a landscape, disaggregated findings across lesbian, gay, and bisexual categories importantly reveal a range of other intersecting factors influencing LGB health, in particular the role of gender. For example, unhealthy weight has been found in lesbians and bisexual (LB) women and in gay and bisexual (GB) men in relation to their heterosexual counterparts and it is likely that societal attitudes and lived experiences will be on the causal pathway to these inequalities (Hatzenbuehler, 2009). This unhealthy weight manifests itself differently across gender. Findings from a recent UK population study revealed that GB men are *more* likely to be underweight and LB women *less* likely to be underweight than their heterosexual counterparts (Semlyen et al., 2020). The observed differences show us that the relationship between sexuality minority individuals and their diet and/or bodies and how this is impacted by received or perceived discrimination, stigma, and social exclusion appears to be moderated by gender(ed experience). For instance, research shows that gay and bisexual men report more disordered eating than lesbians and bisexual women (Peplau et al., 2009) and that sexual minority women have higher levels of body satisfaction whereas young gay and bisexual men self-perceive as overweight. These are likely directly linked to identity where gender norms prevail especially strongly for the gay male body aesthetic (King et al., 2008; Peplau et al., 2009).

Knowledge (About Sexual Minority Health) Is Power

Sexual orientation identity categories (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual) may have limited usefulness for sociological purposes where identity is interrogated and categorical boundaries disrupted, say through a queer lens (Gamson & Moon, 2004), but are hugely useful for demonstrating health inequalities in minority populations (Semlyen, 2017) for public health purposes. These can be used to influence policy which in turn directs resources to address the very health needs identified. Resistance to capturing data either through suppression or exclusion (Pillay et al., 2022) is common and ongoing, despite legislative and societal attitudinal gains. Power asymmetry is evident in recent rollbacks to sexual identity data collection in the USA during the Trump administration (Gates, 2017).

The inclusion of a survey question on sexual orientation identity within national, representative surveys in the UK and USA has allowed the rigorous analysis of population wide health outcomes among sexual minorities not possible before. The majority of research looking at health in LGB groups has relied on snowball techniques to recruit and depended on convenience samples, resulting in ungeneralizable findings which then cannot be used for policy or resources. Impoverished LGB study research design wastes LGB participant and researcher time, and thus is unethical. Only some national health surveys collect sexual orientation identity as part of standard demographic data and even then, in the UK, only since 2008. Monitoring of sexual orientation identity is now mandated in the UK National Health Service but yet to be widely implemented (Almack, 2023). Indeed, we know little about successful mental health treatment for LGB as most intervention studies omit any data on sexual orientation (Semlyen, in press) or fail to record it in the first place (Heck et al., 2017). These disaggregated differences in health outcomes and service evaluation are important to discover and report not least because frequently, prevalence studies group sexual minorities into a single category of “non-heterosexual,” losing all nuanced and observable differences between men and women and different sexual identities. However, these disaggregated differences are all the more important in the light of recent challenges to the collection, analysis, and reporting of this level of nuanced data (Sullivan, 2020). The importance of this level of data analysis as *evidence* of need and its direct link with accurate resourcing of health service treatments and services cannot be underestimated.

Data collection in national health surveys is the only source of representative health outcome data (evidence) available for sexual minorities in most countries, e.g., USA, UK, and New Zealand. Analyses drawing on representative datasets provides statistical power that allows us to generalize to the population as a whole (Semlyen, 2017) while also disaggregating across gender and sexuality. Quality evidence guides health knowledge and drives resourcing. This way LGB sexualities are counted, and count.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have outlined ways in which LGB identities are marginalized by heteronormative politics that reflect heterosexual privilege and prioritize men and masculinity in numerous domains including fiscal and health. Through this we position heteronormativity, heteroacceptability and gender binary as structures that delineate and define LGB sexualities through sustaining existing power asymmetry.

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The Power of Self-Identification: Naming the “Plus” in LGBTQ+



T. Evan Smith and Megan R. Yost

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT): these four well-established identities provide the central framework that is used by both the public and scholars to understand sexual and gender minority people. This framing, however, overlooks or ignores the experiences of an increasing number of people who do not identify with the traditional identities. Currently, in the early decades of the twenty-first century, the number of self-identification terms used by members of the LGBTQ+¹ community has grown dramatically; these include gender identities outside of the gender binary (e.g., nonbinary, genderqueer, agender, and genderfluid), and sexual identities that reflect changing understandings of gender (e.g., pansexual) and more complex understandings of sexual and romantic feelings (e.g., asexual, demisexual). The creation and use of these new identity terms is a powerful way that queer people destabilize assumptions about gender and sexuality and resist minority stress.

In this chapter, we center our discussion on those left out of the LGBT acronym. We consider the role of shifting historical and social context in shaping the rise of nontraditional sexual and gender identities, examine the nuances and variations within these identity categories, and consider the clinical and research implications of affirming,

¹ We use the acronym LGBT to refer to traditional identity labels (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) and LGBTQ+ (which adds queer and unspecified others) to refer to the more expansive and diverse community that is the subject of this chapter. We occasionally use the term *queer* on its own as an umbrella term (as is often used by members of the LGBTQ+ community) (Pfeffer, 2014) to refer to people, relationships, and communities that do not conform to heteronormative and cisgender prescriptions (Hammack et al., 2019).

T. E. Smith (✉)
Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA, USA
e-mail: smith@etown.edu

M. R. Yost
Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA, USA
e-mail: yostm@dickinson.edu

careful attention to gender and sexual diversity. We argue that the increasing adoption of nontraditional sexual and gender identities reflects the ongoing evolution of language related to sexuality and gender as well as the growing empowerment of queer people. Creating and claiming new identities is a means of self-definition and resistance to restrictive conceptualizations of sex, gender, and sexuality.

The increased visibility of LGBTQ+ people and ongoing growth of queer communities has contributed to the empowerment of queer people and their use of new identity terms. Although LGBTQ+ communities continue to be marginalized and experience stigma, discrimination, and violence, these identities have become more socially recognized and accepted in recent years in parts of the U.S. Within some U.S. states, legal developments have provided further recognition of identities and relationships and afforded protections for LGBTQ+ people (e.g., 25 states banning sexual orientation conversion therapy on minors; 22 states providing the option for gender-neutral “X” on identity documents). These gains are not linear, though, and backlash continues to build. As of early 2023, bills in over 20 U.S. states ban teachers from discussing LGBTQ+ identities in school, and approximately 18 U.S. states require transgender youth to participate in sports according to their sex assigned at birth. Worldwide, LGBTQ+ people experience an array of social and political inequities and discrimination (Alessi et al., 2020 in Europe; Corrales & Pecheny, 2010 in Latin America; Manalastas et al., 2017 in Southeast Asia; Milković, 2013 in Croatia; Reid et al., 2022 in Thailand), along with attempts at sexual orientation and gender identity conversion therapy (see Horne & McGinley, 2022, for an international review). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) holds that experiences of discrimination strengthen identification with one’s group; therefore, LGBTQ+ people experiencing oscillations in social support may feel an increasing sense of social identification and group identity.

Another key factor in the growth of new identity labels is a shift away from a medicalized view of sexual and gender diversity. Whereas the initial labeling of same-sex desire and gender difference was imposed upon LGBTQ+ people from the medical community via the pathologization of sexual and gender “deviance,” current labels are emerging from within LGBTQ+ communities themselves. These new terms represent nuanced and varied self-identification processes that demonstrate pride in and ownership of gender and sexuality labels.

Historical Changes in Language: From Medicalized Models to Self-Definition

A complete history of terminology for same-sex attractions and behavior is beyond the scope of this chapter (Bullough, 1994; Halperin, 1990, 2002); however, in brief, labels initially were coined by sexologists and psychiatrists during the move toward classification and empiricism in the mid-to-late 1800s (von Krafft-Ebing, 1931). By the early 1900s, sexologists narrowed in on the term homosexuality to refer to

sexual inversion and same-sex attractions (Terry, 1999). In 1910, Magnus Hirschfield published the first text to explicitly separate gender difference from same-sex sexuality (Hirschfield & Lombardi-Nash, 1991). These medicalized models pathologized gender and sexual difference and offered a fixed, essential view of gender and sexuality that became central to scholarly and public understandings.

As publicly accessible, activist gay and lesbian communities formed in urban centers in the U.S. in the early- to mid-twentieth century, LGBT people created their own labels. An early activist organization, the Mattachine Society, used the term *homophile* in the 1950s; an offshoot of that organization later became the Gay Liberation Front. In a similar time frame, lesbians were actively organizing in groups such as the Daughters of Bilitis and Lavender Menace. Alongside this political activism, sex research progressed in the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., Kinsey) and public discourse about bisexuality opened as well. Terminology for trans people shifted within the medical community from *inverts* to *transvestites*, with some trans people in the U.S. beginning to self-identify as *cross-dressers* and *transsexuals* in the 1960s. By the late 1980s, the term *transgender* began to be used as an inclusive identity category (Beemyn, 2014). The mid- to late-twentieth century, then, saw radical shifts from oppressive definitions of same-sex sexuality and gender difference imposed by the medical community to self-identification by LGBT people with autonomy and pride.

Patricia Hill Collins terms this shift the “power of self-definition” (1991, p. 227). Collins explains that marginalized individuals are oppressed at individual (personal biography) and group (cultural context) levels and resist oppression at each level.² At the individual level, consciousness of one’s unique experiences, thoughts, and feelings creates the possibility of freedom from the matrix of domination. Individuals begin resisting domination through narrating their personal biography (Collins, 1991, 2019). This resistance then operates at the cultural level when shared experiences and identities are given meaning and are validated by similar others. Marginalized communities, then, create a culture of resistance by drawing on individual consciousness and shared experiences. Collins ultimately argues that “subordinate groups become empowered when we understand and use those dimensions of our individual, group, and disciplinary ways of knowing that foster our humanity as fully human subjects” (p. 230).

LGBT individuals, marginalized by societal norms that valued heterosexual, procreative, and monogamous forms of intimacy (Rubin, 1999), engaged in empowerment through self-definition: creating identity labels, sharing those labels, and finding strength in community. Self-definitions were informed by gender, sexuality, and other significant aspects of identity (e.g., culture, social class, generation), and reflected a claiming of self within the context of oppressive expectations for gender and sexuality.

² Collins argues for a third level—the systemic (social institutions). For the purposes of our argument, we are considering only the first two levels.

Psychological Terminology: From “Sexual Orientation” to Self-Defined Identity

The medical model of sexuality historically centered on individuals’ sexual attractions framed in terms of *sexual orientation*: “an internal mechanism that directs a person’s sexual and romantic disposition toward females, males, or both, to varying degrees” (Savin-Williams, 2014, p. 446). These sexual interests and behaviors were assumed to be the result of an enduring erotic orientation to persons of a particular sex. This perspective reflected a binary understanding of sexual attractions that positioned the category of *homosexual* as distinct, nonoverlapping, and opposite from *heterosexual* (Callis, 2014).

Sexual identity, by contrast, refers to how an individual understands their romantic and sexual attractions, feelings, and behaviors as well as the label(s) they use. It is widely recognized that sexual orientation and sexual identity do not always align (Morgan, 2013) because heterosexism and prejudice against sexual minority people prevents some people from identifying as LGBTQ+. Sexual identities are both personal and relational—they are based on one’s understanding of the self and are informed by one’s attractions and behaviors to others (Better, 2014). Gender/sex is understood as central to sexuality, so most sexual identities are based on one’s sex and the sex of the people to whom one is attracted (Galupo et al., 2014).

Psychological understandings of gender have been predicated on a binary understanding of sex and gender; people are expected to fit in one of two mutually exclusive categories—female/feminine or male/masculine (Hyde et al., 2018). These categories are defined in opposition to one another such that a characteristic of one sex (e.g., emotionality) is expected to not characterize the other sex. Binary understandings of gender contribute to narrow understandings of sexuality that shaped the traditional sexual identity labels (LGBT). Binary perspectives continue to pathologize gender and sexual difference and reinforce power structures that limit women, gender nonconforming people, and sexual minorities.

However, starting with the earliest documented emergence of LGBT communities in the mid-twentieth century (in the U.S.), LGBT people defined gender for themselves, often outside of this binary. As studied extensively by Heidi Levitt and colleagues (see Levitt, 2019 for a review), lesbian gender identities (*butch* and *femme*), gay men’s gender identities (*bear*, *leatherman*), and family/house structures (led by gay men or trans women, referred to by parental titles like *mother*) all show the ways that queer people have rejected or reinterpreted the gender binary. These other ways of doing gender specifically reject the link between gender and sex, and reject the notion of only two genders. Instead, queer genders throughout the mid-twentieth century and into the twenty-first show an expansive understanding of gender beyond the binary, not tied to specifically sexed bodies.

These more nuanced understandings of gender developed within specific communities. Butch and femme lesbian genders and gay men’s leather and bear communities emerged from working-class, predominantly White communities that often

excluded people of color (Barrett, 2017; Kennedy & Davis, 1993). In contrast, families/houses emerged from working-class, urban, Black, and Latinx communities, possibly reflecting the kinship tradition of the African diaspora and the emphasis on the extended family valued in communities of color (Chauncey, 1994). Lesbians of color developed their own gendered terminology, using *stud* and *aggressive* rather than *butch* (Kuper et al., 2014). Thus, LGBT genders have carried specific meaning tied to race and class.

These variations demonstrate the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality theory, initially developed by Black feminist scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and Patricia Hill Collins (1991, 2019), focuses on the ways that an individual’s experience is shaped by their multiple, intersecting identities. An intersectional analysis centers on the power, privilege, and oppression that characterize individuals’ experiences of their social worlds. Although psychologists have long considered the interrelationships among sex, gender, and sexuality, it is only more recently that LGBTQ+ identities have been studied in conjunction with other social identities and with attention to privilege and oppression. Differences in gender identity labels and social/familial structures between White LGBTQ+ communities and LGBTQ+ communities of color (who navigate resistance to racism as well as heterosexism/homophobia; Cohen, 2014) demonstrate the vital importance of using an intersectional lens.

Expansion, Nuance, and Specificity: Language Beyond the Binaries

At the current moment, we are witnessing an explosion of labels for gender and sexual identities. This shift in language reflects movement away from binary understandings of gender and sexuality and demonstrates the ways in which LGBTQ+ people have become more free to name and define their experiences on their own terms (Jourdan & Keenan, 2022). Studies have consistently found that between 10 and 30% of people who identify with the LGBTQ+ community utilize newer sexual identities (Galupo et al., 2014, 2015; Gray & Desmarais, 2014). A nationally representative study of sexual minority U.S. adults found that 12.5% used a nontraditional sexual identity label, with 5.8% identifying as queer and 6.7% using another sexual identity label (e.g., pansexual, same-gender loving, asexual, anti-label) (Goldberg et al., 2019). A similar pattern was found among Australian sexual minority adults with 15.7% of respondents having a nontraditional sexual identity label (7.6% queer, 6.6% pansexual, 1.5% another sexual identity label) (Morandini et al., 2017). Furthermore, many LGBTQ+ people understand their sexual and gender identities to be fluid and potentially shifting over time and context (Galupo et al., 2017a). In short, LGBTQ+ people and communities are now naming themselves in increasingly complex, nuanced, and precise ways.

In many ways, the proliferation of gender and sexual identities follows theory development within feminist scholarship and queer theory. Queer theory challenges

fixed notions of identity and destabilizes gender and sexuality binaries (Balzer Carr et al., 2017; Ben Hagai & Zurbruggen, 2022; Duggan, 1992). These ideas are central to how many people with queer genders and sexualities understand their own identities (Galupo et al., 2017b). Viewing gender and sexuality as spectrums rather than as discrete categories enables people to see their own gender and sexuality as potentially fluid and shifting. These new understandings have empowered individuals to explore and develop their identities in new ways, less constrained by binary models of gender and sexuality.

Feminist social science researchers have noted, and celebrated, the challenges that are posed when people's sexual and gender identities are not confined by binaries. Psychologist Sandra Bem seemed prescient when, in 1995, drawing on the work of Judith Butler, Mary Douglas, and Anne Fausto-Sterling, she wrote, "I propose that we let a thousand categories of sex/gender/desire begin to bloom in any and all fluid and permeable configurations" (p. 330). Bem's hope was that an explosion of identity categories would enable society to "dismantle gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality" (p. 329). While societies around the world are still far from that ideal outcome, individuals are increasingly refusing to be boxed in by societal expectations of gender and sexuality. Language represents "both a site of creativity and constraint" (Jourdan & Keenan, 2022, p. 9) as more nuanced and fluid understandings of sexuality and gender identities are unintelligible within traditional identity labels. By using newer gender and sexuality identity labels, people have shed many of the restrictive assumptions of traditional labels.

New Identity Labels

In the twentieth century, the replacement of medical/psychiatric terminology with the terms *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *trans* represented an empowering act of self-definition by members of marginalized groups (Collins, 1991). In the twenty-first century, this process continues with a proliferation of identity labels emerging from LGBTQ+ communities.

As psychologists, we can understand this process as a search for authenticity in the face of minority stress and stigma (Meyer, 2003). Minority stress refers to the psychological and social stressors that come from being LGBTQ+ in a heterosexist and cissexist culture. Minoritized people, who face higher rates of discrimination and violence, are at greater risk of lower psychological well-being and poorer mental health. Meyer theorized that LGB people struggle to avoid discrimination and the internalization of stigma while meeting a "need for self-integrity" (Meyer, 2003, p. 682). Scholars have interpreted this "need for self-integrity" as a desire to be authentic: both being aware of one's "true self" and existing in the world in ways that are consistent with one's true self (Riggle et al., 2017; Riggle & Rostosky, 2012; Wood et al., 2008).

In the context of emerging identity labels, authenticity can be understood as a refusal to settle for language that does not fully convey one's identity. Adopting

more recently developed identity labels has multiple positive functions: creating an authentic sense of self in terms of personal identity (“need for self-integrity,” Meyer, 2003), communicating details about the self to others (creating a positive social identity, Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and creating social support networks with other LGBTQ+ people (Barsigian et al., 2020; Meyer, 2003). Each of these functions buffers the potential negative impact of minority stress on psychological well-being (Brownfield & Brown, 2022; Riggle et al., 2017; Swann et al., 2023).

In the sections that follow, we introduce four newer categories of gender and sexual identity labels: nonbinary, queer, pansexual, and asexual. We consider the social and historical context within which each arose, convey the meanings given to these labels by those who use them, and provide some demographic data on those who hold the identities. Where the research exists, we also consider intersections among these labels and other social identities.

New and Emerging Gender Identities

Nonbinary is an umbrella term that encompasses multiple gender identity terms held by individuals whose genders are not captured by the binary terms of man and woman. Nonbinary people report a variety of experiences of gender including: a combination of male and female (e.g., androgynous, bigender), primarily one gender but not fully (e.g., demigirl, femme man), a fluid sense of gender (e.g., genderqueer, gender fluid, gender variant), something outside of the defined categories (e.g., third gender, pangender), or non-gendered (e.g., agender, genderless, neutral, neutrois) (Galupo et al., 2017a; Hegarty et al., 2018; Tate et al., 2013). Claiming genderqueer, gender-blending, and gender fluid identities was part of the work of trans activists and authors who rejected the gender binary as early as the 1990s (Bornstein, 1994; Feinberg, 1992; Stryker, 1994), but the expansive growth of nonbinary identification labels is a more-recent phenomenon.

Within psychological research, people with trans and nonbinary identities are often grouped together. Substantial numbers of trans people identify in a nonbinary way, either through selecting multiple gender identities or selecting nonbinary labels (Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2016; Kuper et al., 2012). However, while many people identify as both trans and nonbinary, many do not, and there may be key differences between people holding each identity.

Several studies have found more frequent nonbinary identification by people who were assigned female at birth than those assigned male at birth (AFAB and AMAB, respectively) (Hammack et al., 2022). This may be because of the greater stigma AMAB people face when defying norms of traditional masculinity (Hammack et al., 2022). There are also generational and age differences: people from earlier age cohorts are more likely to hold binary trans identities while those from more recent cohorts are more likely to hold nonbinary identities (Beemyn, 2014; Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). Generation impacts access to affirming language; genderqueer adults from earlier generations experienced greater challenges finding labels that fit their experience of gender (Barsigian et al., 2020).

Nonbinary people are creatively developing new labels and categories that better reflect their sense of authentic self (Riggle et al., 2017). Importantly, these identities reflect a rejection of the entire socially-sanctioned structure of gender: the gender/sex binary that assumes a one-to-one relationship between the sexed body and gender identity (presuming that all women are female and all men are male), and the idea that everyone is gendered, with two gender/sex categories sufficient to reflect all of humanity (Hyde et al., 2018; van Anders, 2015).³ Thus, nonbinary people exert their own power not just of self-definition, but also over constricting and inaccurate societal structures as well (Collins, 1991).

New and Emerging Sexual Identities

Because cultural understandings of sexual identity are closely tied to gender of self and other, an individual's gender identity will typically inform their sexual identity. Psychological research highlights this intersection with the robust finding (from research based in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand) that trans and nonbinary people commonly use nontraditional sexual identity labels (Greaves et al., 2019; Hammack et al., 2022; Morandini et al., 2017). Similarly, partners of trans people often take on nontraditional sexual identity labels after the other person in the couple transitions (Pfeffer, 2014). Destabilizing gender requires a move away from traditional sexuality identity labels, because when gender becomes less binary, so too must sexuality.

Queer Identity. Within LGBTQ+ communities, *queer* has been increasingly used as an umbrella term inclusive of all people who experience marginalization due to their gender and/or sexuality (Goldberg et al., 2019). With the proliferation of sexual identity labels, the ability of *queer* to encompass everyone and honor their disruption of cis/heteronormativity makes it a valuable and powerful community label.

In addition, *queer* has emerged as a personal sexual identity for many people. Some adopt the term because it is inclusive of the gender or sexual fluidity that characterizes themselves or their desired partners (Barker et al., 2009; Worthen, 2022). Others find powerful meaning from its grounding in political resistance (Gray & Desmarais, 2014; Hammack et al., 2022).

For much of the twentieth century, *queer* was a slur used to denigrate sexual minority and gender nonconforming people in the U.S. (Barker et al., 2009). During the gay liberation movement and AIDS activism of the 1980s, *queer* was reclaimed and used as a symbol of pride and resistance to society's homophobia and transphobia (Duggan, 1992). "We're here! We're queer! Get used to it!" was a chant that originated with the activist organization Queer Nation NY (2016). Despite increasing commodification (e.g., through shows such as "Queer Eye"), *queer* continues to hold

³ When considering the global context and the parts of the world in which the majority of people live, the gender system is not generally binary, and instead other gender systems are practiced. These include societies with more than two genders, societies that see gender as fluid, and societies that see nonbinary or fluid people as performing important social roles (Hegarty et al., 2018).

meaning as a term of resistance to oppressive societal expectations of gender and sexuality.

The use of *queer* is strongly related to generational cohort and age. The stigma of the term is more salient for those who developed their sexual identities prior to its reclamation and thus are less likely to describe their sexual identity as queer (Goldberg et al., 2019 in the U.S.). People who identify as queer are, on average, younger than those who identify with more traditional sexual identity labels (Goldberg et al., 2019; Morandini et al., 2017, in Australia), and are either reclaiming the former slur or never knew the term as a slur.⁴

Generational differences in the use of *queer* also reflect changing understandings of gender over time. In a study of lesbians in the U.S., Baby Boomers primarily understood gender as an oppressive and constraining force, but Millennials understood gender as both internal and external and as fluid (Ben Hagai et al., 2022). *Queer* draws no attention to the gender/sex of the person or their partner, which fits well with a conceptualization of gender embraced by many Millennials.

Finally, multiple studies have found that queer respondents reported higher educational attainment than respondents with traditional sexual identities (Goldberg et al., 2019; Mereish et al., 2017). Attending college may allow LGBTQ+ students to meet others with nontraditional identities and learn about academic and activist frameworks (e.g., feminist theory, queer theory) which may then shape their own understandings of gender and sexuality. Thus, while the community creation of newer identity labels can be an empowering process, the adoption of newer labels like *queer* may reflect some level of privilege.

Queer creates community strength by ignoring differences between individuals in favor of an empowered community. *Queer* does not delineate nuanced specificity in an individual’s self-understanding (as is the case with nonbinary and, as we’ll see, asexual identities), but instead it demonstrates a power of self-identification at the level of the group. For individuals, this can be freeing: instead of defining details of their attractions, and instead of defining an identity in terms of gender/sex binaries with which one may fundamentally disagree, one can claim membership and belonging by using the label *queer*. *Queer* also demonstrates the power of minoritized communities to reclaim words once used to demean them that are now flipped into words of pride.

Pansexual Identity. Attention to cultural and political contexts is also central to a full understanding of pansexual identification. *Pansexual* emerged as a common sexual identity label during the 2010s (Belous & Bauman, 2017). The prefix “pan” means “all,” and *pansexual* refers to attraction that is independent of gender or sex. For most who adopt the identity, pansexual involves an explicit rejection of the gender binary and the expectation that sexuality should be influenced by gender. Pansexuality’s rise in prevalence parallels the increasing visibility of trans and nonbinary people; using the label is understood as signaling intentional inclusion of trans and nonbinary people.

⁴ In some Spanish-speaking locales, there has been a similar reclamation of former slurs by LGBTQ+ people (Vidal-Ortiz, 2011).

As with *queer*, generational cohort is strongly tied to the adoption of *pansexual*. An archival study of youth sexual and gender identity labels used from 2006–2019 found that the term was not used by a single participant prior to 2008, but by 2018 was used by 28.9% of the group (Smith et al., 2020). Findings from recent research with online samples of LGBTQ+ adults in the U.S. indicate that roughly 16% identify as pansexual (Galupo et al., 2014, 2015). Pansexual identification has also increased in Australia and New Zealand where similar age differences in identification are found (Greaves et al., 2019; Morandini et al., 2017).

When given the opportunity to describe the meaning of their sexual identities, a majority of pansexual people describe their attraction as “transcending the body” (Galupo et al., 2017b). This perspective is illustrated by a pansexual-identified participant, explaining, “If I’m going to be with someone, I don’t want to let things like genitalia, skin color, or social status get in the way” (Callis, 2014, p. 73). As the pansexual label is intentionally broadly inclusive, it is also often seen as an “anti-label” that allows individuals to claim an identity while maintaining freedom to express their sexuality in whatever form they wish (Belous & Bauman, 2017; Galupo et al., 2017b).

The openness to interpretation of *pansexual* renders it similar to *queer*; it is an intentionally inclusive term for people who are attracted to multiple genders/sexes within the LGBTQ+ community. And, like *nonbinary*, *pansexual* specifically challenges the societal structure of the gender/sex binary, allowing people to name their rejection of these binaries via their sexuality identity. Pansexual, then, also serves as a powerful critique of dominant conceptualizations of sexuality that suggest one can only be attracted monosexually (to men *or* women) or bisexually (to men *and* women).

Asexual Identities. Not all of the emerging sexual identities are based upon rejecting the gender/sex binary. Asexual identities instead reject the societal pressures to be sexual at all. Asexual identities (there is an array of more precise labels) are adopted by individuals who report no sexual attractions, have no desire to have sex, or who acknowledge a more complex relationship among their romantic attractions, sexual attractions, and desire for intimacy.

The growth in asexual identities follows the same pattern we saw with the shift from *homosexual* to *gay* and *lesbian*: away from a medicalized model to one of agentic, depathologized self-identification. Early in the history of sexology, Krafft-Ebing defined lack of sexual desire as “sexual anesthesia” (Oosterhuis, 2000), and in the 1970s, “inhibited sexual desire” was defined and ultimately appeared in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III; American Psychiatric Association, 1980). But from their inception in the 2000s (Gupta, 2017a), online asexual communities explicitly rejected the psychiatric and medical models of low sexual desire, and instead, considered asexuality a sexual identity (Gupta, 2017b; Scherrer, 2008; Scherrer & Pfeffer, 2017) or sexual orientation (Brotto et al., 2010; Gupta, 2017b).

Asexual individuals explicitly reject the compulsory sexuality inherent in our understanding of human nature. Compulsory sexuality is a term “to describe the assumption that all people are sexual and to describe the social norms and practices

that both marginalize various forms of nonsexuality, such as lack of sexual desire or behavior, and compel people to experience themselves as desiring subjects, take up sexual identities, and engage in sexual activity” (Gupta, 2015, p. 132). Asexual individuals resist compulsory sexuality in many ways: rejecting pathologization by using the language of “difference,” rejecting the expectation that sexuality should be central to one’s life, developing relationships that are not driven by sexual desire, considering asexuality to be a sexual identity, and building asexual communities (Gupta, 2017b).

The development of asexual communities enabled asexual individuals to understand the label more fully and interact (online or in person) with others who share that label. Through this process, some recognized that *asexual* did not quite fit their own feelings. *Demisexual* emerged in 2010 to describe individuals who only feel sexual arousal for people with whom they have a strong emotional connection (Cowan & LeBlanc, 2018). Gray asexual or graysexual emerged in 2013 to describe individuals who very rarely experience sexual attraction and arousal (Cowan & LeBlanc). Similarly, the asexual community has developed a rich language for romantic attractions, with asexual individuals who experience romantic attractions identifying as *romantic asexuals* (or more specifically, heteroromantic, homoromantic, and biromantic) and those who do not experience romantic attractions identifying as aromantic (Brotto et al., 2010).

This progression toward more nuanced identity labels demonstrates the agency of asexual individuals themselves; asexual people, recognizing that they differ from the sexual norm, first had only a single label to identify with (*asexual*), but when that did not fit, they created new labels (Cowan & LeBlanc, 2018). With these increasingly specific forms of asexual identity labels emerging, we see continual refinement, all emerging from asexual people themselves as they strive for ever more precise and authentic identity labels. Furthermore, similar to the way nonbinary gender identities challenge the *system* of the gender/sex binary, asexual identities challenge the *system* of compulsory sexuality.

How Psychological Theory Is Changing in Response

In light of this changing landscape, many psychologists have developed more complex ways of theorizing gender and sexuality. Drawing on theory and research on sexuality among trans and nonbinary people (Galupo et al., 2014), van Anders (2015) coined the term *gender/sex*, arguing that it is often impossible to separate biological factors (traditionally named *sex*) from sociocultural or socialization factors (traditionally named *gender*). Shifting to this phrase does not ignore that it is sometimes useful to speak about *sex* and *gender* separately (Hyde et al., 2018), but it provides a way to discuss the constellation of gender/sex factors more holistically, and in a way that better captures many people’s (especially trans and nonbinary people’s) lived experience.

Other scholars immersed in research with LGBTQ+ communities have proposed new models of gender that incorporate the experiences of these groups. For example, Tate and colleagues (2014) proposed the *gender bundle*. By integrating trans and nonbinary experiences of gender along with cisgender experiences of gender, this model suggests that gender/sex consists of five facets that are relevant to everyone: birth-assigned gender category, current gender identity, gender roles and expectations, gender expression, and gender evaluations. As another example, Levitt (2019) proposed a functionalist model of gender based on mixed-methods research with LGBTQ+ communities. This model proposes that people in marginalized LGBTQ+ communities have needed to develop their own gender categories to meet four distinct personal and community needs: psychological (allowing for authentic self-expression), cultural (creating shared community with similar others who value these self-expressions), interpersonal (communicating membership in these communities, both for affiliation and for safety), and sexual (eroticizing gender expressions and increasing self-esteem). Although developed from research specifically on LGBTQ+ communities, Levitt argues that gender serves the same functions for people of all genders and sexualities.

Partly in response to theoretical shifts in how gender is conceptualized, and partly in response to increased attention to diverse sexual identities and practices within LGBTQ+ communities, new models of sexuality/sexual orientation have also been developed. Sexual Configurations Theory (van Anders, 2015), for example, is a multidimensional, dynamic framework of sexuality that incorporates attractions to another person's gender/sex (encompassing both binary and nonbinary gender/sex) and attractions to partnered sexual activity with one person or multiple people. The theory also considers differences between romantic attractions and sexual attractions (Diamond, 2003). This framework can be expanded to incorporate other components of sexuality, such as age of desired partner, interest in sex with or without consent, and interest in kink/BDSM (van Anders).

These newer models of gender and sexuality are important steps in validating the lived experience of LGBTQ+ people and in opening up new areas of research. These models, and others like them, incorporate what van Anders (2015) termed *sexual diversity thinking* and what Hammack and colleagues (2019) termed a *queer paradigm shift*: a move away from considering heterosexualities as "normal" and unmarked but LGBTQ+ sexualities as "deviant" and in need of explanation. Instead, these new models value the study of all genders and sexualities, often creating integrative and synthesized models inclusive of all people. This synthesis does not, however, imply an erasure of difference nor an erasure of considerations of power; sexual diversity perspectives and queer paradigmatic approaches acknowledge that gender and sexuality identities are developed within communities and within power structures that impact what genders and sexualities are intelligible and can be freely expressed. Emerging theory and research on gender and sexualities must explicitly name and analyze these sociocultural contexts and power dynamics.

Recommendations for Psychological Research

We encourage psychological researchers to utilize these newer models of gender and sexuality in their research, and we encourage the development of additional models that attend to the ever-changing lived experience of LGBTQ+ people.

Researchers studying sexual and gender minorities must also carefully consider their methods. Ansara and Hegarty (2014) provide excellent recommendations for avoiding misgendering of research participants; specifically, they suggest the use of open-ended questions about gender (“How do you currently describe your gender?”) and asking about sex assigned at birth only when relevant to the research question. Hyde and colleagues (2018) recommend using a range of measures related to gender/sex (e.g., identities, behaviors, attitudes) and conceptualizing these variables as multidimensional and continuous. These methods refrain from imposing a gender/sex binary on research participants.

Because the language used by sexual minority and gender diverse communities can change rapidly (Tebbe & Budge, 2016), researchers must educate themselves about appropriate terminology before developing research protocols. In addition, researchers should consider whether existing measures of sexuality are well-suited for the intended participants; the Kinsey scale, for example, has been heavily criticized by sexual minority participants and thus may not be useful (Galupo et al., 2014).

Scholars have advocated for feminist research methods when working with LGBTQ+ communities because such methods emphasize participants’ own voices and self-definitions. Participatory action research focuses on empowering marginalized communities through the research process by centering advocacy and inviting community members to collaborate on all stages of the research (Tebbe & Budge, 2016). Trans-liberatory research moves beyond affirmative and collaborative research and “toward a reclaiming of history and valuing of counternarratives... of trans people that can serve as a compass for our society’s thinking about gender” (Singh, 2016, p. 1055). Critical and feminist methods, then, require a change in researchers’ conceptualizations of the subject, object, and purpose of research.

Finally, we join with scholars calling for more psychological research that attends to intersectionality (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016a, 2016b; Hyde et al., 2018; Rosenthal, 2016). Intersectional approaches analyze multiple identities simultaneously and therefore avoid universalizing claims. Further, intersectional approaches analyze “the matrix of social categories and hierarchical structures that upholds relations of oppression and domination” (Marecek, 2016, p. 178). In the context of gender/sexual diversity, an intersectional approach sheds light on systems of power in which heterosexuality and cisgender individuals are privileged and LGBTQ+ people are marginalized (Galupo et al., 2014). McCormick-Huhn and colleagues (2019) have presented a guide for psychologists who are less familiar with intersectional approaches. Their recommendations include recognizing the multidimensionality of participants, the

dynamic and context-dependent nature of social group memberships, the consequences of power and structural inequalities, and how systemic advantage and disadvantage are related to participants' intersectional positions. Ultimately, qualitative and mixed methods research (which can better emphasize lived experience, nuance, variation, and context) may be especially well-suited to intersectional inquiry (Frost et al., 2020; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2019).

Recommendations for Clinical Practice

Sexual and gender minorities (King et al., 2008), trans individuals (Hughto et al., 2015), and those with newer identity labels (Borgogna et al., 2019) are at disproportionate risk for depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns. Thus, many professional organizations have issued best practice guidelines for affirmative therapy (American Counseling Association, 2009; American Psychological Association, 2015, 2021). Consistent across these documents are calls for cultural competence in clinicians working with marginalized communities, which includes holding clinicians responsible for developing their own knowledge of LGBTQ+ communities, reflection on one's own assumptions and attitudes that may impact therapy, and intentional skill development to better serve LGBTQ+ populations (Matsuno, 2019; Sue, 2001).

Although many of these recommendations are applicable to all sexual and gender minorities, careful consideration must be given when considering those who reject the gender/sex binary (e.g., nonbinary and genderqueer people). Helpfully, Richards and colleagues (2016) describe four strategies which could be integrated into affirming mental health care: *stretching* (the categories of femininity and masculinity), *diversifying gender*, *dissolving sex difference*, and *creating ambiguity*. In addition, the Gender Affirmative Lifespan Approach (GALA), a therapeutic framework for work with nonbinary and trans clients, adds the importance of promoting pleasure-focused sexuality in therapy, and of clinicians being able to facilitate medical referrals for clients who wish to seek out hormonal or surgical interventions (Rider et al., 2019).

Another set of recommendations focuses broadly on therapists' interactions with trans and nonbinary individuals to support their gender/sex identities. Clinicians should convey a sense of openness around declaring one's name and pronouns. Asking for name and pronoun should be standard for the first interaction with a client and within paperwork, and that information must then be utilized by staff (Matsuno, 2019). Intake paperwork should not limit participants to binary gender options or overly simplistic sexual identity labels (Knutson et al., 2019). Clinicians should recognize that gender identity and pronouns may shift over time (Kuper et al., 2012), so checking in throughout the therapeutic relationship will help avoid unintentional misgendering (Knutson et al.). Having all therapists and staff use gender-neutral language will provide a model for interactions that decenter gender.

Finally, we would encourage clinicians to explore with their clients whether traditional gender and sexual identity labels truly fit. It may be helpful for LGBTQ+ people

to explore newer identity labels with a therapist in order to find a label that best aligns with their attractions, desires, feelings, and understandings of gender/sex. Because feeling true to one’s self is associated with better psychological well-being and lower depression (Brownfield & Brown, 2022; Riggle et al., 2017), encouraging growth in authenticity could have positive psychological outcomes. Of course, given the pervasive heterosexism, transphobia, prejudice, and discrimination facing LGBTQ+ people, such identity exploration will often need to be balanced with discussions of safety when disclosing such identities to others (Levitt et al., 2016). If clients are seeking out therapy related to sexuality or gender identity issues, clinicians can help clients resist internalized stigma, understand minority stress, develop self-identity labels that feel authentic to the individual, and navigate disclosure to others (Matsuno, 2019). Ultimately, therapists can be instrumental in helping clients develop a more nuanced understanding of gender/sex and sexuality, find labels that feel comfortable and affirming to them, strategize openness and disclosure, and integrate their gender/sex and sexuality with other aspects of self.

Conclusion

The proliferation of LGBTQ+ identities is, we argue, a positive outcome of people exploring their own identities and negotiating the expression of these identities in a world with restrictive norms for gender and sexuality. When existing categories do not adequately describe the nuances of one’s own desires, attractions, and ways of being in the world, creating new labels and sharing those labels with others are powerful acts of authenticity and community-building. For marginalized and devalued people, finding accurate labels for one’s self and creating ties with similar others is a strategy of resistance (Collins, 1991). The ongoing emergence of new identity labels is a reflection of a healthy process of individual and societal change as LGBTQ+ people seek authenticity of self (Riggle et al., 2017) and build communities that resist oppression from the larger hetero- and cisnormative society (Collins, 1991).

To gain a fuller understanding of gender and sexual identities, we must carefully apply an intersectional lens to our work, whether that work is clinically- or research-oriented. Identity labels are adopted by individuals with multiple intersecting identities (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, social class, religion). Each of these identities will shape one’s understanding of self as a gendered and sexual being, and will contribute to each individual’s unique experience of marginalization and privilege. Thus, an individual’s understanding of self will be situated in a particular sociocultural context and set of power structures.

Gender and sexuality identity labels are inextricably tied to discourses around sexuality and gender occurring at a particular historical moment, so we must be attuned to continued shifts in the language that people use to describe their identities. Assuming we will continue to see shifting understandings of gender and sexuality within society and within LGBTQ+ communities, and assuming we will see renewed

attacks on LGBTQ+ people's rights (as is currently occurring in the U.S.), we expect to see ongoing evolution of gender and sexuality identity labels. It is imperative that clinicians and researchers who work with LGBTQ+ people center LGBTQ+ people's lived experience, develop a full understanding of the identity labels they use, and consider the individual and community meaning attached to the labels. Attending to the diversity within LGBTQ+ communities and developing understandings of gender/sex and sexuality that are based in lived experience will enable psychology to continue to be relevant, affirming, and an agent of change toward a more just and inclusive world.

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Transnormativity in the Psy Disciplines: Constructing Pathology in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and Standards of Care*



Damien W. Riggs, Ruth Pearce, Carla A. Pfeffer, Sally Hines,
Francis Ray White, and Elisabetta Ruspini

In this chapter, we explore how what Rose (1998) termed the “psy disciplines” (i.e., psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapy) have created and perpetuated forms of normativity with regard to the clinical care of trans¹ people. In order to do so, we present a reading of both the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health’s *Standards of Care*. In so doing, we argue that the psy disciplines have sought to enforce a particular version of life for trans people that may be characterized as “transnormative” (Latham, 2019; Vipond, 2015). By transnormative, we refer to the ways in which dominant narratives about what it means to be trans emphasize a particular and narrow set of tropes to which all trans people are expected to adhere. These include expectations that (1) all trans people

¹ We note that “trans” is a contemporary term that was popularized in its current form from the 1990s onwards (Stryker, 2008). We recognize that our use of the term may therefore be somewhat anachronistic; however, we use it in this chapter to emphasize continuities in experience, practice, and the construction of transnormativity over time. Where relevant, we also use clinical terms such as “sexual invert” and “transsexual” to acknowledge how certain individuals we might now recognize as transgender were described within the psy disciplines in the past.

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D. W. Riggs (✉)
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Flinders University, Adelaide, SA, Australia
e-mail: damien.riggs@flinders.edu.au

conform to a “wrong body narrative”² when describing their gender (Latham, 2019), (2) all trans people require medical treatment, and (3) all trans people should seek to present and be perceived as cisgender. As such, while transnormative narratives may be used to justify medical interventions such as hormone therapy and surgeries when these are requested by trans people, they can also underpin “reparative” approaches which place in question a person’s gender.

In terms of the psy disciplines, then, and as Johnson (2016) notes, healthcare “should be understood as [a conduit] of transnormativity, a regulatory normative ideology that structures interactions in every arena of social life” (p. 466). The power of the psy disciplines in terms of contributing to normative and indeed pathologizing accounts of trans people is also evident in broader cultural narratives. Examples of this are legion, including: accounts that position the growing number of children disclosing that they are trans as a form of “social contagion” (Ashley, 2019); and the denial of trans people’s existence altogether (Kennedy, 2020). These cultural narratives often draw heavily on the psy disciplines in their pathologization of trans people’s lives. Such cultural narratives serve to justify a transnormative account, drawing as they do on authoritative psy disciplinary accounts of what are constructed as trans people’s supposed best interests.

Importantly, however, in this chapter, we seek not simply to suggest that pathologization and transnormativity, as oppressive regimes of power, control trans people’s lives absolutely. Rather, we situate historical accounts of clinical care and the development of clinical guidelines alongside the actions of trans people to demonstrate the traffic between clinicians, guidelines, and trans communities. This adds complexity to a history that can too easily appear monolithic. Indeed, some trans people have taken up normative accounts of their lives and, in turn, such accounts have been adopted and standardized in the realm of clinical care. In other contexts, trans people have resisted normative accounts, calling for radical revisions to what constitutes

² The “wrong body” narrative frames transgender experience as being “born in the wrong body.” This concept is implicitly present in diagnoses such as Transsexualism (ICD-10) and Gender Dysphoria (DSM-5), and explicitly referred to in the *DSM-IV-TR* diagnosis Gender Identity Disorder (Engdahl, 2014). For critiques, see Bettcher (2014) and Lester (2017). While some minor (though important) linguistic changes have been made to the DSM-5 TR, the wrong body narrative persists.

R. Pearce
School of Education, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, UK

C. A. Pfeffer
School of Social Work, Michigan State University, Michigan, USA

S. Hines
Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

F. R. White
School of Social Sciences, Westminster University, London, UK

E. Ruspini
Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale, Università di Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy

ethical and competent clinical care. In some contexts, such calls have been successful; in others, the dominance of transnormative (and moreover pathologizing) accounts within the psy disciplines have had (and continue to have) a significant and negative impact on trans people's lives. It is these points of tension, intersection, and divergence that this chapter highlights.

Competing Pathways to the Recognition and Pathologization of Trans People

In order to situate the development of transnormativity within the psy disciplines, it is important to explore the historical roots of transnormativity. With the emergence of the psy disciplines in the nineteenth century, increased scientific attention was paid to the lives of gender-diverse people in North American and European societies. Writers such as Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing and English sexologist Havelock Ellis sought to define and delineate what was seen as “sexual deviance.” Behaviors that transgressed social sex roles (such as cross-dressing) were positioned as pathological, as were intersex bodies and various forms of sexual desire (including homosexuality) (Stryker, 2008). The “wrong body” narrative, now so typically associated with trans histories, certainly played a role in the early pathologization of people we might now describe as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or trans (who at the time were often described as “sexual inverts”). For example, Krafft-Ebing (1927, p. 399) described “female inverts” (that is, individuals assigned female at birth who were perceived as possessing male behavioral traits) as possessing “[t]he masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom [sic].” However, as we will show, transnormativity evolved over time. Early treatment pathways were arguably influenced as much by eugenicist logics and experimental attempts to reverse human aging as they were by the notion that a person's physical sex might be remade to reflect their gender or sexual soul (Amin, 2018).

In associating particular forms of behavior, desire, and embodiment with illness or degeneracy, early sexologists simultaneously worked to construct, reinforce, *and question* sexual and gender norms (Gill-Peterson, 2018a; Stryker, 2008). Researchers have described how constructions of binary sex and gender, and “normal” and “abnormal” womanhood, evolved alongside the pathologization of gender-diverse people, through the emergence of diagnoses such as hysteria, borderline personality disorder, and masochism in the psy disciplines (Hyde et al., 2019; Tosh, 2016). Chesler (2005) and Tosh (2016) have argued that such diagnoses worked to pathologize both femininity *and* sexual non-conformity, with women positioned as “mentally ill” if their behavior conformed too closely to feminine stereotypes *or* strayed too far from them. However, sexology also worked to create visibility for sexual diversity and inspired those who sought recognition: for example, self-ascribed “invert” Radclyffe Hall prominently referred to Ellis' work in her 1928 novel, *The Well of Loneliness* (Pearce, 2018).

The pathologization of supposed sexual deviance also relied on logics of racialization (Amin, 2018; Gill-Peterson, 2018b; Snorton, 2017). For example, Honkasalo (2020, p. 20) notes that the supposed effeminacy of Jewish men was “thought to be an external sign of pathology” by anti-Semitic scientists. Similarly, Havelock Ellis positioned Black women’s physiology as inferior to that of white women in his 1900 book *Studies of the Psychology of Sex Vol. 2*, and described “the question of sex—with the racial question that rests on it” as “a chief problem for solution” in the introduction to *Sexual Inversion* (Ellis & Symonds, 1897, cited in Snorton, 2017, p. 4). Like many white Western thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including feminists, socialists, and liberals, as well as conservatives and fascists, Ellis believed in eugenics: the principle of improving humanity through selective breeding. While Ellis was broadly sympathetic to “inverts,” eugenic “science” provided an ideological rationale for modifying bodies in order to contain supposed sexual and racial deviancy, and therefore preserve the health of the “white race.” Consequently, many “hysterical” and working-class women, disabled people, and people of color were targeted for sterilization in North America and many European societies (Honkasalo, 2020).

It was in this context that German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld “appealed to eugenic science to legitimise genitoplasties under the Weimar Republic’s Criminal Code §175, which criminalised deviant forms of sexuality” (Honkasalo, 2020, p. 23). For early patients such as Lili Elbe (1882–1931, treated by Kurt Warnekros, a contemporary of Hirschfeld), surgeries offered an opportunity to elude narratives of degeneracy through “glandular rejuvenation.” With the implantation of donated ovaries, Elbe (for example) might hope to make the transition from sickly middle-aged “male invert” to “an exemplar of youthful, vigorous, feminine European womanhood” (Amin, 2018, p. 598). In this way, her gender transition represented an attempt to fulfill eugenic ideals, through age reversal and improving the health of (white) humanity, at least as much as it represented a physical shift from “male” to “female.” As Amin (2018) observes, this rationale differed substantially from the discourses that were to later underpin normative narratives of “transsexual” desire and embodiment, even as the history of these procedures remains entwined.

Hirschfeld’s *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* closed in 1933 following a Nazi raid and the burning of its extensive library (Stryker, 2008); Warnekros went on to collaborate with the Nazis, performing involuntary sterilizations (Amin, 2018). In North America, many clinicians initially felt uncomfortable providing the kind of treatments offered through centers such as Hirschfeld’s *Institut*, citing both legal and ethical constraints (Meyerowitz, 2002). For example, in 1949, David O. Cauldwell wrote of “Earl,” a male-identified patient who requested access to testosterone and chest and genital surgeries. Cauldwell describes Earl’s desires as “impossible,” arguing: “It would be criminal for any surgeon to mutilate a pair of healthy breasts and it would be just as criminal for a surgeon to castrate a woman [sic] with no disease of the ovaries and related glands” (2006, p. 52). With medical transition ruled out, many practitioners assumed the desire to transition was a matter of *psychopathology*.

They consequently recommended reparative psychiatric or psychotherapeutic interventions to “cure” individuals of this desire, which proved to be ineffective (Rubin, 2006).

At the same time that individuals such as Earl were being denied access to desired treatment, other people—including individuals we might today recognize as intersex people, gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people—were being subjected to unnecessary medical interventions. For psychiatrists such as Clifford Allen, who worked with intersex patients alongside endocrinologist Lennox Ross Boster in the 1930s and 1940s at Charing Cross Hospital in London, UK (later the location of the UK’s largest Gender Identity Clinic), “biological normality was structured into a binary of male and female bodies, and linked to a strict psychological normality, as measured by heterosexuality” (Griffiths, 2018, p. 479). In practice, this meant that patients were subjected to hormonal and surgical procedures to “normalize” their bodies. Initially, practitioners such as Allen and Boster worked primarily with adults, many of whom were involved in consultative processes and potentially consented to treatment. Over time, however, practitioners such as UK urologist David Innes Williams and American psychologist John Money facilitated surgical interventions on infants to conform their bodies to binary sex norms (Griffiths, 2018). Concurrently, from the 1930s through to the 1950s, endocrinologists and psy professionals attempted to “cure” “inverts” through the involuntary administration of hormonal treatments (Rubin, 2006).

In these early years, the limited access to affirmative, consensual medical transition for non-intersex people was driven largely by patient demand (Meyerowitz, 2002). Through press reports on “sex change” operations, prospective patients “found a language in which to express their feelings of having been raised as the wrong sex” (Griffiths, 2018, p. 481). For example, Cauldwell (2006) reports receiving numerous letters from people seeking to transition, and Gill-Peterson (2018b, p. 609) describes how many prospective patients “strategically adopted intersex rhetoric to describe themselves, hoping that would legitimate their request.” German-American sexologist and endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, a former colleague of Hirschfeld, was influential in arguing that these desires be taken seriously.³ Importantly, while Benjamin acknowledged that psy professionals could offer constructive guidance and support for those he described as transsexuals, he observed that this approach did not offer an actual *cure* for the desire to transition. By contrast, surgeries and hormone treatments could provide measurable relief. However, Benjamin insisted that an important role remained for psychiatric assessment: “The psychiatrist must have the last word [on the matter of physical interventions]. He [sic] has to evaluate the personality in regard to possible future consequences and also as to the likelihood of somehow making life bearable under the status quo” (Benjamin, 1954, p. 229).

³ Notably, Benjamin was originally better-known for his work on glandular rejuvenation than for his writings on transsexualism (Amin, 2018). It was his demonstrable success in the latter field that sealed his legacy.

Institutionalization of the Psy Disciplines and the Invention of Transnormativity

From the mid-twentieth century, the evolution of specialist clinical practice for trans people sat alongside autobiographical accounts of trans people's lives in which the authors were more or less compelled to take up what quickly became transnormative narratives. An example of this can be seen in the psy disciplines' injunction for trans people to present a desexualized image of their subjectivity. The life of Christine Jorgensen, a trans woman whose story was reported widely in the North American press from 1952 onward, provides a clear example of the intersections between the experiences of trans people and the use of their experiences by the psy disciplines to authorize particular transnormative responses. Jorgensen felt it necessary to present herself as non-sexual in early self-representations, so as to combat the conflation of (homo)sexuality and gender in early sexological accounts (Meyerowitz, 2002; Serlin, 2004). This type of non-sexual imagery was then (re)incorporated into transnormative representations of trans women within the psy disciplines, to the extent that clinical teams were reticent to accept women who presented narratives involving interest in active sexual futures, and most certainly functioned to exclude women who reported non-heterosexual orientations (Meyerowitz, 2002).

As Rose (1998) notes, the institutionalization of the psy disciplines involved a process whereby individuals were drawn into a network of power relations in which they were encouraged to self-monitor according to standards rapidly established by the psy disciplines themselves. This can be seen clearly in the examples of Elbe and Jorgensen, and as Pyne (2014) notes specifically with regard to trans children, *may* be framed as a form of recognition—with trans being seen as a “phenomenon” worthy of engagement. Yet, such recognition typically comes at a cost. With recognition comes self-regulation and the social demand to hold oneself accountable to existing norms, be these the eugenic logics of the early twentieth century, the particular forms of sexism, racism, and homophobia that prevailed in the 1950s, and those that prevail today. “Recognition” by the psy disciplines for trans people from the mid-twentieth century was, then, not necessarily recognition of the diversity of trans people's lives, but rather recognition of a culturally mediated, psy-inflected account of what it meant to be trans. It is at this period of time, we suggest, that contemporary transnormative accounts began to cohere and publicly circulate.

The proliferation of transnormative accounts is further evident in narratives made public by Jorgensen, her European clinical team, and the interpretations of these accounts in the press in the early 1950s. Specifically, it has been suggested that Jorgensen enacted self-determination according to a very specific set of rules about what it meant to be a (white) woman (Meyerowitz, 2002; Serlin, 2004; Snorton, 2017). Jorgensen's appearance and personality were a frequent topic of commentary at the time, emphasizing her normative femininity in a context wherein this was paramount for women. Importantly, this is not to suggest that Jorgensen was a dupe of her time. Rather, it is to highlight that staking a claim to freedom (in Jorgensen's case, to live as her gender in postwar America) both enacted the American dream

of “choice,” and did so within the constraints of the racialized, heteromasculinist logics considered socially acceptable during this time (Serlin, 2004). More broadly, the reporting of Jorgensen’s life set the stage for a transnormative narrative that was taken up within the psy disciplines as we shall see in the following sections. This is an important point to reiterate in the context of this chapter: As much as Jorgensen’s expression of her gender was structured by dominant discourses of the time, which were in many ways shaped by the psy disciplines and individual clinicians’ responses to and accounts of her life, Jorgensen (and other women whose narratives later became public) very much shaped *how* the psy disciplines came to understand and engage with trans people more broadly.

The American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)*

In this section, we consider how clinical and professional debates have led to highly consequential understandings and prescriptions for engaging with gender and sexually diverse people (for more on this see Hegarty, 2018). While our primary focus is on detailing the psy disciplines’ engagement with gender diversity, in order to do so we must also understand the entangled history of the psy disciplines’ engagement with sexual diversity. We suggest that the struggle to define and control some of the most marginal members of society is always also a struggle for dominance and authority among its most privileged. This is perhaps most readily evident in the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*.

First published in 1952, the *DSM* is now in its fifth edition, though it has undergone numerous revisions and printings across its nearly seven-decade life. The *DSM* is intended to name and describe various mental disorders, serving as the key clinical diagnostic tool for the psy disciplines. The first edition of the *DSM* was 132 pages, outlining 128 distinct diagnoses. Diagnosing mental disorders is a profitable enterprise, with revenue from the *DSM* in the hundreds of millions of dollars. As a result, those involved in writing various editions of the *DSM* have faced their share of controversy (Blashfield et al., 2014). Non-normative gender and sexuality have been a focus across all editions in the nearly 70-year history of the *DSM* (for a comprehensive overview, see Drescher, 2010).

“Transvestism” was listed in only the *DSM-I* and *DSM-II*. “Gender Identity Disorders” were first listed with two main types—Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood (GIDC) and Transsexualism—in the *DSM III* (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). In the *DSM-III-R*, a third type was added—Gender Identity Disorder of Adolescence and Adulthood, Nontranssexual Type (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). In the *DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), the diagnostic name changed to “Gender Identity Disorder” (GID). In the *DSM-IV-TR* (American

Psychiatric Association, 2000), the GID diagnosis required that the individual experience distress or impaired functioning. In the *DSM-5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the diagnosis of “Gender Identity Disorder” was removed and replaced with the diagnosis of “Gender Dysphoria,” the logic being to shift the focus away from seeing gender diversity as a disorder, and to instead focus on the distress arising from the experience of dysphoria.

Diagnosis within the *DSM* has always held potential promise and peril for trans communities, and queer people more broadly. Characterization of queer people within the *DSM* across time has varied from disordered to deviant, fetishistic, developmentally arrested, immature, socially maladjusted, dysfunctional, and distressed (Bryant, 2006; Drescher, 2010; Hegarty, 2018). For some trans people in the twenty-first century, official diagnoses of “Gender Identity Disorder” or “Gender Dysphoria” could provide a productive gateway to accessing hormones and surgeries that may even be fully or partially covered by medical insurance (Davy, 2015). Given the high stakes of diagnosis—which range from social stigma to redemption, with associated treatments and policy recommendations spanning from punitive to liberative—it is imperative to consider just who is given the power of diagnosis.

Because the *DSM* is an official publication of the American Psychiatric Association, psychiatrists have been at the forefront of determining diagnostic categories for mental disorders. Since the 1970s, the percentage of men relative to women has been shrinking, with men constituting more than 87% of all psychiatrists in 1973 and only 45% of all psychiatric residents by 2013 (Scher, 1973; Willis, 2013). Historically, however, most diagnostic decision-making around gender and sexually non-conforming people have been made by white, cisgender, and heterosexual men within the field of psychiatry (see Ansara & Hegarty, 2012 on the “invisible college” informing these diagnoses).

Importantly, these decisions and struggles have not been made without pushback.

In the same period of time as the *DSM-I* and *DSM-II* were being written and published, social activists and movements grew louder and more insistent in their demands for social justice. The 1966 Compton’s Cafeteria uprising in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco and the 1969 Stonewall Inn rebellion in New York City demonstrated the irrepressibility of queer people’s rage and frustration over state and institutional violence and oppression, particularly among its most likely targets—poor, trans, and women of color (Stryker, 2008). Contributing precursors to the removal of homosexuality from the *DSM III* include disruptions of the annual meeting of the American Medical Association (AMA) and APA by queer people engaging in protest as members of the public and sometimes as members from within these organizations (e.g., John Fryer aka “Dr. Henry Anonymous,” who appeared disguised at the 1972 APA meeting) (Cotten & Ridings, 2011; Pillard, 2009). During this same time, Black and Latinx trans rights activists, such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, focused on the rights of some of the most disaffected members of queer communities—such as poor, homeless, queer, and trans people of color—through formation of groups such as *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries* (Stryker, 2008). These social activist engagements, however, were likely more distant from

psy community awareness due to the racial, class, and cisgender privilege of their leading authorities.

Despite the success of advocates in terms of the removal of homosexuality from the *DSM III*, it has been argued that this then opened the door for the introduction of other diagnostic categories that produced similar regulatory effects. Karl Bryant (2006, 2008), for example, offers a compelling account of the emergence of diagnostic categories around non-normative genders, particularly among children positioned as effeminate boys. Bryant argues that the emergence of GIDC in the *DSM-III*, for example, provides evidence for how diagnoses are not only manufactured to provide rationalization for existing clinical practices, but also may be deployed to recuperate marginalized social subjects who have attained broader sociocultural acceptance while targeting others for greater regulation and intervention (2006, 2008). In this way, shifting diagnostic categories holds both generative and repressive potentials for already-marginalized groups. As homosexuality gained greater social acceptance, clinical classifications focusing on these groups needed to shift as well. Bryant (2006, 2008) details how the diagnosis of GIDC, authored primarily by Richard Green (1987), produced two distinct normative outcomes targeting (primarily) effeminate boys (who were seen as either pre-homosexual or pre-transsexual) for diagnosis and treatment: (1) producing socially acceptable, masculine, gay men and (2) limiting the potential for future adult trans womanhood. Indeed, some clinicians who utilized now-defunct diagnoses for gay and lesbian people then refocused their diagnoses and therapeutic interventions (some of which have been described as “gender-reparative therapies”) on trans and gender non-conforming patients (Lev, 2013, p. 293).

Despite this renewed focus within the psy disciplines on the pathologization of diversity, at the same time, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s disproportionately impacted gender-non-conforming gay men and trans women, further igniting activism and galvanizing queer people to, quite literally, fight for their lives (Epstein, 1996; Hegarty, 2018). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, students and researchers also challenged medical authority and its relationship to social justice and equity (Metzl & Kirkland, 2010). From the 1990s, a growing proportion of trans people told their own stories through published autobiographies, describing and sometimes resisting clinical gatekeeping practices and transnormative expectations (Pfeffer, 2017). However, these narratives, as well as social-science scholarship published by feminist and trans scholars, were largely ignored by those crafting the DSM (Davy, 2015). Nonetheless, trans rights initiatives and organizations such as *GID Reform Advocates*, *Stop Transgender Pathologization*, and *Global Action for Trans* Equality* have been vocal in their resistance to the medicalization of trans people’s experience (Cabral et al., 2016; Davy, 2015).

Part of such resistance to medicalization has been a robust critique of the empirical literature on gender diversity: a literature largely written by white, cisgender, heterosexual men, which has targeted gender non-conforming behaviors, especially among children, who are often characterized as more clinically malleable (see overviews by Bryant, 2006, 2008; Hegarty, 2018). Such critiques emphasize that even in instances where diagnosticians attempted to resist a pathologizing focus on gender non-conforming people, they tended to focus upon subjective feelings of

isolation and social dejection to make diagnostic classifications. Doing so has the effect of displacing responsibility for responding to social injustice: diagnosing a targeted individual as disordered or ill rather than seeking to change the cisgenderist and heterosexist society or social system in which they are embedded.

Yet despite the insights produced by such critiques, they have largely gone unheeded by those central to framing debates within the psy disciplines (Cotten & Ridings, 2011; Davy, 2015; Reicherzer, 2008). Scholarship and clinical practice are rarely solely about one's profession or patients. They are also about being perceived as correct and being seen publicly and among one's peers as right or even righteous, sometimes even sparring and reconciling with one another (or with one's self; see Spitzer, 2012) publicly and protractedly through the pages of paywalled, peer reviewed, major, academic journals (e.g., Bayer & Spitzer, 1982), with the user-pays model still predominating over open access approaches. In this way, the story of trans people's classification across various iterations of the *DSM* is also the less-examined story of "credibility struggles" (Epstein, 1996; Pearce, 2018) and "masculinity crises" (Serlin, 2004) among the disproportionately white, cisgender men working to establish personal and professional authority across shifting social contexts. How this story might change, as the field of power relations that constitutes the psy disciplines continues to transform, has yet to be determined.

From The Transsexual Phenomenon to the Standards of Care

The second key text which has historically governed trans people's relationship with the psy disciplines is the *Standards of Care (SOC)*, first published in 1979. The *SOC* are written by a committee assembled by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), an ostensibly international organization based primarily in the United States (US). Whereas the *DSM* is used to diagnose, the WPATH *SOC* is intended to provide authoritative guidance on how to manage a medical gender transition. Early versions of the *SOC* echoed Harry Benjamin's (1966) influential work, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, in centering the role of mental health diagnoses and assuming a transition from a "male" sexed embodiment and associated gender role to a "female" sexed embodiment and gender role, or vice-versa, with those who transitioned described as "transsexuals" (Berger et al., 1979). In this way, the *SOC* contributed to the construction of a transformative narrative that centers particular binary conceptualizations of sexed and gendered possibilities, even as it also helped to open up new pathways for medical transition.

When the *SOC* were first written, surgical and endocrinological interventions designed to facilitate gender transition had already existed within Western medicine for several decades, as a consequence of (1) earlier rejuvenation experiments, (2) affirmative care for trans people facilitated by pioneers such as Hirschfeld, (3) hormonal interventions for "inverts," and (4) operations on intersex people, as we have outlined earlier in this chapter. However, a clinical consensus on treatment pathways for "transsexuality" was only just emerging (Gill-Peterson, 2018a; Meyerowitz, 2002).

Meyerowitz describes how “in the 1960s, most roads led to Benjamin” (p. 133) for individuals seeking to medically transition in the United States; psy professionals and medical doctors alike increasingly referred patients to Benjamin, as did women such as Christine Jorgensen and Tamara Rees. In turn, Benjamin worked with other professionals to ensure that his patients underwent mental health assessments as part of the diagnostic process and in order to receive access to services.

In 1966, the year of the Compton’s Cafeteria rebellion, Benjamin published *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. This book codified and popularized a medical pathway for gender transition, drawing on clinical experience and evidence of patient satisfaction from research undertaken with Benjamin’s clients. There are some interesting parallels and connections between these two very different events, as well as obvious points of departure. Compton’s represented an uprising against police raids, led predominantly by trans sex workers and drag queens. *The Transsexual Phenomenon* represented an intervention from an authority figure who, in contrast to the San Francisco police, sought to make (certain, normative forms of) trans life more livable (Pearce, 2018). Stryker (2008, p. 74) notes that “some of [Benjamin’s] patients were the very Tenderloin street queens who would soon start fighting back [...] the changes in medical-service provision that Benjamin recommended must have been an electrifying call to action.” In the wake of Compton’s (and later, Stonewall), former protesters worked with minimal funding to successfully campaign for decriminalization and new healthcare services, creating groups and networks for political advocacy and mutual support such as *Conversion Our Goal* and *Vanguard* (Meyerowitz, 2002; Stryker, 2008).

Notably, much of the research Benjamin (1966) drew upon was funded by the Erickson Educational Foundation (EEF), a charitable body founded by a trans man—Reed Erickson (Meyerowitz, 2002). The aim of the EEF was to finance research on transsexualism and associated clinical interventions. Like the protesters at Compton, Erickson utilized the resources available to him to bring about change; however, in contrast to the poor and predominantly transfeminine protesters, he was a white man from a wealthy family. In spending millions of dollars through the EEF funding healthcare, research, and education projects from the 1960s through to the 1980s, Erickson played a key role in shaping the contemporary landscape of trans health and ensuring the availability of services for thousands of people (Devor & Matte, 2007; Gill-Peterson, 2018a). However, in contrast to the focus on self-determination in the work of Compton’s and Stonewall veterans, Erickson’s interventions also effectively worked to support the institutional power and privilege of cisgender researchers and, consequently, the transnormative regulation of trans patients. Having funded his own transition in the early 1960s, he did not have to contend with medical gatekeeping and the economic insecurity experienced by many people seeking to access services; on the contrary, practitioners sought his support. Hence, while Erickson’s contributions and generosity are undeniable, his racial, economic, and gender privilege ensured that he was distanced from many of the challenges faced by the prospective transsexual patients he sought to help.

In the late 1960s, a new generation of healthcare professionals began to facilitate medical transitions, with many inspired by Benjamin and/or directly funded by the

EEF (Gill-Peterson, 2018a). In addition to the publication of Benjamin's key work, 1966 saw the opening of the first Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) in the United States at Johns Hopkins Hospital and the University of Minnesota Medical School (Meyerowitz, 2002). These were specialist multidisciplinary centers which offered mental health assessment and—for a lucky few—hormone therapy and surgeries for patients who presented as transsexual. In 1969, the year of the Stonewall rebellion, the EEF funded the first International Symposium on Gender Identity in London, England, as well as the anthology, *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment*, edited by Richard Green and John Money (Meyerowitz, 2002).

By 1978, approximately 40 specialist clinics offering “surgical sex-reassignment to persons having a multiplicity of behavioral diagnoses” could be found across the Western hemisphere (Berger et al., 1979, p. 1). Building on the work of figures such as Benjamin, Green, and Money, these institutions devised criteria by which psy professionals might assess patients and manage access to hormone therapy and surgery. This enabled them to justify their work when faced with criticism from those who, like Cauldwell (2006), argued that such interventions represented an unnecessary “mutilation” of otherwise “healthy” bodies. However, it had the consequence of creating a gatekeeping system in which patients were expected to conform to transnormative narratives. Similarly, access to the GICs was limited by factors such as race, class, and age (Gill-Peterson, 2018a). To obtain the treatment they sought, patients needed to first articulate their experiences in a manner that would be taken seriously by the predominantly middle-class, white, cisgender, male psychiatrists, and clinical psychologists who oversaw these institutions. Consequently, while the first patient to undergo gender-affirming surgery at Johns Hopkins was Avon Wilson, a Black woman (Meyerowitz, 2002), trans people who experienced intersecting forms of marginalization were less likely to be seen as “conventional” women or men. In this way, the emerging clinical consensus worked both to *enable* new forms of transgender subjectivity through medical transition and to *restrict* the scope of sexed and gendered possibility (Pearce, 2018).

International Symposia on Gender Identity continued to be organized throughout the 1970s. In 1975, attendees of the Fourth International Symposium appointed committees to draft overarching guidance for practitioners working with transsexuals (Meyerowitz, 2002). This was eventually published as what would later be recognized as Version 1 of the *SOC* (Berger et al., 1979), by a new organization known as the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA), named to honor Benjamin's work in shaping the field (Benjamin himself was not directly involved in the organization). The second, third, and fourth versions of the *SOC* made very few revisions to the original text (Berger et al., 1980, 1981, 1990). All four documents represented a consolidation of both of Benjamin's ideas and of the central role of the psy disciplines, now positioned as key gatekeepers for treatment. Evaluation was originally to be undertaken by any licensed psychiatrist or psychologist (Berger et al., 1979), but from 1981, the *SOC* specified that “[p]ersons recommending sex reassignment surgery or hormone therapy should have the documented training and experience to diagnose a broad range of sexual conditions” and “proven competence in general psychotherapy, sex therapy, and gender counseling/therapy” (Berger et al.,

1981, p. 3). The role of these practitioners was to “study and evaluate” patients who expressed a desire for medical transition and assess their readiness for treatment through an evaluation of “reasons, motives, attitudes, purposes, etc.” (Berger et al., 1979, p. 3). This was to be done in accordance with the Transsexualism and Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood diagnoses in DSM-III; not coincidentally, these diagnoses were authored largely by Richard Green (Bryant, 2006; Meyerowitz, 2002), who also co-authored *SOC* Versions 1–4 and was a consultant on Version 5.

The Transsexualism diagnosis required that patients exhibit a persistent desire for medical transition over a period of at least two years; the *SOC* recommended that evidence of this was to be obtained through a long-term therapeutic relationship between patient and professional, and/or through interview(s) with a friend or relative of the patient. The authority and judgment of the professional were paramount, with the *SOC* requiring that “the clinical behavioral scientist have knowledge, *independent of the patient’s verbal claim* ... [of] dysphoria, discomfort, sense of inappropriateness and wish to be rid of one’s own genitals” (Berger et al., 1981, p. 7, emphasis added). Patients were required to live full-time in “the social role of the genetically other sex” for at least 12 months prior to the provision of any genital surgery, in a process that was later to be formally known as “Real Life Experience” (Levine et al., 1998). Medical transition was assumed to be a linear process, with desire for surgery being assumed in the assessment for hormone therapy, and a good response to hormone therapy being a prerequisite for surgery.

Patients learned to self-surveil through presenting certain transnormative narratives and expressing particular kinds of desire. Meyerowitz (2002), Stone (1991), and Latham (2019) have described how a discursive feedback loop emerged, in which psych-discipline professionals assumed that particular behaviors (such as the stated desire to be rid of one’s genitals) were indicative of transsexualism, so patients described and performed these behaviors, leading the professionals to assume that their original presuppositions were correct. Another consequence was that many GICs continued to encourage patients to adhere to transnormative expectations, thereby effectively policing both transsexual identity and limiting the scope of imagined possibility. Stone (1991, p. 291) argues that this constituted a fully acculturated, consensual definition of gender and “at the site of their enactment we can locate an actual instance of the apparatus of production of gender.” For example, in an echo of the eugenic histories of trans medicine, Norwegian health authorities were advised by the gender identity team to require irreversible sterilization as a condition for gender recognition in the late 1980s. Their explicit intention was “to avoid the potential calamity of a menstruating man, or even worse, a pregnant man, which would bring the hospital into disgrace” (Monro & Van Der Ros, 2018, p. 66).

Nevertheless, it is clear that the authors of the early editions of the *SOC* took their work very seriously indeed. They refer explicitly to “the moral responsibility” of making a decision to recommend hormones and/or surgery (or not) (Berger et al., 1979, p. 5), a sentiment explicitly echoed in Versions 5 and 6 of the *SOC* (Levine et al., 1998; Meyer et al., 2001), as well as more recent publications by contemporary gender specialists, some of whom are themselves trans (e.g., Richards et al., 2014).

This somewhat paternalistic approach ultimately diminishes recognition of decision-making processes undertaken by patients themselves (Davy, 2015; Gill-Peterson, 2018a; Pearce, 2018).

Trans people's voices were almost entirely absent from the *SOC* until Version 7 was first published in 2011. The first four versions were based on a document written by six cisgender American men; a proposal to include a transsexual person on this committee was voted down by the (predominantly cisgender) attendees of the Fifth International Symposium on Gender Identity in 1977 (Meyerowitz, 2002, p. 254). Dallas Denny and Jan Roberts (1995, p. 9) describe how "[i]n the early 1980s, Jude Patton, a transsexual man, was the 'consumer' representative on the HBIQDA Board of Directors," but by the 1990s there were no known trans people on either the HBIQDA Board or the new committee that had been drawn up to revise the *SOC*. Denny, an openly trans woman, was later listed as a "consultant" for Version 5 of the *SOC*, alongside trans man Jamison Green and transsexual Anne Lawrence (Levine et al., 1998). For a supposedly "international" organization, the HBIQDA was also deeply US-centric. Only three out of the seven authors of the Version 5 *SOC* were based outside of the United States (in Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands); while more international authors were involved in Versions 6 and 7, these documents still predominantly represent a US perspective.

Having noted the absence of trans voices within the HBIQDA, Denny and Roberts (1995) conducted a survey of trans people in the United States to explore their views on the *SOC*. They found a majority of their 399 respondents supported the existence of the *SOC*, but also sought a more flexible treatment pathway. Almost 80% of respondents had heard of the *SOC*, and while many of these individuals had heard about the *SOC* from professional sources, others found themselves educating professionals about the existence of the guidance document. These findings reflect an ambivalence toward clinical pathways that can be traced back to the 1960s and remains within trans communities to this day.

Version 7 of the *SOC* (originally published in 2011) began to acknowledge the growing diversity of transgender language and the possibility of non-binary genders, in which the patient's desired sexed embodiment and gender may differ, and indeed depart from presumed "female" or "male" norms (Coleman et al., 2012). The HBIQDA has also undergone changes; in 2006, it became the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH). In 2007, a British activist and legal scholar, Stephen Whittle, was the first trans person (and first non-medic) to become President of the organization. Whittle's election represented the culmination of a campaign by trans professionals to play an active role in HBIQDA/WPATH; he was also one of several trans people credited with co-authorship of the Version 7 *SOC*.

A growing number of attendees at the biennial WPATH Symposia (successors to the original 1960s and 1970s Symposia on Gender Identity) are trans, with many now organizing informally under the banner of TPATH (the Transgender Professional Association for Transgender Health). WPATH also benefits from the philanthropy of the first (known) transgender billionaire, Jennifer Pritzker, echoing Reed Erickson's support for the early GICs in the United States. However, many scholars and activists continue to criticize the diagnostic framework and assessment models that remain

embedded within the *DSM* and *SOC*, arguing that these continue to pathologize trans bodies, experiences, and desires (Davy et al., 2018). Others—echoing the politics of those who participated in the Compton’s Cafeteria and Stonewall uprisings—prefer to focus on matters such as state violence, social inequalities, and economic insecurity, especially where these are compounded at the intersection of transphobia and racist violence (Raha, 2017).

These debates played out powerfully at the 2018 WPATH Symposium in Buenos Aires. Following a ceremony in which Pritzker was given an award for philanthropy and praised the work of WPATH via video-link, the event saw a series of presentations from working groups drafting chapters for the since released Version 8 *SOC* (Coleman et al., 2022). In many ways, the *SOC8* document reflects the success of the depathologization movement, as many chapters arguably center “affirmative” approaches to trans healthcare, which center patients’ decision-making and informed consent rather than gatekeeping (Chang et al., 2018; Schulz, 2018). Nevertheless, debates continue over the role of healthcare professionals, especially those in the psy disciplines. More transgender people and international authors than ever before are involved in this process; however, authorship remains overwhelmingly cisgender and US-based.

Draft chapter presentations were followed by an extraordinary questions-and-answers session, in which trans professionals highlighted community mistrust of WPATH, concerns regarding a lack of attention to intersex human rights, and language choice—such as a proposed chapter on “eunuchs,” to which some attendees vocally objected (but which remained in the finalized *SOC8*). Through these comments, WPATH and the *SOC* were critiqued for centering not only cisgender people’s perspectives, but also a white, Western perspective, a matter that was particularly pertinent given the event’s location. Human rights campaigner Mauro Cabral summarized these frustrations in a speech from the conference floor: “When WPATH decided to come to Argentina, with the most progressive gender identity law in the world, I was excited. But we could only talk among ourselves. You come to this country because of the weather, steak, and wine, but not to learn from us.”

Discussion

In this chapter, we have traced a specific history of interactions between trans people and the psy disciplines, highlighting the development of transnormativity and its implications in terms of clinical diagnostic guidelines and treatment. In so doing, this chapter has argued that at certain key junctures, trans people have made significant contributions to the framings of their lives. However, historically, these contributions have not always translated into less pathologizing accounts. Indeed, in many ways, the histories mapped out in this chapter suggest that transnormativity and pathologizing accounts have worked hand-in-hand. Importantly, while offering a predominantly historical account, we have suggested at key points in this chapter that both transnormative and pathologizing accounts continue. For example, concepts such as

“autogynephelia,” which suggest that trans women are driven either by a suppressed “homosexual” attraction to men, or a fetishized desire to dress in “women’s clothing,” continue to be used not simply to pathologize, but also to invalidate trans women’s narratives (Bettcher, 2008). Indeed, Serano (2008) suggests that, as a form of pathologization, invalidation goes beyond the “simple” setting up of trans women as a “problem” and instead nullifies trans women’s existence altogether. Psy disciplinary approaches that pathologize trans people’s lives are also evident in ongoing attempts that claim to “cure” a person’s gender. While, as we noted, clinicians such as Harry Benjamin recognized that “reparative” psychotherapy or psychoanalysis had no role to play in the treatment of trans people (e.g., Benjamin, 1967), “corrective” or “curative” approaches have continued to prevail in many geographical contexts (even if, at the same time, they have been outlawed in others).

In North America, corrective or curative approaches have been primarily directed at children (Bryant, 2006, 2008). Such approaches pathologize families through, for example, suggesting that particular parent-child dynamics “cause” gender non-conformity, which has led clinicians to direct parents to enforce behaviors and interests deemed “appropriate” to their assigned sex (see Pyne, 2014, for a summary of the work of both Rekers and Zucker). In response to such pathologizing accounts, there continue to be significant debates over whether or not gender non-conforming children and adolescents should be subject to diagnosis at all (Cabral et al., 2016; Drescher, 2014). In part, such debates emphasize that clinical diagnosis and treatment of gender non-conforming children may be aimed at preventing future queer adults, given the ongoing stigma attached to such adults in the context of a cisgenderist and heterosexist society (Bryant, 2006, 2008; Drescher, 2010; Hegarty, 2018). While there has been a more recent shift toward affirming approaches to working with trans children (see Riggs, 2019, for a summary), pathologizing approaches nonetheless continue to dominate much of the literature. Ansara and Hegarty (2012) examined 94 journal articles published between 1999 and 2008, finding that cisgenderism remained common throughout this time period in articles focused on children. This includes referring to children by their assigned sex rather than their gender, using pathologizing language, and recommending “curative” clinical responses.

In response to ongoing transnormative and pathologizing approaches, trans people have sought to develop affirming approaches to clinical research and practice that challenge the broader psy disciplinary regulation of their lives. Key to affirming clinical approaches has been the recent development of the informed consent model of care, developed in partnership with trans people (e.g., Cundill & Wiggins, 2017). Rather than centering clinician diagnosis and authorization for treatment, this model of care emphasizes that trans people are more than capable of authorizing their own treatment in collaboration with clinicians (Schulz, 2018). Such an approach challenges traditional models of care as outlined in the *DSM* and *SOC*, which in many instances continue to gatekeep access to care. Furthermore, an informed consent model recognizes that in many cases trans people know more about their needs than many clinicians, given the dearth of training and specialization in the field of trans health.

Further, a rapidly growing body of research by trans people has produced a clinical literature that increasingly challenges transnormativity and advocates for a more diverse understanding of trans people's lives and pathways through clinical care (e.g., Greatheart, 2013; Nealy, 2017). Most recently, this research has focused on how trans people may be aware of transnormativity and actively work to resist it in the clinical sphere (Bradford & Syed, 2019). However, because trans clinicians do not exist outside of social norms and structures, or the systems of power relations in which they are embedded, some may also endorse and utilize transnormative approaches in their own work.

As such, and even as trans people are increasingly involved in healthcare provision, it is important to be mindful of who is (and is not) present and reflect critically on what perspectives they do (and do not) bring to the table. This chapter has shown how transnormativity and processes of pathologization are ultimately also constructed through racialization practices, social-class privilege, competitions for professional prestige, and the binary Western norms of gender, sex, and sexuality. The vast majority of trans people who have been involved in development of the HBIGDA/WPATH and the *SOC*, including key figures such as Patton, Denny, Lawrence, Green, and Whittle, are white, as have been the philanthropists Reed Erickson and Jennifer Pritzker. Of the growing number of transgender clinicians and researchers, a majority are white and/or transmasculine; this is particularly visible within organizing spaces such as TPATH meetings. Moreover, trans people do remain a minority within professional settings and are absent from the authorship of trans diagnostic classifications in the *DSM*. This is not a coincidence; rather, it reflects the wider inequalities in which trans people's struggles are embedded. Those who fail to recognize and account for this are liable to continue reproducing power inequalities and constructing constrained forms of subjectivity through their work (Rose, 1998).

In conclusion, this chapter has suggested that while some things change, others stay resolutely the same. Trans people are much more visible and are increasingly having input into how the psy disciplines understand and engage with their lives. However, the psy disciplines continue to regulate treatment for transgender people, reinforce transnormative approaches, and exclude the most marginalized and vulnerable from services and professional bodies alike. As such, we must continue to critically examine historical and contemporary practices that enshrine the psy disciplines as the most appropriate arbiters of trans people's lives.

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Power as Control/Power as Resistance and Vision: Disability and Gender in Psychology (and Beyond)



Akemi Nishida and Joan M. Ostrove

I let ... the multitude of relationships we have to disability, illness, suffering, injustice, and cure jostle me, knowing that I need this exact tangle of conflicting and overlapping conversations. Holding it all—sickness and human vulnerability, health and disability, the need for and the rejection of cure—is much harder work than writing anti-cure diatribes. And much more necessary. (Clare, 2017, p. 62)

Disablism threatens not only material needs, but emotional ones as well. (Watermeyer, 2013, p. 186)

Ask a disabled person what they think of *psychology*. You are likely to receive a long list of ways in which the field has failed them. Disabled individuals and communities have profound insight into what it feels like to be the target of psychological interventions, rehabilitation, and cure that often reduce the disabled person or their disability to something that needs to be eradicated. Social media is full of individual disabled people's stories of ableist counselors and disability communities' responses to ableist psychological research; it is also full of community-centric and grassroots explorations of how to emotionally and psychologically care for one another and live on our own (e.g., Fireweed Collective, n.a.; Fukui, n.a.; Page & Woodland, 2023; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018).

At the same time, however, rejecting psychology (or psychological supports) all together is not an adequate answer. Disability justice activist and artist Eli Clare (2017), quoted above, wrote extensively about the complex relationship disabled people have with the notion and practice of "cure." Disability rights activist and critical psychologist Brian Watermeyer (2013), also quoted above, advocates for disability studies to re-engage with the field of psychology and writes about the necessity of psychological care for disabled people. Both authors describe the

A. Nishida (✉)
University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA
e-mail: nishidaa@uic.edu

J. M. Ostrove
Macalester College, Saint Paul, MN, USA
e-mail: ostrove@macalester.edu

psychological impact of social injustices, including ableism, and advocate for a disability-centric way to engage in emotional care and support.

The disability community and disability studies have historically distanced themselves from the field of psychology because psychology's dominant discourse insists on understanding disability as a biomedical deficit and pathology in need of cure, rehabilitation, or segregation (see, e.g., Dirth & Adams, 2019). And psychology has been oblivious to its role in creating and maintaining ableism. Nevertheless, the last 35 years have seen a persistent and increasing effort to engage a critical disability studies (sometimes combined with a feminist) perspective in psychology (e.g., Banks, 2010; Dirth & Branscombe, 2018; Fine & Asch, 1988; Forber-Pratt et al., 2019; Gill et al., 2003; Goodley & Lawthom, 2005; Nosek, 2010; Olkin & Pledger, 2003; Pledger, 2003). Some of this work specifically includes the recognition that ableism hurts disabled people interpersonally, emotionally, and spiritually and thus we (disabled people) do need support, theory, and research, including from within psychology (Reeve, 2006; Watermeyer, 2013).

Our goal in this chapter is to examine the complex relationship between psychology and disability through the lenses of power and gender. The first part of the chapter takes up the issue of *power as control*. How is power exercised over disability communities through the forces of ableism and sexism? How is the discipline of psychology part of a powerful system that constructs, enforces, and maintains ableism (which is mutually constitutive with sexism and other forms of systemic oppression)?

In the second part of the chapter, we examine *power as resistance and vision*. How is power exercised by disability communities for social transformation to end ableism, sexism, and other intersecting forms of oppression? How has psychological research advanced disability rights activist principles and helped us understand disability identity and activism? We strongly believe that knowledge emerging from disability communities—crip wisdom—must be a core feature for re-imagining psychology as a vehicle for social change. How can psychologists learn from disability communities so that psychology will no longer be a mechanism of oppression but a site to advocate for just healing practice and social transformation?

Power as Control

[P]ersonal and communal experiences of disability, illness, and disease cannot be understood outside of systems of violent racial, economic, environmental, and sexual exploitation.... [A] feminist-of-color disability analysis aims not to be additive ... but to demonstrate how disability is in fact central to the gendered and sexual management of women and queers of color..... [D]iscourses of (dis)ability, that is, rhetoric about ability and disability encompassing discussions of mental/physical fitness, normality and abnormality, and biological superiority, have been used to create, maintain, and justify racial and gender hierarchies. (Schalk & Kim, 2020, pp. 2, 8, 10)

Feminist of color disability studies scholars Sami Schalk and Jina B. Kim (2020) articulate and analyze how ableism undergirds racism and sexism (and larger cisheteropatriarchy). To their quotation above, we would add “vice versa” to emphasize how racism and sexism (with other social injustices) are central to the construction and enacting of ableism and the ways in which societal norms related to ability and capacity are shaped by white supremacy and sexism, among other interlocking system of power. We cannot fully comprehend sexism (and all intersecting forms of oppression) without insights into ableism as much as ableism is built on and mutually constructed with sexism and other systems of domination and subordination (see also Bailey & Mobley, 2019; Lewis, 2022; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Sins Invalid, 2019).

Bodyminds¹ of gender minority people have historically been essentialized and studied scientifically and psychologically to validate their inferiority to (cis)men and to justify sexist and transphobic treatment of them (e.g., Chesler, 2005; Daley et al., 2012). For instance, the practice of pathologizing and psychiatrizing (typically white and middle-class) ciswomen when they stepped out of traditional gender-role expectations of submissiveness and docility is well documented (e.g., Baynton, 2001; Chesler, 2005; Metz, 2010). Such form of sexism is also racialized. Women of color are inherently excluded from the notion of *white* femininity and hence constantly targeted for racist-sexism (see Bailey, 2021 on misogynoir, for instance; also Crenshaw, 1991). Psychological studies are deployed to enforce the gender binary which pathologizes those who do not and or refuse to fit into it (e.g., the inclusion of gender dysphoria in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; Shapira & Granek, 2019). Feminist critical psychologists Shahr Shapira and Leat Granek (2019) demonstrate how psychiatric practices often minimize trans autistic people’s identities and experiences as “co-morbidities,” or try to argue that autism *caused* their *gender dysphoria*, demonstrating that the only understandings of transgender and autism available to these practitioners are medicalized and pathologized ones. Ableist enactment of sexism, therefore, negatively impacts not only ciswomen but also anyone who is marginalized with respect to a gender norm.

Similarly, sexism enables ableism, because the norm against which the concept of disability is shaped and disabled populations are (mis)treated is constructed on cisheteronormative standards. It is not against *any* abilities and capacities that people are labeled as deviant and pathologized, but on their (in)ability to perform racialized notions of femininity and masculinity or other gendered expectations. As noted above, the *inability* to perform docility, historically demanded of white middle-class women, psychiatrized them as hysterical or labeled them with other psychiatric disabilities (e.g., for an analysis of schizophrenia in the pre-civil rights era, see Metz, 2010). On the contrary, their *inability* to be financially independent was not pathologized, but expected. At the same time, women of color are constantly targeted

¹ The term “bodyminds,” introduced in a disability studies context by Margaret Price (2015; see also Sami Schalk’s [2018] *Bodyminds reimagined: (Dis)ability, race, and gender in Black women’s speculative fiction*), refers to the inextricable and mutually-influential relationship between the physical and the mental, including as sites of [so-called] impairment.

for various forms of violence (interpersonal and state) precisely because they were *unable* to perform such racialized femininity, a notion of femininity from which they were inherently and systematically excluded (Crenshaw, 1991).

Based on an intersectional gendered standard, disabled people are stereotyped as asexual or hypersexual as well as judged (literally) as to whether they are allowed to have sexual experiences with others or not (Gill, 2015; Nario-Redmond, 2010; Rodríguez-Roldán, 2018). The stereotype literature suggests that disabled people are significantly more likely than non-disabled people to be stereotyped as dependent, incompetent, and asexual (Nario-Redmond, 2010). Research about stereotypes encountered by women with disabilities in the context of their interpersonal relationships with non-disabled people concluded that non-disabled people consistently viewed them as incompetent and helpless (or else super-capable and “amazing”), intellectually challenged, and asexual (Crawford & Ostrove, 2003). Such stereotypes and judgements are deeply impacted by type of disability and intersecting social oppressions. It is critical to note that although many disability studies scholars stop their analysis of sexual stereotypes with the recognition of how (typically white and physically-) disabled people are perceived as asexual, those with psychiatric disabilities, especially those who are Black and brown, are often stereotyped as hypersexual (see e.g., Rodríguez-Roldán, 2018, for an analysis of different stereotypes attached to different groups of disabled people). Additionally, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in group homes are overwhelmingly among those whose sexualities are profoundly surveilled, indicating that they are not necessarily seen as asexual (Gill, 2015). Disability studies scholar Michael Gill (2015) examined a court case that formally restricted sexual engagement between two men, one of whom was labeled with an intellectual disability and lived in a residential facility. Sexism, heterosexism, and ableism worked in tandem to portray gay intellectually disabled men’s sexuality and sexual drive as “risky and inappropriate,” further intensifying the surveillance and disciplining of their sexual behaviors and violating their right to self-determination.

The intersection of ableism and sexism also poses violent and material impacts on girls, women, and gender-nonconforming people (for reviews see Fine & Asch, 1988; Nosek, 2010; Ostrove & Coffman, 2012). For instance, disabled women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence, and to a greater extent (with respect to duration and severity), than are non-disabled women (e.g., Iudici et al., 2019). Intersecting oppressions unjustly subject disabled girls and gender-nonconforming students of color to punishment within education settings, disguising it as “discipline” (Connor et al., 2015). From the history of eugenics and forced sterilization (e.g., Serrato Calero et al., 2020), to employment related discrimination (including un- and under-employment and workplace harassment; e.g., O’Hara, 2004), and differential access to medical care and treatment (e.g., Bailey & Mobley, 2019; Chevarley et al., 2006), intersecting forms of oppression based on ableism, sexism, and other forms of domination profoundly impact disabled people’s lives.

Ableism affects people across multiple categories of social identity and is intertwined with multiple forms of social oppressions (e.g., cisheteropatriarchy, xenophobia, fatphobia; see, e.g., Lewis, 2022; Minich, 2016, Schalk & Kim, 2020). It is

necessary to keep expanding our recognition and analysis of how sexism and ableism manifest and materialize and deeply impact even the lives of those who do not necessarily identify, or are not recognized, as disabled and women. In other words, one way to think about ableism and sexism as intersecting with other social injustices is as a form of control whose tentacles extend to every corner of our lives to determine who is worthy and who is disposable (a phenomenon that became abundantly clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, where in the United States, for example, ableist notions about “quality of life” shaped determinations about ventilator access even before there was a significant shortage of ventilators [see, e.g., Kukla, 2020; Mingus, 2022]), a phenomenon with which the field of psychology is complicit.

The Role of Psychology in Shaping and Maintaining Ableism

Ableism. A system of assigning value to people’s bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This systemic oppression leads to people and society determining people’s value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, “health/wellness”, and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, “excel” and “behave.” You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism. (Lewis, 2022, Para. 4)

Social justice activist and community attorney Talila A. Lewis’s definition of ableism (2022) gives us an entry point to examine the role of psychology in the construction, enforcement, and maintenance of ableism. It articulates the many (in)direct ways that psychology is built on and contributes to interlocking forces of social injustices including eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism that continue to shape the status quo.

Given this complex relationship, it is perhaps not surprising that (many) disability communities express deep skepticism toward psychology as a discipline and as a practice. The products, objectives, and impacts of psychological research and practice have shaped notions of standards and deviation, as well as the very concepts of “normal” and “abnormal” (Washington, 2008). The field has contributed to the codification and classification of disability in an effort to maintain ableism, including by coercing disabled people into unwanted and unneeded cure and rehabilitation and not seeing them as knowers and decision-makers in relation to their own body-minds (Clare, 2017; Kafer, 2013). Engaging a critical disability studies analysis of psychology, critical psychology and disability studies scholars Dan Goodley and Rebecca Lawthom (2005) note that the field of psychology is distrusted by many in the disability community because it is “individualistic, bourgeois, apolitical, professional-led, normalizing, and oppressive” (pp. 4–5). Importantly, however, they also lay out ways in which some psychologists are working to make changes to their understanding of disability, noting that “to situate psychology as a bounded discipline engaged with enforcing normalcy does a disservice to the dynamic nature of knowledge disciplines” (p. 5).

Disabled psychologists and their allies (e.g., Adrienne Asch, Thomas Dirth, Anjali J. Forber-Pratt, Carol Gill, Michelle Nario-Redmond, Rhoda Olkin, Constance Pledger, Brian Watermeyer) are indeed centering a critical disability studies and disability rights philosophy in the discipline and practice of psychology. There are also many psychologists who are passionate about *helping* disabled people participate in the larger society. It is a slippery slope, however, as such passion can be experienced as enforcing paternalistic normalization via modification of disabled people's body-minds and behaviors rather than working to modify the ableist society that established the exclusionist standards in the first place. In the next few paragraphs, we briefly survey some of the overwhelming critiques of psychology emerging from disability studies and elsewhere. This analysis urges us to pay attention to the critical insights of members of the disability community, who are often situated as the objects and targets of psychological research and interventions rather than knowledge builders.

The pathologization of the psyches and behaviors of Indigenous people (particularly women in many cases) was a key tool of settler colonialism (e.g., Burch, 2021; Cowing, 2020; Driskill, 2019; LaDuke, 1999; Yellow Bird, n.d.). It was based on labeling and diagnosing of daily livings and philosophies of Indigenous people as *different from the norm*. With settlers' ways of being embodied and enforced as the norm and standard, Indigenous people were considered "insane" and hence needed to be segregated in asylum under the violent surveillance and control of settlers (which settlers called "care" and "treatment") and away from their families. In other words, it was psychologization and pathologization of their being which laid a partial ground for settler colonial violence against Indigenous people, culture, and socialities, as well as the lands and waters they attended.

Scholar and medical journalist Harriet Washington (2008) documents both a vast array of medical and psychological diagnoses created to pathologize Black Americans' desire and fights to end racism, and also a dehumanizing series of medical experimentations objectifying and targeting Black people, all used to enforce and maintain the racist status quo. For instance, she interrogates how a white Louisiana doctor who was considered a renowned expert on "black health" in the nineteenth century, Samuel A. Cartwright, came up with a series of mental diagnoses to argue that "black's ... mental deficit made it impossible for them to survive without white supervision and care" (p. 36). *Drapetomania, hebetude, and dysthesia aethiopica* are diagnoses he invented to pathologize Black enslaved people fighting for freedom and resisting their enslavement.

Enforcing Normalcy, by disability studies scholar Lennard Davis (1995), traces the historical construction and idealization of "normal." Davis documents the ways in which, since the nineteenth century, normality was enforced with the development of "statistically validated" psychological studies and projects that were deeply entangled with the goals of eugenics. Explaining how we reached the point where "health is [considered] wealth and a sound mind in a sound body is the most priceless of human possessions" (Kelves, 1985, cited in Davis, 2006, p. 10) and how ensuring (and enforcing) the health and sound mind of citizens became governmental projects and responsibilities, Davis contextualizes the historical emergence of the discipline

of psychology. “[Sigmund Freud’s] work was made especially possible by the idea of normal,” he explains and thus concludes,

Freud [was] producing a eugenics of the mind—creating the concepts of normal sexuality, normal function, and then contrasting them with the perverse, abnormal, pathological, and even criminal. Indeed, one of the major critiques of Freud’s work now centers on his assumption about what constitutes normal sexuality and sexual development for women and men. (p. 10)

In other words, psychology sprouted within the eugenic climate in which the division of physical and moral “norm” and “deviance” was already laid out and upon which the budding science of psychology was deployed to measure, categorize, and value (or devalue) human populations. In a different, but related, project contextualizing the eugenicist roots of the discipline, developmental psychologist Erica Burman (2008), citing Ian Parker’s work, writes,

developmental psychology participated in social movements explicitly concerned with the comparison, regulation and control of groups and societies, and is closely identified with the development of tools of mental measurement, classification of abilities and the establishment of norms. It is associated with the rise of capitalism and science, subscribing to a specific gendered, alienated and commodified model of scientific practice (Parker, 2007). All of these features are reflected in the terms of developmental research, including the reproduction of the division between rationality and emotion. (pp. 13–14)

The field of psychology developed in a context in which eugenics, (settler) colonialism, racism, and other forms of social stratification were continuously reinforced and shaped by social norms (and vice versa). Feminist social worker Sophia Freud (1999) points out how the social norm and the concept of abnormal are deeply constructed in relation to

[the] sociopolitical economic context including the historical moment [, and are] culture specific.... Psychotherapy and the psychological theories ... have been given the sociopolitical function of judging and maintaining standards of acceptable normal behavior. This is seldom done arbitrarily since psychological theories [and their judging of normality] are apt to be a mirror of the conventions of their time. (p. 335)

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that psychology was deployed to validate and legitimate such stratification, attaching values of superiority and inferiority to (pseudo)claims of biologically determined human differences and standardizing the concept of “normal.”

The implications of the construction of normality extend far and wide, deeply intertwined with notions about who deserves, needs, or should be coerced into counseling to correct and rehabilitate (socially constructed) deviance (Freud, 1999). Indeed, not everyone is equally subjugated to the classification of “deviant” or “normal,” provided access to counseling, or considered in relation to how and to what end any kind of psychological intervention or support is utilized. We would like to note that throughout this chapter, we are not trying to overlook distinct histories and disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, but are putting forward our analyses against what disability justice activist and cultural worker Leah Lakshmi

Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) calls the “healing industrial complex,” or a technology of discipline and control exercised primarily through and over *mind*.

Jonathan Metzl’s (2010) critical work, *Protest Psychosis*, methodically portrays changes in how psychiatric diagnosis and treatment are heavily influenced by sociopolitical context and deployed differently at the intersection of sexism and racism. For example, prior to the civil rights movement in the United States, the diagnosis of schizophrenia was largely given to white people and its symptoms were recognized as harmless to the larger society (Metzl, 2010). At the rise of the civil rights movement, the same diagnosis became increasingly applied to Black men, particularly those fighting for Black liberation, to condemn and pathologize them as “insanely aggressive.” Metzl notes, “[s]chizophrenia’s rhetorical transformation from an illness of white feminine docility to one of black male hostility resulted from a confluence of social and medical forces ... [including] biased actions of individual doctors, researchers, or drug advertisers [as well as discriminatory climate at the structural level]” (p. xv). Here, anti-Black racism within psychiatry manifested through the pathologization of Black men’s desires and struggles for liberation, whether through individual diagnosis or the climate of the field at large. Simultaneously, the disciplinary power of psychology and psychiatry is deployed for the management and control of individual Black men, Black communities, and the larger social uprising against systematic racism.

These examples depict complex ways psychology is involved in both the making and treating of mental differences, resulting in treatment that is often experienced and recognized by disabled people as control over, and violence against, their bodyminds. The subfield of rehabilitation psychology, as well, is similarly positioned to detect those who have difficulty participating in a society in a “productive” manner and to find ways to support them to function “normally.” In response to these efforts, critical psychologist Ian Parker raises an alarm:

the knowledge and technology that psychologists produce is designed to adapt people to society. Because present-day society is organized around exploitation and subordination, even the most well-meaning psychologist contributes to alienation, to the separation of our selves from others and from our own creative abilities. (Parker, 2007, p. 1)

Echoing the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King’s admonition in his 1968 address to the American Psychological Association that “there are some things in our society, some things in our world, to which we should never be adjusted” (King, 1968, p. 10), critical psychologists and disability studies scholars have demanded that the field divorce itself from the historical view of disability as “individual pathology, abnormality, or difference from a standardized norm” (Bogart & Dunn, 2019, p. 652; see also Goodley & Lawthom, 2005; Olkin & Pledger, 2003; Watermeyer, 2013) and to shift its focus from “fixing” and “curing” disabled people to joining them to fix and cure the ableist society.

Power as Resistance and Vision

Individuals located perilously at the interstices of race, class, gender, *and* disability are constituted as non-citizens and (no) bodies by the very social institutions (legal, educational, and rehabilitational) that are designed to protect, nurture, and empower them. (Erevelles & Minear, 2010, p. 129)

The methodology of disability studies as I would define it, then, involves scrutinizing not bodily or mental impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations. (Minich, 2016, para 6)

In their recent review of work on the psychology of power, Michael W. Kraus and Brittany Torrez (2020) articulate the need to contextualize our understanding of the concept in the social structures that create and define relations of power, and to support the “consistent and collective struggle against structures of power and the people who wield that power in the service of the status quo” (p. 88). Power as *resistance and vision*, therefore, is critical to our analysis of power in relation to gender and disability in psychology. Disability studies scholars, disability activists, other disability community members, and their allies *resist dominant and stereotypical notions of disability*—within and beyond the discipline of psychology—by conceptualizing disability as a social phenomenon embedded in relations of power.

A social or political/relational conceptualization of disability (Kafer, 2013) offers a way to understand the role of power in structuring psychological experience and interpersonal and intergroup relationships; indeed, the very concept of “disability” can itself be understood as “a system of power that shapes bodymind norms and expectations” (Schalk, 2017, para 4) or as a “product of social, political, economic, and structural factors that differentially disable *or enable* people as a function of their corporeal differences” (Dirth & Adams, 2019, p. 263, italics in original). A political/relational model of disability recognizes—and resists—the constraints imposed by structural, political, ideological, and attitudinal barriers to human flourishing (Dirth & Adams, 2019; Kafer, 2013). A political/relational model also questions the valorization of independence and individualism characteristic of the United States and other Western nations (Dreger, 2005; Mingus, 2017) and actively encourages the forming of disability communities as well as the adoption of a disability identity to acknowledge and foster such collectivity.

Making a relatively early argument for the importance and power of claiming disability, Simi Linton (1998) described the ways in which “disabled people, across the broadest spectrum of disability, [solidified] as a group” (p. 5). She noted:

Although this group identity has certainly not been comfortably embraced by all disabled people, a strong disability alliance has led to civil rights victories and the foundation of a clearly identified disabled community. The cultural narrative of this community incorporates a fair share of adversity and struggle, but it is also, and significantly, an account of a world negotiated *from the vantage point of the atypical*.² Although the dominant culture describes

² Although we do not directly engage feminist standpoint theory (e.g., Harding [1991]) in this chapter, we want to acknowledge the influence of that critical work to our own thinking about

that atypical experience as deficit and loss, the disabled community's narrative recounts it in more complex ways. The cultural stuff of the community is the creative response to atypical experience, the adaptive maneuvers through a world configured for nondisabled people. The material that binds us is the art of finding one another, of identifying and naming disability in a world reluctant to discuss it, and of unearthing historically and culturally significant material that relates to our experience (p. 5).

Social psychologists of disability have been at the forefront of applying a social identity model to psychological research about disability (Dirth & Branscombe, 2018), developing measures and assessing critical correlates of disability identity. Anjali J. Forber-Pratt et al. (2020), for example, developed a measure of disability identity among people with a range of physical, intellectual, learning, and psychological disabilities. Their work offers evidence for cross-disability solidarity and for the inverse relationship between a commitment to disability culture and community and feelings of anger and frustration with ableist experiences. Claiming a disability identity (i.e., scoring high on such items as "Being a part of a group of people who have disabilities is important to me" and "Being a member of the disabled community is central to my identity" [p. 475]) predicted support for collective/group-level efforts toward advancing the social status of people with disabilities, expressing pride in the disability community, and working toward system change on behalf of disability rights (Nario-Redmond et al., 2013). Disability identification in that study was also positively associated with both collective and personal self-esteem. Kathleen R. Bogart (2014) found that disability self-concept (a combination of disability identity and disability self-efficacy) was strongly associated with satisfaction with life, particularly among those with congenital disabilities.

In their work exploring who identifies as disabled, Bogart et al. (2017) reviewed literature that confirms the psychological and social importance of claiming a disability identity, which is positively associated with self-esteem, satisfaction with life, political engagement, and workplace advocacy, and negatively associated with psychological distress. Strong claims to Deaf identity (Carter, 2015) are particularly illustrative of Deaf people's powerful resistance to the dominant culture's ideas of "normal" and "able-bodied." Members of the Deaf community's strong affinity for Deaf culture, signed languages, and commitment to Deaf pride are demonstrative of ways in which Deaf people take power, claim space, and assert their humanity (see, e.g., Holcomb, 2013; Padden & Humphries, 2006).

Despite the ample and important ways in which psychologists—including many disabled psychologists—have resisted a pathologized view of disability, we note that very little of the disability identity literature in social psychology engages gender (or offers any kind of intersectional analysis [recognizing that doing so is itself both challenging and contested within and beyond the discipline, see e.g., Cole, 2020]). Work that does engage both disability and gender complicates our understanding of ableism and offers additional arenas for resistance. For example, if claiming

feminist disability studies perspectives in psychology (see, e.g., Coffman-Rosen & Ostrove, 2020) but also the ways in which Linton's articulation of the "vantage point of the atypical" in the area of disability in particular resonates with Garland-Thomson's (2002) use of Nancy Mairs' (1996) concept of "sitpoint."

disability requires not only acceptance of but also pride in one's (non-normative) bodymind, what does it mean for people who become disabled due to the forces of ableism, sexism, racism, classism, and more that may materialize in the shape of state violence (e.g., Bailey & Mobley, 2019; Erevelles, 2011; Nishida, 2022; Schalk & Kim, 2020)? Or as feminist psychologists Joan Ostrove and Stacey Coffman (2012) articulate, such intersecting forces of social injustices shape and define rigid standards of beauty and thus impose challenges for all disabled people, and disabled girls and women in particular. For example, Margaret A. Nosek (2010) enumerated identity-related challenges for women with disabilities because of the role that ableism plays in identity development for girls. Specifically, disabled girls may face challenges with self-worth and self-esteem, if they do not squarely fit in the dominant cultural or social standards of attractiveness, or if the development of their sexuality and interest in relationships is disrupted or compromised by the ableism of their potential partners. Hegemonic cultural standards for both "normality" and "beauty" shape the experience and process of identity development. As feminist disability studies, scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002) suggested, "the twin ideologues of normalcy and beauty posit female and disabled bodies, particularly, as not only spectacles to be looked at, but also as pliable bodies to be shaped infinitely so as to conform to a set of standards called *normal* and *beautiful*" (p. 11, italics in original). Efforts on the part of disabled women and non-binary individuals in particular to transform the notion of beauty and claim a right to sexuality have supported people to take on a disability identity with pride (see, e.g., the work of *Sins Invalid: An Unshamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility*, n.d.; *The Body is Not an Apology*, n.d.). These efforts—along with many others—have also galvanized disability activism.

From Identification to Activism to Justice

As queer brown disabled people, we are forced to teach the basics — asserting that we, too, are humans deserving of human rights; that we have a collective history and future; and that we are not deviant or aberrant but an essential part of humanity.

—Sins Invalid, *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People*. (p. 5)

Resistance to disability oppression in its many forms has a long and important history in the United States and in many other parts of the world (see, e.g., Charlton, 2000; Lima et al., 2018; Ma & Ni, 2020; Meldon, 2019; Na, 2023) and is intimately connected to disabled people's strong sense of disability identity. In a study of disabled young adults, for example, Michelle Nario-Redmond and Kathryn C. Oleson (2016) found that disability identification predicted advocacy for disability rights, as well as higher levels of affiliation with other disabled people, in-group solidarity, and recognition of both personal and group-level disability discrimination. Claiming disability identity among disabled activists was associated with resistance to being cured (Hahn & Belt, 2004).

Disabled psychologists have themselves taken direct action to assert the importance of naming and claiming disability. For example, in response to the structural erasure of “disability” at the 2018 American Psychological Convention (where the Disability Resource Room was renamed the “Multi-Abled Resource room”), Andrews et al. (2019) reference the #SaytheWord movement (a social media effort to name and claim a disability identity), challenging the discipline itself with the following questions:

What does it mean within the field that we are so afraid to be known as disabled or even possibly disabled that we will not access resources? We believe this is not only a product of the shame and fear elicited by prejudice, but also speaks to how little disability as diversity is valued in the field of psychology. (p. 114)

Social psychologists of disability have offered evidence that confronting ableism—even in non-explicitly activist ways—can be met with resistance or backlash, however. For example, across two studies, non-disabled participants perceived a blind person and a wheelchair user who resisted unsolicited assistance from a non-disabled person as less warm, regardless of gender, than the person who did not confront the “helper” (Wang et al., 2019).

In an effort to complicate and bring a more intersectional framework to work on disability identity and activism, disability studies scholar Akemi Nishida (2016) conducted life story interviews with seven disability rights and/or disability justice activists. Recognizing—as many who work on disability identity do—that claiming disability requires a *political analysis* of one’s own relationship to dominant social and cultural standards and expectations, Nishida (2016) asked:

1) How do disabled people—who often do not share their marginalized disability identity with their family members and other surrounding people—initiate and proceed with their political development? In particular, 2) how is political development experienced by disabled people who occupy multiple marginalized identities? (para 5)

Critically, coming to claim a disability identity and engage in disability activism was—for almost all participants—a process that was grounded first in identity and activism related to race, sexuality, and/or gender, not disability. In fact, an explicit rejection of the disability identity characterized the early lives of several participants, some because of ableism—direct or internalized—or lack of contact with other disabled people, and some because of the absence of attention to race, sexuality, or gender in the disability community they had access to. For many participants, developing an analysis of injustice and strategies to resist it in racial justice, feminist, or queer activism offered a pathway to disability identification and activism. As one of Nishida’s participants noted, “There is *no way* that I would come out as a disabled person if I wasn’t queer and feminist identified [first].... I had these activist frameworks [from queer and feminist activism] already in place that helped me to start thinking about [disability]” (para 15, emphasis original).

Although claiming disability identity and engaging in disability activism are powerful forms of resistance to ableism, and work on disability identity and activism have been critical in depathologizing the study of disability in the field of psychology, we remain mindful of Schalk and Kim’s (2020) claim that “feminist-of-color

disability studies ... understands disability as a relationship to power rather than a legible identity to which one can lay claim” (p. 38; also see Bailey & Mobley, 2019; Erevelles, 2011).

We look, therefore, beyond the discipline of psychology for additional evidence of resistance and action grounded in an analysis of power rather than a relationship to identity. We find it at the intersection of queer theory and disability studies (e.g., Chen, 2012; Kafer, 2013; McRuer, 2006) and feminist of color disability studies (e.g., Bailey & Mobley, 2019; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Hinton, 2021; Minich, 2016; Schalk & Kim, 2020) in which theorists argue that concepts like disability, gender, sexuality, and race, are “temporal and contextual, [thereby] challenging ideologies and epistemologies grounded in rigid conceptions of both [bodyminds] and identities” (Ostrove & Coffman, 2012, p. 104).

Described by Schalk and Kim (2020, p. 48) as centering “the experiences of queer, trans, and/or racialized disabled people,” perhaps no other framework offers a more convincing analysis of the relationship—and forms of resistance—to power than *disability justice activism*. Work in disability justice is deeply intersectional, paying keen attention to the ways in which multiple axes of systemic oppression operate to marginalize, dehumanize, disenfranchise, or displace multiply marginalized disabled people (including people with disabling conditions who do not identify as disabled) as much as it embodies and provides visions of different ways to be with one another and construct collectives. Indeed, it centers the wisdom of disabled people who are queer, trans, migrant, Black, Indigenous, and/or claim other marginalized identities to rethink how we collectively organize, attend to one another, and nurture a vision and dream of collective liberation. To do so, disability justice activists put forward and embody in their work intersectional analyses, interdependent relationships, leadership of those most impacted by systems of oppression, anti-capitalist politics, a commitment to cross-movement organizing and cross-disability solidarity, recognizing wholeness, sustainability, and collective access and liberation (Sins Invalid, 2019). As the disability justice political performing group Sins Invalid note in the introduction to the second edition of their disability justice primer *Skin, Tooth, Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People*,

As queer brown disabled people, we are forced to teach the basics — asserting that we, too, are humans deserving of human rights; that we have a collective history and future; and that we are not deviant or aberrant but an essential part of humanity. ... As we challenge white supremacy, settler colonialism, gender normativity and violence that targets trans people, we challenge able-bodied normativity. Through this clearing practice, we create Disability Justice. (2019, pp. 5–6)

Offering examples and suggestions about how we can learn from and reflect on the resistive power of a disability justice framework in and beyond the academy, Akemi Nishida (2019) proposed the idea of *critical disability praxis*. She questions how we can *live* disability studies, or more precisely, how we can practice principles of disability justice activism in our daily lives as we engage in disability studies. She offers three strategies for doing so: (1) dismantling the knowledge hierarchy maintained and enforced in the academy (including disability studies) and enabled by multiplying oppressions; (2) developing an intimate relationship between the

academy and communities to co-construct holistic and collective access practice without ignoring the power dynamics between these two spheres; and (3) creating an action-based disability studies to eradicate ableism. She is keenly aware of how academia historically co-opted social justice activism including disability justice, and therefore, she critically challenges readers and herself with a question of what it means to bring disability justice into academic conversations. She then carefully situates teaching of disability justice activism as *a compass* to navigate and guide our social justice-oriented scholarly works, including fighting against the corporatization and institutionalization of education (Nishida, 2019).

Conclusion

Ableism has been theorized as undergirding various interlocking system of oppressions (Baynton, 2001; Erevelles, 2011; Lewis, 2022). Additionally, disabled people are members of, and typically marginalized within, every other social identity group, especially given that disability can be a process and result of social oppressions and violence. Despite this reality, it is only relatively recently that a social analysis of disability is making it into scholarship in dominant and mainstream psychology and thereby changing the traditional power structure of the discipline. At the same time, it is important to note that the strategies for engaging disability in those traditional ways will not ultimately disrupt the status quo or realize the kind of transformative change imagined by disability activists, organizers, and thinkers (see Cole, 2020, for an important recent argument re: disciplinarity and intersectionality in psychology). Despite the attention to intersectionality in disability justice activism, disability is afforded relatively scant sustained attention even in intersectional feminist psychology theory and research. Intersectional feminist work in psychology offers a meaningful framework for engaging and integrating disability, and for analyzing the meaning and impact of relationships of power. As key pioneers of work on gender and disability in psychology have done in the past (e.g., Fine & Asch, 1988; Nosek, 2010) we must continue to confront and address the ableism in the palpable absence of intersectional attention to disability in much of feminist psychology's current work (even as we challenge social and other psychologists working on disability to address issues of gender, race, sexuality, class, etc.).

Ultimately, we need not only a change in our research foci, methodologies, and clinical perspectives, but also a dismantling of the very ground we inhabit. Whether we reimagine how psychology is practiced, how psychological knowledge is developed, or how core values have shaped psychology as a tool for management of people and shepherding them to fit into the dominant social norm, massive transformation is needed. Disability activists challenge and inform *how* we engage in our day-to-day lives, noting (for example) the ways in which our hyper-productive working style (e.g., working without breaks for longer and longer hours toward an individualist and product-driven agenda and evaluation system) makes our field inaccessible to anyone who cannot fit into it and also disables us further (e.g., Nishida, 2015). We

must work to embody disability activist principles and learn from disability communities' wisdom to dismantle power-based structures in the discipline of psychology itself, and instead practice a social justice-based psychology that dismantles ableism, sexism, racism, and all other forms of oppression.

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Understanding Power in Feminist Knowledges of Bodyweight and Appearance



Helen Malson, Andrea LaMarre, and Michael P. Levine

In this chapter, we analyze the implicit and explicit ways that power figures in feminist research and theory on bodyweight and appearance. In the process, we consider how power is made visible or becomes occluded in propositions about what we know. In order to do this, we begin with an exploration of theorizations of power in feminism. We then discuss the significances of bodies and appearance per se in constructions and regulations of femininity and of feminist analyses of the specific appearance norms that have predominated in twentieth and twenty-first-century Western and Westernized contexts. Finally, we turn our attention to feminist work on eating disorders and end with some reflections on what we see as future directions for feminist research in this field.

Power and Feminism

‘Power’ has multiple meanings, depending upon whether the context is politics, statistics, baseball, or dams. For feminist theories of appearance and bodyweight concerns, one relevant denotation is ‘possession of control, authority, or influence over others’ (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, nd). Power is also the agency (motivation + personal or interpersonal ability + opportunity) to resist control by others

H. Malson (✉)
Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
e-mail: helen.malson@monash.edu

A. LaMarre
Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

M. P. Levine
Kenyon College, Gambier, OH, USA
e-mail: levine@kenyon.edu

and to make meaningful, productive decisions that advance one's physical, mental, interpersonal, economic, and/or socio-political interests.

As an amalgam of paradigms, feminism has always been engaged in articulating and negotiating the positive, negative, and ambiguous nature of power. Meehan's (2004) critical essay examining Amy Allen's (1999) book *The Power of Feminist Theory* considers power in terms of three phenomena. First is the domination and subordination (*power-over*) imposed by systemic structures and daily practices that constitute sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, and so forth. Second is the ability (*power to*) of those disadvantaged and abused by such cultural institutions and practices to resist by carving out pockets of influence. And third, feminists have a vested interest in understanding the potential for empowerment toward socio-political change that emerges from collective interests and actions (*power in solidarity with*) pertaining to the first two themes. Influential feminists (e.g., de Beauvoir, 1953/1984; Wolf, 1991) have also employed concepts of patriarchal domination and oppression wherein

power is figured as the ability of one group [men] to define, suppress, or otherwise control members of another group [women] by controlling resources and establishing cultural practices, traditions, and rules that serve their own interests and ensure their position of domination. (Schippers & Sapp, 2012, p. 31)

Two ways in which the patriarchy can be viewed as maintaining this systemic domination are the omnipresence of a male sexually objectifying gaze (Calogero et al., 2011) and the threat of rape and other forms of violence against women (Brubaker, 2021). Embedded in this objectifying gaze is the establishment, perpetuation, and policing of unrealistic appearance ideals that normalize appearance-consciousness, body-modification, body dissatisfaction, and competition rather than solidarity between women. In the context of the Western conceptualization of feminism emerging in 'waves' (see, e.g., the historical definitions in Malinowska, 2020), Schipper and Sapp (2012) summarize the political implications of this structural approach to power:

Precisely because femininity is the embodiment of subordination, a second wave feminist perspective is one that is critical of femininity and calls for women to reject feminine embodiment or seek social change to eradicate the femininity enforced under patriarchy or male domination. In these writings, femininity is a mechanism of control that men as a group use to subordinate women as a group, and/or it is the embodiment of women's powerlessness and oppression. Men define and/or enforce femininity; women embody it to signal and perpetuate their subordination to men. (p. 29)

Brubaker (2021), addressing the incompleteness of this model, asks 'How can we reconceptualize patriarchy, gender, and power to retain their value but expand their applicability beyond the gender binary and heteronormative contexts?' (p. 23). Understanding appearance concerns from a third-wave feminist perspective requires us, then, to explore how hegemonic systems impose as 'natural' such values and practices as cisgenderism, White supremacy, and heteronormativity. However, in analyzing power, femininity, gendered appearance ideals, body dissatisfaction, and

disordered eating, feminist work has very often overlooked the privileging of young, White, heterosexual able-bodied cis women (LaMarre et al., 2022).

Third-wave feminism, like second-wave feminism, situates ‘femininity within broader and institutionalized conditions of a male dominant gender system’ and emphasizes “systemic and widespread pressures on girls and women to embody hegemonic forms of femininity” (Schippers & Sapp, 2012, p. 30). Where it differs is that more recently, many feminists have conceptualized power, bodies, gender, and appearance concerns as interrelated sets of negotiated and contested constructions and as fluid social practices. These dynamic social practices come with explicit or implicit ‘citations’ that ‘reference’ values, expectations, and narratives circulating within networks of interpersonal relationships, themselves framed by complex social structures in which power is unevenly distributed (Butler, 1990; McNay, 2013; Meehan, 2004).

Conceptualizing power in terms of multiple ongoing negotiations and contestations allows third-wave feminist approaches to position women, individually and collectively, as having potentially more *power* (*to* and *with*) in terms of both agency and solidarity. Women can deploy shared commitments, dialogues, choices, and artistic expressions to articulate conceptions of gender and bodies that challenge objectification, subvert traditional femininity/masculinity dualities; and, in the process, they can redefine gendered meanings, including gendered ideals of appearance and self-care/expression (Piran, 1999; Schippers & Sapp, 2012). Of course, such ‘choices’ are clearly also significantly delimited by context (Butler, 1990; Gill, 2008). Importantly, such perspectives also enable us to think about gender and power in more complex ways, foregrounding intersectional approaches to gender which attend to the complex interplays of racism with sexism and with other forms of inequality and which thus facilitate us in challenging the privileges associated with being White, heterosexual, cis gender, able bodies, and/or middle-class within as well as across categories of gender (Collins, 2004; Crenshaw, 1991).

Bodily Appearance as a Lynchpin of Femininity

Simone de Beauvoir’s groundbreaking feminist text, *The Second Sex* (1953/1984), explores the socio-economic and political frameworks that have shaped women’s everyday lives. Her analysis demonstrated the links between how women have been imagined across different societies and historical epochs and the material conditions of gender inequality, marginalization, and oppression. One way women have been established as ‘other’ and as subordinate to men is through a cultural association of women (and not men) with the body. In contrast with ‘man’s’ intellectual and spiritual transcendence, ‘woman’ is understood to be sunk in the immanence of her body. This body is defined primarily, of course, by its reproductive capacities, the sexuality attributed to it, and its conformity to (or divergence from) local cultural ideals of heteronormative feminine beauty (de Beauvoir, 1953/1984). Jordanova’s (1989) history of images of women in science and medicine similarly emphasizes

this subordinating construction of woman-as-bodily in a web of hierarchical binaries: man/woman, mind/body, rationality/emotion, active/passive, culture/nature, public/private, and so forth.

This construction of woman-as-bodily can be viewed as part of a broad discursive scaffolding of a long-standing cultural emphasis on bodily appearance in defining and regulating femininity (Beale et al., 2016; Bordo, 1993, 2004). Definitions of femininity as bodily vis-a-vis women's reproductive capacities have been pivotal in perpetuating gender inequalities, for instance, in domestic labor, paid employment, leadership opportunities, and political power (see, in this volume, Locke; Morrison & Le Grice). But definitions of femininity in terms of physical appearance—weight, shape, facial features, hair, makeup, clothing, and so forth—have been no less important in re-producing and maintaining those inequalities, both symbolically and materially (Wolf, 1991). This is, first, because in emphasizing appearance these definitions cast feminine subjectivity as a surface phenomenon; that is, as superficial and hence antithetical to any deep or meaningful personhood (Malson, 1998). Second, this primacy of appearance in constructions of femininity positions women as passive, rather than agentic, as objects of a hetero-patriarchal male or masculinist gaze (Berger, 1972; Calogero et al., 2011). And third, feminine appearance becomes associated with a subversive and morally suspect agency; with a construction of woman-as-masquerade whose appearance is understood as artifice (Diamond & Quinby, 1988): the *femme fatale* whose beauty hides the danger she poses, primarily to men, but also more widely to society's 'moral order' (de Beauvoir, 1953).

These feminist analyses emphasize the limitations, restrictions, and contradictions that are constituted and maintained through symbolic or discursive power (McNay, 2013) because they illustrate how appearance-focused notions of femininity produce a 'cultural imaginary' (Castoriadis, 1989; Hall, 1997) of 'woman' as a vacuously superficial, passive, duplicitous sexual object. And, because they thus disqualify women as inferior and other, these constructions of femininity function to underpin more tangible material inequalities such as pay gaps, under-representation in leadership positions, gender differences in hours of unpaid labor, and sexual and domestic violence (see, in this volume, Locke; Lazard, Mannay & Folks; Thompson). Power features here, then, as the discursive *power* of 'taken-for-granted,' unexamined assumptions about the nature of femininity and the seeming naturalness of the social practices and power relations they predicate. But these appearance-oriented constructions of femininity also function as 'regimes of truth' that discipline and regulate women's subjectivities and body management practices (Foucault, 1972; McNay, 2013), shaping and delimiting their/our options to conform to and/or resist prevailing truths, for instance, about gender, beauty and body management.

One way in which this happens in modern Western and globalized contexts is through the 'requirement' that women engage with consumer culture, buying the products and services 'necessary' to achieve particular locally/globally sanctioned 'looks.' Dorothy Smith's (1993; see also Wolf, 1991) still very relevant analysis of women's insertion into modern consumer capitalism via 'discourses of femininity' excavates the largely hidden knowledges, skills, work, and expense entailed

in emulating feminine appearance ‘ideals.’ Power is thus theorized here as the *power of capital* as well as the *power of discourse* to persuade women of the importance of physical beauty, the flawed nature of their/our own appearance, and the necessity of buying cosmetic products and services and engaging in the unpaid labor that will ‘correct’ those ‘flaws.’ From a critical feminist perspective, it is through the performance of these practices that ‘femininity’ is materialized (Butler, 1990).

Gill’s (2008) and others’ analyses of postfeminism further illustrate how even notions of female empowerment have been co-opted by mass consumer capitalism to promote narrowly defined appearance ‘ideals’ that require us to purchase ‘beauty’ products and services. By siphoning women’s money, time, and skills into buying and applying an increasingly wide array of ever-more invasive appearance-related products and services, capitalism’s ‘beauty myths’ exacerbate already-existing gender inequalities while commodifying and individualizing empowerment as the power to shop for a specific ‘look.’ Yet, while the fashion industry frequently proclaims its enthusiasm to embrace diversity (e.g., Newbold, 2020), the ‘looks’ that the industry promotes almost invariably marginalize Black women as well as ‘older women, disabled women, fat women and any woman who is unable to live up to increasingly narrow standards of female beauty and sex appeal that are normatively required’ (Gill, 2008, p. 44). As Afro-Caribbean women in one recent UK study (Griffiths & Haughton, 2021, p. 23) noted, the mainstream cultural perception of their hair “‘is an assault on who you are. You have been told that your hair is not good’; ‘going for a job and being told that in order to get it, ... you gotta do something with your hair’; ‘you would have to have straight hair to be socially acceptable.’” The failure to attend to such violences in constructions of ‘beauty’ or to link those constructions to the wider systemic violences experienced by girls and women of color is, as we note below, a continuing issue in feminist work in this field.

Culture, Power, and Media Representations

The Focus on Bodyweight and Shape

In the social sciences, particularly in psychology, most feminist work on appearance has examined recent Western/globalized norms and practices, especially gendered appearance ideals promoted in mainstream and social media, as well as more broadly in everyday discourse. The majority of this research has analyzed representations of bodyweight and shape. Feminist analyses have documented the historical shifts in Western beauty standards away from the sometimes fuller, fatter ideals of the past. For example, contrast Reubens’ seventeenth-century portrayal of female beauty in *The Three Graces* with the idealized ‘hourglass’ figures of the early 1900s and the 1950s, which gave way in the 1960s to a slimmer, taller, younger, and more androgynous ideal that has persisted with minor variations into the present. This thin ideal has become a near-ubiquitous centerpiece of contemporary notions of beauty and even

of acceptable femininity. Unsurprisingly, therefore, an extensive body of feminist research has documented the prevalence and analyzed the significances of this ‘thin ideal’—and of ‘dieting’ and other weight management practices as the alleged means of achieving this gendered aesthetic—in mainstream media (Bordo, 1993, 2004) and, more recently, in social and digital media (Baker & Walsh, 2020; Eckermann, 2009; LaMarre et al., 2017).

Clearly, bodyweight and shape ideals, as key criteria of feminine ‘beauty,’ can be understood within the frameworks outlined above as underpinning gender inequalities through the inordinate emphasis placed on women’s appearance *per se*. But as earlier feminists (e.g., Orbach, 1978) and later critical feminists (Holmes, 2018; LaMarre et al., 2022; Malson, 2009) have noted, power also features here in quite specific ways. The shift in the 1960s to a thinner more androgynous ideal has been interpreted as a quasi-feminist rejection of traditional domestic and maternal femininities and as an attempt to exert control over one’s body and food intake when other avenues of autonomy are curtailed (Bordo, 1993, 2004). At the same time, slenderness and food restriction have also been read as signifying a hyper-conformity to traditional feminine mandates to privilege others’ needs over one’s own (Orbach, 1978); to be petite, frail and childlike and to not take up ‘too much’ space (Bordo, 1993, 2004; Boskind-Lodahl, 1976); to deny, control, or even erase the seemingly unruly female body; and, of course, to become and remain heterosexually attractive (Eckermann, 2009; Malson, 2009). What, until relatively recently, has gone largely untheorized in this focus on constructions of slenderness is the racist as well as (hetero)sexist politics entailed in this thin ideal (Thompson, 1992) that is built on weight norms derived from predominantly White male samples and that has been openly used to uphold notions of White superiority (Friedman et al., 2020; Strings, 2019).

This view of ‘the thin ideal’ as pernicious is supported by reams of statistics demonstrating the negative impact on body satisfaction of viewing images that idealize feminine slenderness (Grogan, 2021) and documenting increasingly high levels of body dissatisfaction, particularly among girls and women (Bucchianeri et al., 2013; Carter et al., 2017). Such research is undoubtedly useful in providing evidence of the negative impact of this narrowly defined and near-ubiquitous appearance ideal and rightly points a finger at mass media and, increasingly, at social media (Eckermann, 2009). But it can also be viewed as problematic in some ways. This is because, first, like the feminist media analyses discussed above, this work again has often failed to even note, let alone critique, the Whiteness of idealized thin female bodies. The reproduction of unmarked Whiteness in body image scholarship obscures how racist, as well as sexist, ideologies shape this ‘thin ideal’ and render invisible the experiences of girls and women of color in terms of ‘body image’ and more broadly in terms of the racist as well as sexist violences that target their bodies (see Bordo, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). And while some studies acknowledge the Whiteness of beauty norms beyond thinness (Levine & Murnen, 2015), such as pale skin, blue eyes, or ‘smooth shiny’ hair (Bordo, 1993, 2004; Griffiths & Haughton, 2021; Smith, 1993), such analyses rarely inform experimental body image research or indeed non-experimental work in this field.

Another issue with experimental body image research that feminist critics (e.g., Blood, 2005) have raised is that in theorizing causality, body image researchers tend to conceptualize their participants as *passive* consumers of media images, thus re-articulating a derogatory construction of young women as easily influenced and ‘excessively’ invested in mass media and fashion (Holmes, 2018; Katzman & Lee, 1997). Lastly, the effect of these images is often conceptualized in psychologized rather than socio-political terms—as girls’ and women’s lack of both body confidence and media literacy, rather than as society’s oppression of girls and women via the policing of their/our bodies (Blood, 2005). Differences between individuals are also often psychologized and reified such that those girls and women experiencing more distress around food and bodies, who may be identified as having an eating disorder, are often understood as psychologically vulnerable and as categorically different from those who may be less distressed.

The Shifting Cultural Landscape of Body Norms

While idealized female slenderness continues to predominate as a cultural appearance ideal, feminist scholars within and beyond psychology have also documented some significant cultural and historical shifts in constructions of gendered ‘beauty.’ These include the increasing importance accorded to gendered physical appearance ideals (Gill, 2008); the impact of idealized thinness on ever-younger children (Jongenelis et al., 2014); the framing, as we discuss below, of bodyweight as a matter of health as well as aesthetics (Rich et al., 2010); and the increasing levels of body dissatisfaction among cis boys and men (Adams et al., 2005) and among trans and non-binary individuals (Diemer et al., 2018).

As numerous feminist authors have noted, while women continue to bear the brunt of society’s policing of body ideals, recent decades have seen a significant cultural shift toward increasingly muscular ideals for men’s bodies, presenting men’s bodies, too, as objects of aesthetic judgment (e.g., Gill et al., 2005), with men and boys increasingly experiencing body dissatisfaction and ‘dysmorphia’ (Adams et al., 2005). This shift may be interpreted as men’s increasing subjection to social pressures similar in some ways to those experienced by women, but it is also a shift that can be understood in terms of a progressively more amplified gender dimorphism, contrasting a narrowly defined large, broad-shouldered, slim-waisted, and muscular masculinity with an equally homogenized petite but increasingly curvaceous feminine ideal. This amplification that can be viewed as the cultural scaffolding of a view of sex/gender as naturally binary, hierarchical, heteronormative, and highly divergent—a view that leaves little space for trans, non-binary, or queer bodies (see Diemer et al., 2018).

This increasing bifurcation of gendered body ideals can also be viewed in the context of postfeminism, which has seen a move away from the ‘androgynous’ ideal of the 1960s toward more overtly sexualized images that emphasize larger

breasts and buttocks as well as small waists and ‘thigh gaps’ (Gill, 2008). Feminist scholars have given significant attention to this ‘postfeminist’ re-articulation of femininity, characterized by often hyper-sexualized images of sexually agentic and empowered women (Arthurs, 2003; Gill, 2008). Such images, while progressive in some respects, can nevertheless be viewed as potentially problematic, not least because the feminist rhetoric of female empowerment is emptied of its *power-as-solidarity* political content and re-articulated as personal ‘narcissistic’ consumption, for instance, of underwear, fashion, makeup, and cosmetic services (Gill, 2008). The vertiginously heeled Manolo Blahniks, beloved by Carrie Bradshaw in the early post-feminist TV series *Sex and the City* (Arthurs, 2003), or the eye-wateringly expensive designer wardrobes, cosmetic surgeries, and multi-million dollar real estate deals of the brokers in *Selling Sunset* (DiVello, 2019, 2022), vividly illustrates how this commodified notion of ‘empowerment’ is individualized, depoliticized, and available only to those with wealth and a particular kind of body that conforms to a narrowly defined ‘ideal.’

Hence, a second issue with postfeminist images of female empowerment is the continued, indeed heightened, emphasis on physical appearance and the promotion of a very narrowly defined and exclusionary ideal. Indeed, these ‘postfeminist’ images are strikingly similar in many respects to the long-standing images of feminine beauty they claim to supersede. They remain young, slim, White, able-bodied, and stereotypically heterosexually attractive. As Turner (2005, quoted in Gill, 2008, p. 45) notes, ‘the sexually liberated modern woman turns out to resemble – what do you know! – the pneumatic take-me-now-big-boy fuck-puppet of male fantasy after all,’ an observation that clearly also illustrates the seeping of pornography’s norms and values into the mainstream. As recent studies indicate, pornography’s norms of young, slim, large breasted, hairless, and White female bodies with neat labia, where women of color appear only as fetish, increasingly inform the hegemonic body ideals that shape women’s experiences and management of their/our own bodies (Bernardi, 2007). As one participant commented in a recent study (Lucey & Malson, 2021, p. 35) of women’s experiences of porn: “‘All prominent porn stars were White – it consolidated something in me that to be brown was not beautiful or sexy and that really negatively impacted me... POC are represented as fetishes i.e. Asian girls, ebony etc.’”

Pathologized Bodyweight

An additional historical shift in culturally dominant appearance norms is the global ‘war on obesity’ that frames bodyweight as a matter of health as well as of gendered aesthetics. Thus, BMI (body mass index) is understood as a health status and a predictor of future health, and overweight and obesity are pathologized (Rich et al., 2010; Tischner, 2012). Of course, fatness, particularly women’s fatness, has long been vilified, but the declaration of ‘war on obesity’ in the late twentieth century marked a distinct shift in constructions of bodyweight. This discourse now, at least ostensibly,

regulates men's as much as women's bodies and, in the context of neoliberalized health, entrenches a highly moralized view of bodyweight as an issue of individual responsibility about 'correct lifestyle choices' (e.g., Rich et al., 2010; Tischner, 2012).

Feminists and others in critical fat studies have produced important critiques of these oversimplistic, pernicious notions that fat is unhealthy, that dieting works to reduce weight and increase health, and that bodyweight is a personal, controllable, and moral issue (see, e.g., Rich et al., 2010; Tischner, 2012). And, as noted above, the use of standardized BMI to categorize people's weights as healthy or unhealthy is not only fatphobic and sexist but also profoundly racist (Rice et al., 2022; Strings, 2019) in its pathologization and regulation of people's bodies via interventions such as weight loss programs, Fitbits, government sponsored public health 'anti-obesity' messaging, school-based weight monitoring, and the everyday stigmatizing scrutiny of those with bigger bodies (Rich et al., 2010; Tischner, 2012). Yet, as with other dimensions of bodily appearance, feminists have also highlighted instances of individual and collective resistance to this discursive regulation that can be found in celebrations of bigger bodies and movements such as 'Health at Every Size' that disentangle bodyweight from health and support individuals to become more active (Tischner, 2012). While some feminist scholars are skeptical of the efficacy of such resistance (Probyn, 2009), others view it as a necessary part of feminist activism (LaMarre et al., 2022).

Feminist Research and Theory on Eating Disorders

Feminist analyses of bodyweight, appearance ideals, and power have necessarily included the spectrum of disordered eating (LaMarre et al., 2022; Levine & Smolak, 2021). This engagement with eating distress has been wide-ranging and trans-disciplinary, so it embodies some of the tensions entailed in feminisms themselves. Feminist scholars have convincingly argued for the need to situate distress around bodies and food within wider social structures that limit women's and others' ability to navigate the world at peace in their/our bodies (Bordo, 1993, 2004; Orbach, 1986; Piran, 2017). Insights from feminist scholarship on those eating practices labeled 'disorders' have challenged the division of 'normal' and 'pathological' (Malson & Burns, 2009) and illuminated ways in which dominant treatment modalities can re-trench rigidity, surveillance, and distrust (Boughtwood & Halse, 2010; Gremillion, 2003). Feminist scholars have also challenged the medical formulation of eating disorders as individual pathologies by illustrating how the spectrum of body/eating distress is tied to broader power structures that constitute 'gender, embodiment, self-control, individualistic competitiveness, personal display, self-discipline, mass consumer culture and the uncertainties of postmodernity' (Malson et al., 2008, p. 417). In this context, critical analyses of the discursive power of medicine and psychology as institutions (Gremillion, 2003; Holmes et al., 2021) have been as important to feminist approaches as exposing broader societal norms and inequalities, as discussed above, that shape 'eating disordered' experiences and practices

along with the normative discontents of undiagnosed distress (LaMarre et al., 2022; Malson & Burns, 2009) among cis girls and women (Bordo, 1993; Chernin, 1983; Orbach, 1978), and increasingly among trans (Jones et al., 2016; Protos, 2020) and non-binary people (Diemer et al., 2018), and cis men (Duggan & McCreary, 2004).

Here, we return to an important theme of this chapter. As Becky Thompson noted over 30 years ago, ‘while feminist research has documented how eating problems are fueled by sexism, there has been almost no attention to how other systems of oppression may also be implicated in the development of eating problems’ (1992, p. 546). Thompson was one of the first scholars to entangle gender with various spaces of marginalization, thus revealing the need to situate eating ‘problems’ within the contexts of racism and other power dynamics such as heterosexism woven into society (see also Piran, 2001). There remains a great need to develop intersectional theories (Crenshaw, 1991; Strings, 2019) that can guide research on body image, eating distress, and dis/ordered eating. For example, recently Le et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between disordered eating and racial microaggressions faced by Asian American women. There were no significant correlations between racism or sexism, considered independently, and disordered eating, but their *co-occurrence* was strongly associated with disordered eating (Le et al., 2020). Clearly, feminist scholarship that contributes to developing nuanced understandings of how and why people might develop eating problems—and what might be done to help—must be rooted in intersectional theorizing (Crenshaw, 1991; Rice et al., 2022) that attends to the lived bodies of those experiencing eating problems, understanding that ‘discourses that describe the body are not only texts of the body but also constitute powerful regimes of truth about the body and bodily practice: they formulate the body’s material realities and regulate embodied subjectivity’ (Burns, 2006, p. 61; see also Cheng & Kim, 2018; Watson et al., 2012).

Feminism, Voice, and Power

A significant proportion of early feminist work in eating dis/orders focused on analyses of narrowly defined body ideals, drawing attention to the pernicious effects of media consumption, particularly in relation to broader tensions around gender roles (e.g., Shisslak & Crago, 1994). Feminist work on prevention has focused on this sociocultural surround, aiming to equip girls and women with the tools to challenge the narrow images and roles prescribing who and what they might be (Shisslak & Crago, 1994). From initial isolated efforts in the late 1980s to ongoing international projects being implemented as randomized controlled trials, prevention programs designed to reduce risk factors (and increase protective factors) for negative body image and disordered eating have focused on equipping people with the knowledge and skills to resist and, in some instances, change local cultures promoting idealization of slenderness and the definition of cis women in terms of appearance.

A full review of the successes, failures, and promising possibilities in the eating disorder prevention literature—including feminist approaches—is beyond the scope

of this chapter (see Levine & Smolak, 2021). Nevertheless, prevention work designed to deconstruct ‘the thin ideal’ or eliminate weight/shape-based bullying offers an entry point to unpack and challenge suggestions that body ideals should be resisted by building *individual* resilience or that there is a singular body ideal that is implicated in producing eating disorders. Feminist and public health paradigms in particular argue that efforts to prevent and treat any socioculturally situated ‘disorder’ must foster change culturally rather than simply targeting individual resilience (Levine & Smolak, 2021; Piran, 1999, 2001; Thompson, 1992). As Steiner-Adair (1994) notes, ‘primary prevention will be most likely to succeed when eating disorders are addressed as a social justice issue, linked with other forms of prejudice’ (p. 388).

This is a formidable challenge because it requires the disruption of prevailing power/knowledges. To reiterate another of our principal themes, power is theorized here as discursive, as ‘regimes of truth,’ located within economic and institutional systems that establish and regulate the conditions that re-produce inequalities and mobilize eating disordered subjectivities and practices and distressed experiences of embodiment more broadly. Hence, redistributions of power may also be effective. Prevention researchers have suggested that encouraging the participation of those who are the ‘targets’ of an intervention in its design and delivery yields stronger results than psychoeducation (Becker et al., 2008; Levine & Smolak, 2021). Moving beyond psychoeducation allows us to consider how eating disorders and body distress are about power and cannot be prevented simply by gaining knowledge about problematic body ideals.

Another challenge here is that eating disorders prevention messages are necessarily embedded in cultural discourses about bodies/appearance that are layered, shifting, confusing, and contradictory (Cliff & Wright, 2010). For example, the simultaneous proliferation of ‘anti-obesity’ and ‘anti-eating-disorder’ messages allows for only a very narrow zone of ‘acceptable’ practices around bodies and food (LaMarre et al., 2017). Further, while ‘the thin ideal’ has been a major focus of several well-established, relatively successful prevention programs (Levine & Smolak, 2021), the focus on this ideal tells only part of the complicated stories inscribed and expressed in body distress (Piran, 2017). For those experiencing racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, social class, and more, disordered eating may be as much about these cultural violences as it is about sexism and idealized thinness (Jones & Malson, 2013; Thompson, 1992, 1994). Feminist—particularly intersectional feminist—perspectives are well-suited to taking a multifaceted perspective on prevention (Piran, 2017; Piran et al., 1999). This type of prevention would integrate dialogues, critical consciousness raising, and advocacy at multiple levels of society in order to (a) acknowledge how body conflicts ‘crystallize’ broader power struggles and (b) challenge an ever-more complex sociocultural landscape that opens spaces for some bodies and constrains others (Bordo, 1993/2004; Eckermann, 2009; Piran, 1999; Piran et al., 1999).

Pathologization, Identity, and Resistance

People who develop eating disorders are often aware of how they are understood and positioned in clinical and popular discourses (Malson, 1998) and many seek to distance themselves from representations that ignore the complexity of their lived experiences (Holmes et al., 2017). Often, these representations are themselves conflicting and contradictory. For example, as noted above, constructions of thinness are variously configured as both conforming to and resisting gendered ideals.

In these analyses, power is again understood in Foucauldian terms in which eating disordered subjectivities are constituted and regulated by culturally available discourses. Importantly, however, the focus here on the instabilities and uncertainties of interpretation can aid us in challenging the simplistic, unhelpful, and all-too-often derogatory stereotyping of those with eating disorders (and of young women more broadly); for instance, as having too much and/or too little control and as passive cultural dupes, unable to resist hegemonic norms. Instead, discourse here is understood as 'both an instrument and an effect of power but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (Foucault, 1990, p. 101).

When we think about 'resistance' and 'conformity' to cultural norms, we must consider that there is no singular discourse or ideal being conformed to or resisted (Eckermann, 2009). Even when a culture of thinness is a precipitating factor, its influence combines with other oppressions (Piran, 2017; Thompson, 1992, p. 558). Particularly in a digitized world, people seeking to make sense of themselves and their bodily experiences and practices may embody contradictions, in some ways aligning with and in other ways resisting expectations about their bodies (Day & Keys, 2009). 'Choices' about body management and eating practices are, of course, constrained by spending power or a lack thereof and must also be explored in relation to the tensions that surround 'choice' in a society with particularized notions about, for example, restraint *and* spontaneity (Bordo, 1993, 2004) and what is 'really' healthy (Musolino et al., 2015). Feminist scholars have long remarked on how those identified as having an eating disorder may indeed be 'too good' at internalizing societal messages about 'ideal body management' (Bordo, 1993, 2004). With a relative lack of power in sexist, racist, heteronormative, and ableist societies, they/we become 'authorities' on dieting, exercising, emotion regulation, the complexities of 'healthy' eating, self-management and image management for safety, and other components that constitute increasing risk for disordered eating. Even engagement with spaces deemed to be 'extreme' or extra-ordinary, such as 'pro-anorexia' websites, might be understood as attempts to engage with the conflicting messages about bodies, health, agency, and identity that leave many flailing (Holland et al., 2018). Overlaid onto a fatphobic society that continues to prize restraint and calls for women to stay small (but not too small), 'eating disordered' practices may actually feel like a safe, rational way to navigate contemporary Western cultures (Musolino et al., 2020).

Voice and Power: Speaking for or Speaking with?

An important feminist consideration in relation to power is ‘voice’: who is allowed to speak, who is heeded, and who is disregarded (Belensky et al., 1986). People diagnosed with eating disorders are rarely trusted to be experts on their own experiences (Holmes et al., 2021; Saukko, 2008). As Ferreday (2012) writes, those diagnosed with anorexia nervosa are often configured as ‘the Other [who] is denied a voice by those very discourses that claim to want to understand and, in doing so, to ‘save’ her’ (p. 140). Even within feminist contexts, there is a tendency to speak for or over those with eating disorders, particularly those not seen as recovered (Holmes et al., 2017). A focus on particularized ‘eating disordered bodies’ (typically the most emaciated) functions to eclipse the voices of distress in favor of framing those bodies as spectacles (Burns, 2004). Culturally, the eating disordered body takes on the sheen of voyeuristic fascination, horror, or abjection (Ferreday, 2012; Warin, 2010), which marginalizes the stories of those whose bodies do not—and perhaps never will—conform to this extremely strong cultural narrative around what an eating disorder ‘is’ and what it ‘looks like.’ Those whose eating disorder doesn’t result in a very low BMI and those who are not young, White, able-bodied, cis gender women will be occluded from this image and, correspondingly, are under-represented in treatment contexts (Becker et al., 2003; Diemer et al., 2018) as well as in research, feminist and otherwise (LaMarre et al., 2022).

The dismissal of the voices of those diagnosed with eating disorders is called out in feminist research taking place in the context of treatment centers, including Warin’s (2010) work critiquing the power relations embedded in and reinforced by ‘expert’ clinical discourse that disqualify the views of ‘eating disordered patients’ as irrational pathology. This is one way treatment for eating disorders may also problematically replicate the very binds it attempts to dislodge (Gremillion, 2003; LaMarre et al., 2022). Tightly monitored treatment settings inscribe particular norms of subjectivity onto those experiencing eating distress, leaving little room for voice and thus resistance and agency (Boughtwood & Halse, 2010; Holmes et al., 2017; Malson et al., 2008). This is particularly true in the wake of increases in managed care environments and the emphasis on evidence-based treatment (Lester, 2019). Decades of feminist analyses demonstrate the tendency to subsume the identities of those with eating disorders into their disorders (Ryan et al., 2006) and that doing so risks limiting the capacity to imagine what life outside of the eating disorder might look like (Malson et al., 2011). Yet, the authoritative march of mainstream treatment continues.

Exploring eating disorder recoveries provides further evidence of the contradictions entailed in how we talk, write, and think about bodies. The extensive body of literature on eating disorders in treatment contexts (often stemming from anthropological, ethnographic fieldwork, e.g., Gremillion, 2003; Lester, 2019; Warin, 2010) offers significant insights into how those with lived experiences of eating disorders experience treatment. Confrontation with a world in which ‘healthy eating’ has taken on promises of immortality and purity upon exit from treatment—or after

having undertaken a ‘recovery journey’ independent of treatment contexts—can tell us about how bodies and eating are read differently based on understandings of histories of pathologies, interpretations of body size, and assertions about fitting or not fitting idealized norms of health. The particularized kinds of treatments legitimized for eating disorders demand of those who attend them what is often the direct opposite of dominant discourses on health (LaMarre & Rice, 2016; Malson et al., 2008), further adding to the conflictual management of bodies and subjectivities noted above. Recovery is a category closed off to many by virtue of their ‘inability’ to perform it in particular ways (LaMarre & Rice, 2016). This is not just an issue of seeing oneself in representations of recovery but, fundamentally, a social justice issue (Kenny et al., 2020).

A Few Steps in Moving Forward

With its emphasis on reflexivity in the personal, professional, and political realms, feminist theorizing and research on body image and eating issues has been clear about its own failings and the need to nuance how power, privilege, and inequalities are studied and understood. As discussed above, there has long been an acknowledgment that eating distress impacts women of color, people of all genders, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, and people who will never lose or maintain weight to the level at which concern is typically expressed. Still, even feminist work on eating disorders continues to focus on White, thin, young, able-bodied, cis gender, and heterosexual women. Given the amplitude and persistence of stereotypes about eating disorders, people positioned outside of its stereotyped boundaries may not see themselves as ‘legitimately’ entitled to support or to participate in research.

We must also attend to the lack of research and theorizing around eating disorders other than anorexia nervosa. With a few notable exceptions (e.g., Brown-Bowers et al., 2017), binge eating disorder, which is more prevalent than anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa combined, has not been the subject of significant feminist work. Beginning with DSM-III in 1980, a diagnosis of anorexia has often been prioritized over a diagnosis of bulimia, and, representationally, bulimia has settled into a much lower position within the hierarchy of research topics and publications (Ison & Kent, 2010). When bulimia has been analyzed, it has been positioned as over-feminized, out-of-control, and requiring professionals and caregivers alike to deal with behaviors that provoke disgust (Burns, 2004). Moreover, fixation on anorexia nervosa is an acknowledgment of its deadly nature *and* a professional expression of the cultural emphasis on thinness. We need to acknowledge that diverse factors, including power inequalities, are operating to motivate a diverse spectrum of body sizes and shapes to engage in fiercely restrictive and unhealthy eating practices, along with harsh body management practices (e.g., ‘fat burning’ overexercise), that are ‘anorexic’ without always producing emaciation (Garner & Wooley, 1991; Gaudiani, 2018). Feminist scholarship is well-suited to engage in theorizing beyond thin bodies, as

these approaches make room for exploration outside of pathologized, diagnostic boundaries.

There has also been a growing recognition that collaborations between clinicians, researchers, people with experience of eating disorders, their families and friends, politicians, and policymakers can reduce the amplitude and persistence of stereotypes about eating disorders. In so doing, disempowered people who have suffered outside of the stereotypical boundaries can experience themselves as having 'legitimate' problems deserving of culturally sensitive professional care and social support. An example of this kind of ongoing collaboration is the Eating Disorders Health Integration Team, (<https://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/health-integration-teams/eating-disorders/>) located in Bristol, UK, co-directed until late 2022 by Malson (see also Piran, 1999, 2017). This way of embedding social justice in research and service development will have many positive reverberations, including increasing the probability that a wider variety of people would have access to care, professionals would be better trained, and treatments would be more flexible in terms of empowering discourses between helpers and people in need of help. Such advances will also go a long way toward understanding and addressing the ways in which people who may already be feeling out-of-control (a form of powerlessness) are harmed by professionals with power and consequently may have no desire to engage any further with eating disorders research or treatment (Holmes et al., 2021). As feminist scholars have argued, creating more opportunities for marginalized voices to speak and be heard can only be beneficial (Holmes, 2018; Warin, 2010). Feminist methodologies which seek to examine and redress power inequalities in research relationships and which emphasize the importance of situating ourselves as researchers will also be key to engaging in participatory and collaborative work that more thoroughly challenges the hetero-patriarchal power relations that permeate this field (Burns, 2006; Holmes et al., 2017).

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Families and Development

Gender Development Within Patriarchal Social Systems



Rachael D. Robnett and Kristin D. Vierra

Starting from birth, children are inundated with information about what it means to be a girl or a boy. In fact, the process of gender socialization often begins prenatally—sometimes weeks before the baby is born. Learning the sex¹ of the developing fetus is an eagerly anticipated pregnancy milestone for many expectant parents. The excitement surrounding this milestone is evidenced in the increasingly popular “gender reveal” parties, whereby the parents announce whether they are having a girl or a boy to their family and friends (see Gieseler, 2018). These announcements can be fairly elaborate and often garner nearly as much attention as news of the pregnancy itself. For example, in 2020 the singer/American football player celebrity couple Ciara and Russell Wilson announced that they were expecting a boy by shooting blue confetti out of two cannons in a video that they posted to their social media accounts. The video generated numerous headlines in pop culture news outlets and has been viewed nearly 5 million times.

It stands to reason that parents, family, and friends are excited to learn the sex of the developing fetus because they recognize at some level that gender plays a fundamental role in organizing society. For example, parents typically create lists of potential “girl names” or “boy names” in accordance with fetal sex. For many parents, fetal sex also plays a key role in how they design the nursery, which styles of baby clothing they purchase, and which items they request on the baby registry. As infants transition into early childhood, gender socialization often intensifies. Examples of

¹ In this chapter, we use the term *sex* to refer to biological categories and the term *gender* to refer to socially constructed roles, norms, and identities. We recognize that this is an imperfect distinction and that sex and gender interact in complex ways.

R. D. Robnett (✉) · K. D. Vierra
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV, USA
e-mail: rachael.robnett@unlv.edu

K. D. Vierra
e-mail: vierrk1@unlv.nevada.edu

childhood gender socialization are ubiquitous and range from gendered appearance indicators (e.g., blue for boys; pink for girls) to gendered parenting approaches (e.g., admonishing a girl to be careful, but encouraging a boy to be daring).

These early examples of gender socialization may seem inconsequential on the surface; however, it is crucial to acknowledge that the process of gender socialization is embedded in a patriarchal social system that affords boys and men greater agency, power, and status relative to girls, women, and gender nonbinary individuals.² This has significant implications that stretch across the lifespan. The remainder of this chapter explores these implications in two sections. In the first section, we outline how gender and power interact to shape three domains of development that are central to self-concept throughout the lifespan: identity, academic and career preferences, and romantic relationships. In our discussion of each domain, we highlight classic scholarship as well as more contemporary work that focuses on young people who are marginalized within patriarchal systems. In the second section, we turn our discussion to the importance of empowering young people to resist patriarchal norms and practices. Specifically, we introduce the concept of critical consciousness and outline empirically grounded strategies for fostering critical consciousness in youth. Much of the research we describe was conducted with U.S. samples; international research and illustrative examples are explicitly described as such.

Domains of Development

Identity

The term *identity* refers to the traits, behaviors, preferences, roles, and life experiences that people incorporate into their sense of self. Identity plays a key role in guiding behavior and decisions throughout the lifespan. In this section of the chapter, we focus on how people's understanding of gender informs their identity. We begin by discussing how gender identity develops in children. Then we highlight recent scholarship that critiques classic gender identity scholarship for being overly simplistic and potentially harmful.

Development of Gender Identity

Children receive a constant stream of implicit and explicit messages about gender. These messages originate from a variety of sources, which include parents, teachers, peers, and the media (Robnett et al., 2018a). In addition to absorbing messages

² In keeping with the tenets of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1984), which are described later in the chapter, it is important to keep in mind that patriarchal social systems do not privilege all men to the same degree. Men who identify as white, heterosexual, and cisgender tend to reap the largest benefits from patriarchy.

about gender from other people, most children actively seek out information about gender and incorporate this information into their broader understanding of the world (Leaper, 2013). As a consequence of these complementary socialization processes, children often develop a basic awareness of their own gender as well as corresponding gender roles and gender stereotypes within the first several years of life (Martin et al., 2002). Children's early understanding of gender and their motivation to learn more about it reflect the important role that gender plays in society (Hyde et al., 2019).

Given the encompassing nature of children's gender socialization, it is unsurprising that many children (and adults) perceive gender to be a salient facet of their identity (Powlishta, 2004). The term *gender identity* refers to the connections that people draw between their sense of self and their understanding of gender. At the most basic level, gender identity is often equated with gender labels. For example, the gender constancy interview—a long-standing method of assessing children's understanding of gender—examines gender identity through simple questions that require children to apply gender labels to themselves (e.g., “Are you a girl or a boy?”; see Slaby & Frey, 1975). Gender pronouns such as *she*, *he*, and *they* are another type of label that can be used to convey gender identity. It is increasingly common in the U.S. and other parts of the world for people to state their gender pronoun preferences in professional artifacts such as an email signature, nametag, or résumé. Similarly, some workplaces and educational settings proactively create opportunities for employees and students to share their preferred gender pronouns.

Historically, children's ability to label their gender has been viewed as an essential first-step toward a more sophisticated understanding of how gender operates in society (e.g., Kohlberg, 1966; Ruble et al., 2007; Slaby & Frey, 1975). Gender schema theory proposes that children's awareness of their gender identity catalyzes them to learn more about gender roles, norms, and stereotypes (Martin et al., 2002). In turn, this information guides children's subsequent behavior—often steering them toward preferences and activities that are consistent with their gender identity. It is through these socialization processes that gender differences in status and power begin to emerge. For example, girls learn to value traits associated with communality such as *gentle*, *polite*, and *helpful*, whereas boys learn to value traits associated with agency such as *strong* and *daring* (Robnett & Susskind, 2010). Arguably, girls and boys should be encouraged to develop both sets of attributes. Yet because of patriarchy, traits and roles that are associated with masculinity tend to afford more status and power than the traits and roles associated with femininity.

Beyond the Gender Binary

Although prior research focusing on gender identity is informative, it also has limitations. Historically, most gender identity scholarship (and the gender socialization literature more generally) has been guided by three assumptions that reflect *gender binary* conceptions of gender (e.g., Burman, 2017; Hyde et al., 2019): (1) there are only two possible gender identities (boy/man or girl/woman), (2) gender identity is stable over time and contexts, and (3) gender identity will “match” sex assigned

at birth. Of course, these assumptions about gender identity are not limited to the research literature; they are commonplace in popular discourse as well. Indeed, the gender binary is evident in even the most mundane aspects of life. For example, teachers perpetuate the gender binary when they divide their class into a girls' team and a boys' team for a class competition or when they greet their students by saying, "Good morning, girls and boys."

Young people whose gender identity does not neatly fit within the gender binary have historically been marginalized in the field of psychology and the general public. This is particularly the case for youth who identify as *transgender*, which is a term that describes people whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. For instance, the Olympian and reality television personality Caitlyn Jenner identifies as a transgender woman, which means that she was assigned the sex of male at birth, but psychologically identifies as a woman. For decades, it was common for parents and clinicians to perceive transgender youth as having a problem that needed to be treated. This tendency is exemplified in the clinical diagnosis of gender identity disorder (GID), which was a diagnostic option in the U.S. until 2013. More specifically, in the Fourth Edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), children could receive a GID diagnosis for gender nonconformity or if they expressed a strong desire to be the "other" gender, among other diagnostic criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Although GID has been replaced with the less-pathologizing diagnosis of gender dysphoria in the Fifth Edition of the DSM, there is still a widespread belief that transgender youth are confused or delayed in their understanding of gender. This belief is controversial and not supported by contemporary scholarship (e.g., Olson et al., 2015). Nonetheless, transgender youth continue to encounter stigma and negative treatment from family members and peers due to their departure from the gender binary (Grossman et al., 2005; Toomey et al., 2010). This puts them at an increased risk of challenges such as lower life satisfaction, depression, and suicidality (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Haas et al., 2011; Toomey et al., 2010).

These challenges have been documented globally, which underscores the need for large-scale reform in how gender identity is understood and affirmed (Reisner et al., 2016). Consistent with this call to action, scholarship that conceptualizes gender identity in terms of the gender binary is increasingly regarded as overly simplistic and potentially harmful to individuals, society, and scientific progress (Hyde et al., 2019). This view is captured in a recent position paper by Hyde and colleagues (2019), who use evidence from fields such as neuroscience, behavioral neuroendocrinology, and developmental science to explain why the gender binary is a flawed and incomplete framework for understanding how gender operates in individuals and the broader social context. The authors also provide a number of examples of how the gender binary constrains people. Many of these constraints have implications during childhood and adolescence. For example, endorsing gender binary beliefs can contribute to youth avoiding academic and extracurricular pursuits that ostensibly conflict with their gender identity and corresponding gender roles. Hyde and colleagues (2019) conclude by encouraging social scientists to replace the gender binary lens with

theoretical frameworks and research methods that acknowledge the complex, fluid interplay among sex, gender, and self-understanding.

Academic and Career Pursuits

Messages about which academic and career pursuits are appropriate for girls versus boys are conveyed by parents, teachers, peers, and the media. These socialization messages are sometimes transmitted via subtle patterns of reinforcement, but they can also be fairly explicit. For example, the websites for national retail stores continue to classify toys as “Toys for Boys” and “Toys for Girls.” Encouraging girls and boys to play with different types of toys is not without consequence. Through play, children develop interests and skills that correspond to cognitive, academic, and career outcomes (see Leaper, 2000; Lillard, 2015). For instance, toys such as dolls and kitchen sets tend to be marketed to girls. This provides girls with early opportunities to practice caregiving skills. In contrast, toys such as video games, blocks, and science kits tend to be marketed to boys. This provides boys with early opportunities to practice science, engineering, and technology skills.

These gender-differentiated childhood experiences, taken together with other gender socialization practices, help to explain subsequent gender differences in academic pursuits and career attainment (see Leaper, 2000; Robnett et al., 2018a). Most notably, men are underrepresented in careers related to caregiving such as early childhood education and nursing, whereas women are underrepresented in careers related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) such as engineering and computer science (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Although caretaking careers and STEM careers are both important for societal functioning, STEM careers tend to be more lucrative and prestigious compared to careers that emphasize caretaking. Accordingly, gender differences in STEM career attainment reflect and reinforce structural-level gender differences in status and power. This is part of why men’s overrepresentation in the STEM workforce has garnered more attention in the research literature and in national-level discourse about education compared women’s overrepresentation in fields such as early childhood education (see AAUW, 2010; U.S. Committee on STEM Education, 2018). Below, we elaborate on work that examines girls’ and women’s underrepresentation in STEM fields. In particular, we focus on how gendered power dynamics contribute to challenges such as stereotyping, gender bias, and sexual harassment that disparately impact girls and women in STEM fields.

Girls’ and Women’s STEM Achievement and Representation

Gender differences in youths’ STEM achievement vary depending on how achievement is measured. In general, girls have an advantage when achievement is measured through grades, whereas boys have an advantage when achievement is measured

through standardized test scores (see AAUW, 2010; Leaper, 2013). Importantly, however, these average gender difference tell an incomplete story unless they are considered alongside other sociodemographic variables such as class background and ethnicity. For example, although boys tend to outperform girls on math standardized tests, girls from wealthier socioeconomic backgrounds tend to outperform girls *and* boys from working class backgrounds (AAUW, 2008). As well, the magnitude of gender differences in STEM achievement varies cross-nationally. For example, Else-Quest and colleagues (2010) found limited evidence of a gender difference favoring boys when math standardized test performance was averaged across more than 40 nations, but the size and direction of gender differences differed to a large degree from one country to the next. Although boys' and girls' performance was equivalent in many countries, girls outperformed boys to a moderate degree in some countries, whereas the reverse pattern was apparent in other countries. The researchers postulated that this variation might be due in part to national-level indices of gender equity such as the proportion of women in research-intensive careers (Else-Quest et al., 2010).

Although girls and boys show similar levels of STEM achievement during childhood and adolescence (see Hyde, 2018), women are nonetheless underrepresented in many STEM college majors, graduate programs, and careers (AAUW, 2015). For example, in high school, girls comprise nearly half (49%) of the students who take the AB Calculus advanced placement exam (NSF, 2018), yet women earn less than one-third (28.5%) of the doctorates awarded in math (NSF, 2019). Women's STEM representation also varies based on field of study. Generally, women are less well represented in degree programs and careers that are math-intensive (e.g., computer science; engineering) as opposed to those that emphasize the life sciences. For example, within the U.S. workforce, women comprise over half of medical scientists, but only a quarter of computer programmers (AAUW, 2015). Further, women in the STEM workforce often have lower median salaries compared to their male counterparts—even in specific STEM careers such as those related to biology where women tend to be well represented (NSF, 2019).

It merits reiterating that focusing on gender tells only part of the story when it comes to degree and career attainment in STEM. For instance, the National Science Foundation (2019) reports that in science and engineering careers, Asian American women and Black men have the same median salary (\$80,000); by comparison, median salaries are much higher for Asian American men (\$100,000), but much lower for African American women (\$68,000). This illustrative example suggests that African American women are doubly disadvantaged by virtue of their membership in two groups (i.e., African American; women) that tend to be marginalized in STEM fields. For this reason, we join others in arguing that it is crucial for the developmental science literature to prioritize understanding how gender interacts with other social category memberships to shape people's academic trajectories (e.g., Syed & Ajayi, 2018). By failing to explicitly discuss racial-ethnic background and other social category memberships, the research literature perpetuates incomplete assumptions about how gender bears on people's experiences in academic domains and daily life more generally.

Potential Causes of Girls' and Women's Underrepresentation in STEM

Although women's underrepresentation in STEM fields is caused by a number of factors (e.g., AAUW, 2015; Eccles & Wang, 2016), many of the challenges they encounter can be traced to negative stereotypes about girls' and women's STEM abilities. These stereotypes are especially pervasive in domains related to math. At their core, math-gender stereotypes tend to rest on two-related assumptions: (1) That math is a domain reserved for brilliant people with natural math ability and (2) that boys and men have more of this natural math ability than do girls and women (e.g., Starr, 2018; Storage et al., 2020). Empirical evidence demonstrates that these assumptions are false: Math ability can be cultivated, as with ability in any other academic skill, and gender differences in math achievement are typically very small and sometimes favor girls (see AAUW, 2010; Hyde, 2018).

Despite evidence indicating that math-gender stereotypes are inaccurate, scholarship suggests that math-gender stereotypes are nonetheless internalized by middle childhood. For example, Cvencek and colleagues (2011) found that boys and girls in second grade endorsed the stereotype that math is for boys. Further, Neuville and Croizet (2007) showed that making gender salient resulted in hindered math performance for girls in third grade, but had no influence on boys. These findings indicate that girls are aware of math-gender stereotypes and that this awareness can contribute to decrements in their math performance.

Stereotypes continue to create challenges for women who persist on the path to STEM careers. In fact, stereotyping may become worse as women transition out of gender-balanced high schools and into male-dominated STEM degree programs and careers (Robnett, 2016). Research from the field of social psychology provides insight into this possibility by demonstrating that numeric representation, power dynamics, and stereotyping are connected (Goodwin et al., 2000). Specifically, this work indicates that members of higher-status majority groups have a tendency to stereotype members of lower-status minority groups. Sometimes stereotyping is an unintentional cognitive shortcut; other times, however, stereotypes are intentionally directed at members of lower-status groups who constitute a perceived threat to the status and power that members of higher-status groups hold (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2000; Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2000). For example, if a woman's male classmate feels threatened and embarrassed that she outperformed him on a physics test, he may attribute her performance to luck or academic dishonesty instead of acknowledging that she is a strong physics student.

Gendered power dynamics and stereotyping often manifest in additional challenges for girls and women in STEM (Leaper & Robnett, 2018; Robnett et al., 2018a). In particular, accumulating evidence indicates that many girls and women in STEM encounter sexism or sexual harassment at some point in their academic trajectory (e.g., Clancy et al., 2014; Eaton et al., 2020; Leaper & Brown, 2008; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). For instance, Clancy and colleagues (2014) surveyed over 600 students to ask about their experiences with sexism and sexual harassment during STEM field work. Most of the women in sample reported hearing inappropriate comments (e.g., sexual remarks) at least occasionally during field work, and nearly one-fifth of the

women reported that they frequently encountered these comments. Male peers appear to be an especially common source of discouragement for girls who are interested in STEM (Riegle-Crumb & Morton, 2017; Robnett, 2016; Robnett & John, 2020). For instance, Robnett (2016) found that 70% of women in math-intensive undergraduate majors reported experiencing sexism from male peers in their major at least once in the past year. Findings also indicated that women who reported higher levels of sexism tended to have lower levels of confidence in their STEM ability; however, having a supportive network of STEM peers helped to offset this negative association. Similarly, Riegle-Crumb and Morton (2017) found that girls' interest in pursuing a STEM career was negatively associated with their exposure to male peers who believed that boys are better than girls in science, but was positively associated with their exposure to female peers who were confident in their science ability. These findings imply that peer networks may have great potential for promoting greater gender equity in STEM fields (see Dasgupta, 2011; Robnett & Leaper, 2013a).

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are another important facet of human development. For many young people, the process of exploring sexual and romantic attraction is a defining feature of adolescence and emerging adulthood.³ Similar to gender identity and academic aspirations, people's experiences in romantic relationships are contoured by patriarchal norms in the broader social context. As detailed below, these norms give rise to two ideologies—ambivalent sexism and heterosexism—that respectively afford boys and men greater power than girls and women in heterosexual romantic relationships and contribute to the marginalization of people who identify as sexual minorities.

Ambivalent Sexism

Prior to adolescence, girls and boys tend to have strong biases in favor of their gender in-group, which can be attributed to the pervasive role that the gender binary plays in interpersonal dynamics and social structures (Maccoby, 2000; Powlishta, 2004). As a consequence, interactions between girls and boys are often characterized by disinterest, avoidance, and even hostility. This is apparent in popular childhood taunts (e.g., “Girls rule; boys drool”) and in children's tendency to affiliate almost exclusively with members of their gender in-group during lunch, recess, and unstructured time (see Mehta & Strough, 2009). Children who do affiliate with members of the

³ It is worth noting that some youth identify as *asexual* (i.e., not interested in sexual relationships) or *aromantic* (i.e., not interested in romantic relationships). Because only limited research focuses on people with these identities, this section of the chapter primarily focuses on people who identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

gender out-group often experience teasing and may be labeled with pejorative terms such as *sissy* (for a boy who plays with girls) or *tomboy* (for a girl who plays with boys). These challenges are likely magnified among children who identify outside of the gender binary (e.g., Reisner et al., 2014).

As children transition into the developmental period of adolescence, gender-based attitudes become more nuanced. For heterosexual youth specifically, the indiscriminant hostility of childhood is incompatible with the interdependence that is required in their romantic relationships (de Lemus et al., 2010; Glick & Hilt, 2000). This sparks a transformation whereby hostility toward the gender out-group is tempered with more benevolent attitudes (Conner et al., 2017; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Although the interplay between hostility and benevolence characterizes attitudes toward boys and men as well as girls and women, most existing work focuses on how this interplay impacts girls and women. *Hostile sexism* is characterized by overtly negative sentiments that target girls and women who violate gender-role norms. For example, a girl is experiencing hostile sexism when her peers tease her for being muscular, aggressive, or outspoken. In contrast, *benevolent sexism* is characterized by positive sentiments that are directed toward girls and women who align with gender-role norms. Despite its seemingly positive valence, benevolent sexism is premised on the notion that girls and women require support and protection from boys and men. For example, a girl is experiencing benevolent sexism when the boy she is dating insists on paying for her dinner because he assumes that boys (men) need to provide for girls (women). Importantly, people can perpetuate hostile and benevolent sexism regardless of their gender identity (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). For example, a mother is exhibiting benevolent sexism when she urges her daughter to pursue a romantic partner who can be a good financial provider for the daughter's future family.

Hostile and benevolent sexism, which are collectively described as *ambivalent sexism*, work together to disempower girls and women by punishing them for displaying agency (hostile sexism) and rewarding them for displaying submissiveness (benevolent sexism). This has significant implications for norms and dynamics in heterosexual romantic relationships. More specifically, boys and men tend to hold a disproportionate amount of decision-making power in romantic relationships; girls and women, in contrast, are often cast in the role of accommodating and supporting the decisions their partner makes (see Eaton & Rose, 2011). This decide/accommodate distinction is apparent in boys' and men's tendency to initiate major romantic relationship transitions. For example, during the initial courtship phase of a relationship, boys and men are typically expected to initiate the first date as well as the physical aspects of the relationship such as the first kiss or first sexual encounter (Cameron & Curry, 2020). Later in the relationship, men are typically responsible for initiating cohabitation (Sassler & Miller, 2011) and the marriage proposal (Robnett & Leaper, 2013b). After marriage, many women continue to accommodate their partners when deciding whose career to prioritize and in terms of patrilineal naming conventions (Pilcher, 2017; Robnett, 2016). Although these norms and practices are pervasive, they appear to be especially commonplace in relationships where one or both partners strongly endorse ideologies such as ambivalent sexism that encourage

an uneven distribution of power between women and men (Cameron & Curry, 2020; Lee et al., 2010; Robnett et al., 2016, 2018b).

The uneven distribution of power that ambivalent sexism encourages may also serve to normalize various forms of aggression that boys and men direct toward girls and women. With regard to physical aggression, for example, adolescent girls are more likely to believe that dating violence (directed toward girls) is acceptable if they are high in hostile sexism (Lee et al., 2016). Hostile sexism has also been linked to boys' attempts to exert control over their girlfriends' online behaviors (e.g., messaging with friends; Cava et al., 2020). Similar patterns have been obtained for sexual coercion and sexual aggression (Eaton & Matamala, 2014; Morelli et al., 2016). For instance, one study showed that hostile sexism predicted adolescent boys' and young men's likelihood of distributing their romantic partner's sexually explicit texts without their partner's consent (Morelli et al., 2016).

Heteronormativity

Patriarchy's impact extends well beyond power dynamics in heterosexual romantic relationships. One of the pillars of patriarchal social systems is *heteronormativity*, which is an ideology that promotes heterosexual attraction as the only natural sexual orientation (Herek, 1990). Patriarchy and heteronormativity are linked in part because girls' and women's subordinate status in heterosexual relationships helps to keep heterosexual boys and men in positions of power—both in the home and in society (Rich, 1980). Consequently, the desire to maintain the patriarchal status quo goes hand-in-hand with opposition to relationships that depart from heterosexual norms (Herek, 1990). This opposition often manifests in heterosexism, which refers to negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviors that are directed toward people who identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, or members of other sexual-minority groups.

Some indicators suggest that overt heterosexism has declined in recent decades—at least in some parts of the U.S. and the world. For example, in a 2019 Pew survey, 72% of U.S. respondents agreed that homosexuality should be accepted by society, which was an increase from 49% in 2007 (Pew Research Center, 2020). Importantly, however, agreement with this sentiment varied on the basis of sociodemographic characteristics such as political affiliation and age. The same survey illustrated that although there is wide global variation in the extent to which homosexuality is accepted, many of the countries surveyed showed a trend of increasing acceptance over the past decade. These findings are consistent with shifts in political discourse and key policy changes such as the rapid expansion of marriage rights in many parts of the world. Relatedly, same-sex couples are increasingly visible in the popular media. For example, mainstream children's television shows such as *Doc McStuffins* feature characters who identify as sexual minorities.

Despite the increasing societal acceptance of same-sex attraction, heterosexism continues to present challenges for sexual-minority adolescents and adults. For example, a national survey conducted in the U.S. from 2015 to 2019 demonstrated that

sexual-minority youth encounter higher rates of bullying compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Johns et al., 2020). This higher rate of bullying may in turn contribute to a heightened risk of psychosocial challenges such as anxiety, depression, suicidality, and substance abuse (e.g., Johns et al., 2020; Poteat & Espelage, 2007). Moreover, the sense of being unwelcome at school can have a negative impact on sexual-minority youths' academic performance and engagement (Poteat & Espelage, 2007).

Some of these challenges appear to persist as sexual-minority adolescents' transition into emerging adulthood. For example, during the first semester of college, sexual-minority students report higher rates of psychological distress and low rates of social acceptance relative to their heterosexual counterparts (Alessi et al., 2017; Riley et al., 2016). On the other hand, however, some aspects of life may improve during emerging adulthood—particularly for sexual-minority youth who have the opportunity to attend college. For example, relative to high school, college often affords a larger, more diverse peer landscape. Thus, sexual-minority youth who struggled to establish a supportive peer network during high school may find that this task is easier when they reach college (Riley et al., 2016). Sexual-minority undergraduates who are able to find a sense of community on their college campus may have a reduced risk of psychological challenges. For example, sexual-minority undergraduates in one study reported that joining campus organizations and establishing connections with sexual-minority peers helped them cope with heterosexism that they encountered on campus (Alessi et al., 2017).

Despite these challenges, some people who identify as sexual minorities report that being free from heteronormative scripts confers advantages in their romantic relationships. For instance, Lamot (2017) found that many people in same-sex relationships perceive heterosexual courtship scripts as rigid and unimaginative. These participants further described the advantages of being able to “write the script ourselves” when deciding which practices to adopt in their own romantic relationships (see also Underwood & Robnett, 2021). Another potential advantage of same-sex relationships is their more balanced distribution of power relative to heterosexual relationships. For example, one large-scale review of dating scripts revealed that same-sex relationships are more likely than heterosexual relationships to be built around a friendship script whereby responsibilities are shared in a flexible and equitable manner that takes into account each party's unique skills and preferences (Eaton & Rose, 2011).

Resisting Patriarchal Gender Norms: The Importance of Critical Consciousness

Thus far, we have discussed the ways in which gender socialization and patriarchy work together to oppress girls and women as well as members of other marginalized groups in the domains of identity, academic and career pursuits, and romantic relationships. Our discussion now shifts to strategies that can help young people

resist patriarchy. Namely, we introduce the concept of *critical consciousness* (i.e., *conscientização*; see Freire, 1970). People who have developed critical consciousness can recognize structural oppression and are motivated to work toward social change (Diemer & Blustein, 2006). Thus, interventions that seek to foster critical consciousness can have positive implications for individuals while simultaneously resisting patriarchy at the structural level. Below, we elaborate on what critical consciousness is and how it develops. Although our discussion often focuses on girls and women, we also explain why initiatives that encourage young people to resist patriarchy will have limited success unless they take into account the ways in which gender interacts with other social categories.

Critical Consciousness Overview

Critical consciousness was originally conceptualized by Paulo Freire, who argued that education and empowerment are closely linked (Freire, 1970). More specifically, he believed that education is a tool that can be used to help members of marginalized groups recognize, understand, and resist the systemic social forces that contribute to their oppression. Contemporary scholarship builds on Freire's work by examining three facets of critical consciousness: critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). *Critical reflection* refers to the ability to recognize and question oppressive social forces such as patriarchy. A person is engaging in critical reflection when they reject individualistic explanations for inequity and instead blame systemic structural causes. The second component of critical consciousness is *political efficacy*, which refers to the motivation and confidence to participate in activities that promote social change. Individuals who are high in political efficacy report having knowledge about politics, confidence to talk about politics with others, and the ability to critically analyze political figures. Critical reflection and political efficacy lay the groundwork for the third critical consciousness component: *Critical action*, which refers to individual or collective behaviors that challenge systems of oppression and create social change.

Benefits of critical consciousness include increased psychological empowerment, emotional support, and access to supportive peers (Christens et al., 2016; Ginwright & James, 2002; Klar & Kasser, 2009). Moreover, as an individual acquires critical consciousness, they begin to replace self-blame with the ability to recognize social systems that create oppression (Ginwright & James, 2002). In addition to these psychological benefits, critical consciousness has been linked to many developmental benefits (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016). For example, youth who are exposed to programs designed to develop their critical consciousness tend to show heightened school engagement (O'Connor, 1997) and increased commitment to their future careers (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer et al., 2010).

Development of Critical Consciousness

The aforementioned benefits have sparked scholarly interest in how critical consciousness develops. The first-step in acquiring critical consciousness is recognizing that inequities exist (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). According to Brown and Bigler (2005), the ability to detect sexism and other forms of discrimination likely emerges during childhood and is spurred by social-cognitive advances such as improved classification ability, deeper insight into other people's mental states, and greater knowledge about stereotypes. Importantly, however, children's ability to detect discrimination is often limited to concrete incidents with clear contextual cues (Brown & Bigler, 2005). During adolescence, improvements in abstract reasoning may afford a more sophisticated understanding of discrimination. With regard to sexism, for example, adolescents may begin to understand that gender inequity is a systemic phenomenon as opposed to isolated instances of biased treatment.

Features of the social context shape whether and when critical consciousness emerges. In particular, youth are more apt to develop critical consciousness if their parents and peers are open to discussing social justice issues with them (Diemer & Li, 2011). The school climate can also scaffold the development of critical consciousness. For example, classrooms that encourage a free and safe exchange of ideas support youths' understanding of social and civic issues (Martin & Beese, 2016). More generally, Watts and Flanagan (2007) argue that for adolescents to get involved in social and political affairs, their environment must be structured in a way that makes these opportunities available to them. To this end, youth often benefit from being part of a network of people who recruit them when opportunities for action emerge and mentor them through their involvement.

Other scholarship focuses on instilling critical consciousness via interventions. For instance, feminist scholars drew from Freire's (1970) philosophy of education to create feminist pedagogical interventions. Feminist pedagogy can be conceptualized as a collective laboratory in which group members work together to unravel, interpret, decode, and analyze girls' and women's experiences (Kimmel & Worell, 1997; Sinacore & Boatwright, 2005). Feminist pedagogy attempts to empower girls and women by encouraging participants to reflect on their lived experiences and emphasizing the importance of the knowledge that each participant supplies. For example, Martin and Beese (2016) introduced feminist pedagogy to girls attending an alternative high school. The girls participated in nine weeks of discussion that focused on how sexism and sexual harassment manifest in the media and at their own school. After the intervention, many of the girls had moved away from perceiving sexual harassment as a personal problem; instead, they recognized that sexual harassment is a systemic problem that impacts many of their peers. Other feminist pedagogical interventions introduce feminist principles within the context of undergraduate courses. For example, one classic study examined women's experiences in a women's studies course (Bargad & Hyde, 1991). Over the course of the semester, the women

showed significant increases in their feminist identity and in their desire to participate in feminist action at their school and in their community. The results of this study provide an example of how critical consciousness can have implications at the individual level (i.e., feminist identity) as well as the structural level (i.e., collective action).

Intersectionality

A potential limitation of feminist pedagogical interventions is their tendency to focus exclusively on gender inequity. The interpretive framework of *intersectionality* proposes that efforts to combat social problems such as sexism will meet with limited success unless they acknowledge the ways in which social categories combine to create distinct experiences with oppression and privilege (Cole, 2009; Godfrey et al., 2019; hooks, 1984). For example, a European American girl and African American girl will both experience sexism over the course of their development, but their experiences with sexism will differ in fundamental ways given their different ethnic backgrounds. The push to focus on interlocking system of oppression arose from critiques of the women's rights and racial justice movements. In particular, Crenshaw (1989) argued that the feminist movement centered white women, whereas the racial justice movement centered men of color. Both movements, therefore, overlooked the unique challenges that women of color encounter on the basis of their membership in two marginalized social categories.

In response to critiques from Crenshaw (1989) and others (e.g., Syed & Ajayi, 2018; Warner, 2008), scholars have begun to develop critical consciousness interventions that more explicitly address inequities stemming from interrelated systems of oppression (e.g., Jacobs, 2016; Lane, 2017; Watts et al., 2002). For instance, Lane (2017) invited Black high school girls to take part in a two-year empowerment program. The program was designed to address the unique challenges that arise from being both Black and a girl. A core component of the program's curriculum was critical dialogue that focused on historical and contemporary issues facing young Black women. The intervention facilitator also encouraged the girls to perceive themselves as change-makers and as allies who should challenge and support one another. The girls who participated in the program experienced a range of positive outcomes. For example, the program provided the girls with a space to critically analyze the negative stereotypes that often characterize portrayals of Black women in the popular media. This led the girls to reconstruct their definitions of Black femininity to focus on cultural assets such as intelligence and resilience. Many girls also "found their voice," meaning that they were more comfortable asserting themselves when they encountered discriminatory remarks or actions.

Despite noteworthy exceptions such as the previously described Lane (2017) intervention and some interventions guided by liberation psychology (see Lykes & Távara, 2020), it remains somewhat uncommon for scholars to draw from the tenets of intersectionality when designing critical consciousness interventions (Jemal, 2017).

This may be because pragmatic considerations such as limited time or funding can make it difficult to implement interventions that are tailored to multiple dimensions of identity. For example, a critical consciousness intervention that focuses exclusively on gender inequity will be easier to design and carry out than a critical consciousness intervention that focuses on gender, ethnic, and social class inequities.

When developing more targeted interventions is not possible, we recommend that researchers be mindful of intersectionality when facilitating the intervention and interpreting its outcomes. By applying the intersectionality lens, researchers may be able to glean valuable insight into why critical consciousness interventions vary in effectiveness for different participants. For example, a critical consciousness intervention that focuses on resisting patriarchy could inadvertently alienate people who identify as sexual minorities if the intervention focuses on challenging heteronormative practices such as chivalry and the gendered household division of labor.

A related concern is that interventions typically focus on instilling critical consciousness in young people from marginalized or oppressed groups. This framework has been criticized, however, for leaving social problems to be overcome by members of oppressed groups (Jemal, 2017). Consistent with this point, Freire (1970) argued that liberation cannot be achieved without camaraderie in which the oppressor fights alongside the oppressed. Thus, we recommend that researchers develop critical consciousness interventions that help young people from more privileged groups recognize their role in oppressive social systems. For example, teachers in the UK have mobilized to teach their students—particularly the boys—to question and resist violent messages about women that have been popularized anew by social media figure such as Andrew Tate (Bubola & Kwai, 2023). Here, too, the intersectionality lens is valuable. Although boys need to recognize that their gender confers status and power, they should also have opportunities to explore how their access to patriarchal privilege varies depending on their other social category memberships such as racial-ethnic background or socioeconomic status (see Jemal, 2017).

Conclusion

Despite noteworthy markers of progress, patriarchy continues to impact young people over the course of their development. These impacts are not limited to girls and women; rather, patriarchy constrains and harms people from a range of backgrounds. Further, although this chapter focused on three domains of development—identity, academic and career pursuits, and romantic relationships—patriarchy arguably bears on all aspects of human development in some capacity. Interventions that seek to instill critical consciousness show promise of empowering young people to combat patriarchy at the individual and structural levels. As suggested by scholars in the critical consciousness and intersectionality literatures (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Freire, 1970), these interventions will likely be most effective to the extent that they include youth from all gender identities and consider interlocking forms of oppression.

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Parenting as Partnership: Exploring Gender and Caregiving in Discourses of Parenthood



Abigail Locke

This chapter focuses on gender with regard to pregnancy and caregiving/parenting practices. Its placement in a volume on gender and power is pertinent given that we often see gendered stereotypes related to caring come into play in early parenting in what were regarded as ‘equal’ partnerships before children (Faircloth, 2020; Miller, 2017). The focus in this chapter is on heterosexual partnerships where there is a ‘mother’ and a ‘father’ to explore gendered practices in caregiving. There is a strong research field on lesbian and gay parenting that potentially demonstrates more equal caregiving practices (Ryan-Flood, 2009). Lesbian and gay parenting arguably demonstrates a deliberateness and intentionality of kinship parenting rather than a reliance of biological factors (Weston, 1991). Susan Golombok’s work (2015) on new family forms indicates more positive parental well-being and parenting from parents in gay father families compared with heterosexual families.

With regard to power, as others have noted (e.g., Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004), power is inherently complex to define and tends to be fluid. Acting from a post-structuralist perspective that considers the ways in which power is actioned in discourse, this chapter has its focus is on how ‘parents’ are being both positioned in, and potentially resisting, particular discourses. The chapter considers discourses around ‘parenting,’ ‘caregiving,’ ‘mothers,’ and ‘fathers.’ The first two of these concepts are presented in gender neutral terminology. However, parenting and caring practices are anything but neutral and, as others have noted (e.g., Sunderland, 2006) discourses of parenting tend to be more tied to motherhood than fatherhood. Some of these differences in caregiving amounts may be justified through structural inequalities, for example, the ‘motherhood penalty’ (Budig & England, 2001) where mothers traditionally appeared to have more responsibility for caring and are more likely to opt for part-time or flexible working hours, partly due to previous gender pay gaps and societal expectations on gender and caregiving. As Williams (2010) argues

A. Locke (✉)
Keele University, Keele, UK
e-mail: a.j.locke@keele.ac.uk

when looking at maternal stereotyping in the workplace, there is a ‘maternal wall’ of discrimination whereby working mothers may be seen as having reduced capacity for the workplace and being likely to take time away from the office for caregiving responsibilities. As Yarwood and Locke (2016) and Locke and Yarwood (2017) noted, these gendered patterns of caregiving appear even in families where parenting is supposedly at least equally ‘shared.’ The gender gap in family responsibilities has been gradually narrowing (Pailhé et al., 2021). However, parenting responsibilities tend to still be predicated on traditional mother/father lines (Sullivan et al., 2018). I will reflect on this further on in the chapter.

As will be discussed, the COVID-19 pandemic across much of the globe starting from the Spring of 2020 laid bare the tensions inherent in gender and caregiving responsibilities where, for example, in the UK there is now clear evidence that the lockdowns had a larger impact on working mothers rather than fathers who were disproportionately impacted with balancing childcare, homeschooling, and precarity in the workplace, leading to suggestion of knock effects on mental health (Kirwin & Ettinger, 2022). The focus in this chapter is one of exploring these gendered constructions of caregiving and unpacking some of the underlying assumptions inherent within these discourses.

In this chapter, I offer an exploration of caregiving and parental identities and situate these within contemporary parenting ideologies and discourses. It uses as exemplars contemporary research work to demonstrate common discourses around gender and parenting. The first exemplar concerns the ‘maternalisation’ of parenting culture, from the ways in which ‘parenting’ and ‘mothering’ become synonymous, in terms of parenting advice and responsibility. The second exemplar is a study conducted on fathers who took on the primary caregiving role for their children, so-called, Stay-At-Home-Dads (SAHDs) and contextualizes findings from this work within a wider discussion of parenting roles, gendered identities, and intersectional concerns. The chapter discusses this work within the wider context of gender, power, and parenting, finally situating it as an exemplar in the UK lockdowns during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021.

Contemporary Parenting Culture and Ideologies

Parenting does not occur in a vacuum and any aspect of knowledge and advice that we are given contains aspects that are culturally, societally, and historically located (e.g., Apple, 1987; King, 2015). It is also pertinent to remember that ‘parenting’ does not form a hegemonic discourse, despite it often being seemingly reported in these ways. Indeed parenting discourses will differ in terms of intersections with gender, whether ‘mothering’ or ‘fathering’, and social class (Dolan, 2014; Gillies, 2007; Shirani et al., 2012), age (Budds et al., 2016; Eerola & Huttunen, 2011; Locke & Budds, 2013), ethnicity (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009), sexual orientation (Johansson, 2011; Ryan-Flood, 2009) as well as paid work status (Christopher, 2012; Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2003), with all of these differing issues themselves potentially, in turn, may

intersect with gendered norms in terms of masculinities and femininities. I will unpack and discuss some of these issues further within this chapter.

There are a number of parenting ideologies that frame discussions on contemporary parenting practices. Within the field of Parenting Culture Studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2014), we can see how dominant discourses around parenting are located within risk behaviors and risk management, drawing on work from Frank Furedi on “Paranoid Parenting” (2002) in which he notes parenting has been reconstructed as a “troublesome enterprise..... (which) systematically deskills mothers and fathers” (page 201). In this vein, mothers are cast as ‘risk managers’ (Lee et al., 2010) in that their role is to make ‘informed choices’ on what the appropriate actions are in their parenting practice. Similarly, Daminger (2019) terms mothers as often acting as ‘project managers’ in the household in that they are managing the decisions and tasks that the household needs to run effectively. Note in all of these examples, that the responsibility for parenting often lies with the mother. This is reflected widely across research literature as well as advice around parenting, as this chapter will demonstrate.

Contemporary parenting culture has been regarded as being ‘intensive.’ The contemporary concept of ‘intensive mothering’ came in formative and groundbreaking work by Sharon Hays (1996) on the ‘Cultural contradictions of motherhood.’ For Hays, the mother (note not the father here), despite other roles and pressures in her life, needs to be self-sacrificial, full-time (even if employed), and child-centered in her parenting practices. This concept of ‘intensive motherhood’ is incredibly influential and has been adapted in more recent years to fit more nuanced aspects of mothering practice. For example, Christopher (2012) talks in similar terms of ‘extensive’ mothering to explain how working mothers performs ‘extensive’ duties of caring for their children demonstrate their ‘good’ mothering. Similarly, Joan Wolf (2011) renamed this ‘total’ motherhood in reference to the care work associated with full-time breastfeeding of a small infant. Finally, French philosopher, Elisabeth Badinter, refers to the current mothering ideologies as ‘overzealous’ (2012). As research continues to demonstrate, the norm toward gendered caregiving where perceptions of ‘good’ mothers are commensurate with full-time stay-at-home mothers, rather than those in employment (e.g., Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002), is still clearly evident across parenting discourses. Women who do not or cannot live up to this idealized form of motherhood may feel judged as being a ‘bad’ (or inadequate) mother (Arendell, 2000; Christopher, 2012).

Within contemporary parenting ideologies, it becomes apparent that there is almost a kind of surveillance on parenting practices (Gross & Pattison, 2006). These include decisions on how the baby is fed (Lee, 2007; Knaak, 2010; Locke, 2015, 2017), the timing of pregnancy (Budds et al., 2016) and women’s behaviors pre-(Budds, 2021; Waggoner, 2017) and during pregnancy (Locke, 2023; Lowe & Lee, 2010). Working from a neoliberal standpoint, there is a presumption that we are citizens of a liberal democracy making choices about our lives and our health that are based on accurate and true information that we receive in order to avoid or minimize the risk of harm to ourselves or our families (Ayo, 2012). For example, the dominant discourses that are present within current health promotion practices that we find

are of ‘informed choice’ and risk. The way that parenting discourses have become bound up with notions of risk links in with Foucault’s notion of governmentality (Foucault, 1991; Lupton, 1999) and, in turn, many of these discourses become tied up with health behaviors related to parenting. Furthermore, aspects of accountability (and potential blame) for making the ‘wrong’ choice (Phipps, 2014) are inherent throughout contemporary parenting discourses.

‘Parenting’ and the Discourse of the ‘Maternal’

Much of the information and advice around parenting issues is delivered to a gender neutral ‘parent.’ However, the terminology of parenting is not without issue or debate. As, in the cases above, much of the parenting literature relates specifically to ‘mothering’ as a practice or ‘mother’ as the main caregiver. When we consider the language of parenting, we can often see somewhat stereotypical gendered constructions of caregiving and responsibility inherent throughout. As Kate Boyer (2018) notes, childcare predominantly remains ‘women’s work.’

Baraitser and Spigel defined an interest in the ‘maternal’ as, among other things, a ‘unique form of care labour’ (2011, p. 825). One way in which this has been conceptualized in the feminist literature is to consider a discourse of the ‘maternal,’ most famously suggested by Ruddick (1995) in her theorizing of ‘maternal’ embodied, nurturing caregiving. Therefore, from this perspective ‘maternal’ defines a set of practices associated with nurturing behaviors, most commonly linked with raising children, and most often related to ‘mothers’ as engaging in these caregiving practices. I will pick this up again later in the chapter in my discussion of primary caregiver fathers, i.e., stay-at-home-dads.

As the research literature demonstrates, infant feeding practices are one key place where intensive mothering ideologies are played out in full (e.g., Wolf, 2011). We now consider an example taken from a newspaper study of media representations of a method of infant feeding called ‘baby-led weaning’ (Locke, 2015) where I considered how baby-led weaning was both endorsed and resisted as a means of displaying ‘good motherhood’ in contemporary parenting culture. If there was any doubt of the ‘maternalisation’ of parenting culture and the prevalent discourses around gendered binaries of care, this article from the UK press makes it clear. It focuses on ‘parenting’ advice to the new ‘parents,’ in this case, Prince William and Kate Middleton, the (now) Prince and Princess of Wales, after the birth of their first child, Prince George.

Official guidelines say six months is the earliest parents should start giving their baby food other than milk, although a study earlier this summer revealed that 96 percent ignore that advice and start earlier. Kate will soon realise that there is a huge debate about how to wean a baby: in one corner are fans of traditional spoon-fed puree; in the other are advocates of a new approach called Baby-Led Weaning, where small chunks of food are placed in front of your baby and it’s up to him whether he eats it or throws it on the floor. It’s a messy business, and although Kate presumably won’t have to worry about extracting chewed green beans from the crevices in the high chair, BLW is a step too far for many mums. (EXCERPT 1: The Telegraph, 21 July 2013, UK)

As we see throughout the extract, when giving advice to the gender neutral, ‘new parents,’ the focus is clearly on Kate as the mother, who is explicitly cited twice, as the one who the advice is specifically aimed at. There is a presumption in parenting discourses whereby they tend to automatically defer to the mother in terms of the receiver of parenting information and advice (Sunderland, 2006). This is one indication of the ways in which gendered constructions of caregiving are occurring in parenting information and practices. If we situate the advice alongside intensive mothering ideology, then we can see how the information is directed to the mother and how the mother takes this up in her performance of child-centered, intensive motherhood in order to fulfill her ‘good mothering’ identity.

The issue of ‘parenting’ discourse from some feminist perspectives can be problematic as it presupposes an equality within society that is clearly not there. As Arlie Hochschild (1990) noted some decades ago, women are commonly involved in the ‘Second Shift,’ that is, that once they have fulfilled working demands outside of the home, they come home to a ‘second shift’ of domesticity. Time use studies of housework and childcare within the home regularly demonstrate that women and mothers tend to perform more of these tasks (Bianchi et al., 2012; Sayer, 2005). This appears to be the case even within some homes where the father is the primary caregiver (Craig, 2006). Latshaw and Hale (2016) noted how in families where the mother was the breadwinner, once the mother returned to the home after a day in paid work, she took over the childcare. They argued that families were continuing to ‘do’ conventional gender despite having an alternative domestic setup. While this may be due in part to societal expectations on gender and domestic pursuits, as argued by some, (e.g., Hochschild, 1990), it also demonstrates the dominance of the ‘intensive’ (Hays, 1996) or ‘extensive’ (Christopher, 2012) mothering ideology, that the mother is performing her ‘good mothering’ role in this way.

Contemporary Fathering Discourses and Stay-at-Home-Dads

Despite the societal discourse around ‘involved fatherhood’ that is commonplace in many Western and industrialized cultures, there is evidence to suggest that discourses of the nurturing mother as primary caregiver are commonplace and evident throughout all aspects of parenting education and literature. Jane Sunderland’s (2000) work on contemporary parenting texts and magazines notes how fathers were often portrayed in these texts as “part-time,” “baby entertainers,” “line managers,” and “bumbling assistants” as opposed to equal carers. Similar points have been raised elsewhere, such as by Wall and Arnold’s (2007) study of the Canadian Press, whereby fathers are often portrayed in ‘fun’ playing roles with their children, while the mothers perform more nurturing tasks such as cooking and general day-to-day childcare.

In recent years in the UK, and elsewhere, there has been a documented rise in fathers who are taking on the primary caregiving role for their children. While some

of this has been put down to a ‘de-gendering of parenting’ and the rise of involved fatherhood (Risman, 2009; Miller, 2010 on the un-doing or redoing of gender and caring), others have put the larger increases down to the global recession of 2008 or ‘man-cession’ as it was commonly reported in the print media (Locke, 2016) due to the apparent negative effect of the recession on male unemployment (Wall, 2009; c.f. Williams & Tait, 2011). Exact figures on the number of stay-at-home-fathers within the UK are hard to ascertain but a survey by insurance company Aviva in 2010 estimated that up to 1 in 7 fathers were taking on the primary caregiving role for their children. More recent figures from the Office of National Statistics in 2015 suggested that 225,000 men in the UK were economically inactive due to looking after their home and family (ONS, 2016). In the UK, a system of Shared Parental Leave was brought in half-way through the previous decade (Children and Families Act, 2014). Importantly, and in terms of societal responsibility and discourses around gender and parenting, all employed women maintained full eligibility for maternity leave and statutory maternity pay but could also *choose* to share the balance of the remaining leave with the other parent and pay, up to a total of 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay (Statutory Maternity Pay Rate). As Locke and Yarwood (2017) noted however, the introduction of SPL was a missed opportunity “to break down engrained ideological and political discourses of gendered work-family divisions” (page 9).

There are a plethora of research studies focusing on contemporary fathering and the rise of the ‘involved father.’ One such study (Henwood & Proctor, 2003) found that, in general, men placed less importance on their role as providers, and instead identified their role at home, as a father, as their main concern, comparing their role favorably with that of their fathers. Anna Dienhart suggests that despite talk of the “new father” and “working women,” “social discourse about the good provider role for men still seems deeply entrenched” (Dienhart, 1998, p. 23). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that discourses of the nurturing mother as primary caregiver are commonplace and evident throughout all aspects of parenting education and literature, as we see with Sunderland’s (2000, 2006) work on depictions of fathers in parenting magazines. When we consider how the ideology of intensive parenting is being conceived, it is clearly focused toward motherhood, while ‘fatherhood’ is someone neglected, or indeed ‘insulated’ from this pressure (Shirani et al., 2012). Fathers themselves claim to be more involved in autonomous decision-making, rather than feeling pressured by expert advice and external judgment. However, given the gendered assumptions of parenting that inhabit our society, the reported differences in “actual” decision-making could explain this “insulation,” as it is the mother who is typically cast as the decision-maker for her children. As Henwood and Proctor (2003) noted two decades ago, this equity in decision-making was raised as a key tension in a sample of involved fathers (in heterosexual relationships). There is a small but growing literature around fathers in primary caregiving positions with the majority of that work focusing on single fathers or fathers who will take on the primary caregiving role for a limited time (Russell, 1999) instead of a permanent domestic setup, as is the case for many of the fathers using, for example in the UK, the Shared Parental Leave system. In addition, much of the work on contemporary fatherhood

focuses on those in heterosexual relationships (e.g., Chesley, 2011; Miller, 2011). As Andrea Doucet (2006) noted almost two decades ago when considering the dilemma of gender ‘equality’ in parenting—there is no socially acceptable model for a mother as a secondary caregiver. This statement remains as true today where mothers taking on that role are somehow depicted as non-normative.

Parenting as Partnership: A Discourse of ‘We’

Drawing on interviews taken from a larger project looking at ‘stay-at-home-dads’ (SAHDs) in the UK that I conducted, we can explore gendered expectations of parental caregiving. While conducting the interviews, it became apparent that the fathers were talking within a discourse of ‘parenting.’ That is, when discussing their practices of caregiving for their children, the word most commonly used was ‘parenting’ and they talked in terms of collaborative decision-making between themselves and their ‘partners,’ in most cases, the mothers of the children (the majority of the sample identified as heterosexual).

It became clear for all of the fathers in relationships in the sample here, that ‘parenting’ was very much a joint venture and one that was enacted through discussions and agreement with their partners. The first excerpt is from a participant who has the pseudonym, Jim. He has two children and is one of the part-time working fathers in the sample. At the time of the interview, he was residing overseas but has been part-time and the primary caregiver since the children were very young in the UK. As interviewer, I ask about the ‘partnership’ side of parenting as Jim has been talking of parenting as collaborative all of the way through the interview. The interviewer’s talk is marked in bold.

I: Is parenting very much a kind of partnership between you two then do you think?

J: Tag team, yes it has to be, especially with these two. You know, we don’t have roles for ourselves but the kids have roles for us. The kids see us in doing different things and their ideas of what we do are quite set I think and they have said quite often you know, “Mum, why do you work all the time. Dad should be the one that works all the time, you should be at home.” Anna craves that. (EXCERPT 2, Jim, Interview 6)

This excerpt shows how for many of these families, the SAHDs formulate their parenting in terms of being a joint enterprise, a domestic ‘tag team’ that he humorously notes the need for their two particular children (daughters). What also becomes apparent here though is that although Jim and his partner have a clear partnership with a division of roles, the societal discourses of gendered caring are still very much felt within their family. He claims that their children portray parenting and the responsibilities very much in gendered norms of parenting in that the mother’s role is to not be working ‘all the time’ and she ‘should be at home,’ whereas the father’s role is one that is constructed as working ‘all the time.’ He backs this up that

one of his daughters (“Anna”) “craves that,” i.e., inferring that she would prefer to have her mother at home, rather than her father. It is interesting that Jim’s excerpt suggests that children are aware of gendered norms toward caregiving and parenting when being raised in what is regarded as a non-traditional family. This points to the strength of the societal discourses of gendered parenting that permeate through much of our daily lives.

This parenting as partnership and the joint decision-making is evident throughout all of the interviews and another example is given below. In this excerpt, we hear from Craig, who, at the time of the interview, was the primary caregiver for two young children aged 16 months and 3 years of age. The three-year old attends preschool on a part-time basis. This excerpt deals with Craig’s reason for becoming the primary caregiver. Prior to becoming a SAHD, Craig and his partner were both in professional occupations.

one of the biggest reasons, actually is, my wife did suffer with post-natal depression and it’s funny because at first we were very, kind of, ‘Oh we don’t talk about this’ and ‘Well we’re managing. We’ll get through.’ And actually, as time has gone on, we sat down and thought, ‘Well actually, one of the best ways to deal with it is to be open and up front and talk about it.’ So, and actually that would have been one of the reasons why we decided to make the change. That and I’m a much better cook than my wife too ((laughs)). (EXCERPT 3, Craig, interview 3)

As we discussed earlier, there are strong societal gendered expectations of parenting where mothers are seen as natural nurturers while fathers are seen as providers (Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011; Thomson et al., 2011). As Locke (2016) observed, media representations of the reasons for becoming a primary caregiving father typically focus on monetary concerns as the sole issue. However, as noted elsewhere (Locke & Yarwood, 2017) and here, the reasons for taking on the primary caregiving role are diverse. In the case of Craig, he suggests a strong contributing factor in the decision was his wife’s post-natal depression during her second maternity leave and their decision for her to return to work early, while Craig took on the primary caregiving role. As becomes evident throughout all of the stay-at-home-fathers in the wider sample, the nurturing role of fatherhood and being in the position to develop this deep relationship with their children appears to be one of the paramount issues that emerges across the corpus. This stands in opposition to common media depictions of fatherhood (Locke, 2016) but reflects the growing literature on modern fatherhood whereby fathers are wanting to be involved, nurturing parents (Doucet, 2006; Finn & Henwood, 2009).

Much like Hays’ (1996), intensive mothering ideology, ‘good’ parenting practices are full-time, intensive, and child-centered, and for the SAHDs interviews presented in this chapter, the importance that they placed on performing a ‘good father’ role appeared to be paramount (see also Henwood & Proctor, 2003). The nurturing nature of the parenting role is one that is typically bestowed on the mother, therefore stay-at-home-fathers have to navigate a myriad of discourses of caregiving, parenting, and traditional gendered norms of what mothers and fathers do in their accounts of caring for their children. In the interviews that I conducted, there was a clear sense of them orienting to a ‘good parent,’ rather than talking in terms of being a

‘father’ for many of the SAHDs. This mirrors previous work from Doucet (2006) on Ruddick’s ‘maternal lens.’ While Shirani et al. (2012) suggested in their study of first time fathers, that fathers were somehow insulated against intensive parenting cultures, I would suggest that fathers in a more primary caregiving position, as is the case here, appear to be displaying strong elements of orienting to a good parenting ideology. How this good parenting manifests for this group is in contrast to many of the ‘involved fathering’ studies that still contain the presumption of the mother as the primary caregiver (e.g., Dermott, 2008; Henwood & Proctor, 2003) but also suggests that societal constructions of ‘good fathering’ are out of touch with everyday fathering experiences.

The consideration of stay-at-home fathers within larger discussions of gender, power, and parenting is an important one. These fathers continue to be a minority within contemporary society, a society where it is evident that there are strong societal expectations that mothers undertake the primary-care role, while the fathers are the financial providers with clear discourses around masculinity being tied to this provider status (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003). While elsewhere we see fathering discourses being bound up with hegemonic masculine ideals (Connell, 1990, 1992; Locke, 2016), contemporary research suggests we are moving toward more sensitive, caring, equal masculinities (Elliot, 2016) of more involved fatherhood (Johansson & Klinth, 2008) with inherently variable masculinities (Coles, 2009). As Elliot (2016) theorizes, caring masculinities reject domination and instead embrace care and relationality. Therefore, she suggests that these “constitute a critical form of men’s engagement and involvement in gender equality and offer the potential of sustained social change for men and gender relations” (page 240).

Therefore, to begin to understand the complexities of gender in relation to modern families, a more thorough examination of the intersection of different factors in relation to parenting, caregiving, and contemporary parenting cultures would be beneficial.

‘Parenting’ in a Pandemic: Mothers, Fathers, and Gendered Norms of Caregiving

As this chapter has demonstrated, gender and parenting are an area full of complexity and nuance. The chapter began by considering advice that is given to gender neutral ‘parents’ before considering the language of the ‘maternal’ and the tensions inherent in the concept and usage of ‘parent’ for gender neutrality. As demonstrated, in much of the advice that is given to new parents, childcare is still commonly seen as predominantly women’s work (e.g., Boyer, 2018; Crittenden, 2010). From here the chapter turned to considered gendered constructions of caregiving inherent in contemporary society by focusing on stay-at-home-dads. Here it became apparent that the fathers discussed parenting as being in a ‘partnership’ and this was very much a joint enterprise between both parents. With the rise of fathers in caregiving roles, and

also the introduction of Shared Parental Leave (SPL) schemes in many countries, a reconsideration of the language of parenting is perhaps timely. However, since the introduction of SPL in the UK in 2015, the rates of take-up have been consistently low which suggests that while some fathers are wanting to step into a primary caregiving role, this remains an exception rather than a move to a more equal, shared parental responsibility. Reasons for the low take-up have varied but do include workplace and societal norms of gendered caregiving (Locke & Yarwood, 2017; Yarwood & Locke, 2016) as well as fathers' reluctance to take a career penalty (Working Families, 2020; cf Budig & England, 2001 on 'motherhood penalty').

However, a final note for consideration for a chapter on parenting in a volume on gender and power, is the issue of parenting and homeschooling that arose in many parts of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic such as the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 in the UK. In these lockdowns, we saw that the pandemic exacerbated inequalities in gender and parenting (Lyttelton et al., 2023) where across the board, it appeared to be the mothers who were taking on the majority of homeschooling tasks and additional childcare (Petts et al., 2021). This was irrespective of whether they were in relationships and, if so, whether the partners were at home also. Given that many parents were working remotely through most of the pandemic lockdowns in the UK, it is of interest that homeschooling is a task that commonly fell to the (often paid-working) mothers to fulfill. As was reported in the Guardian Newspaper in the UK (8th January 2021) reporting on the closure of schools, the headline was that mothers were taking 'twice as much unpaid leave as fathers.' This article drew on a survey carried out in the UK by organizations including the Women's Budget Group (an independent network of leading academic researchers, policy experts, and campaigners) and the Fawcett Society (a charity which campaigns for gender equality). It claimed that 15% of mothers were said to have taken unpaid leave during earlier lockdowns, in comparison with 8% of fathers. In addition, 57% of fathers said that their jobs did not enable them to work from home during school closures, compared with 49% of mothers. See also O'Reilly (2021) on the gendered impact of parenting in a pandemic. It does appear that the effects of childcare due to the pandemic may have had a more detrimental effect on mothers rather than fathers but, given the focus in this chapter on 'parenting as partnership,' the pandemic has held a mirror up to societal discourses and responsibilities of caregiving, despite the move to involved fatherhood and a rise in caregiving fathers. As Yarwood and Locke (2016) noted, in working couples, when a child was ill, it was the norm that mothers took time off to look after the child. They noted that this was the case even where the father worked part-time. The reasons for this seemed to vary and were complex matters of 'good mothering' discourses (in line with intensive parenting ideologies) as well as an expectation, in both families and employers, that this was the mother's role. As Auðardóttir and Rúðólfssdóttir (2021) found in their study in Iceland, parenting in a pandemic is an 'overwhelming project that requires detailed organization and management.' This management tended to fall onto the mothers (c.f. Daminger, 2019) rather than being shared equally between parents.

Similarly, with regard to the gendered impact of homeschooling during a pandemic, the gendering of support for homework (and children's needs) appears

to still be societally mandated. As Lehner-Mear (2020) noted, mothers appear to adopt ‘good mothering’ discourses through their maternal support for homework., In essence, performing their (intensive) mothering displays through caregiving and associated practices that are still highly gendered in the expectation of who fulfills these tasks. All of these aspects seem to signify that gendered norms of parenting and caregiving continue to run deeply within many societies despite changes in working practices, societal policies, and other initiatives. The pandemic and the ‘un-doing’ of the steps in gender equality with regard to parenting practices were disappointing to note but also served to remind us of the fragility of cultural change. And, that the introduction of policies relating to sharing parental leave and a societal discourse of ‘involved fatherhood’ are not enough to tackle the complexities of moving toward a new model of parenting that does not differentiate task and responsibility on the basis of gender.

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Power, Gender, and Aging



Joan C. Chrisler

Until the turn of the twenty-first century, feminist scholars and activists paid little attention to older women's issues or their experience of ageism (Calasanti & Slevin, 2006). Early activism and books on the topic by Barbara Macdonald (Macdonald & Rich, 1983), Sandra Martz (1987), and Betty Friedan (1993) initially garnered attention, but the experiences of older women soon disappeared from public awareness. Why? Perhaps it is because of the stigma attached to aging in Western societies, where most feminist scholarship has been written. Perhaps the second wave of feminism's slogans about *sisterhood* promoted an emphasis on younger adult women and obscured the experiences of their mothers and grandmothers (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001). Perhaps activists saw sexism and racism as more fundamental to human oppression and chose to focus their attention there. Perhaps it took changes in longevity and the demographic shift to draw attention to elders; indeed the shift, which has been called the gray tsunami, exposed the extent of ageism as politicians and journalists decried the costs to society of an aging population. Perhaps it took the aging of baby boomer feminists, the first generation to benefit from the Women's Liberation Movement, to recognize ageism as they experienced it first hand.

Yet ageism is an intersectional oppression. If we live long enough, we all (rich or poor, White or of Color, gay or straight, woman or man, trans or cis, thin or fat, able-bodied or disabled) will experience age-related stereotypes, whether positive (in cultures that respect the aged) or negative (in cultures that do not). The first experience of ageism is always a shock, perhaps because, whatever our age, we tend not to think of ourselves as *old* (Furstenberg, 1989). The experience of ageism is disempowering, and the shock of it may be greater for those who have had more ability to exercise power and more access to resources, respect, and dignity. Those who have lived their lives on the margins of society in a struggle for dignity may have

J. C. Chrisler (✉)
Connecticut College, New London, CT, USA
e-mail: jcchr@conncoll.edu

difficulty recognizing their initial experiences of ageism *per se*, as it is entangled with other “reasons” why people or institutions ignore or treat them disrespectfully.

Ageism

Ageism refers to prejudice against individuals based on their age. Although there are some instances where younger people experience ageism (e.g., adults-only apartment complexes), in societies where youth is highly valued, it is elders who are most often the targets. Ageism may be experienced as discrimination (e.g., in hiring or promotion) or as microaggressions (e.g., social invisibility, jokes about “senior moments”). The stigma attached to aging is reflected in people’s attempts to pass as younger than they are (e.g., cosmetic surgery; cosmeceuticals; hair dye; identifying as middle-aged when they are in their 60s, 70s, and beyond) and in complimentary ageism (e.g., “You don’t look 70,” “She’s 90 years young”). Stigma is also reflected in younger people’s preference not to spend time with older people (North & Fiske, 2012); in the development of spaces where elders congregate (e.g., “senior centers,” “senior living”), which facilitates social distancing by youth (North & Fiske, 2012); and in the scarcity of positive images of elders in popular culture (Lemish & Muhlbauer, 2012; Neville & Anastasio, 2019).

Both women and men experience ageism, but there is some evidence that women may experience it sooner and more frequently. Some research shows that women are perceived as old at earlier ages than men are (Chrisler et al., 2018; Hummert et al., 2019; Kite & Wagner, 2002). The double standard of aging (Deutsch et al., 1986; Sontag, 1979) means that women are judged more harshly than men are when signs of aging begin to show, which results in greater pressure on women to hide those signs (Dingman et al., 2012) and greater shame when their age is obvious (Holstein, 2006). In Hollywood, actresses “age out” of lead roles much earlier than their male peers do, and it is common in films to see leading men paired romantically with actresses who are decades younger than they are (Lemish & Muhlbauer, 2012).

The stereotype of elders has both positive (e.g., wise, experienced) and negative (e.g., grumpy, senile) components (Kite & Johnson, 1988). In youth-oriented cultures, the negative aspects are emphasized, which may be another way for younger people to distance themselves from elders (Chrisler et al., 2016). Many negative components of the stereotype refer to unattractiveness (e.g., wrinkled, ugly) and incompetence (e.g., forgetful, frail), which places them at the intersection of sexism and ageism, given that the feminine gender role stereotype includes weakness, passivity, and dependence and that women are subjected to the double standard of aging. Thus, it may be easier to perceive older women than older men as incompetent (Chrisler et al., 2016). The stereotype content model places elders in the pitied (i.e., warm but incompetent) group (“doddering but dear”; Cuddy & Fiske, 2004, p. 3), a pattern that has been found across cultures (Cuddy et al., 2005). Housewives (Eckes, 2002) and pregnant women (Masser et al., 2007) have also been rated warm but incompetent, which may make being pitied a more common experience for women

than for men. Benevolent sexism, the tendency to see women as weak and in need of help and support (Glick & Fiske, 1996), may lead to benevolent ageism, the tendency to see elders as weak and in need of help and support (North & Fiske, 2012).

Internalized ageism refers to elders' acceptance of negative stereotypes about aging, which can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Stewart et al., 2012) and lead to learned helplessness (Cousins, 2000). Ample evidence now supports stereotype embodiment theory (Levy, 2009), which posits that stereotype threat or ageist microaggressions can lead elders to act on (or embody) ageist stereotypes in self-defining ways. For example, priming negative stereotypes (e.g., shaky, senile) in a lab setting results in worse handwriting (Levy, 2000), lower willingness to take a risk, more frequent requests for help (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2012), and poorer performance on memory and math tests (Abrams et al., 2006; Desrichard & Kopetz, 2005). In longitudinal studies, elders, who internalize more positive than negative components of the stereotype assess their health more positively (Ramirez & Palacios-Espinosa, 2016), are more resilient in the face of stressful events (Levy et al., 2015), and even outlive their more negative peers (Ng et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2012). Thus, ageism actually contributes to the incompetence younger people perceive in elders, reinforces negative stereotypes, disempowers elders, and undermines elders' physical and mental health.

Ageism is more common in developed (industrialized, post-industrial) societies, especially those with individualistic, capitalist, Western cultures, where respect depends upon material measures of productivity (Gullette, 2004; Lips, 2003). Elders may be seen as "greedy geezers" or "deadwood" because they are seen as no longer productive and as takers (rather than makers) of societal resources (Gullette, 2004). In developing societies with traditional collectivist cultures, ageism may be less common because definitions of productivity are more flexible and elders hold respected roles (e.g., grandparent, midwife, mother-in-law) (Lips, 2003).

Power and Empowerment

There are various ways to think about power, but here I follow classic social psychology theories and define power as *influence*: the ability to persuade (e.g., Cartwright, 1959). We can think of power in several ways: *power over*, the ability to influence others to do what one wants; *power from*, the ability to resist others' influence attempts (e.g., to say "no"); and *power to*, the ability to marshal one's own thoughts, emotions, and actions in order to achieve one's own goals (i.e., empowerment) (Hollander & Offerman, 1990; Yoder & Kahn, 1992). Women are often perceived to have less influence than men and less ability to exercise the three types of power. However, that analysis is too simplistic. Who is the woman in question, whom is she attempting to influence, and in what circumstances? Power is always dynamic and contextual, and any given woman (regardless of her age) may have more influence and feel more empowered in some circumstances (e.g., in the family) than in others (e.g., in the workplace or public sphere).

Raven (1965) described six power bases, or modes of influence, that people commonly use: reward, coercion, referent, legitimate, expert, and informational. Reward power requires the ability to offer resources to those who accept one's influence, whereas coercion power requires the ability to withhold resources or to deliver punishment to those who resist one's influence. Referent power is based on relational ties that enable people to influence each other (e.g., "Do it for *me*," "Parents should stick together"). Legitimate power is based on social roles (e.g., parent/child, teacher/student) and positions in a hierarchy (e.g., admiral, committee chair, manager) that include a right to influence others. Expert power is the right to influence based on others' recognition of one's relevant expertise, and informational power is the ability to influence based on clear and convincing rationales for action or access to information not generally available. To utilize these power bases successfully, influencers need resources, self-confidence, social status, knowledge/expertise/wisdom, self-efficacy, and/or collective action.

Below I consider how successful elders might be in exercising power and whether there are gender differences in access to what influencers need in order to be successful. I also consider some of the intersectional identities that impact the exercise of power.

Resources Necessary to Exercise Power

Physical Attractiveness

Attractiveness has been shown repeatedly in social psychology research to empower and to provide social benefits. For example, as a result of the halo effect, in which attractive people are thought to have other "good qualities" (e.g., intelligence, friendliness, morality), attractive people are more likely than unattractive people to be hired and promoted and less likely to serve time in jail for criminal infractions (see Fikkan & Rothblum, 2012, for a review). Beauty is especially entwined with social status for women across cultures. Beautiful girls and women are seen as leaders in their peer groups and celebrity culture (e.g., Instagram influencers), are more likely to attract high-status romantic partners, and can deploy their looks as a reward in influence attempts (Frevert & Walker, 2014). Just being seen with a beautiful friend, date, spouse, or co-worker can enhance people's social status (Frevert & Walker, 2014). Thus, women of all ages spend time engaged in beauty work to make themselves as attractive as possible.

The double standard of aging limits women's ability to use beauty as a power base as they age, as beauty is associated with youth in many cultures. Women are judged more harshly than men are when signs of aging appear (Foos & Clark, 2011); the fact that women of all ages report anxiety about aging (Barrett & Von Rohr, 2008; Slevic & Tiggemann, 2010) indicates that they are aware of such negative judgment. A much discussed, but under-researched, experience of women in their 50s is "the

transition from visibility to invisibility” (Chrisler, 2007, p. 6), when women used to “turning heads” realize that no one is looking at them anymore, no matter “how well dressed and well groomed they are” (Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2018, p. 145). The power to attract attention via beauty is gone—for those who once had it.

Many wealthy women try to hold on to beauty as a resource by engaging in more expensive and labor-intensive beauty work designed to hide or remove signs of aging (e.g., hair dye, Botox injections, “anti-aging” creams, cosmetic surgery), work that requires constant self-discipline (Clarke & Griffin, 2008). Recent studies in Western countries have shown that midlife women report considerable interest in cosmetic (especially face- and weight-related) procedures that would make them look younger, and many would elect them if the procedures were more affordable (Chrisler et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2007; Slevac & Tiggemann, 2010). Perhaps the closer women were to the beauty ideal in their youth (e.g., slender, able-bodied, White, attractive), the more disempowering signs of aging feel to them.

There is some evidence that older women are redefining what it means to be attractive. They are making the most of what they have by focusing on their clothes and their posture, by emphasizing health over beauty, by finding beauty in signs of aging (e.g., white hair), and by focusing on aspects they can control (e.g., hairstyle, make-up) (Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2018). For example, older women may choose clothes and accessories to cover parts of the body they find unattractive (e.g., scarves, long-sleeved blouses) (Clarke et al., 2009) or develop their own unique sense of style (e.g., Lyn Slater, a former professor of social work who is known on Instagram as “the accidental icon”, began blogging about fashion in her 60s). These strategies can contribute to older women’s self-confidence and feeling of attractiveness (“looking good” for their age). Indeed, some recent studies show that older women have greater body acceptance and appreciation than younger women do (Montemurro & Gillen, 2013; Tiggemann & McCourt, 2013) and that women in their 80s are more positive about their appearance than are women in their 60s (Baker & Gringart, 2009). Some recent films (*Calendar Girls*; *The Book Club*; *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande*) that show women in their 60s and 70s as vibrant, lovable, attractive, and sexy might contribute to the empowerment of at least some older women (Lemish & Muhlbauer, 2012).

Physical Strength

Men and boys typically have greater upper-body musculoskeletal strength than women and girls at all ages. Physical strength can be used in the exercise of coercion (e.g., an implied threat, a physical assault) and reward (e.g., providing protection or assistance) power. It is also useful in *power from* (e.g., “Try to make me do it!”), and it contributes to personal independence (e.g., stamina, ability to do tasks without assistance), which is especially important to elders’ empowerment.

Lessened strength is part of normal senescence (Seifert et al., 1997), and weak grip is one of the signs of frailty (Xue, 2011). Both genders, especially in the oldest age

group, can become frail, but women may be more likely to be perceived as frail, and at earlier ages, because of the nexus between sexist and ageist stereotypes (e.g., weak, vulnerable, dependent). Perceptions of older women as frail can result in benevolent ageism (e.g., doing for them what they could do for themselves or urging restrictions of their activities, thus undermining their self-efficacy), targeting them for scams, or using physical threats to control them. Internalization of others' perceptions that one is frail is disempowering and can result in stereotype embodiment: Older women may believe that they cannot exercise, continue with favorite activities, go out by themselves, or live alone (Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2018).

How serious the typical loss of strength depends on how much muscular strength individuals developed in their youth and how well they maintained that strength through midlife via manual labor, exercise, and/or athletics. Exercise in old age can help elders to maintain or improve stamina, strength, and balance, yet most older women in the USA do not exercise regularly (Lips & Hastings, 2012) or have hobbies that require physical activity (e.g., dancing, gardening) (Taylor, 2012). Older men are more likely than older women to engage in exercise (Chen et al., 2012), perhaps because of habits developed in youth when they were athletes. In the USA, ethnic minority and rural older women are especially unlikely to report regular exercise (e.g., Garcia, 2015; Pullen et al., 2001). Barriers to exercise reported by older women are often related to gender (e.g., beliefs that exercise is unfeminine; that women should not sweat or become muscular; that they are too old or fat or clumsy to exercise) (e.g., Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2018). Yet there are signs that this is beginning to change.

Although today's oldest women were born before athletics were generally considered appropriate for girls and women, baby boomer women often have a different view, and younger generations are likely to be even more interested in sport and exercise at every age, despite variations in culture and social class. Sports leagues for senior citizens are growing in popularity in the USA, and community organizations often sponsor exercise classes designed for elders (Chrisler & Palatino, 2016). In China, it is common to see elders exercising together (e.g., tai chi) in public parks. Role models, such as members of the South African Grandmothers' Soccer League and Sister Madonna Buder (aka The Iron Nun, the oldest person to complete the Ironman Triathlon—at age 82), show that it is possible for some women to maintain physical strength into old age. Older women have reported that it is empowering (and a form of resistance to ageist stereotypes) to develop strength, maintain fitness, and improve balance (e.g., Dionigi et al., 2011; Halvarsson et al., 2016). Even playing Wii video games at home brings these benefits (Keogh et al., 2014). Strength and fitness also support elders' independence and contribute to *power to* achieve their own goals.

Money/Gifts

Money (i.e., the ability to provide or withhold it) is a mainstay of the reward and coercion power bases. Across cultures, women typically have less access to wealth than men do (Schein & Haruvi, 2015). This results from gender discrimination in salary, hiring, and promotion; tracking of girls and women into lower paying jobs; time away from paid employment to raise children; inheritance laws or traditions in some countries that favor sons over daughters; and fewer years of education for girls than boys in some countries. Women are less likely than men to have pensions or significant savings to support them in old age; in countries, where all elders have government benefits to protect them from poverty, women's payments may be lower than men's because they have had fewer years in the workforce (Sugar, 2007).

However, older women's economic situation appears to be improving. In industrialized countries, on average, 70% of women ages 25–64 are in the workforce (Schein & Naruvi, 2015), and more older women are continuing to work beyond age 65—some because they need to supplement their retirement income and others because they enjoy their jobs (Cole & Hollis-Sawyer, 2020; Denmark et al., 2015). It is not difficult to point to prominent older women who have inherited (e.g., Queen Elizabeth II) or earned (e.g., Oprah Winfrey) substantial wealth. Many baby boomer women, who had professional careers or good-paying jobs with benefits, are retiring with enough income to live very comfortably. These older women have become known in popular culture as WOOPies (well-off older persons) or GLAMs (gray, leisured, and moneyed) (Muhlbauer et al., 2018). Their financial status increases their social status, draws attention to their personal and philanthropic interests and consumer decisions, and makes them more influential than older women with less income (Muhlbauer et al., 2018; Schein & Naruvi, 2015). Of course, many WOOPies benefitted from wealth transfer (i.e., inheritances from spouses, parents, or other relatives) as well as from their own earnings. Low-resourced families do not have wealth to transfer, undocumented immigrants are excluded from well-paid jobs and educational opportunities, and lesbians in countries where same-sex marriage is prohibited are unable to inherit (or must pay high inheritance taxes) when their partners die. Thus, cumulative effects of prejudice and discrimination can make some women increasingly financially dependent on their families as they age, even as other better-off older women become less dependent than earlier generations (Schein & Naruvi, 2015).

However, there are gifts that do not require purchasing, and almost every older woman has those to bestow or withhold. These include family lore, secrets, recipes, and heirlooms. Grandmother's blessing is a valued reward, and avoiding her curse is a great relief. Older women can be quite skilled at influencing others by offering an heirloom with sentimental value if the child provides a service she needs or a grandchild achieves a particular goal. Such gifts are both rewards and signs of affection.

Affection/Sexuality

Most people find signs of affection (e.g., smiles, hugs, kisses, pats on the back, attention) rewarding, and these can be used very effectively to influence behavior. The feminine gender role stereotype includes kindness, warmth, and nurturance, which means that most women have been socialized to be comfortable displaying these traits—at least some of the time. The promise of affection, and the threat to withhold it, are traditional ways for women to exercise reward and coercion power (Johnson, 1976).

The intersection of gender and age stereotypes may make it easier to perceive older women as likable (grandmother vs. grumpy old man). A likable person who likes us back is a rewarding companion. Likability, similarity/in-group identification, and/or the bonds of friendship and kin are necessary to exercise referent power, which calls upon shared feelings or identity as a means of influence (e.g., “You’re my dear granddaughter/my best friend,” “Family should help each other,” “Sisterhood is powerful”). Women across cultures often have closer friendships and larger social support networks than men do, and with those come a history of counting on other women for advice and assistance (Lips, 2003; Taylor, 2012). Thus referent power is a comfortable way for most women to assert influence and is a type of power that older women may be especially able to utilize.

Sexuality is another traditional way for women to exercise power—by offering or withholding sexual activity (Johnson, 1976). Although the double standard of aging suggests that women lose their sexual candidacy (i.e., desirability) at earlier ages than men do, older women with romantic partners can still exercise power through sexuality. Ageist stereotypes portray elders as lacking in sexual desire, but a survey of elders in five Western countries showed that 79% of men and 78% of women disagreed with the statement “Older people no longer want sex” (Nicolosi et al., 2006). Sexuality is an important part of relationships for many elders (McHugh & Interligi, 2015) and strengthens the bond on which referent power rests. However, women whose relationships are unhappy or who have unsatisfactory sex lives can draw on the ageist stereotype to exert *power from*, as they explain that they no longer desire sexual activity.

Although sexuality can remain a way for older women to feel powerful, it can also be disempowering. The intersection of sexism and ageism means that women who actively exhibit sexual desire are demeaned, especially in youth-oriented cultures (McHugh & Interligi, 2015). Older men might also be demeaned (e.g., as “dirty old men”), but they are more likely than older women to be praised for their vitality if they remain sexually active. It is acceptable for older men to seek younger partners, but older women who do the same are considered to be *cougars* who prey on younger people (McHugh & Interligi, 2015).

Time

Time is a resource that is most available to higher status individuals, who are able to control the number of hours they spend in the workforce and who can afford to pay others to do some of their work at home. Women, who work long hours or multiple jobs or irregular schedules, and also do housework, raise children, and care for older relatives, have little time to spare. Spare time can be used to develop expertise and seek out information, maintain relationships, and provide attention and affection to family and friends, activities that make it possible to utilize the expert, informational, and referent power bases.

Older women whose childrearing days are behind them and who are retired or semi-retired from the workforce have more free time, and more control over their time, than they once had. This allows them to develop new interests (or return to old ones) through volunteer work, political engagement (e.g., poll workers, campaign workers, candidates for office), social justice activism, taking courses, arts and crafts, mentoring, or trying a new career direction. Elders keep many communities going through their dedication to volunteer work, and they find that work both enjoyable and empowering (Denmark & Klara, 2007; Kulik, 2015). Older women can utilize their skills and expertise, accomplish goals, try out new leadership roles, and expand their support and friendship networks through volunteer work and activism (Lips & Hastings, 2012; McHugh, 2012), which provide opportunities to utilize expert and referent power. Many retirees had experience with collective action during their youth (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, Women's Liberation Movement, Gay Rights Movement, Disability Rights Movement) and welcome the opportunity to reengage with current issues. Activist groups that cater to elders include the Gray Panthers, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Older Women's League (OWL), Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC), and the Raging Grannies. Collective action, whether toward social justice or in a community organization planning an event, is empowering (McHugh, 2012). Opportunities for activism are increasingly available online, a boon for older women with chronic illness or disability or those who live in rural areas or have difficulties with transportation to events.

Of course, not all older women have the luxury of time. Some continue in the workforce, some are raising (or helping to raise) grandchildren (Duarte-Silva et al., 2012; Kulik, 2007), others are caring for ill partners or friends (Kulik, 2015), or are ill themselves and unable to engage in the activities they would prefer.

Wisdom/Knowledge/Expertise

Wisdom, which is often defined as a combination of knowledge, experience, and sound judgment used for the good of oneself and others (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000), develops over time, and is frequently associated with elders. Indeed, *wise* and *sage* are among the positive stereotypes of elders (Kite & Johnson, 1988). Leaders in many

societies across cultures and historical time periods have surrounded themselves with a Council of Elders in order to take advantage of their wisdom; of course, most of those elders have been men. Expertise refers to highly developed skills based on knowledge and practical experience; cognitive psychologists have estimated that it takes thousands of hours of study and practice to become an expert at any task (e.g., juggling, neurosurgery) (Chi et al., 1988). Younger people may have a lot of knowledge in particular areas of interest, but it takes many years to develop wisdom and expertise, including learning from one's own and others' mistakes. Expertise is itself a power base, as others defer to the influence of experts. Knowledge and wisdom support the informational power base, as they aid in explanation of why others should accept someone's advice or suggestion.

A traditional way that older women have demonstrated wisdom, knowledge, and expertise is in the family. Grandmothers and Great Aunts serve as sources of advice and information about childrearing and family traditions. Midwives and Medicine Women are often elders in the community. Witches are typically portrayed in Western popular culture as old women, perhaps due to fear of their particular knowledge and skills. Other cultures have more sympathetic depictions of older women who use their wisdom and expertise for the good of humanity (e.g., the Hopis' Grandmother Spider).

Feminism created a path for many women to develop knowledge and expertise through higher education and career training. Thus, many women today enter old age with nontraditional, as well as traditional, forms of wisdom. Some older professional women continue their careers or serve as consultants or mentors to young (or aspiring) professionals (Denmark & Williams, 2012; Denmark et al., 2015). Others volunteer their expertise to community groups or to politicians or government agencies developing public policy. Today it is easy to think of examples of older women who now, or in the recent past, share(d) their wisdom in politics (e.g., former Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, activist LaDonna Brave Bull Allard), business, and the professions (entrepreneurial women over 60, whose small businesses are known as *silver start-ups*; Dr. Alla Illyinichna Levushkina, who was still performing surgery successfully at age 89), and the arts (e.g., actress Judy Dench, artist Grandma Moses).

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is essential to the exercise of power. If the person attempting to influence does not seem confident, others doubt the person's legitimacy, expertise, explanation, or ability to follow through with promised rewards or threatened punishments (Johnson, 1976). Studies of adolescents and young adults have often shown that boys and men are more self-confident than girls and women are (Lips, 2003). However, some research (see Roberts & Mroczek, 2008) suggests that self-confidence increases with age.

Interview studies with midlife and older women have shown that increased self-confidence and authenticity are a hallmark of midlife (50s and 60s) (Arnold, 2005; Burns & Leonard, 2005; Leonard & Burns, 2006); the women spoke about feeling more self-assured because they have coped successfully with challenges and adversities; feeling freer to spend their time the way they want after children are grown; feeling more able to express themselves honestly due to job and relationship security; feeling able to take more risks and to reorder their priorities; and feeling more content or comfortable with their bodies than they did when they were younger. Self-confidence also comes from internalization of successful influence attempts in the past, possession of expertise, and others' acknowledgment of one's wisdom.

Older women who have lived more restricted lives and/or who have been able to demonstrate competence only in limited areas (e.g., childrearing) might find it difficult to be self-confident beyond these areas. Elders who are regularly subjected to ageism and who have internalized ageist stereotypes that lead them to doubt their competence may lose the self-confidence they previously had in connection to their knowledge, skills, strength, beauty, and other resources (Levy, 2009). If independence and self-efficacy decrease, perhaps due to illness, frailty, or disability, then self-confidence is likely to decrease as well.

Leadership Roles

Individuals may hold roles in social hierarchies that grant them the legitimate right to influence others. Leadership roles are seen as particularly powerful. In societies that accept elders as leaders, older people can exercise legitimate power. In most cultures, those elders have typically been men, but this is beginning to change for privileged women in Western countries. Elders may also be influential behind the scenes as *éminences grise*, mentors to whom younger people turn for guidance and advice. Stepping down from leadership roles (e.g., in business, the military, academe) as a result of illness or retirement is disempowering, and may be particularly difficult for men who are used to being deferred to by others (Sugar, 2007). However, as noted above, elders can utilize their social capital in new leadership roles in civic or political organizations.

People do not retire from their family roles, and they retain their right to influence their younger relatives. Grandmothers and mothers-in-law wield considerable influence, especially in traditional societies where younger women have little influence (Lips, 2003). The head of the family makes important decisions regarding family assets (e.g., business, land use). In wealthy families, grandparents may control their children and grandchildren because they determine who will inherit which family assets.

Helplessness

A less discussed form of legitimate power is *helplessness* (Johnson, 1976). In most cultures people are taught to feel an obligation to assist those who are weak or in distress. (It is difficult, for example, to see a crying lost child in a park or shopping mall without stopping to help.) Elders who are ill, frail, or disabled can command attention and assistance by virtue of their acknowledged helplessness, and they can use their condition to resist unwanted influence (*power from*), both of which can be empowering. However, they are also at the mercy of their helpers (whether relatives, neighbors, or paid caregivers), who may neglect or abuse them. Elder abuse is both dangerous and disempowering, and victims are often reluctant or afraid to complain or report their abuse (DeFour, 2012) because of their dependence.

Conclusion

The question of whether people gain power, lose power, or retain similar levels of power as they age is complicated by gender, culture, and class as well as by other personal (e.g., personality traits, extent of internalization of ageist stereotypes) and demographic variables (e.g., educational level, generation/cohort). Collective action to improve the status of elders in societies and government policies that reduce the levels of poverty among elders (e.g., pensions, free or inexpensive healthcare) have empowered many (Schein & Naruvi, 2015; Sugar, 2007). Healthy elders are able to maintain greater independence, decision-making, and connection to their social networks (Chrisler et al., 2015; McHugh, 2012). The purchasing power of WOOPies and GLAMs has attracted attention to their interests and desires (Schein & Naruvi, 2015), and a change toward a more positive portrayal of elders in the media has begun (Lemish & Muhlbauer, 2012).

The process of aging may mean decline in access to some resources (e.g., physical attractiveness, physical strength, financial income, friends) necessary to utilize reward, coercion, referent, expert, or informational power and/or a decline in legitimate power previously derived from particular high-status roles. Yet aging may also mean gaining greater access to other resources (e.g., time, self-confidence, wisdom) that enable utilization of power bases such as reward, expert, informational, and referent power. Thus, “aging does not invariably mean a decrease in empowerment; it might just mean a change in how and from where power is derived” (Chrisler et al., 2015, p. 25).

Elders can empower themselves by seeking out new opportunities and roles in community, civic, and political organizations. Learning new hobbies and activities (e.g., arts, crafts), or returning to old ones (e.g., action toward social justice), can be empowering and connect elders to communities who share their interests (Maidment & McFarlane, 2011). Elders can focus on interdependence (i.e., helping each other) rather than independence, use assistive devices and community services (e.g.,

canes, hearing aids, shared van services) that help them to maintain social ties, and engage in self-care (regular physical activity, adequate rest and nutrition) to support their health and maintain their energy and stamina (Chrisler et al., 2015). Engagement in organized religion or other spiritual activities promotes resilience, optimism, and social connections and serves as a source of strength, perhaps especially for older women (O'Brien & Whitbourne, 2015). Elders who are homebound or live in isolated areas may be able to maintain social connections online; playing computer games, face-timing with grandchildren, and participating in Facebook groups or other online communities can empower elders and enhance their quality of life (O'Brien & Whitbourne, 2015). Contact with grandchildren, or other young relatives, friends, neighbors, or former co-workers, provides the opportunity to give them attention, affection, and sage advice. Beauty, money, and high-status careers are not the most important things in life—at old age, or any age. Making the most of what one has can be empowering.

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Mental and Physical Health

Empowerment and Disempowerment in Women's Sport



Elizabeth A. Daniels and Jessica B. Kirby

Professional sports are highly popular with global audiences, as evidenced by the revenue generated by several leagues. Collectively, the National Football League, Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, and the National Hockey League in the United States (U.S.) generated almost 35 billion dollars in revenue in 2018, with tens of billions more coming from TV contracts (Mathewson, 2019). Similarly, revenue from professional soccer in Europe was estimated at 25.2 billion euros for the 2019–2020 season (Statista, 2021). At the youth level, sport is also highly popular in the U.S. with 7.62 million youth (3.24 million girls and 4.38 million boys) playing high school sports in the 2021–2022 academic year (National Federation of State High School Associations [NFHS], 2022). Comparable levels of youth sport involvement in Europe for U14 to U18 athletes included 2.76 million European youth (580,707 girls and 2.18 million boys) participating in 18 sports in 27 countries in 2017–2020 (Emmonds et al., 2023). In both the U.S. and Europe, participation rates are noticeably lower among girls than boys with the disparity far greater among European youth.

In general, in the U.S. and worldwide, sports are viewed as positive activities that yield a number of beneficial outcomes for participants, including improved health, psychological well-being, and character development for youth specifically (Coakley, 2011). The implications of these beliefs are far-reaching in that public policymakers and other decision makers allocate public and private funds to sports and sport programs (Coakley, 2011). Yet, access to and resources for sport are not equitable across groups. For example, girls and women have historically been excluded from and marginalized in sporting contexts in the U.S. (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Cahn,

E. A. Daniels (✉)

Centre for Appearance Research, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK

e-mail: Beth.Daniels@uwe.ac.uk

J. B. Kirby

Health Sciences, University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS), Colorado Springs, CO, USA

e-mail: jkirby@uccs.edu

1994; Cohen, 2001). Thus, U.S. girls and women have less access to highly valued cultural activities and may have to fight for resources and opportunities. As a result, sports can be viewed as both empowering and disempowering contexts for girls and women. In this chapter, with a focus on the U.S., we will examine: (1) the historical exclusion of girls and women from sport, (2) present-day mechanisms for the marginalization of women in sport, including a focus on sport media, and (3) girls' and women's experiences in sport, including a focus on abuse in sport.

History of Women in Sport in the U.S.

Victorian Era

In middle- and upper-class Western households in the 1800s, women were associated with the domestic sphere; they were supposed to be dutiful wives, housekeepers, and mothers. Men were considered the breadwinners who were responsible for meeting their families' economic needs. The status of men was higher than women because of their wage earner role. Society came to idealize this arrangement, known as the Victorian cult of the family (Hargreaves, 2002), despite the infeasibility of it for working-class and poor families who relied on women's and children's labor to survive. Hargreaves (2002) proposed that the Victorian cult of the family "acted as a dominant constraining force on the early development of women's sport" (p. 53).

The general view of the time was that women were physiologically inferior to men and possessed a "delicate" constitution which prevented them from tolerating physical exertion (Dowling, 2000). The concern was that physical exertion would endanger their childbearing capacity and, thus, women should be restricted from such activity. Summing up this belief, Dowling (2000) noted that, "Women owed it to the next generation, and the generation thereafter, to cultivate nothing but their fertility—not mind, not artistry, and certainly not body" (p. 4). This ideology became known as the "the cult of womanhood," and educators, psychologists, clergy, and doctors, particularly obstetricians and gynecologists, were its primary advocates (Dowling, 2000, p. 4). As a result, nineteenth-century middle-class, White Western women largely believed they were indeed frail. The implications of this belief were far-reaching in that women's inherent physical weakness was generalized to more global beliefs that women were inferior to men physically, mentally, and emotionally. These beliefs became accepted despite contradictory evidence from large numbers of women who performed physical labor including enslaved women (Couturier & Chepko, 2001). These women were considered biologically female, but not feminine because true women were "weak" (Twin, 1979).

Despite the popular belief that women should reserve their energy for procreation only, there were some who thought *moderate* exercise, such as basic gymnastics, would be useful in combating the ill effects of women's fragile health (Couturier & Chepko, 2001; Dowling, 2000). Proponents thought exercise would promote healthy

living for women and, therefore, ensure their procreative capacities. In contrast, opponents of female exercise claimed that sport was dangerous to the health of women and could lead to genital decay (Dowling, 2000). Opponents claimed that women must sacrifice their physical development “for the greater glory of the species” which was the “price of having a female body” (Dowling, 2000, p. 16). The debate about whether physical activity was beneficial or harmful to women centered on the health of middle-class and wealthy White women. Working-class and poor women routinely engaged in strenuous and often dangerous physical labor for survival, but there was little concern for their health.

Because of the popular acceptance of the notion of female frailty, sport was considered irrelevant for girls and women until the end of the nineteenth century (Twin, 1979). Boys were encouraged to play ball games because the resulting skills, such as strength, speed, and agility, were considered practical and useful for them. It was believed that these skills were not necessary for girls, therefore, they were not encouraged to play. The rise of organized sport for boys and men in the U.S. occurred after the Civil War (i.e., post 1865; Cahn, 1994). During this period, fears abounded about the feminization of the country as the number of sedentary urban occupations increased and the farming way of life decreased. Sports became a testing ground for proving manliness (Rader, 1999). In addition, it was believed that sports provided the opportunity to learn hard work, ambition, diligence, perseverance, humility, and respect for authority (Twin, 1979). These qualities were considered necessary to succeed in U.S. life and men from every socioeconomic level could acquire them through sport. The notion was that sport builds character. Women were not required to build the sort of character required of men. Indeed, hard work, ambition, diligence, and perseverance were considered antithetical to femininity (Twin, 1979). Thus, women were systematically excluded from sport during this period.

In the late 1800s, the medical community in the U.S. continued to warn about the dangers of female physical activity, but some thought that exercise could return energy to the body and create a balance between physical and mental activity (Cahn, 1994). Women's and co-educational colleges in the U.S. created physical education departments to ensure women's physical health (Twin, 1979). Organized sport for women emerged as an outgrowth of basic instruction in sport (Kenney, 1982). Intramurals, which included club sports, interclass games, and social competitions, were permitted by most institutions. This shift brought about women's first opportunities for organized sport participation in the U.S.

The Twentieth Century

By the turn of the last century, the medical community was in favor of moderate exercise for women as a means to strengthen their weak bodies (Twin, 1979). There was, however, serious opposition to vigorous competition because it was thought that menstruation weakened girls and women physically and mentally and vigorous competition would imperil their fragile health (Lenskyj, 1986). In addition, the public

was worried that sport could lead to emotional stimulation and would masculinize women's bodies (Twin, 1979). To avoid such dangers, modified versions of men's games that were shorter and less strenuous were proposed.

College women had the most opportunity for sport in the U.S. during this period (Cahn, 1994). However, women physical educators closely monitored the physical activities of women students and established themselves as the ultimate authority on women's physical lives. They strongly promoted a "moderation" philosophy which encouraged *restricted* physical activity that de-emphasized competition and encouraged widespread participation, for example, women's basketball rules in which players were confined to particular sections of the court instead of moving freely across the entire court so as to limit exertion and physical contact. The emphasis in women's athletics in this period was on health, fun, and cooperation for women with the financial means to attend college.

In contrast, in this era, working-class youth, including girls and people of color, obtained their first organized athletic opportunities through YWCAs/YMCAs, settlement houses, city playgrounds, and local schools (Cahn, 1994). In 1906, middle-class urban reformers founded the Playground Association of America specifically to provide these young people with recreational activities. The motivation behind this organization was not concern for the well-being of working-class youth, though. Rather, organized sport was intended "to install physical and moral discipline, instructing poor immigrant youth in 'American' concepts of cooperation, democracy, achievement, and subordination to the group" (Cahn, 1994, p. 18). Thus, opportunities for sport for working-class/immigrant youth were intended to indoctrinate them with the values of the dominant society.

Changing Attitudes Toward Women's Physicality

A new ideal of womanhood emerged in the 1920s in the U.S. that sanctioned athleticism and emphasized a fit physique (Twin, 1979). As more women became physically active, their skill level and achievement climbed. For example, in 1926, Gertrude Ederle swam the English Channel two hours faster than the five men who preceded her, and in 1924 Sybil Bauer broke the men's backstroke world record (Cahn, 1994). The press documented and celebrated these accomplishments and leading women athletes were almost as popular as movie stars. The majority of these successful women athletes, however, were White, participated in sports that were considered to be acceptably feminine, and came from privileged backgrounds where they trained at exclusive athletic associations and country clubs. The mainstream press generally ignored working-class and women of color who participated in sport, although the African American press covered African American women's sports (William, 1994). The public's reaction to celebrated, White female athletes was ambivalent; there was admiration mixed with criticism. Feminists saw female athletic success as an advance for all women, whereas opponents feared a loss of masculine privilege and superiority (Cahn, 1994).

Although an athletic lifestyle for women became fashionable in the culture during this period, physical activity among college women, a small and economically privileged group, continued to be strictly monitored by women physical educators (Couturier & Chepko, 2001). Interscholastic and intercollegiate competitions were discouraged in favor of play days, which were one-day meets where teams were formed on the spot and were comprised of women from various schools. This format was intended to reduce competition. Through these practices, women physical educators enforced a standard of feminine respectability that limited competition and prioritized modesty. In spite of the dominant ideology, however, some college women embraced competition and established sport clubs in an effort to disguise an informal varsity system.

During the 1920s, racial exclusion policies, which had previously been somewhat more flexible, were enforced in sport. African Americans pursued sports in segregated community settings including YMCAs/YWCAs and settlement house recreation programs (Cahn, 1994). African American female athletes were generally approved of in Black communities in the 1920s. In African American communities in southern U.S. states, both women's and men's sports helped to form cohesive Black communities in the wake of migration out of the rural south spurred by racial violence and oppression. Sports became community social events. According to William (1994), the Black community provided a positive environment for female athletes, and the Black press supported and published their achievements and accomplishments regularly with a respectful tone.

In contrast to respectful media coverage of female athletes in African American communities, White working-class women were objectified by the press and commercial promoters of sport, who presented women's sport as a novelty and sexualized women athletes. For example, one women's softball team was named Slapsie Maxie's Curvaceous Cuties (Twin, 1979). Many of these women's sports teams were governed by the Amateur Athletic Union, which was founded by industrial and community-based sport leaders. They claimed to be more democratic than other organizations run by women physical educators because they offered sport to more women, specifically working-class women and others who did not attend college. In actuality, however, they exploited working-class women athletes for their own monetary ends by marketing women athletes' physical appearance by combining sporting events with beauty contests and dances.

Changes in U.S. Law: Title IX

Social change in the 1960s and 1970s laid the groundwork for changes in women's physical world (Rader, 2004). In the women's rights movement of the 1960s in the U.S., women fought for the same opportunities granted to men and won battles in the political arena such as the Equal Pay Act of 1964. At the same time, traditional constraints on women's physical freedom and sexuality as well as the boundaries of appropriate feminine behavior were questioned. The ensuing changes influenced

how people viewed physical activity for women. Furthermore, the sporting goods industry in the U.S. seized on the opportunity to expand their sales by marketing fitness and sports equipment to women during the fitness craze of the 1970s (Rader, 2004).

During this period, a small group of women physical educators agitated for change, breaking with the anti-competition stance long advocated by their colleagues (Rader, 2004). In 1963, a policy change occurred in the leading organization of women physical educators in the U.S., the Division of Girls' and Women's Sports, which reversed the long-held prohibition on interscholastic and intercollegiate sport for girls and women (Chepko & Couturier, 2001). The Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women was founded in 1965 (and subsequently the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women in 1971) to oversee U.S. women's sports at the collegiate level (Chepko & Couturier, 2001). Despite such progress, women were still considered "other" in the domain of sport. For example, organizers wanted women's collegiate programs to be less competitive than men's programs (Chepko & Couturier, 2001). They tried to ensure that goal by not providing athletic scholarships for women. Through these actions, we see that educators continued to constrain opportunities for women in sport.

In 1972, Title IX of the U.S. Educational Amendments Act was passed which prohibited gender discrimination in all educational programming, including sports, by school districts, colleges, and universities that received money from the federal government. By the end of the 1970s, the number of college women playing sports doubled and close to two million girls played interscholastic sports at the high school level, which represented a sixfold increase from the 1970 to 1971 school year (Rader, 2004). Despite the skyrocketing interest and participation by girls and women in sport, societal attitudes on the mass entrance of women into sport were mixed. The athletic ability and skill of girls and women were questioned as they had been for centuries (Chepko & Couturier, 2001). This skepticism toward female athleticism was rooted in the Victorian notion of the appropriate role of women (i.e., not in sport) and the belief that women are physiologically weaker than men and therefore in need of protection.

These historical conceptions continue to limit the opportunities for girls and women in physical activity and sport in the present day. Indeed, complaints and lawsuits citing Title IX violations continue to be filed every year. In 2016 alone, there were 6,251 complaints filed with the Office of Civil Rights about athletics (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Because of ongoing discriminatory practices in U.S. school sports, the Women's Sport Foundation offers a free guide to parents and students to help assess and achieve equitable sport opportunities in schools (2009). Overall, even after the enactment of Title IX, there continue to be barriers and limitations to girls' and women's sport opportunities in the U.S. (Cooky & LaVoi, 2012). For example, media contribute to the *ongoing* limitation of girls' and women's opportunities in sport in the present day either by ignoring women's sport and female athletes or by framing coverage in stereotyped ways. In the following section, we discuss the ways in which female athletes are depicted in media and how these stereotypes may contribute to the devaluing of women's sport in the U.S.

Media Coverage of Women's Sports

One of the most striking patterns in how women's sports are portrayed in mass media is its absence. The most recent findings from a 25-year longitudinal study of sport media in the U.S. revealed that coverage of women's sports remains "dismally low" (Cooky et al., 2015, p. 1). Indeed, coverage of women's sports in 2014 at 3.2% was notably lower than the prior 10, 15, 20, and 25 years, which ranged from 1.6% to 8.7%, on three local affiliate news shows in southern California. Likewise, coverage of women's sports on SportsCenter, a highly popular daily sports news television show, is almost non-existent, ranging from 1.3% to 2.2% over a 15-year span (1999–2014; Cooky et al., 2015). Similar patterns exist in prominent U.S. sport magazines, such as *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN*, which depict female athletes on just 5–10% of their covers (Frisby, 2017; Weber & Carini, 2013). Portrayals of female athletes with disability are rare as well (Buisse & Wasend, 2018). Collectively, these findings demonstrate that producers of sport media marginalize women's sports, allocating minimal air time and print space. The impact of this marginalization can be far-reaching. As Kane and Greendorfer (1994) explained, "The media reflect who and what has value and prestige in this culture. By their symbolic annihilation of the female athlete, the media tell us that sportswomen have little if any, value in this society, particularly in relationship to male athletes" (p. 34). Tuchman (1978) defined symbolic annihilation as "condemnation, trivialization, or absence" of women in the media (p. 8).

Coakley (2001) echoed Kane and Greendorfer (1994) in noting that in the process of producing sport, those who make content and programming decisions "usually emphasize images and messages consistent with the dominant ideologies in the society as a whole. Thus, the media often serve the interests of those who have power and wealth in society" (p. 352). In the U.S., the powerful are typically White men; as a result, women's sports are often marginalized in sport media. An outcome of this lack of power is the denial of women's full potential in sport (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). In addition, as a result of the minimal media coverage of women's sport, girls lack regular access to role models of skilled adult women athletes. Boys also miss the chance to see strong and competent female athletes. Because sport remains a domain stereotyped as male, it is important for *both* boys *and* girls to gain knowledge of female athletes. Indeed, Messner (1994) suggested that boys who play, or watch, competent female athletes will form a more expansive and respectful view of women's physical abilities as compared to boys and men of earlier generations who were not exposed to such examples.

When female athletes *are* featured in sport media, the coverage is markedly different than how male athletes are portrayed (Daniels, 2018; Daniels & LaVoi, 2013; Fink, 2015; Sherry et al., 2016). First, production techniques used in media coverage of women's sports are less exciting and less sophisticated than in men's sports, which positions men's sports as more entertaining than women's sports (Cooky et al., 2015; Greer et al., 2009; Musto et al., 2017). For example, female athletes are often depicted celebrating after scoring, rather than in action performing

the skills necessary to score (Musto et al., 2017). In contrast, media coverage of male athletes typically highlights their physical capabilities by using slow motion and multiple camera angles to build excitement around high-impact plays. Second, female athletes in stereotypically female sports, such as gymnastics, are more likely to be featured in media than female athletes in stereotypically male sports, such as boxing (Lumpkin, 2007, 2009; Vincent et al., 2003). This type of preferential coverage implies that particular sports are more socially appropriate for girls and women. As a result, girls and women may avoid or not even consider stereotypically male sports even though they may be interested and may enjoy those sports. Third, female athletes are often portrayed in media as sexual objects, for example, tennis star Caroline Wozniacki on the front page of *Sport Illustrated's* swimsuit edition (e.g., Clavio & Eagleman, 2011; Cranmer et al., 2014; Kim & Sagas, 2014). These sexualized depictions distract viewers from focusing on the athleticism of female athletes (Daniels, 2012; Daniels & Wartena, 2011), diminish viewers' perceptions about the athletes' competence (Daniels et al., 2021; Gurung & Chrouser, 2007; Nezlek et al., 2015), and increase self-objectification in female viewers (Daniels, 2009; Linder & Daniels, 2018). Further, female athletes of color may be subject to hypersexualized portrayals in sport media, which is less common for White female athletes (Schultz, 2005). Taken together, these practices serve to position women's sports as less entertaining and physically exciting as men's sports; limit girls and women to specific sports, deemed socially acceptable; and remind viewers that the sexual appeal of female athletes is important above and beyond their athleticism and athletic accomplishments. The implicit message these practices convey is that girls' and women's sports are not as important as boys' and men's sports, effectively limiting and discouraging girls' and women's involvement in sport. In the following section, we detail the sources of empowerment and disempowerment girls and women experience in organized sport at each level of competition.

Girls' and Women's Experiences in Sport

Most people learn basic physical skills through free play with their families and childhood peer groups (Coakley & Donnelly, 1999). First experiences with organized physical activities and sports can occur in a number of settings including physical education classes in schools, as well as publicly and privately funded youth programs in schools and communities. However, preparedness for physical activity and sport begins at birth. Research has shown that from infancy boys more often than girls are treated in ways that may encourage and prepare them for later physical activity and sport participation (see Leaper, 2002 for a review). For example, boys commonly are rewarded for behaviors such as independent exploration of their environment, vigorous play, and gross motor activity. In contrast, girls do not always receive similar support for physical play and may be discouraged from rough physical activity. In addition, fathers are more likely to play roughly, or engage in physical play with their sons, than with their daughters in early childhood (Lindsey et al.,

1997). Differential experience with physical play in early childhood is a precursor for lifelong patterns in which girls have less opportunity for mastery attempts at optimally challenging tasks in the physical domain, resulting in lower levels of perceived competence and task value for sport among girls as compared to boys (Fredricks & Eccles, 2002). However, girls who are supported and encouraged to participate in physical activity and sport through parental role modeling, logistical and resource support, and positive expectations of success in the physical domain are more likely to experience increased enjoyment, develop greater physical competence and self-esteem, and persist in sport participation with self-determined motivation (Harter, 1981; Horn & Horn, 2007; Weiss & Kipp, 2018; Weiss et al., 2012). Indeed, girls' sport involvement is associated with a large number of positive outcomes (for a review, see Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, 2018).

Youth Sport

Youth sport includes participation opportunities that range (in the U.S.) from early childhood, typically starting around five years old, through adolescence. Early development of sport-specific physical competence often begins with deliberate play, which includes peer-led informal engagement in sport, and continues with more structured youth sport experiences (Côté & Erickson, 2015). The value of boys' physicality over girls' physicality is normalized and reinforced structurally in many youth sport settings (Messner, 2011). For example, girls and boys are often segregated into separate sport teams by gender even at early ages when sex differences in physical maturation and motor development are minimal (Kane, 1995; Milner & Braddock II, 2016). Accordingly, by elementary school, gendered social norms are well established, including which types of sport activities girls and boys have learned to value and expect to succeed in (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

In contrast to sex-segregated youth sport leagues in childhood, sex-integrated leagues for pre-pubertal youth can mitigate gender role socialization that disadvantages girls in sport by normalizing intersex competition and cooperation. Furthermore, sex-integrated youth sport leagues create more inclusive early sport opportunities for transgender youth, who are increasingly subject to harassment and excluded entirely from sport participation in the U.S. (Arthur-Banning, 2018; Lucas-Carr & Krane, 2011). The youth sport domain, in the early sport sampling years of 6–12 years of age, is a prime setting to normalize inclusion, and support equity of access and empowerment for all children regardless of gender identity; inclusion that is critical in all community spaces (for more information on inclusion, see <https://www.athletically.org/>).

In addition to gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and experiences of disability are also implicated in children's opportunities for sport. Youth sport participation trends in the U.S. over the past decade show lower participation rates for girls, and youth experiencing a disability, as well as for youth from households with lower

income, lower education levels, and/or from minoritized racial and ethnic backgrounds (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019). In the U.S., socioeconomic status and race overlap, such that people of color are more likely to have fewer economic resources compared to White people (LaVeist, 2005). The pay-to-play youth sport system in the U.S. has systematically excluded millions of children from low- and middle-income backgrounds from access to potentially positive psychological development via organized sport participation because their families lack the ability to pay for their children's sport participation.

High School Sports

Adolescents participate in high school sports in the U.S. typically between the ages of 14 and 18 years. Fifty years after the passage of Title IX in the U.S., girls still have fewer opportunities for organized sport than boys do. Indeed, in the 2021–2022 academic year, the number of girls participating in high school sports had still not reached the number of boys who participated in 1972 (3,241,472 vs. 3,667,000) (NFHS, 2023). Furthermore, girls of color have considerably fewer opportunities than White girls, White boys, and boys of color according to an analysis of sport opportunities for U.S. youth at heavily White (defined as White enrollment of 90% or higher) and heavily minority high schools (defined as White enrollment of 10% or lower) (National Women's Law Center, 2015). This study found that there are far more sport opportunities at heavily White schools (for every 100 students there are 58 spots) compared to heavily minority schools (for every 100 students there are just 25 spots on sports teams). Gender disparities are severe between these schools. Girls at heavily White schools have 82% of the opportunities boys have to play sport (for every 100 female students there are 51 spots on teams, and for every 100 male students there are 62 spots on teams). In contrast, girls at heavily ethnic minority schools have 67% of the opportunities to play sports that boys have (for every 100 female students there are just 20 spots on sports teams, and for every 100 male students there are 30 spots). The patterns from this study are supported by other research finding that girls in urban, rural, and low-income communities, and particularly girls of color, have greater disparities in participation opportunities compared to boys due to safety concerns in traveling home after practice and games, lack of transportation, lack of money to pay for participation fees and uniforms, and/or responsibilities to care for younger siblings (Cooky, 2009; Lopez, 2019; Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

During adolescence, physical and sport competence beliefs contribute to the development of self-worth, a substantial source of empowerment and psychological well-being. Competence beliefs and sense of self-worth are reinforced by parents and coaches through contingent feedback and role modeling, with increasingly salient sources of competence beliefs coming from peer evaluations and social comparison, particularly regarding physical appearance (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Brustad et al., 2001; Horn & Newton, 2019). Adolescents are at risk of dropping out of sport during this developmental stage, but girls are nearly twice as likely as boys to drop out of

sports by the age of 14 (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). This pattern of dropout among girls is especially concerning in light of research demonstrating the potential for sport participation to be a positive experience for girls. For example, a study of African American, Latina, and White adolescent girls demonstrated that sport participation was related to higher self-worth, perceived body attractiveness, athletic competence, and (in Latina and White girls only) less depression (Duncan et al., 2015). These results suggest that improving equity of participation in sport might contribute to greater psychological well-being among adolescent girls.

Intercollegiate Sports

Intercollegiate sports in the U.S. comprise student-athletes competing for colleges and universities in which they are enrolled in baccalaureate (i.e., undergraduate) and sometimes post-baccalaureate (i.e., graduate) studies. Structural and social inequities that begin in youth sport continue to be reflected in the gaps in participation and access to opportunities at the collegiate level. In the 2021–2022 academic year, there were 64,045 more male student-athletes compared to female student-athletes competing in the U.S. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (293,105 male vs. 229,060 female; NCAA, 2023). Thus, female student-athletes represented 44% of the total NCAA student-athletes, despite the fact that women constituted the majority (58%) of undergraduate university students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). Furthermore, White female student-athletes have more access to collegiate sports compared to female student-athletes of color. In 2022, 153,941 White female student-athletes were rostered on NCAA women's teams compared to just 24,522 Black female student-athletes (NCAA, 2023). Additionally, female collegiate athletes receive fewer athletic scholarships than male collegiate athletes do, restricting access for female athletes with limited economic resources in particular. For example, in 2021, there were 3,000 more collegiate scholarships for male compared to female student-athletes out of 152,000 total scholarships (Statista, 2022). These patterns are concerning given that sport participation among girls and women is associated with greater academic achievement (Burns et al., 2020; Zarrett et al., 2018) and with professional success, with women in leadership and executive roles in the corporate sector being far more likely to have played sports in their lifetime compared to women in non-leadership industry roles (EY & ESPNW, 2015).

Inequity for women in the NCAA extends to coaching and administration as well. Women currently hold only 25% of NCAA athletic director positions, 25% of head coach positions (6% of men's teams and 41% of women's teams), and 29% of assistant coach positions (NCAA, 2023). In an effort to increase the number of women college coaches, the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport authors and releases their *Women in College Coaching Report Card* annually, which assigns institutions, conferences, and sports a grade (A through F) based on the percentage of women in head coaching positions of women's university sport teams (e.g., LaVoi et al., 2019; see also LaVoi, 2016 for an edited volume on women

coaches). In the 2021–2022 academic year, only 23 out of 359 (6.4%) institutions earned an A grade (70% or more women in head coach positions), and over two-thirds of institutions (70.5%, $n = 253$) had 50% or fewer women head coaches (Silva-Breen et al., 2022).

In an encouraging example of increasing access and empowerment opportunities for women in sport, in 2019, the NCAA added women's wrestling as an emerging sport. This addition has the potential to mitigate gender and racial inequities in access to sport. Advocates have argued that girls' and women's wrestling programs can be added to existing boys' and men's programs at the high school and college levels to create co-ed teams much like track and field, with minimal cost associated (Dent, 2019). Furthermore, participation in full-contact and combat sports, like wrestling and martial arts, has been shown to empower girls and women, as well as increase exposure to models of women's physical capabilities (Kirby et al., 2019).

Professional Sports

At every level of sport, girls and women face obstacles including reduced access to sport opportunities and cultural attitudes that prioritize boys' and men's sports. In women's professional sports, this translates to economic disempowerment through substantially lower salary caps, far less media coverage, fewer sponsorship contracts, and lower coaches' salaries (Women's Sports Foundation, 2019). For example, in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) in the U.S., the average salary in 2022 was just over \$100,000; however, 47 players made less than \$15,000 (Her Hoop Stats, 2023). In comparison, in the men's league, the National Basketball Association (NBA), the average salary was more than \$8 million, with only 2 players earning less than \$15,000 (ESPN, 2023). Due to low salaries in the U.S., professional female athletes have often competed abroad in their off-season to earn higher salaries. Although the average WNBA player makes a livable salary, contracts abroad can pay over a million dollars for one season, a more than fivefold increase in salary compared to the highest paid WNBA athletes. This economic reality became visible on the global stage in 2022 when WNBA player Brittney Griner was detained in Russia while traveling to begin her season with the Russian professional team UMMC Ekaterinburg.

In 2022, while Griner spent 10 months imprisoned in Russia, legislative and judicial progress was made in the fight for equal pay for male and female professional athletes in the U.S. The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) settled a lawsuit filed against the U.S. Soccer Federation for sex discrimination in salary, which resulted in the federation committing to equal pay for the U.S. men's and women's national teams (Treisman, 2022). Subsequently, the U.S. Congress passed the Equal Pay for Team USA Act, which requires all men and women representing U.S. national teams in global competition to receive equal pay and benefits across sports (ESPN, 2022). These two major legal cases may help set a precedent that can be used by women in professional leagues and national teams globally to seek

equitable economic empowerment. In 2023, evidence of this momentum is clear. The Canada Women's National Soccer team has begun to protest unequal pay and substandard treatment they have received from Canada Soccer (Nabbi, 2023). In the U.S., the Professional Golf Association and Ladies Professional Golf Association have announced the first mixed-team competition that will offer equal prize money for male and female athletes, similar to what the major professional tennis Grand Slam tournaments have done over the past decade (Matuszewski, 2023). As a result of this progress, there is pressure now on sport governing bodies to compensate professional athletes similarly across gender and for lawmakers to require such equity through legislation. Furthermore, female athletes and male allies have been leading the way in advocating for equal pay in the U.S. Their victories have empowered other female athletes to speak up against unfair compensation structures.

Abuse in Sport

One of the most problematic and dangerous intersections of power and gender in the sport domain centers on the lack of autonomy female athletes may experience in sport, which is a powerful form of disempowerment. Coaches yield enormous power over young athletes, in particular, spending countless hours with them, often unsupervised, while parents subscribe to a "coach knows best" mentality in pursuit of an athletic scholarship or pathway to elite sport (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). By the time athletes reach elite levels of competition, they have been socialized for many years to yield to their coaches' and trainers' prerogatives above all else, limiting their capacity to advocate for their own health, well-being, and safety (e.g., North, 2019). All too often, coaches are directly and indirectly harming young athletes physically, mentally, and emotionally through developmentally inappropriate training, critical and toxic training environments, and relentless pressure to win and continually exceed performance benchmarks (Mountjoy et al., 2015).

An extreme form of disempowerment is sexual harassment and abuse, which unfortunately is a common problem in sports. Girls are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse in sport than are boys (Brackenridge et al., 2008). This may be because of gendered social norms around the superior physicality of boys and men, combined with the lack of autonomy afforded youth athletes from coaches, who are more often than not men (Eiler et al., 2019). The sexual abuse case involving USA Gymnastics (USAG) that began in 2016 is one of the most prominent examples of sexual abuse of female athletes. One hundred and fifty-seven gymnasts, who had been sexually abused by a USAG team physician over multiple decades, testified in court, after initial complaints of abuse had gone ignored for more than 20 years (Hobson, 2018). The case resulted in substantial fallout including criminal convictions, firing and resignation of coaches, athletic directors, a university president, and national sport governing body directors, as well as closure of prominent training facilities, termination of USAG corporate sponsors, and a bankruptcy filing by USAG (Hauser & Astor, 2018; North, 2019). Positive policy changes have resulted with the enactment of the

Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017, establishing the U.S. Center for Safe Sport. However, prominent athletes, like Simone Biles and Aly Raisman, assert that sport governing bodies do a poor job of addressing sexual abuse in sport (Allentuck, 2019; Park, 2017).

Conclusion

This chapter described the historical constraints of girls and women in sports in the U.S.; the media's perpetuation of cultural beliefs that women's sports are not worthy of proportional and high-quality coverage; and the barriers and limitations that girls and women continue to face today, 50 years after the passage of Title IX, including unequal funding and the risk for abuse in sport. Through this discussion, it is clear that sport can be a disempowering context for girls and women. However, this chapter also discussed the potential sport has to empower girls and women. Indeed, sport involvement is associated with a number of positive outcomes including, greater physical competence, perceived body attractiveness, self-esteem, academic achievement, and sense of self-worth, as well as fewer depressive symptoms (Burns et al., 2020; Duncan et al., 2015; Harter, 1981; Horn & Horn, 2007; Weiss & Kipp, 2018; Weiss et al., 2012; Zarrett et al., 2018). These patterns demonstrate that sport can be a powerful source of positive psychosocial development for girls and women, although it is important to note that not all sport contexts are automatically positive (for a discussion of best practices for girls' physical activity participation, see LaVoi, 2018).

Moving forward, advocacy, education, and policy change are necessary to make sport a reliable source of empowerment for girls and women. We recommend education and professional development for athletes, parents, coaches, educators, administrators, and policymakers in schools and universities, sport clubs, communities, and sport governing bodies, along with policy changes that address ongoing problems we have described in this chapter. For example, what constitutes a healthy sport climate versus an abusive one? From their earliest sport experiences, children should be taught that they have the right to bodily autonomy including the right to refuse to practice or compete while in physical or emotional pain as well as to be treated with respect by coaches, teammates, and other sport personnel as a requirement of the team climate. In addition, athletes should be educated about what is appropriate versus abusive touch within a sport context. When abuse cases come to light, they should be taken seriously and acted upon quickly to protect the health and well-being of athletes. Education equips athletes and their families with critical knowledge about how to advocate for their well-being in sport. However, these efforts need to be combined with systemic change within sport leagues and governance bodies as well as educational institutions such that the well-being and humanity of athletes are prioritized over winning records and profits. Furthermore, to position sport as a truly empowering activity for girls and women, systemic change is needed to increase access to

sport for girls and women from all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as all levels of (dis)ability.

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Understanding and Addressing LGBTQ Health Disparities: A Power and Gender Perspective



Alyssa N. Zucker

Demonstrating that embodiment is profoundly political is one of the most distinctive contributions of feminist scholarship. (Hawkesworth & Disch, 2016, p. 8)

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other queer-identified (LGBTQ¹) people across the globe experience stigma and discrimination, which contributes to worse health outcomes compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (United Nations, 2015). While there is variation across country and context, a commonality is that mistreatment is related to negative mental health (Nakamura & Logie, 2020) and physical health (Daulaire, 2014) outcomes. The UN (2015) framed violence and discrimination against LGBTQ people as a human rights violation and acknowledged that it affects subsets of the LGBTQ community differently. Young people and lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women are particularly at risk in family and community settings, and violence is often racialized, having a disparate impact on LGBTQ communities of color. Thus, while not using the language of “intersectionality” per se, the UN analysis acknowledges that the effects of anti-LGBTQ oppression are felt differently depending on the power and oppression associated with other social categories. Further, the framing of this oppression as a human rights violation highlights the power of the state to create and enforce policies that can protect or harm people.

In this chapter I focus on the relationship of anti-LGBTQ oppression to health outcomes, with attention to gender and power, primarily in the U.S. but using other international examples when possible. As in other countries, LGBTQ people in the

¹ In the chapter I use the terms *LGBTQ*, *sexual and gender minority*, and *queer* interchangeably depending on the context.

A. N. Zucker (✉)
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies,
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA
e-mail: azucker@ufl.edu

U.S. experience disparities in a number of mental and physical health domains, including suicidal ideation and behavior (Hottes et al., 2016; Yildiz, 2018), HIV/AIDS prevalence (Becasen et al., 2019), cigarette smoking (Jamal et al., 2018), and disordered eating (Calzo et al., 2017). As recently as 1973, homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association, and the legacy of this categorization continues to shape LGBTQ people's interactions with the health-care system (Meyer, 2003). In addition to being sicker, overall, than heterosexual cisgender people, sexual and gender minorities are often poorer as well, and face tremendous barriers to accessing quality health care (Skinner, 2015); these disparities are particularly stark for LGBTQ people of color (Follins & Lassiter, 2017; Tan et al., 2017). Importantly, scholars have argued that worse health status is not due to inherent weaknesses among sexual minority populations, but rather to the excess burden of stigma, prejudice, and discrimination that lead to a cascade of poor health outcomes (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003).

Below I first describe stress-and-coping models that psychologists have used to understand the excess burden of health problems for LGBTQ people and then draw on a health disparities framework to review some health inequalities sexual and gender minority people experience compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. These frameworks emphasize the explanatory power of "upstream" social determinants of health over "downstream" individual health behaviors to explain health discrepancies between groups. I then discuss the ways feminist women's health activists have theorized structures of power as they relate to health outcomes and compare those to how population health researchers and psychologists have modeled these relationships. Finally, I conclude with a section outlining recommendations for how psychologists and policy influencers can make a difference in the mental and physical health landscape for LGBTQ people, and further argue for systematic transformation of laws, policies, and institutional norms. Throughout, I employ an intersectional feminist analytic.

Stress Models

Psychologists have long been interested in humans' experiences of stress and how they cope with it (e.g., Dohrenwend, 1973) and the consequences of stress for psychological and physical health (McEwen & Stellar, 1993). A typical way of conceptualizing stress involves distinguishing major life events (e.g., having a baby, moving to a new city) that are intense stressors that occur infrequently from daily hassles (e.g., misplacing one's keys, being stuck in traffic), which require much smaller adaptations but occur frequently. While both major life events and daily stressors are related to mental health, daily hassles have a stronger relationship to physical health outcomes (DeLongis et al., 1982). A study of primarily white adults in the U.S. found that sexual minority people experience more daily stressors and may have a more negative mood in response to them than heterosexuals (Wardecker et al., 2022). Foundational research on stress examined general stressors that could happen

to anyone, regardless of social identities such as gender or sexuality, but the field has since expanded to include an analysis of identity-related oppression as a potential source of stress (as well as identity-related strengths as a source of resilience).

The first scholar to combine stress theory with scholarship on prejudice and identity while focusing specifically on sexual minority populations was Brooks (1981), who built a theory of minority stress for lesbian women (Rich et al., 2020). Brooks' (1981) model postulated that the reduced status associated with lesbian identity would lead to the stressful experience of others' prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviors, which would cause psychological and biophysical distress in the targeted woman. Other psychologists also expanded on generic stress frameworks to focus specifically on stressors that people experience due to racism, sexism, and other oppressions (e.g., Landrine & Klonoff, 1996, 1997). Discriminatory stress can take the form of a major life event (e.g., being victim of a hate crime) or a daily hassle (e.g., experiencing a microaggression). Discriminatory stress may have a greater impact than generic stress because, unlike losing a set of keys, it is personal, and it relates to aspects of people that they cannot or do not want to change. Importantly, Landrine and Klonoff (1996, 1997) demonstrated that discriminatory stressors contributed to psychological distress above and beyond generic stressors. Theoretical and empirical work by psychologists who advanced stress-and-coping models to consider discriminatory stress contributed to the interdisciplinary study of how discrimination relates to poor health and health disparities, and drew attention to the role of structural and interpersonal power in these dynamics.

Drawing on the theorizing of Brooks' (1981) and other scholars, Meyer (2003) developed a minority stress model to understand discriminatory stress experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. This model is widely known and has influenced the direction of LGBTQ health scholarship (Rich et al., 2020). Meyer separated discriminatory stress into two categories: distal and proximal. Distal stress is external and objective; it consists of discrimination that others can observe, like being called a derogatory name or being a victim of a hate crime. Proximal stress is internal and subjective; it consists of psychological processes like hypervigilance and anticipation of negative interactions that sexual minority people experience internally living in a world that often mistreats them. Meyer argued that such a model might serve to explain excess rates of substance use disorders, affective disorders, and suicide among LGB people compared to heterosexual people. Although Meyer's original theory focused on connections between discrimination and mental health for LGB people, it has been extended to include trans people as well (e.g., Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Lefevor et al., 2019) and to include physical health outcomes (e.g., Lick et al., 2013). In this chapter I use the existing literature to show that such stigma and discrimination are embedded in a larger cultural context that polices gender and sexuality and allocates power to a hegemonic white cisgender heterosexual male position, while crushing—to varying extents—people who deviate from those identity positions.

LGBTQ Health Disparities

Health discrepancies between a socially disadvantaged group and a more advantaged group are identified as health disparities or inequalities (Braveman et al., 2011); often they are contextualized as being caused by social determinants (e.g., residential segregation) rather than biological differences (Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, 2021). A key component of health disparities is that they could be prevented if society were able to address differences in structure (e.g., differential exposure to environmental toxins) or treatment (e.g., racism in a healthcare interaction; CDC, 2023). That is, they are not due to some inherent feature of the group members afflicted with the poorer outcome, but instead due to socially determined factors that can be modified. There is increasing recognition that many health disparities between people of color and white people are driven by racism as a fundamental cause (Gravlee, 2020; Ogunwole & Golden, 2021). Thus, rightly so, Gkiouleka et al. (2018) argued that scholars should “reframe health inequalities in the light of power relations and interrogate the processes that produce them” (p. 97) instead of framing health inequalities as being due to attributes of an individual (e.g., low socioeconomic status). Although the literature on anti-LGBTQ discrimination and health disparities is less well developed than that regarding racist discrimination and health, many parallels in theorizing oppression as the fundamental cause of health disparities exist. Furthermore, many people are both racial and sexual/gender minorities and experience the intersection of those oppressions.

In the U.S., the National Institutes of Health officially recognized sexual and gender minority people as a category for health disparities research in 2016 (Pérez-Stable, 2016). This designation made it easier for researchers to apply for funding in this area and was an official recognition that LGBTQ people in the aggregate experience a number of health disparities compared to cisgender heterosexual people (see, e.g., IOM, 2011; Rodriguez-Seijas et al., 2019; Williams & Mann, 2017). Additionally, some subgroups like lesbians, men who have sex with men (MSM), and bisexual teens experience particular disparities uniquely, and outcomes are further qualified when examining the intersection of sexual and/or gender minority status with other important categories such as race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Rodriguez-Seijas et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2017). Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to review all of these, I present some highlighted examples below, focusing in particular on meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and nationally representative samples when possible.

Mental Health

Sexual minority people have higher rates of mental health problems compared to heterosexual people (IOM, 2011; Meyer, 2003; Wittgens et al., 2022). In a systematic review, Plöderl and Tremblay (2015) identified higher rates of depression, anxiety,

suicide attempts, suicide, and drug-related mental health problems among sexual minority men and women, both adolescents and adults, with bisexual people often at higher risk than other sexual minority people. Marchi and colleagues (2022) found a similar pattern of results for self-harm and suicidality in a large quantitative synthesis. In a systematic review and meta-analysis, Jonas et al. (2022) found that LGBTQ youth were at heightened risk for mental health disorders compared to heterosexual cisgender counterparts, with over a third meeting clinical criteria for depression. Russell and Fish (2016) identified similar disparities, which were especially notable among bisexual youth. They also argued that scholars need to know more about how risk might differ at the intersection of LGB status with gender and race/ethnicity. In a meta-analysis, Ross et al. (2018) found that heterosexual people reported the lowest levels of anxiety and depression, with bisexual people reporting levels equal to or greater than lesbian and gay people.

Disproportionately high levels of mental health problems among LGBTQ people may be caused by childhood adversities (Friedman et al., 2011; Jonas et al., 2022). In a meta-analysis, Jonas et al. (2022) found that LGBTQ young people reported a higher prevalence of adverse experiences such as sexual abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, and cyberbullying. In another meta-analysis, Friedman et al. (2011) found that sexual minority individuals were more likely than sexual nonminority individuals to report having experienced childhood sexual abuse, parental physical abuse, and threats or injuries at school. Findings were particularly stark for bisexual people. Given that some of the abuse was due to minority sexual orientation, the abuse itself could be viewed as, in part, distal minority stress under Meyer's (2003) framework. From a different angle, theorists of gender and power can note that the abuse of children is one of the most blatant examples of exerting power over another person. In this context, Neath (1997) described physical and sexual abuse of children as a manifestation of patriarchal social structures that lead to impairment. While most abuse of children is carried out by male perpetrators, "exertion of power over others is not limited to men, but is a behavior common to everyone living in patriarchal social systems" (Neath, 1997, p. 202). In the context of feminist theorizing, abuse of children in general and abuse of children because of their sexual or gender minority status in particular, is evidence of exertion of heteropatriarchal power. If LGBTQ people develop disproportionate mental health problems in response to earlier abuse (among other factors), scholars can understand that as an individual response to mistreatment driven by systemic inequities.

Trans and gender non-conforming (TGNC) people experience worse outcomes than cisgender people in terms of depression, anxiety, eating concerns, self-injury (Lefevor et al., 2019), and PTSD (Reisner et al., 2016). Although these results are observed among TGNC people broadly, nonbinary people had worse outcomes than both binary trans and cis people.

Substance Use

There are higher rates of substance use and misuse of many types (e.g., cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy) among sexual and gender minority adolescents compared to cisgender heterosexual peers (Goldbach et al., 2014; Mereish, 2019). These disparities are evident as early as 12–13 years old (Coulter et al., 2018). Results from a systematic review and meta-analysis suggest that the strongest risk factors for substance use among LGB adolescents include victimization, stress and lack of support, and housing status (Goldbach et al., 2014).

The higher rates of substance use in adolescence carry into adulthood (Starks et al., 2020). Using a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults, Schuler et al. (2019) found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual people had elevated rates of various types of licit and illicit drug use compared to their heterosexual peers generally; the discrepancies varied by gender and cohort, with notable findings of elevated lifetime and recent use of all substances for bisexual women and gay men. Schuler and colleagues used these findings to argue against the hypothesis that current LGB young adults face lower levels of minority stress than older cohorts. In a large survey of trans adults, 29% reported illegal drug use, which is three times the rate of the general population (James et al., 2016). Starks et al. (2020) argued that in addition to reasons why people use substances in general (e.g., to feel good, to avoid problems), LGBTQ people use substances to cope with minority stressors.

HIV/AIDS

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2020), the population most affected by HIV in the U.S. is gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. In 2017, 70% of new HIV diagnoses were among adolescent and adult men who have sex with men. Further, this burden was disproportionately felt among men of color; only 28% of new infections were among white men, with 37% among African Americans, 29% among Latinos, and the remaining 6% among other groups of color. Additionally, HIV prevalence is particularly high among trans people, especially trans women, and again disproportionately burdens trans communities of color (Becasen et al., 2019). In a model of HIV prevalence over time within a simulated cohort of Black men who have sex with men, Matthews et al. (2016) estimated that 60% of the cohort would be HIV-positive by age 40, noting that “if Black MSM in the U.S. formed a country today, it would have the highest HIV prevalence on the globe” (p. 10). Importantly, much of the excess burden of HIV among men who have sex with men is attributable to the mechanics of receptive anal intercourse, which carries an 18 times greater chance of HIV infection than receptive vaginal intercourse (Halkitis et al., 2013). Thus, despite the fact that MSM and trans women (who disproportionately engage in sex work with men for survival) are stereotyped and stigmatized for having more sexual partners, much of their risk is from the mechanics of anal sex, and

remains high even with a low number of partners. The very high rates of HIV among men who have sex with men and trans women of color are indicative of the synergistic effects of anti-LGBTQ oppression and racism (Halkitis et al., 2013). These intersecting forces (which are often joined by socioeconomic oppression) interlock to create situations in which it is more difficult to engage in safer sexual practices. Furthermore, many people may be in social environments that already have a high prevalence of HIV, which also increases risk of transmission (Matthews et al., 2016); environments also vary in terms of accessibility of pre-exposure prophylaxis drugs that can help prevent HIV seroconversion.

Other Sexual and Reproductive Health Outcomes

Using a nationally representative sample, Tornello et al. (2014) found that sexual minority young women were at higher sexual and reproductive risk than heterosexual peers. This included the domains of earlier sexual debut, greater number of partners, and experiencing forced vaginal intercourse by a male partner (i.e., rape, although the survey question did not use that term). Findings were particularly stark for bisexual adolescent young women, who experienced the highest rates of unintended pregnancy terminations. Using a nationally representative data set, Goldberg et al. (2016) found that young bisexual women had significantly higher odds of becoming pregnant as teenagers than did heterosexual women and were more likely to become pregnant while still in high school. Lesbian women were least likely to have a teen pregnancy in this sample, although they were equally likely to have one as compared to bisexual and heterosexual teens in the Tornello and colleagues' study described above.

Interpretations

Across these domains and studies, it appears that bisexual people are particularly likely to have negative health outcomes. Importantly, they face biphobia, similar to how lesbian and gay people face homophobia, but bisexual people also experience monosexism; that is, the systematic belief that monosexual orientations such as heterosexuality and homosexuality are the only legitimate orientations. Thus, bisexual people potentially experience interpersonal mistreatment from both heterosexual and lesbian and gay people, and also experience erasure at the institutional and community level, which may contribute to high rates of mental health difficulties (Flanders et al., 2015; Ross et al., 2018).

A number of scholars have noted that failure to collect sexual orientation and gender identity marker data—particularly in large, federally funded research projects—severely limits the knowledge base in this area (e.g., Mereish, 2019; Patterson et al., 2017). The authors of the landmark Institute of Medicine report (2011) noted that much of the knowledge about specific LGBTQ health disparities

(e.g., differences in breast cancer rates for sexual minority women) were tentative because they often rely on convenience samples that are not representative. Many large-scale studies collect gender identity information, in particular, in a way that makes TGNC people invisible, despite the fact that for over a decade there have been clear recommendations to use a two-step process that separately asks about sex assigned at birth and current gender identity (GenIUSS, 2013; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022) that would allow for clear identification of TGNC people in survey samples (Patterson et al., 2017). The Affordable Care Act, implemented in the U.S. in 2010, mandated standardized collection of sex (among other demographic variables), but did not make specific provisions for sexual orientation data collection (Wolff et al., 2017). While a handful of major studies sponsored by Health and Human Services have begun to collect sexual orientation data, most of them do so in a unidimensional way and decisions about whether to include sexuality-related variables in research have been marred by political interference (Wolff et al., 2017). To improve the knowledge base about health disparities among LGBTQ people—which are often caused by anti-LGBTQ oppression—researchers must demand that rigorous, sensitive measures be used in data collection.

Social Determinants of Health: Oppression Shapes Health Outcomes for LGBTQ People

Feminist scholars and activists have long recognized that discriminatory social forces shape institutions and interpersonal interactions in ways that disempower people at the margins, often creating or exacerbating negative health outcomes. Popular notions of women's inferiority are embedded in religious traditions and centuries of male philosophers' and physicians' conceptions of (white, middle class) women's bodies and health (Kinser & Lewis, 2005; Krieger & Fee, 1994) and used as a mechanism of social control. The assumption that the default body is (white, heterosexual, cisgender) male and that female bodies are deviant has created a healthcare system that, at best, is misguided about women's health, and at worst, perpetuates discrimination (Johnson, 1992). The same can be said of sexual orientation (Murphy, 2016; Robertson, 2017) and gender identity (Bauer et al., 2009); that is, the scientific literature and theorizing on LGBTQ health, and the healthcare experiences of queer people have been hindered by centuries of focus on heterosexual, cisgender people as the norm.

One example of the contributions of feminists to theorizing health is the Boston Women's Health Collective. The group and its major publication *Our Bodies, Ourselves* were borne out of individual women's dissatisfaction with the sexist health care they received from male physicians in the 1960s (Stephenson & Zeldes, 2008). Connecting the personal with the political, women came to realize that their lack of information and mistreatment in the exam room were not just personal problems, but a result of systemic sexism; thus, they both politicized the body and the idea of

health and began to give priority to *structures* as determinative of health, rather than individual psychological or biological processes (Grigg & Kirkland, 2016). This line of thinking advanced by feminist health scholars draws attention to the fact that interpersonal discrimination, both in general, and in the context of healthcare delivery, is not just a problem of a few bad actors but rather a sign of a larger system that is set up with certain bodies as the norm, and with deep-seated biases at every level of the system.

A mostly separate body of literature has emerged in population health that takes up many of these same issues when examining health disparities of particular populations, including LGBTQ people. Much of population health has focused on health promotion through a neoliberal lens—one that emphasizes biomedicalization, individualization, and personal autonomy (Heard et al., 2020). However, there are branches that recognize broader social and political drivers of health, arguing that patterns of health and disease reflect “the distribution of power, property, and technology within and across nations, over time” (Krieger, 2005, p. 350). Krieger offered vivid imagery to describe the impact of such power relations on health, suggesting that all living organisms “literally incorporate, biologically, the world in which we live, including our societal and ecological circumstances” (p. 351); that is, the social world becomes embodied. There is now a robust literature, based on both correlational and experimental studies, and quasi-experimental field work, that demonstrates that systemic mistreatment of people and disparities in social and material resources—whether occurring at structural, institutional, interpersonal, or internalized individual levels—is related to poorer mental and physical health outcomes (for reviews, see Richman et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2019). Based on this literature, scholars now know that many aspects of health are at least in part socially determined, and that relations of dominance and subordination are implicated in health outcomes.

Although the bulk of the research described above has focused on how racism is related to poor health among Black and other people of color, there is evidence pertaining to gender-based and anti-LGBTQ discrimination as well. For example, in one nationally representative sample, 57% of LGBTQ adults reported experiencing interpersonal discrimination (such as being the target of slurs, microaggressions, and violence; Casey et al., 2019) and LGBTQ racial/ethnic minorities reported significantly higher levels of discrimination than white LGBTQ people in some domains. In a different study of transgender and gender diverse people aged 16 and older, more than 75% of participants reported experiencing discrimination in the past year, and discrimination was associated with anxiety and depression (Puckett et al., 2020); this association between discrimination and psychological distress is a common finding across types of discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.; Pascoe & Richman, 2009). In a very large (but not representative) sample of transgender adults in the U.S., 46% of respondents reported experiencing verbal harassment and 9% reported being physically attacked in the past year due to being trans (James et al., 2016).

In addition to being subject to hostile and subtle mistreatment in general, LGBTQ people often face mistreatment in healthcare settings in particular. From the microaggression of being presumed to be heterosexual to the explicit denial of (lifesaving)

care to trans people once providers discover they are trans (Feinberg, 2001; Witten, 2008), LGBTQ people often experience healthcare encounters as discriminatory. In one study of trans people of color in Chicago that relied on interviews and focus groups, Howard et al. (2019) found that 100% of their sample described healthcare experiences that were negative due to providers' responses to their gender identity and/or race, including refusing to use correct names and pronouns and making assumptions about HIV-status and engagement in sex work. Participants often sought care at LGBTQ health clinics, but worried about facing racism there; similarly, those who sought care from other people of color worried about experiencing transphobia from them. Further, anticipating such negative interactions is a form of proximal stress (Meyer, 2003), in that individuals expend psychic energy worrying about the real possibility of facing mistreatment from providers or front-office staff, and debating about whether their need for care is sufficient to take the risk of being mistreated. In one nationally representative study, 18% of LGBTQ adults reported avoiding health care because they anticipated experiencing discrimination, and 16% reported having experienced such discrimination (Casey et al., 2019). Further, trans people often must educate their providers on trans-related healthcare issues such as hormone therapy (Poteat et al., 2013; Witten, 2008) or are treated as "freaks" or displays for trainees due to their gender status, even when seeking non-gender related care, such as for strep throat (Feinberg, 2001).

Additionally, LGBTQ people in the U.S. are less likely than cisgender heterosexual people to have health insurance, which may further impede access to care and contribute to poor health outcomes (Casey et al., 2019). LGBTQ people may not have employment that provides insurance benefits, and prior to marriage equality in 2015 they were unlikely to obtain insurance through a spouse. Further, they may not be able to afford copays and deductibles even if they are insured. These barriers to full coverage reflect the sorry state of U.S. healthcare policies in which access to care is not treated as fundamental human right. As the only industrialized nation without universal health insurance (despite improvements from the Affordable Care Act), the U.S. spends notably more per capita on health care as a share of the economy and has worse health outcomes in a number of domains than other high-income countries (Tikkanen & Abrams, 2020). Thus, while discrimination in healthcare encounters may represent a barrier to LGBTQ people seeking care, the inability to access care in the first place reflects a system of power in the U.S. that does not value all lives equally.

Taken as a whole, these data suggest the importance of intervening on a number of levels to improve LGBTQ health. These include broad policy changes to make health care more accessible and affordable, institutional and provider changes to reduce mistreatment in healthcare interactions, and efforts to reduce overall stigma for queer people in everyday life. These efforts must be intersectional. LGBTQ status does not exist as a single-axis identity/power status. Rather, it intersects with race/ethnicity, ability, and social class, among other axes of power, ultimately influencing people's health behaviors and outcomes through complex pathways.

There is Hope: Transforming Power Structures and Improving Health Outcomes

There are many reasons to be optimistic about health possibilities for LGBTQ people, due to institutional and social change efforts at multiple levels. First, acceptance of LGBTQ people has shifted dramatically in the U.S. over the last half century. In 1973 the diagnostic category “homosexuality” was removed from the DSM, which contributed to reversing decades of sanctioned pathologizing of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people by psychiatrists and psychologists (Russell & Fish, 2016). More recently, debates among these professionals have led to revisions to diagnoses related to gender identity that affect TGNC people (Russell & Fish). Although there is more work to be done to depathologize these identities and behaviors, and the effects of former diagnostic codes can be felt for a long time, these are important steps toward improving conditions for LGBTQ people.

In the span of 12 years beginning in 2003, U.S. Supreme Court decisions moved from outlawing state anti-sodomy statutes to legalizing same-sex marriage (Kite & Bryant-Lees, 2016). Although the current right-ward tilt of the U.S. Supreme Court has made some fear that marriage equality will again be at risk, as of this writing it is still legal in all 50 states, and Congress passed the Respect for Marriage Act in a bipartisan vote. This bill was signed into law in December 2022 and provides additional protections for same-sex couples’ marriages.

As recently as 2004, Americans opposed same-sex marriage by a margin of 60% to 31%; in 2022, these numbers were almost exactly reversed, with 37% opposed and 61% in favor (Pew, 2022). Relatedly, laws that affect LGBTQ people have changed rapidly. In addition to the U.S. Supreme Court decisions in 2013 and 2015 that legalized same-sex marriage, a decision in 2020 extended workplace anti-discrimination protections to LGBTQ people. Social science research has demonstrated that policies and structures that are inclusive of LGBTQ people promote health, whereas discriminatory policies contribute to health disparities among sexual minority people (Hatzenbuehler, 2018; Matsick et al., 2020).

Of course, there is more work to be done in these areas, and structural stigma toward sexual minority people still exists (Pachankis & Lick, 2018). For instance, voter initiatives and state legislation to exclude trans people from public life via restrictive bathroom bills, and attacks on the rights of LGBTQ people to adopt children are contemporary examples of the ways LGBTQ people’s human rights are regularly infringed upon in the contemporary U.S. In Florida, for example, each legislative session brings additional restrictions on how educators may teach about gender and sexuality, and school librarians are removing books from libraries out of fear of violating laws (PEN America, 2023). Additionally, the marginalization experienced by LGBTQ individuals is exacerbated by those also contending with racism, economic inequality, or ableism, among other forms of discrimination (DeFillipis & Anderson-Nathe, 2017). In spite of this, the overall national trend is positive and suggests that the broad laws and policies that govern people’s lives and signal hostility or welcoming to members of minority populations is shifting in a positive direction.

Below I offer some advice for psychologists and people interested in influencing health through policy for ways to reduce discrimination and/or increase health for LGBTQ people.

Academic psychologists have contact with many students, as psychology is often one of the most popular majors in liberal arts colleges. Teaching is an opportunity to communicate current, evidence-based information about LGBTQ people's lives, strengths, and struggles to many students who are interested in the helping professions but may not have had much exposure to LGBTQ issues. Professors can infuse their syllabi and lessons with LGBTQ-relevant information whenever possible. They can propose new elective courses (e.g., LGBTQ Psychology) or first year seminars related to the intersection of sexuality studies and psychology, and possibly cross-list courses with gender, sexuality, and women's studies departments.

Researchers can collect better data on sexual and gender minority people or push for the data collection source to do so if they are using larger data sets. As described earlier, there is clear guidance on best ways to measure both sexual orientation and gender identity and doing so makes the lives of LGBTQ people visible. Such visibility is just the first step in focusing on LGBTQ people in research, however, as what scholars do with the data and how they frame research questions and analytic strategies has implications for building the knowledge base about gender, power, and LGBTQ people. Feminist scholars have long argued that it is not identity per se that confers risks or benefits to people, but rather the privileges and oppressions that go along with that identity (e.g., Bowleg, 2012; Gkiouleka et al., 2018). I strongly encourage psychologists to stop analyzing sexual orientation (and race, class, etc.) as demographic or identity variables, perhaps to be "controlled for" in statistical analyses, but instead to do a deep and contextualized dive into how existing structures exert power over people's lives (see Cole, this volume). Such analyses could examine the psychological consequences of marginalization, forms of resistance at individual and group levels, and the impact of structural change on well-being.

Providers of mental health care should remember the insights of earlier feminist psychologists that structural differences in access to power show up in people's psyches and intimate relationships and should not be disregarded or minimized as a source of suffering (e.g., Caplan, 1992; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Although those earlier authors were often writing about the gender dynamics of heterosexual cisgender women and men, their attention to the mental health effects of sexist domination and dehumanization are still powerful; their insights that it is challenging to live in a world made for others and be healthy remain true for sexual and gender minority people today. Caplan (1992), in particular, worried that the very act of engaging in therapy might convey the notion that it is the individual who is the problem, not the oppressive social context. She encouraged social action as a way to address the root problems that create situations of psychological distress and correctly locate the source of trouble outside the individual marginalized person. Additionally, there are now specific training programs—ranging from continuing education credits to graduate degrees and certificates—that help practitioners learn the literature on LGBTQ mental and physical health and become more competent providers. These

are important steps in reducing poor treatment by individual providers. However, as Feinberg (2001) astutely noted:

Education is important. But attitudinal change is not the same as institutional change. If education is not tied to transforming systems of health care delivery, then it's as effective as putting out a forest fire with teacups full of water. Sensitivity and diversity training has to be linked to a commitment to institutional change and mechanisms for compliance. (p. 899)

This perspective was echoed by Mateo and Williams (2020), who argued that the reduction of bias and discrimination must be an institutional priority in the health professions, and offered a set of recommendations and actions to transform healthcare institutions.

There is exciting work happening in the health professions to improve provider-patient relationships and healthcare delivery that scholars can learn from and infuse in psychology. Some of this work involves improving the concept of “cultural competency,” moving away from reductive ideas about learning other people’s cultures that may risk perpetuating stereotypes. For instance, Wesp et al. (2018) used critical race, postcolonial, and intersectionality frameworks to encourage nurses to take an emancipatory approach to cultural competence—“one that enhances understanding about how power works to limit opportunities, create marginalization, and perpetuate inequities” (p. 319). This is consistent with medical theorizing that suggests doing away with cultural competency in favor of structural competency (Metzl & Hansen, 2014). A structural competency approach teaches that stigma and health disparities are not due to interpersonal encounters alone but are the result of structural inequities; it offers trainees ways to understand the broader structural contexts that shape patient-provider interactions, health behaviors, and health outcomes. Psychologists can use these theories and perspectives to inform both therapeutic interactions and research design. Such frameworks also fit well with a health humanities model that exposes how social forces have harmed those people that medicine has defined as deviant (Garden, 2019). The critical healing that emerges “creates space in the margins for alternatives to normalcy and health, spaces where those deemed misfits are able to flourish” (Garden, 2019, p. 2). First person narratives from LGBTQ people writing from such margins (e.g., Clare, 2017; Sharman, 2016) are invaluable in illuminating the ways that power and social structures influence their bodies and health.

Psychologists are trained to think at the level of individuals’ psyches, interpersonal interactions, or the effect of groups on one another. A key insight from feminist theorizing, the population health literature focusing on discrimination and health, and critical psychological research is that researchers must focus on social structures and institutions that exert power over people and contribute to health disparities for LGBTQ people as a group, as well as causing individual-level suffering.

Hatzenbuehler and Pachankis (2016) argued that stigma operates at individual, interpersonal, and structural levels, socially determining the health of LGBTQ young people. Focusing specifically on structural stigma, Hatzenbuehler (2018) showed that sexual orientation disparities in psychiatric disorders were more prevalent among residents of states with high levels of structural stigma (e.g., those where LGBTQ status was not included in nondiscrimination or hate crime policies). Further, lesbian

and gay teens in counties with fewer anti-bullying policies in the school district were more likely to attempt suicide in the past year (Hatzenbuehler, 2018). In another study, sexual minority women who perceived a more positive personal impact of equal marriage rights had lower odds of depression (Drabble et al., 2022). Branstrom and colleagues (2023) examined the relation of structural stigma to sexual minority victimization across 28 countries in the European Union. They found that victimization was higher in countries that had more structural stigma (e.g., where laws and policies favored heterosexuals or discriminated against sexual minority people or same-sex behavior). Further, these findings were particularly stark for men who were gender non-conforming and of lower socioeconomic status, highlighting the need for intersectional analyses. These data strongly imply the importance of intervening at the structural level to create policies that are inclusive and protective of sexual and gender minority people. We can expect to find direct and indirect effects of such policies on LGBTQ people's mental health, and sometimes physical health as well. Matsick et al. (2020) summarized this perspective well:

Given health disparities are not simply born in the body but emerge from people's environments, the case of health disparities is not only a medical issue but a social one. Consistent with social psychology's emphasis on the power of the situation, altering stigmatizing environments for sexual minorities can effectively lessen health disparities...Efforts to reduce disparities can prioritize changing social contexts over earlier attempts to change stigmatized individuals' psychological, behavioral, or physiological responses to stigma. (p. 206)

Additionally, Chaudoir et al. (2017) systematically reviewed published interventions that aimed to reduce sexual minority stress. They uncovered 44 interventions, which aimed to reduce stigma that occurs due to discriminatory laws, policies, or interpersonal prejudice, or to bolster coping strategies. Their detailed review of existing programs may be helpful to sexual minority people and allies looking for concrete ways to create a less stigmatizing environment, thereby reducing minority stress. These include education via lectures and role-playing, and the establishment of anti-bullying policies.

Conclusion

Psychological and population health scholarship on LGBTQ health disparities is often rooted in social science and biomedical research literature that does not adopt a critical feminist perspective. Bringing feminist insights to this scholarship and related activism will be crucial in moving this area forward. For instance, feminists' thorough analysis of damaging binaries that privilege male over female, straight over queer, and the consequences of these power structures are sometimes lost in discussions of stigma processes. Feminists have developed and applied an intersectionality framework—both to more accurately understand and represent individuals' lived experiences and to emphasize an inherently political perspective committed to disrupting the oppressive status quo (Bowleg, 2012; May, 2015). This is necessary for studying and transforming LGBTQ health disparities and will help keep

the focus on systems of oppression and liberation and the key contribution of Black women scholars and activists. Too often psychological scholarship has lost focus on the importance of power and social structures and has taken a single-axis approach to understanding lived experience. Intersectional feminist theory and analyses can help avoid those pitfalls (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017).

Scholars must also be vigilant against the infusion of neoliberalism in all areas of theorizing, including in conceptualizations of LGBTQ health. As Grigg and Kirkland (2016) astutely noted, in recent years “health” has been cast as a virtuous achievement of self-regulation. For example, Siconolfi et al. (2015) found that neoliberal ideologies of personal responsibility and rational autonomy were evident in young gay and bisexual men’s narratives about HIV prevention, even when such ideology did not reflect the complexities of their lives and the larger economic and social situations in which they lived. The adoption of a neoliberal framework that puts the responsibility for achieving health on individuals and blames them when they do not succeed makes it challenging to remain focused on dismantling oppressive social structures.

I began this chapter with a quotation from political scientists Hawksworth and Disch (2016) that credits feminist scholarship with demonstrating the profoundly political nature of embodiment, and this fits well with Krieger’s (2005) observations as a social epidemiologist that humans come to embody our social circumstances. The framing of this scholarship as political is consistent with an intersectionality perspective that rejects the idea of neutrality, instead insisting that the goal of this work is to “identify, unpack, and contest the ... workings of dominance” (May, 2015, p. 35). Psychologists have done some of the groundbreaking research that helps support these perspectives and have made key contributions to the understanding of how stigma and discrimination contribute to LGBTQ health disparities. However, psychologists would do well to adopt intersectional feminist and other critical perspectives that allow for analyses of power to take a central role in teachers’, researchers’, and clinicians’ theories and transformative practices.

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Reproductive Justice: Illuminating the Intersectional Politics of Sexual and Reproductive Issues



Tracy Morison and Jade Sophia Le Grice

In Aotearoa (New Zealand)—the whenua, or land, from which we write—reproductive politics have been shaped by colonial concerns, White nationalism, and eugenics, as in many other former White-settler colonies. Historically, under the broad goal of “race improvement”, professional judgments about women’s “fitness” to have or raise children discriminated against Māori, targeting them for coercive sterilization, family caps,¹ and forced removal of children from whānau (Indigenous family structures) (Wanhalla, 2007). Today, remnants of the logics of eugenics persist in Aotearoa in racialized constructions of risk in sexual and reproductive health research and policy, which justifies a continued problem-focus on Māori (Came et al., 2021). For instance, policy spotlights “at risk populations”, named as Māori, youth, and Pacific people, and in some instances welfare benefits were made contingent on using long-acting contraception (McGinn et al., 2021; Ware et al., 2017). State surveillance of Māori whānau (extended families) and the removal of children from their care is ongoing (Williams et al., 2019). The example of Aotearoa vividly demonstrates that reproductive matters are underpinned by fundamental questions about what it means to be a valued human being. These questions are configured amid vectors of privilege and marginality, where some lives are valued over others. The reproduction of the socially privileged is prized and encouraged, while the fertility of the Other is devalued and restricted.

¹ A family cap denies mothers/families receiving welfare assistance and further financial aid after the birth of another child. This policy is enacted to limit “welfare dependence” in some parts of the United States and some other countries, such as South Korea and Singapore.

T. Morison (✉)
Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand
e-mail: t.morison@massey.ac.nz

J. S. Le Grice
University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand
e-mail: j.legrice@auckland.ac.nz

Given the racialized, gendered, and class-based dimensions of reproductive issues, it is crucial that researchers studying sexuality and reproduction are cognizant of “women’s power in society, given their spatial and social location, the intersectionality of their social identities, and the processes by which gender and other social identities affect individuals’ power, decision making, and reproductive health” (Beckman, 2018, p. 273). This is particularly pertinent to psychology, a discipline with a historical reluctance to attend to issues of power and a long tradition of detaching the individual as the “object of study” from the socio-cultural context in which behaviors make sense (Eaton & Stephens, 2020). For psychologists—as well as researchers from other disciplines—reproductive justice provides a nuanced, holistic, and critical theoretical lens to understand and respond to the power dynamics underlying reproductive issues (Morison, 2021). While these issues may be diverse, the aim of the reproductive justice analysis is essentially to make visible the power relations that negatively impact people’s sexual and reproductive lives and ultimately transform these (Luna & Luker, 2013; Ross & Solinger, 2017).

The expanded view that this relatively new feminist theory offers is considered one of the most significant changes in contemporary reproductive politics (Ross, 2017a, 2017b). The reproductive justice framework can expand the theoretical and empirical contributions of the sexual and reproductive health and rights paradigm as well as feminist research in this area. Like many other feminist approaches used in this field of study, a reproductive justice lens is sensitive to the gendered power dynamics and the socio-political intricacies contouring people’s reproductive lives and experiences, but it also extends analyses to consider interconnected systemic oppressions: the intertwining of sexism with ableism, classism, racism, and so on (Morison, 2021).

Our aim in this chapter—which provides an overview of reproductive justice as a movement, theory, and praxis—is to outline some foundations for a broad and inclusive notion of reproductive justice. We begin with an explication of the reproductive justice framework, sketching its origins and then going on to explain how the framework amalgamates human rights and social justice.

Part I: What is Reproductive Justice?

Reproductive justice was conceptualized by Black feminists in the USA in the 1990s in response to the limitations of the dominant reproductive rights logic, and its inherent focus on “individual rights and the marketplace of choices denied to the vulnerable members of our society” (Ross, 2017a, loc 4225). Reproductive justice scholar-advocates critiqued the dominant liberal, individualistic notion of rights that conceived of individuals as autonomous choice-making citizens and required them to *claim* sexual and reproductive health rights. This conceptualization of rights is susceptible to the capitalist free market’s logic within which social and health services are considered commodities available for consumers to purchase. Accordingly, someone seeking to control her fertility enters a marketplace of options and

simply selects what she prefers. The assumption is that choice is free and unfettered, overlooking differential access to the resources—economic and more—that enable choice (Macleod, 2018; Ross & Solinger, 2017).

Reproductive justice as a concept and movement therefore arose as a counter to individualistic conceptions of sexual and reproductive health and rights, as founders “spliced together the concept of reproductive rights and social justice” (Ross, 2017a, p. 290). The movement’s fundamental purpose was to spotlight and address systemic and structural inequities preventing people from exercising their sexual and reproductive rights (Zavella, 2016). Proponents therefore highlighted how individual sexual and reproductive choices and possibilities (at the micro level) are enabled or restricted by (macro level) “institutional forces such as racism, sexism, colonialism, and poverty ... in societies” (Ross, 2017c, p. 291). They also made connections between different forms of oppression, showing how they were rooted in interconnected structural inequities (SisterSong, 2007). In this way, reproductive justice ushered in a more revolutionary feminist politics than White liberal feminism, which was concerned largely with gender-based economic inequalities and activism through legal reform.

Key Conceptual Components of Reproductive Justice

The reproductive justice framework has two key conceptual underpinnings that distinguish it, namely, (1) a focus on social justice and (2) a human rights foundation. These enable a two-pronged approach to sexual and reproductive issues that balances the notions of rights and justice (Morison & Herbert, 2019). We discuss each of these components in more detail below.

Social Justice Basis

A reproductive justice approach expands the focus beyond individual choice-making by locating human rights within a social justice framework (Gilliam et al., 2009). Acknowledging that “choice” does not exist in isolation from the reproductive politics of specific socio-historical contexts in which decision-making occurs, the framework considers how access to power and the resources to act on one’s choices are contextually mediated (Oaks, 2016; Price, 2010; Ross, 2017a). Consequently, one can identify the conditions that enable or obstruct the realization of sexual and reproductive rights (Ross, 2017b).

The key to this broadened perspective is Crenshaw’s (1989) intersectionality theory, which, according to Ross (2017b, p. 286), “propel[led] one of the most important shifts in reproductive politics in recent history”. Intersectionality theory was originally developed to draw attention to the unique challenges faced by African American women and other women of color that had previously been neglected in feminist work on reproductive health and rights. The notion of intersectionality was

used as “an amplifying organizing concept to shed light on the intersectional forms of oppression that threaten Black women’s bodily integrity” (L. J. Ross, 2017a, p. 291).

Drawing on intersectionality theory, a reproductive justice approach locates reproductive issues within an interwoven network of power relations, or “matrix of domination” (Collins, 1990), that supports or impedes the enactment of sexual and reproductive rights. Race, class, and other axes of difference are seen as co-creating sexual and reproductive health experiences in such a way that, based on one’s social location, reproductive oppression is experienced disproportionately (Schuch et al., 2020). The focus, therefore, is structural, on how systems of domination interrelate and interweave in different ways (Grzanka & Schuch, 2020).

Thus, the reproductive justice movement represents a broadened feminist framework that encompasses social justice issues (Mason, 2018), connecting “reproductive rights to other social justice issues such as economic justice, education, immigrant rights, environmental justice, sexual rights, and globalization” (Price, 2010, p. 42), with the ultimate aim of promoting reproductive freedom for all. Ultimately, reproductive justice is a framework that contextualizes issues related to sexuality, reproduction, and childrearing against a broader canvas of social issues that backgrounds, shapes, and constrains reproductive life, decisions and aspirations across different community spaces, and axes of social privilege and marginality (see Le Grice, 2014).

Human Rights Discourse

In a similar fashion, the rights-based component of the reproductive justice approach goes beyond individualistic notions of rights discussed above, such as entitlement to sexual freedom, bodily self-determination, and reproductive autonomy (Rebouché, 2017; Ross & Solinger, 2017; Zavella, 2016). An international human rights discourse has two main advantages. Firstly, it offers a wider, more encompassing notion of rights as *collective* rather than personal, recognizing that people from different groups may require different things to achieve their rights owing to their intersectional location in society (Ross et al., 2017). Using the human rights lens, therefore, allows reproductive justice advocates to draw attention to the need for structural change to support rights (Luna & Luker, 2013).

For instance, from a reproductive justice perspective, the issue of access to reproductive health care comes to be seen as more than simply about *the right to choose*—which is often only be meaningful for those with the means to gain access or to purchase services—but also about affordability, availability, and the cultural safety or appropriateness of sexual and reproductive health services. In this way, the approach emphasizes *both* “the human right to make personal decisions about one’s life, *and* the obligation of government and society to ensure that the conditions are suitable for implementing one’s decisions” (Ross, 2017a, p. 174, emphasis added).

The second advantage of human rights discourse is that it allows for reproductive rights to be explicitly connected to the protection and advancement of women’s human dignity and equality within the global community. Locating issues within the

arena of global social justice means that human rights instruments and treaties can be invoked to argue for universal rights to equality that may supersede local legal rights (Rebouché, 2017; Ross & Solinger, 2017). For instance, Romero and Agenor (2017) have shown that family cap policies, which deny further welfare support to poor women who have additional children, amount to human rights violations according to international human rights documents, notably the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. From a human rights perspective, family cap policies represent differential treatment of women based on their economic and social standing and discriminate against poor women and their children.

Appeals to human rights can, therefore, create opportunities for nations to supplement or expand upon existing laws, thereby aligning themselves with progressive players in the international arena (Rebouché, 2017). This allows for stronger, more positive claims to the full human rights of women and marginalized people than notions of individual rights contained in national legal frameworks regulating sexuality and reproduction (Ross, 2017a).

Part II: Using a Reproductive Justice Approach

Reproductive justice is simultaneously a feminist framework, praxis, and theory (Ross & Solinger, 2017). Hence, struggles for reproductive freedom may take root across interconnected areas through grassroots activism (e.g., handsoffourtamariki.org.nz); research and scholar-activism (Ware et al., 2017, 2018); media, journalism, and online investigations (Tupaea et al., 2022); sharing narratives and raising awareness through knowledge exchange (Moyle, 2017); and transforming institutional systems of social development, health, and education (Green, 2018). In this section, we discuss the various ways that a reproductive justice approach may be put to work (i) in movement building and community resistance, referring to the work and approaches of Māori and mana wāhine in Aotearoa, (ii) as an analytical lens, and (iii) in intersectional praxis through coalitional politics.

Reproductive Justice as a Framework for Movement Building and Advocacy

Reproductive justice emerged from struggles for self-determination and bodily autonomy and is thus fundamentally about praxis (Ross, 2017c). Even before the framework was formally developed, Ross (2017c) argues, women of color fought to control their fertility and to attain self-determination. We illustrate this by drawing on the example of Māori struggles for reproductive self-determination in Aotearoa,

which have been key to flourishing in a context where Māori were historically considered a “dying race” by the Crown, but also a threat to the “racial vigour” of New Zealand as a White Settler nation (Wanhalla, 2007; Le Grice & Braun, 2016). The continued devaluation of Māori reproduction has sparked initiatives asserting the right for Māori to reproduce and bear children with dignity.

In many such Māori social justice initiatives change is considered from an inter-generational perspective, that is, as decolonizing institutions and social spaces for future generations to flourish (Le Grice & Braun, 2016). Unraveling and resisting Western patriarchal knowledges and their effects on tikanga (Māori practices) and mātauranga Māori (Indigenous knowledges) have made visible the systems, contexts, and processes that create patriarchal colonial continuities across time. Responding to this, mana wāhine² activism has often been premised upon valuing Māori women’s knowledges and reproductive capacity, potential, and practice. It has also involved resisting colonial discourses that characterize the whānau (indigenous extended family) as a problematic context for raising children, problematizing the violence wrought upon whānau through colonial processes, and reasserting mātauranga (knowledges), tikanga (practices), and te reo Māori (Māori language) associated with whānau ora (extended family well-being) (Le Grice & Braun, 2016; Pihama et al., 2016). An example is Ware’s (2014) proposed Whānau kōpepe, a culturally appropriate approach for supporting for young Māori parents that centres Māori cultural preferences, practices, and aspirations.

Untangling the cultural and colonial discourses that suppress Indigenous knowledges has not been solely an intellectual exercise. This undertaking has provided impetus to challenge discursive barriers to accessing abortion services (Le Grice & Braun, 2017), create humanizing spaces for takatāpui³ (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007; Kerekere, 2017), and redefine what is “traditional” beyond the replication of earlier colonizing social formations of gender and sexuality. The recuperation of mātauranga Māori about sexuality and reproduction has been significant in reviving traditional practices of preventing, and healing from, sexual violence (Pihama et al., 2016). Drawing on mātauranga Māori in the development of quality information and resources on reproduction has also been central to reproductive justice initiatives (Glover et al., 2008; Le Grice & Braun, 2018; Murphy, 2013).

In addition to these decolonizing measures, Māori scholar-activists have challenged institutional racism in health care to support the dignity of Māori women during pregnancy and birthing (Kenney, 2011), calling attention to inequities in maternity care (Makowharemahihi et al., 2014), unequal outcomes for Māori whānau accessing neonatal care (Pihama, 2010), and barriers to quality maternity care created by the intersection of race, gender, and fatness (Parker et al., 2019). Attention has

² “Mana wāhine, often referred to as Māori feminist discourses, is a theoretical and methodological approach that explicitly examines the intersection of being Māori and female” (Simmonds, 2011, p. 11).

³ Takatāpui is a Māori word, historically meaning “intimate companion of the same sex”. The term was reclaimed in the 1980s and used as an alternative to Western ideas of sex, sexuality, and gender by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other members of the “rainbow community” (takatāpui.nz).

also been given to challenging and intervening in the intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender that impinge upon support access and availability of menstrual products (Fleming et al., 2020), the lives of young Māori parents (Ware et al., 2018), and infant care practices (Jones et al., 2017).

Reproductive Justice as Intersectional Praxis Through Coalitional Politics

As well as stimulating local activism, the reproductive justice approach enables feminists to establish ways of working together across boundaries to protect and achieve rights (Ross & Solinger, 2017). The success of reproductive justice, therefore, Ross and Solinger (2017, p. 71) point out,

is that this framework infers a universality that has previously eluded the women's movement, while avoiding essentialism. [...] Reproductive justice is universally applicable because every human being has the same human rights, a foundational reproductive justice principle. While reproductive justice was created by women of color, its precepts apply not only to women of color.

For this reason, many feminists see reproductive justice as a more inclusive alternative to the “divisive” argument for women’s (civil) rights (Ross & Solinger, 2017).

Practically addressing the social inequities that underpin various reproductive issues from a reproductive justice perspective requires “a more sophisticated transversal politics that [takes] intersecting power relations into account” (Collins, 2017, p. 1461). To this end, the movement looks to intersectional theory to tackle “wicked problems”⁴ (e.g., health disparities, poverty) (Collins, 2017). Intersectionality is employed as a theoretical framework and political praxis in the reproductive justice movement (Price, 2019). It functions as “a touchstone for political action” (Collins, 2017), providing not only a nuanced understanding of the intersecting oppressions comprising various forms of domination, but offering complex perspectives on possibilities for political action (Collins, 2019). Intersectional praxis challenges universalized notions of women, while at the same time allowing for the recognition of commonalities across movements (Ross, 2017b). Attending to “transversal relations of commonality” or “chains of equivalence” around shared struggles (Macleod, 2012) allows for a counter politics founded upon “collective action that emphasizes the synergy of ideas and action” (Collins, 2019, p. 186).

It is possible, some would argue necessary, to move away from single-axis political issues and to build political solidarity within and across domains of power, and

⁴ A wicked problem is a complex and dynamic problem that is difficult to define, has no clear solution, and is often interconnected with other problems. It is often characterized by ambiguous or changing requirements, conflicting values, and multiple stakeholders with different perspectives and interests. Solving a wicked problem requires a holistic and collaborative approach, rather than a linear or technical solution.

across historically, distinct collective entities (e.g., civil rights and queer movements) (Collins, 2019; Price, 2019). The notion of “flexible solidarity”, as articulated by Collins (2019), allows for the formation of flexible and strategic alliances based upon shared interests. For instance, the Black Lives Matter movement arose from a coalition between queer and race activists challenging state-sanctioned violence against Black bodies and particular sub-groups within Black communities. The reproductive justice movement, therefore, sees itself as “a coalition of different social groups such as African American women, Latinas, Asian American and Pacific Islander women, Native American/Indigenous women, Arab/Middle Eastern women, young people, trans people, lesbians, queer women, and their allies” (Price, 2019, p. 596).

Working within an intersectional framework, “activists cultivate flexibility and negotiate dynamics of difference and solidarity in relation to axes of power in local movement contexts” (Zavella, 2016, p. 509). Their intersectional praxis resonates with transnational feminist thinking. As an activist strategy or praxis, it involves working from grassroots, privileging marginalized women’s experiences, and recognizing power relations within coalitions (to prevent further marginalization within movements) (Grabe, 2016; Price, 2019). Attempts are therefore made to attune advocacy efforts to suit the specific historical, geographical, and cultural location, with its own nuanced gender relations (Macleod, 2012). Lines of work involve base building; policy and advocacy work, including research and policy analysis; and culture shift work that challenges problematic representations and discourses (Zavella, 2016).

Reproductive Justice as an Analytical Lens for Research

The reproductive justice framework has been successfully used in reproductive health advocacy and programming, as discussed, but the framework has gained traction somewhat more slowly for use in sexual and reproductive health research and related scholarship (Luna & Luker, 2013). As an analytic lens for research, the concept has only recently begun receiving scholarly attention and uptake. In psychology, this has been particularly slow (Eaton & Stephens, 2020). Feminist or critical psychologists have produced a little scholarship drawing on reproductive justice theory, but this body of work comprises only (1) a small number of empirical studies (e.g., Chiweshe et al., 2017; Grzanka & Schuch, 2020; LaMarre et al., 2020; Morison et al., 2022; Parker, 2022; Parker & Le Grice, 2022; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2019), (2) a few theoretical papers expanding the theory for application outside of the USA (e.g., Macleod, 2018; Macleod & Reynolds, 2021; Macleod et al., 2017), and (iii) some edited collections including authors from other disciplines (e.g., Chrisler, 2012; Eaton & Stephens, 2020; Morison & Mavuso, 2022).

While the topics of the movement’s origins and the historical roots of reproductive justice theory are relatively well covered in psychology scholarship (and beyond), little has been written about actually using the framework as a theoretical lens (Morison, 2021, 2023). Part of the reason for this is that no clear guidance on application of reproductive justice theory was given by the original theorizers, who

preferred to let the theory be a versatile, adaptable “open-source code” (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 71). The advantage of this versatility is that as a theoretical framework reproductive justice can be utilized across disciplines and tailored to diverse feminist research questions involving power. The difficulty is that the lack of specificity—along with widespread resistance to critical theories in disciplines like psychology—can create ambiguity, especially when those who do use the theory do not explain how they put it to work, including their epistemic positioning and rationale for using the lens (Morison, 2023).

Addressing this shortcoming in a recent methodological article, Morison (2023, p. 174) presents actual analytical techniques that can be applied, aiming to inspire more thought and debate on how reproductive justice theory might be fruitfully and rigorously used in psychology research. She “trace[s] three key theoretical strands in the genealogy of reproductive justice and parse[s] some essential features of reproductive justice theory, showing how each strand represents a theoretical development offering different avenues for application”. Further such contributions are to be welcomed in psychology and other disciplines interested in sexual and reproductive matters.

In broad brushstrokes, as Morison (2023) explains, applying reproductive justice as an analytical lens involves situating a reproductive issue within a specific social context with its multiple, interlocking relations of power that structure people’s sexual and reproductive lives. One might focus on the social relations shaped by gender, ethnicity/race, class, and other social categorizations; structural and systemic dynamics; or socio-cultural discourses and practices (Chiweshe et al., 2017). For instance, the theoretical lens can illuminate the complexity of reproductive decision-making by untangling some of the underlying social factors—all of which have a complex and intricate connection to gendered relations. These may include: inadequate reproductive health information, education, or services; sexual exploitation and violence; social and economic deprivation; duration of pregnancy intervals; and current family size (Macleod et al., 2017). Such analyses explicate how reproductive relations are re/produced and reinforced for particular individuals and groups within various social locations in relation to both disadvantage and privilege (Hurtado, 2017; Ross, 2017a). Examining sexual and reproductive issues using a reproductive justice lens can advance our understanding of the multidimensional power dynamics in which these issues are embedded.

Part III: Developments in Reproductive Justice Theory and Practice

In this final section, we consider two significant developments in contemporary thinking around reproductive justice, discussing transnational theoretical development and moves to “queer” reproductive justice.

Transnational Theoretical Development

Recent strides in reproductive justice movements have seen coalitions of solidarity develop across national boundaries. This involves merging the more nuanced local generation of theory and decolonization—crucial within Global South contexts—with the internationalization of common struggles associated with globalization, imperialism and Eurocentrism (Smith, 2012). In this regard, scholars call for transnational work in reproductive justice that investigates how

we are linked by common themes of the struggle for bodily autonomy, the residual impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma, family violence, and a desire for reproductive freedom. Recognizing these connections, across time and space, national boundaries, and various identity categories are vital to building the solidarities necessary to create a more equitable world. (Bakhru, 2019, p. 4)

Bakhru's (2019) recent edited volume demonstrates the impact of globalization on the "sexual and reproductive lives of different kinds of gendered bodies in the twenty-first century" (p. 6). This is explicated through transnational and interdisciplinary perspectives on reproductive justice across a breadth of topics—including, for example, transracial adoption, assisted reproduction, maternity care, family planning, and prenatal sex selection. This text showcases reproductive justice work and initiatives occurring beyond the Global North, with scholarship spanning the globe and including case studies from Mexico, Uganda, Colombia, and Taiwan. Within this broader global frame, the work speaks to specific local and nuanced issues as they are experienced by Indigenous peoples who are striving for the reclamation of their self-determination and by migrants who are negotiating new cultures and contexts. Furthermore, the specific issues experienced by sexually and gender diverse and intersex people are also included.

The ways that such scholarship may contribute to creating solidarities is demonstrated by Chiweshe and colleagues' (2017) work in Southern Africa. These researchers explored transversal commonalities and differences in power relations across Zimbabwe and South Africa, comparing and contrasting the discursive resources that women drew on in narratives explaining their decision to terminate a pregnancy. Their analysis demonstrates "a contextualised reproductive justice stance to abortion decision-making that identifies both transnational and context-specific power relations" (Chiweshe et al., 2017, p. 1). Situating reproduction within the social power relations of particular contexts allowed them to "identify those power relations that are cross-cutting and transnational and that can be tackled on a broad front, and those power relations that are context specific and require localised dialogues" (Chiweshe et al., 2017, p. 19).

Queering Reproductive Justice

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people have been a part of reproductive justice and sexual liberation movements for as long as these have existed (Flores et al., 2011). Yet, more recently, the conscious shift away from identity politics and toward flexible solidarity in reproductive justice has foregrounded common concepts and causes across movements, such as bodily integrity and agency (Price, 2010). For example Mamo and Alston-Stepnitz (2015, p. 529) illustrated how the “very different, yet specific, historical and legal social policies of injustice perpetrated against African Americans and queer people intersect”. In this regard, the common cause is “the human right to have children and to parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities”. As Nixon (2013) asserted in relation to trans people’s reproductive rights:

Reproduction is not just a matter of individual choice. Reproductive health policy affects the status of entire groups. It reflects which people are valued in our society; who is deemed worthy to bear children and capable of making decisions for themselves. Reproductive decisions are made within a social context, including inequalities of wealth and power.

Accordingly, Nixon (2013, p. 79) described the reproductive justice movement as “a natural home” for activism related to the intersection of reproduction and gender identity.

Supporting this view, feminist, queer, and reproductive justice writers have foregrounded the utility of the notion of sexual (or intimate) citizenship (Morison & Lynch, 2019; Richardson, 2015; Riggs & Due, 2013). Sexual citizenship captures the confluence of sexuality, sexual practices, procreation, and state recognition. Cohering with the rights-based approach in the reproductive justice framework, calls for sexual citizenship invoke the state’s obligation to uphold and support the rights of all individuals (Ross & Solinger, 2017). Richardson (2000) categorized these as rights to: (i) sexual practice in intimate relationships, including rights to sexual pleasure and to self-determination (e.g., the right to have children); (ii) self-identity and self-definition (e.g., the right to name the kind of sexual person one is); and (iii) institutional recognition and public validation of a variety of sexual relationships (e.g., choice and public recognition of partnerships).

Seen through the lens of claiming full citizenship, there are clear overlaps between struggles around the sexual and reproductive rights of queer persons and concerns advanced by feminists advocating for *inter alia* full recognition of the equal status of women; reproductive agency; challenges to the dominance of procreative norms; and the primacy of the heterosexual subject in granting citizenship status (Reddy et al., 2019). As Stacey (2018, p. 6) remarked, queer and reproductive justice theories offer “different yet complementary lenses” through which to consider common issues and “a conversation between them is only just beginning”.

Given the common causes and concepts across movements, queer and reproductive justice movements have actively and overtly formed alliances. For example, “Causes in Common” in the USA, is a “national organizing initiative that brings together activists from the LGBT Liberation and Reproductive Justice movements to

work toward shared goals” (The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, 2003). Such alliance building has led to an expansion of what reproductive justice means and represents, more than simply as the equivalent for sexual and reproductive health (Ross et al., 2017). The conscious inclusion of sexuality in the reproductive justice movement allows for the recognition and promotion of sexual justice (Price, 2010). In this sense, “reproductive justice is ... about shared principles based in the human right to health and a desire for real social change” (Perez, 2007, p. 1).

Yet, at the same time, inequalities of wealth and power create tensions, inequities, and ethical dilemmas (Luna, 2018; Smietana et al., 2018). For instance, new assisted reproduction technologies reinforce inequities as women of color in the Global South labor as surrogates for economically privileged queer men in the Global North, even as they allow the creation and inclusion of non-normative families (Mamo & Alston-Stepnitz, 2015; Smietana et al., 2018). Indeed, as the socio-political and technological landscape shifts, so too do conversations about reproductive justice and sexual citizenship, necessitating further scholarship and research on the queering of sexual and reproductive justice.

Conclusion

Poised at the apex of neoliberal capitalism, in the face of intensifying oppression, the call for reproductive justice and freedom now seems more urgent than ever (Bakhru, 2019; Roberts, 2017). Across the world, recent years have seen backlash against the gains of the women’s rights movements evident in widespread rolling back of state provisions for reproductive care, failures to enforce laws protecting women’s rights, the overturning of such legislation—most strikingly the repeal of *Roe v Wade* in the USA in 2021, and the reinstatement of draconian policy (e.g., the “global gag rule”) (Bakhru, 2019; Chrisler, 2013; Garita, 2014). Reproductive justice represents a necessary paradigm shift. As movement, theory, and praxis it has grown and ripened for such a time as this. An intersectional, human rights-based framework, reproductive justice brings into focus the multidimensional power dynamics in which sexual and reproductive issues are embedded; it provides galvanizing moral and political rationale for advocacy; and it can move beyond single-issue struggles and push past binary politics allowing activists to reach across difference to build movements.

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Women's Mental Health: A Critique of Hetero-Patriarchal Power and Pathologization



Jane M. Ussher

For centuries, women have outnumbered men in diagnoses of mental health problems from the “hysteria” of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to anxiety, depression, and self-harm in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Women are also more likely to receive psychiatric “treatment,” ranging from hospitalization in an asylum, accompanied by restraint, electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), and psycho-surgery, to psychological therapy and psychotropic drug treatments today. If you look to the experts for explanation, the problem is often positioned within, with the reproductive body or women’s intrapsychic processes to blame (Ussher, 2011). The influence of “stress” or other aspects of the social environment is acknowledged within bio-psycho-social models of distress (Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000), but outside of a feminist theorization of women’s madness, little attention is paid to power, politics, or the gendered nature of psychiatric diagnosis and distress, and intersectionality is completely absent from this agenda. In this chapter, I offer a feminist intersectional analysis of women’s higher rates of reported depression and anxiety, locating a critique of hetero-patriarchal power at the center. This is not to deny the reality of women’s experience of prolonged misery or distress, which undoubtedly exists. However, if we examine the roots of this distress, in the context of women’s lives, it can be conceptualized as a reasonable response, not a reflection of pathology within.

Medicalizing Women’s Misery

The statistics on gender differences in depression and anxiety paint a stark picture of women’s mental health. Epidemiological researchers report that in the Western developed world, on average women are between 1.5 and 2 times more likely than men to

J. M. Ussher (✉)
Western Sydney University, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: J.Ussher@westernsydney.edu.au

be diagnosed with anxiety disorders (McLean et al., 2011) and depression (Salk et al., 2017). Women are also twice as likely as men to be prescribed psychotropic medication, in particular selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) (Currie, 2005; Davey & Chanen, 2016), a “treatment” that clearly locates the solution within.

From a bio-medical perspective, the primary explanation that has historically been put forward for women’s higher rates of reported depression is the reproductive body. We have been told that gonadal changes at puberty lead to psycho-neuroendocrine changes to the brain (Young & Korszun, 1998), and greater “limbic system hyperactivation,” which makes women more sensitive to stress (Parker & Brotchie, 2010). Such “neurotropic factors” have also been associated with the duration of depression in women, but not in men (Cardoso et al., 2014). “Raging hormones” have been linked to premenstrual, perinatal-natal, and menopausal stages of the reproductive life cycle, deemed to be peak periods of distress (Studd, 1997). Justification for this “raging hormones” approach is found in reports that women’s greater propensity to report depression emerges at puberty (Salk et al., 2017) and is no longer present post-menopause (Kessler et al., 2005). Depression has been linked to “the unique physiological and behavioral demands of pregnancy and motherhood,” and the associated “changes in neuroanatomy and neuroplasticity, and immune signatures” (Eid et al., 2019, p. 86).

However, while gender differences in the reporting of depression may appear at puberty, this cannot be explained by the “turning on” of the endocrine system, as has been claimed (e.g., Kuehner, 2003, p. 167). Girls who experience early puberty, which is known to lead to sexual objectification and sexual harassment, are at higher risk of depression, suggesting that it is the social consequences of pubertal change that produce distress (Stubbs, 2020). The evidence for “times of great hormonal fluctuation” across the life span (Studd, 1997, p. 977) being causally linked to women’s distress is equally weak. Premenstrual distress has been found to be strongly associated with women’s social and relationship context with over-responsibility, relationship dissatisfaction, and communication problems (Ussher & Perz, 2020). Depression in the post-natal period has been conceptualized as an understandable reaction to the strains of early motherhood, linked to high and unrealistic expectations, combined with low social support (Nicolson, 2020). Finally, social and relational context, and women’s perception and negotiation of midlife change, have been reported to be the factors associated with distress at midlife—rather than hormonal changes in the menopausal body (Hickey et al., 2022; Hunter, 2020), with women who have positive attitudes to aging and menopause reporting feeling happier and more satisfied with their lives at midlife (Dillaway, 2020; Ussher et al., 2015).

Psychological Theories of Depression: Pathologizing Women's Distress

A range of psychological explanations have also been put forward to explain women's higher rates of reported depression, many of which involve an interaction between biological, psychological, and social factors, within a vulnerability-stress approach (Hyde & Mezulis, 2020). For example, meta-analytic research has been used to argue that in the face of stress, women are more likely to engage in rumination, whereas men engage in avoidance (Johnson & Whisman, 2013), a gender difference that has been reported to emerge by age 13 (Jose & Brown, 2008). Rumination and resulting low mood has been described as increasing hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal activity, resulting in depression (Huffziger et al., 2013). It has been argued that adolescent girls' greater tendency for rumination is a key aspect of their "depressogenic attributional style" (Hankin & Abramson, 2001), with the emergence of gender differences in depression post puberty resulting from the interaction of pre-existing vulnerabilities, negative life events, and cognitive vulnerabilities (Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000).

An alternative multi-factorial model, with a psycho-biological slant to it, has been presented by Cyranowski and colleagues (2000), who explain adolescent onset of depression in terms of girls' heightened affiliative needs, interacting with adolescent transition difficulties and negative life events, particularly those with interpersonal consequences. They draw on meta-analytic research which claims that women are more concerned with affiliation, while men are more likely to be concerned with personal autonomy, instrumentality, and agency (Feingold, 1994) to argue that heightened affiliative needs have an evolutionary basis. This is deemed to be located in "women's historically greater investment in offspring care and their relatively greater use of long term sexual mate selection strategies" (p. 22), linked to the "mammalian neuropeptide oxytocin" (Cyranowski et al., 2000, p. 23).

Absence of a secure parental base leading to an insecure attachment style has also been posited as a potential contributory factor in Cyranowski et al's (2000) model, as insecure attachments are associated with lower self-esteem, lower social support, and greater symptoms of psychological distress in women (Shaw & Dallos, 2005). Similarly, in her work on self-silencing, a pattern of behavior involving a focus on others at the expense of the self, accompanied by repression of a woman's own needs and concerns, Dana Jack has associated insecure attachment style with high levels of self-silencing, and as a consequence, with women's depression (Jack & Ali, 2010). Drawing on self-in-relation theory (Kaplan, 1986), women are deemed to self-silence because they believe that they are not loved for who they are, but for how well they meet the needs of others (Jack & Dill, 1992), with the resultant silencing of needs and anger, and the use of external standards to judge the self, leading to feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

However, psychological theories of depression have been dismissed by many feminist critics for being overgeneralized and oversimplified (Marecek, 2006, p. 298), or for being based on a positivist epistemology which positions women's distress

as symptoms of an underlying disorder (Stoppard, 1999; Ussher, 2010). Both biomedical and psychological theories of depression have been criticized for decontextualizing what is often a social problem, simply acting to legitimize expert intervention, while negating the political, economic, and discursive aspects of women's experience (LaFrance, 2009; Stoppard, 2000; Ussher, 2010). Such theories also focus on and reify a homogenous category "woman." In contrast, intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) recognizes that women are characterized simultaneously by multiple intersecting social categories, such as gender, age, sexuality, social class, and ethnicity, which are properties of the individual in terms of their identity, as well as characteristics of social structures (Hawkey & Ussher, 2022). These categories intersect in ways that shape unique experiences of mental health and risk of experiencing distress or being diagnosed with depression (Rosenfield, 2012). For example, a young woman who has low socio-economic status (Reiss, 2013) and identifies as queer (Pitts et al., 2006), will experience a double jeopardy in terms of likelihood of experiencing depression.

Deconstructing Diagnoses: Labeling Women's Misery as Depression

In contrast to realist bio-medical and psychological viewpoints, many feminists have adopted a social constructionist standpoint, arguing that psychiatric diagnosis is a gendered practice that pathologizes femininity (Ussher, 2011). Within the discourse of "medical naturalism" that dominates bio-medicine and the psych-professions (Pilgrim, 2007, p. 539), epidemiological data is used to imply that depression and anxiety are naturally occurring pathologies existing within the sufferer, which can be objectively defined and measured. Within a realist epistemological framework, diagnostic criteria, such as those as laid out in the DSM-V-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association) (American Psychiatric Association, 2022), are used to ensure uniformity across research, with assessment of individual symptoms conducted through standardized questionnaires or clinical interviews. However, depression can be conceptualized as a social category created by a process of expert definition which medicalizes the whole continuum of mild to severe misery as a unitary psychiatric disorder (Stoppard, 2000). As Jeanne Marecek (2006) argues, "depression is not something people have, but a set of practices authorized by the culture through which people express to others that they are suffering" (p. 303).

Gender role stereotypes used by medical practitioners and gender bias in psychometric instruments which categorize normative aspects of feminine behavior (such as crying or loss of interest in sex) as "symptoms" (Salokangas et al., 2002) have been deemed to result in medical practitioners diagnosing depression in women at higher rates than men (Potts et al., 1991). It has also been argued that many women only label their unhappiness as "depression," and as a result take up a bio-medical model to

explain their “symptoms,” after receiving medical diagnosis and treatment (LaFrance, 2007), with their brains being conceptualized as needing “work” through antidepressants (Flore et al., 2021). The discursive construction of women's unhappiness as depression in health policy, medical journals, self-help books, drug company literature, women's magazines, and other mass circulated literature (Gattuso et al., 2005) also plays a significant role in women increasingly positioning their distress as an illness, “depression.” The gendered nature of this medicalization results in an insidious creeping of pathologization into women's lives.

The diagnostic category of “depression” is very much a Western cultural concept with many “symptoms” of depression not expressed, or positioned as sign of distress, in many non-Western contexts (Marecek, 2006). One of the explanations for the higher reported rates of depression in White women in the United States compared to racially or ethnically minoritized women (Phimphasone-Brady et al., 2023) is that distress is more likely to be somatized in the non-White groups (Brown et al., 1996), or presented as physical problems to general practitioners (GPs), as this is seen as having greater legitimacy (Burr & Chapman, 2004). However, women from racially or ethnically minoritized groups do exhibit different or greater symptom presentation, that could influence diagnosis of depression, depending on the diagnostic criteria followed (Phimphasone-Brady et al., 2023). Acculturation can increase the risk of diagnosis. For example, for Chinese and Latino women living in the United States (Alegría et al., 2008), and South Asian women living in the UK (Nazroo, 1997), those who were acculturated were twice as likely to report depression as those who were not acculturated. This doesn't mean that racially or ethnically minoritized women experience lower rates of distress: it may simply be the case that this distress is not conceptualized as “depression” within the “symptom pool” (Shorter, 1992) that is drawn on by these women.

However, positioning depression as a discursive construct could appear to negate the existence or magnitude of the misery experienced by many women. Feminists who dismiss medicalization are also left with the dilemma that at an individual level, the diagnosis of depression can serve to validate to women that there is a “real” problem, isolating prolonged misery from “the character of the sufferer” (LaFrance & Stoppard, 2007, p.130). So how might we understand women's distress, without medicalizing or pathologizing the individual woman?

Understanding Women's Misery: Inequality, Discrimination, and Violence

Not all women are at equal risk of depression. The social context of women's lives is a plausible explanation for women's higher rates of reported depression. Gendered inequalities in society, leading to the discriminatory treatment of women and disempowerment, are a significant factor in the development of women's distress (Chonody & Siebert, 2008; Van de Velde et al., 2010). For example, in a World Mental

Health Report (Desjarlais et al., 1996), the social roots of women's mental health problems in low income countries were identified as under-nourishment, low paid work, and domestic violence, leading to a plea for co-ordinated efforts to economically empower women and reduce violence in all of its forms. While differences in rates of depression have been reported across Asian-American, African-American, and Latino women (Brown et al., 2003), these differences have been said to disappear when socio-economic differences are controlled for (Alegria et al., 2008). In the United States, women who live in states which are high on the economic autonomy index, and where women have better reproductive rights, are also reported to be significantly less likely to experience depression (Chen et al., 2005). Similarly, in European countries, women's life satisfaction was reported to have increased after the introduction of abortion rights and birth control (Pezzini, 2005), with socio-economic and family related factors (Van de Velde et al., 2010), as well as educational level (Matud et al., 2006), moderating the risk of depression. Depression within sexual and gender minority populations is also associated with social inequalities, with those who have lower educational levels reporting higher distress (Ferlatte et al., 2019). This has led to the conclusion that depression can be reduced by increasing women's access to economic resources, education, and employment, as well as facilitating autonomy over reproductive decisions.

Discrimination and violence operating at an individual level is also an influential factor in women's depression. Researchers have reported that women who experience frequent sexism (Klonoff et al., 2000), or who perceive themselves to be subjected to personal discrimination (Dambrun, 2007), report higher levels of depression than those who experience little sexism or low levels of discrimination (Belle & Doucet, 2003). Online sexual harassment and abuse are significantly associated with depression in adolescent girls (Stahl & Denhag, 2021) and adult women (Stevens et al., 2020), with high rates of harassment experienced by women who are public figures, such as politicians (Every-Palmer et al., 2015) and journalists (Lewis et al., 2020). The experience of physical and sexual violence has been linked to a range of women's mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress syndrome (Cortina & Kubiak, 2006; Kendler et al., 2000), as well as physical health problems (Kendall-Tackett, 2007). Indeed, higher rates of having experienced child sexual abuse (Molnar et al., 2001), adult sexual violence (Koss et al., 2003), or having witnessed parental violence (Covey et al., 2020) in women compared to men have been described as going a considerable way to explaining the adult gender difference in depressive disorders (Cutler & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991; Dunn et al., 2012). This is an issue for a significant proportion of women, as violence against women is so prevalent across cultures it is now recognized as a primary health and human rights issue by the World Health Organization (World Health Organisation, 2002).

Women who are transgender (trans), or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ), are vulnerable to sexual assault or harassment on the basis of the intersection of gender and sexuality diversity (Callander et al., 2019). LGBQ women are significantly more likely to experience physical and sexual assault (Balsam et al., 2005; Szalacha et al., 2017), sexual harassment (Szalacha et al., 2017), and sexual

assault by a stranger (Moracco et al., 2007), than exclusively heterosexual women. Trans women experience social exclusion and sexual violence at rates significantly higher than all other groups in the broader lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) community (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2016; Ussher et al., 2020).

Racial and gender discrimination combined increases the risk of poor mental health and wellbeing (Perry et al., 2013), with women who are Black and LGBTQ experiencing higher rates of discrimination and higher levels of depressive symptoms than White heterosexual women (Calabrese et al., 2015). Black LGBTQ women who live in predominantly White societies face discrimination and violence on the basis of their intersecting gender, sexuality, and racial identities (Matsuzaka & Koch, 2018). For example, in the United States, trans people of color are 2.5 times more likely to experience discrimination and sexual violence compared to cisgender people (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2016). Sexual violence is often accompanied by other acts of physical violence, with trans people significantly more likely than cisgender people to experience physical violence (Dean et al., 2000), with the highest rates of physical violence reported by trans women of color (Ussher et al., 2022).

Sexual violence is likely to compound chronic stress already experienced by trans and LGBTQ women, who endure stigmatization and discrimination within a heterosexist and transphobic society (Cyrus, 2017; Hawkey et al., 2021; Hendricks & Testa, 2012). Described as “minority stress” (Meyer, 2003), the compounding nature of multiple stressors is reflected in the significantly higher rates of mental health problems reported by trans and LGBTQ women, compared to the general population. For example, in an Australian national survey, trans people were four times more likely to experience depression, and 1.5 times more likely to experience anxiety disorders, compared to the general population (Hyde et al., 2014). A national survey examining trans discrimination in the United States also found that 41% of respondents reported attempting suicide, compared to 1.6% in the general population, and for those individuals who had experienced sexual assault, this figure went up to 64% (Grant et al., 2011).

Gender Roles and Life Events

The construction and experience of gendered roles have also been classified as a significant factor in the development of women's depression. It has been posited that “gender intensification” occurs at puberty, characterized by parental and peer expectation of girls' conformity to “restrictive social roles” (Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994, p. 436). Mothers have also been reported to engage their daughters in discussion of sadness and fear, while encouraging suppression of such emotions in their sons, which has been linked to a greater focus on depressive emotions in girls (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). Adolescent body dissatisfaction, resulting from the objectification of women's bodies in Western culture (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997),

is another issue of concern. Over 80% of girls compared to 40% of boys aged 12–18 report dissatisfaction with their body image (Sobrino-Bazaga & Rabito-Alcón, 2018), leading to the conclusion that body dissatisfaction accounts for a substantial part of the gender difference in depressive symptoms (Morken et al., 2019; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994). Indeed, one explanation put forward for the lower rates of depression reported by African-American women and girls is their lower rate of body dissatisfaction (Hayward et al., 1999) and greater preference for a curvaceous body ideal (Overstreet et al., 2010), in comparison to White women and girls. However, more recent studies posit that measures of body image and appearance ideals may not be accurate assessments of body dissatisfaction for Black women and girls (Lowy et al., 2021). There is also evidence that both Black and White women are susceptible to disordered eating, with symptoms that emerge in adolescence potentially following women into midlife (Parker et al., 2023).

Gender roles have also been linked to the negotiation and experience of life events. It has been reported that depression is associated with both severe life events (Bifulco et al., 1998), and cumulative adversity (Turner & Lloyd, 1995), for women and men. Indeed, one explanation for higher rates of depression reported by adolescent girls, when compared to boys (Kessler, 2003), is the higher levels of social and relational challenges, life events, or life stress girls experience at this time (Jose & Brown, 2008). The mental health of young people, in particular girls, has been described as a “global public health challenge” (Patel et al., 2007), a challenge exacerbated in recent times by stresses associated with COVID-19 lockdowns (Saunders et al., 2021) and the proliferation of sexual harassment (Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2022).

Certain groups of adult women, particularly those caring for young children (Brown & Harris, 1978), those experiencing poverty (Belle & Doucet, 2003), and those with negative close relationships (Bifulco et al., 1998), have been reported to have a greater susceptibility to life events, and to experience depression as a result—clear evidence of the intersection of identities in the experience of distress. It has also been suggested that women and men respond differentially to certain life events, those involving children, housing, and reproduction, because of the greater salience of these events to women’s role identity (Nazroo et al., 1998). Described as “network events,” this is interpreted as being the result of women’s greater involvement in the lives of those around them (Kessler & McLeod, 1984, p. 620), with women’s responsiveness representing a “cost of caring” (Kessler et al., 1985, p. 492), associated with the pressure on girls to engage in connectedness (Shaw & Dallos, 2005), that leads to elevated levels of depression.

Woman as Problem: Acknowledging the Political Context of Gender Differences in Depression

We cannot simply accept these socio-cultural and psychological explanations for women's higher rates of reported depression uncritically. Many of the accounts reviewed above provide us with at best partial analyses, as they still position depression within the woman—even when acknowledging the social causes of distress, such as poverty or violence. As is also the case with bio-medical models, they depoliticize the roots of women's distress, and neutralize the causal pathways under scrutiny, and indeed, depression itself, as objective entities that can be simply measured or monitored. As Pilgrim and Bentall (1999) argue, while “it is possible to talk about the “diagnosis of child sexual abuse” and the “diagnosis of depression” in its survivors, it is less mystifying to think about the enduring misery created by the sexual oppression of children by adults” (p. 270). Constructs such as “neuroticism,” “stressful life events,” or “depressogenic attributional style” are stripped of their gendered context (Stoppard, 1999, p. 81) and accepted as unquestioned causal mechanisms.

Equally, while we may correlate social inequalities, gender roles, or adult sexual violence with women's depression, most socio-cultural accounts provide no analysis of the hetero-patriarchal political context and structural conditions which maintain deeply entrenched gender divisions in reproductive labor and economic activity, to the disadvantage of women. We need to question “who benefits from the restriction of women's reproductive rights?” “Why is it that domestic and sexual violence is so endemic, and that so few cases are prosecuted?” (Gavey, 2018) “Why are women still taking on the greater burden of childcare, resulting in their greater vulnerability to adverse life events?” “Why do women earn less than men, even they are as well qualified?” and “Why are women in a minority in positions of power in society?” (Ussher, 2010).

To take just one example, while women may suffer on an individual basis from the “cost of caring,” if they did eschew this traditional feminine role, the expenditure placed on the state would blow national budgets, in both developed and developing countries (Folbre, 2021; Vine & Kindersley, 2009). It would also mean greater demands would be made on men, who currently do far less unpaid caring, or housework, than women, across the world (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Samtleben & Müller, 2022). Stripping accounts of women's misery of any acknowledgment of the historical or political context of women's lives, while paying lip service to socio-cultural or psychological influences, thus serves to shore up the very structural factors that lead to distress in the first place, through making gender inequality an invisible issue.

A case in point is analysis of the relationship between marriage and depression. For many years, marriage was put forward as a risk factor for women's depression (Bebbington et al., 1991), with young married mothers of small children deemed to be at particularly high risk (Matud et al., 2006). However, a number of studies report that marriage is a protective factor for both men and women, as it acts to buffer psychological distress (e.g., Kim & McKenry, 2002; Sachs-Ericsson & Ciarlo, 2000),

with divorced or separated individuals at higher risk of depression (Stack & Scourfield, 2013). In reporting research on “marriage” and depression, I am not taking a naïve hetero-normative position, for it is “marriage” between a man and a woman which has been the focus of research in this area, despite the move toward marriage equality in sexuality diverse relationships. While the importance of gender roles within marriage is often implicitly acknowledged by researchers (e.g., Brown & Harris, 1989, p. 381), there is rarely, if ever, any critique of the underlying tenets of hetero-patriarchy which may be instrumental in creating the particular conditions associated with “marriage” and women’s depression. Specific factors in heterosexual relationships which have been linked to women’s depression include relationship distress and dissatisfaction (Whisman & Bruce, 1999), self-silencing (Whiffen et al., 2007), humiliation (Brown et al., 1995), partner violence toward the woman (Koss et al., 2003), dissatisfaction with decision making, financial issues and childcare (Byrne et al., 2004), inequality in relation to domestic responsibilities (Chonody & Siebert, 2008; Doyle, 1995), absence of partner support (Brown et al., 1986), partner withdrawal in the face of the woman’s needs (Byrne & Carr, 2000), communication problems (Byrne et al., 2004), and feelings of disempowerment (Price, 1991). While Brown and colleagues (1995) describe these relational patterns as creating “depressogenic effects,” as Pilgrim and Bentall argue, “this could be reframed by simply stating that miserable women live with oppressive men” (1999, p. 270). The very use of the medicalized term “depression” therefore acts to depoliticize women’s distress and negate the gender differences in power that pervade women’s lives.

If we look outside of a heterosexual matrix, where roles within relationships are not taken for granted and divided on gendered terms, these oppressive patterns of relating are less common, suggesting that it is not “marriage” which may be a risk factor for women’s depression, but particular aspects of relationships which are more common in a hetero-patriarchal context. Researchers have reported that in comparison to heterosexual relationships, lesbian relationships are experienced as more satisfying (Kurdek, 2003) and communication is more likely to include open exploration of feelings, empathic attunement to non-verbal cues, and the absence of contempt (Connolly & Sicola, 2006). Conflict is resolved more effectively with less likelihood of a demand-withdrawal style of conflict resolution (Kurdek, 2004). There is also greater egalitarianism in dealing with household responsibilities, including childcare, accompanied by adaptability in dealing with relational needs and domestic tasks (Connolly, 2005, p. 270). This has implications for women’s mental health. For example, in a study on women’s premenstrual distress, conducted with women who self-defined as “PMS sufferers,” women in lesbian relationships reported lower levels of depression and anxiety and higher levels of premenstrual coping than women in heterosexual relationships. Lesbians also reported higher levels of empathy, support, and positive communication with their woman partner, compared to rejection, absence of communication, and lack of empathy on the part of many male partners, particularly when the woman was premenstrual (Perz & Ussher, 2009; Ussher & Perz, 2008). This suggests that hetero-patriarchal discourses and practices

within intimate relationships should be the focus of critical attention, not decontextualized “marital” factors, as is so often the case in analyses of the relational context of women’s depression.

There *are* examples of attempts by feminist psychological researchers to demystify and position the blame for misery outside of the women, and to acknowledge the hetero-patriarchal context of distress, even when psychological mechanisms, such as rumination or self-silencing, are the focus of attention. For example, in Nolen-Hoeksema et al.’s research, women’s propensity to ruminate is deemed to be tied to the chronic strain they experience, “the grinding annoyances and burdens that come with women’s social power (including)... a greater load of the housework and child care and more of the strain of parenting than men” as well as absence of affirmation by their partners (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 1999, p. 1068). This is deemed to be combined with women’s lower social status, their unequal power and status in relationships, as well as greater life-time prevalence of sexual and physical assault, leading to feelings of chronic lack of control, low self-mastery, and learned helplessness and, as a consequence, depression. The solution put forward by Nolen-Hoeksema and colleagues is to help women to gain more mastery over their lives, but also to change their social circumstances so they “don’t have so much to ruminate about” (1999, p. 1068). Similarly, Dana Jack’s self-silencing theory locates women’s propensity to self-silence in gender specific schema and culturally constructed relationship norms, which lead women to internalize anger and engage in self-sacrifice as part of the role of being a good wife and mother (Jack, 1991). Hyde and Mezulis (2020) acknowledge socio-cultural factors, including media influences and sexual violence, in their multi-factorial model of women’s depression. However, the individual women are still the unit of analysis, which reifies the notion that the problem is within.

Acknowledging Women’s Distress and Disempowerment: Acknowledging the Need for Social and Political Change

We need to question the increasing medicalization of misery in the West, in particular the way, in which women who experience mild distress or understandable problems with everyday life are defined as having a mental disorder “depression” and told that the optimum treatment is medication. The term “depression” may function to communicate the extent of a woman’s distress, and validate her subjective experience, however, it needs to be conceptualized outside of a medical model which positions it as pathology within the woman. As feminists, we also need to be wary of reinforcing medical naturalism through discursively positioning our research focus, or our participant’s experiences, as “depression.” In the same way that feminist psychologists have used the term “premenstrual change” or “premenstrual distress” in order to avoid the medicalized connotations of the diagnostic categories of PMS or PMDD (Ussher, 2006), we may need to deliberately subvert taken for granted

assumptions by using terms such as “severe distress” “prolonged misery” or “continuum of depressive experiences,” to make the point that depression is not a unitary, global, trans-historical pathology. We also need to avoid conceptualizing women as a homogeneous group, acknowledging the intersection of gender, sexuality, social class, disability, and racial identities in the etiology of women’s distress and their treatment within health systems (Brown et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2017).

We also need social and political change so that women are not living in a context of gendered inequality, violence, and abuse—acknowledging that some women are more vulnerable to such abuse (Gavey, 2018). We need to critically examine the gendered socialization of girls and women, which may act to increase their likelihood of rumination, self-silencing, self-objectification, disempowerment, and the internal attribution of problems. However, this does not mean that the distress of individual women is ignored. It is possible to offer therapeutic support which acknowledges women’s individual life experience, as well as the cultural context within which their distress is constructed and lived, as feminist therapists who adopt a narrative therapy model, often alongside cognitive-behavioral or psycho-dynamic techniques, have demonstrated (e.g., Gremillion, 2004; Lee, 1997; McQuaide, 1999; Ussher et al., 2002). Psychotropic medication, particularly when used alongside therapy, may be beneficial for alleviating some cases of “extreme mental turmoil” (Moncrieff, 2009, p. 308), however, it is not necessary or appropriate for the “problems in everyday living” (Currie, 2005, p. 19) that are positioned as depression in pharmaceutical advertising.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that depressed mood or misery is not solely a “woman’s problem,” as “depression” is reported by both women and men, cisgender and, trans, and non-binary people. The ways in which this phenomenon is manifested and experienced differently across gender is deserved of further investigation. At the same time, unraveling the phenomenon of women’s higher rates of reported depression may provide insights into the nature and etiology of “depression” per se, as has been previously suggested (Bebbington, 1996; Rutter et al., 2003). However, it also provides insights into the gendered and hetero-patriarchal nature of social and familial life, the consequences of inequality and discrimination for women, and gendered patterns in certain aspects of psychological processing which occur within a relational and cultural context. Examining the construction and treatment of depression also provides insights into the cultural construction of what it means to be “woman” across intersecting identities, where diagnosis with pathology is an ever-present specter, whether we accept or reject archetypal feminine ideals and roles.

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Violence

Saying It like It is? Sexual Harassment, Labelling, and #MeToo



Lisa Lazard

The year 2017 has become synonymous with the issue of sexual harassment. This was, of course, the period in which the New York Times exposed Harvey Weinstein's long history of harassment, assault, and rape and has become culturally referenced as a tipping point that galvanized the digital #MeToo movement. What followed was an unprecedented number of people, particularly women, publicly recounting their experiences of sexual harassment. Situated within a feminist poststructuralist framework, this chapter explores the complex social landscapes that have contributed to people's, particularly women's, ability to speak out against sexual harassment. Naming experiences as sexual harassment have been predominantly referred to in the psychological literature as the phenomenon of 'labelling.' This chapter is historically organized, beginning with the popularization of the term sexual harassment in the 1970s through to #MeToo, in order to explore cultural shifts, primarily in the UK and the United States, that have been relevant to women's ability to label sexual harassment. Feminism, postfeminism, and neoliberalism, as cultural frames, are explored in relation to shifting understandings of sexual harassment, speaking rights, and gendered power.

Placing Sexual Harassment on the Social Agenda: 1970s–1990s

In the mid-1970s, the term 'sexual harassment' emerged out of feminist activism to describe women's experiences of unwanted sexist and sexual conduct at work. Prior to the popularization of the term, these unwanted experiences were widely treated as a normal, trivial problem of everyday life. The coining of the term was thus seen as

L. Lazard (✉)

School of Psychology & Counselling, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
e-mail: lisa.lazard@open.ac.uk

crucial for reframing women's experiences as a form of patriarchal oppression and allowing women to break silences about their treatment at work. The attention to sexual harassment in feminist scholarship and activism in the late 1970s widened the focus from the politics of rape to a broader range of men's violence against women. For example, definitions of sexual harassment might include leering, ogling, wolf whistling, cat calling, touching, sexual bribery, and sexism (Farley, 1978; Fitzgerald et al., 1988). This wider focus theorized the links between normative heterosexuality, sexual harassment, and women's subordination. Kelly's (1988) highly influential research on this topic articulated the relationship between extreme forms of sexual violence and everyday heterosexual interactions between men and women as a continuum of sexual violence. Kelly's research was informed by Rich's (1980) classic essay 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' in which heterosexuality was theorized as a *political institution* which supports men's power and dominance over women. Rich argued that the presumed naturalness of heterosexuality renders it as compulsory. This, she contended, serves to both confirm men's power over women and divide women by constituting lesbian women as 'other.' Drawing on the ground-breaking work of feminist legal scholar MacKinnon (1979) on the sexual harassment of working women, Rich pointed out how compulsory heterosexuality operates in other institutions such as the workplace. For Mackinnon (1979), women's greater experience of sex-based subjection in employment (for example, job status inequity and income inequality) provided the social conditions for sexual harassment. This argument underpinned Mackinnon's successful and monumental judicial case that sexual harassment constituted unlawful sex discrimination in US employment law. Indeed, feminist scholarship and activism were so successful in placing sexual harassment on the social agenda that workplace sexual harassment became legally regulated in countries across the globe throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Thomas & Kitzinger, 1997).

Despite these legal successes, sexual harassment remained a contestable issue in public arenas throughout this period. Feminist understandings of sexual harassment as a significant social problem were set against its normalization within the broader society. As Herbert (1989) argued, public dialogue often continued to characterize sexual harassment as a natural or inevitable consequence of gendered relationships, particularly between men and women. Most commonly, sexual harassment was naturalized through the male sex drive discourse in which men are positioned as biologically compelled to seek sex with women (Hollway, 1983). This characterization underpinned understandings of sexual harassment as, more often as not, a misunderstanding stemming from natural differences between the sexes. Critiques of feminist theories of sexual harassment were, of course, unsurprising given that the term sexual harassment challenged the parameters of social acceptability, particularly for men.

In the late 1980s to 1990s, backlash discourses against sexual harassment were abundant (Wright et al., 1990). The response to sexual harassment became constituted as 'political correctness'—an attempt by the Left to impose their social vision and to mute opposing political opinion. Thus, sexual harassment was positioned as an attack on free speech (Barker, 1994). Within this context, Deem (1999) argued that feminist and female voices became problematized and controlled, particularly in

media discourse. For example, to speak out about sexual harassment was seen as perpetuating feminist dogma, however, at the same time, women's silence on such matters was criticized as a failure to support other women (Deem, 1999). Thus, for women both speaking and silence were subject to trouble.

In the 1990s, understandings of sexual harassment were shaped by the rise in postfeminism. While postfeminism has been characterized in different ways, Gill (2011) refers to it as a cultural sensibility which characterizes gender equality as a goal already achieved by feminist efforts and as a result feminism is no longer needed. In postfeminist discourses, feminist politics are both taken into account and repudiated (McRobbie, 2004). Sexual harassment became a particular concern in postfeminist accounts in the 1990s. These concerns centered on the purported conflation between womanhood and victimhood in feminist writings as illustrated in Roiphe's (1993) book on unwanted sex. Roiphe agreed with feminist arguments insofar that laws were required to deal with extreme workplace abuses. However, Roiphe (1993) rejected feminist arguments that so called 'ordinary behaviors' such as 'leering and ogling, whistling, sexual innuendo and other suggestive or offensive or derogatory comments, humor and jokes about sex' should constitute sexual harassment and that women should be treated as victims (p. 100). To deal with 'ordinary' behaviors, Roiphe (1993) suggested that:

Instead of learning that men have no right to do these terrible things to us, we should be learning to deal with individuals with strength and confidence. If someone bothers us, we should be able to put him in his place without crying into our pillow or screaming for help and counselling ... we should at least be able to handle petty instances like ogling, leering and sexual innuendo at a personal level. (pp. 101–102)

In common with many postfeminist writers at the time (e.g., Wolf, 1993), Roiphe's (1993) argument was formed in reaction to feminist critiques of heterosexuality and, as such, her writing is devoid of critical engagement with the relationship between power, gender, and sexuality. While Roiphe recognized that 'petty' 'ordinary' instances need to be challenged, her objection is based on the feminist widening of the definition of what counts as sexual violence. Roiphe's solution to mundane sexual harassment is the promotion of women's agency and empowerment as the antidote to women's passivity and powerlessness in relation to men. Roiphe's individualizing solutions to sexual harassment are deeply problematic in how they offer a thoroughly depoliticized understanding of gender and power. Roiphe (1993) effectively displaced any need to consider the social and structural bases of sexual harassment (Lazard, 2020).

Feminists working in many disciplines, including psychology, either implicitly or explicitly drew on the notion of a continuum of sexual violence, mentioned earlier, to challenge postfeminist distinctions between 'ordinary' behavior and violence. This served to remove doubt over whether women should call their unwanted experiences 'sexual harassment' and challenge them using discrimination laws. As mentioned earlier, in psychology, women's naming of unwanted experiences as sexual harassment became referred to as 'labelling.' Women's labelling was widely treated in feminist psychology as a much needed political act that was necessary for collective

mobilization against sexual harassment. However, in the 1990s, feminist psychologists began documenting a pervasive pattern of women's reluctance to define their experiences as sexual harassment. The body of work exploring this pattern characterized women's refusal to use the term 'sexual harassment' as a practice of 'non-labelling.' The term non-labelling became a short-hand to describe women's unwillingness to describe their unwanted sexual and gendered experiences using feminist sense making.

One reason women were refusing to label their experiences as sexual harassment was their reluctance to identify as a victim (Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995; Magley et al., 1999; Schneider et al., 1997). This is perhaps not surprising given the prevalence of postfeminist thought at the time when much of this empirical work was carried out. Kitzinger and Thomas (1995) argued that women's rejection of both the term sexual harassment and the associated victim identity represented an attempt to refuse being positioned as passive and powerless. By non-labelling, Kitzinger and Thomas (1995) suggested, women were exercising the limited power that was available to them within contexts of patriarchal oppression. At the same time, women's reluctance to use the term was represented as a considerable barrier to further promotion of political organization and resistance against sexual harassment (Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995).

The relationship between women's agency and non-labelling was of deep concern to feminist psychologists. Within this body of literature, women were predominantly represented as not only reluctant but also confused and uncertain about how to define sexual harassment and in need of assistance to fully understand their experience of victimization. This was largely the focus of Thomas and Kitzinger's (1997) classic book on feminist psychological research on women's non-labelling. Women's uncertainty was theorized to be a consequence of patriarchal socialization in which they are subjected to continuous cultural messaging that prioritizes men's definitions of women's experiences (Cairns, 1997). While such research intended to set women's non-labelling in the context of the systematic discrimination and marginalization of women, the framing of non-labelling as the result of confusion and powerlessness served to reproduce women as victims (Herbert, 1997; Mott & Condor, 1997). As Brewis and Linstead (2000) argued, the construction of women as 'helpless' and 'confused' in sexual harassment scenarios 'implies a learned helplessness, an understood inability to prevent or even understand men's behavior toward them and an understood dependency on others' (p. 89). This, Brewis and Linstead (2000) argued, translates into women's understanding of themselves as unable to confront such behavior. Simultaneously, within the non-labelling literature there was a tendency to problematize women who refused to label as failing to enact resistance. Labelling and non-labelling became polarized as 'good' and 'bad' respectively. The entrenchment of this polarization is well-captured in the heading of part one of Thomas and Kitzinger's (1997) classic monograph—'refusing the label, declining to protest' (p. 19).

In analyzing these patterns around women's agency and passivity in the sexual harassment literature in the 1990s, Brewis and Linstead (2000) argued that discourses which construct women as individually responsible for stopping sexual harassment, and discourses of victimization which position women as powerless and dependent

are equally problematic because they can both serve to perpetuate the conditions for the reproduction of sexual harassment. This argument is resonant with Gavey's (2005) ground-breaking thesis on rape, which suggests that the positioning of women as helpless victims may contribute to the cultural scaffolding that enables sexual violence. Underpinning these cultural patterns is the persistence of the normative and rigid gender binary which position women's sexuality in narrow and limiting ways. Women's desires have historically either been absent, passive, and constrained—secondary to or in the service of men. Women's agency in sexual relationships to men has been largely limited to a gatekeeper role in which they consent or refuse sex. In contrast, men are positioned as sexual agents, actively seeking to fulfill their own sexual impulses. In conventional heterosexual relationships, persistence, pressure, and coercion of women by men to submit to sex have been normalized, setting the conditions which make sexual violence possible.

The acknowledgment of the gendered binary, in which women are sexually victimized by men, was central to the feminist political goal of reframing personal experiences of harassment as a public issue that required governance. The gains of feminist activism in this particular cultural milieu were predicated on establishing women as disproportionately victimized. The status of women as victims was important because victimhood allows recognition of particular experiences as social injustices (Burt & Estep, 1981). Any dilution to this argument could effectively undermine claims of gender inequality that had been hard fought for. In line with this, sexual harassment was generally theorized within the binary gendered dynamic of women victims and men perpetrators. Labelling was positioned as a means of rupturing women's passive and subordinated position through its association with feminist 'speak out' activism (e.g., Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995). What this also meant was that predominant strands of theorization became stuck in a loop in which rigid gender binaries were both problematized and effectively reproduced by positioning women as a monolithic category within rigid gendered frames of victimization. This is not to say that intersectional power dynamics were completely absent from this body of writing. Much work in the area explicitly recognized how, for example, sexuality and race and gender came together and shaped sexual harassment experiences (Epstein, 1997; Larkin, 1991; Thomas & Kitzinger, 1997). However, the monolithic categorization of women, which was necessary for getting sexual harassment on the social agenda and thus tended to be prioritized, ultimately curtailed any radical potential of intersectional theorization of labelling and the politics of gendered victimization.

Sexual Harassment from the 1990s to 2000s

A small body of work in the first decade or so of the 2000s noted that women's non-labelling of sexual harassment continued to be a significant issue (Adikaram, 2016; Lee, 2001). Alongside the continuation of patterns of non-labelling, the reporting

of sexual harassment also appeared to be in decline. Sexual harassment prevalence surveys are notoriously difficult to compare because of methodological differences in their design and application. However, the US Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), an independent agency concerned with the protection of federal employees against workplace abuses, aggregated their own sexual harassment survey data collected in 1994 and 2016 on 12 behaviors that were categorized on one of three dimensions of sexual harassment: Unwanted sexual attention, gender harassment, and sexual coercion. In 1994, MSPB found that 44.3% of female employees and 19.1% of male employees reported having experienced one or more of these behaviors. In 2016, those figures had dropped to 20.9% of female and 8.7% of male employees (Hayes et al., 2020).

Patterns around the non-labelling and reporting of sexual harassment were related to shifts in how the topic was treated and understood in both popular and academic arenas. Specifically, there appeared to be a gradual shift around sexual harassment from being a public preoccupation in the 1990s to a reduction of its visibility as a feminist issue in the 2000s (Lazard, 2020). This is not to say that sexual harassment was no longer a topic of research in academic study. However, the issue, particularly in the 2010s, became subsumed under other topics, particularly bullying (Karami et al., 2021). Coy and Gardner (2012) argued that this could be seen in a change of language in school policy guidance in England which moved from sexual harassment as sexist/sexual bullying in 2007 and 2009 to a document in 2011 where sexism was not mentioned, and issues of gender equality were less explicit. Coy and Gardner (2012) also note that during the 2000s, social science research around the issue of sexual harassment seldom linked the phenomenon to the continuum of violence against women and girls.

A decline in visibility of sexual harassment as a feminist issue seems to have co-occurred with a steady disengagement with political vocabularies around sexism in the 2000s. As feminist scholars have noted, the term sexism was rarely used in feminist writings post 1990s (e.g., Ahmed, 2015; Gill, 2011). Decreases in explicit engagement with both sexism and sexual harassment at this time appear to be interwoven because they have long been conceptually joined in feminist theorizations and activism. This is captured in Wright et al.'s (1990) claim that 'sexual harassment is not about sex, it's about sexism' (p. xxv). Gill (2011) argued that the relative disappearance of the word sexism in the 2000s was related to the ways in which sexism had begun to change form in the 1990s. For example, Gill's (1993) research had found new, subtle, and dynamic forms of sexist practice in interviews with radio producers on the lack of female broadcasters.

In Gill's (1993) study, sexism was not explicitly linked with a female lack of ability in comparison to male workers. Instead, gender inequality was justified in accounts which simultaneously claimed admiration of women workers. For example, justifications for not hiring women included appeals to circumstances such as the lack of women applicants. Gill (2011) argued that disengagement with political vocabularies around sexism, (and as I have argued elsewhere, sexual harassment) which intensified during the 2000s, coupled with the emergence of new and subtle

sexist practices, can be linked to the rise in postfeminist discourses around women's empowerment and (supposedly achieved) equality (see also Lazard, 2020).

Postfeminism in the 2000s became interwoven with broader cultural developments including what has been termed as the sexualization of culture. The sexualization of culture refers to the ways in which many contemporary cultures, particularly in the global north, have over the last twenty years been increasingly suffused and saturated with the sexual. This has become reflected in, for example, shifts to permissive sexual perspectives and increased interest and visibility in sexual identities, values, and practices (see, for example, Attwood, 2006). The feminine body in particular has been 'supersexualised' within mainstream culture (Gill, 2008; Whitehead & Kurz, 2009). The sexualization and objectification of women have been identified as a significant contributors to sexual violence through the ways in which these processes position women as passive bodies (Paasonen et al., 2020). However, more recent motifs around women's sexualization move away from feminine sexuality as the passive object of male gaze to that which is agentic and playful. Clothes, images, and practices that had been confined to the sex industry became mainstreamed as *Porno Chic* (e.g., Harvey & Gill, 2011). The increased visibility of the 'sexy' feminine body, undoubtedly facilitated by image sharing on social and digital media, became interwoven with broader notions of women as empowered sexual subjects (Dobson, 2015). Gill and Scharff (2011) articulate these patterns around femininity using the notion of postfeminist sensibility mentioned earlier, which includes:

the notion that femininity is increasingly figured as a bodily property; a shift from objectification to subjectification in the ways that (some) women are represented; an emphasis on self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of the 'make-over paradigm'; a resurgence of ideas of natural sexual difference; the marked 'resexualisation' of women's bodies; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference. (p. 4)

Postfeminism shares commonalities with neoliberal ideas, which predominate in many western industrialized societies that promote individual responsibility as the bedrock of personal achievement and growth. Neoliberalism has been theorized as a political and economic rationality which champions free markets, privatization, and competition. It has also been linked to a form of governance (Senellart et al., 2008) in which individuals are conceptualized as autonomous entrepreneurs who are free and responsible for making choices to improve themselves and transform their lives (Gill & Scharff, 2011; Rose, 1999). The freely choosing and responsible neoliberal subject firmly resembles postfeminist ideals of self-empowerment, entrepreneurialship, and self-transformation. As Negra and Tasker (2013) point out 'postfeminism proclaims for gender what neoliberalism advocates in a broader sense: both assert that the individual bears ultimate responsibility for their social status' (p. 348).

The expansion of postfeminist and neoliberal ideas introduced further complexities for labelling and negotiating sexual harassment and violence. Bay Cheng (2015) argued that neoliberal sexual agency for women is characterized as volitional, self-controlled, and responsible decision-making to have sex. According to the neoliberal logic, when women fail to demonstrate such agency, they leave themselves open to becoming victims—an identity, as mentioned earlier, associated with passivity and

powerlessness. As Bay Cheng (2015) suggested, agents and victims are positioned as diametrically opposed, with victims treated as lacking the ability to protect themselves. This complex terrain that women are required to navigate can be seen in Burkett and Hamilton's (2012) study of heterosexual women's experiences of pressured sex. In this study, while women positioned themselves as empowered sexual subjects who can freely choose to consent, they also described how their ability to consent to sex was constrained by heteronormative discourses of sexual compliance. Acquiescence to unwanted sex was constituted as a personal choice to please their partners rather than victimization. Burkett and Hamilton (2012) argued that compulsory postfeminist sexual agency negated the negotiation of consent because 'women can no longer express distress if men and women are now equal' (p. 828).

Indeed, empirical work in the 2000s on sexual violence more broadly reported women's rejection of victim identity by women. This rejection was often coupled with an emphasis on women's empowered choices which highlighted the need to rise above sexual harassment and violence (Phipps, 2014; Stringer, 2014). This is well-illustrated in Baker's (2010) study of women who had experienced sexual violence in contexts of social disadvantage, including racism, poverty, and homelessness. Baker (2010) found that psychological practices used by women to talk about their experiences were marked by their individual volition to improve their lives and to use their personal hardships as an opportunity to develop personal strength. These psychological practices were used to disclaim victim identities for themselves, but more than this, volitional talk facilitated a denial of both the social structures underpinning intersectional disadvantages and compassion for those impacted by these.

Making Sense of #MeToo

Against the backdrop of the 1990s and early 2000s, it is perhaps not surprising that #MeToo has been referenced as a watershed moment. On the face of it, we seem to have witnessed a turn from widespread reluctance to acknowledge sexual harassment to an extensive labelling of it on a scale unimaginable in earlier decades. The digital #MeToo movement began with actress Alyssa Milano's tweet, inviting the online community to write 'Me Too' as a status because:

if all the women who had been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem. (@AlyssaMilano, 15 October, 2017)

The phrase 'Me Too' has its roots in Tarana Burke's long-standing activism to counter shame and build empathetic solidarity between African American survivors of sexual violence (Lazard, 2020). In the wake of privileged celebrity women's calling out of Weinstein, Milano's repurposing of Burke's phrase 'Me Too' as a hashtag went viral. #MeToo as speak out activism resembles, in many ways, feminist psychological constructions of labelling sexual harassment as agentic resistance discussed earlier.

While the hashtag arose out of celebrity women's experiences of sexual harassment in the United States, its global spread appeared related to #MeToo's appeal as an inclusive digital movement in which frequently marginalized experiences of sexual victimization were voiced publicly (Gill & Orgad, 2018). That said, #MeToo has also been widely criticized because white, middle class, professional western women's experiences were the most visible, heard, and believed, particularly early on in the movement (Lazard, 2020). Loney-Howes (2019) argued that othered women including, but not limited to:

women of color, woman with disabilities, migrant women, women on temporary visas, working class women, refugee women, elderly women and also the LGBTQ community were, however unwittingly, left out of, excluded from or marginalized from the #MeToo movement. Their experiences of violence ...remain far too complex for popular media outlets, social and legal institutions and crucially, mainstream feminism to comprehend. (p. 30)

Critiques of #MeToo as superficially inclusive but reflective of white western feminism resemble long-standing debates around how diverse strands of feminism, reflecting differing intersectionally shaped concerns, can together mobilize for change (Capdevila et al., 2006). Alongside the recognition of intersectional inequalities at play in the #MeToo speak out, I would like to highlight another key moment around speaking rights. I refer to Journalist Benjamin Law's #HowIWillChange which he tweeted in response to Milano, writing:

Guys, it's our turn. After yesterday's endless #MeToo stories of women being abused, assaulted and harassed, today we say #HowIWillChange. (@mrbenjaminlaw October 16 2017)

Law's hashtag activism was intended to bring men and boys into the conversation by asking them to reflect on how they contribute to sustaining a culture supportive of sexual violence. Specifically, Law's tweet asked men to speak as (potential) perpetrators of sexual harassment or as a group that in some way enable women's victimization (PettyJohn et al., 2019). Milano and Law's tweets rest on the rigid heterosexual gender binary discussed earlier in which men are monolithically positioned as sexually agentic and women as sexually passive. Critical engagements with gender binarized explanations of sexual harassment and violence are, as I have argued, a thorny issue because of the risk of undermining the valid claim that women are disproportionately sexually victimized by men. However, as Gavey (2018), has argued.

research that only looks for men's sexual aggression and women's sexual victimisations...reifies understandings of women's sexuality as passive, submissive and vulnerable, and men's as active, aggressive and dangerous. In doing so it arguably risks contributing to discourses/knowledges that actually perpetuate the very dynamic of rigidly gendered heterosex that arguably supports the rape and sexual coercion of women. (p. 184)

The ways in which #MeToo and #HowIWillChange asked women and men to engage with the events of 2017 could be seen to have contributed to an intensification of the gendered dynamic highlighted by Gavey (2005, 2018). For example, during

the writing of this chapter, I was told about a poster that had been hung in men's (but not women's) toilets in nightclubs in London. The poster supplied by the City of Westminster in conjunction with the Metropolitan police reads:

“A Smack on the Bum?”
 It is not a Joke
 It is not flirting
 It is Sexual Assault

As I have argued elsewhere, this anti-sexual harassment poster is resonant with a similar campaign #AskforAngela in which posters were displayed in women's toilets in pubs and nightclubs. These posters outlined a means for women to discreetly ask staff for help by using the codeword ‘Angela’ if they experienced unwanted sexual attention in these settings. The gendered positionings of perpetrators and victims in these poster campaigns are made clear by the intended audiences for both (Lazard, 2020).

While the anti-sexual harassment poster aimed at men offers sharp relief to the predominant attribution of sexual violence risk management to women (Anderson & Doherty, 2008), it nevertheless reifies women as always already the true victims of sexual harassment by men. Women's bodies as a site of vulnerability and victimization sit in tension with the postfeminist female sexual subject that is empowered, agentic, and desiring. That women continue to be positioned as the ‘true’ victims of sexual harassment reveal the limits of women's empowerment and autonomy in this postfeminist era. Postfeminism has required women to be active, ‘freely choosing’, sexual subjects, but without reworking dominant discourses around heterosexuality in which women are required to be desirable for and desired by men. As Frazier (2021) argues, acknowledging the effects of patriarchy, sexual harassment, and violence is discursively impossible for women who align successfully to the postfeminist ideal. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that old and rigid gender binaries of victim-perpetrator dynamics are drawn on as a form of resistance to sexual harassment which can be seen in the #HowIWillChange/#MeToo juxtaposition and the aforementioned anti-sexual harassment poster campaigns.

The limits of what postfeminist empowerment offers women were particularly visible in the reporting of the case of Aziz Ansari which was based on an interview with a woman referred to as ‘Grace’, published by babe.net. Grace's interview describes persistent and pressurized attempts by Ansari to initiate sex with her during a date. The Ansari case moved public #MeToo discussions from workplace sexual harassment to uneven gendered power in heterosexual dating and, in doing so, attracted a considerable amount of controversy. Critiques of Grace focused on her failure to enact controlled empowered sexual agency because she had not clearly communicated non-consent (Kettrey et al., 2021). The absence of a firm ‘no’ from Grace was constituted as Grace's personal failure because women are ‘free’ to state their wishes and desires in the postfeminist era (Worthington, 2020). The problem with Grace, according to much of the popular press, was that she appeared to be

'up for it' by going home with Ansari but then transgressed the boundaries of post-feminist sexual agency by not going through with it. It is important to acknowledge that some newspaper articles were supportive of Grace. However, as Patil and Puri (2021) argue, this support was shaped by racial inequalities. While the article did not explicitly engage with race and assumed a color-blind position, Ansari's position as a South Asian American man in the Babe article was clearly visible through his celebrity. Grace on the other hand was racially unmarked and presumed white. As researchers have noted, while the description of Ansari's persistence is undoubtedly problematic, Grace's speaking rights were legitimized through the ways in which white women's pain is intelligible, particularly when this violation is perpetrated by men of color (Patil & Puri, 2021). The case also reflects concerns about unequal speaking rights for those who have been sexually harassed and who are located within interlocking systems of racism and sexism.

The link between #MeToo and systemic change has also been questioned. Gill and Orgad (2018) argued that #MeToo prompted charitable legal support for women, greater visibility of women in powerful workplace positions, and calls for better workplace policies. However, Gill and Orgad (2018) also point out that these changes are in keeping with a postfeminist female empowerment and not disruptive to capitalism, neoliberalism, or patriarchy. Within public discussion of #MeToo, the political is often reduced to the personal, particularly through how individual perpetrators are framed as deviant, psychologically abnormal, or monstrous (Lazard, 2020). The systems that enable sexual harassment are concealed by this individualized focus. An example of this can be seen in the highly individualized treatment of Weinstein in some reporting which had a distinctly postfeminist flavor. Specifically, Weinstein was described by his lawyer as 'an old dinosaur learning new ways'—a comment following on from a description of Weinstein seeking advice on gendered power dynamics in the workplace a year before the New York Times exposé (Kantor & Twohey, 2017). This particular strand of argument consigns sexual harassment and misogyny to the past and presumes we are now in new, enlightened, and gender equitable times where sexual harassment is rare. This postfeminist logic would seem to run counter to the subsequent snowballing of the #MeToo campaign. That a 'bad apple' discourse continues to frame much of the reporting would seem to indicate the strength and persistence of neoliberalism and postfeminism as dominant frames for making sense of sexual harassment (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Lazard, 2020).

"Bad apple" discourses of sexual harassment have been increasingly inscribed in culture and codified in law. This is reflected in the Westminster anti-sexual harassment poster and in law reform in some countries. Notable is the anti-street harassment law passed in France in September 2018 which had reportedly resulted in 450 fines between its introduction and April 2019 (Willsher, 2019). Loney-Howes (2019) questions, however, whether this reflects a feminist agenda or that of a neo-liberal state which is effectively reformulating the impacts of #MeToo to enact punitive punishments of individuals and, in doing so, effectively concealing the conditions (including its own role in) underpinning contemporary sexual harassment. What is also concealed by this approach is how marginalized and disadvantaged groups have been disproportionately targeted using such punitive approaches to law and order

(Lazard, 2020). An attention to the intersectionally shaped cultural conditions of sexual harassment and violence may buffer against problematic state appropriation of feminist agendas of resistance which further enact discriminations in the name of women's rights.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a brief history of particular cultural developments that have shaped how the phenomenon of labelling and speaking out against sexual harassment has been understood in psychology from the mid-1970s to the digital #MeToo movement of 2017 and beyond. I have focused on how postfeminism and neoliberalism have become important frames for understanding gender politics, which have (variably over the years) muted people's ability to speak out against sexual harassment or, more recently, shaped who is heard and legitimized as victim. I have argued that these cultural developments have reinforced rather than destabilized the persistence of the gender binary in which women and men are positioned as both monothetic categories and as victims/perpetrators respectively. In psychology, the growth in attention to intersectional power dynamics at play in experiences of sexual harassment is promising for moving beyond monothetic categorizations of women as victims and men as perpetrators. However, this feminist project will require consideration of wider discourses of postfeminism and neoliberalism to resist the misappropriation of feminist goals.

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Power, Gender, and Intimate Partner Abuse: Empowerment, Patriarchy, and Discourse



H. Lorraine Radtke, Mandy Morgan, and Ann Rogerson

Intimate partner abuse perpetrated against women is a major societal concern globally, and a critical site for research for more than four decades. What is now commonly referred to as the second wave of feminism has produced theories, policies, and social services for victims and perpetrators. How power and, in particular, gendered power relations are implicated has been a central concern from the very beginning, although as we will point out, some theoretical approaches serve to minimize their significance.

Before elaborating on the topic of this chapter, we situate ourselves within the field of partner abuse and the sectors within which we have worked as this experience serves as the grounding for our critical analysis on power relations. Mandy and Ann are members of the Domestic Violence Intervention and Services Research Program which involves a team with over 25 years' experience of collaborating with service and intervention providers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The team has worked with providers of refuges services, stopping violence programs, specialist courts, and community initiatives for innovative service provision on research projects with women and men who are clients, lawyers, police officers, judges, doctors, and service providers (e.g., Morgan & Coombes, 2016; Morgan & Mattson, 2018; Rogerson et al., 2020). Lorraine Radtke was part of a large, multi-disciplinary research team that conducted a longitudinal study of women who had experienced partner abuse and lived in the Prairie Provinces of Canada (the Healing Journey project). This project was a collaboration between academic researchers and community partners, mainly women's shelters or umbrella organizations representing women's shelters.

H. L. Radtke (✉)

Department of Psychology, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada

e-mail: radtke@ucalgary.ca

M. Morgan · A. Rogerson

School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

e-mail: C.A.Morgan@massey.ac.nz

A. Rogerson

e-mail: A.L.Rogerson@massey.ac.nz

The focus of the study included the women's general well-being, service utilization, physical and mental health, and mothering experiences (e.g., Tutty et al., 2020, 2021, 2023). Thus, our concerns with power are based on our interactions with women who have been abused, those who work on the front lines, and other researchers, as well as the enormous research literature.

Although we are well aware that partner abuse is not limited to abuse perpetrated by men against women, a focus on the specific sex/gender intimate partner relationship with men perpetrators and women victims is justified based on the incidence and severity of such abuse, both historically and currently, and evidence that the specific gender configuration of the relationship matters in terms of the power relations implicated in the abuse (e.g., Roebuck et al., 2023; Stam et al., 2016). In this brief chapter, we could not do justice to all the possible gendered relationships in our current, gender-fluid world and arguably more research and analysis is required to do so. However, the complex ways in which gendered masculine and feminine practices may be implicated in lesbian relationships (e.g., Sanger & Lynch, 2018) or how men's sexual violence toward other men is shrouded in myths that reproduce gendered power relationships (e.g., Turchik & Edwards, 2012) emphasize the importance of broad understandings of gender that account for the central importance of dominant heteronormative social norms. Hence, we concentrate on the crucial, on-going feminist project of understanding partner abuse as a widespread form of violence against women.

The field of partner abuse primarily draws on three broad conceptions of power. Notably however, their uptake has not always occurred in a mutually exclusive fashion, which is understandable given that power could be deemed a family resemblance concept, with multiple meanings that focus on various aspects of power, albeit within different theoretical frameworks (e.g., Haugaard, 2010). In order to highlight what each conception brings to the analysis of the problem of heteronormative partner abuse, we will focus on their distinctiveness. The first construes power as the property of individuals and locates power in people's motivations and actions (e.g., McClelland, 1975). Powerful people are those with the capability and sufficient personal resources to dominate others. The second construes power as structural and locates it in social hierarchies and institutions (e.g., Apfelbaum, 1979). This draws our attention to the myriad forms of inequality in societies, including gender, race, class, age, and so on (e.g., Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). The third draws on postmodern theorizations of power and emphasizes power as a force that is distributed and circulates *through* people, whose actions serve to produce its effects (e.g., Foucault, 1977). This theorization of power draws our attention to discourse and taken-for-granted knowledge about everyday life.

In the following sections, we explain how each of these conceptualizations of power influence the field of partner abuse, with practical examples of how they shape interventions aimed at ending partner abuse and restoring the dignity and well-being of those affected by intimate abuses. Finally, we turn our attention to the way in which postmodern concepts of power are particularly useful for understanding how power is implicated in the field of partner abuse research and the conceptualization of gender which directly impacts divisive debates on the gendering of partner abuse.

Individual Power and Women's Empowerment

Of the three broad conceptualizations of power we have briefly introduced, the oldest within the field of partner abuse and the discipline of psychology is the concept of power as a property of individuals. Prioritizing an individual's capacity to hold and exercise power over others according to their personal characteristics and resources involves individualizing the conditions that enable one person to dominate, control, and abuse another. Examples of well-known psychological theories of individual power include McClelland's (1975) power motive and French and Raven's (1959) bases of social power. Conceiving of power as *within* a dominant partner who controls a more subordinate partner by abusing them creates an understanding of partner abuse as a dual deficit in individuals. The partner who abuses is understood through concepts such as instrumental aggression, morbid jealousy, poor impulse control, or mismanaged anger. Power then is exercised by disordered men who suffer deficits of personality or relationship skills which can be redressed by treatment. Some researchers have developed typologies that classify men according to quality and quantity of disorder (e.g., Holtzworth-Monroe & Stuart, 1994; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Likewise, those who are victimized by an intimate partner are understood as suffering psychological deficits. The earliest psychological explanations of victimization included psychopathological constructs, like masochism, which assumed that women who were victimized suffered willingly to satisfy unconscious desires to be harmed (O'Neill, 1998). By this account, a victimized woman exercised her individually located power by choosing, and often provoking, violence. Later concepts such as 'battered woman syndrome' and the related notion of 'learned helplessness' (Walker, 1977) replaced earlier psychopathological constructs but also located power within the individual woman. In this case, a woman's power is damaged by partner abuse, which results in a loss of capacity and resources for self-determination. This led to interventions focused on restoring a woman's power, or in other words, empowerment.

The focus on individuals is unsurprising given psychology's historical commitment to the individual as the core object of disciplinary inquiry (e.g., Sampson, 1977). Nonetheless, the isolation of the individual from their social, historical, and cultural conditions has been widely critiqued for well over half a century, and feminist contributions to understanding how individuals are situated within wider social relations of power have played a significant part in the development of more socially conscious theories of power (e.g., Young, 1990). Among these contributions are early theorizations of patriarchy as a social system within which men are dominant and women subordinated to them by traditions that prohibit women's authority to make autonomous decisions about their own lives (Beechey, 1979). In the Anglo-American and European traditions from which psychology emerged, an exemplary case of patriarchy was enshrined in British coverture law, which stipulated that a married woman did not have a separate legal existence from her husband. Women were passed from fathers to husbands as burdens of responsibility, at best capable of being suitable housewives, mothers, and helpmates. Most forms of men's authority over women,

including their rights to their wives' wealth or earnings, divorce, and custody of children, were still guaranteed by common law until at least the second half of the Nineteenth Century. A married woman was a dependent, like a child or a slave. Husbands' rights to sex whenever they chose, regardless of their wife's consent, continued in British, Canadian, and New Zealand law until late in the Twentieth Century (specifically, 1992, 1983, and 1985, respectively). The removal of marital rape exemptions from rape law was substantially influenced by the work of feminist advocates who brought a structural theory of patriarchal power to the legislative authorities of democratic nation-states with European colonial histories (see Ryan, 1995).

Despite the influence of a structural concept of power in the field of partner abuse, individualistic conceptualizations of power continue to dominate, even when those approaches are informed by feminist principles of social justice (see Fine, 1989, for a critique of individualistic academic research on violence against women). There are many potential examples of psychology's individualistic interventions informed by theorizing power as a capacity, damaged by intimate abuse. For instance, Family Courts in Aotearoa/New Zealand engage psychologists to assess cases where children are affected by parental 'disputes' involving practices researchers have identified as 'paper abuse,' a form of partner abuse involving legal interventions aimed at controlling women's autonomous decision-making post-separation (e.g., Elizabeth, 2015). Further, concepts of power as an individual capacity to decide a course of action underlie some of the practices within interventions to stop men's perpetration of partner abuse, especially those which empower men to control their temper and identify cycles of built up frustration that lead to outbursts of abuse or violence, often alongside critical examinations of gendered role expectations in men's use of coercive control (for further discussion, see Morgan & O'Neill, 2001; Robertson, 1999).

Given our sector experience, the example we have chosen is a relatively recent practice of measuring empowerment through the Empowerment Star, a means of envisioning the outcome of interventions for women who have been victimized by intimate partners. It recognizes social injustices against women and gathers evidence of the effectiveness of interventions in improving women's capacity for self-determination and safety from abuse. In the context of the intervention sector, such evidence potentially meets the accountability requirements of funders and identifies deficiencies in the intervention that require improvement.

Outcome STARS

The Empowerment Star, described by the developers as a 'tool,' focuses on individual responsibility and measured outcomes with the aim of achieving change for victims of 'domestic abuse' and evaluating the services designed to assist them on this journey (www.outcomesstar.org.uk). The underlying model centers on empowering women for rebuilding their lives post-abuse and sits within a constellation of Stars developed

for the social service industry by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd. The original star developed by this group addressed homelessness, but there are now stars for intervening in autism and ADHD, mental health and harmful gambling, among others. According to the website, the stars are now used by many agencies in the UK and in a number of international contexts, and the various stars have been developed in collaboration with service users and providers. Each star has a unique set of 10-point scales that cover the key outcome areas to be addressed in moving toward the desired endpoint (in the case of the Empowerment Star, this is independence and choice). Where the individual falls on each scale is assumed to reflect the individual's location on their journey. In the case of the Empowerment Star, the starting point for each key area is 'not being ready for help' and the end point is 'the ability to maintain life without specialist support.' In short, there is an underlying, generalized model of how to facilitate and evaluate individual change that is then adapted for a specific social service sector. In the case of the Empowerment Star, it is noted that women are not responsible for their partners' abuse and that there may be circumstances beyond the individual woman's control. In keeping with the general model, service users are viewed as having agency, knowledge, and expertise and the scale ratings are generated by the service user in dialogue with the case worker. Among the key areas to be addressed on the journey to independence and choice are safety, legal issues, and empowerment and self-esteem.

Empowerment nonetheless has a clear individualized meaning:

... in order for change to take place in people's lives, service providers need to engage people in the motivation, understanding, beliefs and skills that are needed for them to create that change themselves. While practical changes in a person's circumstances, such as new accommodation, may be important, by themselves they are not enough to bring lasting change. Change within the person is a key active ingredient and it is therefore the relationship of the individual to the challenges they face that is the primary focus in most versions of the Outcomes Star. This value recognizes societal or other external factors beyond people's control, while empowering them to change the things they can. (Burns & MacKeith, 2017, pp. 5–6)

While this generic definition bears some similarity to understandings of empowerment in the field of partner abuse, it also has some clear differences. Kasturirangan (2008), for example, highlighted how families and communities are potentially part of the empowerment process, and like others, emphasized women's relationships within their social context (e.g., Cattaneo & Goodman, 2015; Czerny & Lassiter, 2016).

An early critique of the Empowerment Star argued that in positioning women as able to achieve a life free of abuse through attending to the Star's key areas, knowledge garnered through many years of feminist family violence work is being ignored (Webb, 2012). Specifically, women's freedoms are restricted in many ways, an understanding that informs many of the social services in the field of partner abuse (Webb, 2012). In short, it is problematic to focus on measuring individualized power while failing to assess the ongoing effects of patriarchy, gender inequities, multiple marginalization, on-going violence from estranged partners, family and community influences, cultural understandings, and the contextual lived effects of these specific

relationships. One example of a barrier is the preference of family courts for shared custody of children, which often affords an opportunity for the ex-partner/father to continue a pattern of abuse toward the mother. In a response to these concerns, MacKeith and Burns (2013) noted that the stars are a work in progress, and they rework them as needed. While recognizing the need for social change, they nonetheless argued that for service providers working with individual women, the goal of helping the women achieve the best possible life under the circumstances was still worthwhile. This apolitical defense grounded in an individualistic perspective construes the community activism that goes on coincidental with aiding individual women as independent of the empowerment process. Many services, especially women's shelters that were initially created by courageous women who opened their homes to those fleeing abuse and continue to be informed by feminist analysis and practice, and others who have been guided by concerns with structural power as well as individual power, such as the Duluth Model to be discussed next, would beg to differ.

While the Outcome Stars may provide quick feedback to organizations, validating outcomes for continued funding and identifying areas needing changes, by construing power as lacking in victims of partner abuse and the problem that needs fixing, the approach does not question the institutional (e.g., service providers, funding bodies) and corporate power (e.g., the company that develops and sells the stars) that constrains and measures both the clients' deficits and the programs' outcomes. Sensitivity to this requires consideration of structural power in developing programs aimed at empowering women who have experienced partner abuse.

Structural Power and Women's Empowerment

Conceptualizing power as situated within structures, namely, institutions and social hierarchies, informed early feminist theorizing on patriarchy as well as efforts to change patriarchal social relations by ensuring women's legal, economic, and social rights to self-determination (Beechey, 1979). Institutionalized power includes the formal systems of law and government as well as social institutions like marriage, norms such as heterosexual coupledness or sexual monogamy, and everyday practices like childrearing or housework. It enables systematic discrimination against particular people and institutes social hierarchies in which some are resourced, capable, and legitimately authorized to dominate others (Apfelbaum, 1979, 1999). Feminist analyses of the Twenty-First Century conceptualize the historical, systematic subordination of women to men in Anglo-European cultures, patriarchy, as a system in which discrimination against women intersects with discrimination based on socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity, citizenship, religion, sexuality, age, and so on (e.g., Cole, 2009; Grabe et al., 2015).

The sub-disciplinary field of community psychology offers an exemplary case of incorporating structural power into theory and analysis by often locating individuals within an ecological model, with familial, social, economic, and political environments seen as affecting how experiences of oppression or liberation impede

or allow them to exercise power within their own lives. Power is still a resourced capability of individuals, though it is unevenly distributed through social structures and institutions that are inequitable and unjust. A dual approach requiring both structural and personal change to rectify the uneven distribution of power and the motives and actions of those who use violence to maintain power over their intimate partners underlies interventions to prevent partner violence that are based on the Duluth Model (Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 2017).

The Duluth Model

The Duluth approach to coordinated, community-based interventions locates power relations and protection of women and children as central and has been prominent in shaping services related to partner abuse and the work of those who lobby and campaign for ending violence against women (see for example, Shepard & Pence, 1999). It began in the early 1980s through the efforts of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, with an emphasis on holding perpetrators accountable and keeping victims safe (see the website for details, www.theduluthmodel.org). Importantly, it called for shared policies and procedures across agencies, both criminal and civil. In contrast to the Empowerment Star approach, the Duluth model asserts that the community is responsible for women's safety while recognizing that policies and procedures must be developed based on the women's experiences. It also incorporates the goal of changing men by offering non-violence programs for men.

The Duluth model is well recognized for the 'power and control' wheel that specifies the tactics commonly used against women in intimately violent relationships (i.e., using coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, economic abuse, isolation, male privilege, children, and minimizing, denying, and blaming). The wheel reflects a general concern with asymmetrical interpersonal power relations in which the agency of victims is constrained by the abusive and violent actions of an intimate other and mirrors the asymmetrical power relations between women and men in society. Power then is theorized as a capacity for autonomous choice that may be exercised to control another's choices and repress their capacity to choose through violence and threats of violence. Gendered power relations in society at large determine who is the victim and who is the perpetrator. As a corollary, restoring a woman's capacity for autonomous choice by improving her safety and supporting her to set her own goals for her life has been commonly understood to be empowerment (e.g., Kasturirangan, 2008; Morgan & Coombes, 2013). Relatedly, the Duluth Model's proponents conceptualize their programs as entailing education to promote liberation, a term that highlights a woman's release from oppressive circumstances to living conditions that afford greater freedom.

The emphasis on collaborative, coordinated responses to partner violence suggests a strong investment in systems advocacy to change the way communities and the criminal justice system respond to partner violence, victims, and perpetrators. Systems advocacy implies recognition of structural violence in the societal systems that

discriminate against women. Various criminal justice systems have long been understood as discriminatory against women as well as peoples of color and colonized indigenous peoples. Power here is the capacity for social structures to establish and maintain hierarchies in which some types of people have lower economic and social status, fewer rights, and less capacity for autonomous choice than others.

The dual focus of the Duluth model on power and control within heterosexual relationships and discriminatory, ineffective systems of intervention is consistent with the emancipatory focus frequently associated with the second wave feminist movement. Since the early days of the model, however, recognition of the diversity among women and men has grown along with the need to consider the multiple intersections that shape women's and men's subjectivity and lived experience: race, culture, class, socio-economic status, age, ability, gender, sexuality, and so on (Anderson, 2005; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Crenshaw, 1991). Multiple power and control wheels have been created that include multiple sites of inequity and provide increasingly refined distinctions in tactics of control. Such complexity may at some point prove unwieldy, however. A more pressing challenge to the Duluth Model comes from the voices claiming gender symmetry in the perpetration of physical assault against an intimate partner, that is, that women and men are more or less equally inclined to be violent toward an intimate partner. We deal specifically with the gender symmetry debate in a later section.

For now, we turn to the third conceptualization of power that stems from an entirely different set of assumptions about knowledge. It offers a critical stance on partner abuse as a complex social problem that includes questions about how the language we use to articulate the problem is connected to responses to the problem as well as imagined solutions.

A Foucauldian Approach to Power

A Foucauldian approach also allows for a gendered power analysis and, therefore, is consonant with the programs of the Duluth model and the earlier battered women's movement. However, for Foucault, power is neither a property of individuals nor structural, but a process of enabling and constraining actions according to the ways in which categories and concepts are constructed. For example, the categories of 'women' and 'men' enable and constrain those who are assigned to 'female' and 'male' sex categories as well as those who resist their assignment or move among categories flexibly. Traditionally, psychology and western knowledge systems treated 'women' and 'men' as self-evident, homogeneous categories that were equivalent to gender. Until very recently, gender measured as assigned sex category was common in psychology. While recent categories of gender have been 'expanded,' sometimes to include 'other' or sometimes more clearly non-binary possibilities, their measurement continues to be constructed in relation to social norms of gender, sex, and sexualities. Foucauldian theories have been engaged to understand how predominantly white, middle class, male, heterosexual perspectives

(Connell, 2002; Richardson, 1996) shape how men and women in different social and cultural positions experience sexuality (Barter, 2006). Such analysis has proven useful for theorizing structures and practices of social power relations over several decades of feminist research that engaged with Foucauldian discourse analysis to critique and disrupt heteronormativity (e.g., Bartky, 1997; Gavey, 2018; Hollway, 1984; Ramazanoglu, 1993).

Foucault's theories of discourse, power, and knowledge have offered opportunities for reflexively engaging with how social power relations and knowledge are implicated in responses to complex social problems like partner abuse. Conceptualizing discourses as coherent sets of statements that are active both in constructing the objects of which they speak and in positioning subjects—those who speak or are spoken about—leads to the recognition that discourses form ways of understanding and interpreting categories like 'victim' or 'perpetrator' and how each is related to institutions like the criminal justice system or heterosexual marriage. Further, discourses of 'partner violence' construct distinctions between physical and psychological assault and minor and serious assaults. Importantly, discourses also position subjects, offering rights, stipulating duties, and compelling obligations (Berns, 2001). As objects of discourses that speak about 'battered women,' victims may be constituted as lacking choices and needing empowerment. This construction offers women who have been victimized a position as powerless and subjugated, while a corresponding position of criminal or offender is available to her partner. The shifts in the definition of 'interpersonal violence' that are discussed by McHugh et al. (2005) illustrate how discourses construct different 'versions' of phenomena, a pluralism of contemporary knowledge of domestic violence that is consistent with postmodern discourse.

The very terminology employed to define and describe the problem of partner abuse has been debated precisely because it is so closely associated with how one conceives of power as part of the problem. Even our use of the term 'partner abuse' is problematic, because it assumes that intimate relationships are partnerships, that is, affiliative, collaborative, and companionable. It also elides the gendering of intimacy, which itself is fraught with the difficulties of including anybody whose gendered intimate practices resist heteronormative assumptions. Furthermore, it obscures the scope of intimate abuse and the complexities of love and fear, pain and hope that are well understood by activists, advocates, and feminist researchers. We engage the term in this chapter because of its wide usage in contemporary times and the scope of abuses it includes, which extend beyond physical violence as the only, or even most serious, concern.

Discourses also formulate institutionalized rules: they specify how knowledge and truth can be recognized and claimed in specific organizations, societies, or communities (Parker, 1992, 2002). In relation to 'partner violence,' they are the groups of statements, admissible as knowledge, that enable violence to be identified, and the facts of its perpetration to be determined through evidence or measurement. For example, the claim of gender asymmetry is embedded in a particular way of conceptualizing science as objectivist and measurement as essential to the legitimacy of 'research findings.' This scientific discourse does not allow the same variations in

its object of inquiry as the postmodern discourse that tolerates variety and even ambiguity in the objects of its construction.

The idea that discourse circulates through objects, subjects, institutions, and social relationships disrupts the constructed duality of the individual and the social embedded in theories that construe power as the capacity for individual, autonomous choice. Instead, power is distributed and discourses produce more or less socially viable subject positions that implicate disciplinary power. Through discursive processes that produce the ways in which people can become particular kinds of persons and through self-surveillance, 'subjects' orient to normalizing discourses. In this way, individuals become accountable for scrutinizing their actions and ensuring that they are acceptable to others. Disciplinary power is productive: it enables and limits self-examination and human action as well as bringing about techniques for dividing people into categories such as women/men, victims/perpetrators, empowered/powerless.

Researchers adopting feminist postmodern approaches have analyzed the ways in which discourses that construct gender operate to produce particular versions of intimate abuse, and whose interests are (not) served by these constructions. For example, Burman et al. (2004) have shown how discourses of gender and race intersect to produce barriers to service provision for women from ethnic minorities who have experienced domestic violence. Also, Elizabeth et al. (2012) analyzed how custody law governs gender through discursive tactics that protect the interests of non-resident fathers to the detriment of custodial mothers and children in cases where there has been domestic violence before the couple separated. Further Harris et al. (2012) identified a tension between claims that gender equality has been achieved and therefore intimate abuse occurs for individual reasons and claims that intimate abuse occurs due to systemic inequities; notably, in both cases, men remain the privileged category of sex/gender relations. [Also see, e.g., DeShong, 2015; Langan et al., 2016; Towns & Adams, 2016].

Other feminist postmodernist researchers have analyzed narratives to consider how they construct gender, categorize persons, and organize relations of domination and subordination that systematically position women as 'less viable' subjects. Jarnkvist and Brännström (2019), for example, identified a master narrative of the 'ideal victim' in how women positioned themselves in their stories of victimization. Throughout different 'phases' of their personal stories, the women's relationship with the image of an ideal victim shifted, including their resistance to positioning as passive or self-blaming or minimizing the abuse their partner had perpetrated. The women also told counter-narratives which positioned them as caring mothers and enabled them to construct themselves through 'the strong discourse of motherhood in society' (Jarnkvist & Brännström, 2019, p. 22).

An example of how a more reflexive, discursive theorizing of gendered social power relations is implicated in the intervention sector could focus on women's counter-narratives, such as those discussed above, indigenous men's strategies of protection and care for their partners and children (King & Robertson, 2017) or the complications of continuing to conceptualize victims and perpetrators as separate categories (Stam et al., 2016). Our choice however is to discuss a call to 'change the

narrative' within the intervention sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand, which provides a specific and practice example of intervention informed through a postmodern theorizing of power.

Changing the Narrative

The dominant narrative of partner abuse has individualized power relations in partner violence, equating them to the control of men over women and attributing responsibility for acts of violence and resistance according to dominant social narratives. Early activism for women's and children's safety from violence in the home began with feminist community interventions, specifically the establishment of refuges/shelters in the early 1970s. After considerable systems advocacy for change, the New Zealand government introduced the Domestic Violence Act (1995) to "try and incorporate a power and control approach to defining domestic violence" (Cram et al., 2003, p. 3) by including forms of psychological and emotional abuse as well patterns of ongoing abuse. Although legal reforms which identify the pattern as coercive control took another 23 years to be realized in a revised Family Violence Act (2018), from the late 1980s the Government took an increasing role in funding and then leading coordinated responses to domestic violence based on the Duluth model. Community voices for changing intervention responses to domestic violence have been strong in the sector for decades, but lack of research amplifying sector voices in academic literature leads us to rely on Government publications to discuss calls for 'changing the narrative' within the sector.

Among proliferating New Zealand government-led responses to community advocacy since the early 2000s was the institution of a Family Violence Death Review Committee (FVDRC). The first published report appeared in 2010 and discussed how the Committee would gather and provide evidence and analysis of culpable deaths, the most serious outcomes of Aotearoa New Zealand's "unacceptably high rates of family violence" (FVDRC, 2010, p. 7). In subsequent reports, they drew on voices from the intervention sector and cultural expertise to identify issues, raise questions, and make recommendations for practice, as well as present analyses of data on family violence deaths. For instance, the Third Report (FVDRC, 2013) recommended improvements in three areas: for survivors of family violence death events; in "inter-agency collaboration and information sharing in high risk family violence cases" (p. 3); and in the violence intervention programs for perpetrators developed from the Duluth model. The Fourth Report (FVDRC, 2014) began challenging the conceptualization of family violence, emphasizing the need for the sector to 'think differently' so that responses from both community and Government agencies were more effective. In the Fifth Report (FVDRC, 2016), the focus was entirely on "changing the narrative about family violence" (p. 13) rather than reporting any analyses of data on culpable deaths, which were published separately a year later (FVDRC, 2017).

Although the language of the FVDRC Reports conforms with legally institutionalized gender neutrality, the Committee has consistently attended to the predominance

of women's deaths at the hands of men and the predominance of men's violence against older children, including children's deaths as "an extreme response to intimate partner separation" (2016, p. 13). Gender analyses are limited to sex differences between victims and perpetrators, rather than analyses of gendered power relations. Nevertheless, the Committee's reports always featured the pattern of gender asymmetry in deaths, as well as overrepresentation of Māori as victims and perpetrators and greater mortality rates among those who are socio-economically deprived.

Without explicitly mentioning theories of power, the Fifth report's theme of 'changing the narrative' is consistent with feminist postmodernist conceptualizations that analyze the discursive privilege of physical assault, the construction of victims as disempowered, and the plurality of discourses producing different 'versions' of partner abuse. The 'different thinking' encouraged by the Committee involves understanding the pattern of abuse that constitutes a form of entrapment for (predominantly women) victims, the entanglement of partner abuse and child abuse, the impact of partner abuse within a whole network of relationships, and the need to transform a "fragmented assortment of services and initiatives" (FVDRC, 2016, p. 14) based on different interpretations of 'the problem.' There is a strong emphasis on collectively changing our understanding of partner abuse to challenge historical thinking about such abuse as an interpersonal problem for individuals, the separation of partner abuse from child abuse, and the attribution of causality to a single individualized issue (such as alcohol or drug misuse). In relation to entrapment, partner abuse is reconstituted as 'social' in three senses: an abusive partner creates social isolation through tactics of coercive control; institutions with the resources and authority to intervene repeatedly attribute responsibility to victims to 'empower' themselves; and structural inequalities of gender, class, and racism intensify both coercively controlling entrapment and institutional indifference to women's and children's victimization in partner abuse. Through layering individual, institutional, and structural forms of social isolation into the proposed new thinking and storying of partner abuse as social entrapment, the FVDRC's Sixth Report articulates a counter-narrative that enables attention to gendered social power relations at multiple sites of intervention.

In our final section, we consider how a Foucauldian theory of power enables us to attend to gendered power relationships in the arena of knowledge production about partner abuse. Theory and research are key sites for constituting how gender is conceptualized in approaches to partner abuse, which we recognize as too frequently marginalizing the voices of those who are most closely involved with the abuse and partner abuse interventions.

The Gender Symmetry Debate

We address the gender symmetry debate, because it touches on our central concern in this chapter, namely how power and gender are implicated in partner abuse. While the feminist analysis of partner abuse highlights gender asymmetry, a counter claim concerning *gender symmetry* has had a long-standing influence in the literature (see

for example, Dobash et al., 1992) and has provoked considerable debate (Frieze, 2005; Hamby, 2017; McHugh, 2005; Stam et al., 2016; Winstock, 2017). This debate centers around the simple claim “that about the same percent of women as men physically assault a marital, cohabiting or dating partner” (Straus, 2012, p. 539). Such arguments potentially undermine existing policies and practices related to partner abuse that are formulated within a feminist framework and may impact funding and publication practices, which could negatively influence the feminist research agenda on intimate abuse. Power is implicated at the heart of this debate, both in terms of how power is theorized and in terms of the discursive forces that keep the debate going and enable practices that potentially undermine the safety and well-being of women and children.

One endeavor to resolve this debate has entailed re-theorizing power as an inherent element of partner abuse. An important example is Evan Stark’s (2010) paradigm for domestic abuse research that situates partner abuse within the context of asymmetrical social positions with consequentially different gendered experiences of violence that effectively “exacerbates gender inequality” (p. 108). The paradigm addresses three problematic assumptions: that (a) the problem needing to be addressed is physical violence, which (b) occurs in discrete events, and (c) specific physical harm and psychological trauma are connected to those events. He deliberately uses the term ‘abuse’ rather than ‘violence’ to emphasize that the typical pattern entails “the nonvoluntary establishment of unreciprocated authority by one party over the other and the corresponding reallocation of resources and opportunities in ways that benefit the dominant party” (Stark, 2010, p. 202).

Stark (2006, 2009, 2010) is one of many researchers to note that partner violence occurs within an ongoing relationship, and therefore the historical context of any particular violent act needs to be considered. Further, he emphasizes that the consequences of abuse are cumulative and varied, that is, not simply physical or psychological. Stark (2010) does not deny that women perpetrate acts of violence, but, he argues “men’s greater capacity than women to deploy coercive control [is linked] to their ability to exploit persistent gender inequalities” (p. 207). Much of this remains invisible to the outside observer, because it entails men controlling women’s domestic activities, which as Stark (2010) notes, are already devalued and of little interest to society as a whole. Thus, Stark is an example of an expert in the field who recognizes gender asymmetry in the perpetration and experience of partner abuse as inevitable in the context of gendered power relations.

Others, such as Murray Straus, have persistently made the case for gender symmetry. A prolific researcher and advocate of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) for measuring partner violence, Straus conducted quantitative, ‘normal’ scientific research with the CTS beginning in the late 1970s (Straus, 1979) and repeatedly asserted that women are as violent as men in intimate relationships on the basis of CTS scores (e.g., Straus, 1980, 1999, 2008, 2012). Using Foucauldian theory to connect the arguments made in support of gender symmetry with the practices that they enable and constrain by circulating and legitimating particular discourses, we make explicit the assumptions about gender and power that enable the symmetry/asymmetry debate to sustain its traction. This entails analyzing how power works

on two levels: (a) how power is theorized and incorporated into analyses of partner abuse and (b) how the discursive power of scientific discourse enables certain research questions to be asked and specific conceptualizations of the problem of partner abuse to be created while closing off other questions and conceptualizations.

Like many working in the field of partner abuse, Straus wrote very little about his theoretical position on power. In a 2012 article defending his position on gender symmetry, he invoked ‘patriarchy’ in describing the perspective of those who criticize the CTS:

According to the “patriarchy theory,” [Partner Violence] is perpetrated almost exclusively by men in order to maintain male dominance in the society and the family. It follows that, if this theory is correct, the CTS must be invalid or misleading. (Straus, 2012, p. 539)

Neither ‘patriarchy theory’ nor ‘male dominance in the society and the family’ are explained, but in earlier articles, Straus conceptualized power in individual terms, as a quality of the decision-making process among married couples when studying partner abuse (Coleman & Straus, 1986). Power was conceptualized as ‘who has the final say’ in making decisions such as buying a car, having children, or what job a partner should take. Couples were classified as male-dominant, female-dominant, equalitarian (joint decision-making), and divided power (unilateral decision-making with husbands and wives responsible for decisions in different areas). Thus, power was individualized in the form of the decision-maker and, although the sex binary was included to distinguish the members of the pairs (heterosexual couples were assumed), gender was otherwise ignored and any potential dominance hierarchy was viewed from a gender-neutral perspective. Theoretically, either the husband or wife could be dominant, thereby disregarding structural differences, such as the wage gap or discourses of gender difference that undermine gender equality.

Gender however remains implicit in the constitution of power as dominance in decision-making within husband and wife ‘couples’ in that power is equated to mastery (i.e., control of situations and others) and the use of reason (i.e., decision-making entails rational consideration of options and the cognitive ability to choose one course of action based on logical criteria). In other words, power, as understood by Straus and his collaborators, is gendered in being imbued with characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity in a context where the partners are man and woman. Coleman and Straus (1986) went one step further, however, and predicted the least conflict within couples where the woman and the man agreed on who should make the final decision. Conceptualizing power as legitimate authority to decide, exercised within a couple by mutual consent, equates conflict with challenging authority. This compounds the individualism inherent in conceiving of power as decision-making by ignoring relational processes such as negotiation and coercion. Importantly, it excludes the kind of subjective experience that Stark attends to, where an abusive partner may effectively control mundane, everyday domestic activities that are the responsibility of the target of that abuse, e.g., how a woman is to mother her children and clean the house, as well as her access to information about family finances and actual monetary resources. When relationship dominance is treated as independent of partner abuse (i.e., as a possible precursor to abuse)

and narrowly defined as equality/inequality in decision-making, a pattern of coercive control that is gendered is rendered invisible and irrelevant to the problem of partner abuse. How patriarchy may be sustained in the face of neo-liberalism and post-feminism and thus continue to undergird partner violence against women is not a question that can be asked with power thus understood.

Research related to who initiates violence and the self-defense motive are further examples of the problematic conceptualization of power, because it assumes that violence is the result of individualized processes, captured in discrete acts, and reinforces the idea that relationships can be categorized in terms of dominance. The initiator of events is assumed to be the dominant person, while self-defense is exercised by the person in a subordinate position. Context and the unfolding interaction between partners is ignored. For example, Straus (2012) cites Capaldi et al. (2007) as reporting that in 46% of their late adolescent couples, the female hit first, an act of physical aggression according to the researchers. Physical aggression was defined as ‘aversive physical contact,’ which could include “a slight shove to hard hits (e.g., shoving the partner on the shoulder so that their elbow fell off the chair, poking with a pencil, hand slaps, kicks, hitting across the head)” (p. 106). Yet, as the researchers noted, some examples of physical aggression were ‘playful’ with the goal to initiate physical intimacy. Nevertheless, the scientists created data that trumped what individual actions and relationships meant to the participants by simply documenting sex differences in the initiation of physical aggression and reciprocation and leaving aside the meanings of those actions. Investigating the self-defense motive for engaging in violence is equally problematic. Self-defense is often assumed to mean actions aimed at preserving one’s safety (e.g., Cascardi & Vivian, 1995), but anger in the face of perceived insults, accusations, or coercion may also underpin physical aggression aimed at defending one’s reputation or integrity. Adding gender and power into the analysis, who is most likely to fear for their safety and who is most likely to be concerned about their social position? As in the research about initiating violence, researchers’ interpretations and assumptions belie the experiences of their research participants, who live in the world and in their relationships as gendered persons.

This is where the power of science and theorizing power come together. Following established normative scientific practices, dominance in relationships, defined in a specific and narrow manner by the questionnaires utilized, is made relevant to the problem of domestic violence and constrains how the problem is conceptualized, with important consequences for both women and men. Locating power within individuals as discrete enactments of unilateral decisions and restrictions and denigration of partners, such experiences are reportable on a questionnaire. This is a kind of ‘sovereign’ power that presumes individual autonomy, independence, authority, and self-control (Foucault, 1977) and allows individuals to be represented by a count of how frequently they engage in particular behaviors. Moreover, relationships can be classified according to their power relations—either power is symmetrical, with equal partners, or asymmetrical, with one dominant partner—and partners may either agree or disagree with the power-sharing arrangements. This reduces relationships to categories that are then amenable to quantitative comparisons. It also enables victim blaming, as when the partners agree to one partner being dominant, implicitly one of

the partners contributes to her/his own subordination. Importantly, what is privileged in 'measuring' power reflects masculinist values in focusing on power as dominance.

Patriarchy entails multiple power relations (e.g., political, economic, and social), including the discourse of science that constrains how the debate about gender symmetry has unfolded. The dominant discourse of science includes the assumption of a single social and physical reality that can be directly observed, reduction of a phenomenon of interest to variables, the use of objective measurement devices that allow for quantification of the variables and are universally applicable, the assumption that knowledge accumulates and moves us closer to the truth, and the possibility of an objective researcher speaking from a neutral position. This produces a focus on measurement and sampling issues, which privileges scientists' perspectives and excludes women's ways of knowing (e.g., Belenky et al., 1986; Code, 1991; Collins, 1990; Harding, 1991) and constitutes an exercise of power. There is a long tradition of feminist scholars, such as Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) and Jill Morawski (1994), who have carefully studied the historical forces that shaped science in the image of man, drawing attention to unexamined androcentric bias (Chrisler & McHugh, 2018), proffering alternative discourses of science linked to women's experiences in the world, and thereby offering resistance to the normative version of science. In so doing, they have also exposed how patriarchal power relations are inherent within the normative discourse of science, with its focus on dominating and controlling its objects of study. 'Male dominance' is perpetuated through a discourse of science that privileges masculinist practices.

One example is the pervasive use of the CTS (Straus, 1979) in research, which simply assumes that physical abuse occurring within intimate relationships is something that can be counted and quantified and that quantification is a meaningful activity for researchers or others concerned about problems like domestic violence. Further, its use presumes that the scale constitutes a gender neutral and universally applicable, objective standard against which both genders can be compared. As Straus (2012) argued, "... if the CTS had been designed to measure assaults that were the result of male dominance and control, it would not be possible to determine the extent to which male coercive control is the basis for male PV because those would be the only assaults recorded" (p. 541). He forgot however that in constructing the Physical Assault scale items, he made decisions about what constitutes physical assault and how to word the items, introducing his own subjectivity into his measuring device. Before any data are collected, the possibilities are already foreclosed.

Within the dominant discourse of science, much attention is paid to the technology of measurement and quantification. Even Straus (2012), the creator of the scale who acknowledged that the CTS had 'shortcomings,' (Straus, 2012, p. 539) did not go so far as to question whether or not there is a singular, measurable reality of abusive relationships. Indeed, he treated the problem of quantifying acts of physical violence when respondents' memories might be unreliable as a technical problem to be addressed by changing the response scale. The possibility that respondents may neither understand nor remember physical violence as one (or many) temporally discrete acts is not raised as a question. Ways of representing experiences of victimization and perpetration as situated, particular, and subjective also are not

addressed. Within the confines of research employing the CTS (or any similar scale), respondents are forced to report their experiences within the scale's constraints. The data produced serve the interests of the researcher and not necessarily those of the respondents.

When viewed within a different discourse of science, say a postmodern one, different questions arise, and the researcher's attention is drawn to different concerns. For example, how are specific violent acts, like pushing or slapping, understood by particular victims and perpetrators within specific circumstances? Instead of treating victimization and perpetration as variables (i.e., as 'somethings' that can be assigned different values), intimate relationships are seen as constituted in a complex set of human interactions where meanings are negotiated and depend in part on people's social locations. As well, male dominance and control would be conceptualized as *the* problem which is manifested in partner abuse and not as an individual motive that is potentially causal but independent of partner abuse. In other words, partner abuse is all about gendered power relations.

The larger question remains: why does the debate continue despite the many studies and critical commentaries that have argued against gender symmetry? One reason is the ongoing use of the CTS and other masculinist technologies of positivist science. For example, Espinoza and Warner (2016) argued that insufficient attention has been paid to men who are victims, women who are perpetrators, and bilateral partner abuse, and championed psychological sciences as the means to fill the knowledge gap. Pitting the 'psychological reality' of partner abuse against 'a sociologically explained problem,' their arguments were clearly shaped by the dominant discourse of science (p. 962). Thus, they see the way forward as focusing on the psychology of the individual partners—their motives, their actions, and their personalities. The reduction of partner abuse to psychology is so extreme that patriarchy, 'the sociological explanation,' is simply acknowledged as 'a societal problem' (p. 962), "critical in some but not all forms of partner violence" (p. 964), and possibly wrong because "an overwhelming majority of males endorse respectful views toward women" (p. 959). Thus, gender is reduced to sex differences and power is not included in the theoretical framing of the problem. The other reason the debate continues relates to how researchers position themselves as scientists within a discourse of positivist science. They are the objective scientists in pursuit of the truth about partner abuse, whereas others, such as feminist scientists, who take up an alternative discourse of science or resist attempts to reduce partner abuse to motives and discrete behaviors, are marginalized by simply ignoring or over-simplifying their contributions to knowledge. Wherever a masculinist discourse of science remains unquestioned and taken for granted as the gold standard of knowledge production, the debate will continue and the voices of those who live experiences of domestic violence, including those dedicated to improving the safety of women and children in the intervention sector, will be marginalized.

Conclusion

We have advanced the argument that understanding and resolving the problem of partner abuse necessarily entails an appreciation of gender and power. However, power has been conceptualized in three different ways with varying consequences for theories of partner abuse, the positioning of the partners involved, and approaches to dealing with the problem. Postmodernist approaches to power, in particular those inspired by Foucault, have led to a critical appraisal of the field that has remained stuck in a debate over sex differences. Attention to the uptake of discourses related to partner abuse, a form of power rendered visible by a Foucauldian approach, shows the possibility of undermining the conditions that support partner abuse through resistance to dominant discourses and the circulation of counter-discourses, such as conceptualizing partner abuse as arising within social power relationships that subordinate women to men.

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A Narrative of Silencing: Exploring Sexual Violence Against Women at the Intersections of Power and Culture



Rebecca L. Howard Valdivia, Courtney E. Ahrens, Jennifer M. Gómez, and Carly P. Smith

Building upon decades of consciousness raising, activism, and advocacy dating back to the Civil Rights movement (McGuire, 2011) and beyond, the last decade has seen an outpouring of personal testimony about survivors' experiences of sexual violence. In 2006, Tarana Burke founded the 'me too.' Movement (me too., 2023) to bring resources and support to survivors, particularly Black women and girls and other survivors of color. Made viral in 2017 by actress Alyssa Milano, the #MeToo hashtag sparked a mainstream movement that created space for survivors to share their stories. Although many survivors spoke out about their experiences, notably fewer LGBTQ+ and survivors of color spoke out (Burke, 2021), highlighting the differential stakes that speaking out can have for survivors facing multiple, intersecting systems of oppression (Gómez, 2018). The almost immediate silencing of survivor testimony also underscored the persistent and powerful forces that oppose recognition of the scope of sexual violence and need for social change (for a timeline see Tribune, 2020).

In this chapter, we seek to identify and challenge the multiple, intersecting forces of rape culture and oppression that work together to silence survivors. We use Kristie

R. L. Howard Valdivia

Social and Cognitive Psychology Doctoral Program, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE, USA
e-mail: rhoward10@huskers.unl.edu

C. E. Ahrens (✉)

Psychology Department, California State University, Long Beach, CA, USA
e-mail: Courtney.Ahrens@csulb.edu

J. M. Gómez

School of Social Work, Center for Antiracist Research, Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health, Boston University, Boston, MA, USA
e-mail: gomezjm@bu.edu

C. P. Smith

Abri Radically Open DBT, Portland, OR, USA

Dotson's (2011) work on epistemic violence to explore the role of silencing, institutional betrayal, and systemic oppression in maintaining rape culture in the United States, with a focus on survivors who are subject to multiple forms of oppression. In so doing, we seek to build upon the voices of survivors who have called for interpersonal, structural, and cultural changes to dismantle rape culture and dissolve the veneer of silence that has kept sexual violence hidden for so long.

Feminist Conceptualizations of Sexual Violence

Feminist scholars have long conceptualized rape as a tool of social control that functions to keep women 'in their place' (Brownmiller, 1975; Donat & D'Emilio, 1992; Griffin, 1979; MacKinnon, 1987). These scholars argue that the fear of rape restricts women's behavior, limits their freedom, and causes them to live in a constant state of stress and anxiety (Calogero et al., 2021; Gordon & Riger, 1989). Feminist scholars have also argued that sexual violence serves to uphold systems of domination and subordination (e.g., patriarchy, cisheterosexism, white supremacy, ableism) by reinforcing subordinate status and punishing marginalized individuals (e.g., women, LGBTQ + individuals, people of color, disabled people) who dare to challenge or subvert dominant systems (Armstrong et al., 2018).

When marginalized individuals dare to challenge such systems, they not only risk being assaulted, they also risk being blamed for the assault, which serves to justify and normalize sexual violence. Experiences of rape are discredited and minimized when they do not align with stereotypes about 'real rape' (Estrich, 1987) or 'classic rape' (Williams, 1984), which limit rape to violent assaults committed by strangers (who are also stereotypically mentally ill, poor, and/or men of color) in a public place against victims (who are also stereotypically white, middle class, educated, heterosexual, cisgender women) who verbally resisted or fought back. These stereotypes function as a *master narrative* (i.e., dominant discourse)—a culturally shared framework that provides a "moral, ethical, and affective framework" for evaluating and understanding experiences (Fivush, 2010, p. 94)—which serves to restrict definitions of rape and determines who can be a victim and who can be a perpetrator.

Dominant discourses about sexual violence are also upheld through widespread rape myths that suggest that women want to be raped, are to blame for rape, lie about rape, or exaggerate the impact of rape, and that men do not mean to rape (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Payne et al., 1999). Although some of the original research on rape myths occurred over 40 years ago (Burt, 1980), recent research suggests that rape myths continue to persist (Edwards et al., 2011; Zidenberg et al., 2022). These myths serve multiple functions. Rape myths about who can rape serve to excuse privileged perpetrators (e.g., White, middle or upper class, educated men), while myths about who can be a victim serve to ignore the victimization of marginalized survivors (e.g., survivors of color, LGBTQ + survivors, disabled survivors; Armstrong et al., 2018). Myths about what constitutes rape serve to normalize 'mild' forms of sexual violence (e.g., unwanted sexual contact; Papp & McClelland, 2021); trivialize 'less severe'

forms of sexual violence (e.g., verbal coercion, incapacitated or alcohol-facilitated rape) and acquaintance rape (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Persson & Dhingra, 2022); and establish requirements of physical or verbal resistance from survivors (Cohn et al., 2009). Myths about victim responsibility and men not meaning to rape shift blame to the survivor and work to exonerate the perpetrator (Payne et al., 1999). Finally, the myth that survivors lie about rape makes society distrust survivors (McKimmie et al., 2014; Weiser, 2017), effectively shifting societal concern from survivors to perpetrators who have been ‘unfairly accused’ (Edwards et al., 2011; Weiser, 2017).

Taken together, these myths serve to silence survivors whose assaults do not adhere to dominant discourses about sexual violence. They also intersect with other forms of oppression, including racism and heterosexism (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), to silence LGBTQ+ and survivors of color in unique and powerful ways. For example, racist stereotypes that hypersexualize Black and Latina/o/x survivors (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009), and promiscuous stereotypes about bisexual survivors (Dyar et al., 2021), work to further discredit, dismiss, and silence already marginalized survivors.

Feminist Conceptualizations of Silence

In this way, the silencing of survivors keeps sexual violence (in)visible, preventing social justice and change (Močnik, 2018). Feminist interpretations of voice and silence have been conceptualized as metaphors for power (Reinharz, 1994), with consequences for what experiences will be (un)acknowledged: “At its most simple, what is given voice will be recalled and what is silenced will be forgotten” (Fivush, 2010, p. 90). Being *silenced*, then, is an imposed loss of voice, which can occur at both the interpersonal (e.g., failing to believe survivors) and cultural levels (e.g., stereotypes about rape and marginalized groups; Fivush, 2010). In a society that values certain voices and silences others, silencing thus becomes a tool of oppression that represses alternative discourses. By silencing non-dominant voices, current systems of power go unquestioned and social change is stifled.

To further understand how silencing functions, we turn to the work of Kristie Dotson, a Black feminist philosopher who has written extensively on systems of oppression. According to Dotson (2011), the ability for a speaker to speak and be heard ultimately depends on an audience’s ability to understand the speaker. For communication to be successful, the audience must be willing to listen and must be able to understand the speaker’s words *as the speaker intends them to be understood*. When the audience fails to extend this *linguistic reciprocity* because of pernicious ignorance (i.e., a reliable and repetitive lack of knowledge—ignorance—that causes harm), they are said to be engaging in a *practice of silence* (i.e., a reliable and repetitive failure to understand the speaker; Dotson, 2011).

Practices of silence comprise two forms of silencing: testimonial quieting and testimonial smothering. *Testimonial quieting* occurs when “an audience fails to identify a speaker as a knower” (Dotson, 2011, p. 242) or fails to recognize the speaker as credible. *Testimonial smothering* occurs when the speaker self-silences because the

consequences of telling are high (Dotson, 2011). When silence is imposed, either via testimonial quieting or smothering, alternative discourses are silenced and dominant discourses are upheld (Armstrong et al., 2018; Fivush, 2010).

The Silencing of Survivors

Survivors experience many forms of silencing. In some cases, they choose to remain silent and never speak about the assault, particularly when potential consequences are salient. This form of *testimonial smothering* is pervasive with up to 1/3 of sexual assault survivors never telling anyone about the assault and another 1/3 delaying disclosure for more than one year (Ahrens et al., 2010; Millar et al., 2002). *Testimonial smothering* can result from cultural scaffolding that normalizes rape and sexual aggression (Gavey, 2005; McPhail, 2016), and rape myths that make survivors question their experiences (Johnstone, 2016; Kahn et al., 2003). Social stigma surrounding sexual assault can also make it difficult for survivors to talk about their experiences (Smith & Cook, 2008), especially when stigma leads to shame and self-blame (Sabina & Ho, 2014; Weiss, 2010). Fears of negative consequences, such as being blamed by others (Spencer et al., 2017; Zinzow & Thompson, 2011), not being believed (Patterson et al., 2009; Sable et al., 2006), retaliation by the perpetrator or the perpetrator's supporters (Sable et al., 2006; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011), and institutional involvement (Sabina & Ho, 2014; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011), can also silence survivors. Such fears may be particularly salient among survivors with one or more marginalized identities, who may fear the social consequences of being 'outed' (Edwards et al., 2022), being reported to immigration authorities (Zadnik et al., 2016), being subjected to further discrimination (Armstrong et al., 2018; Crenshaw, 1991), or being misunderstood (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009; Hackman et al., 2022).

Similar fears may lead survivors to be selective about to whom they disclose. On average, survivors disclose to three people (Ahrens et al., 2009; Ullman, 2010), and disclosures to informal support providers, such as friends and family, are more common than disclosures to formal support providers, such as legal and medical professionals (Ahrens et al., 2007; Ullman, 2010). Although more than 2/3 of survivors disclose to at least one friend or family member (Sabina & Ho, 2014; Walsh et al., 2010), in the United States, fewer than 1/3 of sexual assaults are reported to the police (Lonsway & Archambault, 2012; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011), fewer than of survivors seek help from medical services (Krebs et al., 2007), and fewer than 1/5 of survivors disclose to a rape crisis center (Campbell, Wasco, et al., 2001). Fears of formal system involvement may be particularly salient for survivors of color whose experiences of systemic violence can lead to a justifiable distrust of formal systems (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009; Lindquist et al., 2016).

When survivors do disclose, they can also be silenced by negative reactions (Ahrens et al., 2010; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2015; Ullman & Relyea, 2016). Negative reactions to disclosure can be interpreted as *testimonial quieting* because such reactions often result from disbelief (i.e., the failure to recognize survivors as credible

experts of their own experiences). Negative reactions can include turning against the survivor (Relyea & Ullman, 2015; Ullman & Relyea, 2016) or stigmatizing reactions (Overstreet et al., 2019), such as blaming the survivor, treating the survivor differently, and infantilizing forms of control. Negative reactions can also include unsupportive reactions (Relyea & Ullman, 2015; Ullman & Relyea, 2016), such as prioritizing the disclosure recipient's needs over the survivor's, distracting the survivor, telling the survivor not to think about the assault, and controlling behaviors that diminish the survivor's autonomy.

Such negative social reactions are more likely from formal than informal support providers (Ahrens et al., 2007; Dworkin et al., 2019). Indeed, few survivors in the United States and internationally find their interactions with police satisfying (Bach et al., 2021; Lorenz, 2023), and interactions with the U.S. medical system are frequently perceived as cold (Campbell, 2006). Silencing does not just occur at an interpersonal level, however. Negative social reactions from formal support providers are produced within institutions that further work to silence survivors, particularly marginalized survivors who have often experienced other forms of violence from the same institutions (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2018).

Institutional Silencing

Silencing is systemic and reinforced within institutions that use silence to ignore, dismiss, or minimize survivors' voices. Although this may manifest differently by country, region, and community, the resultant silencing is common. In the U.S. context, there are many examples of institutional silencing. For example, when institutions, such as the criminal legal or medical system, repeatedly minimize survivors' experiences or refuse services (Campbell et al., 1999; Campbell, Ahrens, et al., 2001), they are contributing to pervasive *practices of silence*. When police officers assume that 30–50% of survivors are lying (Kelly, 2010; Weiser, 2017), despite the fact that research consistently suggests that only 2–8% or fewer reports *may* be false (Lisak et al., 2010; Weiser, 2017), they are engaging in *pernicious ignorance*. When rape myths are used in police reports to blame victims, normalize rape, and justify police decisions to disregard sexual assault cases (Greeson et al., 2016; Shaw et al., 2017), dominant discourses that hold survivors accountable for their own assaults are reproduced. When institutions systematically discriminate against survivors from marginalized groups (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009; Long & Ullman, 2013) and fail to investigate and prosecute cases involving survivors of color (Armstrong et al., 2018), existing social inequities are exacerbated. When the media focus on stereotypical sexual assault cases and fail to provide a critical, societal critique of rape (Easteal et al., 2015; O'Hara, 2012), toxic cultural norms that support rape myths are strengthened and widely disseminated. And when hundreds of thousands of rape kits are left untested by the criminal legal system (i.e., the Rape Kit Backlog; Campbell et al., 2017; Strom et al., 2009), the sheer magnitude of institutional disregard for survivors' experiences of sexual violence is exposed.

The cumulative failure of key institutions to adequately prevent and address sexual violence has profound implications for survivors and society as a whole. Survivors often describe their experience with institutions that blame and fail to support survivors as a ‘second assault’ (Campbell, 2008; Campbell, Wasco, et al., 2001). This *secondary victimization* is related to poorer mental health functioning (Dworkin et al., 2019; Ullman & Relyea, 2016), negative relational consequences (Ahrens & Aldana, 2012; Banyard et al., 2010), and reduced disclosures (Ahrens, 2006; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2015). Survivors may also experience a sense of betrayal from these institutional failures (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

Institutional betrayal occurs when (1) a survivor depends on and/or trusts an institution, (2) there are defined or reasonably expected ways the institution will respond to sexual violence, and (3) the institution fails to act in a way that is consistent with the defined role (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Institutional betrayal may occur through acts of commission (e.g., covering up reports, mishandling investigations) or omission (e.g., failing to prevent sexual violence; Smith & Freyd, 2014). The impact of institutional betrayal can be profound and is related to decreased system engagement (Holliday & Monteith, 2019; Smith, 2017) and increased symptomology (Andresen et al., 2019; Smith & Freyd, 2013).

Unlike secondary victimization, which focuses on individual experiences, institutional betrayal uses a wider lens to examine the impact of inadequate institutional policies and practices. For example, the almost exclusive focus on stranger-perpetrated assaults in U.S. university prevention materials and programs illustrates a systemic failure to address the reality of acquaintance rape on college campuses (Bedera & Nordmeyer, 2015). Universal mandatory reporting policies, which are common in the United States and require all university employees (e.g., faculty, graduate students, undergraduate resident assistants) to report student disclosures of sexual violence to the university even when the survivor does *not* want to report (Holland et al., 2018), are another example of institutional betrayal. University enactment of universal mandatory reporting policies disregards survivors’ reporting preferences (Holland et al., 2020) and employees’ concerns about the potential harm to already vulnerable and marginalized students (e.g., LGBTQ + students; Holland et al., 2019).

This prioritization of institutional needs over survivors’ needs results from the discrepancy between the interests of those in the highest positions of power (who are often more privileged in society) and the interests of those who are most affected by sexual violence and systems of oppression (who are often less privileged). Indeed, institutional betrayal is disproportionately experienced by people who are disempowered in other ways, with LGB+ student survivors reporting more instances of institutional betrayal than heterosexual student survivors (Smidt et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2016), and student survivors of color also reporting high rates of institutional betrayal (Gómez, 2022).

Socio-Cultural Silencing

Practices of silence also occur at the socio-cultural level. Systems of oppression, such as racism, cisheterosexism, ableism, and classism, often intersect to affect survivors' experiences of sexual violence and resulting consequences (e.g., Watson et al., 2021). Failure to engage in *linguistic reciprocity* with survivors of (multiple) marginalized identities then leads to incomplete—or incorrect—understandings of the challenges faced by survivors. Although systems of oppression can intersect to impact survivors of many identities, much of the work in this area has focused on the experiences of Black women in particular. Black women scholars and activists, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Thema Bryant-Davis, and Patricia Hill Collins, have drawn attention to the ways that race, class, and gender intersect to affect Black women's lived experiences. Noting that discrimination is not simply additive, Crenshaw (1991) argues that experiences of sexism are different for Black women and White women, and that experiences of racism are different for Black women and Black men. When feminist and anti-racism movements each fail to listen to the unique needs and experiences of women of color, these movements promote a practice of silence that minimizes the experiences of the very people they purportedly represent.

Black women survivors face numerous challenges that are unique to their positionality. Black women's bodies have historically been hyper-sexualized to 'justify' the rape of Black women and to discredit survivors who disclose experiences of sexual victimization (Crenshaw, 1991; Tillman et al., 2010). Black men have also been historically stereotyped as rapists of White women, which was used to 'justify' lynchings and terrorism against Black men (Crenshaw, 1991). Together, these stereotypes may make it difficult for Black women to speak about sexual violence—both out of fear that they will not be believed and out of a desire to protect Black men from an unjust and discriminatory system (Crenshaw, 1991).

Indeed, fears of condemning Black men to a racist and discriminatory system can play a prominent role in Black women survivors' decisions to remain silent (Bent-Goodley, 2001; Tillman et al., 2010; Washington, 2001). Termed *racial loyalty*, this cultural mandate to protect the Black community from societal trauma (e.g., oppression) can silence Black women (Bent-Goodley, 2001; Tillman et al., 2010; Washington, 2001) who may realistically fear they are putting their entire community at harm if they disclose (Platt et al., 2009). Reluctance may be especially poignant when the content of the disclosure is risky because dominant informal and formal support systems may misperceive the allegation as confirming societal stereotypes.

Black survivors may also be reluctant to disclose for fear of losing the support of their community. Community support can rely on (intra)cultural trust—"connection, attachment, dependency, love, loyalty, and responsibility" (p. 3) among group members—which helps protect oppressed group members from the impact of societal trauma (Gómez & Gobin, 2020). However, violation of (intra)cultural trust is distinctly harmful; when members of one's own marginalized group are the ones perpetrating harm, (intra)cultural trust is broken, resulting in a cultural betrayal (Gómez & Gobin, 2020).

Cultural betrayal trauma theory (CBTT; Gómez, 2023) was developed to explain the distinct harm of within-group violence in marginalized groups. CBTT argues that societal trauma that oppresses the Black community necessitates the development of (intra)cultural trust as a protective mechanism. When this (intra)cultural trust is violated, the resulting sense of cultural betrayal can be uniquely and profoundly harmful, even traumatic.

Survivors who have been assaulted by someone within their own marginalized group may also experience (intra)cultural pressure (Gómez, 2019a), which includes pressure for the survivor to protect the in-group—including the perpetrator(s)—even at the expense of the survivor’s own health and wellbeing (Gómez, 2023). Examples of (intra)cultural pressure include creating a culture in which trauma seems more likely or common, making it difficult to disclose, reacting inadequately to disclosures, and suggesting that the trauma may affect the group’s reputation (Gómez, 2019a, b, c). Prior research provides support for CBTT, indicating that cultural betrayal trauma is associated with diverse outcomes in marginalized populations, including psychological distress and internalized prejudice (Gómez & Freyd, 2018; Gómez, 2019a, b, c; McMahon & Seabrook, 2020).

Cultural betrayal trauma can occur across diverse marginalized groups, with experiences of cultural betrayal trauma reported across varying racial/ethnic groups, including Black (Gómez, 2023), Latina/o/x (Howard Valdivia et al., 2022), and Asian American and Pacific Islander (Gómez, 2017) survivors of violence victimization. Pressure to remain silent in cases of intra-group sexual violence victimization has also been reported by LGBTQ + individuals (Hackman et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2021).

Building Linguistic Reciprocity

According to Dotson (2011), linguistic reciprocity is built through *testimonial competence*—when the audience demonstrates they are able to understand the speaker’s words as the speaker intends them to be understood. To do this, audiences must critically examine their own *situational ignorance*—the advantages and limitations in understandings that result from how individual positionalities and subjectivities align (or do not align) with dominant discourses (Dotson, 2011). A critique of dominant discourses, including systems of oppression that magnify silencing, is needed to counter situational and pernicious ignorance and to work toward demonstrating testimonial competence. Testimonial competence, however, is ultimately dependent upon audiences’ ability to demonstrate to survivors that they are willing and able to understand survivors’ experiences. Thus, linguistic reciprocity can only be achieved by centering survivors’ needs and knowledge. We must work toward linguistic reciprocity by engaging in practices that recognize and situate survivors as knowers—as experts of their experiences—and by rebuilding or creating alternative systems and resources that can better support survivors.

Inclusive Practices

Wide-spread investment in inclusivity is needed to better ensure survivors have access to support resources and spaces. This includes investing in the availability of diverse support providers. Availability of support providers with varying life experiences, including LGBTQ + and support providers of color, may help survivors feel like their experiences will be better understood, and may reduce the high stakes of disclosing to a dominant group member when within-group violence victimization occurs (Bach et al., 2021; Hackman et al., 2022; Tillman et al., 2010). But creating accessible and supportive resources are not achieved by simply hiring diverse providers. Support providers need to make genuine efforts to outreach to marginalized communities to create new partnerships and rebuild trust (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009; Hackman et al., 2022). There is also an urgent need for resources to be tailored to survivors of varying life experiences, which can start with educating providers about sexual violence that does not fit the cisheternormative, racist, classist, ableist, sizeist, etc. ‘real rape’ stereotype, how systems of oppression intersect to impact survivors’ experiences, and the importance of cultural competence and humility (Bach et al., 2021; Hackman et al., 2022; Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998; Tillman et al., 2010).

Inclusivity and acceptance may also help reduce sexual violence victimization. For example, research indicates that greater perceived hostile sexism and biphobia among peer groups is associated with increased sexual violence victimization (Grove & Johnson, 2022), whereas greater perceived inclusivity of LGBTQ + individuals at the institutional level is associated with decreased odds of sexual violence victimization (Coulter & Rankin, 2020). Institutions can thus work to change institutional climates to create more affirming and inclusive spaces for marginalized communities. Institutions may do this by creating more inclusive education (e.g., funding programs like Women’s and Gender Studies and Sexuality Studies; offering a wide variety of classes about race, class, sexuality, intersectionality, etc.), speaking out against harmful legislation (e.g., anti-trans legislation, anti-immigrant legislation), and responding adequately when harassment occurs (e.g., ensuring survivors are supported, ensuring the harassment ceases to continue).

Consciousness raising, demonstrations, and other forms of activism can also help increase awareness and understanding. Activities such as Take Back the Night marches, Speak Outs, and the Clothesline Project can help dispel myths about sexual violence (Lewis et al., 2018) and may facilitate community building and solidarity. Online campaigns and the use of social media feeds can also be used to build awareness and frame sexual violence as a broader social problem, and may be more accessible to disabled activists and survivors (Jackson, 2018; Mendes et al., 2018; Turley & Fisher, 2018).

Programming

Bystander approaches and educational efforts about how to respond to disclosures can challenge peer norms and reduce potential harm during disclosures. Focusing specifically on the role that bystanders can play in transforming rape culture, bystander programs seek to engage peers in challenging rape supportive norms and behaviors (Banyard et al., 2004; Katz, 2018). Such programs encourage everyone—not just survivors—to interrupt, make visible, and challenge gender norms, racism, and other problematic aspects of peer culture that normalize sexual violence (Jouriles et al., 2018; Katz, 2018). Additionally, education efforts that seek to improve informal support providers' (e.g., friends) reactions to disclosures may also be an effective means of reducing harm and increasing understanding (e.g., Edwards et al., 2022). To be most effective, such programs should incorporate a wide variety of contexts, cultures, and lived experiences (Hackman et al., 2022).

A variety of support resources can also be offered to indicate an investment in supporting survivors. For example, support groups guided by feminist values may be helpful for some survivors (Mendes et al., 2018). Feminist support groups can help survivors by reconceptualizing dominant discourses, sharing personal stories with others, highlighting acts of resistance and agency, and encouraging group activism (Fivush, 2010; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2011; Wood & Roche, 2001). But feminist support groups may not be helpful for all survivors, necessitating investment in other types of support groups that may better fit the needs of different survivors (e.g., Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; French et al., 2020).

Culturally-Relevant Frameworks

Culturally-relevant frameworks for healing should also be considered. The psychological framework of radical healing for communities of color (French et al., 2020) shifts from an individualistic perspective of healing to an interconnected, community-based approach that promotes thriving after trauma. Traditionally, individualistic approaches promote healing within a racist and oppressive society. In contrast, this radical healing framework highlights the strength of communities of color and the community's ability to challenge dominant, oppressive narratives and norms (French et al., 2020). Radical healing works by creating awareness of oppressive systems and fostering hope for change (French et al., 2020). This and other frameworks for healing can also incorporate an intersectional lens to make space for diverse survivors. Focusing on the strengths of the community and ability to challenge oppressive systems may also have the ability to transform (intra)cultural trust from a protective mechanism to an agent for community empowerment.

Institutional Processes

Institutions need to center the needs of survivors. Institutional courage (Smith & Freyd, 2014) can guide institutions in better centering and supporting survivors. Institutional courage is when institutions act to protect and support members who trust and/or depend on the institution. This may include responding supportively to disclosures, being accountable when harm occurs, requesting and honoring feedback about what the institution is doing well and how it can improve, and promoting transparency (Freyd, 2018). By acting courageously, institutions can create practices that better meet survivors' needs.

Institutions can evaluate practices and procedures to ensure they are promoting survivor choice. For example, widely adopted universal mandatory reporting policies in the United States (Holland et al., 2018) can be replaced with policies that focus on supporting survivors upon disclosure and only reporting *if the survivor wants to report* (Holland et al., 2021). Additionally, universities can develop multi-disciplinary response teams (Greeson & Campbell, 2013; Lichty et al., 2008) and develop better anti-retaliation policies to protect survivors who report (Bedera, 2022), particularly during a time when legal action against survivors (e.g., defamation suits, non-disclosure agreements) have become more common and visible in mainstream culture (e.g., Nesbitt & Carson, 2021).

Greater transparency in institutional policies and procedures can help survivors make informed decisions, ensuring survivors retain more choice and control over resource and support engagement. For example, the legal system should provide clear and detailed descriptions about how the system works, survivors' options within the system, and potential outcomes of system engagement (Ahrens et al., 2020; Busch-Armendariz & Sulley, 2015; Smith et al., 2014). Similarly, universities should ensure their policies and procedures are written accessibly for survivors (not just lawyers), and that information about options and processes are freely shared with survivors (Bedera, 2022).

Accountability when harm happens should also be prioritized. To try and prevent harm, policies that hold police officers accountable for inadequately written reports, subpar investigations, victimizing responses, and mishandled evidence must be put into place and vigorously upheld (Lonsway & Archambault, 2012; Spohn & Tellis, 2012). When harm does occur, system failings should be admitted, sincere apologies should be provided, and every effort should be made to reform harmful or failed policies and procedures (Smith et al., 2014).

Restorative Justice

Alternative forms of justice that bypass the criminal legal system and formal investigations within universities should also be considered. Approaches such as restorative justice may be more acceptable to marginalized survivors who justifiably do not trust

traditional legal systems (Armstrong et al., 2018). Unlike the traditional legal system, which focuses on punishment and removal of perpetrators from society, restorative justice approaches use a community-based approach that brings together survivors, perpetrators, support providers, and key leaders from the larger community to identify steps that can be taken to achieve healing, restitution, and community engagement (Kim, 2018; Koss, 2014; Koss & Achilles, 2008; Koss et al., 2004). Specific techniques include victim-offender conferencing, family group conferencing, healing circles, and community reparations (van Wormer, 2009), all of which function to extend *linguistic reciprocity* in which the entire community is helped to understand and respond to survivors' needs. Through carefully scaffolded dialogues, the community can be guided toward developing individualized plans that address the needs of survivors, and may also reduce survivor concerns of subjecting perpetrators to racist systems.

Conclusion

Practices of silence are characterized by audiences' reliable and repetitive failure to understand survivors (e.g., as credible experts of their own experiences) because of pernicious ignorance (Dotson, 2011). Such practices of silence have contributed to the harm and silencing of sexual violence survivors. Pervasive rape culture and other intersecting systems of oppression (e.g., patriarchy, cisheterosexism, white supremacy, ableism) reproduce dominant discourses that restrict what is acknowledged as sexual violence and enable systems that systematically silence survivors. But practices of silence can be challenged by practicing testimonial competence (Dotson, 2011). Recognizing and situating survivors as knowers will better enable audiences to understand survivors' experiences and needs. In turn, systems and resources that better support survivors are possible. For this to be achieved, however, the dominant discourses about sexual violence (e.g., stereotypes about 'real rape') must be challenged to create space for a multiplicity of narratives, particularly narratives of multiply marginalized survivors who experience silencing from multiple systems of oppression. In centering survivors, it is possible to challenge practices of silence and radically transform the societal norms, conditions, structures, and systems that have enabled sexual violence to proliferate.

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Communication and Technology

Gender and Power in Technological Contexts



Jessica Drakett

This chapter will examine the various ways in which we can conceive of gender and power in relation to technology. How do gender and power connect in technological contexts? What does power look like here, how is it shaped and allocated, and who possesses it? What possibilities may exist with regard to reshaping power through acts of resistance in and through technology? In order to explore these questions, this chapter will attend to considerations of gender, power, and technology in relation to labor, focusing specifically on the domains of technology education and work, and activism in technological contexts. Technology itself is a far-reaching term, and there are no doubt opportunities to theorize around the connections between gender, power, and technology across myriad domains. For instance, the labor of self-presentation on social media, the multiple forms of harassment and violence enacted in and through technology, and subjects which perhaps once felt more closely aligned with science fiction than with our current climate such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and technologically enhanced bodies all stand as sites ripe for exploration by feminist psychologists. However, this chapter will begin by considering feminist approaches to gender and power via technology studies, before moving to examine the interplay of gender and power in relation to technology education and work, then finally exploring some of the possibilities and pitfalls new technologies may offer to feminist activists as a tool and space of resistance and protest.

J. Drakett (✉)
Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK
e-mail: J.Drakett@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Looking Back: Gender, Power, Technology, and Feminist Thinking

In order to contextualize this chapter, it is first necessary to consider feminist approaches to the interplay of gender, power, and technology in a broader sense. When examining some of the rich and varied theoretical literature underpinning feminist understandings of gender and technology, we come across accounts spanning from the wholly pessimistic to relentlessly optimistic.

For instance, Judy Wajcman's writings on feminist technology studies (2004, 2007, 2010, 2011) outline the conflicting positions and frameworks present in historical approaches attempting to conceptualize the gender and technology link. Noting the 'liberal cast' (2011, p. 266) of early approaches, Wajcman draws attention to the supposed gender neutrality of technology, and the assumption that the solution to women's lack of inclusion in technological spheres was simply a matter of promoting equal access to education and employment. Later approaches however saw radical and socialist feminisms offering alternative ways of thinking about gender, power, and technology, seeking to examine the knowledge, culture, and artifacts of science and technology itself, rather than positioning the problem of underrepresentation within individual women. Wajcman (2010) discusses the later assertions that technology itself was intensely bound up with patriarchal projects such as medicine and militarism, drawing on examples of reproductive and in-vitro fertilization technologies (IVF), noting strong radical feminist opposition to these in the 1980s. In this particular example, technology has been framed as exploitative, with gendered power relations enacted upon women's bodies through medical control and interference (Unger, 2001).

So then, for radical feminist approaches to technology, gendered power relations were framed as being 'embedded more deeply within technoscience' (Wajcman, 2010, p. 146). However, socialist feminist accounts of technology and science tended to be broadly arranged around Marxist dialogues, with an emphatically pessimistic take on technological advances and what this might mean for women in the workforce. For example, articulating fears that the increasing computerization of work (e.g., office work) would lead to the de-skilling and fragmentation of jobs, impacting more negatively on women than men, with women tending to occupy secretarial and clerical roles (Wajcman, 2004, 2007). Wajcman (2004, p. 27) notes that for socialist feminist approaches, masculinity is 'embedded in the technology itself,' considering the historical contexts of manufacturing, engineering, and the industrial revolution. It is argued that technology reflects the designs of men, with machines configured and built around men and their domination of skilled trades. Though technology may be socially shaped, it is argued that this shaping occurs in a way that privileges men and works to exclude women. Wajcman (2004) further argues that this masculine domination of technology is bound up with the equating of skilled work as men's work.

Unsurprisingly, various critiques of these overtly pessimistic frameworks have been raised by feminist technology scholars. Wajcman's writings on technology and

feminism highlight potential problems with, for example, the gender essentialism which runs throughout earlier feminist accounts, along with portrayals of women as passive victims of technology (Wajcman, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2011). Works by scholars such as Haraway (1985) and Plant (1997) offered a more optimistic outlook, pointing to the possibility for technology to work in an emancipatory capacity, blurring the boundaries around gender identity, bodies, and established gender roles. Technological developments such as virtual reality and reproductive technologies were framed as offering us the possibility to reshape gender, and thus by extension, power, in technological contexts and beyond. Furthermore, Wajcman (2011) notes that theories around the networked and global knowledge society (e.g., Castells, 1996, 2010 network society) work to position technology as a valuable and potentially revolutionary transformative tool—a point which is crystallized within considerations of technology as a space and tool for resistance and activism.

However, even these hopeful portrayals of a space where people can transcend norms around gender and the body have not gone without criticism. For instance, Riley et al. (2009) note the importance of bodies online, pointing to work exploring eating disorders in online contexts (e.g., Day & Keys, 2008). More recent work around ‘fitspiration’ (‘inspirational’ media content such as user generated social media postings consisting of images and videos pertaining to ‘fitness’) such as that of Deighton-Smith and Bell (2018), serves to further highlight the failure of technology to live up to its emancipatory potential. Furthermore, echoes of earlier concerns around gendered power relations being embedded within the technology itself can still be found in more recent works such as O’Neil’s (2016) *Weapons of Math Destruction*, which speaks to the potential harms that can be wrought by the use of big data and algorithms. It is argued that algorithms, though perhaps at first glance appearing to be neutral and unbiased, have gender, race, and class-based inequalities baked in. Power is distributed asymmetrically through technology, with implications for equal access to education (e.g., through decisions made around student finance, disproportionately impacting those already living in poverty) or fair treatment within the justice system (e.g., through the use of facial recognition software, something where racial inequalities and technology intersect in a deeply concerning manner).

Perhaps most useful then for feminist psychologists interested in unpacking notions of gender and power in relation to technology, is Wajcman’s call for a focus on feminist politics rather than on technology itself. Drawing on studies of virtual worlds such as *Second Life*, Wajcman notes that despite possibilities to dismantle and disrupt gender discourse in digital space, any potential is inevitably ‘constrained by the visceral, lived gender relations of the material world.’ Technology is framed not only as a source, but also as a consequence of gender relations, with gender and technology being co-produced simultaneously. Wajcman ultimately notes that technological spaces (and by extension, technology) are neither ‘inherently patriarchal nor unambiguously liberating’ (2010, p. 148). In a similar vein, Locke et al. (2018) echo this cautious and balanced position with their note that social media spaces, while undeniably gendered, classed, and racialized, are neither utopian nor dystopian.

Ultimately then, it is argued that the adoption of this balanced and cautious position is crucial in exploring the connections between gender, power, and technology. Perhaps most pressing for critical feminist psychologists with an interest in this area, there is a clear need to embed feminist thinking into the rapidly expanding field of cyberpsychology. With the British Psychological Society recently approving the addition of a new cyberpsychology section (BPS, 2018), the relative youth of and openness toward interdisciplinary working inherent in this field makes it an ideal site to incorporate and strengthen feminist understandings of gender, power, and technology.

The Current Climate: Gender, Power, Technology, and Work

Women represent a minority in technology, and although there is some degree of variation and inconsistency across statistics available, a persistent gender gap is present across educational and professional settings. For example, figures from the WISE Campaign (WISE, 2022) report that women make up just 26.9% of core STEM occupations in the UK (encompassing science, engineering, and information communications technology roles, but excluding health occupations and skilled trades). Drilling further down to IT work specifically, women account for just 19.5% of IT professional occupations, and 24.7% of IT technician occupations. In the USA, despite accounting for 57% of professional occupations, women make up just 26% of professional computing occupations (NCWIT, 2019). A similarly disappointing picture emerges when we examine the statistics in higher education, with women accounting for a mere 16% of computer science graduates in the UK (WISE, 2019) and 19% of computer and information sciences degree recipients in the USA (NCWIT, 2019). West et al. (2019) UNESCO policy paper, 'I'd blush if I could,' provides a striking exploration of the persistence and severity of the gendered divide in digital skills globally, reporting declines in the number of women studying computer and information science majors across Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to higher-income countries such as the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Additionally, their work attends to the complicated notion of the gender equality paradox. Here, we actually see higher levels of gender equality negatively associated with women's participation in technology programs, and the authors highlight the pressing need for more work to be done in order to better understand this puzzling disparity. Ultimately it appears that the statistical landscape is both disheartening and complex, serving to justify the urgent need for more explicitly critical, feminist work in this area.

Especially upsetting when considering the current state of women's underrepresentation in technology is their historical position within the discipline. The earliest pioneers of computing were women, and we must not forget the enormous impacts they had in shaping technology at large. Looking to the history of computing, we find high-profile examples of women working in technology, such as Ada Lovelace, the English mathematician and writer who is widely regarded as the first computer programmer owing to her work on Charles Babbage's planned Analytical Engine, an

early concept of a programmable computer. Indeed, Ada Lovelace Day is observed on the second Tuesday of October, seeing various events held worldwide celebrating women in STEM in honor of Lovelace herself. Other names and stories may however be less well known, such as the story of the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC)—the first electronic computer in America, which was used primarily for the automation of complex ballistics calculations during World War II. Historian of science Jennifer Light (1999) notes that the two names predominantly attributed to the ENIAC are those of men, in spite of the fact that close to two hundred young women worked as ‘human computers’ to work through the ballistics calculations, and indeed six of these women ultimately ended up programming the machine itself. Most importantly, Light (1999, p. 455) argues that this kind of erasure of women from the history of computing has worked to perpetuate myths of women being ‘uninterested or incapable in the field.’

However, scholars such as Ensmenger (2015) remind us that the presence of high-profile and pioneering women in the history of technology reflects the early feminization of the occupation itself. Women were deemed suitable for the kind of repetitive and low-wage work that made up computer programming on the earliest computer systems. For a time, computer programming was framed as women’s work, as an extension of clerical work or something requiring assumedly ‘feminine’ talents such as patience and attention to detail. Rising demand for skilled technology workers in the 1960s brought with it a rise in salaries and status, and with this an influx of men. Fine (2011) draws attention to the ways in which the uptake of computers in business and domestic settings contributed to the re-gendering of technology, shifting and redrawing the balance of power. With people such as Bill Gates and Steve Jobs enjoying prominent success, the term ‘geek’ became associated with technology, and computer programming became bound up with notions of masculinity, science, and rationality.

In response to this current underrepresentation, there has been a proliferation of research, campaigns, and initiatives looking to address the imbalance. Within psychology, the literature often centers around individual differences or mainstream social psychological explanations (see Helgeson, 2017). As such, much of the research and many of the initiatives aiming to address the problem necessitate a closer reading and analysis from critical feminist scholars, as they are shot through with reproductions of troubling postfeminist narratives around gender and work, in particular those which reproduce neoliberal notions of choice, individualism, and empowerment as discussed by Gill (2007).

When examining efforts to explain, account for, and manage the gender gap in technology (and related STEM fields more generally), it is common to encounter the gap being framed in terms of being a ‘leaky pipeline,’ with this being perhaps one of the most dominant metaphors in academic and popular press alike. The metaphor of the pipeline symbolizes the journey into and through STEM fields (moving from education and training to careers in organizations) as flowing through like water through a pipe. Men travel this metaphorical pipeline smoothly, whereas ‘leaks’ in the pipeline see the loss of women at various points along the journey (Varma & Hahn, 2008). However, this dominant metaphor has been called into question by

scholars such as Soe and Yakura (2008), who challenge the representation as being overly simplistic, and as working to screen out organizational cultures in discussions of women's underrepresentation in STEM fields. Additionally, Herman (2015) notes that the pipeline speaks only to a particular kind of smooth, linear (and inherently masculinized) career path not in line with the 'frayed' careers of women in STEM spaces, who are more likely to bear the weight of career breaks, changes, and re-entries. Furthermore, the pipeline metaphor has a clear focus on the 'supply' side of the equation, characterizing women as problematic, and as having let themselves and society down, their status as 'drips' from the pipeline positioning them as failures (Soe & Yakura, 2008). The persistent and problematic use of this model has been highlighted by Vitores and Gil-Juárez (2016), who argue convincingly for a better approach to understanding the gender gap in STEM. That is to say, an approach which does not inadvertently re-inscribe notions of masculinized and linear career paths as the baseline or norm, while simultaneously obscuring the lived experiences of women studying and working in STEM fields.

With regard to campaigns and initiatives aiming to provide solutions and interventions, we find similarly problematic underpinnings and assumptions. These may be found in formal campaigns, for example, the heavily criticized 'Science: It's A Girl Thing' video, published by the European Commission, which sought to entice girls to pursue careers in STEM fields by featuring glamorous, conventionally attractive young girls playing with cosmetics in a laboratory setting (Collins, 2012). UK-based Energy supplier EDF's #PrettyCurious campaign encouraged young women to consider STEM careers, yet understandably was criticized for conflating appearance and beauty with achievement in science (Reynolds, 2015). We can also find instances within more informal efforts, such as Mattel's controversial *Barbie: I Can Be A Computer Engineer* book, which saw the popular fashion doll struggling to make her game design ideas a reality, relying on the help of her (male) friends to complete the technical programming work needed to make her game come to life (Ribon, 2014).

These kinds of campaigns and initiatives have come under scrutiny from scholars interested in gender, power, and technology. For example, Faulkner and Lie (2007) have discussed the 'pervasive and tenacious' (p. 162) nature of essentialist and binary understandings of femininity and masculinity present in inclusion strategies. They draw attention to the potential consequences of campaigns seeking to recruit more women into programming and development roles, which emphasize the need for social and communication skills, noting that although there may be some short-term benefits offered in terms of increasing participation, in the longer term such initiatives may see women pressed into more peripheral roles where they become responsible for more social, and less technical, aspects of work.

In an evaluation of a UK-based initiative to encourage the engagement of girls with IT, Fuller et al. (2013) leveled criticisms around the misinterpretation of the 'problem' of the underrepresentation of women in technology careers and education. Campaigns and initiatives built around assumptions of gender difference (for instance, around women's 'lesser' capability with, and/or interest in technology) work to reproduce the idea that women are the problem, that they are lacking or

deficit in some way, and that their absence in technological spaces can be addressed by ‘fixing’ something inherent in the women themselves. Furthermore, such initiatives can be criticized as playing into neoliberal and meritocratic discourses around success and power, where anyone can theoretically ‘rise to the top,’ as long as they choose to capitalize upon their innate talents and negotiate the systems and hierarchies of competition which, in this case, constitute technological workspaces. Crucially, within these systems the notion of meritocracy functions as a kind of ‘ideological myth’ (Littler, 2013, p. 55) working to conceal structural inequalities. In this space, discussions of gender and gender-based inequalities are at best minimized, and at worst rendered invisible and unspeakable (Kelan, 2009).

It seems fair to suggest then, that rather than being wholly empowering, these campaigns may run the risk of being disempowering. Solutions provided may be limited in their practical utility and benefits, instead functioning to reproduce troubling discourses around what power looks like in technological contexts, where power is allocated, and who may be best placed to possess it. As such, these kinds of campaigns and initiatives are in further need of critical reading and analysis from feminist scholars interested in gender, power, and technology.

Indeed, some of the campaigns noted above speak to the notion of an ‘image problem’ for technology work and workers, something which is often cited as a potential explanation to account for women’s absence in technological fields (Hayes, 2010; Margolis & Fisher, 2003; Varma, 2007). There is a degree of tension across representations of technology work, with typical constructions of those working in the field positioning them as ‘geeks’ or ‘hackers’ (Wajcman, 2007), terms most commonly associated with masculinity (albeit in a less conventional form), poor social skills, and an unhealthy obsession with technology. However, as Proctor-Thomson (2013) notes, there have been efforts to address technology’s ‘image problem,’ reshaping the identity of the technology worker into a much more desirable form. Instead of the ‘geeks,’ we may now be faced with ‘cool casuals,’ ‘passionate heroes,’ and ‘business professionals’ (p. 93). In more recent work from Mendick et al. (2016), the discursive construction of the ‘geek celebrity’ in young people’s talk is explored, with this imagined figure straddling both desirable and undesirable aspects of historic and more contemporary constructions. They note that the geek celebrity.

... holds together contradictions. *He* is both inside of celebrity, through his wealth and status, *and* outside of ‘vacuous’ celebrity culture, through his talent and enterprise. He is both incredibly wealthy *and* incredibly generous. He has both a desirable lifestyle and intellect *and* an undesirable asociality. (p. 217, emphasis in original)

It is not uncommon to find technology job advertisements touting an array of perks and benefits, good rates of pay, and often offering up the possibility for flexible work schedules and locations. Some may even offer a degree of ‘coolness,’ depending on the specific company or role. As Gill (2002) noted, new media work, which encompasses a wide range of technological roles, is widely considered to be ‘cool, creative, and egalitarian.’ As such, technology work can be perceived as a desirable career choice, offering a certain degree of prestige and power to those working within it.

However, such benefits may not serve to benefit all equally, and may not truly stand up as ‘benefits’ when examined with a more critical eye. Indeed, a striking gender pay gap persists across technology work, and progression and promotion may be experienced at a slower rate for women, with Rickett (2014) reminding us that the ‘glass ceiling effect’ tends to manifest at its most powerful in male-dominated workplaces. The cool and fun ‘corporate campus’ culture (Ensmenger, 2015, p. 43) consisting of hammocks, ball pools, Nerf guns, and ping pong tables found in numerous technology firms today serves to recreate the historic dorm rooms and basements where ‘geeks’ were forged, re-inscribing masculine values in technological work environments. As technology itself facilitates the possibility for a near constant level of connection to our work, the boundaries between professional and personal spaces become blurred, and issues of work–life conflict can start to occur (Messersmith, 2007). As these boundaries between professional and personal begin to blur, so too do the responsibilities of employees and employers around safety, wellbeing, and conduct (Drakett & Kenny, 2018). The positioning of technology work as flexible, offering the possibility for workers to be located anywhere with an internet connection, or to dictate their own hours, or to be casual and informal in countless ways may allow for the production (and reproduction) of inequalities by closing down talk around gender and other structural inequalities (Gill, 2002). Indeed Gill (2002) points out how the cultural and creative industries in which technology work resides are commonly constructed as meritocratic environments, where dominant discourses of individual capability and effort function to silence discussions of inequality and imbalances of power.

Workers in the creative and cultural industries may well be easier to exploit, as their work is presumed to be all-encompassing, requiring a level of obsession, perfectionism, and personal dedication on the part of the individual (Reimer, 2016). Conceptualizing technology work as part of the creative and cultural industries is perhaps easiest when considering arenas such as video game production, a specific domain in which scholars such as Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter (2006) and Chess and Shaw (2015) have examined the exploitative, exclusionary, and deeply gendered practices at play in the industry. Cultures hinging around long hours, ‘bulimic’ work patterns of extreme and intense periods of work followed by brief periods of rest and calm, in a boom and bust scenario, are commonplace in these industries, with Pratt (2000) noting that these patterns of work are unsustainable for many employees, tending to continue for a few years before workers begin to worry about burning out, leaving, or taking career breaks or sabbaticals.

Related and similarly masculinized work environments such as science and engineering also promote competitive cultures of long hours and overwork, with Herman (2015) arguing that such cultures privilege masculine identity, where cultures of overtime and full-time availability likely function to disadvantage women on a practical level. Perhaps unsurprisingly, women working in such environments may be doubly disadvantaged, with many working the ‘second shift’ (Hochschild, 1990), on top of fulfilling their duties within competitive and highly pressurized cultures of overwork. Herman (2015) notes that work–life balance initiatives may do little to improve the situation for women working in such environments as they continue

to be bound by heteronormative gender roles, despite their well-intentioned roots. Further to this, motherhood and associated periods of leave may pose a problem for women in STEM, owing to dominant assumptions around linear career paths in this field, or the speed at which technology is presumed to advance, and so forth.

It has been argued then that, for many women, their identities run counter to conceptualizations of the ‘ideal’ worker in this space. For instance, notions of the ‘ideal’ worker in technology are wrapped up with assumptions of ‘gender neutrality’ with Kelan’s (2008, 2009) work with men and women in the technology industry in Switzerland providing useful insight into the ways in which gender is produced, downplayed, neutralized, and made irrelevant through workers’ talk. Kelan’s participants were often keen to present themselves as workers first and foremost, rather than *gendered* workers. However, there was a tension between this downplaying of gender and, for example, the ways in which some women would actively reject ‘being made a woman’ (Kelan, 2009, p. 178) through their actions, for example, by rejecting hyper-feminine modes of dress, or refusing to carry out ‘domestic’ chores in the workplace. In a similar vein, Demaiter and Adams (2009) noted the tendency of women working in technology to downplay the significance of gender in their workplace interactions, while simultaneously and covertly narrating its importance and relevance.

These discursive tensions speak to the power of gender in relation to technology, highlighting its importance in the face of supposed invisibility, and undermining the assumptions of meritocracy which underpin technology work. What possibilities then, if gender is rendered unspeakable, might exist for resistance?

Looking Forward: Gender, Power, Technology, and Resistance?

It is sometimes difficult to remain optimistic in the face of such a vast, and often rather bleak, technological landscape. However, adopting a more hopeful outlook, it is possible to find instances of technology, gender, and power converging in a more positive way, with the spaces and tools of technology functioning as a means of resistance, activism, and protest against myriad injustices. This is particularly salient when considering matters of gender inequality and feminist activism in online spaces, with projects and movements such as Everyday Sexism and #MeToo serving as examples to highlight the powerful potential of online activism. However, as Mendes et al. (2018) note, the implications of technology for feminist activism and politics are complex and messy at best and warrant further investigation by scholars working across disciplines.

In spite of this messiness however, it is fair to argue that technology itself opens up many possibilities around political participation and protest. New technologies have been found to be useful in offering spaces and tools for activists to connect, helping to signal boost feminism and feminist activism through, to draw on some

notable examples, the use of hashtags as means of connecting people and fostering networks and communities (Guillard, 2016; Looft, 2017; Turley & Fisher, 2018), or participation in feminist blogging (Keller, 2016). Indeed, while social media spaces such as Twitter are often acknowledged as potentially dangerous and toxic environments (especially for women, and notably *visible* women such as those working in high-status political, media based, or technological roles), they can also offer a range of benefits to participants, such as community building, or offering a source of solidarity and support. It has been argued that it is possible to conceive of digital spaces as ‘relatively *safer* and *easier*’ for people to participate in feminist conversations, as compared with offline contexts (Mendes et al., 2018, p. 243).

One such example which is illustrative of this relative easiness, but also of the messiness and complexity inherent in modes of online resistance, can be found in the use of Internet meme-based responses to misogyny and harassment. While some memes may serve to reproduce problematic constructions of gender, serving as examples of ‘ironic’ sexist humor (Drakett et al., 2018), and others may work to explicitly malign feminism and social justice movements (Massanari & Chess, 2018), there are numerous examples of the subversion and repurposing of the format in order to, for example, respond to misandry and anti-feminism (Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018). Utilizing the power of humor, internet memes can be an effective and powerful tool for political action, with a growing body of research examining their utility in various political contexts (e.g., Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Milner, 2013; Rentschler & Thrift, 2015). The relative ease of creation and potential to reach wide audiences quickly should not be underestimated, and it is not uncommon to see familiar examples of internet memes spilling out from digital to physical spaces, adorning placards and posters at offline protests and marches such as the Women’s Marches on Washington and their global counterparts (Mina, 2017). However, there is a need for caution when it comes to drawing on the power of humor as part of wider strategies of protest, as participants may run the risk of being dismissed, and their voices not taken seriously (Brantner et al., 2020).

Movements cohering around hashtags on social media have the potential to reach global audiences and open up possibilities to speak the unspeakable (Keller et al., 2018). Hashtag activism allows activists to ‘continue the conversation beyond the originating dialogue by creating an identifier or tag for fellow activists,’ also offering the possibility for tracking and monitoring the development of a movement over time (Stache, 2015, p. 162). The so-called ‘hashtag feminism’ can be positioned as a form of discursive activism (Clark, 2016), which can offer feminist activists the possibility for rapid response to specific incidents. Clark (2016) argues that hashtag feminism offers value not only in terms of its potential to provoke material socio-political change, but in its ability to nurture ‘more intersectional and open feminist movements’ (p. 801).

Consider for example the case of #distractinglysexy. Following the misogynistic remarks made about women scientists by Nobel laureate Tim Hunt, and his subsequent resignation from an honorary professorship (Waxman, 2015), women working in STEM fields shared pictures of themselves at work in labs or conducting research

in the field, connecting with each other through the use of the hashtag #distractingly-sexy (Brantner et al., 2020). It could be argued that this particular example of feminist informed hashtag activism served to not only blur the boundaries between professional and personal spaces, but also open up a space for the explicit performance of or ‘doing’ of gender in a STEM workplace (Kelan, 2009). Through engagement with this hashtag, women could effectively rewrite and subvert the misogynistic remarks which had prompted the action in the first place. In a similar vein, Rentschler (2015) draws attention to the ways in which feminist activists have challenged dominant discourses around rape prevention which seek to blame victims, by subverting the hashtag #SafetyTipsForLadies.

However, writing on #MeToo, Gill and Orgad (2018) remind us of the overwhelming challenges of such campaigns in their relation to gender and power. While #MeToo has seen global uptake, it has also faced criticism for the focus on white western women’s experiences. Gill and Orgad draw attention to the potentially exclusionary aspects of the movement, specifically the politics and aesthetics, which function to further marginalize those who do not already occupy powerful and privileged positions. Zarkov and Davis (2018) raise a key question here of exactly *who* is able to participate in the movement. They note that the most visible participants of #MeToo are those who already hold privileged positions of power, e.g., wealthy celebrities, journalists, politicians and so forth. They note that for many women, participation in #MeToo may not be so straightforward owing to issues of access (to social media) or because they may face sanctions for engaging with the movement. Indeed, women who speak out against inequalities on public social media platforms all too frequently encounter instances of harassment, bullying, and violence in online spaces. Turley and Fisher (2018) tread a cautious path in their exploration of ‘shouting back’ via hashtags on social media, and of particular note is their reminder that the internet does not represent a ‘utopia for feminist campaigning’ (p. 129). They draw attention to the symbolic and actual violence women face in online spaces, which may take various forms including ‘trolling,’ or rape, or death threats issued against women engaging with political or activist causes. Additionally, they point to issues around the extent to which digital labor (such as engagement with activism, and the management of an online presence) is time consuming and more often than not, unpaid.

While technology work itself is long overdue its #MeToo moment, and indeed at the time of writing this chapter, the games industry was being rocked by allegations of sexual abuse, with many women coming forward to detail their experiences of sexual harassment and violence while working in the industry (BBC, 2019), the potential ramifications of speaking out may well be too grave for those working inside such a highly masculinized environment. While access may be less of an issue for savvy technology workers, the sanctions they may face in terms of their professional and personal lives may limit their ability to participate in such movements. Consider for instance the abuse of Anita Sarkeesian, a media critic whose work exploring representations of women in popular culture (including video games, ‘geeky’ media, etc.) saw her receiving numerous rape and death threats online. Her personal contact information was shared online, and events where she was due to speak received bomb threats and threats of mass shootings (Webber, 2017). In a truly disturbing example

of the use of technology to commit acts of violence against women, an online game was created where players could virtually beat up a picture of Anita, rendering virtual blood and bruises over her face (Valenti, 2015).

Jane's (e.g., 2016, 2017a) work on 'feminist digilantism' (a lovely portmanteau of 'digital' and 'vigilantism') offers food for thought to psychologists interested in the interplay between gender, technology, and power. In a recent paper exploring feminist digilantism as a response to the online abuse and 'slut-shaming' of an Australian woman in 2015, Jane (2017b) outlines a host of benefits, and a range of potential pitfalls and ethical issues, in enacting power in this way online. In the face of inadequate responses from relevant authorities and regulatory bodies, Jane (2017b, p. 8) argues that 'a degree of feminist digilantism can be seen as legally and ethically justified as well as socially necessary.' Perhaps most pressingly though, the paper encourages a reflexive approach with regard to feminist activism online, asking those who participate to consider the ethical and utilitarian implications of their actions. For example, meditation on whether or not actions cross boundaries between activism and vengeance, or whether activism should be limited so as not to 'mirror the perpetrators' (2017b, p. 8) is suggested as a key starting point for the interrogation of feminist power and its enactments in this space.

Ultimately then it is worth remembering that notions of 'hashtag activism,' 'hashtag feminism,' and so forth, can be framed as double-edged swords. While it is important to acknowledge the potential benefits offered by digital participation in political movements, there are undoubtedly questions raised and pitfalls to be aware of, with Wajcman's reminder that 'feminist politics and not technology per se is the key to gender equality' (2007, p. 287) feeling particularly poignant here.

Reflexive, Cautious, and Faintly Hopeful?

Building then from these calls for reflexive and mindful approaches in our digital action, we must also seek to extend this reflexivity to our scholarship. There is a pressing need for researchers to work intersectionally, considering explorations of race, class, and (dis)ability in more nuanced and careful ways. Consider for example, the justified critiques around *whose* voices come to the fore in campaigns such as #MeToo (e.g., Gill & Orgad, 2018; Zarkov & Davis, 2018), or the ways in which race and gender intersect with technology in relation to the disproportionate levels of Twitter abuse received by Black and Asian women MPs, as compared to their white colleagues (Dhrodia, 2017). The neoliberal and meritocratic backdrop which frames so much of the work attempting to explain and/or address women's underrepresentation in technology education and work may serve to further entrench their marginalization, locating blame with individual women and obscuring structural issues which impact on their participation. Many recent works (Drakett et al., 2018; Jane, 2017b; Keller et al., 2018) make the case for a reflexive and cautious approach to our analyses of gender, power, and technology, presenting wary yet faintly hopeful standpoints

more in line with Wajcman's (2004, 2011) technofeminist understandings of technology studies. This careful and considered approach should offer feminist scholars inside and outside of psychology the best possible chance of working in order to better understand, and begin to address, issues of gender and power operating across a range of technological contexts.

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Social Media and Gendered Power: Young Women, Authenticity, and the Curation of Self



Charlotte Dann and Rose Capdevila

As we were beginning to write this chapter, there was a widespread trend on TikTok where users post videos of themselves asking, “What’s a scam that’s become so normalized that we don’t realize it’s a scam anymore?” In continuation, they will often comment or reflect on topics such as dysfunctional societal practices, instances of bad science, the pitfalls of political systems, or experiences of discrimination and inequity. While this trend is but one of many on TikTok—one which will quickly dissipate—it stands as an example of the ways in which social networking sites (SNS) have served as a platform to make visible problematic issues that had not previously received attention, much less nuanced consideration. At the same time, social media has been widely implicated in the rise, if not production, of problematic issues such as “fake news,” revenge porn, cyberbullying, and other less than salubrious practices. However, as contentious and potentially divisive as social media may be, most current estimates indicate that over half of the world’s population are regular users with forecasts showing continued growth for years to come (Statista, 2023). But it isn’t just about the numbers. Through the technological developments around smart phones, social media has become an integral part of our lives and, importantly, our everyday lives have become embedded in social media. And so, these apps become marked out not just as a technology but as a cultural and social force. As such, they have become a site where psychology, power, and gender all come (in)to play.

Given the breadth and currency of this topic, this chapter will focus on one aspect of online practice where these three elements—psychology, power, and gender—meet: the role of authenticity through the curation of self-online among a particularly problematized group—young women. We begin by dipping into the rich body of

C. Dann
University of Northampton, Northampton, UK
e-mail: charlotte.dann@northampton.ac.uk

R. Capdevila (✉)
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
e-mail: rose.capdevila@open.ac.uk

feminist psychological literature around the presentation of the gendered self and then consider how it comes into relation with the digital context by both drawing on pre-existing forms of knowledge and creating space for new ways of sense making.

In discussing social media, we need to be mindful that the online landscape can, and does, shift quickly—from the point of conceptualizing this chapter to the actual writing of it we have had to continuously reconsider our approach. The popularity of some social networking sites (SNS) has dimmed with others coming to the fore in response not only to technological developments but also to changing cultural and political contexts. Note, for instance, the explosion of TikTok internationally during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions as well as the vicissitudes of Twitter after the takeover by Elon Musk. Concurrently, in just a few years, we have witnessed cultural shifts around conceptualizations of gender through online phenomena such as the growth of influencers and #hashtag activism with the adaptive iterations of neoliberal feminine identities that have been perpetuated in these spaces. This constantly changing context shows no evidence of slowing. Thus, as authors, we agreed that rather than focus on the different trends that sweep across specific social media spaces, it would be more fruitful to turn our attention to the concepts and processes that underpin these practices in an ever more digital world. We do so through attention to three practices: the posting of selfies, the engagement in activism, and the promotion of celebrity. Taking these three points of focus, we explore the production of intersectional online selves through notions of agency and authenticity. We will conclude the chapter with a reconsideration of the gendering of power in social media.

Before moving into the psychological literature, it is worth attending briefly to the attempts to govern the use and abuse of power online which have taken a variety of forms (for a discussion of these see Cusumano et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2020; Napoli, 2019). Some of these attempts have involved self-regulation such as the production of community guidelines by specific online communities while others include the processes put into place by the SNSs themselves such as content control, suspensions, and bans. However, as the internet becomes ever more established within our lives and cultures, dissatisfaction with self-regulation has increased and the call for more aggressive government intervention—both national and international—has been mounting, together with the lingering concern that these “internet giants” remain largely “unregulated” and, ultimately, “too powerful.” More recently, these attempts to regulate social media have become entangled with foreign policy agendas and international politics more widely. While we acknowledge the importance of these critiques and share in the widespread concerns about the outsized power that technology companies wield, our remit in this chapter is more tightly focused on how power plays out in everyday social media practices. To this end, drawing loosely on a Foucauldian approach (Foucault, 1980; also see Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982), we conceptualize power as relational. Doing so allows us to make sense of emerging issues in digital spaces in a way that resonates with the networked processes inherent to social media.

The Gendered and Generational Self

Presenting the Self

Research around social media use indicates that engagement with SNS is influenced by both gender and generation (Auxier & Anderson, 2021), and this includes how, when, and what platforms are used. Most of us are familiar with the idea that Facebook is for Boomers (those born post WWII to the early 1960s) who came to use social media as adults, while Zoomers (born late 1990s to the early 2010s) who grew up with digital technology, prefer more creative and dynamic platforms such as Snapchat, BeReal, and TikTok. With respect to the upload and circulation of images on SNS, existing scholarship on generational and gendered patterns of engagement indicates that this practice varies in terms of frequency and presentation. According to Dhir et al. (2016), image posting is more common among women than men and among young people than their older counterparts while there is considerable research evidencing important gender differences in how users (re)present themselves online (Bell, 2019).

While we endeavor to acknowledge intersectional positionings in this chapter, our attention is on the particular intersection of age and gender and our main focus is on young women. The rationale for this choice lies in the extensive literature in psychology arguing that in Western culture (and beyond) it is young women, in particular, who have been “encouraged” to conform to normative beauty standards that require high levels of intervention and self-surveillance (Blood, 2005; Tischner, 2013). As Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) argued over a quarter of a century ago, “women are typically acculturated to internalize an observer’s perspective as a primary view of their physical selves (which) can lead to habitual body monitoring” (p. 173). More perniciously, with the development of postfeminism, this internalization has been attributed to the exercise of agency or individual choice (McRobbie, 2009; Stuart & Donaghue, 2011). As Elias and Gill (2018) remind us “in postfeminist culture, women are interpellated as active, autonomous and self-reinventing subjects, whose lives are the outcome of individual choice and agency” (p. 64). This interpellation serves to produce young women as ideal neoliberal entrepreneurial subjects (Scharff, 2016); “good” citizens who become personally responsible for the state of their appearance, striving to achieve ever better bodies as dictated by the social standards of the time (Tischner, 2013).

In the early days of the internet, chatrooms and Usenet groups seemed to operate as a culture unto themselves, albeit set within (and expanding the boundaries of) offline culture. At that time, one of the perceived characteristics of this environment that received much attention was the apparent invisibility of the body. Many of the standard indicators, the presentational elements of the self, that we commonly use to ascertain who someone *is* were not obviously available online. In a chat room, you could be anyone you wanted to be—any gender, age, ethnicity, in fact, any physical characteristic from accent to height to hair color had the potential to become irrelevant. This was a space that would allow the freedom of identity play

or anonymity, which also implied that it could be (and in many cases still might be) a space without accountability. While there was great excitement about the potential to create a “level playing field,” there were also concerns that if you could pretend to be *anyone* online, then *anyone*—that is con artists, pedophiles, catfishers, etc.—could take advantage of this seeming anonymity. Alternately, you could be the person you wanted to be—your best self—and “hang out” with those like you (would like to be). While these identities were still shaped by intersecting axes of difference a direct link to specific bodies remained tenuous. This, however, was soon disrupted by the introduction of the smart phone with a front facing camera and the SNS which accommodated this new affordance, allowing for the presentation of the “real” self.

Producing Gender Online

The visual is, of course, gendered. Moreover, it is not just the visual that is gendered, but also the practice of visibilizing that is gendered. Hirdman (2010) has noted that while cyberspace had previously been conceptualized as a space that is typically disembodied, more recently there has been an increase in calls for the unpacking of how the body is (re)produced and (re)constructed online. And this is where our argument picks up—digital embodiment is occurring, but even so the body continues to be constructed through the lens of how embodiment is understood in the physical world. As Whitty (2003) noted, “although the physical bodies are not present in cyberspace, the body still does matter” (p. 345) and so, we would argue, it is the sense making and assumptions around embodiment in digital spaces that needs unpacking.

The psychological literature around self presentation is vast, drawing on numerous traditions and overlapping disciplines. However, research on social media often draws, explicitly or implicitly, on Erving Goffman’s (1959) classic theory of self-presentation which proposes that, in interactions with others, we endeavor to manage the impression that they will form of us by adapting our behavior to the context in which we find ourselves. As a result, we can (only) and do behave differently in different settings. However, quotidian and popular media discourses around social media often position posting on SNS as performative to underpin an understanding of these as inauthentic (Darr & Doss, 2022). In line with these dominant discourses, ever blurrier distinctions have been made between what is “real” life, as it is lived offline, and the life presented online, which can be perceived as manipulated or, even, manipulative.

Although the introduction of the image to cyberspace mitigated identity play, the poster still had control over which photos were uploaded and, importantly, how they were edited. There was much debate around how realistic these images were after being edited and filtered to add make up, hair color, or flattering lighting (Wolfe & Yakobovits, 2022). However, it is also the case that filters could be used to add accuracy to images, for instance, for dark skin which has historically been distorted by photographic technology (Roth, 2009). Beyond the discussion of “accuracy,” it was the visual representation of women online that became problematized in that,

even when controlling upload, women were produced not as subjects, but rather as objects of the male gaze. Döring et al. (2016) found in their research that selfies posted on Instagram not only reflected stereotypical gender roles, but that they did so to an even greater extent than the much-critiqued images presented in magazine advertising (see also Butkowski et al., 2020). Blair and Takayoshi (1999) have noted in their discussion of YouTube that while women had apparent control over their own uploaded image, this did not appear to protect them against sexist harassment. Moving the analysis further, Renold and Ringrose (2013) argued that the practice of image posting has been accompanied by the trivialization of young women's online presence. They point out that it is the negative that is often focused on for young women's social media use, rather than giving space to the meaning that young women make from these online spaces. With specific reference to selfies, for instance, Warfield (2014) has argued that dominant media discourses characterize these as "narcissistic vanity rituals by (predominantly) vacuous teenage girls" (p. 2). The way that young women navigate through spaces online thus becomes trivialized in the context of a non-neutral Internet; an Internet that is set in the context of patriarchal societies. What becomes dismissed is the notion that, as young women themselves claim, they aim to capture something "real" or authentic about themselves through selfie posting (Lazard & Capdevila, 2021; Warfield, 2016). Current research indicates that posting can serve to maintain friendships, explore aspects of their lives, and make visible activities that are not just associated with caring responsibilities, work, or other "productive" matters (MacKay & Dallaire, 2013).

Given the cultural context in which gender plays out online, it is unlikely to be surprising that the discipline of psychology has approached this area of inquiry in particularly mainstream ways, primarily predicated on historically dominant notions of the unitary rational subject (Henriques et al., 1984). This has had the effect of taking the research in two main directions both of which lead to discourses of pathologization. One is focused on the body, through notions of image and esteem, and the other on the mind, drawing on conventional theories of personality (McCain et al., 2016). These are both premised, we would argue, on the neoliberal entrepreneurial subject (Scharff, 2016) discussed earlier. More recent conceptualizations drawing on critical postfeminist approaches, however, have critiqued as limited these more traditionally conceived pathologizing discourses.

Negotiating Authenticity

Paechter (2013) outlines, among other issues of community and privacy, the importance of authenticity in the construction of young women's identities in online spaces. This research argues for the importance of establishing authenticity in being well-received within the online community. However, Faleatua (2018) contends that the performance of authentic online identities extends beyond simply wanting to be liked online—it is a way of harnessing power through desired digital self-representation. Interestingly, participants in Faleatua's study likened Instagram to a game of power

whereby the right kind of image posting leads to likes or confirmation that their identity is being well-received. The thing that stands out here is their *acknowledgment* that while SNSs have the power over processes for and performance of the platform, as well as the promotion of particular images, the young women could control how their image is curated and presented. This echoes Lazard and Capdevila's (2021) work on young women's selfies, whereby the filtering and editing of selfies contribute to the authenticity of self by way of communicating best captured examples. A presentation of one's authentic self online produces that online self not as detached from reality, but rather as an extension of it. This allows for the disruption of traditional offline hierarchies in online spaces (Robinson, 2007). Voice online can give space for voice offline and, thus, power is disrupted through curation of self through these online communities.

Community is a critical element of these processes. As Granic et al. (2020) have argued, "most of us, but especially youth, are living their everyday lives in an offline world that is woven dynamically and interactively with online contexts in a single holistic ecosystem" (p. 196). They refer to this as "hybrid reality." As argued earlier, social media has become, and aspires to be, an integral part of everyday life even at times endeavoring to explicitly capture authenticity. Note for instance the growth in recent years in the popularity of the BeReal app. Taking advantage of the dual camera facility of smart phones, at an undetermined time of the day, the app messages users requiring they take both a selfie and an image of what they are looking at which it then sends to everyone in the user's BeReal social network. BeReal advertises itself as "A new and unique way to discover who your friends *really* are in their daily life" (emphasis added), the idea being that the app will capture the users at an unedited, authentic moment. According to Statista (2022), 66% of 2022 BeReal users were female, with the vast majority being young women. Many of the participants identified BeReal as an "authentic social media app," taking the "selfie" one step further.

The Feminist Entrepreneur

The "Prosumer"

Accompanying young women's aspirations around the production of authenticity, as neoliberal entrepreneurial subjects, they are also in a continuous process of self-improvement in an effort to meet with societal expectations of "good femininity" as posited above. At the same time, the prevalence of social media and the way it has developed has been theorized to have contributed to the spread of what Alvin Toffler (1980, p. 282) referred to as "prosumers"—a portmanteau of the words producer and consumer. The improved self is then one that is simultaneously produced and consumed, positioning these young women as the ultimate prosumer. This dual positioning for SNS users requires careful management.

To provide some background for this, we would argue that the contemporary concern with authenticity is in part rooted in the rise of reality television. Drawing on Baudrillard, Rose and Wood (2005) argue that “It may matter less whether [reality tv] programs...are real in some objective sense than that the subjective experience of reality involves the complex interaction of message and audience” (p. 286). A similar sensemaking is evident around objective and subjective reality in social media posts in which authenticity becomes produced relationally. Following a resonant line of argument, Banet-Weiser (2021) has suggested that it is this authentic relationality/relational authenticity which plays into the neoliberal self-branding that is demanded on social media particularly of young women who pay a high price for being found not to be authentic. In this sense, authenticity is not something that “is” but rather something that is “produced.” Banet-Weiser further argues that “The more *effort* women make in crafting themselves according to a particular version of apparently effortless authenticity, the more authentic their self-presentation.” (p. 143). This argument brings to the context of social media the argument we made earlier more generically around the presentation of the gendered self.

#Girlboss

The epitome of this neoliberal postfeminist young woman has been captured in popular culture by the notion of the “Girlboss” or, particularly relevant in the social media context, by its online version #Girlboss. The term was coined by Sophia Amoruso (2014) to denote female empowerment in a challenging male dominated business world by “beating them at their own game” so to speak. The Girlboss is an attractive figure in that she implicates both authenticity and agency for young women. She exists, of course, thanks to feminist struggles to defend women’s rights in the workplace. Similar to the “lean in” approach popularized by Sheryl Sandberg (2013) around the same time, this take on feminism has come under considerable scrutiny. Mastrangelo (2021) defines the notion of the Girlboss “as emergent, mediated formations of neoliberal feminism that equate feminist empowerment with financial success, market competition, individualized work-life balance, and curated digital and physical presences driven by self-monetization” (p. 4).

Notably this approach encourages young women to market themselves in a high workload culture creating an ideal that is inherently ableist and disregards any commitments to care for others (Fradley, 2022). It promotes a lifestyle that is attainable to very few, idealizing the pursuit for wealth and little responsibilities. As Maguire (2020) suggests, the notion of the #Girlboss sets up a “success equals happiness” equation that is supported in our society and culture through the constant availability of self-improvement advice. This advice dominates many social media platforms with, for instance, beauty tutorials having become one of the most popular genres for women on TikTok (Shutsko, 2020). The online power in the #Girlboss rhetoric comes from the marketing of this focus on self and success as feminism—a kind of “doing it for the girls,” women working hard and being visible. However,

this is more capitalism than feminism. The #Girlboss perpetuates ways of being that are largely exclusionary of others, as mentioned above, and also serving a very male gaze. What this term does then is to tap into notions of “feminism,” while visibilizing a very particular kind of young woman (Alexandersson & Kalonaityte, 2021) and, thereby, as Mastrangelo (2021) argues, alienating her from a collective, intersectional feminism that has the potential to generate greater political power.

A Case in Point in Three Parts

To this point, we have explored the ways in which young women come into relation with social media. We have considered how they can be made (in)visible online and how gender is mitigated through authenticity, agency, and, ostensibly, power. In this section we will look at three specific cases where these can be seen to play out: selfies, #activism, and celebrity.

Selfies

Ten years after the Oxford English Dictionary selected “selfie” as their word of the year, it is likely fair to say they have become a thing of mundanity. There are probably very few people left who have not been involved in the everyday practice that is selfie taking—on a holiday, at a family reunion or to mark an occasion to name but a few. In spite of their popularity, selfies have been the subject of considerable societal censure (Diefenbach & Christoforakos, 2017; Lazard & Capdevila, 2021). In everyday discourse as well as in much of the psychological literature (e.g., Koterba et al., 2021; Weiser, 2015) selfies are problematized as superficial, self-indulgent, or a form of digital narcissism. As Goldberg (2017) has argued, selfies represent “a kind of compensatory self-obsession that requires the approval of others and is thereby pathologically beholden to them” (p. 3). This “self-obsession” tends to be associated primarily, although not exclusively, with the practice of young women (Capdevila & Lazard, 2020; Dhir et al., 2016).

The evidence around the benefits and dangers of selfies is mixed. For instance, in their meta-analysis of selfie behaviors and self-evaluation, Felig and Goldenberg (2023) found that taking and posting selfies were both associated with positive appearance-specific self-evaluations but selfie editing was associated with negative appearance-specific self-evaluations. In the literature surveyed by Felig and Goldenberg (2023), gender and age did not appear to moderate these negative and positive relationships. However, importantly, they argued that methodological factors played a role “suggesting these relationships depend on factors, such as how selfie behaviors are measured and study design” (p. 1). This resonates with research by Johannes et al. (2021) on the problematic nature of reporting methods of social media use overall. To explore this a bit further, we can focus on the findings by Felig and Goldenberg

that editing was associated with negative self-evaluation. Following their own logic, this is interesting in that it relies on the methodological categorization of editing as a singular phenomenon. We would argue that this approach risks confounding the diversity of ways in which the phenomenon is experienced by selfie takers themselves.

As we mentioned earlier in the chapter, image editing can serve a number of purposes including to correct for distortions produced by photographic algorithms and technology, particularly for people of color. Moreover, there is consistent evidence that selfie editing can be used ironically or simply for fun. Based on their research on the psychological functions of selfies in self-presentation, Diefenbach and Christoforakos (2017) suggest that “the playful and somewhat ambiguous support of self-presentation may be a key factor for the success of selfies” (p. 2).

Our own research indicates that very little of the existing literature reports methodological approaches which allow young women to voice their own sensemaking around editing. The use of innovative methodologies that aim to capture young women’s own experiences of selfie posting indicates that many of the outcomes of these studies are artifactual of the methodology used. For instance, Capdevila and Lazard (2020) used processual selfie completion to capture the act of selfie taking and posting in situ. By sitting with the participant as they produced a selfie—talking through and recording each step—the research was able to provide evidence of technical and artistic expertise, nuanced understanding, and complex sensemaking around the process that would be invisible in more experimental, survey, and even interview methods. A further study by Lazard and Capdevila (2021) using Q methodology to capture shared understandings of selfies with young women found a number of different narratives of how they talk about and make sense of the practice. These empirical approaches were able to capture the importance of posting for both communication and the creation of communities along with the challenges young women faced in navigating the social requirements around producing “good” femininities.

Grindstaff and Torres Valencia (2021), move beyond the individualized sense making of selfie practices. Based on a series of interviews with young people, they distinguish between what might be the banality of a single selfie and the phenomenon that is selfie culture, arguing that “selfies may well be a DIY response of sorts to the persistent exclusion of women as producers of media.” (p. 746). Similarly, the study by Lazard and Capdevila (2021) evidenced the complexity of the curation of self both around young women’s own posting and through their audiencing of others’ posts. Critical elements of selfies become overlooked if we focus only on individualized processes: the relationality of the process of posting and the audience, and the communities created thereby are, of course, critical to the power of social media.

#activism

“Social media facilitate online activism” affirm Greijdanus and colleagues (2020, p. 49) in their discussion of the psychology of online activism and social movements.

Grejdanus et al. point out that online activism is underpinned by the affordances of social media which allow for community building and the development of shared reality along with the possibility of bringing together individual experiences—all elements critical to the success of social movements (Della Porta & Diani, 1999). The hashtag has served as a particularly powerful affordance for bringing people together. Recent years have witnessed the impact of movements such as #Everydaysexism, #MeToo, #timesup, #BlackLivesMatter, #seacabo, #MahsaAmini along with many others. These activist engagements endeavoring to create change are often referred to as hashtag activism, but also derided as slacktivism. Similarly, the term “keyboard warriors” has come into use—a derogatory term for those who support activism online. Both these terms aim to bring attention to the fact that value distinctions are made between the virtual space afforded by SNSs and the geographical space in which activists attend marches and go to meetings. We would argue that this type of sensemaking which challenges the authenticity of digital political actors, relies on distinctions between “real” and online life that, as we have already argued, do not reflect social media users’ experience of “hybrid reality.” The review conducted by Grejdanus et al. (2020) referred to above, confirmed that the bulk of empirical studies found a positive correlation between online and offline activism. In this sense, research indicates that activist engagement with SNS can provide access to the type of collective political power that, as Mastrangelo (2021) has argued, is denied through neoliberal notions such as that of the #Girlboss.

After the Women’s Marches which took place in January 2017, there were extensive reports of the role of social media in successfully mobilizing and organizing such large numbers globally. It is estimated that approximately four million women participated in the United States and another five million worldwide. Times, locations, transport information, templates for signs, and even patterns for “pussy hats” were circulated to millions instantly evidencing how social media has extended both the reach and the inclusivity of the women’s movement. Not only could those activists isolated in their geographical communities find connections with others, but social media also provided a space for the participation of those unable to attend in person for reasons of health, disability, or caring responsibilities. Moreover, it allowed those connections and communities to continue post event (Einwohner & Rochford, 2019). This was not an isolated case, the reach of social media and digital feminism extends beyond the West as is evidenced through the Naked Chest against Domestic Violence and #MituinChina in China (Lixian, 2020), and the transgressive possibilities for Iranian women activists (Tahmasebi-Birgani, 2016).

With respect to young women in particular, Taft (2020) has written about the rise of “girl activists” since 2011 who have gone from being virtually unrecognized in both public discourse and academic literature to “celebrated cultural figures” (p. 2); these include figures such as Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg. While Taft does not address the contribution of social media to this rise in visibility, other authors have commented that, for young women in particular, online activism has proven less intimidating and a more familiar means of doing politics (e.g., Harris, 2008) thereby serving as a gateway to engagement. In their study of the #freethenipple protests organized by young women in Iceland, Rúðólfsdóttir and Jóhannsdóttir

(2018) show how young women were able to make use of social media to take up an agentic position in relation to change. They also point out the importance of the support the activists received from older feminists. In other words, agentic online engagement can take strength from the extended relationships that are facilitated by the very technology on which they depend. We would argue that these wider support networks, which are accessed online, but experienced as authentic, are critical to young women's sense of political agency.

What is undeniable, of course, is that as well as widespread support, online political engagement can bring pervasive censure and extreme abuse and even facilitate top-down repression in authoritarian states. Chen et al. (2018) argue that, while hashtag activism can be powerful, we must attend to its limitations in that by creating inclusions, exclusions are also produced, and these can result in backlash. We need only read the newspapers to see the disdain of some white male middle-aged journalists and politicians for Taft's "girl activists." Taft (2020) argues, however, that the success of these young women can be problematically premised on their appearance as "hopeful, harmless and heroic" which, by relying on a series of sexist and racist tropes, constructs them as politically safe. Instead, she recommends, they should be "re-figured in ways that acknowledge their transformative leadership and support, rather than undermine, their efforts to build collective power and resistance" (p. 13). As Chen further argues, the success of hashtag activism lies not in the "hashtag" but rather in the "activism." In order for #activism to make a difference, to be seen as authentic and agentic, it must be embedded in everyday practices and concerns.

Celebrity

The relationship between celebrity and #activism—specifically feminism—has historically been a fraught one. For many decades it had been considered best practice for celebrities not to mention the "f-word" publicly. So, when at the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs), Beyoncé stood in front of an enormous screen with the word "FEMINIST" written on it, many (albeit not all) feminists rejoiced (Trier-Bieniek, 2016). Beyoncé's brand of celebrity feminism has been both feted and harshly critiqued. As one of the most successful pop stars in the world, her endorsement has certainly prompted serious consideration of "the meaning of gendered identities within dominant power structures in which women are marginalized" (Prins, 2017, p. 30). If this event stands as a critical moment in the popularization of what is referred to as "celebrity feminism," the critical tool has been social media.

Prins (2020), in writing about Taylor Swift and her relationship with her fans, has pointed out how social media has drastically changed the celebrity landscape, destabilizing previous understandings of celebrity-audience interactions. In acknowledgment of the power of these online relationships, it has become normalized for celebrities (or their teams) to create and maintain these online "communities" using SNS. For instance, early in 2023, the media reported widely that Swift's fans, commonly known as "swifties," managed to bring down the price of eggs in response to a tweet

from their idol. This ability to act as a single digital force, to affect markets, could be conceptualized as empowering for young women, and yet, the links to neoliberal capitalism are hard to deny. In her study of feminist clubs in secondary schools, Jackson (2021) found that the young women very much “recognized the commodified context in which celebrity culture is embedded” (p. 1088).

The commodified relationship between the celebrity poster and the audience is, arguably, nowhere more visible than in the phenomenon of the social media influencer (SMI) who endeavors to “shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media” (Freberg et al., 2011, p. 90). Young women influencers who become “famous” through their engagement with SNS disrupt the customary celebrity route which has traditionally relied on institutional intermediaries such as sports, fashion, or, as per the examples above, entertainment. However, social media influencers play a key role in the advertising ecosystem (Brooks et al., 2021). The “celebrification” of these young women on social media explicitly marks them as the quintessential prosumer. As they consume social media, they produce content that gives them access to a specific type of power—the power to influence others about what to buy, how to dress, and where to self-improve. Maybe unsurprisingly, research indicates that purchase intentions are more positively correlated with influencers who have become famous through social media than with celebrities who have achieved their status through the more traditional routes (Pöyry et al., 2019) and influencers are seen as more trustworthy than traditional advertising (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020). This is predicated on the successful negotiation of authenticity with their audience while maintaining their appeal to advertisers (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020). As argued by Banet-Weiser (2015), within these gendered economies of visibility, the main product that is being sold is a feminine body that is filtered through a post-feminist sensibility bringing with it a type of hyper-feminine forms of consumption (McRobbie, 2008; Riley et al., 2016) that reinscribe the neoliberal entrepreneurial subject. Thus, their power lies not in the “product,” what is being bought and sold, but rather in the creation of relationships that rely on notions of authenticity.

Conclusion

The ways in which we make sense of young women and social media can serve to both resist and reinscribe existing hegemonic and patriarchal power structures. The use of social media as a tool with which to persistently trivialize young women as narcissistic and inauthentic in both media and academia deserves serious feminist attention. We would argue that an acknowledgment of “hybrid reality,” where the everyday takes place for young women, has the potential to make visible new, agentic spaces for previously disenfranchised communities. The use of technology to resist or reinscribe existing power structures, through selfie curation, hashtag activism, or social media influencers is predicated on the possibilities of mediating gendered power through an intersectional feminist lens.

We have discussed how the presentation of self for young women has been historically shaped through the male gaze to internalize the observer's perspective and how, with the advent of "postfeminism," this practice has become constituted as an expression of agency or individual choice. The production of young women as the "ideal neoliberal entrepreneurial subject" (Scharff, 2016) translated to online spaces as the quintessential prosumer or #Girlboss. However, one of the basic affordances of the social networking platforms is that they facilitate community as they are inherently relational. The community building affordances of SNS allow for the pursuance of shared agendas and shared goals, with the potential to empower those groups that engage with them. Over the years this has allowed for disruption through the amplification of marginalized voices. At the same time, the affordances of social media can function to redirect these voices back toward commodification and entrepreneurialism. Social media, as we stated at the beginning of the chapter, is integral to our everyday life and our everyday lives have become embedded in social media. For feminists, it is critical that we attend to how power plays out in these spaces and how the role of authenticity, and attempts to undermine it, are implicated in young women's curation of self.

In this chapter, we have endeavored to explore how psychology, power, and gender play out in the hybrid reality created by social media with particular attention to young women's curation of self-online. Because we have drawn on a theory of power that is relational, we have attended to the ways in which the role of authenticity can serve to facilitate or hinder agency. In reflecting back to the TikTok trend with which we began the chapter, "What's a scam that's become so normalized that we don't realize it's a scam anymore?," we would argue that the trivialization of young women, and the extensive use of social media to do so, is certainly one of these scams. This scam draws on patriarchy and neoliberalism to constitute young women's agency as trivial and inauthentic and thus to disempower them. We would conclude then that intersectional feminist attention, that functions to make visible the significance and potential of young women's engagement with social media, is a crucial counter to this scam.

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Implications and Applications

Entitlement, Backlash, and Feminist Resistance



Kristin J. Anderson and Christina Hsu Accomando

Feminist psychologists in recent decades have correctly incorporated the topic of privilege into discussions of prejudice and discrimination (Anderson & Accomando, 2002; White et al., 2001). White privilege, male privilege, cisgender privilege, heterosexual privilege, and class privilege, for example, reflect the unearned advantages enjoyed by individuals in dominant groups—even if they also occupy identities that are not advantaged.¹ Thus, to understand the full impact of inequality and oppression, scholars and activists scrutinize both discrimination against people in marginalized groups and the corresponding unearned privileges of people in dominant groups. One psychological phenomenon that has received less direct examination but powerfully influences the persistence of social, economic, and political inequality is psychological entitlement. The concept of entitlement captures one's sense of deservingness and is particularly helpful in understanding backlash against progress toward equality for marginalized groups. Dominant group members' sense of entitlement sets the stage for their resentment when they perceive their position or status is undermined. Even when such group members might be otherwise disadvantaged (e.g., working-class white people, men of color, cisgender women), entitlement still plays a significant role in resentment, horizontal hostility, and backlash.

¹ Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins and other women of color feminists have identified how we all occupy multiple locations in the matrix of domination. Being targeted in some ways does not negate the privileges one receives for their location in any dominant groups. This idea is key to the notion of intersectionality. See Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.

K. J. Anderson

Center for Critical Race Studies, University of Houston-Downtown, Houston, TX, USA
e-mail: AndersonK@uhd.edu

C. H. Accomando (✉)

Department of Critical Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies, California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, CA, USA
e-mail: ca3@humboldt.edu

In this analysis, we particularly draw upon social psychology, critical race theory, and intersectional feminism. Social psychology tells us to examine not only internal psychological processes but also social contexts and hierarchies. Critical race theory tells us that racism is systemic and structural, not just interpersonal (Accomando & Anderson, 2022). Intersectional feminism tells us that identity, oppression, and resistance exist in a matrix of domination. These approaches, taken together, offer complex and complementary lenses to examine backlash and resistance.

Entitlement, in the context of unequal power and privilege, is key to understanding backlash, which, in turn, is key to understanding why progress moves forward, slows, and reverses even as nations have seen powerful and effective movements for progressive change. Critical race theorist and intersectional feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988) points out that historically, and in the present, wherever there is reform, we also see retrenchment, and often the retrenchment is even more powerful than the original progress that preceded the backlash. We argue that power entitles those with it to process information in self-serving and convenient ways. Studies show that entitlement also produces reckless, even dangerous behavior. When dominant group members' sense of entitlement is disrupted, they engage in backlash as an attempt to bring the world back to stasis—the time when they believe they were comfortably in power. Viewing backlash through a lens of entitlement allows us to understand the emotional component to backlash. Backlash emotions range from confusion and defensiveness to rage, and the behavioral manifestations of these emotions span a similar gamut. Backlash emotions are given social and political validity by pundits and politicians (Kranish, 2021), not because they are legitimate responses to social progress, but because they are expressed by dominant group members.

Backlash is not unique to the present era—it happens again and again throughout history by an advantaged group in response to progress made by those on the margins (Anderson, 2016). There was backlash when newly freed African Americans made economic and political gains during Reconstruction; when women sought to control their reproduction; when queer people demanded marriage rights; when transgender people insisted on having public lives; and when educational materials began to acknowledge systemic inequality (Accomando & Anderson, 2022). The rage of the entitled has profound socio-political consequences, from policy retrenchments and group violence to public support for authoritarian leaders (Anderson, 2021). Thus, feminist psychologists would do well to follow the dynamics of entitlement and backlash with vigilance.

In this chapter, we argue that entitlement is key to understanding the persistence of inequality, especially backlash against progressive change. We begin by defining entitlement and situating it among the concepts of power and privilege. Next, we offer some contemporary manifestations of entitlement that capture the range of behavior it produces, including men's ignorance as perpetrators, mansplaining, and precarious manhood. Finally, we explore the relationship between entitlement and backlash against progressive change, such as the punishment of confident and competent women and patterns of violence—usually committed by men across different ethnic backgrounds—against marginalized groups. As we explore these dynamics, we offer examples of intersectional feminist resistance as a counterweight to backlash.

Power, Privilege, and Entitlement

Power is the ability to influence others. It is the capacity to affect the conduct of others through the real, perceived, or threatened use of rewards and punishments (Fiske, 1993). Power holders can be in influential positions, meaning they make the laws that govern society, enforce the laws, or run powerful organizations. Their power is based on achieving recognized status that allows them influence. There is also cultural power, which is determined not by specific achievements, but by the status of the group to which one belongs (e.g., one's racial, gender, or religious category). Being white, a man, cisgender, heterosexual, and Christian confers power and status relative to those who are not the normative identities in these social categories.

The powerful are influential because they have the resources to influence. Those who have cultural power but not material resources in the form of wealth and political influence are still powerful relative to those without cultural power. For example, a white working-class heterosexual man has cultural power even if he lacks economic power. His gender, race, and sexual orientation make him the cultural default in three ways. A Latinx working-class heterosexual man will not be considered the cultural default in terms of his ethnicity or class status, but his heterosexual maleness confers power in relation to women and queer people. That a white working-class heterosexual man has more power than people of color, queer people, and women does not mean that he *feels* powerful or believes himself powerful. He might not feel powerful when he is passed over for a promotion or hollered at by a passing driver. He may experience many challenges in his life. Those challenges, however, are likely not due to his gender, race, and sexual orientation.

Those who are members of dominant groups—groups that are the cultural default and the more valued members of a social category—are granted privileges based on their higher-status group position. Privilege refers to the unearned advantages, opportunities, protections, and benefits-of-the-doubt granted to dominant group members simply because of their group membership (McIntosh, 2020/1989). These privileges exist regardless of whether the recipients seek them out, and they are so regularly given to dominant group members, they often do not realize they have them. Many of these benefits should be available to everyone, but they are not, and some benefits should be available to no one, but are. And because these benefits are so taken-for-granted by dominant group members, they may either naively assume everyone gets them or come to believe they deserve the unearned advantages.

Psychological Entitlement and Its Relation to Power and Privilege

When a group is viewed as the ideal or normative identity in a social category, they are valued and become accustomed to expecting privileges as the norm. Entitlement is one's *belief* or *sense* of what they deserve (Major, 1994; O'Brien et al., 2012).

Power and privilege produce an inflated sense of entitlement. How does entitlement relate to power and privilege? Power is about *position* or social location: one's ability to influence is due to having resources or membership in a dominant group. Privilege is about *advantage*: certain benefits or protections given to someone based on power. Entitlement is about *expectations*: the inflated sense of deservingness one has as a result of power and the benefits of privilege. Entitlement exists in a social context but captures something psychological. Power, privilege, and entitlement amount to a kind of triad of dominance.

Entitled people are more likely to define their own deservingness based on ascribed characteristics (i.e., who they are), rather than achieved characteristics (i.e., what they have accomplished; Major, 1994). Entitled people tend to be self-centered. They have the tendency to take credit for positive events and to blame others for negative ones (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). Entitled individuals agree with statements such as "I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others" and "People like me deserve an extra break now and then." On self-report measures, men tend to show higher levels of entitlement than do women (Crone et al., 2020). Unfortunately, most empirical studies on entitlement are limited by the over-reliance on white U.S. college student participants. However, one study of Latinx, black, and white U.S. college students found that men reported higher levels of entitlement than women across all three ethnicities (Crone et al., 2020).

Whereas gender differences are detected in self-report measures, entitlement can be a tricky phenomenon to capture because those who feel entitled do not usually recognize their sometimes-breathtaking sense of entitlement. The entitled have the luxury of lacking introspection. They are accustomed to an environment that quietly and seamlessly moves in their direction. Therefore, other measures of entitlement are less direct but no less illustrative of the phenomenon. For example, men feel entitled to a higher salary than their similarly situated peers, whereas women are more likely to believe that they are entitled to the same salary as their peers (Barron, 2003).

Brenda Major's classic research studies (e.g., Major et al., 1984) reveal how some individuals' sense of entitlement is independent of actual accomplishment. Undergraduates in these studies were asked to complete a task. When they were finished, they were instructed to pay themselves what they considered fair for the work they completed, leaving behind any remaining money. Like other studies, men paid themselves significantly more than what women paid themselves. This pattern held even when women outperformed men. When Major and her colleagues paid students a *fixed* amount of money to perform a task, women were more likely than men to work longer, to complete more of the work, to be more accurate, and to be more efficient. When participants were asked to provide evaluations of their own performances, women and men did not differ in their self-rated performance evaluations, even though the women performed better than the men (Major et al., 1984).

Perhaps it is not surprising that men believe they are worth more than what women believe women are worth. People reward men accordingly (Solnick & Schweitzer, 1999). In experiments in which respondents are asked to allocate salaries to job candidates with exactly the same credentials, respondents allocate higher salaries to men than to women (Williams et al., 2010). In addition, jobs that are arbitrarily

labeled as “male” are viewed as higher value and therefore meriting a higher salary than jobs with the exact same characteristics labeled “female” (Alksnis et al., 2008). These findings give men good reason to believe they deserve things that they do not necessarily deserve. These findings also provide insight into why dominant group members can be inflexible and brittle when adaptation is required, such as changes in the economic or demographic landscape (Anderson, 2021).

Power, Entitlement, and Self-Centered Disregard of Others

Research studies illuminate the relationship between power and one’s sense of entitlement. Those in power tend to process information in a self-serving manner that produces dismissiveness and ignorance in relation to those without power (Fiske, 1993; Guinote, 2015). Whether power is generated by a simple prime in a laboratory, or from real-life groups, powerholders do not need to be careful in their attention to and interpretation of others. They feel less pressure than those without power to scrutinize their decisions and behavior because they are less likely to be held to account (Fiske, 1993). Research studies on attention find power decreases attention to other people (Fiske, 1993). Power holders can be careful and deliberate in their thinking when motivated, but they are quite comfortable relying on stereotypes when evaluating people—especially if those they are evaluating have little power. Experiments in which power is manipulated in the laboratory find that power holders tend to encode and remember stereotype-consistent information and ignore information that contradicts their stereotypes (Guinote & Phillips, 2010). And from the power holder’s perspective, why not stereotype? Stereotyping others doesn’t really cost power holders anything. Their power entitles them to stereotype with few consequences.

In contrast, those with less power are more likely to attend evenly to all information. They are required to consider consequences of their actions and ponder their judgments because they have to; often their employment and their safety make them vigilant in a way that power holders do not need to be (Fiske, 1993). This dynamic undergirds W. E. B. Du Bois’s notion of “double consciousness,” by which African Americans are “gifted with second-sight in this American world” (Du Bois, 2005/1903, p. 7). It also informs Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) concept of *la facultad*:

the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. . . Those who do not feel psychologically safe or physically safe in the world are more apt to develop this sense. Those who are pounced on the most have it the strongest—the females, the homosexuals of all races, the darkskinned, the outcast, the persecuted, the marginalized, the foreign. (p. 38)

The flip side of this capacity, this perceptiveness, is the ignorance afforded to the powerful and the entitled.

When we think of social and cultural power outside the laboratory, that is, when we put things in terms of already-existing hierarchies, we can see how dominant group

members know relatively little about subordinated group members but subordinated groups are compelled to be well-informed about dominant groups. A domestic worker knows a lot about her boss—when they are in a bad mood, the kind of food they like. A boss knows little about the domestic worker—the boss does not need to. And this arrangement might be preferable for the boss as this lack of personalization allows them to view employees as expendable and exchangeable. Whether we are talking about gender, race, class, or citizenship hierarchy (or any of their intersections), the privilege of being in the dominant group comes with the paradoxical *disadvantage* of ignorance. James Baldwin (2010) wrote,

You cannot lynch me and keep me in ghettos without becoming something monstrous yourselves. And furthermore you give me a terrifying advantage [Y]ou never had to look at me . . . , and I had to look at you. I know more about you, therefore, than you know about me. (p. 17)

Sexual Misconduct: The Convenient Cluelessness of Entitlement

As discussed above, dominant group members feel liberated from paying attention, especially in attending to those with less status. One area where convenient cluelessness abounds is in men's sexual assault and harassment of women. The #MeToo movement started by Tarana Burke rose to global attention in 2017 and has been a reckoning for some powerful men who had escaped consequences from groping, assaulting, and raping women for years and sometimes decades. Several high-profile men were rightly forced to account (some have lost jobs, while a few have faced criminal penalties). Enter the convenient bumbler. In "The Myth of the Male Bumbler," Lili Loofbourow (2017) writes that the male bumbler is astonished to discover that men have power relative to women, and he believes that he personally has never had power over anyone. *Who, me?* he says. *What power?* Loofbourow says there's a reason for this sudden claim of cluelessness: The bumbler's culturally enabled ignorance exonerates him. And ignorance and incompetence are seen as less damaging than malice. "The bumbler takes one of our culture's most muscular myths—that men are clueless—and weaponizes it into an alibi," writes Loofbourow. "Our culture makes this script available. We need to shed the exculpatory scripts that have mysteriously enabled all these incompetent bumlbers to become rich, successful, and admired even as they maintain that they're moral infants" (para. 14).

A variant of the convenient bumbler is when men "misremember" violating women. Emma Gray (2017) writes that when men feel entitled to women's bodies, their bad behavior feels normal, even routine to them. When you are used to taking advantage of people, taking advantage of someone is not noteworthy. In fact, it doesn't even feel like taking advantage. So why would an entitled man remember something exploitative he did years before? A brutal irony of sexual assault and harassment is that the traumas that frequently shape the trajectory of survivors' lives are often unremarkable to the men who have inflicted them. This may be why some men seem

shocked (either genuinely or performatively) when they are asked to answer for their actions. When perpetrators respond to claims against them with “nothing happened,” they may, in many cases, be lying. But an alternative explanation offered by Gray is that when some men say “nothing happened,” it’s not just a denial—it’s that they truly consider the incident so trivial that they do not remember it (Gray, 2017). The perpetrator has learned that he is entitled, even expected, to treat women in these ways. A violation that can crush a woman’s sense of self, her ability to trust, her relationships, her sexual life, her sleep, and her ability to move freely through the world, may mean nothing to the person who caused it all. Inga Muscio (1998) describes her fear-driven upbringing by a mother who, she learns only in adulthood, had been raped at the age of nine, profoundly shaping her and her daughters’ lives. Muscio writes that “the two men who raped our mother have no idea either of us exist on the planet to have been raised under the shadow of their action” (p. 154). Individual entitlement in concert with a rape-supportive culture allow such a divergence of experience.

Alongside the male bumbler are the men seemingly flummoxed by women’s allegedly confusing signals. At the height of #MeToo, articles emerged in the popular press written for men about how to read women’s “confusing” signals. One article begins with this curious assertion: “In most cases, when a woman gives you mixed signals, she is simply testing to see how confident you really are” (Bacon, n.d.). Take note of the gendered nature of “signals”—a term rarely attributed to men’s communication. That women are believed to deploy “mixed signals” suggests an indirectness, a subtlety that contrasts with men’s straightforward and direct communication. This construction of women’s inscrutability further serves to exonerate men, often casting them as the real victims of women’s mysteriousness.

Are women really as confusing as some men claim? Are men really confounded by women’s words? Is it necessary for a woman to say a hard *No* before a man understands she’s not interested in giving him her phone number? Advice offered to women to just say *No* is simplistic and ignores the sophisticated and complex manner in which both women and men typically conduct refusals in everyday life. In most cultures, it is unusual to just say an unequivocal “No” in any context. It is precisely women’s knowledge of the culturally normative ways of doing refusals that makes it challenging for them to simply say *No* to an unwanted invitation. Do men understand these same social rules? Research from O’Byrne et al. (2006) says yes. O’Byrne conducted focus groups with heterosexual undergraduate men in Australia to see how they comprehend and perform refusals.

The men in O’Byrne’s study were first asked how they would respond if invited to a pub by a friend when they do not want to go. They come up with all kinds of nuanced responses—for example, they say they *can’t* go rather than they *won’t* go. These same men are then asked how they would refuse sex. Again, simply saying *No* is not in their repertoire. They would say they are not ready, or that they “didn’t have this in mind.” They would use nonverbal cues too. Instead of pouring a drink and sitting on the sofa, they would turn on the TV. Then the men in the study are asked how they would know a woman isn’t interested in sex. She would say it’s getting late. She’d ask about calling a ride, and again, body language—she would look at her watch. These are all good strategies for politely refusing. And yet, when these

same men were presented with an acquaintance rape scenario, several men became confused and made statements such as, “Well, when does no mean no and yes means yes?” and “The perpetrator could actually really be the victim when a woman is throwing themselves on you but later says, ‘Well, I said no’” (Hansen et al., 2010). Based on these data, men understand and use the same information anybody else would and yet some become confused in the context of sexual coercion. So why do some men commit acquaintance rape? Certainly, for most men, it does not result from an innocent misunderstanding of women’s ambiguous refusals (and of course many women give *unambiguous* refusals that are ignored). More likely, it comes from the witting intention of heterosexual men to engage in coercive sex while, at the same time, not seeing themselves as rapists because they have been taught that they are entitled to sex from women. Imagining themselves confused is their way out of accountability.

The Entitlement to Explain Things to Others

Some men mobilize ignorance when they know better, but other times they claim knowledge when they do not have it. Thus, another manifestation of entitlement is *mansplaining*. People from dominant groups tend to feel comfortable weighing in on an issue they know little about. Entitlement provides few repercussions from inaccuracy and failure to honestly self-reflect. A study of 15-year-olds in nine English-speaking countries found that young men, compared to young women, are more likely to claim knowledge they do not actually have (Jerrim et al., 2019). When asked about their expertise on a variety of topics—some of which were *made up*—not only did young men report having more knowledge on the topic than did young women, but so did youth from wealthy families compared to working-class and poor families. Male privilege and class privilege both functioned to generate a sense of entitlement in these young people to empower them to imagine (or pretend) that they had expertise they factually lacked.

In an article about men’s entitlement, Solnit (2014) tells the story of a man at a party who educates her on a topic he feels very knowledgeable about. After disregarding her attempts to interject, he chatters on and on about a brilliant book he has just read. He had to be told several times that it was *her* book he was telling her about with authority before it finally sunk in. *Mansplaining* has come to define the act of a man who confidently if not condescendingly lectures a woman on the basics of a topic about which he knows very little, under the mistaken assumption that she knows even less. *Mansplaining* epitomizes the clueless egocentrism of entitlement. *Mansplainers* are blind to the idea that they may have something to learn from another person, especially one from a marginalized group.

A *Washington Post* headline captures this problem in one area—the Academy: “New study finds that men are often their own favorite experts on any given subject” (Ingraham, 2016). The article describes a research study that calculated the number of times academics cite their own prior work in their current work. Universities often

factor in citation counts when making decisions about hiring, tenure, and salary, so it is easy to see how self-promotion can lead to actual promotion in the academic workplace. King et al. (2017) examined a massive database of academic work: 1.5 million papers published between 1779 and 2011. They found a substantial difference in self-citation patterns between women and men. Overall, men cited their own papers 56% more than women did, and in recent decades, men self-cited 70% more than women. This self-citation gap held true across every major academic field the authors studied, including biology, sociology, philosophy, and law. Why do men feel entitled to cite themselves? In addition to men having a higher opinion of their own abilities than women, they face fewer social penalties for self-promotion—a topic we address later in this chapter.

The arrogance of people in a dominant group to claim knowledge without learning from or even consulting the affected group permeates policymaking. People of wealth regulate welfare, white lawmakers and judges restrict the voting rights of people of color; people who cannot become pregnant legislate the bodies of those who can. In 2019, the U.S. state of Alabama passed, at the time, the most restrictive abortion law in the United States, making abortion a crime at any stage of pregnancy. Those who voted for the ban were exclusively white men (Durkin & Benwell, 2019). In 2012, U.S. Congressman Darrell Issa held a hearing on the Obama administration's mandate that insurance companies cover contraception. Not a single woman was on the panel (Zornick, 2012). These politicians seem comfortable excluding women and people of color in decisions that affect these communities directly.

The fight for reproductive rights involves much more than access to abortion and birth control, although willful ignorance and the narrow frame of entitlement help explain why it took the mainstream white-dominated U.S. women's movement a long time to broaden its approach. The systematic denial of reproductive justice in the United States certainly comes from white men, but the erasure of the intersectional realities of reproductive oppression also came from white-dominated feminist organizations that focused their efforts on white women gaining access to abortion and birth control. Black, Indigenous, and women of color have faced not only forced pregnancy but *also* forced sterilization (Roberts, 1997). Fannie Lou Hamer and other black women (and girls) in the U.S. South so commonly faced involuntary sterilization, it came to be known as the Mississippi Appendectomy (Roberts, 1997). When organizations like the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse were fighting in the 1970s to protect women of color from involuntary sterilization, however, mainstream U.S. feminist organizations did not support their efforts, saying they did not want to endanger their fight for access to voluntary sterilization. The intersectional framework of reproductive justice challenges this narrow framework and makes cross-cultural and cross-movement coalitions necessary. In 1994, Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice coined the term "Reproductive Justice" as an expansive framework that includes: "(1) the right *not* to have a child; (2) the right to *have* a child; and (3) the right to *parent* children in safe and healthy environments. In addition, reproductive justice demands sexual autonomy and gender freedom for every human being" (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 9). Reproductive Justice sees the connections between supporting abortion rights and opposing sterilization abuse,

and it further sees the relevance of related injustices, such as mass incarceration, environmental racism, and gentrification (Ross & Solinger, 2017).

Precarious Manhood and the Entitlement Tradeoff

The notion of precarious manhood was captured by Vandello and Bosson (2013), who describe manhood as hard won and easily lost. Precarious manhood beliefs, measures of which have been validated in 62 countries (Bosson et al., 2021), include the idea that manhood is tenuous and hard to achieve, and that boys and men go out of their ways to perform it—sometimes to their own and others' detriment. Boys and men are expected to adhere to an anti-femininity mandate. For example, some men won't take jobs they see as so-called women's work. For example, some men hold out for diminishing coal-mining jobs when they could be applying for home health aide jobs (Vedantam et al., 2018). Women have been flexible and have pushed themselves into men's jobs; men have not pushed themselves into women's jobs (Vedantam et al., 2018).

There are consequences of precarious manhood beliefs for men. Men learn to be fixated on performing masculinity, which often entails aggression. Men tend to believe that aggression is more typical than it actually is. They believe that women are attracted to aggressive men, when, in fact, women have reported viewing aggression as weak and impulsive, a loss of self-control, not sexy or charming (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Performing obligatory masculinity is a tradeoff, and the price is worth it when entitlement is the result. In order to maintain their status as men—relative to women and the feminine—men put forth great effort repeatedly to achieve manhood and distance themselves from the lower echelon of femininity. Many men make this conscious or unconscious calculation and have determined the benefits, such as feeling entitled to the advantages of being in a high-status group, outweigh the limitations (Anderson, 2021). Studies have revealed the racialized impact of masculinity threat and the gendered nature of racism. Goff et al. (2012) asked black and white men to perform pushups before and after being exposed to racially discriminatory or racially neutral feedback. They found that racial discrimination is felt by black men, but not white men, as a masculinity threat. Further, they offer evidence that men respond to masculinity threats with physical acts of “compensatory masculinity” (p. 1115).

Men in positions of power, such as police officers, who fear that their masculinity is under threat, sometimes respond in violent ways, with dire consequences for people of color, both men and women. Kimberlé Crenshaw, one of the founders of the #SayHerName movement, summarizes some of this research and also asks for greater focus on the treatment of black women. Officers who kill civilians do not always measure high on explicit racial bias, but often fear that their masculinity is under threat. Crenshaw argues that studies of masculinity threat have so far failed to address how black women are particularly vulnerable to such acts of state violence (Crenshaw, 2020). Legal scholar Michelle S. Jacobs connects such patterns to stereotypes of

overbearing and emasculating black women, controlling images that proliferate in both media and policy. She argues that police officers encountering black women who do not readily submit to their authority may experience masculinity threat, triggering the use of excessive or lethal force (Jacobs, 2017).

All of this work reinforces the overarching argument of intersectional feminism that we must constantly “ask the other question” (Matsuda, 1996, p. 64). In cases of gendered violence, what is the role of racism? In cases of racial violence, what is the role of heteropatriarchy? When we examine—or protest—police violence, how can we attend to intersections of racism, patriarchy, and homophobia, on psychological and institutional levels? In her 2011 article “Heteropatriarchy Kills,” Angela Harris argues that this sort of analysis will change not only how theorists examine these issues but also how activists work for social change. She considers social movements that have sought to challenge violence in the criminal legal system and sees potential in transformative justice as a paradigm that “holds promise for the struggle to undermine the mutually reinforcing systems of toxic masculinity and conventional criminal justice” (Harris, 2011, p. 17). Contemporary movements are increasingly calling for not just “reform” but deeper institutional changes informed by intersectional analysis.

Entitlement, Backlash, and Resistance

Entitlement and its manifestations, such as mansplaining and overconfidence, combined with precarious manhood, are a toxic mix and set the stage for backlash. When dominant group members are accustomed to being centered, even the most modest movements toward progressive change for marginalized groups can be interpreted as an unfair sidelining of those in dominant groups. Dominant group members are highly sensitive to criticism and have strong reactions when they perceive issues relevant to them are sidelined (Grillo & Wildman, 1991). Those used to being treated as the norm, the center, the ideal, the legitimate, feel entitled to take up space, to have their worldview validated, and to not modify their behavior (Anderson, 2021; Hochschild, 2016). Thus, some dominant group members feel ignored and decentered—for instance by LGBTQ Pride Month, a Black Lives Matter chant, or even seeing someone in a public setting they think is their own. The entitled can feel entitled resentment in the face of even the gentlest request for minority rights and the most modest pace of progressive change. Privilege makes one so used to being at the center of what’s important and normal, that those with it come to expect preferential treatment as “the way things work.” To the person experiencing privilege, this expectation does not even need reminders, conscious recognition, or explicit demonstration. It is the status quo, but when it is disturbed, the entitled experience confusion and anger.

The police killings in the United States of African Americans Breonna Taylor and George Floyd sparked a widespread uprising across the United States and Black Lives Matter solidarity protests in many other countries. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors,

and Opal Tometi created #BlackLivesMatter in 2013, after the acquittal of the man who murdered Trayvon Martin. Born out of that miscarriage of justice, and now a global movement, Black Lives Matter was conceived by black queer women with a keen sense of lived intersectionality and the need to eradicate white supremacy on a systemic level. “Black Lives Matter” reimagines movement building and is larger than a protest against police and vigilante violence against young black men. Garza writes, “Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum” (Garza, 2020, pp. 719–720). The powerful impact of Black Lives Matter as a phrase and a movement, not surprisingly, led to several forms of backlash, including the aggressive retort “All Lives Matter,” which is a perfect example of stealing back the center (see Grillo & Wildman, 1991). In “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” Garza (2020) calls attention to the role of entitlement not only from those who take black lives, but also from progressive movements dedicated to social justice but still erasing the diversity of black lives in their activism and their acts of appropriation. Seeing and participating in the Black Lives Matter movement in all of its complexity, and crediting the women who founded the movement, is a vital feminist and antiracist project.

Punishing Competent Women

Psychologists have captured the entitled resentment of dominant group members who are incensed by subordinated groups who, despite their oppression, dare to live their lives with dignity, confidence, and competence. Entitled resentment can have deadly consequences, when white people call the police for no reason, for example, but it also appears in subtle, everyday contexts such as workplace evaluations. Earlier we presented a study on academic men’s propensity to cite their own work. In addition to men having a higher opinion of their own abilities than women (Pallier, 2003; Visser et al., 2008), they face fewer social penalties for self-promotion. Women face a *dominance penalty* (Rudman et al., 2012) for competence, confidence and assertiveness. That is, women who behave assertively and confidently are seen as *too* dominant and judged more harshly than men with the same personality profile.

A classic experiment from Heilman et al. (2004) illustrates how women pay a social penalty for competence. College students evaluated the competence, likeability, and hostility of clearly successful or ambiguously successful candidates in a male-dominated job. When students rated the employee’s competence, successful women and men were evaluated equally—they were both credited for their successes. When information about candidate performance was ambiguous, the woman was rated as less competent than the man—men seem to be presumed competent even with mixed evidence. A different pattern emerged in judgments of likeability but one that is consistent with the notion of a dominance penalty. When there was ambiguity about the candidate’s performance, there was no gender difference in likeability. However, when there was clear evidence of success, the woman was liked less than

the man. In fact, the successful woman was liked less than the candidates in all other conditions: the clearly successful man, the ambiguously successful man, and the ambiguously successful woman. A similar pattern emerged in terms of judgments of hostility. These patterns hold for both women and men raters; so these gender stereotypic norms, and the tendency to penalize women who violate them, are meaningful for both women and men respondents. Significantly, dislike was associated with not being recommended for promotions and salary increases (Heilman et al., 2004). These results suggest that men can feel comfortably entitled to recognition and credit even when it's not quite deserved. Women are credited with competence but they are disliked (and punished) for their competence, whereas men are not.

Women in general face the dominance penalty but the penalty may be harsher for women of color. For example, Anderson and Smith (2005) found that Latina college instructors with strict teaching styles paid a dominance penalty relative to Anglo women professors with the same teaching style. Some studies (e.g., Livingston et al., 2012) suggest that black women pay less of a dominance penalty, possibly because racialized gender stereotypes construct black women as more aggressive than passive, and thus, their confidence does not violate stereotypes in the same way as white women's confidence. Another study found that compared to white women who did pay a professional penalty for dominance, Asian American women did not face the same dominance penalty. However, Asian American women are perceived to be less fit for leadership than similarly situated white women (Tinkler et al., 2019). This study found that the negative impact on white and Asian American women was independent of their behavioral style (dominant or communal). "[W]hen competence is firmly established," the authors suggest, "white women may not avoid backlash by being nicer and Asian women may not avoid questions about their leadership by being more assertive" (p. 9).

Sexualizing Women Who Outperform Men

The studies described above could be seen in the context of *dominant group recovery*—putting women of all races and men of color back to a position that makes dominant group members comfortable (Anderson, 2016; Faludi, 1991). Another strategy for dominant group recovery is for some men to demean and sexualize women who have hurt their feelings. Dahl et al. (2015) examined men's reactions to being outperformed by women. In this study, men were led to believe they were playing a computer game with another participant. After they completed a task, they were told that their teammate was a woman. In the threat condition, they were told the woman outperformed them. In the non-threat condition, they outperformed her. The men were then instructed to pick avatars (characters that represented each player) for themselves and their partners. The women's avatars varied on how much clothing they were wearing. How did the men respond when they believed they were outperformed by a woman? They reported greater public embarrassment and anger relative to the men who believed they outperformed the woman. The reactions of

these embarrassed men in turn predicted the avatars that they chose for the women. The men who were angered at being outperformed chose more sexually revealing avatars for the women than did the other men. Sexualizing women who outperform you is a relatively subtle form of dominance, making it difficult to detect and resist. At the same time, sexualizing women is so common in popular culture that this strategy to repair harmed masculinity provides a socially approved, non-physically-violent means of asserting power and repairing masculinity. Recent research finds that entitlement predicts which men will be sexually aggressive (Raines et al., 2023).

Valenti (2018) finds that there are specific, gendered ways that men attack women in person and online. There is simply no equivalent with the genders reversed, in which women punish men in similar ways. Men's punishment of women in many cases results from the men's maladaptive strategies for dealing with strong emotions including anger and embarrassment. Revenge porn is one phenomenon by which men punish women, and this revenge is usually the aftermath of a woman rejecting a man. The fact that there are groups and forums on the Internet where men can find support for this behavior justifies and normalizes it to some men (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016). Revenge porn is gendered behavior of men lashing out against the women they can no longer control.

Men's Violence Against Transgender Women

The violence against transgender women in recent years epitomizes entitled resentment and backlash against progressive change. In the last couple of decades, transgender individuals have begun to be recognized for the gender that they identify as rather than the gender assigned to them at birth. Transgender people, as well as nonbinary people, have demanded respect and recognition of their humanity even in the face of rejection from family members, strangers, and institutions. Consistent with most progressive movements toward equality, the recognition of transgender people as fully human and worthy of dignity is met with violent backlash. Cisgender men and heterosexuals are more likely to report transgender prejudice than cisgender women and lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (Hatch et al., 2022). Significantly, transgender individuals who conform to the gender roles associated with their gender expression have been perceived more negatively than those who are less gender conforming, presumably because they are more difficult to detect as transgender and threaten the gender binary (Broussard & Warner, 2019). Violence against trans individuals tends to be especially gruesome and "personal," meaning the violence is close-up, sometimes involving torture and mutilation. Violence against transgender women, especially transgender women of color, has become so frequent that the American Medical Association has declared it an "epidemic" (American Medical Association, 2019). We understand men's violence against transgender women through the lens of entitlement.

Transgender activist Laverne Cox captures the entitled resentment of anti-trans violence when she says, "when we are living our lives, so many times just walking

down the street as a black trans woman, people saw it as some sort of affront to them, when men would find themselves attracted to me because I was walking down the street, and they would get upset about that” (Goodman, 2019). A consistent thread that runs through men’s violence against transgender women is the notion of the man feeling “fooled” or “tricked” by the victim. In fact, a legal defense strategy used by men who have murdered transgender women is the trans “panic” defense (Maigné, 2019). The revelation that the woman that a man is attracted to is transgender, according to this defense, is such a profound deception, that the man lashes out in violence. Notice the shift in responsibility here. The *perpetrator* of murder frames himself as the *victim* of a vicious deception and frames the murdered woman as the cause of the violence that ended her life. Laverne Cox ties these physical and verbal attacks to backlash against the trans community’s unprecedented visibility. “And as we come out of the shadows, people want to force us back into the dark and to back pages. And we are saying, ‘No, we deserve a right to live in the light’” (Goodman, 2019). She argues for more visibility, not less, and transgender rights activists are continuing to fight for their humanity in legal, political, economic, employment, and media contexts. These are explicitly intersectional movements that challenge the violence and invisibility to which trans people are subjected across multiple institutions.

Power, Entitlement, and Men’s Intimate Partner Violence

The aggression of rejected men plays out not just on the Internet but also in heterosexual intimate relationships. For instance, when men feel disempowered, relative to their partners, some respond with aggression. The reverse tends not to be true. A study of white heterosexual couples in New Zealand is revealing (Overall et al., 2016). This study examined couples’ communication styles based on how much power each partner has in the relationship. Men who possessed low relationship power exhibited more aggressive communication (criticism, domineering) during the couple’s conflict discussions. In contrast, women’s relationship to power was not associated with aggression. In other words, the women partners who had low relationship power did not behave aggressively with their mates. Interestingly, in these conflict interactions, the women were more verbally aggressive than their partners overall, but their verbal aggression was independent of their power status. What accounts for men’s aggression as a result of low power in interpersonal relationships? Follow-up analyses indicated that the men in the study responded aggressively to lower power because low power threatens masculinity; and such drops in felt masculinity predicted a greater probability of men behaving aggressively toward their partner. The authors argued that aggression for these men was an attempt to repair their masculinity. Men who were unable to influence their partner resorted to aggression. The implications of this study are that, in some cases, men’s violence against their romantic partners is associated with their feelings of disempowerment. Some men are highly sensitive to feeling disrespected. Traditional gender roles tell men they should be.

In her book on intimate partner violence, *No Visible Bruises*, Rachel Louise Snyder (2019) writes that violence is rooted in men's entitlement. Violence is the result of a belief system all men who are perpetrators seem to share (Snyder, 2019), a belief system that tells them they are the authority in their lives and they are to be respected and obeyed. Men are the top of the social hierarchy. Men learn to have a sense of ownership over the world, themselves, and their partners. Men become violent when their expectations are threatened. For these men, their strategy for bringing things back to status, to normal, is violence. Snyder, who observed men in anti-violence programs, found that what was so challenging for the men to grapple with wasn't becoming nonviolent. Rather, it was learning that they had internalized a false and harmful construction of what they are supposed to be like, what masculinity means, and what being a man means. Snyder found that many men were actually relieved to learn that they had been coerced into their violence, not born with it. Boys' and men's socialization into conventional gender roles limits their range of thinking, feeling, and behaving and keeps them constricted by narrow ideas of what men could be and how men could behave.

Certainly, anger and aggression play significant roles in men's lives because anger and aggression are so closely tied to traditional gender roles. However, when we consider the significance of gender roles and entitlement in domestic violence, we must consider anger in a novel way. Anger is not necessarily at the root of intimate partner violence, even if it may be used as an outcome—a way for a man to bring back stasis, and status. Men who are perpetrators of domestic violence target their partners and children for abuse, but usually not people outside their immediate family (Snyder, 2019). In other words, perpetrators are not walking around seething in anger, but they do use violence to control specific others—the others they feel entitled to brutalize, particularly their woman partners (Snyder, 2019). Snyder reports that men in domestic violence programs tend not to have substantial levels of anger, and that only a small percentage were in the unusually high range. Only about 25% are so-called “rageaholics” (Snyder, 2019). The abuser's anger is targeted toward those he feels entitled to abuse, often his partner or her family. As a result, friends and acquaintances of abusers are often surprised to hear that they committed an assault. These men treat many people in a respectful manner. They know how to treat people well; they just choose not to treat their partners well.

Domestic violence generally refers to intimate partner or family abuse. But a significant amount of violence in home spaces includes violence against domestic workers—usually women of color—in someone else's home (Lopez & Rafei, 2021). Entitlement plays a role in this dynamic in several ways, from male employers who feel entitled to both the labor and the bodies of the women they hire, to women employers who rely upon domestic workers without considering the exploitation in which they are complicit. White individuals of economic privilege, including women who consider themselves feminist, often feel entitled to pursue their economic and professional endeavors while someone else does the care work that makes their professional work possible. Domestic workers have also been at the forefront of some key political struggles of our day, including fights for fair wages and safe workplaces. In 2019, at the height of #MeToo in the United States, the National

Domestic Workers Alliance joined with Alianza Nacional de Campesinas (National Farmworker Women's Alliance) to demand policies to keep all workers safe from sexual violence, including domestic workers and farmworkers. Women in these jobs face widespread sexual abuse, yet their workplaces are generally excluded from laws that are supposed to protect workers from sexual harassment.

Indigenous and First Nations communities in North America face not only domestic violence but also staggering numbers of unsolved cases of murdered and missing women, girls, and two-spirit people. Few of these crimes are solved and 95% of the cases are not covered by national media (Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk, 2018). An important intersectional movement in North America is the fight to bring awareness and justice to the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women. The profoundly murderous entitlement of settler colonialism—which imagines itself entitled to land, resources, and human bodies—underlies the murder and rape of Indigenous peoples from the earliest moments of first contact. This violence continues in multiple forms today. In a chilling intersection of colonization, racism, misogyny, and environmental exploitation, “man camps” of hundreds or thousands of non-Native men who are temporary workers are established in U.S. states such as Montana and the Dakotas by extractive industries. Studies have shown that this increase in temporary population is associated with increased rates of physical and sexual violence, with one Bureau of Justice Statistics study showing a 70% increase in violent victimization associated with the arrival of this population (First Peoples Worldwide, 2020).

Accurate statistics are elusive—cases are not always reported, and records often fail to indicate whether someone is Indigenous. Cheyenne scholar Annita Lucchesi founded the Sovereign Bodies Institute (sovereign-bodies.org), which supports community-engaged research on gender and sexual violence against Indigenous people, including the creation of the MMIWG2 (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit) Database, with 120 years of data. The Institute both shines a light on victimization and foregrounds resistance. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women USA (mmiwusa.org) provides information and grief support for families, and education programs for community members. Creative resistance has also flourished through efforts such as The REDress Project, which installs empty red dresses in public places to call attention to violence against Indigenous women and shake the rest of the community out of its complacency (redressproject.org). As discussed above, an element of dominant group privilege is not needing to bother to know about what happens to people in targeted groups, and activists work to challenge that ignorance.

Conclusion

We have laid out the case for the crucial role entitlement plays in understanding the persistence of sexism and other forms of inequality. Entitled individuals tend to have an outsized sense of deservingness, believing they are exceptional and special. They believe good things should come to them, not because they have worked hard,

but because of who they are (Major, 1994). Men tend to have a stronger sense of entitlement than do women, and other people (both women and men) seem to agree that men deserve more than women simply for being men (Alksnis et al., 2008). We have catalogued phenomena associated with entitlement here, and they tend to turn on slipshod information processing and the ignorant, indifferent disregard of others. The mansplainer cannot imagine that someone other than he could be more knowledgeable about a topic. The entitled bumbler is shocked when confronted with his abusive behavior toward women. Thus, some dominant group members feel entitled to their ignorance, even as they cloak it with false expertise.

An analysis of entitlement allows us to understand the emotional reaction of backlash by the entitled (Anderson, 2016, 2021) in response to their perception of being sidelined or having their relative status decreased in the social hierarchy. Precarious manhood and the toxic violence it can produce seem to be trade-offs for the privileges of being a man in a patriarchal culture. These phenomena are raced as well as gendered. As we can see in cases of police violence, racialized assumptions can collide with threatened masculinity, producing deadly consequences. The phenomenon of the entitled white woman who calls the police on African Americans living their lives epitomizes the interaction of race and gender in entitlement, but we also see this intertwining in the history of movements for social change. Women of color activists have always theorized and organized with intersectional lenses, but their leadership has often been sidelined, from Abolition and Suffrage to contemporary movements. The white-dominated reproductive rights movement refused to address the role of racism for decades; the male-dominated civil rights movement repeatedly dismissed issues of sexism and homophobia. Backlash is a major threat to social movements, but entitlement from within progressive movements has also stunted their effectiveness. An intersectional analysis of entitlement is necessary in our scholarship and our movement building.

Understanding entitlement's role in the persistence of inequality should help researchers, activists, journalists, and policymakers understand the entrenchment rooted in one's sense of deservingness. Entitlement is not genetic. It is learned, so it can be unlearned. But we have to see it, understand its workings, and care about its consequences.

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Friendship Never Ends? Postfeminism, Power, and Female Friendships



Sarah Riley, Adrienne Evans, and Alison Mackiewicz

In this chapter, we consider gender and power in contemporary girls' and young women's friendships through the lens of postfeminist sensibility. Postfeminist sensibility was both a term and concept coined by Rosalind Gill (2007a) to describe how, from the 1990s, a range of elements came together in media aimed at women that interpellated women to work on themselves to meet cultural norms of femininity, while understanding this work as 'choiceful' and empowering. As we discuss below, these ideas quickly moved off the page and screen, radically shaping gender relations and identities, and intersecting with other important cultural shifts including the expansion and normalization of digital technology (Evans & Riley, 2023) and a political context in the West defined by widening schisms that relate to identity. These schisms include the fall-out from Brexit in the UK; the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the US; Black Lives Matter movements; the interconnected rise of "popular feminism" and networked misogyny (Banet-Weiser, 2018); and related online 'culture wars' such as 'incel' (or involuntarily celibate) and #MeToo. Other examples include the way that women have unprecedented access to public leadership but that this exposes them to extreme levels of physical and online hostility (Evans & Riley, 2022; Wilson, 2022). It is within this context that young women learn to conceptualize femininity and friendship.

To explore the relationships between postfeminism, femininity, and friendship, this chapter begins with an overview of how we understand postfeminist sensibility, and what kinds of gendered ways of being in the world are intelligible and permissible

S. Riley (✉)
Massey University, Wellington, Aotearoa, New Zealand
e-mail: S.Riley@massey.ac.nz

A. Evans
Coventry University, Coventry, UK
e-mail: ab0063@coventry.ac.uk

A. Mackiewicz
Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, Wales, UK

within this sense-making. We then draw on the work of Michel Foucault to show how this can deepen our understanding of postfeminism and subjectivity, especially in relation to conceptualizing power. Finally, we consider research informed by these analytics that explores female friendships.

Gender in Postfeminist Times

In this chapter, we conceptualize gender as a construct shaped by social, cultural, historical, and political contexts. From this perspective, gender is not something that comes naturally because it is embedded within our DNA, determined by our genitals, chromosomes, or other biological ‘facts.’ Rather, we are born into a world where certain ideas about gender circulate, and we learn to understand ourselves through these ideas because they provide us with the concepts with which to think and feel. Our innermost thoughts are thus built using concepts that originate outside of us, but because we use these concepts to think with, cultural notions of what it means to be feminine or masculine feel like their genesis is from within us, our own personal thoughts emerging as a natural part of who we are. As Judith Butler (1990) notoriously argued, typical understandings that biological sex (girl or boy) determine our gender (feminine or masculine) need to be reversed—we should understand the power of gender norms as creating our understandings of biological difference between ‘male’ and ‘female.’ Such binary constructs (either/or) structure us, limiting how we might make sense of ourselves and others if we/they do not fit clearly into these categories.

Understanding gender as a social construct leads us to consider the ways gender is constructed with our own socio-historical context. Developing our social constructionist standpoint, we recognize that at any moment there are multiple, intersecting—and sometimes contradictory—ways of making sense of gender, but that some have more power than others in shaping the norms that young women use to make sense of themselves. And for us, one of the more powerful forms of sense-making of contemporary gender relations and relationships is ‘postfeminist sensibility.’

In her pivotal article on postfeminist sensibility, Rosalind Gill (2007a) argued that the term ‘postfeminism’ had become “one of the most important and contested terms in the lexicon of feminist cultural analysis” (p. 147). Staking a claim in this contested territory, Gill (2007a) argued that postfeminist sensibility includes a set of elements that coalesce, but not necessary in a cohesive way, to produce understandings of ideal femininity. One characteristic of this is a make-over paradigm, where women are expected to work on themselves to transform their bodies. Transformation is represented as a route to freedom and self-optimization (even as it requires women to discipline their bodies to meet cultural beauty ideals, such as smooth, hair-free legs). This work on the body is related to an understanding of femininity as a bodily property, so that work on the body is the route through which women can understand themselves as appropriately female. Postfeminism is also tied to ideas of sexual empowerment, which Gill argued represents a shift from sexual objectification to

sexual subjectification, in which women were invited to celebrate their agentic sexuality. Yet identifying with these new sexual subjectivities required women to always be 'up for it' and engage in a performance of hyper-sexy femininity that mapped onto previous representations of women as sex objects. Such work on the self and body was made sense of through ideas of individualism, choice, and empowerment; yet postfeminism also represented a return to understanding gender through biological and essential gender difference that reasserted binary-gendered categories. This included ideas, for instance, that it is natural for women to desire practices associated with traditional femininity, such as marriage and shopping.

The 'post' of postfeminism was used to signal that while feminist language of women's sexual liberation and economic freedom was articulated; this language was not harnessed to the service of radical social change, but to individualism and consumerism. For example, the feminist critique of sexual objectification was flipped within postfeminism, with fashions for women to look hyper-sexy reframed as women's empowerment, since, in a postfeminist/post-equal world, if women dressed sexy it was their choice. Feminist critiques of objectification were further nullified since postfeminism included irony and a knowing 'wink,' articulating the idea that empowerment was demonstrated through the ability to ironically play at being objectified. But as Gill (2007a) argued in her critique, "the notion that women just 'please themselves'... presents women as entirely free agents and cannot explain why – if women are just pleasing themselves and following their own autonomously generated desires - the resulting valued 'look' is so similar" (p. 153).

The dual engagement and disengagement with feminist ideas was more fully developed by Angela McRobbie (2009) who argued that a key characteristic of postfeminism was the simultaneous drawing on and refuting of feminism, which worked to both articulate a feminist sentiment that young women would support (e.g., that they should expect to be paid a fair wage), while also making feminism itself unfashionable and unnecessary. For example, *Grazia* magazine advertised itself in a UK national newspaper with the statement "42% of women who ask for a pay rise get one. 100% would probably celebrate with shoes" (cited in McRobbie, 2009, p. 65). Thus, while reflecting feminist concerns with equal pay and women's pay gap, the magazine advertisement reasserted appropriate feminine consumption, while addressing underpay as simply a matter of individual women asking for more—rather than a political and collective issue in the context of endemic gender pay disparities. This idea of feminism as a 'spent force' became a powerful identification tool for many young women, with those of us teaching feminist psychology at the time remembering young women angry at the idea that they might consider themselves anything other than individuals living gender-equal lives.

Gill's (2007a) article originally described postfeminist sensibility as a media address, that is, a way in which women's media spoke to their readership. But, as in the lecturing example above, postfeminist sensibility quickly became part of young women's everyday sense-making, shared across a range of texts and talk to the extent of becoming a hegemonic ideology (Gill, 2017). Part of this 'success' is that postfeminist sensibility was underpinned by neoliberalism; a political and economic doctrine where the ideal citizen is a self-enterprising individual, acting

with freedom within the marketplace (Rose, 1990). Thus, a postfeminist sensibility, demonstrated through transformation and understood as a form of individual choice enabled by consumption, aligned with neoliberalism, and produced various ideal figures of neoliberal femininity. This included the ‘can do’ girl, who identified what she wanted and achieved it through hard work and an entrepreneurial spirit, unrestricted by structural inequalities, such as sexism, racism, or classism that might have limited past generations (Harris, 2004); and the ‘make-it-work’ woman who succeeds at work despite challenges that might include mental illness and sexist work cultures (Chowdhury & Gibson, 2019). Other figures of postfeminism include the “sexual connoisseur,” a sexually confident, knowledgeable, pleasure pursuer, who constantly works on her sexual identity and skills (Evans & Riley, 2014; Tappin et al., 2023).

Conceptualizing postfeminism as a sensibility opened a way to understand neoliberalism as gendered and enabled an analysis that brought together multiple and sometimes contradictory elements—like individualism and essential biological differences (Gill, 2008). Importantly, Gill (2007b) distinguished ‘postfeminist sensibility’ from previous understandings of postfeminism as an era after feminist politics, a feminist movement (like the ‘third wave’), or as a way to describe poststructuralist feminist theory; and later from concepts of popular feminism and neoliberal feminism (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020).

Conceptualizing postfeminism as a sensibility also allowed Gill to make associations between the term sensibility and Raymond Williams’s concept of ‘structures of feeling.’ Williams’ (1977) notion of structures of feeling refers to how we sense the present moment, of what gives the ‘now’ a quality or feeling. From this perspective, ‘knowledge’ or ‘culture’ is never in a state of being fixed, rather there are constant relations and flows between objects, utterances, and things. Reading postfeminism through this lens allows us to conceptualize postfeminist sensibility as a fluid notion that can change while still being understood as a form of postfeminism. It enables us to recognize that, while there have been significant changes since 2007, this sensibility still shapes cultural understandings, but might be better thought of as postfeminism 2.0 (Riley et al., 2023).

Significant shifts in the last decade warrant the description postfeminism 2.0. For example, in writing this chapter, we reflected on how we no longer have hostile students in our lecture theaters, and doing feminist research projects are back on our students’ agendas. Unfortunately, this seems to be driven by the impossibility of claiming to live in a gender-equal world, as our female students are sexually harassed as they walk in the street, describe their nightclubs as ‘a bit rapey’ and (like their female lecturers) risk hostility if they express an opinion online. Out of this crucible of sexism has emerged a renewed engagement with, and visibility of, feminism (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Keller & Ryan, 2018; Mendes et al., 2019). Feminism it seems, is no longer consigned to a “retirement home in an unfashionable rundown holiday resort” (McRobbie, 2004, p. 512).

Yet, the feminism most visible in our current moment reproduces postfeminist sensibility, for example, making sense of political participation through consumerism, or in upholding economically productive and feminine workplace

behaviors, such as in Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg's suggestions to 'lean in' (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Gill, 2016). Along with trying to make sense of these new forms of feminism, other important and interconnected developments in research on postfeminist sensibility orient around intersectionality, a new emotionalization of psychological public and private selves, and transnational articulations. We highlight key aspects of these issues below (see Riley et al. [2017] for a fuller overview, and Riley et al. [2023] for a deep dive into these issues).

Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) groundbreaking work on intersectionality is increasingly used in scholarship on postfeminism to consider the racialized implications of postfeminism. Using the metaphor of an intersection with multiple exits and directions, Crenshaw's concept is used by a range of feminist researchers who argue that we need to recognize women's experiences as structured by their multiple positionalities at the intersections of social categories—not just gender—but race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability, and so forth. For example, Ringrose et al. (2018) showed that in both London and New York, Black girls and young women could not so easily engage with postfeminist notions of empowerment through sexuality because they had to negotiate their bodies being read by others as either not sexy or hyper-sexy. These girls thus had to navigate racist and classed interpretations of sexiness that were not experienced by middle class White girls.

An intersectional approach in the study of postfeminism is also useful in analysis of digital media representations. For example, Villesèche et al. (2018) argued that the feminism of #MeToo embodies a postfeminist sensibility by overlooking or excluding the ways that women of colour might differently experience the kinds of harassment reported in the hashtag. Joseph (2009) has also shown how a post-racism rhetoric works within postfeminism in her analysis of celebrity Tyra Banks, where Banks had to navigate racist and sexist comments about her body, while negating how any response she made could be read as too political. Butler's (2013) intersectional analysis of another celebrity, Nicki Minaj, suggests Minaj's racial ambiguity allows her to rupture the Whiteness of postfeminism—such as in her appropriation of the Barbie doll. Furthermore, Dobson (2015) showed how media representations of White celebrities are more positive, arguing that Paris Hilton was able to represent the ideals of postfeminism—consumerist, wealthy, constantly transformational, and sexually agentic—because she was White.

Along with developing an intersectional approach to the study of postfeminism, researchers have highlighted a new emotional tone in postfeminist sensibility. This emotional tone draws attention to the psychological worlds of women, particularly the psychological pain of living in a judgmental scopic regime. The outcome has been 'love your body' discourses and calls for 'confidence,' supported by non-governmental organizations (e.g., 'free being me' Girl Guides confidence badge) and digital technologies including social media and apps like 'think like a GIRL,' which has the strap line Be Bolder—Be Smarter—Be Stronger—Be YOU.¹ In considering this intensification of the affective, psychic, and therapeutic, scholars have critiqued positivity and resilience discourses as insidiously intensifying the work women need

¹ <https://saportareport.com/think-like-A-girl-app/sections/reports/hannah/>.

to do on themselves and reinforcing notions of women as flawed (now in mind as well as body) (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Gill & Orgad, 2018; Orgad & Gill, 2022; Riley et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2023).

The concern is that the ‘can do’ girl has become the ‘bounce back woman’ (Gill & Orgad, 2018), and that working on ‘positive outlook’ or ‘resilience’ locates the problem in girls and women, and the solution is them working on themselves—represented in regimes around exercise, diet, therapy, or self-help. These industries have their own commercial vested interests. For example, in an expansion of the mindfulness industry, the Barbie brand now includes a Barbie Breathe with Me doll² who “knows the way to be one’s best is to give yourself the best care!”. With lights and sounds, the doll ‘guides’ its owner through meditation and comes with ‘cloud emojis’ that represent different emotions. The concern is that it is through such commodities that attention is directed away from critiquing or showing anger toward the social and economic contexts that requires girls and women to be increasingly resilient. These contexts include recession, neoliberalism, and the reactionary gender politics represented by the rise of far-right leaders and spokespeople, including Trump and Putin.

Recent analysis of postfeminism also points to its transnationality, articulated in recognizable ways but in variants that enable it to speak to local concerns and values (Dosekun, 2015; Evans & Riley, 2023; Murdeshwar et al., 2018; Riley et al., 2023). For example, Adamson and Salmenniemi’s (2017) analysis of Russian self-help literature showed how a postfeminist sensibility is employed to justify women working on themselves to be attractive to men, making it both a moral responsibility and an act of empowered freedom for women to work on themselves in ways that cement gendered inequalities. There is also emerging research on synergies between postfeminist feeling rules and the Chinese state ideology of Positive Energy 正能量 since both exhort women to be positive and understand that it is their responsibility to work on themselves in order to do so (e.g., Zhang & Riley, forthcoming). These studies show how power works through gender, shaping the direction of women’s desires toward things that might be toxic for them.

Girl Power! Poststructuralist Power!

Much of the work reviewed above is informed by the work of poststructuralist philosopher and cultural theorist Michel Foucault. Foucault’s theories and concepts developed throughout his life and have been taken up in different ways since then, especially by feminist researchers who found his concepts useful for developing feminist work despite their concerns about his lack of engagement with gender inequities in women’s lives (Ramazanoglu, 1993). Here, we pay attention to three concepts we find particularly helpful in thinking about postfeminist sensibility, power, and female friendships. These are: governmentality, normalization, and technologies of the self.

² <https://barbie.mattel.com/shop/en-us/ba/breathe-with-me-barbie-doll-gmj72>.

For Foucault (e.g., 1978, 1980), power is most productive when it is invisible. This occurs when it is not wielded by one person or institution (e.g., state, monarch, God) in an obviously coercive way, but dispersed through the sense-making of a number of diverse and divergent apparatus—or *dispositif*—such as government departments, the military, education, the family (Rose, 1990), or (we would argue) different elements of the media and associated experts such as social media influencers. These *dispositif* circulate ideas that enable people to think in particular ways. Governmentality is a term used to describe this process, offering us a way of thinking about how our thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors are directed without it feeling coercive. As such, governmentality acts as an entry point concept into thinking about power.

The term ‘government’ in Foucault’s idea of governmentality, therefore, does not refer to official Governments, but to how people are managed by getting them to manage themselves—or, to use an often-quoted formulation, governmentality is about ‘the conduct of conduct’ (Foucault, 1994, p. 237). We see governmentality in those moments when we do something that feels like it is our choice or comes from our own desires, yet somehow it maps onto cultural values or expectations—as in our discussion above on how women understand they need to work on themselves to be more resilient. Governmentality thus helps us understand how power creates a desire in people to ‘choose appropriately’ and to feel as though those choices emerge from an individual, practiced as an act of freedom.

Alongside invisibility, then, freedom is a key mechanism of power in Foucault’s notion of governmentality. To feel as though you are acting, doing, thinking, or feeling a particular way because you freely chose to—even when this way also seems to best support how others would like us to act, do, think, or feel—is much less coercive than being told to, and therefore, far more productive. Shopping, for example, may feel positive, where we get to spend our own money on items that we individually choose for ourselves. It is also, however, a way of providing citizens with a sense of freedom tied to capitalist concerns, making us economically useful. Further, our ‘choice’ is limited to whatever is made available for us to purchase—which might be determined by fashions, codes, or ideals of what it means to be a good person.

Governmentality as a concept is closely tied to both normalization and technologies of the self. ‘Normalization’ shaped Foucault’s works on prisons (1991), mental health (2004), and sexuality (1978); see Rabinow (1997) for a collection of Foucault’s essays and interviews related to norms and normalization. For Foucault, normalization refers to how socially sanctioned expectations become the tool against which we are asked to measure ourselves. Meeting these socially sanctioned expectations becomes a moral imperative, so that “[d]eviation from the norm is then (falsely) read as proof of behaviors that can be pathologized, just as conformity is (falsely) taken as evidence of health and good conduct” (Heyes, 2006, p. 133). Feminist theory and research, for example, highlights how the norm of slimmess is morally tied to health citizenship and ‘good’ practices of self-care (Bordo, 2003; Riley et al., 2019a). Thus, if one is slim, one is understandable as a good person. The norm also means people are more likely to ‘choose’ this embodiment (or try to attain it) or be stigmatized by others if they do not.

This understanding of ‘choice,’ however, needs to be problematized because we do not necessarily actively ‘choose’ our attachment to norms. Developing a psychological analysis of power and norms, Davies (2013) argued that because our thinking is structured by norms they become part of us, creating a “passionate attachment” (Davies, 2013, p. 24) to these norms, a longing to fulfill them, and powerful emotions such as fear, anger, anxiety, or disgust “toward the one (which might include oneself) who transgresses the norms and thereby risks destabilizing them” (Davies, 2013, p. 24). Her work points to the importance of looking at the affective flows of governmentality as a mechanism for their power ‘over’ us.

Governmental norms thus shape how we feel about ourselves, directing our desires toward being recognized as a good person. Such desires also motivate us to work on ourselves using certain practices and techniques that allow us to meet the norm more closely. Foucault (1988) terms this practice of reflexively working on the self ‘technologies of the self,’ these “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (p. 18). We understand technologies of self as involving a constrained agency, where people may work on themselves to produce themselves into their own desires, but these desires are structured by societal norms and values (Evans et al., 2010; Riley et al., 2019b, 2023). For example, weight loss can leave women flushed with success, but such feelings are enabled by societal discourses that link together health, weight, morality, and self-mastery. As Foucault (1987) argued:

practices of the self ...are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself [sic]. They are patterns that he [sic] finds in this culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group. (p. 122)

Foucauldian concepts of governmentality, normalization, and technologies of the self provide us an exceptional toolbox for thinking critically about gender and power through the lens of postfeminism. Governmentality allows us to understand how discourses of choice act as a powerful rhetoric, such that engaging in practices once critiqued by feminists—like dieting or objectification—can now be framed within the logic of freedom. Normalization allow us to make sense of how ideas typically associated with ideal femininity persist (such as slimness), and how the emotions attached to these norms shape subjectivity. And technologies of the self-help explain how a postfeminist sensibility is turned in on the self, allowing people to work on themselves in the attempt to attain a ‘good,’ ‘happy,’ or ‘normal’ life, where this self-work feels like it emerges from deep within the individual, from our own desires, even as it is directed to meet societal values and ideals. Below, we apply this Foucauldian analysis of a postfeminist sensibility to make sense of gender and power in our intimate relationships with others, focusing on female friendship, since it is one of the culturally and psychologically dominant ways of framing intimacy, and because friendships are often important for girls and young women, offering a site for intense emotional attachments to one another (Frith, 2004).

Postfeminist Friendships

I love my husband, but it is nothing like a conversation with a woman that understands you.
I grow so much from those conversations.—Beyonce

The above quote comes from a *Psychology Today*³ blog post on the importance of female friendships, one of many popular texts documenting the differences between women's and men's friendships and emphasizing the significance of strong and close female friendships for mental health and wellbeing. Having reasserted gender difference as a given by inciting the popular essentialist reference that 'men are from Mars, women are from Venus,' the text then makes clear the closeness of female friendships are the result of engaging in particular practices: long phone calls, text messages, nights out, and weekend trips. These activities are then coupled with the emotional value of women's friendships. The article goes on to highlight the cancer fighting benefits of female friendship, citing an article in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, followed by a discussion on what women talk about with their friends, including discussions about (heterosexual) marriages, break-ups, and beauty.

In presenting friendship in this way, *Psychology Today* engages in the (re)production of a norm about women's (and men's) homosocial relationships. The article valorizes women's friendships for their psychological intensity, a position supported by expert scientific accounts (as part of a Foucauldian *dispositif*), and in a way that assumes heteronormative relationships (marriages, break-ups) and feminine appearance concerns. It also hints at men's friendships as 'lacking' intimacy—evoking a binary between men and women.

The *Psychology Today* article is an example of how popular media draws on elements of a postfeminist sensibility in their representations of female friendships, including gender essentialism, the focus on normative femininity (Gill, 2007a), and in the emotionalizing and 'feeling rules' of neoliberalism (Gill & Kanai, 2019). Recognizing this pattern, Winch (2013) asks why, when individualism is so central to postfeminism, is female sociality and 'girlfriend culture' also dominant?

The role of girl friendship has always been central to postfeminism, evidenced in the early days of the quintessential 1990s postfeminist band, the Spice Girls, and their song Wannabe, whose lyrics highlighted the importance of female friendship "if you wannabe my lover, you gotta get with my friends".⁴ By the 2000s, these ideas also circulated in young women's sense-making about their friends and friendship practices. Thus, just as postfeminism shifted from a media address to a hegemonic ideology shared across everyday sense-making, so we can see the same flow in postfeminist understandings of friendship. Mackiewicz's (2013) study with young, White, British, mostly low social economic but middle class identified, women drinkers offers a good example, where friendship was regularly evoked as significant in these young women's lives and made sense of within a postfeminist

³ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/happiness-is-state-mind/201808/the-importance-female-friendships-among-women>.

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

sensibility. See, for example, the extract below, where Amelie talks about growing up with a group of girls and how these friendships changed over time.

Extract 1

Amelie: um well with Tracey we were best friends all the time, but in school I made my really good friends, Peyton and Loretta. We were all close friends and then Wanda and Peyton went off to XXX college and me and Loretta went to XXX college and then Wanda (.) came out of the closet and Loretta was just kind of ‘Oh↓’. I always suspected it, it was absolutely fine, but Wanda kind of distanced herself, she made like loads of gay friends, which is fine, but she kind of abandoned her other friends. But with Loretta we’ve got closer, and Peyton’s the same. Peyton’s very ‘Sex in the City, Bridget Jones’ (.) I sometimes meet up with Tracey but we’ve both got very different lives now. (Amelie, age 18, college student, cited in, Mackiewicz, 2013, p. 226)

In the extract above, Amelie describes a complex hierarchy of friendship of “best friends all the time,” “really good friends,” and people she’s “got closer” to, while others have “very different lives now.” This is constructed as the result of different life choices (related to Further Education colleges), as well as through sexual identities. Wanda’s coming “out of the closet” is negotiated first through reporting Loretta’s “Oh↓” sentiment, before Amelie distances herself from homophobia by stating “I always suspected it, it was absolutely fine,” and further offsetting this possible accusation by determining that Wanda’s association with the friendship group ended since she made her own friends in her own community, and thus, it was Wanda who “abandoned her other friends.” Such talk speaks to recognition of similarity and difference, and the normalization of homosociality being shaped by similarity—especially similarities based on who one desires. That is, female homosociality and friendship manage belonging through a heterosexual norm (Maddison, 2000).

Deepening further the friendship group’s existence within postfeminist sensibilities, Amelie also described the kinds of drinking practices engaged with by the group:

Extract 2

Amelie: me, Loretta and Peyton we just kind of go round each other’s houses and have a wine night↑, like, or a cocktail night whatever and it’s just us three, and we just get drunk basically (.) we really like dressing up, we’re always like dressed up nicely, like heels and a really nice dress (.) and we always get ready at each other’s houses (.) like I would do Loretta’s make-up, she’s just kind of ‘Do my eyes for me’, and Peyton’ll do our hair. (Mackiewicz, *ibid.*, p. 227)

In this extract, Amelie defines the practices common in discourses of the ‘girls night in,’ both in terms of alcohol consumption and the focus on each other’s appearance. Drawing on heavily gendered forms of drink (i.e., a “wine night” or “cocktail night”), which are also those reflected back to young women in television series such as *Sex and the City*, Amelie suggests that the purpose of these evenings is to get drunk, and importantly to do so together—“it’s just us three.” The “it’s just us three” expresses

the intimacy of female friendship, while talk of collectively working on appearance (heels, dresses, make-up, and hair) refocuses such intimacy as in the interests of achieving feminine beauty standards; techniques through which these young women work on themselves (and each other) “so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness ... [or] perfection” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18).

Alongside the girls’ night in, other participants in Mackiewicz’s (2013) research discussed how female friendship also shapes their engagements in public drinking spaces. In a focus group, for example, one participant stated; “we can go to the bar and drink shots or we can do whatever we want as long as we’re together and having a good time” (Lexie, age 20, office worker), to which another added “we’d never go and like leave our mates” (Mouse, age 21, office worker; cited in Mackiewicz, *ibid.*, p. 228). In the literature, many have noted the female friendship group as a means of support in the night-time economy. However, while this may represent a form of solidarity, it also means recognizing that such solidarity reproduces problematic neoliberal responsabilization discourses, as a form of governmentality that focus on individual groups of women taking care of each other, rather than on systematic changes to drinking venues, safety infrastructures (well-lit streets, cheaper taxis, late night buses), or even the cultures of heteromascularity which heighten the need for togetherness (Diaz-Fernandez & Evans, 2020; Gunby et al., 2017; Meyer, 2010; Sheard, 2011).

But, despite the discourse of risk, it was also clear that Mackiewicz’s (2013) participants’ talk was also about the pleasures of togetherness. Amelie’s talk reflects this in the pleasures of participating in feminine dressing up, while Lexie’s closely ties together the notion of togetherness as necessary to “[have] a good time.” As mentioned above in our discussion of a Foucauldian concept of power, these pleasures (and the sense of freedom that come from them) do not happen outside of power but are fundamental to it. In fact, its pleasure may be precisely what makes postfeminist sensibility, and the forms of friendship it engenders, so appealing.

Despite celebrating girl friendships as allowing them to participate outside of normative expectations of heterosexual coupledness, Mackiewicz’s (2013, p. 246) participants’ talk was often framed by a hoped-for expectation of meeting “the man of your dreams” (India, age 21, office worker). Therefore, drinking with girlfriends—especially in public spaces, such as bars, clubs, and pubs—was also about appearing attractive and desirable to men. In needing to be attractive to men, these young, heterosexual women had to negotiate the threat of individual competition in their friendships. As Tracy explains below, one way to manage this, as friends, is to work on each other’s appearance, as a form of collaborative technology of self.

Extract 3

Tracey: we’re not competing, we just wanna (.) match levels (.) it’s not a competition between us, we just both, understand (.) like I’d help her (.) even if it meant I suddenly felt a bit less attractive ‘cos she looks more, and then because I’d feel less, she’d help me (.) until eventually we’re on a level ground (.) ‘cos you can’t have jealousy between friends, so we mutually make each other feel as good as we can before we go out. (Tracey, age 18, college student; cited in Mackiewicz, 2013, p. 191)

McRobbie (2004) talks of individualism and young women's disinclination to continue with feminist values of collectivity and equality. Yet in Tracey's talk, we can see a construction of collectivity and equality structuring women's friendship practices, whereby competitiveness is underplayed and replaced with mutuality and care of the other, evidenced in attempts to "match levels" and "make each other feel as good as we can." This is a form of resistance against competitive heterosexuality, but one that only works with similarly 'matched' women.

Mackiewicz's study thus offers an in-depth example of how young, White, straight women talk about their friendships as significant and experienced through heterosexual norms and expectations for women to be sexually attractive, with pleasure and regulation closely tied together. In this section, we also identified the ways female friendships are negotiated as a form of togetherness that is based on similarity; engaging in beauty and other femininity-related practices together; and enabling participation in public spaces and youth cultures like going out drinking, against a backdrop of the threat of male harassment. These friendships were also talked about in highly emotional ways that map onto another element of postfeminism 2.0.

The Emotional Psychologizing of Girl Friendship

Other studies have also noted an emotional psychologizing of girlfriendship. This work highlights how friendship is used or represented in the media, as a form of psychological resilience and as a mechanism to mediate cultural damage in relation to body image, sexism, and disappointment in normative heterosexual relations.

One example of this emotional psychologizing of girlfriendship comes from Winch's (2013) media analysis of the co-brand best friends and television presenters Fearné Cotton and Holly Willoughby. Winch considers the way that Cotton and Willoughby's self-help book *Best Friends' Guide to Life* is presented through the affective registers of best friendship and belonging, in which engaging with the brand will make you feel "like you've got your mates around" (Fearné and Holly, YouTube, 2010, cited in Winch, 2013, p. 45). Winch (2013) argues that Cotton and Willoughby's book presents a normative girlish intimacy, through which the reader is given advice on heterosexual relationships, workplace success, home decoration, shopping, and cooking. In a friendly tone, the two women tell the reader that they don't want to give instructions on how to live, but share instances of their own successes and failures, and how together they supported each other in celebrating achievements and helping overcome challenges. As a Foucauldian form of governance, Winch (2013) argues that the book manages what are culturally considered negative emotions of rage, anger, and disappointment, through the production of 'good' and 'nice' femininity, "to keep 'your head down' and 'be humble [...] no matter what you are feeling, from day one till the end of your days' (Cotton and Willoughby, 2010, 141, 150)" (Winch, 2013, p. 51).

This management of emotions through friendship is echoed in Kanai's (2019) analysis of the content of best friend blogs, where women share memes as best friends,

and others are invited into these intimate moments of sharing since this sharing happens online. Kanai (2019) reads these blogs as a form of intimate public (Berlant, 2011), in which a shared sense of community and insider knowledge works to reinforce normative relationships. Thus, she argues, the pain and pressures of living up to notions of postfeminist perfection (McRobbie, 2015) are hidden beneath a veneer of feminine relatability that is often linked to humor as a mechanism for coping with the expectations of femininity. For example, in one meme, the caption states “When there’s too many hot guys by where I’m laying out and I instantly regret eating this week,” while the gif underneath features actress Jennifer Lawrence screaming alongside the text “My body isn’t ready.” Intended as humorous and sassy, but also underscored by the emotional terror of self-surveillance, the meme suggests that such responses are likely to be shared by others.

For both Winch (2013) and Kanai (2019), the postfeminist friendships presented in the media and online are about performing good femininity. The form of girl friendship that is promoted is thus individualistic since it positions girl friendship as “an investment in the individual as girlfriends are essential in enabling feminine normativity” (Winch, 2013, p. 2). This normative femininity is also tied to consumer practices (e.g., in notions of the ‘girly shopping trip’) and, through this, linked to forms of self-regulation in which women assess each other’s appearance (Winch, 2013). Riley et al. (2016) have also discussed this focus on assessing each other’s appearance, identifying a ‘postfeminist gaze’ at work in women’s homosocial relationships. Drawing on participant accounts of appearance judgements between women, Riley et al. (2016) note that assessing others means that young women also turn a critical eye on themselves, reviewing and judging how they measure up. And while one solution is to give appearance-related compliments rather than criticisms or support each other to ‘match levels’ (see extract 3 above), this offers limited resistance since it validates woman through their adherence to beauty norms.

In another study exploring resistance, Martinussen et al. (2020) identify how women might use friendships to escape postfeminist femininities. In their research, they cite examples of friendships described in terms of not talking and sharing intimacies (e.g., just watching TV and being ‘part of the furniture’), and other instances “where one does not have to be nice, relatable or develop one’s capabilities for being optimistic” (p. 10). So that, rather than friendship as a site where governmentality operates as women teach each other to self-manage and perform normative femininity, for Martinussen et al.’s (2020) participants, friendship offered an escape or subversive resistance from neoliberal demands to always work on oneself.

What this combined work on female friendships shows is that while some friendships are drawn into the service of postfeminist sensibility and associated demands to be the good, nice, attractive, sexy, resilient, ‘can do’ girl, others offer a refuge from these demands. Developing this analysis of resistance, Riley et al. (2023) argued that the individualizing, competitive element of postfeminism might be resisted through recognizing the ‘other’ as a vulnerable and desiring person. They ask, “What interesting shifts might happen if, for example, instead of giving each other hostile, appraising ‘looks,’ young women in nightclubs gave each other sympathetic nods, recognizing the other as also negotiating a context that makes them vulnerable” (Riley et al., 2023, p. 139).

Conclusion

Postfeminist sensibility shapes important elements of our relational, intimate lives, including female friendships. Drawing on our Foucauldian-informed analysis of post-feminism above, we suggest these relationships engage in a form of governmentality. Read through this lens, girl friendship draws on the feminist language of sisterhood, but in a way that reorients back to individualism, a heterosexual norm and, often in heavily gendered ways, back to appearance concerns.

In our analysis above, we have highlighted the pleasures of female friendship, alongside the power, and the potentialities opened between pleasure, power, and resistance. We would suggest that the female camaraderie expressed by girls and young women in research is genuinely felt, and that this is experienced as pleasurable. However, such positive affects also work to highlight the power at play, given that camaraderie is often in response to sexism or in response to neoliberal competition, where managing this competition in the context of friendship requires working on each other's appearance so that friends might "match levels." Similarly, the sense of belonging and recognition involved are powerful positive feelings that emerge alongside female friendships and often express complaint at the demands of femininity. But they also sidestep politics in exchange for humor and a return to normativity.

Resistance can be seen in care for each other, whether, as in the examples above, that is applying each other's make up to the best of their ability; providing a safe space to be free of appearance concerns; or pointing out the impossible demands of ideal femininity. These forms of resistance are, however, less a push-back than 'survive-within' strategies. To explore more explicit forms of resistance, we suggest that future research might consider female friendships in spaces that explicitly mark themselves as resistant. Given the heightened visibility of feminist politics, we might ask, what kinds of friendships have emerged, for example, through protests such as the Women's March or the #MeToo moment? These drew heavily on notions of solidarity but have also been criticized for reproducing racism and heterosexism by making invisible the experiences of women of colour and LGBTQIA+ people, including those who do, and those who do not identify as women (Phipps, 2019; Villesèche et al., 2018). We believe attention to such spaces might give us further insights into the dynamics of gender, power, and female friendship.

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Feminist Therapy, Art, and Embodiment Practices: Reclaiming the Female Body?



Paula Singleton

This chapter considers the female body, constructed by feminism as in need of reclamation (Pitts, 2003). The central questions are, what would it take to consider the female body as “reclaimed”? For it to be as unremarkable, as unproblematic, as the male body in public space? I consider some ways in which feminists have worked toward such ends, moving in sequence from women’s therapy through to art and then embodiment practices. The chapter draws upon the ideas raised in these fields to make an argument concerning tools at our disposal to work toward joyful and rebellious reclamation. However, there are a couple of important caveats. Firstly, I am a trans-inclusive feminist. When I talk of reclaiming the female body, I mean reclaiming the abject feminine from misogynist culture, and rebranding it as powerful, dangerous, and joyful. Whether the reader identifies as having a female body, or identifies beyond a gender binary, then they are included here. This includes the female body which presents as, or is made sense of as, masculine. Secondly, although a large part of this chapter is about art, I am not an art critic; I am a psychologist with an interest in gendered embodiments and a love of feminist art. This is my perspective on some art I have encountered over the past thirty years which questions what it means to be female or feminine in these times, and which engages with the impossible demands of patriarchal culture. It is a partial perspective I am sure, but my own.

Let us briefly consider a summary of relevant embodiment theories from a feminist perspective. Leder’s “absent body” hypothesis (1990) contends that one’s own body is normally absent to consciousness, unless a specific physical sensation or social experience cause it to “dys-appear,” defined as the body’s problematic emergence into the consciousness. Yet feminist work such as that of Young (2001) on the phenomenology of female body experiences challenges such a non-gendered theory. She argues that women simultaneously view their bodies as a burden, and as

P. Singleton (✉)
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
e-mail: paula.singleton@open.ac.uk

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK

something that needs to be protected, but never something which we are allowed to absent from consciousness. Butler argues that all bodies have an “invariably public dimension. [...] Given over from the start to the world of others, [the body] bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life” (2004, p. 26). Yet even in the scopical economy of consumer capitalism, it seems to me that the female body is still continually re/presented to us in contrast to the male body: as more unfinished, less satisfactory, and certainly more noticeable in public. We simply don’t think of men’s bodies as in need of reclamation. The female body, women’s psychosocial being, is still constituted as deviant in the public sphere, and as subordinate in the private sphere. The female body/self cannot yet be considered as “reclaimed.” The chapter now moves to an examination of some attempts at reclamation from feminist therapy movements to art and embodiment practices, before concluding with a feminist call to join arms (Ahmed, 2017) and sharing of tools to generate alternatives to the present “problem” of the female body.

Reclaiming the Female Self: The Women’s Therapy Centre and Beyond

McLeod (1994) notes that feminist therapy began as a riposte to critiques of sexist accounts of women’s emotional well-being, and sexist response to women’s distress. The creative spark galvanizing this was the self-help paradigm dominant in the feminism of the 1970s, predicated on refusing to accept that “what exists” equates to “all that it is possible to be.” Feminist therapy, therefore, pointed to the way that women’s emotional needs were subordinated in sexist culture and attempted to meet these needs by engaging women in therapy that was psychologically productive, emotionally enlightening or personally transforming. Krzowski and Land (1988) describe how the London Women’s Therapy Centre was started in 1976 by Susie Orbach and Luise Eichenbaum, so that women could be treated by feminist therapists in a way that addressed women’s needs and took account of their social realities. The Centre continues to this day, with a particular commitment currently to offer services to women whose needs would not be met elsewhere, or who would not usually have access to therapy: there is a young mothers’ group and services for migrants and asylum seekers. Back in the 1970s, its first home was a basement flat with two large consulting rooms and an office/kitchen. Self-financing, it charged fees on a sliding scale to enable access for the benefit of women who had little or no money. Very quickly, the center was overwhelmed by demand for individual therapy with a two-year waiting list, and so developed a workshop program dealing with the most common issues faced in individual provision: feelings about being stuck in caring roles or problems within social relationships. The workshops were also intended to teach skills useful for self-help groups which many women wanted. Groups were focused around three types of issues: firstly, the interpersonal, those to do with relationships with family or intimate partners; secondly, for issues dealing

with the problems of the outside world rather than the psyche or intimate sphere; and finally, those dealing with issues of the inner world such as depression or expressing creativity. Sessions were run for specific groups of women, such as working class and black women, lesbians, and those with mental health issues such as agoraphobia.

The burgeoning feminist therapy field knew it to be insufficient to consider women's emotional well-being solely in terms of subordination through gender; for example, McLeod (1994) asks us to consider emotional experiences as a "permeable membrane" (p. 7) where our inner states interact with the outside world, such as the demands from our social conditions and the resources and possibilities they make available, and more widely by the ideological assumptions of the day and the way we attempt to express ourselves within the bounds of these. There is so much more than gender at play here. However, McLeod argues, gender can be considered as the fulcrum of women's emotional well-being, whereby societal positionings of women as subordinate "filter into intrapsychic emotional processes that compose women's self-identity" (p. 9). One example of this, posited by Eichenbaum and Orbach (1985), is that young women's emotional needs are forged within relationships with their mothers, who themselves have their own needs unmet in sexist society: personal relationships where emotional needs are supposed to be met are often sites of dominance and subordination and, therefore, poor emotional well-being.

However, critiques of feminist therapy rest upon its call to the journey inward. Women's attentions and energies in feminist therapy were directed very much toward individual solutions and deflected from the need for urgent social change—in a way that sidestepped or even reinforced inequalities. Kitzinger (1991) drew explicit attention to this, in a critique of notions of female power as somehow superior to male power, and power as a concept used as a convenient way of summarizing a situation which, however, does nothing to explain it. In the early feminist therapy paradigm of the 1970s and 1980s, Kitzinger (1991) describes the slew of supposedly feminist self-help titles such as *The Journey Within*, *Journey into Me*, *Healing the Child Within*, and so on, which make abundantly clear the supposed locus of the solution to the problem of female subordination—the "target of resistance to male power becom[ing] female minds" (p. 118). Kitzinger describes the many feminist psychologist fliers at the 1990 conference of the Association for Women in Psychology (AWP) in the United States, as this exemplar:

Sage Fairchild, a professional counsellor and bodywork therapist, who specializes in creative visualization and guided meditation, wants to help her clients "reach a centered place.... Through the integration of physical, mental and spiritual energies, clients are empowered to make clearer choices based on full awareness". (1991, p. 121)

Lest this type of thing be dismissed as "fringe psychobabble without relevance to feminist psychology overall" (1991), Kitzinger argues that the same themes are to be found in mainstream works of the time such as Gilligan (1972), and Belenky et al. (1986), where women's ways of knowing are argued as purely intuitive, subjective, and requiring a definitive reclaiming of the female self. In such a conception of female power and problems, Kitzinger argues, feminist psychology followed its

home discipline, which has persistently refused to make explicit the reproduction of power relationships and often actively obscures these. In working toward the “free, autonomous, self-fulfilled and authentic woman” (p. 124), Kitzinger (1991) argues that such feminist therapy is collaborationist with patriarchy, rather than a challenge to it.

Kitzinger argues for feminist attention to Foucault’s conception of power as productive, not as a force which acts on us from outside, but which produces how individuals are psychologically formed and “served.” In this way, power can be considered as something that nurtures specific types of identity and decides that some are more worthy than others. At the nexus of power and identity therefore, feminist psychology must address an explicit politics of subjectivity, which acknowledges both the “violence of our oppression and the courage of our resistance” (p. 126). But this is a challenging task even thirty years later. The discipline of psychology remains one which tends to depoliticize and individualize, in a way with which therapy inevitably colludes, however feminist it might aim to be, as argued by Fine and Gordon (1991). We cannot reclaim our authentic selves if there are no authentic selves to be had while our psychic feet are bound by the culture which grows us.

Reclaiming the Female Body in Art and Body Practices

One important way in which attention has been drawn to problematized femininities in patriarchal cultures is through art by women, whether or not such work explicitly identifies as feminist. In their broad survey of the impact of the American feminist art movement of the 1970s, Broude and Garrard (1994) describe the initial impetus and energy of the times: the goal of feminist art was to enact a comprehensive and lasting cultural revolution by stopping the suppression of women’s perspectives, and thereby, ushering in a new era of equal representation for the dreams and lives of both women and men. Broude and Garrard argue that the contribution of feminist art has been to introduce a postmodernist revolution in art, by highlighting gender as socially constructed, by contesting the hierarchy of art forms, by using “low” methods such as crafts, video and performance art, and by prioritizing pluralist varieties of work. To exemplify the contribution of such work to the project of “reclaiming” the subordinate gendered body, this chapter focuses, although not exclusively, on the work of Judy Chicago using pottery and various forms of needlework, the performance art of Marina Abramović, specifically *Rhythm 0* (1974), and the photography of Lola Flash.

Judy Chicago

This artist is probably most (in)famous for her work *The Dinner Party*, undertaken 1974–1979 and now on permanent view at the Brooklyn Museum’s Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. Lucie-Smith’s (2000) survey of Chicago’s body of

work describes this work in detail in chapter four. The work is a huge installation piece with monumental textile entryway banners, a triangular table with a shaped plate and decorative runner for each of the 39 historically important women featured, ceramic floor tiles underneath featuring the names of 999 more important women, and the “heritage panels” (information boards) which outline why these women were included. The work was equal parts wildly popular and critically derided. Feminist critique mainly decried the shaped plates which purported to represent vulvar forms, querying why women must always be represented by their body parts, even with feminist aims. Certainly, the imagery could be conceived as problematic because of its essentialist, passive nature. The work fits into the feminist movement of the 1970s which glorified and focused on the female body. Nevertheless, it is of its time, and unfortunately, women of ethnicities other than white and European are not well represented in the work.

Chicago’s *Birth Project* undertaken in the early 1980s focused on representations of birth, as the artist could find no artistic representations of crowning (when the baby’s head starts showing through the vaginal opening with each contraction), saying that “If men gave birth there would be hundreds of representations of the crowning” (1985). Again, Lucie-Smith’s (2000) work, chapter five, has a full description and images from this series. Chicago undertook the design of dozens of these works to be enacted in various form of needlecraft such as embroidery, macramé, and crochet; these were enacted by more than 150 skilled needleworkers for payment. One of the most powerful images in the collection is that of a “birth tear” to the vulva. Feminist critique focused on the lack of “authenticity” in this work because of its collaborative nature arguing that Chicago might have exploited these women. The reaction of mainstream art critics was to negate these representations as art due to both their subject matter (which was considered by many to be too graphic) and the medium. Yet to this date these are the only representations in art of this topic, and their enormous power endures.

To my mind, both of these works exemplify the feminist project of putting women’s lives and experiences to the fore, transforming the abject positionings and embodied experiences of women into high art through decorative “low” art methods. Further, these works reclaim both women’s history, as equally world-shaping and powerful as its male counterpart, and the female body as a site of creative power.

Marina Abramović

This artist is famous for her performance works such as *The Artist Is Present* in residence at MOMA New York in 2010. However, I now focus on an early performance, *Rhythm 0*, undertaken in 1974, at an art gallery in Naples. The artist prepared a table laden with 72 objects, from the mundane to the more threat-laced, including lipstick, comb, whip, paint, and scalpel—and an unloaded gun and one bullet. The instructions for the work displayed on the table were as follows:

There are 72 objects on the table that one can use on me as desired.

Performance

I am the object.

During this period I take full responsibility.

1974

Duration: 6 hours (8 pm–2 am).

Source Tate (n.d.), where the props and a video recording of parts of the performance can be seen

In a video recorded for the Marina Abramović Institute (Zec, 2016), Abramović herself described how she undertook this piece in response to critiques of performance art, which at that time constructed its creators as “sick, exhibitionist, ridiculous, masochistic and attention-seeking”; she undertook this piece “to see how far the public would go if the artist themselves doesn’t do anything.” The outcome of this piece was genuinely disturbing. In the artist’s own words, again from the video of 2016:

They cut my neck and drink [sic] my blood, they carried me around, put me on a table and opened my legs and put a knife in between them. Then one person took the pistol, put the bullet [in] and see if I would really with my own hand push the [trigger], the gallerist came and went crazy, took the gun and threw it out the window, they took the scissors and cut my clothes, they put the rose [thorns] into my body. Then at the end of the time the gallerist came and said the performance was over, I started moving and being myself because I was there like a puppet just for them, and at that moment everyone ran away, people could not actually confront with me as a person. (Zec, 2016).

The power of this work, for me at least, lies in how comfortable the audience was in 1974 with brutalizing an objectified woman in public space. Abramović echoes the work of Yoko Ono in *Cut Piece*, premiered in Kyoto in 1964 (see MOMA, n.d.) where Ono invited the audience to approach her and cut pieces of her clothing. However, where Ono’s work ended at the discretion of the artist, Abramović allowed her audience to continue for six hours. I am including this work here as a piece exemplifying the need for a reclamation of the female body; it points to an urgency of rehabilitation of the category of woman.

Lola Flash

Lola Flash is a portrait photographer who has spent decades creating work that speaks to racism, sexism, and homophobia. They celebrate queer legacies and their career straddles activism and art, beginning in the 1980s with work documenting the ACT UP protests. Recently, their work has focused on women over the age of 70 in the *Salt* series, continuing their project of representing those who are often deemed invisible. As they describe it, “I’ve been going to galleries and museums forever and feeling invisible” (Lynne, 2018), and they encourage their students to start building their own artistic legacy if they don’t find themselves represented.

Their series *[sur]passing* draws attention to the impact of skin pigmentation on Black identity and consciousness, where amount of melanin can lead to a wild variety of outcomes, from “overt favoritism to extreme alienation” (Lynne, 2018). Lola Flash describes the aim of this series:

The models are shot with a large format camera from towering urban vantage points [...] they become divine, larger than the purposely out of focus buildings [...] in contrast to the sharp, crisp rendering of each subject. The subjects assertively return the gaze, hanging the four-foot by five-foot photographs above eye level, the viewer has no choice but to “look up” to these people [...] creating a plethora of complex positive imagery of [black] people. (Flash, n.d.-a)

In the SURMISE series of images of those who are “gender fluid, [and] gay people who look straight and vice versa” (Flash, n.d.-b), Flash deals explicitly with the impact for queer people of visual representations of gender and their effects upon both our psyches and society. In the artist statement on this series, Flash reminds us that the language we have available to talk about gender and sexual identity is constantly being transformed because of shifting political climates and socially constructed notions of what gender expressions are acceptable. In the current climate of demonstrations and campaigns against trans people, often undertaken in the name of feminism, these are important and timely reminders. Gender is not (and never has been) a monolith, except as it has been presented to us by those in positions of power: the church, the state, and heteronormative society. Psychology itself has been a shameful participant in this through the work of those such as John Money, who performed “sexual reassignment surgery” on infants, and more recently, clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson, who firmly conflates “attractive women” with “nature itself,” rendering women as inspiring of terror to young men (2018, p. 323). The consequences of “misunderstandings and misrepresentations related to perceived gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation are often painful, soul destroying and, in some countries, life threatening” (Flash, n.d.-b). Even in countries where legislation might appear to protect those who are different, we continually hear of killings of those with less social power, who are women, femme, queer, trans, Black: the stakes could not be higher for our claim to be fully human and to demand to be seen differently, respected. Flash is keen to celebrate the beauty in diversity and to enable their various subjects simply to be visible, rather than inspected: “my focus as a photographer is really just to say to my beautiful subjects, ‘Lola Flash thinks you’re beautiful. She’s going to drag her big old camera over and take a portrait of you’” (Lynne, 2018).

Body Practices

I now consider feminist politics in relation to body practices beyond art, and some problems which arise when feminism and postmodernism meet agentic female embodied experience. Essentialist feminist politics of the 1970s had a conception of the female body as naturally better than the male body; more nurturant, more

peaceful, and preferable in its natural state, unmarked by patriarchal culture, such as freedom from imperatives to shave body hair or wear a bra. This type of interpretation is also common today in media accounts or representations of women's bodily practices such as tattooing, piercing, and cosmetic surgery (see Pitts, 2003, for an account of the experiences of what might be considered by some to be extreme body modifications). Mainstream culture was then and still is now quick to interpret women's agentic acts concerning their own bodies as signifying underlying problems within the individual psyche. Postmodern theorists have also been very ready to discount women's own understandings of agency in regard to their own bodies and experiences, for instance, Butler in *Bodies That Matter* (1993/2011) argues that we need not consider personal understandings of individual bodies since bodies are made sense of socially, and this overrides individual concerns.

In Pitts' (2003) examination of the accounts of women who have modified their bodies through scarification or tattooing as responses to trauma, she notes that "women's attempts to reclaim their own bodies acknowledge the ways their bodies have already been inscribed for them, without their consent and often through violence" (p. 81). She further argues that these women choose to refuse challenging social pressures which bend them toward silencing and normalizing women's victimization. Even when women do not explicitly refuse victimization, they can still be considered pathological if they fail to inhabit weakness and vulnerability as a sign of femininity. Haywood (1998) notes how women body builders are often pathologized as ugly, steroid-abusing, unfeminine, and "with a will and self-determination that is so extreme that it can be [...] self-destructive" (p. 7). They are violating beauty norms, inviting the male gaze in a way which recuperates women's category of "being looked at" (Berger, 1972, p. 47), moving it from a position of passivity and oppression to one of self-definition, display on one's own terms, at least to the extent allowed in a patriarchal culture.

But what of modern economies of visibility in social networking sites? Toffoletti and Thorpe (2018) draw attention to self-presentation online of female athletes. There are possibilities of disruption here, they argue; "the sportswomen with the biggest international followings and thus the most visible female sporting bodies in [social networking sites], however, tend to be those who are most successfully practising neoliberal feminist discourses of self-entrepreneurialism and empowerment, and who willingly celebrate a sporty and heterosexy, fashionable femininity" (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018, p. 20). It still seems that to violate beauty norms means to "remain largely invisible and/or illegible" (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018, p. 28).

Before turning to the construction of spaces in which to subvert convention and create such possibilities as Nussbaum outlines in *Sex and Social Justice* (1999), I now summarize two poles of perspective on women's embodied experience, relevant to a reclaiming project. One pole is what Pitts (2003) describes as the "mutilating" model, wherein radical feminists and postmodern theorists alike conceive of the perspectives of individuals on their own experiences as somehow irrelevant to notions of power and justice. Pitt designates the alternate pole as the "reclaiming" model, conceiving the individual as all powerful in choosing to refuse patriarchal inscriptions on her psyche, as in the work of the Women's Therapy Centre, and wherein the individual

body can therefore be read as a kind of autobiography unimpeded by culture. These positions both neglect women's agency: we can draw attention to the body as socially constructed and inscribed by gendered power relations. And, like Pitts' women body modifiers, women need not choose to be modified or marked by patriarchal culture, as this is not within individual control. Pitts' argument is that there is no attempt at meaning making about the individual body which can be separated from discourse. She argues that attempts at reclaiming the body should therefore be re-conceived: not as returning the self to some kind of "pre-victimized state" (2003, p. 85), but rather as producing stories of the body different to the ones socially assigned, for example, by gender. These stories co-construct meanings in a mediated exchange between firstly, the lived experience of the body, secondly, a dialogue between the social and personal interpretations about the meanings of that body, and thirdly, within cultural conversations about what those meanings represent. As Cahill (2001) argues, in choosing to account for "how and in what way and by who and to what effect" (p. 143) we have been marked, and in negotiating our agency within (and bursting the bounds of) the discursive limits of gendered power, we are able to transcend (however momentarily) Cahill's "phenomenology of fear": the affective, disciplinary milieu of the categorically female body.

Discussion: The Future of Reclaiming the Female Body

Both individual therapy, and art practices like the Abramović piece *Rhythm 0* described above, bravely position the individual as intensely vulnerable—noticing and foregrounding the problem of how women are perceived in, and how they experience, the public and private spheres. Only by entering this difficult and vulnerable state can our lot be bettered in the longer term. We perform the subject positions made available to us in normative culture (in art) and our present living situations (in therapy), explore and draw attention to the problems within these situations, consider and practice some potential solutions, and reflect upon these to come up with new forms of practicable solutions which are unimaginable from the perspective of normative culture. Whether through feminist therapy, in making or witnessing feminist art, or in deciding how and when to mark our bodies, we are enabled to speak our truths—or as Ahmed (2017) would put it, we raise our arms willfully—even though this makes us vulnerable and can be painful. The self-help paradigm referred to above in the material on feminist therapy continues to the present day in contemporary feminist activism. Such activism includes protesting injustice and campaigning for resources, both physical and discursive. Examples of these include continuing the work of the Guerrilla Girls by pointing to such matters as continuing sexism in art displays, by "ArtActivistBarbie" (to be found on Twitter at @BarbieReports), protesting at the closure or defunding of women's therapy centers and domestic violence shelters, and Chella Quint's Period Positive campaign against menstruation taboos, based upon inclusive values.

The chapter now moves to consider two of the major tools available to those who wish to “reclaim” the female body: firstly, the decoupling of the category woman from vulnerability in the public sphere, and secondly, offering ideas for counterstrategy, of making spaces in which, referring back to Nussbaum, we can subvert convention and resourcefully create possibilities of love and joy, even in societies that nourish problematic gender roles.

Tools 1: Counternarratives

We can use our arms (after Ahmed, 2017) to draw attention to how power works to reinforce inequality. It is possible to decouple vulnerability from “woman.” The counselors, artists, and feminist activists described above point to women’s everyday encounters and the limited affordances available to women under patriarchal regimes. In their transgressions and refusals, they draw attention to dominant cultural norms and how unsatisfactory they are for women as individuals and as a category. They present subjectifications in magnified form. The submissive form of Yoko Ono in *Cut Piece*; the passive bodily object presented by Marina Abramović in *Rhythm 0*: they perform the passivity that patriarchal culture expects and show it to the world at large to shocking effect. They challenge the dark and depressing place assigned to woman within the dominance hierarchy. It is possible to refuse to stay home and suffer in silence, hiding menstrual blood as a source of private shame. It is possible to refuse to accept that only the male nipple is publicly acceptable. It is possible to revel in that which is held abject—female bodies and their entrances and exits, capacities and curves—by producing them at 15 times life size in glowing technicolor and invite all to enter, as in the monumental sculpture *Hon-en-katedral* of 1966 (Niki de Saint Phalle Foundation, 2016). It is possible to re/present abjection as beauty and capacity. Inspired by the photography of Cindy Sherman, it is possible to present women as multiple, complex, and contradictory, as men are allowed to be. As in the fleshy, awe-inspiring self-portrait photography of Catherine Opie, and the exuberant erotic art of certified sexologist, sex educator, former sex worker, and feminist, Annie Sprinkle (1998), it is possible to refuse to accept our designated position as either worthy Madonna or unworthy whore; it is possible to be sexual on terms which refuse such ordering and the shame heaped on the unapologetically sexual woman. After Judy Chicago, as cited in Lucie-Smith (2000, pp. 56, 57), it is possible to challenge the positioning of the female body as the repository of all the emotions in culture, of the male body as disembodied and invulnerable, and it is possible to enquire as to the emotions the male body can contain and express, beyond anger and violence. What would it mean to draw attention to the male body as equally embodied, emotional, vulnerable, and why is this constructed as so threatening? If the feminine is the site of all that is abject and vulnerable, then the masculine can be re/presented as respectable and invulnerable. Hegemonic masculinity is repetitively formulated as denying vulnerability (Courtenay, 2000); Glaser and Frosh (1988) explicitly link

hegemonic forms of masculinity with fear of emotion, denial of vulnerability and especially repudiation of feminine aspects of the self.

Outlining these new forms of subjectivity draws attention to how the “reclaiming” of the female body does not return us to some prelapsarian state, before patriarchal rule. Rather as Pitts argues (2003), the reclaimed body is not recovered, but rather produced by such art, activism, and engagement with cultural critiques enabled by feminist and intersectional theories and concepts. There is always the risk of being misinterpreted by misogynist culture, nonetheless we exercise our agency. It is not possible to escape the dense web that power weaves around us in macro- and micro-cultural practices: what Heritage (1984, p. 197) argues as the “filigree of small-scale, socially organized behaviors which are unceasingly iterated” and which “interlock to constitute the great public institution of gender as a morally-organized-as-natural fact of life.” Yet it is often possible to draw attention to these small-scale behaviors, interrupting their ceaseless iteration and hence disrupting, even if for a moment, the moral organization of gender as natural fact.

Tools 2: Counterstrategies

As Ahmed reminds us (2017) another way to use our arms is to join arms. I now turn to a different way to “demystify power and its components” (Layland, 1990, p. 129) by suggesting some possible ways to join our arms against injustice.

Much power comes from bringing silent individual shames into the public realm, exposing them to air and light, taking the shame out of them by situating them within wider political debates rather than positioning them within discourses of individual failure; drawing attention to the injustice of local practices that were hitherto hidden; proposing alternative subject positions which are more equal. The power apparatus of the gender binary is strong. Nevertheless, it does not produce at all times and in all places men and women who are appropriate and completely docile bodies and subjects. There are significant opportunities for deviousness (in Nussbaum’s terms), for resourcefulness and creating new ways of being, even if in limited ways. To speak of reclaiming female bodies is to remind the listener that femininity is far from a monolith, and that, even under the panopticon of femininity as a disciplinary regime, there are alternatives whereby challenges to subjectivity can be responded to creatively.

None can escape the role of culture in creating understandable and appropriate bodies and subjects, nor is it possible to evade completely the constant reinscription of problematic gender roles. However, the artists, practitioners, activists, and others described in this chapter lay bare, question and/or provide alternative modes of women’s embodied subjectivities. They provide access to experience of the ways in which discourse inscribes female bodily surface with meanings, and they contest those meanings. This chapter aimed to critically examine some spaces where it has been possible to subvert such inscription, by drawing attention to it as inscription. If it is possible for the body to be written upon by culture, then it must also be

possible for the embodied subject to communicate with the culture through the type of inscriptions we choose to make upon and about our own bodies. And this includes demands for payment for their work from artists outside the world of the white cis-gender heterosexual artist, who point out that their marginalization often makes it a struggle to survive, let alone to create cultural products with which to educate those in positions of more social power.

For more on this, we can consider an artwork in the form of a public letter from non-binary textile artist L. J. Roberts from June 28, 2019 (Roberts, 2019). The letter is addressed to “artists, curators, museum directors, archivists” drawing attention to the “systemic barriers and frequent aggression that consume valuable time, energy and resources” of marginalized artists. The work of these artists was commissioned by the Archives of American Art for an exhibition entitled “What is feminist art?,” which commissioned work from many groups of people who are marginalized, and yet paid none of them, while also requiring the work be granted to the archive after the exhibition.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn upon feminist therapy, art, and embodiment practices to consider what it would take to consider the female body as unproblematic as the male body in public space. I have highlighted above some tools at our disposal to reach for rebellious reclamations. However, how to evade the psychosocial effects of hegemonic femininity? How can we (after Nussbaum) resourcefully create possibilities for love and joy, despite patriarchal messages about the “appropriate” (read: insufficient) female body? Wetherell and Edley (1999) argued that upon critical examination of contextual social practices which make up gendered enactments, they are “multiple, varied and much more complex” (pp. 351–352) than usually theorized. This chapter has explored some of the ways in which women are oppressed by the hegemonic feminine. However, the chapter has also explored some of the ways in which practices such as feminist therapy, art, and embodied activism can enable us to “see the structures of power more clearly, and so [we] can the more clearly evade them” (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 77). These visions of the structures of power are seen from below, from a position of oppression. Perhaps as in Lola Flash’s positioning of their subjects in *[sur]passing*, it is possible to “assertively return the gaze,” hanging our representations “above eye level so that the viewer has no choice but to ‘look up’” (Flash, n.d.-a). We must insist upon our construction in the public sphere as powerful, active, agentic subjects: “Insist, insist, insist—there is no such thing as repetition, no such thing, she said, only insistence. We insist” (from Halberstam’s [n.d.] *Off Manifesto* commissioned by the Feminist Art Coalition).

Perhaps we could remind ourselves that, no matter what the world says about our bodies, nor even how we feel about our individual bodies, we can re/claim our bodies by rewriting the apparent opposition of masculine and feminine, in drawing attention to the disciplinary workings of gendered power. Rather than recover them

from some imaginary prelapsarian state, we must produce our re/claimed bodies. Returning to my caveat on being a trans-inclusive feminist, if we turn to de Lauretis' (1987) argument that to represent gender is also to construct it, then I argue that the most joyful outcome here would be for feminism to take the counterstrategy of repudiation of the fearful governance of the imaginary boundaries of masculine and feminine bodies. Inspired by the Xenofeminist manifesto of "Latoria Cuboniks" (2018), let a thousand genders bloom, in order to allow all bodies to be represented as they choose, whether vulnerable, powerful, loving, warlike, or joyful.

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Conclusion

Power, Gender, and Psychology: Common Themes and an Agenda for the Future



Eileen L. Zurbriggen and Rose Capdevila

Our goal for this handbook was to showcase some of the most pioneering scholarship in psychology that analyzes power and gender. The focus was on feminist scholarship for a simple reason: feminists have always understood, and have brilliantly articulated, the ways that power and gender are co-constituted and the ways in which both are implicated in virtually every domain and process of any consequence, whether personal or societal. To understand people, individually and collectively, we must interrogate both gender and power.

As we review the impressive contributions to feminist scholarship featured in this handbook, several themes stand out. These include the importance of feminist history, the need for psychologists to continually interrogate their own use of power, the significance of trusting people as experts on their own lives, the value of intersectionality theory, and the importance of structural and systemic change.

With one exception (Bharj & Hubbard, this volume), we did not instruct (or even explicitly invite) authors to use a historical lens in their chapters. For that reason, we were at first surprised to see that so many of them spontaneously chose to do so. The sheer number of authors who began their chapters with a review of relevant historical detail was striking. Moreover, these sociohistorical summaries were provocative, enlightening, and (often) centrally important to the theorization conducted in the remainder of the chapter. Our authors have reminded us of the importance, for feminists, of never forgetting our history. In the words of feminist historian Gerda Lerner (as quoted by US President Jimmy Carter in his statement establishing Women's History Week; Carter, 1980) "Women's history is women's right – an essential, indispensable heritage from which we can draw pride, comfort,

E. L. Zurbriggen
University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA, USA
e-mail: zurbrigg@ucsc.edu

R. Capdevila (✉)
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
e-mail: rose.capdevila@open.ac.uk

courage, and long-range vision.” We heartily concur with this sentiment and would amend it only in that we believe that claiming the right to share one’s history is equally important for other marginalized communities.

In addition to the explicit history that many authors included in their chapters, another recounting of feminist history was more implicit: the nuanced management of the politics of citation by the authors across themes and topics. In reading through the chapters, we often found them to be carefully and conscientiously referenced—acknowledging the source of each point and referencing others who moved that argument on. As per Sara Ahmed’s (2017) widely cited observation that “Citation is feminist memory” (p. 15), the authors acknowledge the diversity of scholarship that underpins their arguments. This can sometimes be challenging within the practicalities of academic life in which we must respond to conventions and word counts but citations are an important mechanism whereby scholarship is either “honored or erased” (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017, p. 502). Although we ourselves have, on occasion, been drawn into these “pragmatic” practices, we hope this volume bolsters a body of literature and activism (e.g., citeblackwomencollective.org) that serves to counter the historic use of citation as a “problematic technology that contributes to the reproduction of the white heteromascularity” (Mott & Cockayne, 2017, p. 954).

One aspect of psychology in which feminists have historically been critical is in psychology’s treatment of women (Chesler, 1972) and LGBT people (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993). This critique has also rejected a pathologizing and medicalized approach to mental health challenges and psychological distress. These classic critiques were referenced or updated by several authors. A deeper point was made even more frequently: as psychologists and professionals in related disciplines, we need to continuously interrogate our own wielding of power. Whether in recommending treatment for depression or an eating disorder, assisting survivors of partner abuse, facilitating gender-affirming care during a gender transition, or providing emotional care and support for a disabled person, psychologists all too often engage in practices that disempower or even further oppress their clients. Multiple chapters called instead for psychology to be re-imagined as a vehicle for social transformation.

As part of this transformation, psychological clinicians and researchers must trust people as the experts on their own experiences and center that expertise in research, theorizing, and praxis. It becomes increasingly difficult to operate in any other way, when people with marginalized identities demand the right to self-identify, as exemplified in the blossoming of new sexual and gender identities (Smith & Yost, this volume). The kind of coalition building discussed by multiple authors (e.g., Bharj & Adams; Morison & Le Grice) can also be part of this effort.

Another theme across chapters was intersectionality. Although we did explicitly request that all authors include some focus on this important framework, we were impressed with the deep engagement that most of our authors provided. Such engagement led to more richly nuanced analyses of the power issues intertwined within the various domains covered in the handbook. Moreover, in contrast to the critique (by authors such as Settles et al., 2020) that psychologists tend to have a superficial conceptualization of intersectionality, many of the authors who contributed to this

handbook understand intersectionality as fundamentally a theory about power and privilege, rather than only a theory of identity.

Finally, a theme throughout the handbook was the argument that structural and systemic factors are tremendously important in understanding the role that (gendered) power plays in individual lives. In their treatment of resistance, our authors called for structural and cultural change rather than only focusing on individual resilience. Even though the fundamental goal of the discipline is to understand individual behavior and experiences, our authors argued that the deepest understanding comes only when we consider individuals as they are embedded in their raced, classed, and gendered social structures and when we explicitly consider the ways in which those structures are infused with power. The personal truly is political.

This superb set of contributions makes us optimistic for the future of feminist psychology. What unfolds will depend on the creativity and insights of the feminist psychological community, writ large, but we see several attractive pathways. We anticipate the broader application of power and gender analyses to an even more diverse set of issues and domains, we expect a multitude of methodologies to be developed and utilized, and we hope that the attention to context and complexity exemplified by the handbook's contributors will become a standard in the field.

The contributions in this handbook amply demonstrate the potential of combining an analysis of power and gender. We encourage the use of these analytical lenses even more broadly, to help address a wide range of social problems. In domains where a power analysis, but not a gender analysis, is typically made, we can interrogate gender more centrally. These might include events of interest to political scientists (e.g., the invasion of the Ukraine, the autocratic turn in the United States and elsewhere in the world), economists (e.g., the continued rise of neoliberalism, the gendered impacts of income inequality), or sociologists (e.g., the causes and consequences of police violence). In domains where gender is typically already articulated, we can introduce an analysis based in power, or provide a more nuanced understanding of power (e.g., understanding the political backlash against LGBTQ people, the stripping of reproductive rights in the United States, childcare, and other supports for families). In domains where neither power nor gender is consistently and prominently theorized (e.g., climate change), scholars following in the footsteps of our contributors can apply or strengthen both analytical lenses.

We hope that scholars will also emulate the methodological diversity seen herein. Many of the authors have drawn on or developed innovative methodologies that attend to subjective experience and step back from a narrowly focused individualist approach that often dominates psychology. While some chapters did, without a doubt, draw on research produced through traditional experimental positivist methods, many contributors also brought to their research newer practices and technologies of knowledge production. From historical excavations to critical re-readings, to participatory action research, to photo-elicitation and numerous creative methods, the volume evidences the importance of moving beyond traditional methodologies in order to make sense of marginalized experiences.

Finally, it seems to us that the reach and impact of a feminist analysis of gender and power are greatest when scholars embrace context and complexity, rather than

turning away from or minimizing them. Humans are social animals and we are situated within interlocking networks of personal relationships and social systems, including nuclear and extended families, kin networks, friendships, romantic partnerships, geographical communities, schools, religious communities, workplaces, nation-states, and on and on. Our behavior at any moment is informed by all of this contemporaneous context, as well as by everything in our past, from our prenatal environment and the experiences of childhood to our interactions of the past week. Although no theory can hope to incorporate all of this complexity and context, an ever-present awareness that it exists can help scholars avoid the hubris of a one-size-fits-all theory. Just as feminists have always questioned the wisdom of applying to everyone theories developed by studying only men, we should take care not to engage in a similar practice of over-generalization. We must remain cognizant of the fact that every theory, including those developed using intersectional feminist frameworks, must necessarily ignore some amount of individual particularity. Acknowledging this allows us to remain open to voices that have not yet been heard.

As we bring this handbook to a close, we have reflected on the contribution that feminist scholarship in psychology has made to an understanding of gender and power. The richness of the contributions alludes to the relevance of these as analytic lenses. It is our sincere hope that another thirty years do not pass before we see more volumes taking this approach and look forward to the work produced by feminist colleagues coming together to explore the role of power and challenge a singular, individualistic sensemaking in psychology.

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