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COMPARATIVE

FEMINIST STUDIES

Feminist Approaches to Media Theory and Research

Edited by Dustin Harp,
Jaime Loke, and Ingrid Bachmann

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Feminist Approaches to Media Theory and Research

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*To my sons, Austin and Cameron, who remind me each day of the
importance in bringing boys along for the feminist fight.*
—D.H.

*To my two beautiful daughters, Madeleine and Charlotte,
I have had no greater success.*
—J.L.

To my family, for their support and understanding of feminist concerns.
—I.B.

Acknowledgments

Our project began as an inquiry into contemporary feminist media theory and research. Feminist scholars who were finally making inroads in academia at greater numbers almost half a century ago gained momentum in those early years—a momentum that has produced amazing work over the decades. We were curious: What does the academic field of feminist media look like now? Our contributors offer answers to that question and we are forever grateful for their scholarship and patience. As a result of their efforts, this edited collection is a compilation of some important and interesting recent work in feminist media theory and research. As for their patience, the task of putting this project together took much longer than expected and we learned lessons that we did not anticipate, particularly in relation to the publishing process. Some of these lessons we shared with our contributors along the way as we hoped to pass on our knowledge in the spirit of feminist sisterhood.

We would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to the many friends and colleagues who have provided valuable feedback, support, and guidance. Each of us has encountered mentors throughout our years in the feminist media scholarship community and we are grateful for all they have given to us and our community. Dustin Harp is especially thankful to Carolyn Byerly, Linda Steiner, and Gigi Durham (all of whom are included in this volume), as each has provided so much invaluable advice and encouragement over her years in academia. We are also thankful to one another. We are beyond grateful for the collaborative work we accomplish, the ease with which we work together, and the friendship we share.

We dedicate this book to every feminist who works tirelessly to make it a more equal world for us all.

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Through a Feminist Kaleidoscope: Critiquing Media, Power, and Gender Inequalities

Ingrid Bachmann, Dustin Harp, and Jaime Loke

Media and their messages—including access to the production of these messages—have long been a key concern of feminist scholars. As the chapters in this edited volume show, the struggle over meanings and values of what it means to be a woman and what the category of gender entails is as relevant in the twenty-first century as it was more than fifty years ago, when second-wave figure Betty Friedan's (1963) *The Feminist Mystique* first addressed the power of mass media in defining gender roles. Indeed, inroads toward gender equality notwithstanding, women today still face many problems of

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marginalization and misrepresentation in all kinds of media discourses and practices (e.g., Byerly and Ross 2006). Access to media systems and the ability to shape media content contributes to feminist scholars' concerns. To be sure, media are sites of considerable ideological negotiation and contestation (Kearney 2012), and gender negotiations are no exception. Exploring, understanding, and challenging the implications of gender have been at the core of feminist media studies. This edited volume presents examples of where theorization and research currently stand in regard to the politics of gender and media, what work is being done, and offers ideas for where it should be headed. These samples of feminist media scholarship reinforce the importance of the idea that gender is a mediated experience that takes on meaning through communicative practices such as those found in media content (Dow 2006). The book as a whole illustrates how feminist media scholarship can contribute to our understating of these issues, and their implications for both women and men in our contemporary global society.

We set out to illustrate the breadth and depth of feminist perspectives in the field of media studies through essays and research that reflect on and are a reflection of the present, past, and future of feminist research and theory at the intersections of women/gender, media, activism, and academia. This volume is thus divided into three parts: feminist theories, feminist issues and arenas, and feminist strategies and activism. The chapters in these parts—one focusing on theorizations of gender and media in the current media landscape, another addressing current feminist issues in divergent contexts, and a third on feminist-informed activism and mainstreaming feminist ideals—together offer a glimpse into the varied perspectives and global spaces from which feminist scholars are engaging with, theorizing, and critiquing communication and media systems.

Two common themes stand out among the chapters in this volume. The first is a clear illustration of how feminist theorizing, research, and academic activism make a difference today. While there are some historical elements in the book's contributions, these chapters address feminist media studies in a contemporary context—in terms of media systems, gender definitions and expectations, and specific geographic locations. This includes chapters on how foundational feminist media theories must be reconsidered as they are applied in contemporary contexts and specific geographic locations; how perspectives on the mediated sexualization of girls must be contextualized through intersectionality; and how women's voices through social media affect ideas about women and gender.

A second prominent theme throughout the book is the notion of *intersectionality*, which is a far cry from Freidan's conceptualization of feminist

concerns when she brought feminism into mainstream American society in the 1960s. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) coined the term "intersectionality" as a way to explain the oppression of African-American women. Intersectionality theory explains how people's subjectivities and experiences are defined through a set of complex interwoven identities based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, among other markers. Many of the chapters in this book explicitly address and engage with intersectionality, while other chapters include concepts like Chicana feminism, Asian feminism, black feminism, or global South feminism. Together the chapters illuminate the various ways in which feminist media studies is addressing women's intersectionality across the globe. Beyond these strands of commonalities, the chapters offer diversity—in approaches, perspectives, sites of interest, and geographic spaces—and appropriately illustrate the diversity of feminisms in contemporary global culture. These chapters, however, are just a sampling of the important and distinct work occurring in feminist media studies yet offer a glimpse of the types of work occurring in this important area of scholarship.

Feminism, Theory, and Media

With ties to social movements that originally challenged the status quo of women, especially the idea that women naturally lacked rationality and thus could not be considered full citizens (Donovan 2012), feminist media scholarship is an umbrella concept encompassing multiple practices that theorize about the status of women and the nature of gender in mediated messages and practices. As with feminism itself, it conveys varied ideological perspectives, which is why most authors prefer talking of feminist *theories*—plural form—to address the varied philosophical, political, and social frameworks informing this line of inquiry and critique. This is why both feminism and feminist theories are often paired with other terms, such as liberal, socialist, radical, psychoanalytic, cultural, black, and postcolonial.[1]

Accordingly, while there is not necessarily an amalgamated perspective that can be labeled "feminist theory," these approaches have common elements: attention to the status of women in society, the nature of gender, and the interpretation of the condition of being a woman as a basic differentiating label organizing different individuals' lives (e.g., Cirksena and Cuklanz 1992; Donovan 2012; Ross 2010)—often to the extent of legitimizing women's subordination and oppression. When it comes to feminist *media* studies, the focus is on how these issues are created, promoted, and

normalized in one of the most important institutional sites for hegemony—mass media. Given their scope and reach in public understandings of human experiences, this is no minor endeavor.

Thus, feminist media theory goes beyond concerns and promotion of granting women certain rights, and pays close attention to matters of power, culture, voice, agency, hierarchy, and representation in media practices and discourses (Cirksena and Cuklanz 1992; Donovan 2012; Harp 2008; Loke et al. 2017, Van Zoonen 1994). In theorizing gender, feminist media scholars regularly address the multiple dichotomies and dualisms that have served to justify women's taken-for-granted lesser status, including the public/private divide, and the concepts of reason/emotion, mind/body, and subject/object. While these notions are more interrelated than what a dichotomous categorization might suggest, they have proven to be persistent in media discourses, and are often presented as commonsense differences that serve to dominate and relegate women to inferior status.

This is not to say that all women are the same, or that their circumstances and experiences are identical everywhere. Quite the opposite, in their theorization of "the woman question," and their acknowledgment of different influences, feminist theories understand that women are not a unified constituency and that their identities are diverse and multifaceted (Ross 2010; Steiner 2008; Van Zoonen 1994). This theory of intersectionality is prominently applied throughout the chapters in this volume. However, while being careful not to fuse all women together, feminist scholars assert that there are commonalities in women's status *regardless of their different circumstances,* and that sexism results in important inequalities.

It is precisely the insight into inequalities and constructed (often symbolic) differences in media practices with very real consequences in everyday life that form the main contribution of feminist media theory and research, and what the chapters in this book are concerned with. Feminist scholarship exposes patriarchal notions that set up the male (or masculine) as the norm, and the female (or feminine) as "the other" (Rakow and Wackwitz 2004), and underscores the roles of media as contemporary mediators of hegemony, what is socially acceptable, and what should be accepted as reality (e.g., Carter and Steiner 2004; Van Zoonen 1994). In sum, while feminist media scholars disagree on the best approach to challenge systems of differences based on gender, they concur on the fact that the circulation of meanings in media discourses is not ideologically neutral.

Accordingly, a big question in feminist media studies is thus "how, and to whose avail, particular ideological constructs of femininity are produced in media content" (van Zoonen 1994, 24).

Feminist Theorizations

With three sections in this volume, the first attends to feminist media theories. Carolyn Byerly's chapter begins this section by summarizing and situating the complexities of feminist theorizations. Her overview offers a landscape from which to place subsequent chapters of the volume. She stresses the progress made by feminist scholarship while acknowledging the fragmented articulations of feminist media inquiry in its attempt to become mainstream. Byerly's chapter also highlights the enduring challenges of feminist work and notes the important power of naming and labeling with regards to women's lives and feminist research. More importantly, she ends her chapter by positing a challenge of sound theory building to feminist scholars. The chapter serves the important role of contextualizing the field so that readers may place the remaining chapters within the broader scope of feminist media scholarship. The subsequent chapters also illustrate how feminist media scholars are answering the call for theory building.

Just like feminism itself, feminist media theory and research is diverse and heterogeneous as well. Since we live in a mediated world, and gender is a mediated experience, feminist scholarship has paid careful attention to media forms, especially since the 1970s and onward. While the study of media from a feminist theoretical perspective is vast and varied, early on most attention was paid to matters of representation and gender ideology. Representation has long interested media scholars, who have argued that media forms, factual or fictional, send important messages to the public about different groups.

Within the field of feminist media studies, one early milestone in the area of representation is Gaye Tuchman's (1978) label of "symbolic annihilation" to describe how women were mostly erased from media content, or presented in stereotypical roles—victims, mothers, incompetent—thus effectively denying them a space in the (mediated) public sphere. Tuchman found that not only were women themselves marginalized from media content, but women's issues and interests were marginalized as legitimate topics of media coverage. Cast as minorities, the media thus informs society that females and their concerns are not important (Antezana 2011;

Byerly and Ross 2006; Harp et al. 2013). Much of feminist media research has continued in this tradition—and the research has found very little progress in women's representation over four decades. Women remain underrepresented as sources, subjects, authors, and decision-makers in the media industry, to the extent that the most recent edition of the Global Media Monitoring Project, which assesses gender equality in news content in different countries, found that women are about a fourth of people heard, read about, or seen in news, and that only about 10% of all stories focus on women. In Chap. 3, Elizabeth A. Lance and Christina M. Paschyn tackle the notion of symbolic annihilation with regards to women in Qatar, and theorize it within a very particular cultural context where presence in public visual media might be at odds with social expectations regarding gender and gender empowerment. They explain, "We attempt to build on existing feminist media theory to explore the applicability of symbolic annihilation in a context where cultural norms related to privacy and cultural-religious modesty restrict the depictions of women in both print and broadcast media" (42). In so doing, they enliven a 40-year discussion on the power of gender ideology and representation, and underscore the importance of bringing race, ethnicity, geography, and religion into the analysis of women's status in media.

Another early milestone in feminist media research stemmed from Laura Mulvey's (1975) work on the cinematic display of women as objects of the male gaze. Mulvey argued that women have a passive role in film, with no importance to the story: they are meant to be erotic objects for the characters and for the spectators. Their role is to be gazed-upon, for the visual pleasure of men. While the concept has been contested, it underscored the multiple and oftentimes unconscious ways patriarchal society structures and encodes women's lives. This line of inquiry has informed much of the feminist criticism of film, pornography, the glorification of male power over women in visual media, and the harmful effects of the male gaze on ordinary women (e.g., Buzzanel et al. 2004). Further, research shows that mainstream media's tendency to commodify and sexualize women remains pervasive. The fourth chapter in the volume, by Cory Albertson, problematizes the concept of male gaze in light of television depictions of same-sex relationships. The chapter thus provides a roadmap for rethinking and (re)articulating a theoretical cornerstone within the context of contemporary conditions. This chapter, like the one before it, illustrates how feminist media scholars are grappling with

foundational feminist media theories in an attempt to apply them to contemporary issues and with an awareness of intersectionality.

The power of media to disseminate gender ideology has also been a staple of feminist media studies, especially within the cultural/critical tradition. From traditional sex roles to a more nuanced understanding of gender as a social construction, and how gender has been used as a system of differentiation that produces social divisions among people. These lines of inquiry have stressed the complexities of femininity, masculinity, and argued that neither sex nor gender are simple. Indeed, mere consideration of sex differences does not make a study feminist, as feminist media research understands that gender is not a fixed property of individuals, but a social construct reinforced by media messages that operates as "a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds" (van Zoonen 1994, 3). In other words, for feminist media scholars, gender is a power scheme that reproduces patriarchal relations. This approach is at the core of Chap. 5, by Amanda Kennedy. She takes a seemingly obvious link—that pairing women and emotion—and interrogates its cultural and social implications in the consumption and production of mediated messages. Echoing the call in Byerly's chapter to pay more attention to feminist theory-building, Kennedy tackles the so-called "affective turn" in communication and political scholarship and imbues it with feminist conceptualization that can enrich feminist media inquiry as well.

A major critique of early feminist media approaches is the failure to address the intersectional nature of gender. Just like women are not a homogenous group, their identity is not monolithic nor reduced to matters of gender or sex. In that sense, current approaches addressing the creation and sustaining of oppressive gender ideologies understand that these not only serve patriarchal interests, but also racists, classist, and heterosexist ones (Dow 2006). As Judith Butler (1999) explained, gender is not a universalizing concept, nor has it been consistent in different historical or geographical contexts. Indeed, gender always intersects with matters of race, ethnicity, class, sex, culture, regional modalities, and more: in discussing women's lives and circumstances, one cannot omit other identity markers shaping our everyday experiences. While most of the chapters in this book address the concept of intersectionality, the author of Chap. 6 is explicit in her call to attend to it. Meenakshi Gigi Durham's chapter regarding feminist ethics in a globalized world notes the importance of intersectional considerations for a more nuanced evaluation of how media texts are produced and received. Durham addresses the media sexualization

of young girls, especially those from the global South, and argues for scholarship that emphasizes care and empathy when considering sexual representations in our mediated sphere. She argues, "As feminist media scholars, we are at a juncture where we should be asking more careful questions about how social inequalities are created and reinforced" (88).

Likewise, Mia Fischer's chapter, the last in the first section of the book, considers transgender identities at the intersection of feminist media scholarship. Specifically, Fischer's chapter discusses the ethics of knowledge production and doing research on communities that one is not a part of (i.e., writing about trans communities of color as a white, cis, queer person). Fischer's essay follows in a line of inquiry in feminist research that asks scholars to be reflexive in their work and the ways it impacts the world around them. Together these chapters in this first section of this volume provide a landscape from which to contextualize feminist media theories, offer examples of how foundational theories might be (re)articulated in contemporary and varied contexts, and reinforce the importance of intersectionality and reflexivity in contemporary feminist media theorizing.

Feminist Issues and Arenas

The richness of feminist theoretical contributions to various topics and problems at the intersection of women/gender and media marks the chapters in the second part of this book. They not only deal with varied issues and contribute to important discussions about women's circumstances in different parts of the world, but also showcase the insight that feminist understandings can bring to ever-present matters in contemporary society. The feminist issues and arenas addressed in this section include the intersection of sports and media, women's bodies and reproductive choices, digital media and political spheres, and gender violence—all relevant and important topics in the feminist arena.

In the first chapter of the section, Dunja Antunovic and Erin Whiteside argue for much needed feminist research on mediated sport. Their chapter stresses that the field is ripe for all types of feminist concerns with media, including representation, objectification, discrimination, and gender inequalities. While these arenas—representation, objectification, discrimination, and gender inequalities—mark concerns feminist media scholars have studied and critiqued for decades, the growth throughout the globe of women in sports renders these intersections especially important for contemporary feminist media studies. In a field often deemed as inherently

masculine, and packed with heteronormativity, understanding the place of women is an important matter.

Another significant arena in which to understanding the mediated discourse about women is that of women's bodies, abortion and reproductive choices, and gender-based violence. This is the focus of Claudia Lagos and Lorena Antezana's chapter, the ninth chapter in the book. The authors examine the virulent discourse against women embedded in online comments in South American countries, and denounce the symbolic and very real threats that women endure in machista societies. Their contribution follows a tradition of analyzing media texts yet illustrates how feminist media scholars are broadening the focus of those texts beyond traditional forms of content, engaging with social media and user produced content. The chapter also reinforces the importance of linking media content to broader social contexts, including geographic specificity and the cultural and social particularities that go along with that space. Sujata Moorti's chapter follows, providing another important example of feminist media scholarships' contributions to matters of gender-based violence in the world. She highlights how news coverage of sexual assaults in South Africa and India rely on a language of exceptionalism that ends up perpetuating long-held rape myths. Her chapter also goes beyond traditional news media to illustrate how "digital media circuits and their feedback loops … helped shape the differences in the South African and Indian media discourse" (148). In so doing, she illustrates how feminist voices in the mediated public sphere provide a more nuanced account of gender-based violence against women and also reiterates the importance of being attuned to intersectionality as a guiding concept.

Chapter 11 explores the increasingly prominent theorizations on feminist digital media and advocates for richer consideration of racial concerns and white hegemony. Author Lori Lopez argues that too frequently these theorizations have considered gender while ignoring other aspects of women's identities, writing "This blind spot mirrors the history of feminism itself, as second-wave feminists were criticized for primarily centering the experiences of white women and failing to take women of color into consideration" (160). She encourages an intersectional approach that goes beyond the white/black binary and benefits from heterogeneous and complex experiences in the digital realm. This chapter shows the kind of insight that feminist approaches can imbue on contemporary issues while highlighting the need for flexibility from feminist scholarship to go beyond matters of gender alone and consider intersectionality.

The next chapter of this section shows the usefulness of applying traditional feminist concepts to contemporary issues while also arguing for more nuanced understandings of women's various identities beyond gender. Esra Özcan's chapter places patriarchal hegemony and conservative political agendas as the focal point. Based on an analysis of feminism and politics in Turkey, the author invites us to revise notions of West, East, Islam, and women's activism in an increasingly globalized and polarized world. Her chapter reminds us of the importance of transnational feminist theories in the globalized environment for which we reside. As she argues, feminist media scholarship should develop a critical eye for the ways in which multiple pro- or anti-feminist discourses travel from one place to the other through the media, and how these discourses are appropriated in the service of the powerful.

The final chapter in this section notes the long line of feminist media scholarship at the intersection of women and politics before calling for more feminist theorizing of women, intersectionality, and counter-hegemonic discourses in the mediated public sphere. Dustin Harp and Ingrid Bachmann argue that feminist media studies can greatly contribute to understanding and countering mainstream and patriarchal constructions of women politicians, and that includes going beyond essentializing women. As they argue, given "the many ways diverse women are entering into political life [it] is essential that feminist media scholars consider how multiple identities intermingle when considering women and politics" (187).

Feminist Media Scholarship, Strategies, and Activism

While feminist media research has increased over the years and contributions of feminist media theory have been recognized in different contexts (e.g., Ardizzoni 1998; Dow 2006), the explicitly political dimension of feminist media research—often combining activism and advocacy—is not easy to handle and is not necessarily well regarded in academic circles. Critics have deemed feminist approaches to media as biased, subjective, and even unscientific (e.g., Carter and Spitzack 1989; Rakow and Wackwitz 2004; Ross 2010; Valdivia and Projansky 2006). Most feminist research is conducted by women—although disposition and skills to contribute to feminist understandings are not exclusive to female scholars—and if women's concerns are undermined in media in general, female researchers' attention to these women's concerns are not faring any better in scholarly outlets. Since feminist scholarship often expresses anger, it has been deemed

as an overly emotional response—"in line with the assumption that women take things too personally" (Carter and Spitzack 1989, 30). Further, the mere concept of "feminist" has negative connotations for much of society—just see the overly negative coverage of the feminist movement in mainstream media (Harp et al. 2017). Within this context, it is not surprising that conducting feminist research is not necessarily well regarded. In many circles, "feminist" is the F-word of academia.

Promotion of social change, however, does not diminish feminist scholarship. Quite the contrary, as shown in the chapters in the third part of this book, it is one of the main strengths of this kind of work. Also, it is where important inroads have been made in recent years and where new challenges arise.

In the first chapter in this section Gina Chen, Paromita Pain, and Briana Barner also explore the potential of feminist voices in the digital sphere, specifically considering forums social media as a means to gives voices to otherwise marginalized groups. Focusing on small online activities—such as posting a hashtag—the authors examine the possibility for feminist empowerment online and how feminist discourse can be articulated in these spaces. In times when women still have a hard time speaking and being heard in public spheres, these authors' analysis highlights how feminist understandings can inform the role we assign to social media in fomenting social justice, political resistance, and empowerment for women.

The combination of feminist research and practice regularly translates into a specific type of activism—interventions. Chapter 15, by Stine Eckert and Linda Steiner, showcases the importance of such work, describing a research project that transcended the boundaries of traditional academic work and set out to teach young girls online skills as a tool of empowerment. The authors provide a roadmap for other feminist scholars who would like to move their research beyond academia and into the world of real girls' and women's lives, while acknowledging the many challenges researchers face when trying to do this type of work.

Marilyn Greenwald's chapter offers another strategy for impacting our world, arguing that feminist scholars need to be writing biographies of women in media. The chapter addresses the current status of biographies of women in the media in the United States and reviews its relevance. Greenwald argues, "the accomplishments of women have long been overlooked in many—perhaps most—fields, it is important that their stories be told today" (238). Calling biography writing a long overlooked field, she argues stories of female communicators could enrich our understandings

of what it means to be a woman in the media industry today, and the challenges endured by many pioneers and female-firsts in their communities. Greenwald's chapter reminds us to go beyond the typical academic studies and consider other ways in which feminist media scholars might impact the intellectual field. In this case, she is arguing that women be written into history. The book concludes with a chapter by Minoo Moallem, who focuses on the crafting and selling of war carpets in conflict areas. Through example, Moallem urges feminist scholars to understand media and mediated messages broadly in our contemporary global and digital world. She asks readers to expand their definition of media and consider less traditional material objects as means of communication, while also noting the ways in which digital media affects women's lives through information and commerce. In discussing war carpets as media artifacts, Moallem also underscores the often ignored ways in which women's work is exploited and commoditized. She writes, "although it is crucial to interrogate representational practices in the age of global media it is also essential to investigate the unequal cultural, political and economic transactions that take place within the context of a network of transnational ties and exchanges" (258). Moallem's chapter ends the book with an illustration of the various creative and important ways feminist media theories and research are occurring in contemporary academia.

Advancing Feminist Media Studies

While much of communication or media studies regarding women are un- or under-theorized, feminist scholars have been accounting for women and their lives in ways that other theorists have not (Wackwitz and Rakow 2006), which makes more relevant the need to make this kind of research more prominent within a theoretically diverse field. This does not negate the importance of feminist-, gender- or critical-oriented publications and academic spaces. Journals like *Feminist Media Studies* or *Women's Studies in Communication,* to name some, are important outlets for current feminist research and theory building on media studies. However, we believe that given the importance of this kind of scholarship, the risk of becoming a niche topic or area, let alone a marginal endeavor, must be avoided. Feminist media studies matter, and they are worth taking seriously by everyone, not just feminists. Our hope with this book is for both feminist media scholars and others to see the many ways in which real global issues are being addressed through this work, and with the care and nuance that comes with approaching gender from within a framework of intersectionality.

Admittedly, feminist research has yet to be mainstreamed. Inroads have been made, and some prominent voices assert that feminist media scholarship has "become immensely influential across the field of communications" (McLaughlin and Carter 2013, 1). Our own research on feminist scholarship's current status in top-ranked communication journals suggests that this kind of research has claimed a space among high-quality research, but remains a minority (Bachmann et al. 2016). An analysis of twenty renowned, high-impact factor academic publications between 1990 and 2015 found less than 300 articles with a feminist framework, with constant ups and downs over the years. Further, two of these journals had no feminist-related articles in the entire time frame under study. Thus, feminist approaches in communication studies have yet to make it big in mainstream academic research and their scarce visibility in high-impact factor journals may give the impression that feminist research is relatively unimportant—that feminist scholars have nothing meaningful to say.

This book illustrates quite the opposite. The authors in this volume offer varied perspectives on feminist media theory and research, and stress the importance of addressing women's lives and circumstances in today's world. Feminist theorizations on media and communication are important, complex and diverse, just like women themselves, and the chapters in this book advance our ability to understand and improve feminist theory. Similarly, considerations to intersectionality, geography, and contexts showcase how pervasive feminist issues are across the world and how invigorating feminist perspectives can be when tackling these issues. As the final section of the book shows, feminist activism serves as a sophisticated approach to improving people's lives and stands out as a relevant standpoint to address gendered phenomena.

A final common thread throughout the volume is a rich feminist understanding of gender negotiations taking place in and through media. Thus, the book opens for discussion how feminist research, theory, and interventions challenge concepts of gender in mediated discourses and practices and how these ideas fit into the evolving state of contemporary feminisms. The book represents and contributes to a discussion about contemporary feminisms—plural form, which better conveys their varied ideological perspectives—as they are understood in media theory and research, particularly in a field that has changed rapidly in the last decades with digital communication tools and through cross-disciplinary work. The goal of the combined chapters—while by no means an exhaustive example of the work in feminist media studies but rather a representation of the varied

work being done—is to illustrate how the politics of gender operate within the current media landscapes and how feminist theorizing and research shapes academic inquiry of these landscapes. The work on feminists in theorizing media is essential for critiquing power, ideologies, and breaking down inequalities and patriarchy. This book celebrates the scholarship of the contributing authors and other feminist media scholars for the important work they do.

Note

1. Indeed, feminism itself has intellectual influences stemming, among others, from the Enlightenment, Liberalism, Marxism, Freudianism, and Existentialism (for a summary, see Butler 1999, and Donovan 2012).

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Feminist Theories

The reclaiming of theory as politics is fundamental in the goal of representing
experiences of subordination.

–Radha Hegde (1998, 290)

Feminist theory is a broad theoretical perspective, one that serves as connective tissue binding raw data and observation with critical thought about gender and identities. It explains gender inequality, power, and patriarchy, focusing on the ways gender and power influence our world, from the material to the symbolic ways gender plays a role in our lives. While feminism has at times been called out for its narrowness and white centrism, contemporary feminist theory is more often attuned to subordination and dominance that goes beyond gender and considers multiple and intersectional identities.

To engage feminist media theory then is to engage in a social movement, by taking an ideological—political, if you will—stance against patriarchy and other forms of dominance. The chapters in this section illustrate ways of approaching, understanding, and applying feminist theoretical perspectives at the intersection of gender and media. Together these chapters provide a means for understanding some of the contemporary ways in which feminist theorists are thinking about the field of media today.

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Feminism, Theory, and Communication: Progress, Debates, and Challenges Ahead

Carolyn M. Byerly

In the months during which this chapter was conceived, begun, postponed (to complete other projects) and resumed, the world has turned on its axis and now presents me with a vastly different context for considering the importance of theorizing women and communication. That context is defined by unexpected tragedies and emergencies on both national and global fronts,[1] seen in stories and pictures of acts of violence, war and brutality across the world and here at home. And, in many nations—including my own—we have seen a frightful lurch to the political right[2] with renewed threats to women's rights in the process. Add to these events the stubbornness of world leaders to take action to curb the causes of rapidly advancing climate change and environmental degradation. Less visible is

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women's centrality to all of these events. Women have had limited roles in the decisions and behavior that brought them about, yet women will most certainly feel their impacts and have much to say. Indeed, women are already responding on all fronts. The Women's March on Washington on January 21, 2017—the day after Donald Trump's inauguration as President of the United States—brought an estimated half a million into the streets of the United States capital, with millions more marching in companion protests in hundreds of cities across the United States and world. A year later, a reprise protest march attracted hundreds of thousands of participants in several countries.

Women's voices and activism in these unprecedented times of political and economic shifts merit our scholarly attention, as does our ever-changing relationship to communications media. This chapter argues that it is essential that we have the theoretical tools we need to do our work. In the following discussion, I seek to bring renewed attention to the important role and building of theory in women-and-media communication research, particularly communication in and through the media, where public discourse occurs and where—for better or worse—we find representations that serve to construct our gendered selves and our understanding of the world. While the discussion aims to raise some of the issues and challenges in feminist communication theory building, including gaps that require attention, the topic is too big for a single chapter. Thus, the discussion also hopes to enlist others' involvement in feminist communication theory building to fill the yawning gap that exists.

SITUATING FEMINIST COMMUNICATION THEORY

Feminist communication theory is grounded in interdisciplinary feminist scholarship dating from the 1970s, something inspired by women's liberation movements that put women and gender relations on both political and scholarly agendas. In the early years, feminist scholars across disciplines were consumed with problematizing causes and consequences of women's secondary status and recovering women's history. *Feminist Studies*, founded in 1972, was the first scholarly journal in women's studies, but others would soon emerge, such as *Women and Language*, launched in 1976, and the next year, *Women's Studies in Communication*. By 2001, *Feminist Media Studies* was established to focus specifically on women-and-media issues. Scholars also produced foundational books, most notably Tuchman's (1978) early formulation of women's absence in

the mass media as constituting the symbolic annihilation of women. Over the years, feminist communication scholars have published in mainstream communication journals, as well as both authored and edited books too numerous to count.

At the same time that the literature on women and communication has swelled in many useful directions, the specific attention to theory building remains varied—some would say contested—in its meaning and fragmented in development. These contributions as well as omissions are important to an understanding of the theoretical domain of our work.

DEFINITIONS OF THEORY

Theory forms an essential aspect of scholarly inquiry in that it enables the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative forms of evidence within a structured analytical framework. There is general agreement within the broader community of communication scholars that theory may be defined as a set of concepts, explanations, principles, and interrelated propositions that help to explain—and sometimes predict and control—human communication phenomena, including mediated phenomena (Baran and Davis 2015; Dow and Condit 2005). Both feminist and mainstream scholars also agree that there is some variation in the definition of theory among theorists, depending on their positionalities as researchers. Miller (2005) identifies these positionalities using familiar research paradigms, or traditions—namely post-positivist (i.e., social science), qualitative (i.e., interpretive) and critical. These are defined in terms of their meta-theoretical dimensions, which include the researcher's ontology (i.e., worldview), epistemology (i.e., how knowledge is acquired), and axiology (i.e., relationship to the research).

Theory and method are entwined in all cases. For example, a post-positivist (i.e., social science) scholar is likely going to take a materialist view of the world, and adopt the scientific method (a quantitative approach) in order to achieve objectivity, that is, keep a safe distance between the researcher and the thing/s examined. The research findings in post-positivist research tend to be highly statistical and generalizable to larger populations, with the goal of describing, predicting, and controlling the phenomenon. A qualitative scholar, on the other hand, embraces his or her subjectivity (i.e., in-depth knowledge of and relationship to the problem studied) and engages in a research process using textual, ethnographic, or other non-statistical methods in order to arrive at a deeper

understanding of the problem at hand. Critical scholars also tend to be closely identified with the problems they study, which are some form of inequality, oppression, or social injustice. Critical scholars examine the structural aspects of their problems by using a wide range of methods— historical, legal, political-economy, or even empirical—in order to set forth a systematic analysis that reveals a path for social change. This last element of social change represents the so-called emancipatory potential, or praxis, that defines critical scholarship.

DEFINITIONS OF FEMINIST COMMUNICATION THEORY

Feminist scholars find commonality in seeing feminist communication theory as a coherent set of propositions that together provide an overarching explanation for phenomena associated with women and communication that have been observed, researched, and analyzed (Linda Aldoory, personal communication; Eileen Meehan, personal communication; Marian Meyers, personal communication; Karen Ross, personal communication; see also Cucklanz 2016). Linda Aldoory (personal communication) believes that feminist communication theory serves to "make up our debate and discourse about how gender constitutes society and how it is used for power." Eileen Meehan (personal communication) adds that feminist communication theory should also recognize that women exert agency. Dow and Condit (2005) reflect on the matter of agency as well, recognizing that feminist scholarship (including theory building) "sees itself as contributing to positive social change, creating a world in which there is greater gender justice" (461). These scholars place feminist communication scholarship firmly in the camp of the critical paradigm, whose defining feature is praxis (i.e., liberation or emancipation from the oppression it examines).

In defining the elements involved in feminist communication scholarship, Cucklanz (2016) and numerous others also insist "feminist theory in communication should account for not only the interplay of gender and power but also the relevance of other textual elements, including race, sexuality and class, … religion and ethnicity" (para. 1). Cucklanz's overview of feminist communication theories recognizes that feminist scholars have worked actively in many strands of the field, including rhetoric, media studies, journalism, organizational communication, international communication, and so forth, in order to develop relevant theory. She pays particular attention to feminist scholars' efforts to discern, problematize, and theorize gendered ideology.

Rakow and Wackwitz's (2004) edited text *Feminist Communication Theory* employs the elements of difference, voice, and representation to set forth a conceptual framework for feminist communication theories. Their rationale is that together, these elements enable analyses of both speech and mediated communication, which they say work together to construct our social reality. The authors assume a critical (i.e., social change-oriented) position in seeking theory that can enable transformations of the deeper social structures and produce new, more egalitarian social relations. Feminist communication theory, they argue, must be political, polyvocal, and transformative (5–6). Their own contribution is a chapter in which they extend the concept of voice into the theoretical realm, arguing that voice "is the means and ability to speak and to have one's speech heard and be taken into account in social and political life" (95). At the same time, they point out that examining women's voice also requires taking stock of women's silences, both unintentional (as when women are prevented from speaking) and intentional (as when women have gathered in silent protest to war).

Valdivia (Angharad Valdivia, personal communication) posits that "feminist communication theory allows us to understand how we gender ourselves and the world through naming, talking, and representing," and she argues that "for feminist communication theory to have validity, it must be intrinsically intersectional, taking into account the diversity of global origins, race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and class among the vectors of difference." Valdivia's insistence on naming and examining our experiences using intersectional theory reflects what has become a staple of feminist scholarship for two decades. I will return to the matters of naming and using intersectional theoretical approaches shortly.

FEMINIST POSITIONALITIES AND THEORETICAL DEBATES

In their effort to assess the "state of the art in feminist communication," Dow and Condit (2005) refer to the "feminist theoretical debates" that have characterized feminist scholars' attention to theory. Among these are the disagreements as to how communication relates to the nature of sex versus gender (453), but they were also concerned with other issues central to feminist scholarship. Here we see clearly the intricate relationship between theory and method. The authors examined 12 communication journals over a five-year period, locating few studies in feminist communication research that used quantitative approaches to study gender; the

majority took critical approaches to locate, problematize, and change gender ideology, particularly in examining mediated messages. Although I have questions about how Dow and Condit arrived at this conclusion,[3] it nonetheless affirms my own observations over a 30-some year period as a feminist communication researcher. I have noted that much necessary and valuable feminist scholarship has been done by those who use quantitative methods; however, many (particularly early) feminist communication theorists tended to reject this approach, calling it "administrative," "patriarchal," and unsuited to inquiries about women's experience, preferring, instead, to adopt qualitative and critical approaches. Dow and Condit observe that while a preference for non-statistical methods did drive early feminist communication scholarship, a more recent development has been the adoption of multiple methodologies, something that has also opened up analytical (and theoretical) space. They cite the growth of reception studies, for example, in which researchers have adopted more heuristic approaches, such as those finding that women are not passive "dupes" who accept the gender ideology they see in the media but who rather read and use media in unpredictable ways for their own needs (Radway 1983; Parameswaran 1999). They cite numerous feminist scholars who have recognized multiple standpoints in the use of media as diverse as romance novels, television programs, and organizational communication.

Not only do feminist communication scholars take multiple standpoints (or theoretical positions) in theorizing women's relationship to media, but they have increasingly stressed the importance of intersectionality in feminist work. Intersectionality theory in communication studies has grown through the work of a diverse group of feminist scholars who insist on broadening the analytical terrain to encompass power relations associated with gender *and* nationality, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and processes of globalization. Such a complicated theoretical insistence is by no means new, as hooks (1981), Anzaldúa (1999), Collins (1990), Parameswaran (1999) and others have led the way for several decades and, in the process, produced a rich, diverse body of work that complicates the whole terrain of feminist communication theory.

In reality, however, the *phenomenon* of intersectionality was recognized long before the word was articulated to characterize a theoretical approach to examining power in social relations (Wallis 2015, 606). Set forth initially by Crenshaw (1991), a professor of law and a critical race scholar, the theory of intersectionality asserts that oppression cannot be understood by considering a single element, but rather must be examined in terms of

multiple and intersecting identities that allow individuals to be discriminated against in several ways simultaneously. The breakthrough that Crenshaw's theory offered was a structural one in that it required examining institutional bases of systematic discrimination along more than one axis of oppression. Crenshaw's work in legal studies has laid the foundation for other feminist communication scholars to interrogate laws and policies, educational systems, and the media, and other institutions, as the source for problems like women's misrepresentation, silence, and invisibility.

In communication, for example, postcolonial feminist scholar Radha Hegde (2006) rejects what she calls the "long positivist tradition in the social sciences to define categories narrowly and privilege explanatory frameworks that rest on binaries" (24). She opts instead for the intersectionality approach, arguing that one cannot adequately theorize "the gendered subject of globalization [i.e., women]" and the narratives about migration, labor, sex trafficking and asylum, among other things, which circulate in the [globalized mediated] public sphere unless one adopts an intersectional approach (22). For Hegde, this requires considering the system of hierarchies created by nationalism, patriarchy, whiteness, and citizenship (18). In one study, she begins with a single media spectacle, the case that began with the 2011 arrest of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, then chief of the International Monetary Fund for the sexual assault of an African immigrant maid in a New York Hotel. She provides an expansive mapping of the globalized mediated discourses about women of the Global South (like Strauss-Kahn's accuser), and draws a complex and useful picture to demonstrate the interplay of gender, nationality, social class, and other dynamics at work in this discourse. Intersectionality theory enables her to take account of the complexities of women's lives in the mediated public sphere.

Interrogating Feminist Theory Building

While intersectionality names this particular approach to explaining the complexities of women's lives in relation to communication, not all feminist scholars agree to the viability of intersectionality as a theory. Marxist feminists like Eve Mitchell (2013) believe that intersectionality is more accurately understood as a *concept* that recognizes a convergence of multiple oppressions, rather than a theory that explains the ways they work together. This critique suggests that because intersectionality analyses have no binding agent to unify the elements of gender, race, labor, citizenship, and so on, they cannot be used to explain—that is, theorize—those

oppressions beyond description. For Marxist feminists like Mitchell, intersectionality ignores materiality arising from the capitalist mode of production that defines gender and gender relations. Under capitalism, women came to be viewed and treated as the property of men, subject to exploitation both in the home and in the workplace. In the wider society, those who hold class power are able to make decisions that create the rules and laws and determine how resources are to be allocated. Hartsock's (1984, 2004) efforts to define a feminist theory of historical materialism—which she calls feminist standpoint—has moved toward an overarching explanation of power in gendered relationships, both institutional and personal—something that holds potential for feminist communication scholars. Hartsock, a political scientist, sparked a feminist firestorm of theoretical debate in multiple fields for two decades about how to bring together structural dimensions of women's oppression, including the integration of race and ethnicity, within Marxist tradition. She credits Collins (2004a, b), a sociologist, with posing black feminist thought as the interpretive framework that takes account of African American women's experience within the structures formed by the political economy of capitalism. Collins is noteworthy for applying her feminist theory to examinations of the exploitation of both black women's and men's sexuality by a white patriarchal music industry that profits from the hypersexualized representations of black men and women and from misogynistic imagery.

Riordan (2002) also uses a Marxist-oriented feminist political economy theory to examine media, an approach she believes is useful to critiquing gender relations at the macro-level of media (i.e., legal, financial and organizational structures), as well as the meso- and micro-levels (e.g., employment and media content, respectively).

In my own research, I typically adopt a feminist critical political economy theory of media, which is grounded in Marxist assumptions but which also factors in intersectionality concerns of gender and race relations. In one study, this enabled me to examine the low rates of broadcast media ownership by women in the United States, where wealthy white men have had control of the nation's wealth, as well as the laws and policies regulating ownership that result from their ability to maintain control over Congress (which makes laws) and the Federal Communication Commission (which implements law through regulation). As a result, they have been able to systematically limit access to others (Byerly 2006, 2011). In another study (Byerly 2013), I used a combination of critical political economy and intersectionality to show that the material outcomes of neoliberalism

in the United States and other nations are economic globalization and concentrated media markets, processes that have affected women's ability to own media and to advance into decision making ranks within news organizations.

Naming Feminist Communication Theory

Theory is typically built in one of two ways: by adapting or extending existing theories, often by adding a gender dimension; and by posing a new theory to explain some specific (and as yet untheorized) phenomenon related to women and communication (Byerly 2012, 15). While feminist scholars in communication have done much to do both, they have not always given their theories names or set them forth in ways that help others to apply them, test them, and/or validate them. This assessment is supported by Dow and Condit's (2005) survey of feminist scholarship that found few "purely" theoretical pieces published about feminism in (464). When I raised this point with one well-known feminist colleague recently, she immediately assumed that such concerns were "positivist" in nature, and therefore presumably both irrelevant and "not feminist." This strikes me as a tired, outdated notion nearly two decades into the new millennium. Feminist communication scholarship has come more strongly into its own and many of us—myself included—have adopted more diverse methodological ways of studying problems, as well as sought to build new theories. There are also well-established feminist communication scholars who have always taken social science approaches in their research, producing credible and sophisticated data that interrogate power in women's relationship to media, for example, by seeking to identify patterns of enduring marginalization or change in the ways women are represented.

Excellent examples are found in the work of Swedish scholars Djerff-Pierre (2011) and Edstrom (2008), who have documented the low levels of women's representation in the news over time, something that the Global Media Monitoring Project has also examined every five years since 1995. Djerff-Pierre argues that "Large-scale comparative studies are necessary both in explaining the variations in gender representation in the media, and in understanding the role of media in creating the Good Society" (44). She agrees with Gallagher (2010) that "counting is required in revealing structural horizontal and vertical segregation and is an indispensable tool in media monitoring and advocacy" (45). However, Djerff-Pierre insists not only on the importance of data-driven research, but also

on sound theory to make sense of it. She thinks of the media as a "difference engine," a motor that reproduces or reforms the gender order in society, and she argues for large-scale comparative analyses to explain how and why variations of gender representation exist.

Even my own work has become increasingly data-driven in that the projects I have taken up have expanded in scope and volume, something that has required the management of information, typically using spreadsheets and requiring the coding and counting of data. While embracing an empirical feminist scholarly identity, I have maintained a theoretical home in the critical paradigm where concerns about inequality are central and where scholarship is committed to enabling social change, thereby fulfilling the emancipatory potential of research. The years I spent in grassroots feminist activism before undertaking graduate studies in the 1980s honed a commitment to social transformation through struggle, something that has played itself out in my research both in the kind of problems that I have examined and the kind of theories that I have sought and tried to build and name.

Naming has been a basic tenet of second-wave feminism, something seen particularly in the anti-violence movement beginning in the 1970s. Women stepped onto stages and in front of small groups in church basements or community centers to reveal the heretofore unspoken abuses they had experienced from boyfriends, fathers, uncles, bosses, husbands, and others. Thus, a new vocabulary was born in words like sexual assault, acquaintance (or date) rape, marital rape, domestic violence (or abuse), sexual harassment, and others. Once named, the harm could be analyzed and social remedies could be formulated and pursued. Thus, feminist language for women's pain and oppression figured into a whole story of personal and social shifts across the world over these last decades as one nation after another began to adopt laws on sexual and domestic abuse, and women led the establishment of shelters and centers to protect and support victims. Laws addressing these and other forms of gendered discrimination, including in the work place, now protect women from men, and while laws and the social practices that follow are still uneven and incomplete from nation to nation, they represent progress on a grand scale toward women's equality. These various steps represent significant moments in women's communication as well as social and political advancement.

The points I want to make here are three. First, gendered social transformation typically begins with language and the speech acts that bring it into public discourse. Thus, communication is the initial and central component of women's liberation, what Rakow and Wackwitz (2004) also

recognize in their interrogations of how the ability to speak or to choose silence affects women's status and position politically and in personal relations. My second point is that even so, feminist scholars have made minimal progress in naming their own theories to explain the women-and-language relationship (and, by extension, the women-and-media relationship). I believe this has prevented our scholarship from being all that it could be at the theoretical level, which so often seems too general to be clear or convincing. There are exceptions to this worth noting, and only a few examples will be used here. One comes from American feminist journalism scholars Rush et al. (1972) who used a range of quantitative data to pose the ratio of recurrent and reinforced residuum (or R3) hypothesis in 1972 to predict the low numbers of women who would hold faculty and administrative positions in academic journalism programs in the United States. Thirty years later, Rush and collaborators revisited the hypothesis, comparing it to current data from glass ceiling studies to examine the persistent pattern of women's low employment rates in journalism departments as well as their inability to rise into decision making ranks. The later study also looked at what Rush called the "whiteness" factor of the United States academy in general and journalism departments, in particular (Rush et al. 2002, 105).

Another important example of a named feminist communication theory comes from British social anthropologists' Ardener and Ardener (1975) whose muted group theory begins with the premise that men have greater power than women and therefore more influence over language. Such, they stated, is biased toward men, with women becoming a muted group. This early theorization in feminist scholarship has been used widely cross-culturally by communication scholars examining underlying causes of women's subordination. Another example is Sara Mills' (1999) theory of discourse competence, which she developed as an alternative to Ardener and Ardener's more essentialist theory of women's silence and subordination. Mills recognized that women were not all (or always) muted, but rather they could also develop the means to use language to command attention and greater power without speaking aggressively (like men). Mills' theory is an important step toward creating communication theories of women's liberation—an enterprise greatly neglected as feminist scholars have put greater focus on women's oppression. The thing to emphasize with both Ardener and Ardener's and with Mills' theories, which emerged at different points in time, is that in both cases the scholars took care not just to name the phenomenon under scrutiny, but also to lay out the structure for investigating and explaining the phenomenon. The

structure of their theories included the basic premises, assumptions, and hypotheses that others should use when applying them. Both are critical theories, concerned with discerning and revealing the mechanisms of communication at work in shaping relations of power between women and men. My third point is an argument, really. I believe that better theory building will make feminist communication scholarship both more rigorous and more productive in what it can do. The "better theory building" that I have in mind requires naming our theories to reflect the phenomena we study, as well as setting forth their premises and structures.

I have tried to respond to my own expectations beginning about twelve years ago by making a few modest forays into the exercise of theory building. One focus of my scholarship has always been on the impact of feminist struggle, something that occupied so much of my own energy and time during the 1970s and 1980s. A feminist who turned her training in journalism to serve anti-violence, equal pay, and other campaigns in those years, I wrote press releases, trained volunteers to give interviews, and developed press packets for reporters friendly to the issues we were supporting. I entered academic life in the late 1980s wondering how to assess and explain the impact of our movement work, particularly the efforts by women to make the news more responsive to feminism.

A global study of women's media activism led Karen Ross and me to develop the Model of Women's Media Action (Byerly and Ross 2006). When we began to pore over the 96 interviews we had conducted with women in 19 countries about ways they had used or tried to use media to say or accomplish something, we saw distinct patterns emerge in the transcripts. We identified four paths (or approaches) that women had taken in their activities and developed a model for how together they created a feminist public sphere. A model differs from a theory by providing a schema of how a process works, rather than offering an overarching explanation. Our model revealed how a diverse group of participants in our study had followed their various activist paths to collectively create a communicative space where they shared their women's experiences, analyses of the world, and plans to change that world. The model extended Habermas' concept of the bourgeois public sphere, which feminists had criticized for giving men all the credit for establishing democratic society, by recognizing women's active communicative efforts to speak publicly in their own voices about matters of common concern.

A few years later, the reformulation theory was posed during a study that Marcus Hill and I conducted to gauge the impact of feminism on

news of violence against women (Byerly and Hill 2012). In that study, we examined the *New York Times* index over a 40-year period to trace changes in language about rape, incest, wife battering, and other gendered violence. We were looking for adoption of feminist language to name these acts, believing that the news media were essential to shifting public discourse about these problems both from neglect of them as well as victim blaming. We found that the *Times* index began to use feminist-generated terms for sexual and domestic abuse around 1970, when feminists started holding public speak outs in the New York City area (the *Times*' main area of reporting). We also found that the amount of coverage increased in direct proportion to the National Organization for Women's state-by-state campaign to reform rape and incest laws beginning in 1974. A qualitative analysis of a sample of the news stories showed that the coverage adopted a feminist frame, focusing on the neglect of the criminal justice system to victims and the need for stronger legislation. We posed the reformulation theory to identify the potential for feminism to change the amount and direction of news about women through specific media-oriented activities continued over time.

The Present Theoretical Challenge

In the foregoing discussion I have tried to make a case for feminist theory building in communication research that moves from loosely applied general "feminist theory" to an intentional effort to more clearly structure theory(ies) and to give it(them) names. As our feminist communication scholarship grows in volume and matures in the kinds of questions it takes up, so should our work to provide the epistemological means for analysis. The discussion has sought to map the feminist theoretical terrain in communication and other social sciences by showing both progress toward such theoretical development, as well as some of the livelier debates. Yet little has yet been said about the areas yearning for attention—the yawning theoretical gaps.

Because theory tends to reflect the historical time in which it emerges, we might reasonably return where we began and reflect on the seriousness of today's world and women's communicative presence in it. The possibilities, of course, are as endless as the problems that challenge our nation and world right now, but let me suggest several areas for consideration. The first is war and conflict, and what women have to say about these experiences in specific locations or circumstances. Are there patterns in the

ways that women explain the causes of such deadly (male-generated) violence, or convey their distress at living with the ravages of daily bombings or dislocation, which suggest a feminist explanation—a feminist theory? A second area for feminist theory building is in relation to the huge, dynamic area of media conglomeration, a process that is taking place within and across nations, and that largely excludes women as actors and beneficiaries because it consolidates men's economic and political power. Where are women located within the policy and legal structures that allow media conglomeration to occur, how have they responded (or not) and how are they affected? Last, where are women's silences, and what are the cultural, economic, or other structural causes of those silences? Thus, feminist communication theory is challenged to explain and name both the ways that liberation movements have succeeded in raising women's voices and action and transformed social institutions, as well as the ways that many women remain prevented from entering into these changes.

Notes

1. I am referring, for example, to the Syrian civil war that has forced millions of people to flee since 2011, and particularly since bombing intensified in 2015, as well as the refugee crisis this has caused across Europe and other western nations; several shooting and bomb attacks by Islamist militants in Paris since 2015, Brussels in 2016, Berlin in 2016 and other cities; numerous mass shootings in the United States, including 49 deaths at a gay nightclub in Florida, and the continued killing of unarmed black men by police in U.S. cities. These, of course, are alongside the continued war by the U.S. and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003, and the recent drone attacks the U.S. has used against "terrorists" in several Arab nations.
2. Sharp moves to the political right can be seen, for example, in the narrow victory of those leading the Brexit vote in the UK and the subsequent ascent of the conservative politician Theresa May as Prime Minister; as well as the election of Donald Trump as US President in November 2016.
3. The researchers did not explain why they only scanned these 12 journals, omitting others of relevance, including *Feminist Media Studies*, which published three of the five years in their timeframe of analysis; nor did they indicate how many articles they found or how they analyzed them. In addition, they paid very limited attention to feminist media research, which accounts for an enormous amount—perhaps the majority—of feminist communication scholarship.

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The Applicability of Symbolic Annihilation in the Middle East

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As the field of communication research is further internationalized, communication scholars in non-Western locales have been challenged to apply theories central to our discipline that have grown primarily out of the Western experience. Western cultural tenets of individualism and democracy have been assumed as the norm within many communication theories, and initially, several of these theories were simply accepted and applied "as is" in foreign contexts. Increasingly, however, both international and Western scholars working abroad have questioned the presumptions of those theories and how best to apply them in nation-states and regions that do not share the same basic assumptions or a similar cultural context, all to the benefit of more robust theoretical development within the discipline.

In this vein, we take a foundational feminist media theory, symbolic annihilation, and apply it to a non-Western nation-state—Qatar. In doing so, we draw much in our approach from Mohanty's seminal "Under Western Eyes" (1984), not only avoiding the homogenization of a non-Western population through a Western lens, but also exploring the rela-

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tionship between the discursive representation of the Qatari woman (in this case, in the news media), and the material reality, or lived experience, of the Qatari woman. Further, we take Mohanty's point that feminist scholarship should focus on "the material and ideological specificities" (338) that render women's place in a particular set of power relations, rather than rack up a series of examples that make the "universal woman" powerless. Heeding these points, we adopt a bottom-up approach to our analysis, stressing these material and ideological specificities over sweeping statements and generalizations.

A small Muslim nation on the Arabian Gulf, Qatar is home to a female citizenry increasingly empowered to pursue higher education, employment outside the home, and wider freedom of movement. That said, many Qatari women face a unique cultural taboo that prevents them from appearing in public visual media, such as television news reports, online videos, or photographs printed in magazines or newspapers. This, we argue, limits Qatari women's equality in local media. However, our analysis carefully considers how this cultural practice must be understood within Qatari women's specific historic and cultural context. In doing so, we present a rich and nuanced analysis of the limitations this cultural practice presents to Qatari women, but also other methods by which Qatari women subvert it.

Erasing Women: You Can't Be What You Can't See

Symbolic annihilation is a term coined by Gerbner and Gross (1976) to refer not simply to the absence of a particular group of people in the media, but what that means in the social order: "representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation" (44). Tuchman (1978) adapted this to a specifically feminist media context, adding to the concept of annihilation not merely absence, but also denigration, victimization, and trivialization (13). Women's portrayals in mass media occur at frequencies much lower than their demographic presence in the United States, and in stereotypically feminine roles. These symbolic representations of the material world, Tuchman argued, define a woman as having a "limited life divorced from the economic productivity of the labor force" (17). Incorporating the psychological theory of modeling that posits children learn simply by watching, Tuchman argued that because women on television are represented in traditionally gendered roles, boys and girls alike would assume that an adult woman's place is in the home. Fictional though those representations may be, they have the power to shape social expectations based on gender.

Tuchman also argued the reflection hypothesis is at work—that media reflects the dominant social norms of the day. And that they do so for commercial purposes by creating programming that will attract advertisers. We find ourselves thus in a cyclical spiral wherein media are said to reflect reality, and real people model their behavior on the media. Made (2007) explained this as a mutually constitutive process in which the material world and the symbolic world continuously respond to one another. But, as she pointed out, in this chicken-or-egg situation, it is difficult to subvert the dominant media practices that tend not to include a diversity of opinions and portrayals. Feminist activists and academics have contended that if women and girls do not see accurate or varied representations of themselves in the media as valued members of the labor force, then they will be unable to model that behavior in their own lives and reach their full potential as contributing members of society. This has led to the saying, "You can't be what you can't see."

The Invisible Women Problem

Though it was first applied primarily to entertainment media, media scholars have since applied the theoretical framework of symbolic annihilation to news coverage as well. That is also the focus of this chapter and the basis for our theoretical argument.

Harp, Loke, and Bachmann (2011) conducted a content analysis of more than 400 stories from *Time* magazine and found men's bylines dominated in the magazine's Iraq War coverage, with women significantly less likely to be quoted as official sources. Moreover, females accounted for less than a tenth of all people interviewed or referenced. Along these lines, Stanley (2012) conducted a content analysis of more than 1200 news photos published in the *New York Times* and the *New York Daily News* between 1966 and 2006, finding that across this timespan, women continued to be represented less frequently than men. Men dominated pictorial representations overall, as well as in sports, politics, and business. The only area where women occasionally appeared more frequently than men was in fashion, entertainment, and lifestyle—stereotypically feminine areas. Unfortunately, this trend has continued into the digital world, as Jia et al. (2016) found in a study of more than 2 million articles from more than 950 online news outlets: men were more likely to be mentioned than women in *all* categories except for fashion—both in text and images.

Moving beyond the simple quantification of the appearances of women, Harp et al. (2013) looked at the *quality* of women's representations in *Time* and *Newsweek* over a 25-year period. In the globalization discourse of this time period, the authors found women were statistically invisible in the coverage, and when they were included, the dominant frame was the impact of globalization on women's traditional roles in the home.

Symbolic annihilation has not been restricted to media coverage in the United States. The Global Media Monitoring Project tracks gender representation in more than 100 countries, and its most recent data from 2015 showed that women are mentioned only 24 percent of the time across newspaper, television, and radio coverage, which is only a 7 percent increase from when they first collected data in 1995 (World Association for Christian Communication 2015). International researchers have found similar trends in all corners of the globe (French 2013; Kaneva and Ibroscheva 2013; Krishnan 1998; Vos 2013; among many others). Interestingly, researchers looking at how location affected gender stereotypes in coverage of protests found much greater gender disparities in the coverage in the United States and Middle East than in Canada and Asia, though the disparity did exist in all locations (Armstrong et al. 2012). These authors noted, importantly, that, despite equal opportunity policies in the United States based on gender, American media coverage tends to reflect the more patriarchal traditions that are reflected in media coverage in the Middle East.

Researchers in Northern Africa and the Middle East have also begun to apply Tuchman's theory to media representations in the region, finding similarly dispiriting trends. A study of female leaders' depiction in print media prior to the 2009 local elections in Morocco, Skalli (2011) found women leaders were referenced less than 5 percent of the time, and when they were, doubt was often expressed about the women's capabilities. Attiya (2016) undertook an in-depth quantitative and qualitative examination of women at four Arab satellite television stations from 1996 to 2006 and found that few women held administrative positions and no female held major editorial or editorial management positions. Further, though women were more present on-screen on these stations in 2000 than in previous years (between 24 and 40 percent), these rates did not match the lightning-pace progress women were making in the academy in the region at the same time (women made up anywhere from 74 to 96 percent of college graduates). The most robust study to date of how and with what frequency Arab women appeared in the Arab news analyzed

nearly 1500 news briefs from some 100 Arab media sources (Al-Malki et al. 2012). The findings show that Arab women are largely "unseen" in Arab news (xvi), and in fact about 44 percent of news brief references came from just four of those 100 Arab news sources. That said, when Arab women were portrayed in these pan-Arab news media, they took on much more active roles than in Western press representations. They were more often quoted as constructive contributors to the story, and were more likely to be referenced in an "active context" (44 percent of the time, compared to 22 percent neutral, 3 percent negative and 10 percent passive contexts, noting 21 percent of the sample were non-Arab women and not coded). Thus,

> Arab women in these stories take on active sociocognitive stances toward others, resulting in speech acts of asserting, demanding, denying, maintaining and insisting. They take on active social behaviors, such as directing, supporting, organizing, advocating, or rallying others, either within the family or outside the home . . . On their own soil [in Arab news media], their thoughts, words and deeds contribute constructively to news narratives. (Al-Malki et al. 2012, 61)

Deconstructing Symbolic Annihilation

As discussed above, the theory of symbolic annihilation was developed in the United States and is rooted in the Western cultural assumptions of individualism, democratic participation, and a desire for parity between the genders. It is also understood that media are generally valued, transmit social values to the population, and to some degree, reflect social realities. But does it make sense to apply this theory in non-Western societies, particularly to Qatar?

In recent decades, Qatar has undergone significant transformations due to incomparable wealth from oil and natural gas and rapid globalization. Moreover, as the country's monarchal rulers begin to transform its economy away from petroleum industries and toward a knowledge-based economy, women in particular have benefited. Qatari women outnumber and academically surpass Qatari men in the local universities, and their numbers are rising in the workforce as well. At the same time, cultural norms remain that impact the way Qatari women and their achievements are represented in local news media and, consequently, how their image is perceived by local media consumers and the wider population.

Qatari female nationals face a cultural taboo that prevents many of them from showing their faces in publicly disseminated photographs or videos. A significant number of women in the country—though not all—refuse to be depicted in newspapers or on television, even for positive news stories, for if they are, they risk severe cultural backlash—being accused of debasing their own or their family's reputation, or sabotaging their marriage prospects. This cultural proscription against appearing in the media extends to both married and single women, and to women who wear a niqab (face veil) and those who do not. It is often enforced by the woman's immediate and extended family network. In more culturally conservative households, some men even refuse to allow their wife, daughter, or sister's name to be printed in a news story, regardless of the content or angle of the article. However, it is important to note that women frequently enforce this taboo as well, for themselves and for others, as they have been socialized to accept this practice. That said, Qatari women's active embracing and enforcing of this patriarchal norm does not negate the gendered inequality at its core. Indeed, a growing number of Qatari women are beginning to challenge this norm, also expressing resentment toward this cultural proscription against appearing in media, viewing it not only as a double standard against women but also as a barrier for women maximizing their career potential in a society that is becoming increasingly more visually oriented (Paschyn 2013a, b).

Thus, several questions remain. Can we as communication researchers apply the theory of symbolic annihilation in a constructive manner, particularly in a society that is based on tribal-, clan-, or family-based collectivism, is ruled by a monarch, and has significant cultural reservations to women being freely depicted in the media? In addition, how can we apply it without also engaging in an Orientalist and condescending characterization of a region? In this chapter, we attempt to build on existing feminist media theory to explore the applicability of symbolic annihilation in a context where cultural norms related to privacy and cultural-religious modesty restrict the depictions of women in both print and broadcast media.

Like elsewhere in the world, women's empowerment and progress in the Arab Gulf countries can best be described as a constant ebb and flow throughout the decades, largely pegged to the country's overall economic and political transformations. Despite that patriarchy has always been the rule in Gulf societies, many women still enjoyed considerable power within their communities, playing vital roles in the economy (Foley 2010). In Qatar, for example, upper-class families, such as ruling political leaders and

clerics, often practiced the seclusion of women but the same was not true for lower classes. Prior to the rise of the oil economy, when pearl diving was still the dominant industry, women participated actively in the local economy, working as merchants, traders, Quranic teachers, textiles producers, seamstresses, and more. Beginning in the 1930s, however, the collapse of the pearl industry led to women taking on a greater role in the domestic sphere, "all but vanish[ing] from public life" (Foley 2010, 174), and the concurrent rise in conservative Wahhabi Islam ultimately led to the enforcement of dress codes for both men and women.

As the petroleum industry took off later in the 1930s, there were more wealth and educational opportunities for Gulf countries in general, including women. And into the 1960s and 1970s, Gulf women established their own movements, founded their own newspapers, advocated for better education and employment opportunities for women, and some even rallied against wearing the veil, hijab, and abaya. Yet women still faced many obstacles in achieving greater emancipation, as they had no legal rights as individuals, and despite their educational achievements, Gulf women faced social pressure to tend to their homes and families. Further, the tremendous wealth afforded by the petroleum industry led to a robust welfare state, and it was no longer an economic necessity for women to work outside the home, as it had been after the pearl industry collapsed. Gulf governments were then able to enforce gender segregation in many public institutions, including universities, schools, parks, and malls (Foley 2010).

The 1990s brought positive changes to women's status. The rise of the *Al-Jazeera* news network, which was launched in Qatar in 1996, opened a platform through which local women and men could be further influenced by a variety of different views and political-social perspectives, including greater public freedoms for women. In the 2000s, Gulf monarchies began to experiment with greater democratization and granting women's enfranchisement, and the numbers of women holding political power as members of councils, ministries, and cabinet positions has risen (Foley 2010), as has the number of women joining the workforce. In Qatar, despite that the overall rate of employment for Qatari women has stalled at 35 percent, more than 60 percent of those ages 25 to 34 now work (Paschyn 2014), and the government has included women's empowerment and employment as an essential component of its 2030 National Vision goals. Nevertheless, and despite Qatari women outnumbering and outperforming men at universities, men still dominate the workplace. Gender segregation remains the norm at government workplaces and at

the only state university. It often extends to many women's social lives, such as in the *majlis* (plural: *majaalis*), a traditional gathering in which members of the community come together to discuss issues of civic importance; these are typically sex-segregated (Mitchell 2015).

In addition to Qatari women being underrepresented in the workplace, they also remain underrepresented in the local media. Though the country is home to *Al Jazeera*, neither the Arabic nor English-language versions of the network are geared toward locals or local issues. Qatar has four Arabic-language and three English-language daily newspapers and two main television channels: the government-owned *Qatar Television* (QTV) and *Al Rayyan TV*. Qatar journalists enjoy limited press freedom, despite a constitutional guarantee—the law governing the media, for example, prohibits criticizing the emir or publishing anything that "may contradict with the ethics or imply offense to the public morals, or affect the dignity of persons or their personal liberties" (Law No. 8). A person's private life is considered somewhat sacred and is protected by the penal code, to the extent that it is illegal to "spread news, photographs or comments related to a person's private life, or that of his family, even if true" (Law No. 11).

This protection of privacy is also tied to notions of reputation, family honor, and shame, which have disproportionately affected women who carry the "burden of representation" (Yuval-Davis 1997, 39–67). Qatari women face the responsibility of maintaining their family's reputation and honor, described by a Qatari woman as such: "In Qatari culture, female family members are considered ambassadors for the moral values held by their families. If a member of the family does something that opposes the local customs, then this would indicate a perceived failing in cultural expectations on the family's behalf . . . " (Mitchell 2015). As a result, Qatari women must remain constantly vigilant of whether they might reflect poorly on their own and their families' reputations. This has directly contributed to the Qatari cultural taboo against women appearing in various forms of visual media—broadcasts, news photography, and advertisements. Women often decline to appear in newspaper photographs and on television broadcasts—even positive ones—for fear their family will disapprove of their appearing in publicly disseminated visuals. In advertising, this taboo is often circumvented by relying on other Arab women. The concern is that by appearing in visual media, the woman might give the impression that she is too liberal and openly mixes with men, even if no men appear in the picture. Further, among Qataris that do work in

journalism, particularly in the broadcast sector, men outnumber women, and negative perceptions of female television presenters persist (Paschyn 2013a, b).

Interviews with Qatari women and men conducted by Paschyn from 2012 to 2013 suggest that the origins of the taboo are not religiously based. Qataris interviewed stated that Islam does not prohibit women from appearing in pubic or being visually represented in media. Therefore, while Qatari women (and men, for that matter) hold conflicting attitudes on the appropriateness and necessity of local women appearing or not appearing in visual media, there does appear to be consensus that the taboo's roots are cultural in origin and stem from the country's patriarchal tribal past (Paschyn 2013a, b). Even though the media remain a male-dominated affair in Qatar, as the news and visual media industries continue to develop and grow in the country, an increasing number of women are pushing against the taboo and pursuing opportunities to appear in front of the camera.

For some, it would be tempting to characterize the visual taboo in Qatar as a natural extension of its Muslim or Arab background, or to assume women throughout the Gulf, such as in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, experience the same cultural practice. For, as Mohanty (1984) reminds us, there was then, and is now an inclination to depict Middle Eastern cultures and societies as static from an ahistorical standpoint, and Arab and Muslim women as a homogenous oppressed group "without addressing their particular historical, material and ideological power structures" (342). But to do so would be to fall prey to the trap that once plagued Western feminist analysis of non-Western societies. A truly comprehensive and just feminist analysis of women's status in a given society includes careful consideration of its full context (e.g., Mies 1982, cited by Mohanty 1984). The same, of course, must be done with our analysis of Qatar here.

Qatar shares similarities with other Gulf countries, particularly in terms of its general developmental trajectory. Like Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia rely on oil and gas production as their main economic drivers, and they have also undergone rapid globalization. Many of Qatar's neighbors are also making significant efforts to cultivate knowledge economies in which women are already beginning to thrive. For example, just as in Qatar, women in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates outnumber and outpace men in schools and universities (Paschyn 2013a, b). Of course, all of the countries in the Gulf are

rooted in an Islamic religious background. Still, despite these similarities, not all Gulf women face the same taboo against appearing in media that Qatari women do. The taboo is no longer as common in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia—perhaps surprisingly, given the latter's international reputation on women's rights—where the number of local women appearing as TV news anchors and talk show hosts began to rise in the 1990s and early 2000s (Paschyn 2013a, b). A possible explanation for the decrease in this cultural practice in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia is that these countries began to undergo economic and media development several decades earlier than Qatar. Regardless, changes in attitudes toward women appearing in the media in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia might prove prophetic for Qatari society, as Qatari women are beginning to challenge this norm.

A basic assumption of symbolic annihilation is that media are important institutions in society, in part because of the social values they transmit, and the news media are understood to reflect reality. According to a 2015 survey of a representative sample, the majority of Qatari nationals "have trust and confidence that the mass media report the news fully, accurately and fairly," and find the Qatari news media credible (Dennis et al. 2015). Further, 91 percent of nationals reported their favorite news source was based in Qatar, and the majority of Qatari nationals said television, newspapers, and radio were important sources of news and information, among others. In a related survey about entertainment use, most Qataris reported that they learn about real life issues and events through entertainment media, and a minority felt that entertainment media should challenge, rather than reinforce cultural stereotypes (Dennis et al. 2016). These data support the idea that Qataris do consume news and that they find the news media both important and credible. Because Qatari nationals think entertainment media teaches consumers about the real world and should reinforce cultural stereotypes, one can assume that they would feel the same about news media.

Media are, of course, not the only site of transmission of social values, nor are they the only place a Qatari woman might find role models. A significant site of women's involvement in civil society and public life is the aforementioned *majlis,* and more than 80 percent of Qatari women participate in one of some form, such as a family, neighborhood, social, or religious *majlis* (Mitchell 2015). The *majlis*, then, can be a place to make visible the women in public life that are absent from the news media—but only to other women, as *majaalis* are sex-segregated.

As with any population, Qatari women are not monolithic, and they hold different, often conflicting, attitudes about marriage, education, women working, and many other topics. For example, in a representative survey of Qatari women who participate in *majaalis,* while the overwhelming majority (86.5 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person, the majority (55.1 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that men have more right to a job than women (Mitchell et al. 2015). Women report the *majlis* is a place where they can seek advice, encouragement, and networking in their career pursuits (8). But those that attend family *majaalis* (more than 75 percent of Qatari women) are actually more likely to hold traditional views, such as being against matrilineal citizenship for children with a non-Qatari father and the enforcement of traditional dress for Qatari women (although, wearing traditional dress is certainly not a barrier to women's workforce participation or achievement).

Another of the original arguments Tuchman made in her original theory (1978) is that based on representations in the media, women will learn to not see themselves as active members of the labor force or agents of economic productivity, but instead as limited to the unpaid labor of the domestic sphere, *and* that is important because women are in fact vital to the workforce and the economy. But the same is not necessarily true in Qatar. The government is, of course, actively committed to the shift from a petroleum-based to a knowledge-based economy that will require greater numbers of women participating in the workforce. Nearly all of the survey respondents in a representative sample of Qatari women that participate in *majaalis* agreed or strongly agreed (97.7 percent) that the government encourages women to work (Mitchell et al. 2015). So in Qatar's human capital-building efforts, women do appear to be a vital component. But a more cynical outlook considers instead the shortsightedness engendered by the vast oil and natural gas wealth that remains. Is anybody really vital to the economy while the natural gas fields continue to produce?

Sites of Enduring Cultural Practice and Subversion

At the outset of this chapter, we posed several questions, the first of which was whether we, as communication researchers, can apply the theory of symbolic annihilation constructively in a country with such fundamental differences in state policy and societal values. We hope the analysis we presented above does that, but first let us say that instrumental to any

international or cross-cultural inquiry is a detailed examination of foundational assumptions to any Western-developed theory in a non-Western context (or vice versa). It is not simply a thought exercise, but a cornerstone of ordered, rational scientific inquiry, and theoretical development that can be overlooked in cross-cultural communication research.

We then asked how we could apply a theory so rooted in notions of modernity and Western progressive liberal thought in the Arab Gulf without engaging in an Orientalist and condescending characterization of the region. Again, we had to strip from our argument the values imbued by the fundamental assumptions of theory and refrain from looking at the Gulf societies as existing on a timeline that should usher them through to a state of Western-defined modernity. Instead, we must address state policies and cultural values on their own terms, as defined by the society in question. We gauge our success here by the in-depth analysis we provided into Qatar policy and cultural practice.

Finally, and most importantly, we asked whether the lack of women's representation in the Qatari news media can be classified as symbolic annihilation, as originally theorized by Tuchman, or whether there are other venues through which Qatari women are visible and able to leave their mark on society.

Certainly, as we have pointed out above, the cultural taboo against visual representations of women appearing in the media is contested among Qatari women, and as some have argued, is more rigorously defended by upper-class members of society (see Foley 2010), though certainly not by all. Sheikha Moza, the former royal first lady of Qatar and still a very prominent figure in public life, as well as her daughters Sheikha Hind and Sheikha Mayassa, also prominent public figures, are depicted widely in the Qatari press. Yet some Qatari women do not mind the taboo at all and maintain that their photographs do not need to be included in the news, that name recognition is sufficient (Paschyn 2013a, b).

Just because a society's cultural values deem it important for women to remain unseen in public life, however, does not mean that the state or society does not want them to be economically productive members of the workforce. We know in Qatar that the state itself is encouraging women's empowerment, education, and participation in the workforce as a significant piece of its National Vision 2030 (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008), including increasing "opportunities and vocational support for Qatari women" (10) and enhancing women's capacities and empowering them "to participate fully in the political and economic

spheres, especially in decision-making roles" (12). The vision also asserts that "women will assume a significant role in all spheres of life, especially through participating in economic and political decision-making" (11). So in that sense, a fundamental assumption of the theory of symbolic annihilation—that women should be seen as productive members of the workforce—has been met in the case of Qatar. As we know, numbers of younger Qatari women in the workforce are increasing, even as the taboo to depict women in media remains. We also know that women are visible in *majaalis*, and that is an important forum for women's public life. But *majaalis* are single-gender affairs, so while young women and girls may be able to find role models and examples of older women seeking and enjoying educational and career pursuits, those examples remain invisible to the other, more powerful half of Qatari society—men.

Symbolic annihilation theorized the relationship between the discursive representation of women and their material reality as mutually constitutive, but our deeply contextualized analysis reveals a more nuanced reality. Qatari women are, by and large, not represented visually in the local news media, yet they do participate in increasing numbers in the workforce. In this context, however, there is no *expectation* that Qatari women would be visually represented in the media due to the cultural taboo against it, so their absence is not constitutive of the material reality as it would be in a society that carried an expectation of equal representation of genders in the media.

That said, in order to fully overcome their absence in the news media and become visible examples to society, Qatari women members of the workforce need to be seen—publicly, in the news media, and by both genders—in order to be viewed as capable members of society outside of the domestic sphere. While the cultural significance of the *majlis* plays a role in the socialization of young women in Qatari society, including seeing other women as productive members of the workforce, it is not enough for these women to simply be visible to one another. Because men remain the dominant gender in Qatari life, we argue that it is not enough for women to be visible only to other women. Qatari women may be able to subvert the "you can't be what you can't see" maxim through their exposure to professional women in *majaalis*, but until men are able to see that, too, we argue symbolic annihilation of Qatari women in the news media continues.

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Sleeping with the Enemy: The Male Gaze and Same-Sex Relationships on Broadcast Network Television

W. Cory Albertson

Zack Florrick, the lanky teenage son of a lawyer, Alicia Florrick, opens their front door. In the doorway stands Kalinda Sharma, her phone to her ear. Her black hair is styled in her trademark updo. She is wearing a fitted cranberry-colored motorcycle jacket paired with her other trademarks: a black mini-skirt, black pantyhose, and black leather boots.

Zack, in boxers and a T-shirt, stands in the doorway speechless with his mouth open. His eyes move up and down Kalinda's petite frame.

He forces out a meek "Hi."

"Your mom?" asks Kalinda.

Zack motions for her to walk in. Kalinda, meanwhile, continues to talk on the phone.

"You work with my mom?" interrupts Zack, now standing behind Kalinda as she unzips her jacket, revealing more of her lilac-colored blouse.

"Yeah, sure," she responds flatly as Zack watches her walk down the hall.

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With 1975's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey forced us to acknowledge that our "fascination with film" hinges on using a male gaze to view women—subordinate, objectified, and in total service of heterosexual men's pleasure. The concept has become a (if not *the*) lynchpin of feminist media studies and part of the pop culture vernacular.

Mulvey relied on psychoanalysis to reveal the power of patriarchy in Hollywood cinema. In her seminal article, she argued that: "Psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (1975, 17).

Mulvey's concept of the male gaze has not been without criticism. In the past recent decades, several feminist film critics have sought to challenge Mulvey's male gaze focus on three issues: Gender positions in the gaze, heterosexuality of the gaze, and seeing the gaze as exclusively (male) pleasure in voyeurism (Manlove 2007). Mary Ann Doane (1980) argued that "Rather than effecting a complete collapse of spectator onto character (or film), identification presupposes the security of the modality as if" (25). Kaja Silverman (1980) also criticized that Mulvey "leaves unchallenged the notion that for the male subject pleasure involves mastery."

With the second and third issues feminists had focused on the role of pleasure in the gaze. These were the harshest in their critiques of Mulvey's male gaze. Critics redefined the gaze by directly challenging the heterosexual focus of Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure" article. Some of her critics focused on either the gay male or lesbian spectator, while others attempted to integrate several sexual object choices (Manlove 2007).

The third issue feminists responded to questioned Mulvey's strict focus on voyeurism, the fetish and the masculine or feminine pleasure. For example, Gaylyn Studlar (1984) objected that Mulvey neglected the "masochistic" (unpleasureable) dimension of the male spectator, and the following year, Gertrud Koch (1985) argued for a phenomenological theory of the gaze (because the focus on pleasure invites reliance on psychoanalytic methods).

But with the explosive segmentation of the film and television market in recent years, the male gaze's relevance has been saddled with the criticism that current media offers many examples of heterosexual women that do not fall into heteropatriarchy's traps (Bordo 2015; Marcus 2015). This critique begs an important question: Is the male gaze, as a feminist theory (and, by extension, feminism as an activist ideology), still relevant? Relevance of theory can be measured by its applicability to other or new groups. Therefore, this chapter answers that question by *not* looking at

heterosexual women. Instead, this chapter applies the male gaze to the LGBQ community.[1] Specifically, it focuses on the aesthetics, sexual practices, and gender acceptability of recent, fictional lesbian and bisexual female television characters to consider how the male gaze might explain what we are seeing on TV with this shift in representation.

This analysis is constructed around a 2011 Gallup poll that marked the first year a majority of the American public "favored" same-sex marriage—a nine point (and largest ever year to year) increase from 2010. GLAAD's (2011) "Where We Are on TV" report found that during the preceding year's television season in the United States, LGBQ characters accounted for 3.9 percent of all series regulars on network television—the highest percentage recorded in the report's then 15-year history. This analysis focuses on television shows from the 2010–2011 television season that had a lesbian or female bisexual lead character and had 10 million viewers or more, according to annual, averaged Nielsen ratings in the United States. The shows analyzed for this chapter include CBS's *The Good Wife*, FOX's *Glee*, and ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*. This translates to a total of five lead characters (as well as three co-stars whom they had relationships with) and five same-sex relationships across 67 episodes. Viewing these shows while considering the male gaze gets to the heart of both its relevance as a theoretical tool but, more broadly, whether it adequately examines if the television representations were designed to create boundaries for LGBQ characters that heterosexuals (and heterosexual men, in particular) can be comfortable with. To tackle both goals, there is no better example to start with than Kalinda, a dynamic queer character on CBS's *The Good Wife*, which aired from 2009 to 2016.[2]

Kalinda has relationships with one man and three women throughout the season. But she refuses to label herself, which alludes to an *ethos* of queerness over an attachment to a specific identity. However, no matter who she is involved romantically with, her roles within those relationships correspond with essentialist notions of masculinity, which revolve around being competitive and independent (Lipman-Blumen 1984) as well as sexually assertive (Mulvey 1975; Seidman 2002). Traditional Western societal ideals stipulate that femininity revolves around being passive, nurturing, and dependent (Lipman-Blumen 1984) as well as hyperemotional (Mulvey 1975; Seidman 2002). Kalinda is career- and sex-driven with a lack of emotional expression (which is on spectacular display in the scene with Zack described above).[3] However, her physical presentation veers sharply from such masculinity and is decidedly feminine.

As evidenced in the scene above, Zach only registers Kalinda's physical attributes—what Mulvey (1975) calls her "to-be-looked-at-ness." He exhibits the male gaze because his gaze is voyeuristic. First, his seeing is active and easily recognizable. Second, his seeing serves to objectify and, then, distance himself from the object (Mulvey 1989; Rose 2012). His response adheres to the archetypal appearance-focused (as in focused on the appearance of a woman) heterosexual male gaze that Mulvey (1989, 19) says, "projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly."[4]

Mulvey (1975) articulated "three different looks associated with cinema" where the male gaze occurs: the camera recording the scene, the audience watching the scene, and the characters looking at each other during the scene. She believed all three iterations of the male gaze view women as objects in service of heterosexual men's pleasure. In this scene, Zack provides the dominant look. He is also a "societal surrogate." Inspired by Mulvey's discussion of spectatorship between characters, a societal surrogate functions as a stand-in for society, bringing reactions, questions and/or commonly held societal values to a situation (Albertson 2018). In this case, he is a surrogate for the male gaze. As Mulvey suggests, this iteration of the male gaze serves as one version of the male gaze to interact with viewers' knowledge and potentially cue them to view women as the character does. Despite Kalinda's aloofness signaling his ogling as inappropriate, Zach's gaze frames her as an object of desire for heterosexual men. And intertwined with his objectification, his gaze sanctions Kalinda's sexualized hyperfemininity as an expectation of women.

But the male gaze of the camera lens also potentially cues (and, as is often the case, trains) audiences to view women, fictional or not—and heterosexual and otherwise—as it does (Gledhill and Ball 2013). In the scene with Zack, the camera lens initially showcases Kalinda's entire body so that audiences can see what Zack sees. In discussing the influence of the societal surrogate's gaze as well as the camera lens' gaze on audiences, it is important to note that there is not an implication of a universal type of viewer or that each viewer has the same reaction.[5] Viewers bring their own levels and types of knowledge to media, making meaning out of the images in a myriad of ways (Hall 1996; Rose 2012). Rather, the point of this analysis is to show that the representations (through subjugation to the male gaze) of LGBQ subjects are consistently similar, which can be theorized as central to their acceptance by viewers.

As proof of that consistency, all of the same-sex relationships used in this analysis adhere to the heteronormative model where one partner is more masculine while one partner is more feminine within the relationship. And yet *all* of them are traditionally feminine in their appearance. *Glee,* a primetime television show on FOX, which aired from 2009 to 2015, focused on a group of teens and their adventures as part of a glee club at the fictional McKinley High School. Two of the show's main female characters are also a couple: Santana Lopez (who identifies as a lesbian) and Brittany S. Pierce (who identifies as bicurious). The two typically bound around in cheerleading uniforms. Their cheerleading tops are fitted and sleeveless, while the short pleated skirts bare most of their legs. Both have long, thick hair that is typically in a ponytail with soft curls.

Meanwhile, hospital drama *Grey's Anatomy*, which has been on ABC for several seasons starting in 2005, features a female couple that includes sometimes lesbian, sometimes bisexual Calliope "Callie" Torres and her consistently lesbian partner Arizona Robbins. Both typically wear gender-neutral scrubs. But their scrubs are paired with traditionally idealized feminine markers, including make-up and long flowing hair, though Callie does shorten hers to neck-length later in the show. Outside of the hospital, however, more feminine expressions emerge for both characters. At a colleague's wedding, Callie wears a steel-colored cocktail dress with shiny beading around the cleavage-baring V-neck front. Arizona, meanwhile, holds a purse complimenting her blue cocktail dress, also with a low-cut V-neck.

All of these women characters are connected through their traditionally feminine appearances but, most importantly, they are connected in that they experience a societal surrogate in the form of a heterosexual man espousing the male gaze and sanctioning their femininity. During *Glee*'s first episode of the season, the student editor of the school newspaper comes to interview Santana and his eyes—then the camera frame—settle on Santana's breasts as he asks her, "How was *your* summer?" Meanwhile, in another scene from *Glee*, Brittany catches the eye of Artie, a wheelchair-bound member of the glee club. Standing next to him, she clasps her hands behind her and pushes out her chest, which is right at his eye level. After she tells him she wants to be his girlfriend, the camera settles on Brittany's right hip as she moves her hand and places it there. Through the opening between her arm and her hip, Artie stares up at her, grinning. On *Grey's Anatomy*, Callie and Arizona have a discussion about Callie's straight best friend Mark Sloan. Arizona says, "Mark stares at my boobs when we talk—he starts at my face, but somewhere along the way he gets

distracted and ends up on my boobs. I have tried my whole life to avoid the boob-staring guy." Callie, sanctioning Mark's objectification (and displaying the ultimate entrenchment of the male gaze), says that Mark stares "because they're good boobs." Callie also experiences Mark's gaze. In a later episode, she becomes an object of desire for Mark when they have sex during Callie and Arizona's separation.

In her groundbreaking treatise on the lesbian existence, Adrienne Rich (1980) argues that lesbians' jobs hinge on masking their sexual identity through heteronormative characteristics of femininity. Thus,

> A lesbian, closeted in her job because of heterosexist prejudice, is not simply forced into denying the truth of her outside relationships or private life; her job depends on her pretending to be not merely heterosexual but a heterosexual woman, in terms of dressing and playing the feminine, deferential role required of 'real' women (Rich 1980, 642).

Exposed by the male gaze, these television shows provide a new iteration of Rich's argument. In order for lesbian, bisexual, and queer characters to do their "jobs"—both their fictional jobs and their job to entertain viewers—they must adhere to traditional Western feminine beauty standards, that allow for the heterosexual male gaze.

With lesbians depicted in popular media, a "femme" appearance in service of the male gaze is not new (Ciasullo 2001; Hantzis and Lehr 1994). However, what is new, especially for primetime broadcast network shows, is that such appearances are paired alongside physical displays of affection. Historically, lesbians in primetime, though femme, have lacked sexuality and have rarely been shown in sexually intimate situations (Hantzis and Lehr 1994; Moritz 1994, Raley and Lucas 2006). Not anymore.

A brown hand grabs at a comforter—underneath the comforter is a body the hand is trying to get to. Giggles and heavy breathing begin as the camera frame pans up the arm. Eventually, disheveled black hair comes into view. A white hand wipes away the hair, revealing Callie's face. She's smiling, laughing and kissing Arizona.

Then a knock comes at their door accompanied by the voice of Mark. "Torres!" he shouts.

"Awww, shoot," says Callie. "I told him we'd work out this morning."

"But this is like working out; it's just more fun," replies Arizona, smiling.

"Come on! No pain, no gain!" yells Mark, again knocking on the door.

"Go away, Mark!" yells Arizona back at him.

"Hey, be nice, he's lonely," says Callie to Arizona softly. They resume kissing with Arizona again grabbing Callie's head.

"Did you just say my—" says Mark, barging in on but stopping as soon as he sees the two women in bed.

"Oh!" shouts Arizona, ducking under the covers while Callie sits up, holding the covers to her chest. Her bare shoulders are now in full view and allude to her being topless.

"All right, nice," says Mark, nodding approvingly. "You finish; I'll wait."

Arizona lets out a frustrated sigh while Callie throws a pillow at Mark. He closes the door but not without sticking his head back in for one more peek.

On a basic, descriptive level, this scene from *Grey's Anatomy* proves important because of the sexuality it depicts. First, the body parts—mainly arms and shoulders—of Callie and Arizona fill the screen. And those arms and shoulders (with the rest of the body being obscured by the comforter) are intertwined showcasing shared physical closeness and attachment. Furthermore, the image oozes passion. The two women are holding each other's heads and kissing with urgency. And as if more cues were needed, the sounds of giggles signal happiness and pleasure while the sounds of heavy breathing and rapid-fire lip-smacking signal intensity. Unfortunately, as is all too common of images of lesbian intimacy, the scene services the heterosexual man both literally and figuratively.

Mark's response falls in line with the archetypal macho, sex-driven, appearance-focused (he's the chief of plastic surgery at Seattle Grace Mercy West hospital) heterosexual man. He is the societal surrogate—the fiction-alized manifestation of the male gaze. Walking in on Callie and Arizona making out, his eyes grow wide at first. But then they relax and settle on an image long held as a heterosexual male fantasy—two feminine women having sex with each other. Mark even provides audible confirmation of the fantasy in the form of "All right, nice." His remark sanctions the normalcy of two women engaging in sex acts with each other. However, he also sanctions the women to be watched during sex. With a sly grin, he tells Callie and Arizona, "You finish; I'll wait." Though he closes the door, giving them some morsel of privacy, he waits only a few feet away in the living room. The implication is that he will enjoy the image implanted in his mind as well as the notion that the two women are continuing *his* fantasy. Further,

his fantasy offers an important message: sex acts between two women are acceptable but only if the women are desirable to heterosexual men. While the scene may seem an insignificant and even silly moment in a long series of television moments, it is significant because it reinforces gender norms and maintains the male gaze beyond heterosexuality.

A man, however, does not have to be present in a scene to make this point known. Throughout the season, Arizona and Callie are routinely physically affectionate with each other without the physical presence of a man. They share kisses ranging from quick pecks to prolonged, passionate make out sessions in just their bras. And though she does not have a man walk in on her during sex, *The Good Wife*'s Kalinda is similar to Callie and Arizona in that sex acts are common. For example, one scene shows Kalinda's full body propped against the headboard. Kalinda is not nude. However, her breasts are on display through a lacy black bra, especially once she moves her body to be on all fours, hanging over her frequent lover Sophia. Sophia's breasts remain hidden, though she is obviously topless. Unlike Callie and Arizona, Kalinda's sex scenes are slightly more explicit in that they show more skin. Further, Kalinda rarely discusses these sex acts alongside the visual of them, making the emphasis lie in the sphere of objectification more than it does with the other women characters. With regard to her sex acts, the male gaze of the camera lens is at work, providing voyeuristic pleasure instead of both the camera lens and a male character. While not as explicit as *The Good Wife* or even *Grey's Anatomy*, *Glee* does not shy away from depicting same-sex female sexuality either. In one scene, the camera pans up two sets of bare, tanned legs that are tangled around each other. Eventually, the flesh tones morph into the red and white colors of Santana and Brittany's cheerleading uniforms. Santana, her black hair freed from its usual ponytail, lies on top of Brittany, kissing her neck.

Applying the male gaze to Santana and Brittany, Kalinda and her various female lovers, and Callie and Arizona illustrates that they have striking commonality in their appearances and in the depictions of their sex acts. Consistently present are two traditionally "hot" (as Brittany would say) women getting their "mac on" (as Santana would say), which maintains one important aspect of patriarchy: that women must rely on their physicality to be legitimate. From the frame of the male gaze, these scenes are less about offering a progressive agenda highlighting same-sex relationships between women than they are about maintaining subordination of women in surprisingly traditional ways.

And, as the male gaze is used to demonstrate, these shows take their subordination seriously. For example, when *Grey's Anatomy's* Mark walks in on Callie and Arizona making out, the comedy does not lie (in bed) with the sex act. Rather, it lies with Mark walking in on the sex act. The sex act itself remains serious, as Mark's reaction confirms. Such seriousness bleeds into the women's romantic relationships where the sex acts are seen as integral and normal to the maintenance of their relationships, but also integral and normal for heterosexual male pleasure.

Some may dismiss such depictions' lack of nuance as partial to the oft-characterized more traditional and family-friendly broadcast network television model. But the oft-characterized more groundbreaking and risky cable television model utilizes lesbian bodies in the same way (Farr and Degroult 2008). Even though the characters are lesbian, bisexual, or queer, their femininity serves the same functions as their straight counterparts. In fact, any queerness or challenging of heteronormativity becomes muted in the recognition of a blatant, uniformed adherence to Western beauty standards. Scholar Chris Jenks (1995, 150) encapsulates this best when he says, "Women do not look, they are looked at"—a notion the male gaze forces us to see is applied to queer women as well.

As recently as the early 2000s, 15 percent of television programs in the United States contained sexual content involving lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and/or queers. Within those programs, the number of occurrences was low (Fisher et al. 2007). In my analysis, lesbian, bi, and queer women have burst out of such seeming bondage, regularly displaying their sex lives and their bodies. Seeing lesbian, bi, and queer women nourish their relationships sexually in primetime is a feat. Superficially, the images seem positive, a sign of progression. Lesbian, bi, and queer women's sexuality is now acceptable. And as evidence of this truth claim, the shows analyzed sexualize the women across *all* examples. However, the women characters experience this sexual objectification from the perspective of the male gaze. Historically, the male gaze has had a symbiotic relationship with the straight male audience member. It has mirrored and spoken for them. And with the LGBQ television characters, it is doing so again.

But there are even broader implications to this analysis. When paired with the LGBQ community's marginalized status, the male gaze does more than keep the representations in a subordinate, objectified position—the original assertion of the male gaze. Here, it homogenizes relationships, where queer women must be feminine to give society sensuality while hidden aspects of queer life are kept hidden. And this dichotomy

becomes normalized. More importantly, it suggests that queer representation, to be accepted (nay legitimate), needs to adhere to heteronormative standards—perpetuating what Lisa Duggan (2002) refers to as "homonormativity" as well as the notion of what Jasbir Puar (2007) calls "the exceptional homosexual."

Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011) notes that the "right to look" has historically rested with those in power. But technology has changed that dynamic opening up the visual—in this case, television—to be looked at (and critiqued) by many. Straight men may not even watch these shows. The shows may, in fact, be supported mostly by lesbian, gay, bisexuals, and/or queer audiences.[6] Still, it does not make the audiences immune to stereotypes. Similar to how racial stereotypes and prejudice can seep into the minds of people of color (Nosek et al. 2002), gender and sexual stereotypes can seep into the minds of straight women and sexual minorities. Whether or not this relationship between viewer and character is happening is difficult to discern. But what is not hard to discern is that the male gaze continues to explain how we see characters, even lesbian, bisexual, and queer characters, on television. The heterosexual male gaze—both the camera lens and the societal surrogates—can still be used to discern problematic narratives, specifically narratives of queer women. While the debate continues as to how the male gaze interacts with the knowledge of its spectators, the scary *potential* exists for spectators to learn, accept, and use the narrative of the male gaze that television shows subject them to.

Notes

1. I use the term LGBQ because the shows that met my criteria only contained characters who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, bicurious and one with no label, which I call queer. No transgender characters were present.
2. Kalinda appeared on *The Good Wife* from 2009 to 2015.
3. This chapter is part of a larger project that also examines gay and bisexual male roles and sexual identities/labels and everyday roles within these relationships in more detail. For further details, see Albertson (2018).
4. As a researcher of media, I acknowledge the complex and diverse ways that masculinity and femininity operate in some contemporary television programming. However, the focus of this chapter is the application of Mulvey's male gaze theory on lesbian and bisexual female characters in mainstream broadcast network programming.

5. I also do not discount the possibility that the viewer might already practice the male gaze in which case the societal surrogate and the camera lens reinforce the viewer's male gaze rather than instigate it.
6. Without having access to networks' demographic information, it is hard to know the audience make-up for sure.

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The Affective Turn in Feminist Media Studies for the Twenty-First Century

Amanda K. Kennedy

A handful of scholars have mapped out and provided critical commentary on the most recent "affective turn" in feminist media studies (e.g., Gorton 2009; Tyler 2008). Simply put, the affective turn I refer to is generally informed by feminist, queer, and sometimes postmodern impulses; complicates older theories that conceptualize affect as discrete, isolatable, measurable emotions; and reconceptualizes affects, feelings, and emotions as messy and unstable, at times public and political—and not usually quantifiable (i.e., measurable) or even qualifiable (i.e., nameable) (Cvetkovich 2012; Seigworth and Gregg 2010). Many feminist scholars have rejected the idea of "bad" affects—or as Ngai (2007) put it, "ugly feelings"—such as shame, anger, and depression being inherently negative and pathologized as individual problems; rather, affect scholars have suggested that publicly felt "ugly feelings" are more a symptom of larger social problems such as gender, race, labor, and class oppression and inequality (e.g., Ahmed 2010; Cvetkovich 2012; Gregg 2011).

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It has been well noted that specific trajectories in affect theory like what I described above and that have inspired affective turns across many disciplines over the past two decades are difficult—if not impossible—to pin down or define due to affect's theoretical complexity and disciplinary border-crossing. Still, many have attempted to excavate and trace various genealogies of affect theory from their disciplines of origin (see, for instance, Seigworth and Gregg 2010), such as feminist theory and queer and critical-cultural studies, identify where new affective turns are presently occurring, and where affect theory may be headed next—including in feminist media studies (Cvetkovich 2012; Tyler 2008). This chapter will review some of these undertakings to define or map the affective turn, specifically in feminist media studies, beginning with a brief overview of the fields of feminist media studies and feminist affect theory. A review of the affective turn in feminist media studies will be followed by a discussion of theoretical apertures and suggestions for ways forward departing from intersections of feminist media research and affect. To conclude—and along the way—I will propose how affect theory has challenged, transformed, and opened new spaces for thinking about the meaning of the "feminist" in feminist media studies.

Feminist Media Studies

To begin, it is useful to define the central terms and concepts I rely on in this chapter—namely, feminist media studies, affect theory and the affective turn, and affect itself. Steiner (2014) summed up the sub-field of interest: "[F]eminist media studies deploys feminist principles and politics in researching media processes and organizations, regardless of whether the media content expresses a feminist ethos" (359). Further, feminist media studies "relies on feminist theory. That is, it applies philosophies, concepts, and logics articulating feminist principles and concepts to media processes such as hiring, production, and distribution; to patterns of representation in news and entertainment across platforms; and to reception" (Steiner 2014, 359). Hence, feminist media studies is informed by feminist theory, which encompasses (many versions of) affect theory. More generally, media studies has been described as interdisciplinary, inter-methodological, and as having a broad focus on media messages, images, senders (encoders), and receivers (decoders) (Puustinen 2000). Goldberg (2012), linking media theory with cultural studies, assessed: "Media/cultural studies occupies a rare methodological position within and between the humanities and social sciences, with one foot in various theoretical

traditions (e.g., literary, feminist, psychoanalytic) and the other various object-oriented approaches (e.g., textual analysis, actor-network theory, and ethnography)" (242). Thus, potential for objects and subjects of inquiry within media studies and feminist media research—as well as affect theory—can be seemingly infinite.

Feminist Affect Theory

Emerging from critical-cultural studies and feminist and queer theory in the mid-1990s, the "new" affective turn now spans vast academic fields, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, neurology, geography, and architecture, to name a few (Clough 2007, 2008; Gorton 2009; Seigworth and Gregg 2010). As I alluded to above, affect theory and the affective turn—as well as affect—are notoriously difficult or even (by definition) impossible to define (Massumi 1995; Ngai 2007). However, some feminist authors have proposed relatively digestible descriptions, if not concrete definitions, of the terms and concepts that generally ground my analysis. Arguably the most prominent trajectory of affect theory is inspired by late French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (often associated with postmodernism) and sees affect as "force, intensity, or the capacity to move and be moved" (Cvetkovich 2012, 4). However, not all affect theory scholars ascribe to that Deleuzian tradition, and the affective turn is richly heterogeneous in theory, method, and epistemology.

Many affect scholars in feminist and queer theory refocus attention on the political and agentic properties of affect—the potential of affect to both give and suspend agency—in individuals and communities (e.g., Ahmed 2010; Cvetkovich 2012; Ngai 2007). As Cvetkovich (2012) suggested, "feeling bad might, in fact, be the ground for transformation" (3). Feminist and queer approaches also resist pathologizing "bad" affects or "ugly feelings" (Ngai 2007) (e.g., shame, depression, unhappiness) as private problems to be fixed with individual treatments, instead envisioning them as symptoms of more systemic social problems (e.g., Ahmed 2010; Berlant 2011; Clough 2007, 2008; Cvetkovich 2012; Ngai 2007).

Affective Turns in Feminist Media Studies

The affective turn has seen (limited) influence, along with some controversy, in feminist media studies literature. Gorton (2009) and Tyler et al. (2008, 85–90) both noted that the focus on emotion and affect in communication and media research—especially of the feminist variety—is noth-

ing new. However, the recent (since 1990s) "affective turn" has earned distinction as "new," but what distinguishes it from feminism's earlier focus on emotionality depends on whom you ask. For Tyler, affect theory is a feminist project with a long history that is often overshadowed or displaced by the "new affective turn," which tends to be post-political, post-ideological, and resists identity politics or validating markers such as gender and race as categories for analysis (as an example, see Brian Massumi's affect theory). The impulse of the "new affective turn" that attempts to de-politicize affect—claims affect transcends politics, culture, and ideology—is especially problematic for feminist media studies: True to its feminist roots, feminist media studies is fundamentally political and centers embodied markers such as gender and race as sites of inquiry and agency (Tyler et al. 2008, 85–90). Following this feminist logic, Tyler argued that affect is indeed political and embodied, as well as serving as a common vocabulary or register that facilitates conversation in feminist media studies across borders—especially in emerging transnational contexts.

Gorton (2009), commenting on the potential for affect theory in television research, identified some hallmark concerns linking various affective trajectories in media studies: "the place of emotion in the public sphere; the way in which this intrusion of emotion has refigured the feminist mantra 'the personal is the political'; and the debate on how feelings work towards social good" (55–56), as well as "language as affect" and the practice of focusing on individual affects or emotions, such as shame. According to Gorton, by isolating certain affects or emotions for critical interrogation (e.g., shame, disgust, pleasure, fear), affect theories encourage us "to think about the explicit ways in which each emotion affects the individual and the social and how this may shape our relationship to what we watch on screen" (69). She proposed that the significance of the affective turn in feminist media studies is that affect theory "offers a way of thinking about subjectivity that is not tied solely to the psyche. In other words, our actions are guided not just by what we think but also by how we feel and our bodily response to feelings" (69).

The emergence and growing (or steady) influence of the affective turn in feminist media studies is evidenced by the growing number of books, collaborations, and journal articles with feminist or queer affect and media theory as central themes. There is expansive multiplicity in feminist media research that deploys affect theory, which spans (and interrogates normative ideas about) theoretical, methodological, epistemological, ethical, and topical commitments in the field of communication. Many prominent and

emergent refrains in affective feminist media studies overlap and include (a) embodiment and (body) politics; (b) technology, Internet, and digital media; (c) public intimacy; (d) neoliberal consumer culture; (e) audience attachments to screen objects; and (f) heteronormative images/representations of gender, sex, and bodies; (g) queer and postmodern (Deleuzian) theory; (h) bonding and community; (i) affective ethics; and (j) the methodological potentials or capacities of affect theory (e.g., empirical and social scientific avenues for understanding affect and media). The following paragraphs will provide examples of feminist media studies research illustrating some of those themes that have marked the affective turn.

Baer (2016), for example, explored the body politics of digital feminisms (such as in Twitter campaigns), which some argued have been at the expense of the political force of feminist activism. She drew from Lauren Berlant's neoliberal critique and proposition that "precarity has become the key structure of feeling in an era marked by the crumbling of fantasies of upward mobility and political and social equality" (21). Baer examined how digital feminisms build on precarity, which comes from neoliberalism's widespread feelings/impulses of insecurity and instrumentalization, to wield political agency and change; in other words, feelings of precarity and insecurity can inspire and not only suspend agency and politics—the agentic and political potentials of digital media and neoliberal insecurity and precarity. For more about body politics, even via seemingly disembodied technologies and social media, see Mäkelä (2000) and Koivunen (2000).

A slightly different take, Dean (2010) assumed a more dystopian view of blogs and their political potential, partly because of how blogs and the Internet are so embedded/implicated in capitalism, and also because, she argues, political organization and actions do not simply *emerge* from blog activity—they must be actively engaged and deployed (yet the Internet, with its capitalistic impulses, is not automatically an ideal place to do this).

McGlotten (2013) used an affective lens inspired by queer theory and postmodern philosophy of Deleuze to interrogate how "virtual intimacies," or online interactions, have potentiality for personal pleasure as well as queering normative ideas of sexuality, in many of the same ways that "real-life" (interpersonal) intimacies do. For further media research that uses specifically queer and/or Deleuzian theory, see Cvetkovich (2012), Puar (2007) and Tongson (2011).

In other milieu, Seddighi (2014) wrote about the roles of emotional labor and process of inclusion/exclusion in constructing activist and affective communities online that drive social movements, in particular, the

activist network of Iranian Mothers of Park Laleh: "networks are created through cultures of emotion, shared affect and imaginings of communities. … Mothers' affect in public spaces therefore contributes to networking for the creation of a collective memory." and "embeddedness of the mothers' network in a particular locality 320 created visibility and a space of representation through which they could locate their emotion and create fluid affective networks" (525). In other words, online affective spaces gave mothers in that particular network a space for collective and individual subjectivity, agency, and bonding via shared or at least similar material and affective experiences.

Ahmed (2000) also wrote about the communal and bonding properties of affect that can and does drive communities to form and act. She argues that "emotions play a crucial role in the 'surfacing' of individual and collective bodies," and that "emotions are not simply 'within' or 'without,' but that they define the contours of the multiple worlds that are inhabited by different subjects" (10). For Ahmed (2000), emotions, such as hate and love, are not relegated to private domains; on the contrary, emotions (feelings, affects) are often publicly shared by collective bodies in specific times and places (she began the essay with an excerpt taken from the Aryan Nation website as one example) and are often what infuse politics and compel bodies into action to power social movements.

Some feminist media scholars use affective lenses to unpack the cultural mechanisms of fandom and celebrity culture and how media is implicated in those processes. Gorton and Garde-Hansen (2013) used the example of outtake photos from a Madonna photo shoot that appeared online to interrogate how the political/public has become personal/intimate, especially via the Internet and mass and popular media (referencing Berlant): "'intimate' details become public domain," and the viewing public feels license to comment on the intimate (e.g., Madonna's aging body) in ways that reinforce and reproduce dominant sexual and gender stereotypes and ideals of the female body, beauty, and aging. For more examples of affective work on fandom and celebrity cultures, see Kiovunen (2000) and Nikunen (2000). Further examples of affect theory used to interrogate heteronormative images and representations of women and bodies in media, see Coleman (Tyler et al. 2008), Ojajärvi (2000), Puar (2007), Rossi (2000/1), and Tongson (2011).

Relatedly, many feminist media scholars have channeled affect theory in critiques of neoliberalism and new consumer cultures, including Ahmed's (2009) work on (un)happiness and Berlant's (2011) *Cruel Optimism.*

Other areas of interest in affective feminist media studies include ethics (see Bertelson and Murphie 2010; Tyler et al. 2008) and methodological implications and potentials of feminist affect theory (e.g., Tyler et al. 2008; for examples of how empirical and social scientific methods have been used for affect theory research, see Ojajärvi 2000; Puustinen 2000). Additionally, feminist scholars have deployed affect theory in the realm of organizational communication and work, for example rendering visible the often unregistered emotional labor that can take heavy physical and psychic tolls on workers (often disproportionately affecting women) in media industries and/or media studies (e.g., Cvetkovich 2012; Gregg 2011; Surma and Daymon 2014).

While this review of literature from the affective turn in feminist media studies has attempted to illustrate certain common themes and sensibilities, the breadth and depth of feminist affect theory in media studies cannot be adequately covered in this space. However, a more comprehensive review reveals some gaps and potential paths forward for feminist theory in affect and media studies—ways forward that might begin to answer pressing questions about the state of feminist media studies in the twenty-first century: What exactly does it mean to conduct feminist research? What does it mean to be a feminist scholar today? What areas of communication and media are gaining or maintaining the attention of media scholars? The next section will address some of the gaps and avenues for future feminist inquiry in areas of affect and media studies.

Ways Forward for Feminist Affective Media Studies

While research coming from the affective turn in feminist media studies demonstrates the fruitfulness of affect theory for communication and media research, there are some areas that, I argue, it would be advantageous to develop further. In this section, I will discuss the trajectory in affect theory that Tyler rejected as "post-political" and in opposition to the foundational commitments of feminist media studies (Tyler et al. 2008, 85–90)—a model of affect theory that is most commonly associated with Brian Massumi, who draws heavily from Deleuze and Spinoza. I will then turn to an area of scholarship that attends to the affective implications of academic labor that particularly impact women, graduate students and adjuncts, and both humanities and social science scholars—all whom play lead roles in the field of feminist media studies.

Repoliticizing "Post-Political" Affect Theory Tyler was rightly concerned about the potential threats that Massumi's brand of affect theory might pose to feminist media research. She proposed that affect theory could be (at the risk of oversimplifying) identified as falling into one of two camps[1]: one being good for feminist media studies and feminist inquiry in general, and the other dangerous. The latter, she explained, is closely associated with Massumi's work. Tyler summed up Massumi's conceptualization of affect as "a force prior to and in excess of social and cultural inscription, a vital materiality that has been 'left out' of analysis of media focused on meaning, signification, ideology, and difference." Further, Tyler claimed Massumi's project is one that attempts to "liberate" studies of affect from the "constraints" of feminist and queer media studies, along with the accompanying categories of analysis such as gender and race (Tyler et al. 2008, 87). Tyler instead favored the alternative model of affect theory, which more closely aligns with feminist politics (88–89). However, I argue that many feminist and queer theorists have taken up Massumi's brand of affect theory in their own critiques and research and, in doing so, repoliticize it. Further, while for Massumi (1995, 2002, 2010, 2015) affect itself may be post- or pre-political, its effects are anything but—and the political impact of affect is most relevant for feminist media studies.[2] At this point it may be useful to briefly unpack the affective trajectory associated with Massumi.

In addition to Deleuze, the affective turn led by Massumi also draws inspiration from Felix Guattari and Baruch Spinoza, the latter the seventeenth-century philosopher who, among many other things, challenged Cartesian mind-body dualism (Seigworth and Gregg 2010). Affect theorists of this order work to liberate affect from simplistic, instrumental, positivistic, and paternalistic categorizations common in disciplines where rationality and objectivity are naturalized points of departure for theory and research. Further, affect is conceptualized as not merely a set of individual or physical emotional responses that can be plainly identified, but rather as an immanent agentic force or experience. As Clough (2008) put it, affect is understood "as pre-individualized bodily forces augmenting or diminishing a body's capacity to act" (1). Seigworth and Gregg (2010) similarly defined "affect as potential: a body's *capacity* to affect and be affected" (2). While most definitions of affect in this tradition only get more abstruse and obscure (Massumi's writing is among the most dense and least accessible to casual readers), some main takeaways are that affect

is more complex than what researchers have traditionally theorized, and that affect can both generate and suspend agency (e.g., one can be paralyzed with fear or energized by hope).

Another project of some affect scholars in the Deleuzian tradition has been to differentiate between emotions, feelings, and affects (Clough 2007, 2008). Massumi's (1995) seminal essay imparts technical distinctions between affect and emotion—one being that affect essentially escapes human language (hence the difficulty in defining it). For Massumi (1995, 94, 100, 105), affect is *immanent*—affect does not originate from human subjectivity, but it already exists everywhere, in everything. We live in an affective world, and we experience the movement of affects through the movement and assemblages of atoms and matter. Affect is described by Massumi (1995) as *intensity*, existing through, within, and between matter. Following this logic, affect is bigger than—exists before and after, and has potential beyond—emotion: *Emotion* is the qualification, or naming, of affect, as well as its containment (Massumi 1995, 104). Massumi (1995) described emotion as the "capture" (96–97) of affect, arguing that "[a]ffect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But . . . emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders" (88). He continued, "An emotion is the subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity…. It is intensity owned and recognized" (88). Affect is also what connects people to each other. Massumi (2002) called affect the "invisible glue that holds the world together" (217). This makes affect particularly implicated in social relationships, and, as such, relevant to studies in communication that focus on publics.

All of this is to say that, while Tyler's reticence to engage Massumi's philosophy of affect in feminist research is understandable, I also see potential for "Massumian" affect theory in feminist media studies—and it has indeed been appropriated in much affect theory work that centers both politics and media (Tyler et al. 2008, 85–90). For example, queer theorist Puar (2007) drew in part from Massumi in her work on *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times.* Puar (2007, 170–172), referencing Clough's (2007) genealogical tracings of the affective turn, juxtaposed Deluezian-Massumian "technoscience criticism" and theories of affect—affect as "an ontological emergence that is released from cognition, codified emotion being the evidence of the escaped excess that is affect" (171)—alongside the trajectory of the affective turn more practically grounded in bodies and materiality—or the "queer theory on emo-

tions and tactile knowings" (Puar 2007, 170)—associated with scholars such as Ahmed (2000, 2010), Cvetkovich (2012), and Muñoz (2000). Puar's (2007, 201–221) side-by-side analysis of the two trajectories, in the context of queer and nationalistic subjects and representations, led her to favor *assemblages* (see Deleuze and Guattari 2002) as a more accurate and appropriate frame for understanding identities, subjectivities, and relationships between bodies and affects than the more traditionally asked question in the affective turn: What came first—bodies or affect?

Another example, Bertleson and Murphie (2010) channeled Massumi in their essay about affective ethics, national politics, and media images, specifically Massumi's conceptualization of affects as intensities—that which escapes naming or other forms of containment. In sum, Bertleson and Murphie (2010) posited an affective ethics, based largely on Massumi's affect-as-intensity and Guattari's (1995) work on "logics of affect," that replaces longstanding cultural traditions and customs with a "pluralism that might escape an increasingly conservative 'Politics,' in favor of the infinity of little affective powers available to everyday life" (Bertleson and Murphie 2010, 139). While some of these works are not expressly feminist, they do demonstrate the political potential in Massumi's affect theory, making it a candidate to appropriate for feminist purposes in media research.

Affect and Academic Labor In other areas of affect theory, scholars have turned attention to the affective labor involved in many kinds of work (and especially the gendered nature of it) including in media industries and in academia. Both of these types of work (professional and scholarly, but especially the latter) represent sparse areas of research within media studies. Media and communication practitioners, such as in advertising, public relations (PR), and journalism, have received some attention in academic literature (though much of it originates from the realms of organizational communication, management, or other subfields in communication with roots not typically located in media studies). One example, Surma and Daymon (2014) wrote about public relations, which, "as cultural intermediary work that involves the promotion and extension of a neo-liberal agenda, affects the lives and wellbeing of its practitioners" (46). Further, Yeomans (2014) employed a lens of emotional labor to highlight "the role of gendered performance in managing the feelings of self and others in service-oriented occupations" (87), specifically public relations consulting.

Relatedly, critiquing gendered discourses in advertising, Puustinen (2000) theorized advertising texts as productions of embodied subjects (rather than a detached "ideological apparatus" that is the "advertising industry" or agency). In her qualitative and critical study, Puustinen (2000) conceptualized "advertising designers as ideological subjects and agents" and "active cultural subject[s]" (207), and her "main interest lies on the gender and power relations in the larger cultural context in which the advertising designers live" (210). While her main focus may have been on how advertising designers' subject positions impact advertising products and culture—and not necessarily the emotional toll that advertising work has on the workers—Puustinen's research represents a move toward incorporating the lived experiences such as affective labor and affective organizational cultures of workers in media industries (rather than focusing more narrowly on media and its users and audiences).

Outside of strictly media studies-specific arenas, scholarship about the emotional labor involved in academic work and (especially empirical) research is burgeoning in several fields and disciplines, such as that about the emotional work entailed in performing qualitative inquiry (e.g., Blix and Wettergren 2015; Rossing and Scott 2016; Scott et al. 2012) and particularly in feminist research (e.g., Carroll 2012; Stone-Mediatore 2003; Visweswaran 1994). In sociology, recent work has been concerned about how not only gender but also race and other dimensions of intersectionality impact the everyday realities and (disproportionate) workloads—emotional and otherwise—experienced by women of color (and other "Others") in academe (e.g., Moore et al. 2010; Collins 2000).

On the other hand, while scholarship on academic work and emotion has emerged across many disciplines, affective academic labor and laborers (i.e., university staff, adjuncts, graduate students, faculty, and administrators) have seen little if any attention in media studies. To return to an earlier example, public relations scholars have poured abundant resources into researching the emotional work done by *practitioners* in the field—those who "do" PR in the "real world" (i.e., not academics) (e.g., Fröhlich and Peters 2007; Surma and Daymon 2014; Yeomans 2014) but have generally ignored the emotional burden of scholars whose careers are (a) dedicated to conducting research that is supposed to benefit the practice of PR and its practitioners, and (b) doubly bound by not only the neoliberal logics of PR practice, but also the increasingly corporatized university cultures and intellectual economies in which academics are coerced to produce and ultimately commoditize their

knowledge at unprecedented rates.[3] Meanwhile, university faculty and staff, especially graduate students and adjuncts, are sorely undercompensated and underappreciated for the time and physical, intellectual, and emotional labor that goes into teaching, service, and research (which is not to say that those forms of labor are wholly separable).

Cvetkovich (2012), offers an exemplar for scholarly agendas concerned with unveiling and problematizing the affective labor of academic work, especially in the humanities and social science disciplines that happen to encompass media studies. In addition to being part-memoir, the book poses strong criticism and begins to develop theory about, among other topics, the affective and everyday realities of work in higher education—and its infuriatingly tedious and anxiety-producing hazards. Cvetkovich (2012), a scholar of feminist and queer theory, affect and Public Feelings,[4] wrote an effective memoir/journal/"performative writing" project about her foray into academia and coinciding bouts of depression. Naming her target audience in the introduction of her book, Cvetkovich (2012) also revealed the affective baggage tied to "junior scholarship": "graduate students and untenured and adjunct faculty, especially those in the humanities, whose relation to these conditions is often a very palpable sense of fear, anxiety, and, very frequently, diagnoses of depression" (18). Cvetkovich's (2012) own story about her experiences in academe is a strong testament to the affective turmoil academic labor can bestow, especially for untenured faculty and staff, including graduate students.

For example, Cvetkovich (2012) wrote that academics are consistently "squeezed on the one hand by an intensely competitive job market and meritocratic promotion and reward system and driven on the other by a commitment to social justice that often leaves us feeling like we're never doing enough" (19). She continued:

> The forms of productivity demanded by the academic sphere of the professional managerial class can tell us something more general about corporate cultures that demand deliverables and measurable outcomes and that say you are only as good as what you produce. (In this context it can be especially hard to justify creative or individualized intellectual work, and teaching or administration may feel more concrete than pursuing creative thought.) (Cvetkovich 2012, 19)

In short, Cvetkovich's (2012) "depression-as-Public-Feeling" manifesto reveals how academic careers impose infeasible and unfair (at least in relation to the compensation afforded academic laborers) workloads in research, teaching, service, and even unofficial or unsanctioned duties such as collegiality and mentoring. These emotionally and physically taxing demands on academics are brought about by the corporatization of higher education, academic capitalism, and neoliberal demands for ever-rising standards of productivity vis-à-vis efficiency, effectiveness, and excellence (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). Feminist media scholars are certainly not exempt from these pitfalls of academic work—nor are their roles in media culture and processes unimportant. Thus, I suggest that perhaps a more meaningful, practical, and ethical reframing of the question "What does it mean to be a feminist scholar today" might be: "What does it *cost* to be a feminist scholar today?"

In this chapter I have attempted to review and synthesize the conceptual fields of feminist media studies and feminist affect theory, including highlighting some gaps/fertile areas for future research in the affective turn in feminist media studies. Additionally, there are many more (obvious and surprising) areas for further theory development in, and critical engagement with, the affective turn in feminist media studies, such as in ethical, methodological, and therapeutic potentialities of affect in media and its producers, consumers, and messages.

Notes

1. Countless scholars have depicted countless genealogies and evolutions of the affective turn and affect theory, and most if not all tell a slightly different story; thus, I believe that, at least for present purposes, Tyler's dual model of affect theory is as valid and accurate as most others. However, for a more comprehensive mapping of the evolution of affect theory and its many trajectories, see Seigworth and Gregg's (2010) introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader.*
2. For a recent example from Massumi that demonstrates the political capacity of affect, see his chapter in *The Affect Theory Reader* (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 52–70) about the "political ontology of threat."
3. For incisive and far-reaching discussions of the state of academe and academic labor, see Bellas (1999), Newfield (2008), Readings (1996), and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004).
4. See http://pathogeographies.net.

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Girls, Media, and Sexuality: The Case for Feminist Ethics

Meenakshi Gigi Durham

In 2009, then 16-year-old pop star Miley Cyrus, clad in hot pants and high-heeled boots, performed a brief pole dance to cheering crowds on Nickelodeon's Teen Choice Awards television show. The image of this performance stays with me, because shortly before this event, I had received a phone call from a 17-year-old pole dancer in Texas who divulged, in heartrending detail, the sexual abuse and childhood mistreatment that she believed had led to her early involvement in sex work.

The two situations are not commensurate, of course. Cyrus' sexy performance played out in a safe space. Presumably, she exercised a great deal of agency in her self-representation; she had the institutional protection of Universal Studios, the privilege of star status, and a security team; and she was extremely well compensated for her work, which was regarded as an artistic expression. The young sex worker who spoke to me, by contrast, felt threatened and exploited. She described being at risk of ongoing sexual, physical, and economic abuse; she felt powerless to control her own life.

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These contrasting cases highlight a deep schism in feminist media scholarship regarding representations of female sexuality. The politics of representation are crucial to feminist media studies due to the fact that representation is "connected in intimate ways with social practices and questions of power" (Hall 1997, 42) as well as because "[r]epresentations have real effects" (Ussher 1997, 3). Media theorists are keenly aware that representation involves dynamic processes of signification deeply imbricated with ideological and cultural formations; but we are also aware that representations are polysemic, so that their interpretations or decodings are variable and complex. On the one hand, media representations of female sexuality reassert patriarchal power as they "sexualize inequality, domination, and even violence" against women (Caputi 2011, 312). On the other hand, these media representations of female sexuality can be interpreted as expressions of female sexual agency and power, connoting "strength, independence, and the expression of a confident self" (Holland and Attwood 2009, 167).

A solid body of empirical evidence documents the more pernicious impacts of the media sexualization of girls, including increased body shame and dissatisfaction (Halliwell et al. 2011; Slater and Tiggeman 2002), eating disorders (Becker 2004; Thomsen et al. 2002), depression (Harrison and Fredrickson 2003; Tolman et al. 2006), and diminished sexual health (Curtin et al. 2011). At the same time, critics of media sexualization view the very concept as a "moral panic" that reinforces conservative political agendas, disparages working-class girls and women, and holds women responsible for male sexual violence (Bragg et al. 2011; Renold and Ringrose 2011).

I propose that both of these perspectives have merit. The polarities at work in these antithetical perspectives can be rethought and their seeming opposition reconciled if the representations and their impacts are contextually construed. In fact, Rosalind Gill (2012) urges feminist scholars to complicate our thinking about sexual representation by applying an intersectional perspective—"to think about 'sexualization' and sexual empowerment *with* sexism, racism, ageism, classism, homophobia, (dis)ablism, and to think transnationally" (742). In any assessment of mediated discourses and their implications, it is crucial to remember that the media and their audiences are bound up with the cultures, societies, economies, and temporalities in which they operate. A complex interlacing of experiences, identity positions, and cultural perspectives affect media production and

reception; the negotiation of meaning hinges upon the power dynamics at work, as do the impacts and implications of these mediated signs.

Feminist theorizations of intersectionality are of particular relevance in thinking through these processes with regard to sexual representation. As Crenshaw (1991) pointed out, people's subjectivities and experiences are defined through the convergence of a range of identities based on race, class, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, and other markers in addition to gender. These identity markers shape life experiences, and these experiences, as I have argued elsewhere, affect the encodings and decodings of media texts (Durham 2011) as well as their material implications.

So, in First World settings, media representations of girls' sexuality often generate pleasure and feelings of empowerment. A teenager's pole dance or striptease may be construed as enjoyably transgressive, a defiant counter to the societal repression of girls' sexual expressions. In these same First World contexts, however, class position alters the picture. Economic desperation drives children into sex work; field interviews with child prostitutes reveal that they would leave if they could, but they have no viable alternatives (Dank 2011). For these children, media representations of sex work may not be read as pleasurable or iconoclastic; they may be traumatizing. A blogger recounts her stepfather's use of pornography to groom her for sexual abuse, starting when she was eight years old; for her, sexual imagery has had a long-lasting and terrifying impact (Rebecca 2007). Writing in *The New York Times Magazine*, Bazelon (2013) documents the long-term repercussions of young girls' victimization through online child pornography; the images of their sexual abuse continue to circulate, long after the perpetrators have been sentenced and the abuse ended. For these girls, media images of teens in sexual situations cannot be read as playful or rebellious. Their lived, material experiences of rape on camera engenders a different, less utopian reading. Farley (2006) notes that the media portray prostitution as "a glamorous and wealth-producing 'job' for girls who lack emotional support, education, and employment opportunities," masking the violence and degradation of its realities (114). These realities alter readings of media sexualization—just as experiences of war engender post-traumatic stress reactions to media images of political violence (Gvirsman et al. 2014).

Clearly, as Merry (2009) reminds us, "gendered violence and structural violence —the violence of poverty, hunger, social exclusion, and humiliation—are deeply connected" (2). The media sexualization of girls and women, too, plays out in relation to these structural contexts. When we

grapple with the implications of sexualized representations, we are actually confronting ethical issues concerning the rights and wellbeing of the receivers of these media messages, and these can only be understood if they are radically and structurally contextualized.

A crucial aspect of that contextualization is the question of whether these media representations contribute to human flourishing—in the Aristotelian sense of Eudaimonia, the ideal of a good life "involving the interaction of reason, emotion, perception, and action in an ensouled body" (Nagel 1980, 7). The philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that Aristotelian ethics have relevance for feminist thought in its recognition of the material conditions that affect our lives; Aristotle, she writes, "knows that a flourishing life requires activity and that it is possible to be prevented from acting well by hunger, illness, injury, loss of political rights, enslavement, or torture" (Nussbaum 1991, 1025). For Aristotle, the social context plays a vital role in ensuring a flourishing life. Thus, "Aristotelian feminism ceases to be concerned with gender issues solely; it becomes a branch of the larger critique of poverty, oppression, inequality, and the frustration of capability in the lives of human beings the world over" (Nussbaum 1991, 1028).

Reflecting on this notion, which connects with the goals of feminist activism and theory, broaches the role of the media as part of a society that either contributes to or thwarts the capacity of women and girls to live in safety and health, to flourish, and to realize their highest potential. Considerable empirical evidence demonstrates that sexualized and objectified images of girls and women have negative consequences for these aspects of life, especially when they are interlinked with conditions of inequality and vulnerability stemming from the politics of location in terms of race, physical ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other axes of power and identity. In many regions of the global South, conditions of poverty, neo-imperialism, and political violence render girls and women vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation—but this is also true in western contexts of girls and women whose lives are undermined by poverty, racism, and other adverse conditions. As Trinh Minh-ha has ironically noted, there is "a Third World in every First World, a Third World in every Third World, and vice versa" (1987, 139), and these contexts deeply affect the processes by which media texts are produced and received. Moreover, the elisions and omissions of media representations of sexuality speak to the marginalization of certain girls and women; as Myra MacDonald remarks, "By attending to media representations, we might easily forget

that fat, ugly, disabled, or wrinkled women have sexual desires, too, and that stretch marks are not incompatible with sexual pleasure" (1995, 190). How might these women, symbolically annihilated in mainstream media sexual representation, read or react to Miley Cyrus' pole dance?

Connected with the Aristotelian concept of Eudaimonia are the principles at work in the feminist ethics of care, an approach that prioritizes relationships with others and in which "the values of trust, solidarity, mutual concern, and empathic responsiveness have priority" (Held 2006, 15). In evaluating media sexualization, the idea of caring about the ramifications of imagery for girls and women in varying contexts, and paying particular attention to the vectors of power that operate to connect media with real-world experiences, broadens and deepens the scope of inquiry on this subject.

A feminist ethics of care defines morality in terms of caring about the wellbeing of others, specifying that "the nature and quality of relations of care are important and appropriate areas for moral inquiry" (Robinson 2016, 4). Broadly speaking, this approach to ethics is rooted in a relational dynamic, where the self is conceived as one whose concerns are inextricably linked with those of others. In the contemplation of such relationships, the feminist ethics of care "respects rather than removes itself from the claims of particular others with whom we share actual relations. It calls into question the universalistic and abstract rules of the dominant theories" (Held 2006, 11). In other words, an ethics of care is grounded in the realities of actual lives and the conditions and contexts in which relationships are forged. In addition, this approach involves ethical practice as well as moral theory.

While intimate interpersonal caring relationships are the starting point for this feminist philosophical approach, the ethics of care have been productively extended to the social and political realms. As Virginia Held has argued,

> Instead of seeing the corporate sector, and military strength, and government and law as the most important segments of society deserving the highest levels of wealth and power, a caring society might see the tasks of bringing up children, educating its members, meeting the needs of all, achieving peace and treasuring the environment, and doing these in the best ways possible to be that to which the greatest social efforts of all should be devoted (2006, 19).

Moreover, an ethics of care emphasizes "the importance of morality for challenging the legitimacy of distributions of power, for those who are

powerless have neither the grounds nor the means for challenging existing power relations without appealing to morality" (DesAutels and Waugh 2001, ix–x). Bringing these perspectives to bear on the analysis of representations of girls' sexuality, it is imperative that the structural conditions of media production and reception are taken into account. The phallogocentric logics and conditions that operate in most media industries of the global North have been well documented: few women hold positions of authority in these industries, and recent revelations about sexual abuse and assault in these media workplaces demonstrate the inimical workings of gender and power in media production. One compelling example of this is the actress and director Salma Hayek's account of being forced to include a full-frontal sex scene with another woman in the film *Frida* (Hayek 2017). While a naive reading of this scene may impute pleasure and agency to the representation, the backstory is one of blackmail and coercion of a Latina woman by a white male producer. Hayek writes of shooting this scene, "My body began to shake uncontrollably, my breath was short and I began to cry and cry, unable to stop, as if I were throwing up tears . . . [M]y body wouldn't stop crying and convulsing. At that point, I started throwing up . . . I had to take a tranquilizer, which eventually stopped the crying but made the vomiting worse" (2017, para. 49–51). The scene was anything but pleasurable to her, though the on-screen version revealed nothing of her trauma. Here, the conditions of production were harrowingly misogynistic. In other cases, the reception of seemingly "frivolous and fun" media in nonwestern contexts have resulted in unanticipated harm—for example, the precipitation of eating disorders among indigenous girls by the introduction of *Baywatch* on Fijian TV (Becker 2004).

In considering mediated representations of female sexuality, then, it becomes crucial to carefully consider the contexts and conditions of production and reception. Structures of gender, class, race, nation, and other social and political power hierarchies radically inflect the impact and implications of sexual representation in the media.

Within the framework of feminist ethics, the knee-jerk reaction of calling every critique of media sexualization a "moral panic" is clearly inadequate for fully exploring the entailments and complexities of the issue. As feminist media scholars, we are at a juncture where we should be asking more careful questions about how social inequalities are created and reinforced, as well as resisted and challenged, by and through mediated representations of sexuality. In what spaces and cases do these images empower girls and advance feminism? And when and where do they cause harm?

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Queer and Feminist Approaches to Transgender Media Studies

Mia Fischer

When transgender actress Laverne Cox graced the cover of *Time* magazine in June 2014 under the headline "The Transgender Tipping Point: America's next civil rights frontier," her appearance marked an unprecedented moment for transgender visibility in national discourse. In recent years, there has generally been a significant increase in the representation of transgender people on television and in news media: from Cox's role as Sophia Burset in Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black* (2013–), to Amazon's hit-show *Transparent* (2014–), which is partially based on director Jill Soloway's own experience with her parent's transition, and TLC's reality TV show *I am Jazz* (2015–), which follows the everyday experiences of

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transgender teen Jazz Jennings. Undoubtedly, the attention given to transgender visibility reached a culmination point when Bruce Jenner announced "Call me Caitlyn" on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in June 2015. As a former track-star, Olympian gold medalist, and member of the Kardashian clan, Jenner's coming-out had been tabloid fodder for months preceding her official announcement. With all things trans currently being "hot shit" to quote filmmaker and trans rights activist Reina Gossett et al. (2016), there has also been an attendant surge in communication and media studies scholarship engaging with transgender people and issues.

In this chapter I want to provide a basic overview of this scholarship and offer some thoughts for future directions in regard to theoretical frameworks and methodology. First, I argue that transgender media studies scholarship can benefit from applying an intersectional theoretical framework to understand and scrutinize the multiple oppressions transgender people are subject to. Second, I advocate for a queer methodology in order to interrogate how transgender people themselves engage with media and how these representations impact their everyday lives. Before doing so, I will briefly map the intersections of and differences between queer, feminist, and transgender studies in academic and activist spaces.

Transgender Studies' Relations to Queer and Feminist Theory

There is an extensive dialogue within transgender studies that concerns both the relationship between transgender and queer as well as its relationship to feminism (Stryker and Currah 2014). Defining an identity category like "transgender" is inherently difficult because there is always a risk of "assigning a normative telos to an identity category that is often employed to oppose this modernist, binary logic" (West 2014, 9). Susan Stryker (2008) particularly emphasizes the performativity and social construction of identity by referring to transgender as "people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross-over (*trans-*) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender" (emphasis in original, 1). "Transgender," or its shortened version "trans" is, therefore, commonly conceptualized to include a wide range of gender-variant practices, embodiments, and identities that challenge the assumed stability of, and relationality between, biological sex, the gender binary, and sexuality.[1]

It can be theoretically and methodologically difficult to draw a clear-cut line between transgender and queer not least of which because these terms circulate with different meanings and uses—sometimes even contradictory ones—in multiple spaces.[2] As Stryker (2004, 212) succinctly writes, "if queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin." Originally used as an epithet in the early twentieth century, "queer" reemerged as a radical political term among activists during the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s. Concurrently, academics began to use queer to refer to a new post-structuralist academic theory that sought to challenge the naturalizing assumptions of heteronormativity and the stability of gender and sexual identities (see Jagose 1997; or Love 2014). Despite its anti-identitarian meanings in queer theory and in some queer politics, colloquially, today queer has come to be used as an umbrella term chiefly associated with non-normative sexual practices and desires but is also sometimes used to refer to gender non-normativity. Similarly, the acronym "LGBT" is often used to identify a collective of sexual and gender minorities and/or to the activism of mainstream gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights organizations. However, as Mary L. Gray (2009) points out, references to an allegedly coherent and tangible "LGBT community" often signify "the power of nationally mass-mediated conversations to manifest an 'imagined community' of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, whether L, G, B, and T-identifying people are present or not" (12).

While the LGBT movement in the United States has celebrated unprecedented legal victories in recent years, including the passage of federal hate crime legislation, the repeal of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, and, most prominently, the legalization of gay marriage in June 2015, these victories have often benefitted mostly white and middle-class cisgender gay and lesbian constituencies, while systematically excluding and/or ignoring the contributions and needs of trans, gender non-conforming, and poor people as well as people of color (see, e.g., Cohen 1997; Duggan 2004; Ferguson 2005). These exclusions are evident in the very mythology surrounding the origins of the modern LGBT movement. Despite the fact that the activism of drag queens and trans women of color was a fundamental part of the riots at the Stonewall Inn in 1969, their contributions have been all too frequently erased from LGBT history. Subsequent decades have further illustrated that activism surrounding issues of sexuality and gender identity do not necessarily always align themselves with one another and have, at times, been very contentious. For example, when

Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning was arrested in 2010 for leaking thousands of classified documents to WikiLeaks, none of the major national LGBT organizations voiced support for her, fearing that Manning's "betrayal" of national security and alleged confusion over her sexual orientation and gender identity may jeopardize the repeal of DADT (see Brownworth 2014; Fischer 2016a). Once DADT was overturned in 2011, gays and lesbians were allowed to serve openly, yet transgender personnel remained banned under a dubious medical clause.

Similarly, persistent transphobic discourses within certain radical feminist spaces, which posit trans women as "unwanted penetrators" into (cis) women's spaces, continue to cause rifts between feminist and transgender communities. In 1979, Janice G. Raymond's publication *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* cemented anti-transgender sentiment in certain feminist communities with her transphobic contention that "all transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves" (1994, 104). Raymond argued that male-to-female transsexuals were agents of the patriarchal oppression and that their presence in (cis) women's spaces violated (cis) women's sexuality and spirit. Some of these TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminism) debates have recently been revived with Sheila Jeffreys' (2014) publication, *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism*. As transgender studies has become an increasingly vibrant field of interdisciplinary inquiry in academia, its increased institutionalization has also fueled debates about trans studies' place within women and gender studies programs because it continues to "problematize the political efficacy of the category 'woman'" (Stryker and Currah 2014, 6).

And while the national Women's March in January 2017 drew record crowds in numerous US cities—significantly with many participants wearing pink "pussy hats" that equated gender status with genitals—the organizers faced criticism for continuing to sideline trans women and their concerns despite nominally inclusionary principles in their mission statement. Similarly, award-winning novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who has gained recognition for centering a strong feminist perspective in her work, elicited a fierce debate after giving an interview in March 2017 in which she claimed that trans women differ from "real" cis women because trans women allegedly universally benefit from male privilege (Fischer 2017). Thus, while it may be easy to assume that quarrels over identity politics and over whether trans is really part of feminist and LGBT activist

as well as academic spaces are in the past, the difficult, and at times contested, relationship in and between these communities provides an important socio-political context for understanding the larger implications of this current moment of transgender visibility.

SITUATING TRANSGENDER MEDIA STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP

An initial wave of scholarship from media and communication studies pertaining to transgender visibility specifically focused on the murder of Brandon Teena and its subsequent movie adaptions *The Brandon Teena Story* (1998) and *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) in the early 2000s.[3] This scholarship points to a prevalence of pathologizing and disciplining discourses surrounding Teena's trans identity, which sought to reinforce the gender binary and commonly portrayed him as a trickster and deceiver (Sloop 2000; Squires and Brouwer 2002; Henderson 2013). In *Disciplining Gender*, a foundational text for communication and rhetorical studies, John M. Sloop (2004) uses Teena's case to illustrate how troubling gender does not always subversively work to de-naturalize gender, but rather to reinforce prevailing cultural expectations of heteronormativity and heterosexuality. C. Jacob Hale (1998) notes that the visibility of transgender and gay political activism around Teena's case also worked to harden the borders between butch lesbian and female-to-male identities through essentialist constructions between the vagina and womanhood.

More recently, particularly the publication of the anthology *Transgender Communication Studies: Histories, Trends, and Trajectories* edited by Leland Spencer and Jamie C. Capuzza (2015) has made important contributions to understanding trans identities in the broader context of health, interpersonal, and organizational communication as well as media framing analyses. Looking especially at news media, scholars have noted some positive recent trends when discussing trans people and issues, including a decrease in misgendering, focus on genitals, and dead-naming[4]; however, there generally remains very little coverage to begin with, and this coverage disproportionally revolves around trans women, while trans men and non-binary folks remain notably absent (Billard 2016; Capuzza 2016). Sourcing practices also reveal that journalists continue to rely on non-transgender "experts" as proxies, rather than letting trans people tell their own stories, which often individualizes struggles and failures but does not address the systemic nature of intersecting oppressions (Capuzza 2014). Particularly notable is the prominence "wrong body discourse" which is

frequently deployed as a "fixing strategy" to explain and acknowledge trans identities, yet as Bernadette Barker-Plummer (2013) notes, this discourse reasserts the gender binary, ignoring more fluid understandings of gender. Elaborating on the "wrong body" trope, Michael Lovelock (2016) argues that trans has become "fashionable" in recent years precisely because of a larger cultural imperative that encourages women to express their "true" femininity via bodily transformation and makeovers, as exemplified by trans celebrity figures, such as Caitlyn Jenner. However, as Lovelock acknowledges, this visibility is fraught with exclusions around race and gender normativity as it problematically works "to demarcate ideals of 'acceptable' transgender subjectivity" (1).

Similarly, scripted and fictional content engaging trans characters often reasserts heteronormativity rather than challenging or subverting gender binaries in efforts to appeal to dominant, cisgender audiences (see e.g., Booth 2011; Miller 2015; Patterson and Spencer 2017). Furthermore, particularly crime shows continue to problematically rely on storylines that solely depict trans people as deceptive villains, prostitutes, and murderers (Lester 2015). Comparable to news coverage, scripted and fictional shows, therefore, have yet to fully acknowledge a variety of trans experiences, including non-binary ones, as a political constituency and social movement (Capuzza and Spencer, 2017).

More recently media scholars have begun to explore specifically the importance of social media spaces for counter-hegemonic trans cultural production. Particularly, tagging practices as well as new modes of self-representation and self-definition on Tumblr and Twitter constitute modes of resistance to the co-opting and fetishizing of trans identities by mainstream media and the ongoing violence trans communities face (Fink and Miller 2014; Dame 2016; Jackson et al. 2017). While this exponential growth in communication and media studies scholarship focusing on transgender people and issues is commendable, in the remainder of this chapter, I would like to map two future directions—one theoretical, the other methodological—that I invite scholars to consider when engaging with mediated transgender representations.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The first direction pertains to theoretical framing. There is a persistence in some media and communication studies scholarship to employ "LGBT" and "queer" as broad umbrella terms that end up focusing predominantly on representations of white, middle-class cisgender gay and lesbian subjec-

tivities, without addressing how race figures into representations of gender identity and sexuality. In his recent book C. Riley Snorton (2017), for example, illustrates how the erasure of Phillip DeVine, a black man and amputee who was also killed by Teena's murderers, from the "Brandon archive" and larger public memory raises questions about the circulation of anti-blackness and able-bodiedness in regard to which LGBT subjects become digestible and legible for mass-mediated consumption and which ones do not (see pp. 177–198). While intersectionality has been incorporated widely into feminist, ethnic, and sexuality studies and has emerged as an important analytic in queer of color critique,[5] its uptake in communication and media studies remains scarce.[6] With origins in black feminist thought, intersectionality, a term originally coined by legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), is an interpretive framework that rejects additive models of identity and oppression, and instead highlights how they interlock. In other words, neither identities nor oppressive institutions function separately, one layered on top of the other, but are mutually constitutive; for example, the racism Black women experience cannot be separated from the sexism and classism they are often subject to as well.

In my own work I take intersectionality as a key framework for understanding how mediated representations of transgender people are linked to their daily interactions and experiences with systems of state power and violence. For example, in the case of CeCe McDonald, a black trans woman who was charged with murder for killing her attacker during a transphobic and racist assault in 2011 in Minneapolis, it is impossible to separate her trans identity from her identity as a poor woman of color. McDonald and her friends were viciously attacked by a group of white bar patrons because of not just homophobia and transphobia, but racism as well (Erdely 2014; Johnson 2013). Yet local news media and state prosecutors denied these intersecting oppressions, leaving McDonald undeserving of legal protection. Instead, her attacker, Dean Schmitz, was frequently idealized as a loving father figure in the news and the judge refused to admit his swastika tattoo as evidence of his belief in white supremacy (Simons 2012; *State of Minnesota v. McDonald* n.d.). While mediated and legal discourses sought to condone and recuperate the violence of a white perpetrator, McDonald's gender non-conformity rendered her as a threatening subject whose actions did not qualify as self-defense. Because gender identity is always already produced in and through other social formations such as race, sexuality, class, and able-bodiedness, media and state institutions continue to conceptualize trans people as deceptive, deviant, and threatening precisely

because they fail to account for these lives at the intersections of multiple identity categories (Fischer forthcoming).

Secondly, I encourage media studies scholars to step away from solely using textual analysis of their objects to (re)consider what these media representations actually do and how they impact the everyday lives of trans communities. I do not mean to evoke a media effects framework here, rather than an understanding of how trans people themselves engage in meaning-making processes and what the relationships are between cultural representations and their material consequences. Doing so requires a conscious de-centering of media as the sole object of analysis and, instead, paying "greater ethnographic attention to the uptake and meaning of media in our everyday lives" as Mary L. Gray (2009, xiv) notes. A turn toward a queer methodology can allow us to achieve such a de-centering, as it deliberately combines different theoretical and methodological approaches, for example, textual criticism, (auto)ethnography, archival research and historical surveys. For J. Jack Halberstam (1998), queer methodology becomes a "scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior" (13).

Getting up from behind our computer screens to reflect and, when necessary, reconsider our methodological tool-kit enables scholars to broaden their research perspectives. Andre Cavalcante (2017), for example, productively uses ethnography to explore trans people's engagement with first-of-its-kind media "breakout texts," such as *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) and *TransAmerica* (2005) to analyze what "queer identity work" they elicit. A turn to such "on-the-ground" observations fused with critical discourse analysis can reveal new and different insights into how media representations and visibility politics impact and reflect the everyday experiences of transgender people. Similarly, studying the field sites of CeCe McDonald's neighborhood in Minneapolis in 2014, conducting interviews with local activists and McDonald's legal team, as well as news reporters covering her case, combined with close textual and visual analyses of social and news media content allowed me to gather data and insights about her story that would have otherwise been foreclosed to me. I was able to trace how McDonald's Support Committee effectively used social media as a power-building tool to challenge traditional media gatekeepers and state institutions by actively producing alternative epistemologies about the value of trans women of colors' lives (see Fischer 2016b). While interactions with human subjects certainly introduce some unpre-

dictable and at times frustrating variables into the research process—from negotiating the Institutional Review Board process to gaining access to field sites—personally engaging with and listening to the communities that are the subjects of our research usually results in more informed, concise, and rigorous scholarship.

The Ethics of Knowledge Production and Community Accountability

Applying an intersectional theoretical framework and engaging a queer methodology also raises important questions about the ethics of knowledge production and community accountability. Although critiques of hegemonic knowledge production have become commonplace in feminist writing, especially in reflections on ethnographic methodologies, within communication and media studies such critiques remain scarce and are often dismissed as unsophisticated, not theoretical enough, or too "blinded" by political activism. However, María Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman's (1983) foundational questions about the ethics of knowledge production should function as a powerful reminder when considering our own subject positionalities as researchers:

> When we speak, write, and publish our theories, to whom do we think we are accountable? Are the concerns we have in being accountable to 'the profession' at odds with the concerns we have in being accountable to those about whom we theorize? Do commitments to 'the profession', method, getting something published, getting tenure, lead us to talk and act in ways at odds with what we ourselves (let alone others) would regard as ordinary, decent behavior? (579–580).

When CeCe McDonald went to trial in 2012 year, I personally paused for the first time to ponder what material consequences actually derive from increased LGBT visibility. I began to scrutinize my own privileged, cis, white, queer positionality more closely as I initially had not followed what had happened to a poor trans woman of color walking down a street in a neighborhood not very far from my own. While I had no intention of exceptionalizing McDonald's story, writing about her case has certainly been a personal matter and sharpened my sensibilities toward the blurred lines between researcher and informant as well as scholarship and activism. I came to realize that "the ground" quite literally is "both our particular field site—the communities

within which we study and about which we write—and also the epistemological ground on which we stake our claims" (Weiss 2011, 650).

Academia historically privileges those doing the theorizing over those who are theorized about. As I spent well over two years closely connected to McDonald's case and the activism surrounding her, I knew that "sourcing" my interlocutors for knowledge and writing about communities that I myself am not a part of would help me to publish journal articles, finish my PhD, and apply for tenure-track jobs. Questions of community accountability, therefore, constitute an important aspect of my scholarly work. The people I engage with in my research are not merely "informants," but they actively contribute and shape my research in its final form and content. Part of what our work as critical scholars requires, especially in this current political moment, is to follow a feminist commitment to move beyond the ivory tower and engage directly with the communities surrounding the walls of academia. Doing so can help to not only fend off an increasing anti-intellectualism that frequently decries especially the humanities as too impractical and aloof, and instead puts our scholarship into praxis and concrete action.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize, how despite the ability to critically reflect on one's own subject positionality, the dangers of replicating a voyeuristic and/or patronizing gaze of marginalized communities that one is not a part of persists.[7] The "reflexive turn" in ethnography, that is, acknowledging the inherent subjectivity, situatedness, and partiality of all knowledge production, still functions as a double-edged sword as it strategically deploys this admission to justify its truth claims (Weiss 2011). In other words, all ethnographic work and research is inherently contingent, messy, and incomplete.

Conclusion

Despite the much proclaimed "transgender tipping point" of 2014, we are currently witnessing an unprecedented socio-cultural and legal assault on trans people—from trans women of color getting murdered at unprecedented rates, President Trump's proposed ban on trans military service members, to the surge in discriminatory bathroom bills seeking to regulate trans people's access to public restrooms (see National Center for Transgender Equality 2018). The increase of transgender visibility in media and national discourse alone, therefore, has not improved the living conditions for a vast majority of trans people. Instead, true care for and

value of transgender lives, particularly those of trans women of color, requires an intersectional approach to scholarship and social justice activism that moves beyond visibility politics and ruthlessly deconstructs oppressive systems and our own complicity within them—whether that is the criminalization of immigrants by media institutions, the racial inequalities at the heart of mass incarceration, or capitalism's dependency on and perpetuation of virulent forms of white supremacy. With the systemic racism, (cis)sexism, and classism at the core of this conservative backlash against various marginalized communities, neither academic nor feminist and queer activist spaces can afford to exclude transgender voices from formulating strategies for resistance. Especially, the voices of trans women should be at the front and center of cross-coalitional movement building not because they are 'just like' cis women, but because of their own unique experiences *as* women (see Fischer 2017). Similarly, it is especially on us within the academy to utilize a critical pedagogy in the classroom and to ensure that critical queer and trans scholarship does not only accrue "diversity" capital for neoliberal universities but actually benefits the communities from which it emanates.

NOTES

1. On the other hand, "cisgender" refers to those whose gender identity matches their biological sex. Biologist Dana Leland Defosse is widely credited as the first person to put the neologism "cisgender" into public circulation in the mid-1990s. Many find the introduction of the term "cisgender" useful because it consciously marks gender identities that usually go unnoticed and are considered normal, i.e., the unstated assumption of non-transgender status contained in the words "man" or "woman."
2. Not coincidentally, queer (in its contemporary iterations) and transgender both emerged in 1990s activist and academic contexts. Moreover, transgender and queer are both products of Western theorizing that tend to leave unaccounted and/or override other non-Western and non-binary understandings of gender and sexual desire and practice. As Tom Boellstorff (2006) notes, the tendency to project Euro-American theoretical frameworks of race, gender, and sexuality onto other non-Western contexts presents persistent barriers to theorizing queer/ness, particularly in a global context.
3. Brandon Teena identified as a trans man who was brutally raped and then killed by two of his girlfriend's acquaintances in Humboldt, Nebraska, in 1993.

4. Dead-naming describes the practice of referring to trans people by their birth names and not chosen names.
5. See for example, Roderick Ferguson (2004), who defines queer of color analysis as an "interrogat[ion] of social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices. Queer of color analysis is a heterogeneous enterprise made up of women of color feminism, materialist analysis, poststructuralist theory, and queer critique" (149 n1.).
6. For notable exceptions see Julia R. Johnson (2013) as well as Lünenborg and Fürsich (2014).
7. As Lugones and Spelman (1983) aptly point out feminist and queer scholars should not only be concerned about the male monopoly over accounts of women's lives but also the hierarchical privileging of some women's voices over others, particularly as white middle-class women in the United States "have in the main developed 'feminist theory'" (575).

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Feminist Issues and Arenas

Feminism isn't about making women strong. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.
–G.D. Anderson

For decades feminist scholars have tried to understand what it entails to be a woman and why females are relegated to inferior status. Accordingly, feminist theories produce a cultural critique of gendered meanings and identities. While dominant understandings about gender vary within and across cultures, over time and from place to place, feminist scholars argue that they all have to do with configurations of power inequities.

Because of these inequalities, oftentimes women have had little say or control of the realities that shape their lives and thus feminist theories question the power relations and structures that secure men's dominance in society. In that sense, feminist theory advocates for a transformative and interventionist approach to improve women's status, as the dominant patriarchal structure is too powerful and long-standing to change overnight or over the course of several years. The chapters in this section address and update prominent issues concerning feminist media scholars: representation, intersectionality, gender-based violence, power inequalities, and the public sphere.

Feminist Sports Media Studies: State of the Field

Dunja Antunovic and Erin Whiteside

In 2015, television sports announcer Beth Mowins made headlines when she became just the second woman—the first since 1987—to work as a play-by-play announcer for a National Football League game. Mowins called four preseason games for the Oakland Raiders that year, in a move *Sports Illustrated* described as the destruction of a "long-overdue barrier" (Deitsch 2015, para. 67). Indeed, the general sentiment of public applause for Mowins' achievement reflects a broader neoliberal discourse of girl power in which females are praised for paving new pathways and crashing through the glass ceiling in areas ranging from business to education to politics to sports (Harris 2004).

Embracing girls' and women's potential in these spaces is particularly notable given the ways in which gendered understandings have long provided the logic for their exclusion. And it is precisely these shifts in cultural

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narratives regarding sports, gender, and the female body that have under-pinned major improvements in the sports media landscape for women over the past several decades (Cooky et al. 2015). As Gill (2008) writes, however, these narratives of progress and girl power happen within a simultaneous and ongoing process in which women's "bodies are power-fully reinscribed as sexual objects" (442). Gill adds that "on the one hand women are presented as active, desiring social subjects, yet on the other they are subject to a level of scrutiny and hostile surveillance that has no historical precedent" (442).

This fundamental contradiction is a dangerous one, as liberating narra-tives of progress can obscure the ways in which expressions of power rein-vent themselves to produce new logics for women's oppression. In sports, this contradiction is especially prominent, given some of the notable achievements of women like Mowins' and the recent 40th anniversary of Title IX, a gender equity law largely signaled as opening doors for women in the United States to participate in sports. While certain women in sports are cheered publicly for individual achievements, as a group they are sub-ject to a system that still denies them legitimacy, grants access only to those who meet certain aesthetic standards, and constructs individual and divisive hierarchies among women along the lines of class, sexuality, and race. These new articulations of gender demand that women rely on indi-vidual solutions to advance—a logic that keeps hierarchies of power intact (Toffoletti 2016).

Feminist analyses of sports media have been at the forefront of detecting and interrogating gender hierarchies and gendered expressions of power. In this chapter, we review key frameworks in the area of research we col-lectively term "feminist sports media studies." We focus on the *central issues* scholars have identified in relation to women and sports media and the *assumptions* underpinning their analyses. These central issues belong to three distinct yet interconnected areas of research: representation, work-place cultures, and consumption/fandom. Although feminist theories have informed all three areas, most of the review articles focus only on represen-tation studies (e.g., Antunovic and Hardin 2013; Bruce 2016; Duncan 2006; Toffoletti 2016). Rarely are these three areas reviewed together. Based on the review, we discuss opportunities for future research. We hope that by detecting gaps in feminist sports media research (including our own work) we are able to offer suggestions for furthering theoretical connec-tions between sports media research and feminist theory, which could move us forward on the types of questions we ask.

We posit that in light of the prevailing issues, feminist research on mediated sport is not only relevant, but necessary, and the body of research on gender issues in sports media is extensive and impressive. Yet, we also observe that feminist sports media scholarship remains constrained to sport-related fields, rarely becoming incorporated into feminist journals (see Toffoletti 2016). We make the case that in order to capture the contradictions of the contemporary "postfeminist media culture" (Gill 2008, 441), analyses of gender and sport media must be situated within the historical development of feminist frameworks. Such engagement would move conversations in feminist media studies forward and make stronger connections to feminist activism. We believe that scholarship firmly grounded in feminist theory with well-defined suggestions for the sports media industry will remain an integral driving force in promoting social change.

Representation of Female Athletes

The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s led to significant political, legal, and cultural changes for women in sport, including exponential increases in participation opportunities across the scholastic, professional, and international spectrum. However, scholars quickly observed that the mass media did not follow along: Rather than promoting women's sport during this time of social change—as has historically been the role of media for men's sport (Bruce and Hardin 2014)—the sport media industry continued to exclude female athletes from coverage. Advocacy strategies from the "liberal feminist playbook," which pushed for equal coverage, did not result in the seismic shift feminists anticipated (Barnett and Hardin 2011, 178). This stagnation motivated scholars to continue to monitor media coverage. Indeed, media representation remains the most robust and comprehensive research area of feminist sports media studies.

Regardless of theoretical and/or methodological approach, most research on this subject concludes that, with minor qualitative changes over time, female athletes continue to be underrepresented and trivialized in coverage (Bernstein 2002; Cooky et al. 2015). Although such consistency allows women's sports advocates to construct straightforward messages in their efforts toward change, we agree with Bruce (2016) that the "almost obligatory recitation of marginalization, trivialization, ambivalence and sexualization of sportswomen" has severely limited the points of departure in feminist sports media research (367).

Research on representations of female athletes and women's sports initially followed the symbolical annihilation framework first introduced by Tuchman (1978). Accordingly, early sports communication studies sought to illuminate the minimal amount of coverage dedicated to female athletes. A parallel body of research emerged in sport studies and sport sociology beginning in 1984 with the launch of the *Sociology of Sport Journal.* Authors whose work we review in this section positioned gender as a central process—one that is historically and culturally constructed. Rather than taking gender for granted, sport sociologists recognized sports media as an "ideological contest in terms of power relations between men and women" (Messner 1988, 199). Given that patriarchal images of the male body and masculinity are often defined via sport media discourses, Messner's (1988) question of how images of female athletes can disrupt the "ideological hegemony of male superiority" has remained relevant for decades (206). From here, Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) introduced the term "ambivalence," a concept that describes the contradictory messages communicated through sports about female athleticism and effort, and one that continues to be redefined in feminist sports media scholarship (e.g., Antunovic and Hardin 2013; Duncan 2006).

Perhaps the most commonly referenced and least questioned thesis in scholarship on representation of female athletes is Mary Jo Kane's (1989) assertion that "[f]emale athletic participation continues to be underrepresented and trivialized in the media," part of which is to present women in "stereotypical 'feminized'" ways (62). Sexist discourses, oppression of women, and problematic media representations are, under this framework, a result of inequitable power relations between the sexes and ultimately serve to privilege men and masculinity (Kane 1988).

In evaluating the outcomes of common representation patterns, sports media scholars have turned to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, a Gramscian term that describes "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). Those studying gender representation in sports media have coupled hegemonic masculinity with emphasized femininity (or heterofemininity) and compulsory heterosexuality to detect the ways in which media coverage across media platforms perpetuates normative gender ideologies (e.g., Bernstein 2002; Duncan 2006; Wolter 2015). This framework holds sports journalists and decision-makers accountable for men's continued dominance, as it claims that masculinist news values and journalists' sexist attitudes filter the production process and thus reinforce gender hierarchies.

Feminist sports media scholarship have also critiqued the top-down approach to conceptualizing how power operates in sports media. Turning to Foucault's assertion that power operates through discursive formations, researchers took an anti-essentialist view and asked "how women's physically active bodies can become resistant bodies" (Markula 2003, 88). The consideration of the daily interactions through which power is enacted and contested led feminist scholars such as Holly Thorpe (2008) to disrupt dominant readings of media and, instead, argue that "the representations typically deemed sexist . . . are not inherently oppressive" (224). The focus, then, is on the disciplinary sites and practices enacted upon female athletes' bodies, which also allow for transgression (Ho 2017). Discussing the implications of these frameworks for feminist advocacy, Hardin and Whiteside (2012a) argued that such a post-structuralist approach "may ultimately be more satisfying and useful in reconciling the contradictions [feminist scholars] will inevitably encounter" (17).

As feminist theory is defined and organized in myriad ways, communication and sport scholars have offered their own framework for understanding the field through the term "sports feminism." The concept accounts for the divergent ways sporting discourse and practices shape identity, and has thus been praised for facilitating a move toward a "concern with difference" (Scranton and Flintoff 2002, 31). Responding to the presence of non-white athletes in sport, for instance, and especially to the entrance of the Williams sisters into the white space of tennis, scholars have employed critical race theory (Bonilla-Silva 2003) and black feminist thought (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991), to recognize white racial hegemony and intersecting forces of racial and gendered oppressions. The theoretical contribution of this work is crucial for feminist sports media studies as it contextualizes representations of black women within the historical context of slavery and colonization (McKay and Johnson 2008, 493). Critical race theory also reveals how whiteness is normalized in the representation of Asian (Kim et al. 2006) and Latina women in sports (Douglas and Jamieson 2006).

Feminist academics have applied Crenshaw's (1991) theory of "intersectionality" to interrogate how patterns of sexism, racism, and homophobia produce systems of oppression (for instance, see Birrell and McDonald 2012). Further, McDonald (2002) employs queer theory as an analytic tool as she reads media discourses of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) through the lens of "queering whiteness," a process that challenges the "once seemingly stable relationship among sex and

gender, sexual desire, sexual practices, and identities" and simultaneously illuminates "contemporary and historical meanings of race" (380). This body of work attends to the ways in which media representations perpetuate intersecting forces of oppression, but there is great need for further engagement with black feminist thought, Chicana feminism, Asian feminism, and transnational and postcolonial feminism in order to critically and more effectively interrogate broader questions of gender oppression.

Feminist research on sport and disability has also advanced sports media studies. Prior research has pointed to the ways media coverage of female athletes with disabilities perpetuates male-centered ableist notions of sport and reinforces harmful stereotypes (e.g., Schell and Rodriguez 2001). Bruce (2014) argued that articulations of disability and gender become more complicated within the context of nationalism, which plays a significant role in constructions of "otherness." Feminist approaches that recognize how gender intersects with discourses of disability also challenge the very definition of sport.

Lastly, the increasingly global interconnectedness of sport across geographic boundaries prompted feminist sports media authors to question US-centric narratives (Bruce 2016) as well as engage with transnational and postcolonial feminist theory and apply feminist theory from a variety of cultural contexts (see Ho 2017). Bruce (2016) argued that scholars based in the United States would be advised to situate their analyses within particular geographic boundaries rather than assuming that these trends universally apply to other geopolitical contexts. Examining how gender and nationalism intersect in sports media coverage within different media systems is a valuable line of inquiry (see for instance Ličen and Billings 2013). We recognize that such work requires cultural sensitivity and knowledge of language, but these directions in sports media studies are paths that can further feminist theorizing in the field.

WOMEN, SPORTS, AND THE WORKPLACE

Although more women than ever choose to major in communication-related fields and sports journalism programs are on the rise at institutions across the United States, there has not been a corresponding increase in women working in sports media. Sports communication scholars have recognized this problem, and responded by building a body of work documenting practices of discrimination in the sports media workplace. In general, women comprise about 10 to 12 percent of the industry, with

that figure decreasing at higher status positions, whether those be in leadership or in more prestigious organizations, such as athletic departments (e.g., Acosta and Carpenter 2014; Whiteside and Hardin 2011). Furthermore, despite ongoing diversity initiatives implemented by organizations such as the Associated Press Sports Editors—in many ways grounded in liberal feminist ideals of opportunity and access—these programs have not translated into substantial material change. Instead, women seem to progress through the profession via a "revolving door," where they leave not long after initially entering the field (Hardin et al. 2008). This may in part be due to various forms of discrimination and gender-specific issues, ranging from women feeling pigeonholed into "gender-appropriate" work assignments to reports of difficulties balancing careers and families (e.g., Claringbould et al. 2004; Hardin and Whiteside 2009; Hardin et al. 2008; Whiteside and Hardin 2012). There is also evidence of "homologous reproduction" in hiring practices in athletics public relations, a term that describes a trend where new hires match the physical characteristics of those doing the hiring—commonly white and male (Whisenant et al. 2007).

Research has also identified troubling rates of sexual harassment in sports media (e.g., Whiteside and Hardin 2012). Given new understandings of sexual harassment in general, combined with dynamics specific to sports media, we believe this is an issue that may warrant additional attention from sports media researchers. Numerous studies have shown, for instance, that women in male-dominated occupations face increased rates of sexual harassment compared with women in more gender-balanced workplaces (e.g., Holland and Cortina 2016). More than that, though, calls for more gender diversity and more women in leadership are often situated as one potential way to guard against sexual harassment. Nonetheless research suggests that as women gain power—particularly in male-dominated spaces—they may be subject to higher incidences of sexual harassment; this points "to a new obstacle for women" in the workplace (McLaughlin et al. 2012, 642). Thus, as more women enter sports media professions and—like the sports broadcaster Beth Mowins—seek to advance to positions of authority, feminist researchers must stay vigilant in identifying how power may shift to accommodate these trends. A focus on the ways narratives of gender maneuver in relation to contemporary ideological and discursive moments are especially relevant given the intersection of sports and masculinity; as numerous scholars have argued, sporting spaces operate as figurative training grounds for hegemonic masculinity,

and places where the association between dominant and valued cultural characteristics are defined as essentially masculine (e.g., Duncan 2006). In seeking to occupy such spaces, women may be understood as a threat to masculinity, making ambitious women especially vulnerable to new forms of discrimination (Holland and Cortina 2016).

The process of building a career in sports media is fraught with obstacles for women, and in general, sports media has been described as "a profession built on macho behavior which is reinforced by traditions of misogynist and racist jokes" (Claringbould et al. 2004, 715). Indeed, research across a range of methodological traditions consistently shows how discursive frameworks stemming from sports media organizations justify women's exclusion and marginalization. A cultural value system grounded in protecting men's status creates challenges for women trying to establish careers in a space where their worth is routinely questioned. It is no surprising, then, that past research has regularly noted women's feelings of needing to prove themselves to male colleagues (e.g., Miloch et al. 2005; Hardin and Whiteside 2009). In response, researchers have turned their attention to investigating the process by which women negotiate their own identity and make meaning around discourses that question their very status and abilities.

This area in particular represents one within the wider field of communication and sport where feminist methodological concerns have been especially prioritized through the use of long, in-depth interviews. As Hesse-Biber (2007) explains, long interviews prioritize the voices of subjugated knowledges and can highlight the diversity of experiences related to a given issue, or communicative event. By privileging women's voices and concerns, qualitative research on the experiences of women working in sports media has broadened understandings of discrimination within the field, particularly pointing to the shortcomings of liberal feminist initiatives that create opportunities but cannot change cultural frameworks. For instance, qualitative interviews have showed the ways in which women appear to consent to discrimination and see it as routine (Hardin and Whiteside 2009). Failing to challenge a sexist joke, for instance, "seems to be an effective way for them to achieve acceptance, although the same dominant macho culture still prevails" (Claringbould et al. 2004, 716). Other studies have illuminated how women may identify themselves as the problem, and not the culture itself. Miloch et al. (2005) noted that women in their study saw discrimination as irrelevant, with one participant describing it as "a crock of B.S." (228).

The process by which women achieve acceptance reflects a salient feminist theoretical concern, given the relatively contemporary increased visibility

among women in higher socio-political positions. Cikara and Fiske (2008) use the term "paternalistic prejudice" to explain how perceptions of women shift to accommodate their increasing levels of competence in the workplace, but in a way that still functions to delegitimize their worth. They argue that demonstrating competence does not translate into better opportunities for women; rather, a woman must also be liked by exuding normative feminine traits of warmth and accessibility. In sports media, balancing competence with likeability creates a double bind for women whereas they are faced with the impossible task of doing femininity in a culture that especially equates competency with masculinity; furthermore, imagining femininity at odds with competence creates a logic where women may see femininity as a threat to their own value in the workplace (Hardin and Whiteside 2012b, 309).

This meaning-making process may translate into what Cikara and Fiske (2008) refer as the queen bee syndrome, where women who are successful interpret that success due to a fundamental difference in gender: they see themselves as more masculine and thereby fundamentally different and thus "motivated to emphasize the intragroup differences in service of individual mobility goals" (85). Ultimately, the rejection of the feminine and the understanding of success as a function of essential difference from other women may contribute to a divisive discourse where women see each other as enemies, rather than partners in a space where it is to their strategic benefit to collaborate (Hardin and Whiteside 2012b; Whiteside and Hardin 2011). It may also further situate women themselves as problematic, excusing the industry from addressing how its cultural value system undermines women's participation.

This process is further compounded by the ways ideologies related to race and sexuality operate in the gendered meaning-making process. Indeed, just as the original labor and gender movement was critiqued for prioritizing the interests of white, middle- and upper-class women, sports media scholars must move toward deconstructing the term "women" and understanding the varying ways gendered meaning-making processes operate for different groups of women.

Consumption/Fandom

Toffoletti and Mewett (2012) have observed that "women have always been present in sport," and yet "the presence and legitimacy of women as sport fans has always been, and to a large extent continues to be, questioned by many" (xii). Indeed, women have been involved in sport consumption and spectatorship historically, yet their experiences outside of athletic participa-

tion were for a long time ignored (Schultz and Linden 2014). Scholarship on fandom has developed along a similar trajectory, addressing fandom as a ritual through which men learn how to be men (Gantz and Wenner 1995). Sports scholars study gender differences, but they do so by positioning gender as a predictive variable and examining sex differences in fanship motivations, behaviors, and identification (e.g., Cooper and Tang 2012). Although these studies have greatly contributed to media effects literature, they do not explain why differences occur, nor do they challenge gender-based hierarchies in measuring levels of engagement. Studies not explicitly based on feminist theory do recognize women's "historically marginalized position relative to mainstream sport" (Wenner 2012, 210) and complicate narratives about female fans (e.g., Markovits and Albertson 2012), but leave gender assumptions about fandom intact.

Feminist scholars have offered great depth to this scholarship by interrogating women's *involvement*—the role of women as fans and consumers—within the context of the social and cultural forces that shape these practices. In doing so, this research points to the way sport structures familial roles, leisure time, class relations, and broader patterns of media consumption. Further, by bringing visibility to how women engage with, write about, and consume sports, these studies challenge patriarchal gender norms that filter into how media industry professionals design and execute marketing campaigns, promotion strategies, and journalistic content.

Feminist interventions in this literature disrupt several assumptions. First, they debunk the notion that "sport only plays an important role in the lives of male fans" and that sports fandom is "not a part of women's lives and identities" (Pope 2012, 90). In fact, study after study document women's wide-ranging experiences with fandom. Interviews with women who identify themselves as fans reveal the complex ways in which they negotiate their fandom in relation to the masculinity/femininity binary, as they simultaneously challenge and reinforce sexism (Esmonde et al. 2015). Similarly, analyses of sports blogs and interviews with women behind these blogs have brought to light the feminist ways in which they redefine fandom and use new media platforms for advocacy (Antunovic and Hardin 2012; Hardin and Whiteside 2012c). These studies resist taking well-established gender norms in expressions of fandom for granted and instead challenge the very definitions of fandom and of sport. The findings carry implications for both research and praxis, challenging how scholars who employ survey and experimental research measure levels of fandom, as well as how masculinist values of sport in coverage and marketing strategies may alienate audiences who embrace other meanings of sport fandom.

A second contribution of sports feminists studying fandom is the way this work has challenged dominant assumptions regarding the future of successful women's sports leagues. Advocates have adamantly argued that in order to increase the popularity of women's professional and college sports, women—especially those who played sports in their youth—ought to be watching women, a narrative that situates the failure of women's sports to capture sizeable audiences as a function of women's own short-comings. Approaching this assumption from a feminist cultural studies perspective, Whiteside and Hardin (2011) found that women's televised sport consumption is structured by domestic labor responsibilities and responsibilities of facilitating family enjoyment during leisure time (including that of watching sports). Through the process of privileging women's voices in the cultural ritual of fandom, feminist scholars recognize that sports consumption cannot be divorced from normative gender roles, complicating how we understand and interpret fandom.

Finally, feminist scholars recognize that women's sporting events facilitate a process where narratives of sexuality are negotiated and reinterpreted. Feminist geographer Susannah Dolance (2005), for instance, calls WNBA games "contested space[s]" where lesbians and bisexual fans go to create communities in ways that are at odds with the heteronormative strategic messaging from the league. Yet, community itself is a contested term and Tiffany Muller (2007) argues that there is much nuance and variety in the ways lesbian women interpret their experiences of attending WNBA games, problematizing women's sports as a "safe haven" for lesbian and bisexual fans. A similar intersectional approach is the next step in sports media fandom researchers, where continued work on how individuals negotiate, respond, and make meaning around mediated sports will contribute to larger feminist projects related to identity production and negotiation.

Applying Feminist Theory to Sports Media

Based on recent studies, we offer several ways in which feminist media theories can serve as points of departure for sports media scholars. While this list of suggestions is certainly far from comprehensive, we hope that these can serve sports media scholars as they continue to address gender-related problems and encourage feminist media/communication scholars to apply their theoretical and methodological strengths to the study of sports media.

First, scholars need to continue to address the relationship between femininity and athleticism and the way this relationship appears in media coverage. Some feminist scholars conceptualize femininity and athleticism as a "dual identity," in which female athletes balance competing versions of their sense of self (Kane et al. 2013); others critique the notion that the concepts of "woman" and "athlete" are incongruent (Schultz 2014). The difference in interpreting the ways femininity is understood in sporting spaces is manifest in the critique of journalistic practices. Where, for instance, do discourses about motherhood belong? Do such narratives trivialize female athletes who happen to be mothers, or do they function to deconstruct the ways masculinity and athleticism are imagined as inter-changeable? More broadly speaking, where does *the feminine* fit within sporting discourses and what types of representations highlight female agency (Bruce 2016)? Aiding this direction in research is the increased availability of content produced by female athletes and women's leagues on social media platforms, which enables them to "construct their identi-ties as sport participants in ways that potentially challenge mainstream sports media discourse" (Heinecken 2015, 1035). Understanding the multiplicity and complexity of gender identities has led feminist sports media scholars to detect the ways in which female athletes carve out spaces for empowerment (MacKay and Dallaire 2012, 181).

That said, Toffoletti (2016) cautions feminist sports media scholars in interpreting representations of self-defined empowerment that position women as responsible for reinventing new femininities. In the current media environment, sexist portrayals are rendered as individual women's prob-lems—and, in fact, choices—while structural conditions are ignored. These ideologies are consistent with neoliberalism whereby discourses of choice and freedom entail self-surveillance and self-discipline (Gill 2008). Toffoletti (2016) recommends that scholars consult theories in feminist media studies and adopt a "postfeminist sensibility" in order to detect the "set of charac-teristics through which patriarchal and capitalist logics operate" in media coverage (205). Continued engagement with how female athletes perceive and present themselves will require that feminist scholars assess changes in contemporary cultural conditions, carefully examine their own assumptions about gender and, ultimately, ask: What is the motive behind these media portrayals, who benefits, and how are hierarchies of power sustained?

Second, there is a great opportunity to expand scholarship on gender dynamics in sports journalism. First, the now outdated studies on wom-en's career paths, professional identities, and newsroom experiences could

be replicated (Cramer 1994; Hardin and Whiteside 2009). Updating surveys has been effective in assessing ongoing issues with gendered divisions of labor and gender hierarchies in news media (North 2016). Studies that draw upon surveys, as well as focus groups and interviews would be valuable in examining whether and to what extent female journalists' views on gendered news practices have changed. Further, in light of the stagnating problems women face in sports newsrooms and in coverage of women's sports, there is great urgency to move away from the well-established frameworks. To that end, we once again find feminist media scholarship useful. For instance, Carter, Steiner and McLaughlin (2014) asked "How do professionals working within the media push back against stultifying notions of gender, as well as under what conditions might such challenges be possible?" (3). This question might lead sports media scholars to explore feminist activism, as well as identify practical strategies for change.

Third, we also see a much greater application of feminist media studies scholarship to question the commercialization of women's sport and female fans. Proposed solutions ought to be weary of the strategies that commodify audiences into homogenous demographics in order to maintain the economic prowess of the sport industry (Merrill et al. 2015). To develop a more nuanced understanding of sports fandom, sports media scholars would be advised to consult some of the well-known feminist media studies attending to how different structural factors shape and constrain the type of programming women consume (Savigny and Warner 2015). Further, feminist scholarship ought to consider how sports promotion efforts and sports media consumption (even when decidedly pro-women) exploit women's labor for corporate profit, feed into the crisis of overproduction, and perpetuate social inequalities (Meehan and Riordan 2002).

Overall, the economic relations on a global level ought to be questioned so that, rather than adding women to the already existing and highly problematic models of sport, feminist sports media scholarship works toward gender-justice.

Conclusion

A review of nearly 50 years of feminist sports media studies literature points to a vibrant, multi-disciplinary body of scholarship that continues to have practical implications for the sports media industry. As Toffoletti (2016) observed "feminist sports media analysis has been at the forefront of interrogating the gendered, racialized, heteronormative and classed

dimensions of global media sport that sustain hierarchies of domination and privilege" (206). Based on our review of literature, we would attribute the same value to feminist sports media studies. However, we also agree with Toffoletti (2016) that the impact of feminist sports media analysis is primarily constrained to sport-related disciplines. We, likewise, hope to see feminist sports media studies incorporated into feminist media studies and other fields of feminism.

Through our review, we observed that scholars whose research focuses on gender in sports media tend to operate under a set of assumptions that have yielded consistent findings over time. On the one hand, the replication points to how little has changed despite the general sentiment that we live in a contemporary time of "girl power," where girls' and women's potential is encouraged, and their achievements heralded as evidence of a progressive era. The persistent findings that women are underrepresented and undermined in coverage, as well as the general lack of opportunities in sports media remind us that popular liberating narratives about the possibilities open to girls and women function in ways that obscure existing inequities and challenges. This tension points to the need among sports media scholars to continue their work on these subjects and expose the ways public sentiment regarding girls and women diverge from the material conditions these studies continue to demonstrate. On the other hand, precisely because these approaches successfully detect inequality, the theoretical underpinnings guiding research on gender and sports media have also remained consistent. Although existing theoretical frameworks have illuminated problematic inequities and challenges, they have failed to provide systemic solutions to the existing problems in the industry.

We believe that building on this foundation by drawing upon feminist theories in media studies may yield new insights and future directions for research in addressing the questions that continue to linger in our field. Doing so would create a more explicit connection between gender-related issues sports media and wider issues in society and allow scholars to implement feminist strategies that have led to changes in cultural perceptions, institutional norms, and policies.

The first step toward this engagement would entail that scholars situate themselves in relation to their theoretical assumptions. This is not to suggest that scholars should present a list of markers (e.g., liberal feminism, radical feminism, etc.) or that they should necessarily identify as feminist themselves. However, feminist sports media scholarship warrants a thoughtful and nuanced grounding in the frameworks that inform the

research process because such grounding can help better detect gaps, question taken-for-granted assumptions, and develop more efficient strategies for change.

On a practical level, sports media scholars, educators, and practitioners could consult the work of feminist writers and activists who speak out on issues that directly impact sport and sports media. In light of the postfeminist, "I'm not a feminist, but" environment of the twenty-first century, a greater commitment to feminism remains essential (van Zoonen 2015). Failing to acknowledge feminist influences in sports media research risks erasing the history of critical scholarship on gender issues. In this postfeminist environment, feminist approaches to sports media serve as a reminder that structural transformation requires much more than just individual achievement. Feminist sports media studies, as a field, will continue to flourish as long as scholars recognize and nurture the power of the *feminist* collective.

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Online Framing on Abortion and Violence in South America: Dissonant Sense Making

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Along the many issues addressed by contemporary feminist media scholars and activists alike are those of gender-based violence, and abortion and reproductive choice, with a diversity of views. By analyzing contested multimedia discourses on high-profile cases of femicide and pro-choices campaigns in South American countries, this chapter argues that the objectification of girls, teenagers, and women is one of many dimensions of a broader frame under which they are violently portrayed, constrained, and even bullied. Placing the responsibility upon the victims of sexual assault is part of a larger continuum of violence women face in South America, both offline and online. Indeed, anti-violence and pro-choice campaigning and advocacy in the region are often met with aggressive responses.

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Overture

Lucía We started writing this chapter a few days after Lucía Pérez died in an emergency room in Mar del Plata, an Argentine city off the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, 250 miles from Buenos Aires. She was drugged and gang-raped. Her assailants also impaled her, washed her, dressed her up, and then dropped her off at the hospital unconscious, declaring she had over-dosed. But she did not. She died because of the tortures she suffered. Lucía was 16 years old.

Despite the tragic events that led to Lucía's death, readers' comments about the event pointed to the "responsibility" of the girl for what happened to her and highlighted her parents' "negligence." Comments such as "she was actively looking for drugs," "she trusted mere acquaintances," "she looks high in her pictures," "she got into a stranger's car," "she was so pretty," "parents have lost their authority over their kids," demonstrate how Lucía and her parents were the ones held responsible for her death in the words of news readers.

Obviously, there are contested discourses deployed in the digital public sphere, where women and feminist organizations fight against gender stereotypes, through speeches mobilizing a feminist ethics of care and denouncing violence against women. In fact, Lucía's murder triggered such rage across the continent that it mobilized women's marches in many countries, organized by grassroots movements and feminist NGOs, throughout online social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. Hundreds of women of all ages shared their sexual harassment experiences on their online profiles as a way to increase consciousness and shed light upon the pervasiveness of the violence against women. Some of these experiences likely gained media attention due to the relatively high profile of other women sharing their experiences[1] in a wave that is similar to what occurred in the United States, which was provoked by a video published by *The Washington Post* in which Donald Trump, then Republican presidential nominee, made lewd comments about women in a 2005 conversation. His extremely abusive language and his lack of recognition and self-responsibility resulted in an aftermath that motivated thousands of women to share their own experiences on Twitter under the hashtag #notokay and encouraged press coverage on the topic beyond the narrow focus of the US presidential campaign (e.g., Wang 2016).

Both the discursive and symbolic construction of girls and teenagers as responsible for their safety is still mobilizing the highly fragmented digital public sphere in South America. The objectification of girls and women is one of many dimensions of a broader frame under which they are violently portrayed, constrained, and even bullied. Placing the responsibility upon the victims of sexual assault is part of a larger continuum of violence women face in South America, both offline and online. Further, feminist organizations, activists, and scholars consider highly restricted access to safe abortions in the region a serious problem for women's human rights and a part of a continuum of violence (Casas and Vivaldi 2013; Langer 2002; Segato 2003). Indeed, public campaigns and pro-choice advocacy in the region is still a scenario that sparks violent responses against women, their sexuality, their bodies, and their public appearances, as we argue in this chapter.

Belén In 2013, Belén was 11 years old and pregnant as a consequence of being raped several times by her stepfather. The media uncritically echoed the girl's assertion that their sexual intercourse was actually consensual. Even the Chilean president at that time, right-wing millionaire Sebastián Piñera, emphasized and praised Belén's "maturity" and her willingness to actually deliver and raise her baby.

These statements, both the victim's and the country's higher authority's, were only a few of those highlighted at the time; in fact, other stakeholders reinforced the same frame. This seeming sensibility to comprehend and commend an 11-year-old girl because of her "willingness" to become a mother can be explained within a legal, political, and cultural environment in which abortion was completely banned in Chile[2] and highly restricted in all South American countries, and discourses glorifying pregnancy and praising sacrifice through motherhood are still prevalent in public discourse in the region.

Therefore, regarding abortion debates, women are under violent constraints in several crucial but overlapping dimensions: They are not only legally compelled to continue a pregnancy they did not seek or desire; they actually are obliged to keep an unwanted pregnancy, even if they are raped, if they suffer a serious health threat, or if they are carrying a non-viable fetus. In our view, this means that women cannot exercise their free will in any case, under any circumstance. Symbolically, the public

sphere contributes to the reinforcement of this frame with images of women as mothers, responsible individuals for the care of children even under violent circumstances, as merely carriers of somebody else's life, and as recipients of "the gift of life" for somebody else, but not necessarily for themselves.

Thus, women are subjected to and constrained by structural violence embedded in the total prohibition of abortion as the highest control mechanism over their humanness, the extreme social reaction that pro-choice advocacy triggers, and as a part of a broader trend of *machista* social relations that can end in cases like Lucía's: Forced, suppressed, and disposable bodies, mere corpses lacking in will and humanness.

Discourse distributed through the digital public sphere strengthen this frame, hindering public efforts to guarantee safety and women's basic human rights. We focus primarily on online coverage and readers' comments considering the abortion bill proposed by the Chilean government in January 2015 that included the decriminalization of abortion in three circumstances—and which became a law in 2017—as well as some visual discourses that circulated through online social networks mobilizing contesting discourses regarding abortion, in particular in Chile, triggered by a public campaign against gender-based violence and pro-choice. The material crafted in the Chilean digital public sphere is enlightened by a broader focus on South American networks, discourses, and theoretical contributions.

Giving Birth as a Duty

Latin America holds the most restrictive abortion regulations in the world. Indeed, 4 out of 5 of the countries around the world in which abortion is totally banned are located on the continent: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, and (until late 2017) Chile. In the rest of the region, abortion is barely accepted under very restricted circumstances, like saving a woman's life, due to very specific physical health conditions and eventually in rape cases. However, there are several practical obstacles that prohibit these limited exceptions, like the conservative practice of denying abortions among health staff, restrictions enforced through allegations in court, inaccessible facilities, or lack of trained personnel.

In Chile, before the 2017 law—which a new conservative government has vowed to revise—a woman could be criminally prosecuted and face up to five years in prison if she interrupted her pregnancy. The prohibition

was settled by the military dictatorship just before leaving office in 1989, ending six decades where a broad concept of therapeutic abortion as an option was legally accepted in the country. Since the recovery of democracy in March 1990, there were scarce attempts to reverse this situation, ignoring women that were in need of interrupting an unwanted pregnancy and doing so under unsafe conditions.

In Chile, as in the rest of the region, pro-choice advocacy had been at the core of feminist mobilization within the broader concern of violence against women. This background on the historical and cultural aspects framing abortion in Chile illustrates (and argues for) the importance of scholars considering abortion within a feminist media frame to be aware of the particularities of a given context. In this case, the practice was legally banned and it is still under fire by religious movements, conservative leaderships, and a broad and pervasive *machista* society. In other words, conducting research and promoting activism under a pro-choice perspective should be cultural, political, and economically situated. Thus, although the creative use of new technologies and social networks obviously raise and spread liberalizing discourses and images of women's bodies and will, this conversation is highly contested by other frames that are rather aggressive, discriminatory, sexist, and highly reluctant to gender equality, most of them hidden behind the anonymity and impersonation the Internet provides.

Abortion and Symbolic Violence

What is tricky about symbolic violence is its subtlety because it is embedded in our bodies and our daily relationships; it is, in other words, heavily naturalized. As Pierre Bourdieu (2001) points out, the individual is unable to distinguish the social construction of their own femininity or masculinity and, as a consequence, it is hard to identify both the construction and manifestations of its symbolic violence.

As Rita Segato states regarding the legal advancements on formal recognition of women's human rights, there are still moral and cultural chains moderating any positive effect legal reforms can have on Latin American countries. Despite all the legal and political measures, Segato notes, what we see is a legal contract that is infiltrated by the status of morality. What we recognize, highlights Segato, is "a vulnerable modernity"; vulnerable because it is built upon a patriarchal tradition that is permanently under tension. So, despite partial legislation promoting a more egalitarian frame, "we still are perceiving the hierarchical gendered

structures, taking [this vulnerable modernity] by assault through its own fissures" (Segato 2003, 7)[3]. Given this, the status system organizing the world along unequal genders, as well as unequal races, ethnicities, and nations appears as untouchable and obvious.

In Latin America, due to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and its cultural heritage from the Spanish colonization of the Americas, a woman symbolically embodies the ideal of purity and is considered morally superior, as a housewife, as a fighter, supporting her family, tolerating her husband, and exemplifying the highest social values. The dualist gendered relationships corresponds to the high virtues of the so-called *marianismo* or rather what *machismo* implies, splitting Latin American's symbolic and gendered world into the virtuosity of a feminized home and a masculine public sphere dominated by *machos* and *machismo*; that is, the cult of virility (Montecino 2007; Stevens 1974). The public sphere as a male domain implies, also, as a counter, an absent father and a present mother. The opposite to this virgin ideal of the Latin American woman then is the "slut," the woman who does not follow this non-written rule and prefers a more open sexual behavior beyond the confines of the traditional wife and mother. Although these representations have been highly contested, they still organize the symbolic world of women and men in Latin America.[4]

The reproduction and naturalization of the social construction of our biological differences is something that does not happen either randomly or innocently. Rather, it is a consequence of the socialization within formal organizations and processes through which individuals build their identities, such as through the family or churches, to mention just a few of the relevant institutions of social and cultural reproduction. And certainly media play a role in this. The cultural world contributes to the naturalization of symbolic violence, even while violent symbolic relationships are invisible to those who are involved, turning violence into a habit. Power—or more precisely, either the imbalance of power or the lack of it—supports and determines what is appropriate for women and men. This power is based upon the prestige and legitimacy that is mobilized, shared, constructed, and eventually contested, in our media life. This increasingly includes our online social lives as well.

In this sense, violence is a type of relationship framed by social, political, and cultural contexts that tolerate, justify, or encourage the (mis)use of power upon those who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy—in other words, against the subordinated, the powerless, the inhabitants of the social edges. The role media play in this scenario of power relationships

is relevant. In this sense, South American scholarship has addressed the media's portrayal of women as a part of a larger concern about gender discrimination within the field of political communication (e.g., Bachmann and Correa 2013; Gerber 2005; Laurnaga et al. 2000), gender biased press coverage in political campaigns (e.g., Valenzuela and Correa 2009), as another manifestation of violence against women (e.g., Lagos 2008), or as part of the larger crime beat and under the light of a sensationalist or yellow-sort of journalism (e.g., Portugal and Torres 1996). The work done by activists and feminist NGOs has been to increase, improve, and root research in the field of violence against women (e.g., Red Chilena contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres 2014; Toledo and Lagos 2014).

However, sensationalist journalism and its critics are not enough to understand the media coverage and the comments online about symbolic violence in our Southern Cone digital public sphere; it is a universe that produces and reinforces gender inequities, configuring a parallel universe that hosts symbolic violence as well. There are stable structures, registered in our bodies and in digital narratives that emerge in both the impersonation and anonymity of digital southern spaces.

Public Digital Sphere[s]

Despite its critics and some highlighted shortcomings (Benson 2009), Habermas' idea (and *ideal*) of a public sphere in which all individuals and opinions should have the opportunity to democratically be engaged in the community is an oft-cited framework in order to better understand media, democracy, and pluralism (Antony and Thomas 2010; García-Canclini 1992; Habermas 1964; Stein 2006). In Habermas' words, a "well-functioning public sphere" implies "open communication structures that permit and promote discussions oriented to self-understanding" (1994, 128).

Press and newspapers were the traditional landscape in which to deploy deliberation in the so-called public sphere. Indeed, in traditional printed media, readers' comments have a delimited space and length through the editorial pages that are used to explicitly contain the community discussion, also discussed in both Latin American and Chilean contexts (Santa Cruz 2011). However, regarding new technologies, the impact of the Internet on news production and the shift in the role of audiences as content producers has resulted in "audiences no longer restricted by largely elitist and inaccessible media systems" (Antony and Thomas 2010: 1283).

In fact, technological developments such as the so-called Web 2.0 challenge the vertical and one-way flow of information that characterizes traditional mediums, such as printed newspapers and broadcasting. Recent technologies allow news content through different and cheaper platforms, such as blogs or podcasts, encourage collaboration (including *Wikipedia*, just to mention one example), provide an online social-networked life (on Facebook or MySpace), and share multimedia content (e.g., YouTube). The sharing-for-free collaborative type of media culture and consumption has also influenced the way in which traditional media has reshaped their own channels to connect with audiences. A highly commercialized environment, applying multiple marketing strategies in order to engage audiences (consumers) has also played its own role in shaping the way in which individuals and collectives appropriate, consume, engage, or merely navigate online.

In Latin America, there is still unequal access to technologies and a lack of technology literacy. Indeed, class, gender, and age still matter in terms of how connected people are (Godoy and Gronemeyer 2012). There are more than 170 million online users in Latin America, which represents 17 percent globally. Almost 70 million are Brazilian users, 25 million are Mexican users, almost 19 million are from Argentine and about 6 million are from Chile (ComScore 2014). Among these online users, the most popular social networks are Facebook followed by Twitter. Further, online consumption is primarily accessed by mobile phones, which by far outnumber landlines. Specifically in Chile, wide use of the Internet occurred in the late 1990s, as mobile phone technology—and eventually smartphones—skyrocketed. Most Chilean outlets offer free access to their content and allow readers' comments.

Both online tools available for readers' comments and online social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, constitute the two main territories we looked at in order to explore discourses on abortion and violence against women, paying close attention to those which (re)produce and reinforce gender stereotypes, include and circulate violent portrayals, and mobilize discriminatory content.

How #NiUnaMenos Became #NadieMenos and a Not-so-subtle "Pro-life" Message

On October 19, 2016, hundreds of thousands of women, men, children and teenagers crowded the streets of many cities in Chile, Argentina, Mexico, and other Latin American countries, calling for no more femi-

cides in these countries, no more violence against women and girls, a better public policy oriented to guarantee women's safety, and the end of a prevalent *machista* culture. People were mobilized through online social networks, including Facebook and Twitter, using the hashtags #NiUnaMenos ("Not one less [woman]") and #VivasNosQueremos ("We want us alive"). The hashtag inspired flyers, posters, flags, and several cultural products in order to express at the same time the pervasive fear of sexual assault and the shared indignation of the pervasiveness of violence against women as one of the main problems both in public health and human rights in Latin America (World Health Organization 2013).

The expression *Ni Una Menos* is attributed to Mexican writer and human rights activist Susana Chávez, who originally wrote "Ni una mujer menos, ni una muerta más" ("Not one less woman, not one more female death") in 1995 as part of her activism surrounding the kidnapping and murder of several women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico[5]. The poem became a slogan and the slogan widely inspired the Latin American feminist movement advocating to stop violence against women, much before Twitter or Facebook exploded in the South American digital public sphere. Thus, *Ni una menos* has been the motto since the 1990s at each and every parade and social mobilization event calling for justice and no more femicides across the continent; it has been printed and reprinted, photographed, stenciled, written on walls, T-shirts, blogs, and endless media platforms. In 2016, as in previous years, #*NiUnaMenos* became the hashtag accompanying the protests in Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil, and many other countries where women were occupying the streets.

One of the images designed for a previous mobilization against femicides in Peru—a drawing of a pinky swear including the slogan "Ni Una Menos"—was part of the visual expression used later in grassroots campaigns in South America. The original flyer was made by a Peruvian visual artist, Diana Solís Herrera, under the request of the organizations behind the grassroots organizers in Peru (Diana Solís, personal communication). Solís explained that the group wanted to attract upper-class women "because middle and working classes were easily reached through on-the-ground kind of work, face-to-face." The slogan became viral as a part of the feminist campaign, not only in Peru but also in Chile and Argentina. However, it was also re-appropriated and re-signified by retail stores in its home country and by pro-life advocates, turning it into a meme: Same pinky swear, but the slogan turned into "Nadie menos" ("No-one less"), adding "Let's protect everybody, without discrimination: Men, women, children, seniors." Similarly, another widely shared

pro-life picture consisted of an ultrasound image of fetus wearing a pink bow and under the hashtag #NiUnaMenos, and a new tag line—"That goes for them too, right?"

In her study on trolling culture, Phillips (2015) points out that Richard Dawkins coined the term "meme" in 1976 "to describe the process by which cultural artifacts (technological innovations, fashion trends, catchphrases, ideas) spread and evolve." Within a digital media frame, Limor Shifman describes "memes" as "a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance; that were created with an awareness of each other; and were circulated, imitated, and transformed via the Internet by many users," and Ryan Milner proposes "memes" as a "lingua franca (i.e., a bridge language) uniting participatory online collectives" (Phillips 2015, 21–22).

The campaign and the public manifestations of #NiUnaMenos during 2016 in South America triggered a quick online response claiming that everybody—not only women—should be protected and have the right to enjoy a life free of violence: #NadieMenos, a genderless hashtag, symbolized that discourse. Along these lines, there were other catchy (and contesting) phrases, such as "Everybody counts," "Women, girls, boys, pets, should be protected," "No person is more valuable than another," "Stop violence of any kind, against any gender," and "No more violence at all." This discourse points out that focused campaigns in specific populations, like women, contribute to or encourage divisions. Just as the phrase #AllLivesMatter contested the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States, #NadieMenos removed the focus from the specific grievances of women and girls. Although it could be seen as well-intended for some, what is true is that it makes invisible and ignores—once again—the structural gender discrimination in South American cultures. This example fits into a post-feminism frame, that is a perspective that assumes gender inequality is a problem of the past, that feminism has already achieved everything it aimed for, and that gender equality can be individually but not collectively achieved (Banet-Weiser 2012, see especially chapter 2).

The aforementioned meme of the ultrasound with a pink bow was posted on the timeline of a feminist Facebook page by a user by the name of "Tamara Nicole." In addition to the image, she added following message: "WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS?[6] Some women say they respect abortion in order to respect the abuse against women? [sic] If you get an abortion, are you not killing a life? Come on!"[7] The post itself and the meme motivated a hot debate about who had made it, why it was

posted in this pro-choice online space, to what extent it was missing the point, and so forth. To the best of our knowledge, the author of the post and their motivations to post it remain unclear (and beyond this chapter's aim). What is provocative about this meme is how images are re-interpreted and re-appropriated immediately, even within radical or progressive discourses and co-opted by conservative leanings regarding gender. Thus, the original flyer calling to improve awareness about violence against women and promoting a safer public life for them is first relocated within a commercial and branded frame, and, second, turned into a counter meme, losing its original purpose and reframed for the opposite message, that which supports female bodies as constrained bodies. The counter meme caused the original to be emptied of its meaning; the reformulated meme broke up the online public sphere by twisting the original meaning. This is also vivid in the online coverage and comments of the reform proposed by the Chilean government in January 2015 and under parliamentary discussion at the time we write this chapter.

A Visual Dispute of Abortion

In recent years, abortion as a news topic has popped up in the Chilean public agenda in three situations: (1) when an extreme case surfaced, for example, a woman going through high-risk pregnancy, a non-viable fetus, or a minor getting pregnant as a consequence of being raped; (2) due to the opinions and statements of officials and politicians with regards to the legislative initiatives to reform the abortion ban, and (3) when there are public demonstrations, street protests, and social mobilizations addressing abortion.

In such cases, the media operate as an echo chamber, reproducing a few players' voices and contrasting the arguments in conflict. The images published are mostly figurative, showing sources or dramatizing grassroots mobilizations rather than addressing facts and providing additional information. The choices made in media coverage are part of a cultural frame socially in dispute (Antezana and Lagos 2015; Palma et al. 2015).

Mainstream images illustrating online articles about abortion in the Chilean digital public sphere mainly highlight advanced pregnancies of unknown, faceless women; pictures of children as the object/subject of what abortion supposedly would deny, that is, the most sacred fruit under risk of a generic and evil woman, who is the opposite of the ideal *marianismo* (Fuller 1995; Montecino 2007; Stevens 1974). Also, online news content about abortion is often illustrated with images of men collectively

and explicitly opposing abortion (Antezana and Lagos n.d.). This operates as a clear illustration of the historically subjugated female bodies and the male bodies occupying the public space and discourse. All of these representations echo what Segato highlighted as the social position of the woman: "Her compliance is, and it has always been, the measure of a nation's dignity" (Segato 2003: 10).

Readers' comments also show that audiences were engaged in online news coverage of the legal discussion about abortion. During January 2015, the month the bill was introduced in Congress, online versions of radio stations, magazines, and newspapers published hundreds of articles that triggered more than one hundred readers' comments each—and some online articles were commented on by as many as 500 individuals. In our analysis of these comments we distinguished into opinions related to a specific article, a comment about the topic itself but not the article, a response to a previous comment, and a statement about anything unrelated to the article or the topic. We found that the stories from the political beat spurred the most online comments, and that many of these commentaries did not refer to the main content but to the headline alone. Most comments were posted within two days of the article being published, and most of the authors were hidden by anonymity or generic identities.

Further, we also found that there were two primary types of online comments concerning abortion news. One comprises comments that were not related to the article content or even the topic itself; these either responded to another comment or stood alone, unrelated to the discussion in the readers' comments. In this case, the comments were aggressive and relied on highly emotional discourses of blame for all kinds of social evils. These comments often manifested ideas of what a woman should be and do—namely, a "good woman"—reinforcing the *marianista* notion of womanhood. This was the case even when the commenter considered that rape could justify an abortion.

The second type of comments relies on symbolic imagery—images about abortion circulating in the digital public sphere. In this case, the arguments (literally) illustrated are highly polarized and extreme, leaving no room for dialogue.

As such, it seems there is no public conversation at all in these public spaces.

Months later, when the Chamber of Deputies officially started the legislative discussion about the bill, media outlets consistently (re)produced some of the most shocking statements made by politicians opposing the

bill. To a great extent, this coverage was non-critical and without further analysis, and thus served to reinforce myths, discriminatory frames, and violent language against women. Among such rhetoric were phrases like "This is the first step to free abortion," "a raped woman can't think freely," "only an intellectual conspiracy can state a woman has the right to control her own body," "abortion benefits the multinational traffic of human organs," "decriminalizing abortion is as serious as allowing slavery," and "the military dictatorship killed grown ups, [and] you want to kill them inside the womb." Some of the fragmented online public sphere also tapped into this debate and touched on what could be made of such a public agenda. In particular, users highlighted that some officials' discourses showcased notions of what and how women should be, and what pregnancy and motherhood represent in the Chilean public sphere.

Final Remarks

Lucía and Belén are two victims of *macho* societies. In fact, their cases—their sacrifices—embody the extreme social violence against women. In that vein, these sacrifices turn symbolically into a sort of social atonement that eventually restores civilization and social order. A social order, however, that would not be the same as before. Feminist media studies in a sexist, *machista* landscape like South America should not only expose and denounce discrimination and extreme violence, but also unveil the mechanisms that enable them. It is not possible to understand the rage that pro-choice advocacy and activism trigger in some circles without paying attention to the broad and prevalent phenomenon of daily-life violence against females in South America. Although different institutions, such as Congress and media, seem to expand symbolic participation of women's and feminist discourses in the public sphere passing new bills and uncovering them, they do so as a regulated enlargement of women's rights. Despite the contested spaces both offline and online through the digital portrayal and encouragement of empowered girls and women, Lucía will still be dead at the time this chapter is published, there will be other pregnant girls as a consequence of being raped, and the digital public sphere in South American countries will display massive feminist and grassroots campaigns against these deaths. However, on par with the outrage sparked by women's rights violations, the digital public sphere encouraging more progressive portrayals of girls, teenagers, and women will mobilize and amplify the counter-reform to expand and strengthen women's rights.

Notes

1. For example, Francisca Solar, journalist and writer, shared her own sexual harassment experience in Santiago, Chile, after her workday on her Facebook timeline and was echoed by mainstream media.
2. This was the case until January 2015, when the Chilean government proposed a legal reform in order to decriminalize abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy under three circumstances: in case of a mother's life being at risk, a non-viable fetus, and when pregnancy is a consequence of rape. The bill became law in September 2017. Medical coverage of abortion became available in early 2018, but a new administration has already promised to revise and reconsider the new legal framework.
3. Translation by the authors.
4. Recent research shows how pervasive this frame is among high school students educated in institutions oriented to Chilean elites. The idea that the world is divided between "women who you marry" and "women who you have sex with" is still traversing gender and class identities in twenty-first-century Chile. See Madrid (2016).
5. Chávez herself was killed in 2011. Prosecutors identified underage gang members as her killers, and assured her murder had nothing to do with Chávez's work as activist.
6. Capitals in the original.
7. Our thanks to Jimena Krautz for sharing this reference.

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States of Exception: Gender-based Violence in the Global South

Sujata Moorti

December 2012, New Delhi, India Several men in a bus raped a 23-year-old woman, assaulted her and her friend, and abandoned them by the side of the road. Ten days later, the rape victim died of her injuries. People across India protested the rape and state inaction; they organized candlelight vigils and demonstrations even as the police wielded tear gas and water cannons to shut down the protests. The rape and the protests were covered extensively by Indian and international media. This moment became pivotal in opening the space for a wide-ranging discussion of the social, political, and institutional factors underpinning gender-based violence.

February 2013, Bredasdorp, South Africa A 17-year-old cleaner at a construction company was raped, brutally assaulted, and left in the yard of a construction site. Six hours after naming one of her attackers, the rape victim died. National media covered the rape and there were a few protests across the country.

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At first glance, these two rape cases share striking resemblances but, the responses they evoked and their ramifications have been sharply disparate. In this chapter I use these two moments to offer a critical analysis of news coverage of gender-based violence.

News media coverage of the rape victims in the two cases encapsulate the two poles scholars have identified: breathless accounts portraying the victim as a helpless martyr and the assailants as monstrous in the Delhi instance and those that focus on the victim, offering a variety of explanations for the violence and end up blaming the victim for the assault as in the Bredasdorp case. Analyzing United States news media in the 1980s, Helen Benedict used the pithy phrase "virgin or vamp" to characterize news media coverage of rape victims (1993; see also Meyers 1997). Benedict contended that whether the rape victim was portrayed as an innocent victim who did not deserve the assault or as a promiscuous vamp who could not be assaulted or at the very least deserved the attack, both strands of news coverage perpetuated harmful rape myths. Despite decades of feminist activism to raise consciousness about sexual assaults and gender-based violence, news media coverage about them continues to be mired in old tropes. Using news media coverage of the gang rapes in New Delhi and Bredasdorp, in this chapter I outline dominant trends that continue to prevail.[1] I foreground as well digital media circuits and their feedback loops as I contend that these helped shape the differences in the South African and Indian media discourses.

Despite the differences, news coverage of the two instances shared some commonalities. Both India and South Africa are identified as countries with high incidences of sexual violence. News media, nevertheless, presented each of these instances of gang rape as exceptional and unique. I interrogate the cultural work conducted by such a narrative of exceptionalism and elaborate on feminist media criticism of this practice. I contend that by covering brutal instances of sexual assault and presenting them as exceptional, news coverage ends up undermining the goals of feminist activism that they seem to uphold. This paradoxical approach by news media is not new but has been amplified by digital media flows and has necessitated new tactics from feminists to combat gender-based violence. I map these toward the conclusion of the chapter.

Since at least the 1970s, feminists around the world have highlighted the prevalence of gender-based violence. They have addressed the cultural and structural factors that enable sexual violence. Feminists have attempted to dismantle rape myths,[2] alter policing practices, and enact rape law

reform. In the United States, these activist efforts resulted in the establishment of rape crisis centers to assist victims, a series of initiatives such as the establishment of rape kits to ensure preservation of forensic evidence that could improve the chances of a successful prosecution of the assailant, the passage of new laws pertaining to the definition of sexual assault, and so on. In India and South Africa, feminist activism in the 1970s linked larger patterns of discrimination with the prevalence of sexual assault. For instance, in 1972 two Indian police officers raped a teenager named Mathura. The assault highlighted the prevalence of custodial rapes, instances where the police become the wielders of violence. A decade later the Supreme Court acquitted the police officers on the grounds that Mathura was a Dalit woman—member of the lower caste—"habituated to sexual intercourse" and her consent was thus voluntary (Chikarmane 1999). The media covered this court ruling extensively, especially the responses of feminists and civil liberty activists. The Mathura rape case is considered a key moment in Indian feminist history as it resulted in the emergence of a wide range of activist groups, such as the Forum Against Rape and Saheli. Feminists highlighted the poignant ways in which caste and class shaped Mathura's experience of sexual assault even as the sexism central to the court ruling became the catalyst for action (see Sakhrani 2016). While the national media did not cover the initial assault, they reported extensively on the supreme court ruling and subsequent protests. In general, Indian media reporting of sexual violence has been sporadic and marked by sensational accounts adhering to the virgin/vamp dichotomy that Benedict posited, interspersed with long bouts of silence (Joseph and Sharma 1994). News coverage of the December 2012 gang rape shared some features with reporting on the Mathura court ruling. As I elaborate below, though, contemporary media narratives have presented sexual assault as more consequential.

In apartheid South Africa, feminist concerns about sexual assault were similarly shaped by concerns about how race and class shaped one's experiences. They highlighted how white women's rape claims were considered more credible than those of women of color, especially black women. Concomitantly, black men were presumed to be hypersexual and guilty of assaulting white women. Feminist activism in this instance has negotiated carefully the need to raise awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence even while cautioning against the ways in which the logics of apartheid shaped understandings of victim and assailant (see Russell 1996; Scully 2009). South Africa's transition from apartheid was marked by the

development of a constitution that enshrined a commitment to gender equity; it integrated central principles from the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a document that nominally mandates legal protections and state support for women's rights.[3] These changes, nevertheless, have not shifted significantly either the prevalence of gender-based violence or how sexual assaults are understood, within and across the color line (Scully 2009). Notably India is a signatory to CEDAW, but until recently rape laws were largely shaped by a penal code formulated during British colonialism.

Reporting on Nirbhaya

Let us return to the two gang rapes that I referenced at the beginning of this chapter. In December 2012, a physiotherapy student had gone to see a film with a friend. They took a private bus back home after the movie; en route the two of them were attacked and the woman was raped by six men (one of whom was still a teenager and not legally an adult) and brutalized. The woman, whom the Indian media named Nirbhaya, died about two weeks later from injuries sustained during the rape attack.[4] Initial news coverage was limited to a detailed enumeration of the violence inflicted on the woman as well as the police search for and arrest of the assailants. Subsequently, though, news coverage developed a twin focus, one on the health status of the rape victim and the other on the "spontaneous" protests that had erupted across the country; protesters sought justice and accountability from the state and condemned the state's indifference to women's quotidian vulnerability. The street protests were augmented by social media initiatives, such as petitions and hashtag campaigns. The One Billion Rising campaign described the social mobilization in India as a huge breakthrough of consciousness with regards to sexual violence (Watson and Lalu 2014). International news media too developed this doubled focus, highlighting the brutality of the attacks as well as the groundswell of protests. In both registers media coverage characterized the events as exceptional (Butalia 2014; Poell and Rajagopalan 2015; Roy 2014). In reality a number of rapes occurred within the same time period that were as brutal as or more brutal than the one involving Nirbhaya, but these did not garner the same kind of media attention or generate nationwide protests. Some scholars speculate that Nirbhaya encapsulated the aspirational model of citizenship central to contemporary India's goals of being a key player in the global economy (Kapur 2013). Others contend

that one of the assailants was a Dalit and caste-based anxieties account for the groundswell of protests (e.g., Teltumbde 2017).[5]

What was exceptional about December 2012 was the response that it elicited. On a national level, the rape provoked a wide-ranging set of conversations about the status of millennial India. Some political leaders sought to curtail women's mobility and freedom of expression arguing that working outside the home, going to the movies in the evening, and socializing with men accounted for the violence. The gang rape became a site from which media discourses contested people's anxieties about the shifts in gender roles entailed by globalization processes. Most significantly, news media, especially in commentary and opinion sections, gave voice to feminist ideas rebutting rape myths. Feminists highlighted how the intersections of caste, class, and religious identity shaped understandings of sexual violence and criminality; they also signaled the complicity of the state, especially the police and judiciary, in maintaining structures of violence. Arjun Rajkhawa (2016) contends that Indian media offered an incisive and nuanced account of the "links between masculinity, masculine-making cultures, society's patriarchal mindset, and women's experiences of harassment, discrimination and violence" (para. 4).

As a result of the sustained protests, the Indian government instituted a three-person panel, the Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law—known colloquially as the Verma Commission—to review existing laws and make suggestions for legal reform. Scholars and activists have characterized this report as "the most progressive document" pertaining to women's rights produced in independent India. The report enjoined the law to address a woman's right to bodily integrity, sexual autonomy, and legal recognition of adult consensual sexual relationships. Lawmakers, though, sidestepped most of these recommendations and confined legal reform to a broader understanding of sexual assault (but one that still did not encompass marital rape). Legal scholar Ratna Kapur (2013) contends that the reforms that ensued have intensified the sexual security apparatus of the state to ensure the safety of women and left intact dominant gender arrangements. In 2015, the Indian government banned the screening of Leslie Udwin's documentary, *India's Daughter,* which renewed media coverage about Nirbhaya. Here again, the media moved quickly beyond censorship to hone in on rape in the Indian context.[6] In effect, in media discourses Nirbhaya became a flashpoint of Indian gender justice.

SOUTH AFRICAN "INDIFFERENCE"

Anene Booysen's rape and death coverage in South Africa two months later offers a vivid contrast.[7] Seventeen-year-old Anene was a cleaner in rural Berdasdorp. She went out with a group of friends to a local pub; they had some drinks, danced a bit, and Anene left the pub in the company of some male friends. She was found the next morning by a security guard at a construction site fighting for her life. Six hours after naming one of her attackers she died in a hospital. The case was covered by national news media, which tended to focus on the brutality of the attack. There were a few protests as well, including a march led by British singer Annie Lennox in Cape Town. But both the scale of media coverage and responses from the public and the political arena were limited. Some scholars contend that media coverage of Anene's case tended to focus more on her disembowelment rather than the sexual assault (Davies 2014). As I have noted previously, unlike India, on paper South Africa's policies with respect to gender are progressive. In response to this rape and murder the state reintroduced Sexual Offences Court, an initiative introduced in 1993 as a measure to improve the prosecution and adjudication of sexual offences. In addition, the government dedicated funds to improve job opportunities in rural South Africa.

As was the case with Nirbhaya, scholars have noted that the brutality of Anene's sexual assault was not exceptional either; there were many similarly horrific incidents, none of which gained the same degree of attention. A 2011 study conducted by the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre found that the media attended only to the most brutal and shocking instances of sexual violence (cited by Watson and Lalu 2014). Further, media coverage tended to focus on the violence inflicted and was often devoid of a contextual analysis of gender-based violence. The reporting on Anene's murder followed these trends and failed to locate this instance within the broader social context for women in rural South Africa. Media reports discussed Anene's actions prior to her assault, nevertheless, a woman as victim discourse dominated and limited discussion to keeping women "safe" rather than considering the principles involved in eradicating gender-based violence, especially how to delink understandings of masculinity from violence. While media coverage of Nirbhaya continued well after her death, Anene's attacks were displaced in the South African press by Reeva Steenkamp's murder by her boyfriend. The celebrity status of "blade-runner" athlete Oscar Pistorius may account for some of the shift in attention, but "it is clear from the manner in which these two cases

were reported that class and race dynamics say much about whose life is deemed of greater value … For the media it seems that Anene Booysen was interesting only insofar as her body was a site for brutality and for the courtroom dramas that ensued after her death. Her thoughts and views, what she did and said, were deemed inconsequential and certainly not newsworthy" (Watson and Lalu 2014, 22).

Scholars across a variety of disciplines have found Giorgio Agamben's formulation of exceptionalism to be generative in thinking through critically the principles of universalism and liberalism, particularly who is included and who is not in these concepts. While liberalism tend to position humans as rights bearing subjects, the principle of universalism extends this idea that every human subject is endowed with intrinsic dignity. Agamben's formulation of *homo sacer*, sacred man, on the other hand, illustrates how the exclusion and elision of marked bodies from citizenship does not undermine the legitimacy of the liberal project but rather is constitutive of it. Feminist scholarship has developed further how gender and race are central to the production of marked bodies, spheres of exclusion, and the operations of sovereign power.[8] Jasbir Puar (2004) has examined the cultural work conducted by the language of exceptionalism through a focus on the Abu Ghraib scandal. She contends that paradoxically the violence exhibited by American soldiers serves to secure United States imperialism and reposition the country as a haven of human rights. Informed by her writings I contend that news media rhetoric of exceptionalism in the two gang rapes I have discussed above operates on several interrelated planes. It helps posit that the particular gang rape under consideration is a rare form of violence, that the female body is granted the right to ownership of the body in democratic societies, and that the police and the judiciary are best equipped to contain brutal violence. Exceptionalism serves to obscure the vectors of class, race, caste as shaping the fields of visibility.

Digital Networks

As many scholars and commentators have noted, in the Indian context the Nirbhaya protests were remarkable because people from diverse backgrounds were protesting on "a woman's issue." The street protests were supplemented with—and often mobilized by—activism conducted on social media. People turned to twitter to express their outrage about the prevalence of gender-based violence through a vari-

ety of hashtag campaigns: #JyotiSinghPandey, #DelhiGangRape, #Amanat, #Damini, #Nirbhaya. They also expressed their frustration with the police and other authority figures through a different series of hashtags such as #justiceforjyoti. In the immediate aftermath of the gang rape, people changed their Facebook and Whatsapp profile photos with a black oval to register solidarity and to communicate their anger and helplessness (Losh 2014). In some instances, media practitioners turned to Twitter to mobilize public opinion. For instance, TV news anchor Arnab Goswami started a hashtag campaign #NirbhayaInsulted to mobilize support for the ban on the film *India's Daughter*. In the years since the gang rape, activist groups have established sites such as *I am Nirbhaya* to archive and curate video accounts of gender-based violence.

Mainstream media covered these digital campaigns and speculated on their ability to mobilize social change. However, the most noteworthy aspect of Nirbhaya, I contend, was the proliferation of feminist commentary on blog sites, such as *Kafila* and *Moor*. These sites were not affiliated with mainstream media outlets and showcased a range of voices, which offered incisive and nuanced critique of media coverage of the case, police inaction, and the state's indifference to gender-based violence. In addition, the feminist voices articulated clearly the perils of turning to the state to seek carceral solutions to rape. These sites became a productive arena for understanding the social, political, and institutional factors underpinning gender-based violence.

In Breadsdorp, there was a strikingly muted social media response to the local gang rape. Earlier, in response to instances of sexual harassment at Rhodes College and other rape cases, activists had used Twitter to initiate a series of campaigns such as #1in3; #IAmOneinThree; #StopRape. Feminists in South Africa lamented that despite the striking similarities between the two gang rapes, local communities were not activated into protest. "Our Jantar Mantar moment never came," South African scholar Joy Watson argues, referring to the location in New Delhi where protestors converged (Davies 2014). Local media coverage of Booysen repeatedly drew comparisons with Nirbhaya and activists self-consciously modeled their social media campaigns on their Indian counterparts. In this instance, both media and activists participated in the transnational circuits of digital media and sought to produce a feedback loop within South Africa, but to no avail.

Sexual Sovereignty

The news coverage of the two gang rapes I have examined cannot provide any clear account of the role activism, media discourses, and protest culture play in facilitating conversations about gender-based violence.[9] I contend though that in the Indian instance, the inclusion of feminist voices in mainstream and digital media helped offer a nuanced account of sexual sovereignty and gender-based violence. These voices helped transform the gang rape into an event, an incremental accumulation of memories of gendered violence. These feminist discourses helped realign the language of exceptionalism that dominated news coverage of the gang rape and the resultant protests. In South Africa, however, news media focused on the case in isolation. Media accounts failed to take into account the broader issue of sexual sovereignty or the ways in which a narrative of exceptionalism helped bolster the state's security apparatus. The feedback loops and connectivities characteristic of digital media did not result in a uniform response to gender-based violence. Rather, local political, economic, social, and sexual histories determined the responses. Caste and class remain the sticky vectors that continue to shape media and feminist responses to gender-based violence.

Notes

1. There is a long history of exchanges and linkages between India and South Africa as part of the Indian Ocean world. My analysis does not elaborate on these historical underpinnings, but is based on this sustained connection.
2. Scholars have classified as myths a range of ideas that have coalesced across cultures about the nature of sexual assault and why it occurs. Broadly, these myths blame the victim for the assault, trivialize the impact of the assault, and help reify sharply binarized gender roles which normalize the assault. For more see Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994).
3. Feminists in South Africa have used mechanisms encoded in CEDAW to turn to the international community for redressal when the state does not live up to the rights guaranteed by the constitution. See Ashworth (1996).
4. Indian law prohibits the media from divulging a rape victim's name even if the person agrees to it. In the first weeks of coverage the rape victim was identified as Damini (Hindi word for lightning), Amanat (Urdu word for treasure), Braveheart, and a range of other names but Nirbhaya (Hindi word for fearless) gained traction and has become associated with the December 2012 case. Krupa Shandilya (2015) argues that the name Nirbhaya reveals

the discursive logics through which the victim was produced as a middle-class, Hindu feminine subject, symbolically erasing minority women from the category of rape victim.

  As this essay centers on news media coverage I have opted to use the name they have designated rather than identify the rape victim as Jyoti Singh Pandey, even though her parents urged the public to say her name.

5. Anand Teltumbde (2017) contends that the media were responsible for assigning the victim the name Nirbhaya and highlighted aspects of the victim's life story that cast her neatly into the virgin role identified by Benedict.

6. The BBC documentary was slated to air on March 8, 2015, International Women's Day. But, after controversy erupted in India about the film's representations, especially the interview conducted with one of the convicted rapists, the BBC aired the film on March 4, 2015. The film was uploaded on YouTube and soon went viral. On March 5, the Indian government asked YouTube to make the film unavailable in India and the company complied.

  Indian journalist, Vibha Bakshi produced another documentary, *Daughters of Mother India*, which was released in 2014 without controversy. The film even received the National Film Award for Best Film on Social Issues.

7. South African law does not prevent the disclosure of a rape victim's name and I am following the convention used by local news media.

8. For an overview of Agamben's theories and feminist critiques of it see Mitchell (2006).

9. Similarly, Heinrich Boll Foundation set up a comparative analysis of the social responses to the two gang rapes but was unable to conclusively determine why one campaign succeeded and another did not.

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Bringing Race into Feminist Digital Media Studies

Lori Kido Lopez

As our mediated lives become increasingly digitized, we must continue to modify and adapt our understanding of feminism in response—both in the ways that feminist politics and identities are taken up within online environments, and in the way that feminism can help us shape our understanding of the digital. Much of the earliest feminist theorization of digital networks and technologies coalesced under the term "cyberfeminism." Such works are premised on the reality that women are actively participating on digital platforms in ways that collectively subvert patriarchal norms and practices.

Although the use of the prefix "cyber-" has gone out of favor, there is an abundance of scholarship dating from the mid-1990s that tackles the complicated role of gendered identities and experiences in the digital realm. Donna Haraway's seminal *A Cyborg Manifesto* ([2000](#)) uses the metaphor of the cyborg, who is part human and part machine, as a way of using technological advances to break down the familiar binaries and boundaries that surround categories such as "woman" and "machine."

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While Haraway's postmodern take on the need for deconstructing identity in advanced capitalism has inspired a groundswell of writing on cyberfeminism; it has also been criticized for its overly optimistic treatment of identities such as race and disability (Fernandez 2002; Kafer 2013). The complicated intersectional experiences of women of color, among other axes of minority identities, are often neglected or treated too glibly within cyberfeminist discourse and discussions of technology more broadly. Carolyn de la Peña specifically points to the way that historians of technology have become much more adept at discussing gender, but have continued to address race far less frequently for the past twenty years (de la Peña 2010).

This blind spot mirrors the history of feminism itself, as second-wave feminists were criticized for primarily centering the experiences of white women and failing to take women of color into consideration. Scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), Patricia Hill Collins (1990; Collins and Bilge, 2016), and bell hooks (1981) put forward theories of intersectionality that called attention to the fact that anti-racism and anti-sexism needed to take place at the same time, rather than relying upon narrow modes of activism that did not fully address the multiple ways in which discrimination and oppression were experienced. All identities are intersectional in the sense of embodying a complex array of gender, race, class, religious, sexual, and other categories of identity, but intersectional approaches demand an accounting for the privilege that some bodies possess—particularly when that privilege has systematically served to directly disadvantage others. Much of this theorization has emerged alongside the development of black feminism as a specific branch of the feminist movement that recognizes the specificity and uniqueness of black women's experiences and interlocking oppressions, while also acknowledging the diverse array of shifting privileges and disadvantages that structure individual lives.

Yet intersectionality itself has had its critics as well (Puar 2012; Salem 2013), with some arguing that it is often deployed in ways that reify the position of white women as the foundation from which all forms of difference radiate outward. As such, black women and Third World women become homogenized and overdetermined as the always-Other. While such critiques often fail to consider the full depth of intersectional analyses and their later developments, there are certainly other useful metaphors for considering diverse populations. Jasbir Puar (2012) puts forward Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "assemblages" as a way around this problem, given that assemblages focus less on specific bodies and more on

the relationships between them, constantly reconfiguring their connections. As she states, "intersectionality attempts to comprehend political institutions and their attendant forms of social normativity and disciplinary administration, while assemblages, in an effort to reintroduce politics into the political, asks what is prior to and beyond what gets established" (63). Doing so can help to consider the way that space and time play a role in the constant reorganization of our social formations.

This perspective on the fluidity and mobility of identity is quite useful in then reconsidering the way that digital forms of feminism can more fully serve to destabilize hegemonic whiteness. Indeed, digital networking technologies and online forms of communication are distinguished by their ability to transcend boundaries with their potentially non-hierarchical structure that allows for connections to be created between participants from different standpoints. Online networks are flexible and adaptive, built across constantly shifting nodes rather than a centralized or static power hierarchy (Castells 2010). This is not to say that digital communication offers a utopian space that is somehow free from systems of domination; on the contrary, familiar systems of oppression such as patriarchy, racism, and homophobia continue to structure online communities in every way imaginable. Communities who are disenfranchised in traditional modes of mass communication often remain so online, with digital divides persisting in ways that can limit access, digital literacy, leadership roles, and visibility. Moreover, women and people of color are often subject to brutal attacks online for simply participating, as we have seen in the misogynistic and racist attacks surrounding incidents such as the so-called GamerGate (a controversy surrounding video game cultures that resulted in misogynistic digital attacks), or the hateful speech directed at black actress Leslie Jones on Twitter. Nonetheless, the internet still provides a wealth of resources for extending and enhancing opportunities for communication, and in particular, for strengthening overlapping and interconnected movements for feminism and anti-racism to come together.

The work of feminist rhetoric scholars can provide further insight into how digital feminists can engage in breaking down these problematic constructs. Aimee Carillo Rowe (2008) and Karma Chavez (2013) both foreground race in their theorizing of transracial alliances and feminist coalitions without relying exclusively upon intersectionality. Rowe analyzes the transformative power of transracial alliances between straight white women and women of color in the academy, arguing that what she calls a "politics of relation" foregrounds the building of affective ties as a

means of collective empowerment. In starting from the affective connections that draw us together, we can hold ourselves accountable to those with different levels of privilege and move away from our individual locations. Chavez examines spaces of convening as coalitional moments, or "when political issues coincide or merge in the public sphere in ways that create space to reenvision and potentially reconstruct rhetorical imaginaries" (8). For both, there is a focus on the nexus of spatial and temporal alignment—moments of possibility that are necessarily contextually bound, and thus temporary—that nonetheless provide the integral building blocks for sustained activism and eventual social change. Chavez further theorizes "radical interactionality" as a mode of resistance that attacks the roots of oppression by highlighting the "complicated and dynamic way in which identities, power, and systems of oppression intermesh, interlock, intersect, and thus interact" (58)—moving away from the more fixed and linear model of the intersection.

Although Chavez and Rowe are interested in rhetorical analysis and do not apply their thinking to digitally constituted activism, their theories help us to productively shift discussions of feminism in digital networks away from merely asking if digital feminism has been successful or not. In many ways, scholarship on activism and feminism in the digital realm has become fixated on asking about the potential limitations versus the affordances and opportunities brought about by technological advances. While such studies can illuminate powerful insights (Daniels 2009), they stop short of considering the relationships between individual campaigns and the transformative potential for sustained engagement. We already know that no single activist intervention is without flaws or blind spots— whether it is a hashtag campaign like #SolidarityisforWhiteWomen (in which solidarity between different feminist identities was called out for not including people of color within its activism), a viral meme such as "Binders Full of Women" (following Republican candidate Mitt Romney's awkward and demeaning comment during a 2012 presidential debate about how many women applied to work in his office), or an app for documenting street harassment or mapping racism. On its own, every intervention is premised on a specific set of strategies and tactics that necessarily exclude certain uses and outcomes. Yet the question remains as to whether or not we can build a model for exploring the way that the temporary alliances and feminist coalitions forged through these activist uses of digital media can extend beyond transitory moments, even in their invariably limited capacity. How is it that feminist forms of anti-racism and

anti-racist forms of feminism are producing something that is more resil-
ient than the outcome of any individual campaign? Beyond rhetorical
analysis, there is an opportunity for media studies and digital studies
scholars to investigate the formation of coalitions that mirror the network
itself in producing ties that are flexible and durable, able to facilitate
responses in complex and dispersed ways.

In pushing toward these kinds of inquiries, we can also expand beyond
the black/white binary that circumscribes so much discussion of race in
the United States. While black feminism has been absolutely foundational
in bringing questions of race to the fore within feminist communities,
there is need for more complex continued work in the way that Asian
Pacific Islander American, Latino/a and Chicano/a, Arab American,
Native American, and mixed race communities are also engaging in anti-
racist and feminist activism. The interconnected nodes of online commu-
nication mirror this complexity, offering opportunities for participation
that are directed toward specific campaigns but also produce new affilia-
tions, communities of practice, and heterogeneous alliances.

Just to point to a few examples of the way that such analysis might be
fruitful, we could consider the various ways in which #BlackLivesMatter
activism has developed in relation to feminist communities—such as the
herstory posted online by founder Alicia Garza condemning the theft of
black women's work, or the "Hands Off Black Women" movement origi-
nating from Madison, Wisconsin. Also important are the multiracial artic-
ulations created through "APIs for Black Lives Matter" or the Black Lives
Matter policy platform focusing on immigrant rights and fighting depor-
tations, which links the struggles of blacks and Latinos. Each of these
interventions has its own temporality and life cycle, rising to visibility via
the spread of linked social media posts and contributing to digital dis-
course and debates. We might then be tempted to analyze any one of these
moments as a discrete or finite occurrence. Yet the digital discourse that
proliferates and constitutes such coalitional moments, as well as the par-
ticipants who are hailed and activated as a result, do not necessarily dis-
perse and disappear. If we recognize each as nodes within the digital
network, we can more productively trace their evolution and rearticula-
tion—the ways in which their discourses and participants become reacti-
vated in new configurations, or through developing other activist
interventions. In doing so, we can more clearly see the way that digital
platforms and their affordances help evade some of the concerns about the
fixing of intersectionality in only limited configurations. On the contrary,

constituencies representing heterogeneous affiliations are also viable nodes within the same network, which is marked by a fluidity and flexibility that resists concretization.

In considering the broader trajectories of the way that anti-racism and feminism take place online, I also ask feminist scholars to consider how we can view contemporary activist interventions through a more historical lens. That is, rather than immediately attempting to address the individual successes and failures of recently proliferating phenomena, I invite researchers to make connections between today's viral flashpoints and the cultural movements and contexts in which they play a larger role. Scholars of new media often feel pressure to address the latest item that is blowing up their feed, particularly when it seems to represent an exciting new political formation. Academic conferences are rife with presentations on the latest viral event and its rich outpouring of discourse. Yet doing so can fail to accommodate this broader perspective, which demands considering the afterlives of activist interventions and the connections drawn across, between, and around what may indeed be a productive coalition or temporary alliances. In considering the historical debates around the way that identities such as race and gender have come together in activist interventions, it may be possible to extend our analyses forward and backward alongside the vast contours of the digital network.

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CHAPTER 12

Conservative Women in Power: A New Predicament for Transnational Feminist Media Research

Esra Özcan

During the 2016 Presidential Election cycle in the United States, racist and sexist views became mainstream. Then Republican candidate Donald Trump's comments on women and minorities put at least half of the country in great distress. According to a survey by American Psychological Association (2016), "52 percent of American adults report that the 2016 election is a very and somewhat significant source of stress."

This is something that Turkish voters can sympathize with. Many of the Turkish voters have been living under stress caused by a divisive politician: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who came to power in 2002. Like Trump, Erdoğan came to power by appealing to "the silent majority," and by mobilizing the frustrations toward the system. Under his rule, the violation of constitutional rights and freedoms has become rampant, and similar violations of rights are expected under a Trump presidency (Romero 2016). Both politicians are in favor of running the government as a business and they

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speak to the anxieties of their working-class supporters. Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" alludes to a lost glorious past, and Erdoğan alludes to the imagined glory of the Ottoman Empire. They both refer to religion to attract and mobilize supporters. They both have uneasy relations with the media. Donald Trump "plans to change libel laws in the United States so that he can have an easier time suing news organizations" (Gold 2016), and Erdoğan has silenced dissent and criticism in the media through multiple strategies including the use of libel and defamation laws (Baybars Hawks and Akser 2012; Freedom House Report 2016; Yesil 2014). Trump was—and continues to be—a television celebrity[1] and Erdoğan has succeeded to create a cult around his personality. Both men have placed their opponents under great distress. They are both right-wing populist politicians.

While Trump judges women on their looks and "hotness," Erdoğan, who is infamous for his hostility toward feminism, judges them on how well they perform as mothers and wives. Erdoğan has declared women without children as "half-women" and repeatedly encouraged women to have at least three kids (The Guardian 2016). Both men are in favor of anti-abortion policies. Turkish women had access to legal abortions since 1983, yet under Erdoğan, abortion has become a practical impossibility (The Guardian 2015). These leaders, both deeply divisive and polarizing, have gained the votes of millions of women despite their sexist rhetoric. Indeed, 42% of American women who voted cast a ballot for Trump in 2016 (Tyson and Maniam 2016), and Erdoğan received half of the women's vote in 2013 (Tremblay 2014). In spite of the accomplishments of feminism, how do misogynist male politicians succeed in gaining millions of women's votes?

I argue that looking at conservative women's movements in both countries might provide an answer to this question, even if partially. In this chapter, I examine the uneasy relationships between progressive feminisms and conservative women's movements by discussing both Turkey and the United States. Under globalized neoliberalism, strategies of political communication travel from one location to the other very quickly via multiple media and non-media platforms, disrupting the established binaries between the East and West, North and South, and the developed and the developing world. Politicians and interest groups who work toward similar agendas borrow from each other arguments, narratives, and tactics to push for their policies and manipulate the media in their favor. I believe that placing an emphasis on local and national differences diverts our attention from the common experiences across borders. In this article, I intentionally place an

emphasis on similarities rather than differences for analytical purposes. I argue that by looking at how similar arguments are deployed in different locations to reinforce similar political agendas, independent of religious and cultural differences, progressive feminisms can more effectively develop alliances and strategies to counter the nationalist, racist, and sexist discourses.

I argue that women's active contribution in sustaining patriarchal hegemonies in both Western and non-Western countries is understudied. Women in power (in politics and media) who support conservative political agendas play an important role in the creation of repressive hegemonies detrimental to other women. Conservative women in the United States actively work to represent women's interests while trying to overturn the progressive feminist gains. Conservative women in Turkey, who are incorrectly named as "Islamic feminists," have been playing a similar role in the creation of a new conservative hegemony under Erdoğan's Justice and Development—Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—AKP), thereby restricting the choices that used to be available to women in Turkey. I argue that in the context of Turkey, the term "Islamic feminist" is misleading, creating a progressive image for conservative women who support an authoritarian government with a reactionary gender ideology at the expense of progressive feminists' claims for gender equality.

My argument relates to the difficult terrain of representing the "other." "Women for Donald Trump" claims to represent American women. Somebody from Turkey might take their claim on face value and assume that "Women for Donald Trump" represents not only "American" but also "Western" women. Similarly, "Islamic feminists" might be mistaken to represent "Turkish women" or "Muslim women." The categories such as "West," "East" and "Islam" have not been helpful in delineating shared political agendas among conservative and progressive women across borders. Therefore, I propose that we insert "left" and "right" to our discussions of different feminisms as active women's groups both on the left and the right fiercely compete with each other to define what is best for "women" on multiple media platforms across borders. I believe only in this way we can face another important question: How do we approach the issue of representing "Muslim women" without falling into the Orientalist, Islamophobic trap on the one hand, and the Islamist fundamentalist trap on the other?

In the following, I will provide a brief history of feminisms in Turkey and in the United States to provide a background for comparison. I will give more space to the history of feminism in Turkey on the assumption that the readers will be less familiar with it.

History of Feminisms in the United States and in Turkey

The story of feminism in the United States is usually told with reference to the wave metaphor. According to Mann and Patterson's (2016) succinct summary of the wave narrative,

> the **first wave** designates the surge of women's rights activism beginning in the 1830s and culminating around the campaign for women's suffrage that ended or at least went into abeyance in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Taylor 1989). The **second wave** denotes the resurgence of women's organizing in the 1960s that suffered major setbacks with the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1982. The **third wave** refers to the resurgence of feminist activism in the 1990s by younger feminists who came of adult age after the second wave (Siegel 1997). (Mann and Patterson 2016, xxii, emphasis original.)

Turkish feminist scholars and women's rights activists borrowed the wave metaphor to tell the story of feminism in Turkey. In her seminal article on the history of feminism in Turkey, Nükhet Sirman identified "three crucial historical movements" (1989, 3), that have later become more or less standard reference points in narrating the story of Turkish feminism. According to Sirman's narrative, the first significant moment took place during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire starting from the mid-nineteenth century and expanding into the early twentieth, when "educated women had begun to speak out against the Ottoman family system" (Sirman 1989, 9) within the framework of proposed reforms to save the empire. The second wave took place during the 1930s when women were granted a number of rights by the modernizing Turkish state. And the third wave came in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup as a reaction to the "state feminism" (Sirman 1989, 4), that is, against the patronizing role of the Turkish state in defining how women's liberation should look.

Let me open up the second and third waves in this narrative a little further. Following the First World War, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated and the Turkish nationalists, led by Mustafa Kemal (later surnamed Atatürk—the father of Turks), came to power to declare the modern Turkish Republic in 1923. Mustafa Kemal and his team of modernizing elites embraced the tradition of Enlightenment, ideas of progress and French style secularism that promoted the confinement of religious

expression to the private sphere. Turkey's system used to be characterized as "authoritarian secularism" (Göle 1996) that aimed to keep signs of religion out of the parliament, schools, and universities. Kemalist reforms (named after Mustafa Kemal) in the 1930s fully enfranchised women (giving them the right to vote and be elected), annulled polygamy, changed the family law by adopting the Swiss Civil Code, introduced mandatory co-education and opened up the path for women to take up professional roles. The Kemalist reforms made Turkey an exceptional case among Muslim countries in the decades to come. Kemalist reformers saw women's veil and headscarf as an impediment for women's liberation and although they did not pass any laws (Sirman 1989, 10; İlyasoğlu 1998, 243), they discouraged women from wearing the veil and headscarf, making not-wearing these garments an unwritten precondition for upward social mobility. Leaving the traditional Islamic dress behind did not present such a huge problem for many women, but for others it did, particularly for those who joined the Islamist movements after the 1970s. Kemalism's discouragement of the veil and headscarf has remained controversial up until today.

The third significant moment grew out of the leftist movements of the 1970s, and became louder during the 1980s. This wave, which arguably could be extended until the early 2000s,[2] addressed structural problems that have persistently disadvantaged women and remained unsolved. Feminist activism of the 1980s problematized the family and emphasized women's sexual empowerment. Women within the movement organized consciousness raising groups, protested violence against women, pressured the local governments for women's shelters, and lobbied to change or annul the clauses in the Civil and Penal Law that contradicted the principle of equality between men and women (İlkkaracan 2014; Sirman 1989; Tekeli 1995).

The 1980s and 1990s also witnessed the rise of the Islamist movements where the voices of the Islamist women demanding more religious rights have become louder particularly through the demonstrations against the headscarf ban in universities, instituted in the early 1980s. In that sense, third-wave feminism coincided with the entrance of the Islamist women into Turkish politics as significant actors. Kemalist women clearly saw the Islamist women as a direct threat to the gains to women's rights brought by the Kemalist reforms. Leftist feminists on the other hand, were ambivalent. On the one hand they saw the Islamist women engaging with feminism and were willing to see them as sisters who were victims of the same

patriarchal state, but on the other, they were aware of the fundamental differences that made it difficult to see the Islamist women as allies.[3] At the same time, other feminists from the left and scholars from the secular circles cautioned against the anti-feminist strands of thought in conservative Islamist women's writing and saw women's headscarf as another manifestation of patriarchal oppression and a symbol of men's control over women's sexuality (Koc 2015; Merçil 2007; Özbudun 2016).

Conservative/Right-Wing Women or "Islamic Feminists"?

Islamist politics, that had remained marginal until the 1990s in Turkey, managed to translate the unrest caused by economic upheavals, poverty, secular authoritarianism, oppression of the Kurds, and the deficiencies in democratic institutions into a populist language, carrying the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in 2002. Within the last fourteen years, AKP and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have replaced secular authoritarianism with conservative authoritarianism. With its tight grasp on the media, AKP has effectively built a propaganda machine that accompanied the elimination of dissent (by going after journalists, writers, and academics) and silencing the opposition (by going after leftist NGOs, feminist women's organizations, and pro-Kurdish opposition leaders among others). As of this writing in 2017, academics, intellectuals, and observers increasingly express concern about the rise of authoritarianism in Turkey under the AKP regime (Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Kadıoğlu 2016; Tugal 2016).

The history of feminist movements in Turkey entered a new phase with the rise of Erdoğan's right-wing Islamist Justice and Development Party. This phase requires the reassessment of the narratives and histories about leftist feminism in Turkey and its interaction with the Islamist women. The Trump administration might create a similar push toward reading the history of feminism in the United States in light of the less prominent narratives that emphasize feminism's interaction with right-wing women who are both feminism's beneficiaries and fervent opponents.

Women's right-wing/conservative activism is better documented in the United States than in Turkey (Dworkin 1983; Faludi 1991; Nickerson 2012; Schreiber 2008). In Turkey, right-wing/conservative women's activism has been reduced to women's search for the rights to wear the heads-

carf in education and in official posts in Turkey and their story was categorized under the story of Islamist activism. But AKP's term has shown that in fact neither the AKP's nor the women's activism within Islamist circles is limited to Islamism, that is, while religion constitutes an important reference point, broader conservative arguments about how to run the economy and the government shape their political preferences and positions. Within AKP's conservative framework, religion has become an invaluable source for populist rhetoric in justifying gendered neoliberal policies, shrinking rights and freedoms, and an imperialist foreign policy based on the dream of reviving the "glorious" days of the Ottoman Empire.

Conservative women both inside the party and in the pro-AKP media have been instrumental to AKP's success. Most of these pro-AKP women who are also active in the media have been named as "Islamic feminists" or "feminist Islamists" by observers and academics inside and outside of Turkey (Badran 2001; Unal 2015; Akman 2013). Yet, women who are named as "Islamic feminists" are conservative, pro-AKP women on the right of the political spectrum and "Islamic feminist" is a misnomer to describe their political position. It is true that the so called "Islamic feminists" criticize conservative men from time to time and push for the expansion of boundaries set for conservative women in their own circles by asking for more public participation and careers. Yet, under a conservative authoritarian government in power, their activism contributes to redefining women's rights mainly from the conservative perspective, values women as mothers, and shrinks the liberal secular sphere in which many other women in Turkey have enjoyed rights without the constraint of religion and tradition. Their unending support for an authoritarian and repressive government places their "feminism" under question. Sibel Özbudun makes a very good case against "Islamic feminism" in Turkey, arguing that it annihilates the possibilities of secular or atheist critique by religionizing the discourse (Özbudun 2016, 133). This is concerning especially because the increasing power of conservative women does not accompany democratization, on the contrary, it accompanies the suppression of the media and the Islamization of the education system in Turkey,[4] diminishing the choices and perspectives available to the new generations of young women (and men).

Under Erdoğan's Turkey, the headscarf ban in universities and public offices was abolished, which, I argue, was a very positive development. However, now girls as young as ten are encouraged to adopt the headscarf within the new education system, which socializes them into conservative

gender roles.[5] Women who wear a headscarf in Turkey do so for a wide variety of reasons related or unrelated to religious practice. Yet, "Islamic feminists" within AKP struggle to fix the meaning of headscarf mainly in religious terms. It is therefore important to conceptualize their activism separately from the headscarf issue, thereby recognizing the struggle for meaning over the headscarf. The term "conservative women" refers to women who stand on the right independent of what they wear. It includes women who support conservative politics but do not wear a headscarf. It is also open to the possibility that a woman wearing a headscarf might support progressive politics on the left.

Here I propose that we do not use the term "Islamic feminism" to describe conservative/right-wing women's movement in Turkey. Emphasizing conservatism in naming pro-AKP women's activism opens up new possibilities for transnational comparison to conceptualize women's activism in relation to conservative and authoritarian politics.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ANTI-FEMINISM IN TURKEY AND IN THE UNITED STATES

In *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics* (2008), Ronnee Schreiber examines two conservative women's organizations, Concerned Women for America (CWA) and Independent Women's Forum (IWF) in the United States. She emphasizes how these organizations compete with progressive feminist organizations "to represent women's interests in the policymaking process" (Schreiber 2008, 4). In her words,

> These conservative women's groups present a substantial threat to the feminist movement. They are well organized, politically active, and have access to government institutions, political parties and national media. As these organizations vie with feminists over what women need and desire, they publicly contest definitions of women's interests and influence political debates and policy outcomes (2008, 4).

A similar struggle between progressive feminists and conservative women has been going on in Turkey as well, intensified during the last ten years. Inspired by Schreiber's analysis of these organizations, I argue that conservative women in the United States and in Turkey are strikingly similar in terms of their appropriation of feminist arguments for conservative ends, their rejection of progressive feminism, and their emphasis on heterosex-

ual family and motherhood. Religion is an important part of their identities as well, either Islam or Christianity. In addition, their views of "Islam" and the "West" are equally distorted and based on similar binaries.

Schreiber analyzes CWA and IWF as examples for the institutionalization of anti-feminism in the United States. In Turkey, KADEM (Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği—Association of Women and Democracy, established in 2014), represents, in a similar manner, the institutionalization of anti-feminism. KADEM is supported by President Erdoğan; and his daughter Sümeyye Erdoğan is the Vice President of the association and a board member. KADEM publishes its own academic peer-reviewed journal and organizes conferences. For their first congress, KADEM asked for papers that question "gender equality" and focus instead on "gender justice." The term "gender justice" emphasizes the differences between men and women and assumes that their strengths lie in different spheres. Equality is seen as "becoming like men," and feminism is rejected as a hegemonic imposition of the West while patriarchy is left unquestioned. Akyüz and Sayan-Cengiz (2016) criticized KADEM's campaigns against violence for "normalizing masculinist norms and patriarchal relations of domination" (2016, 1–2).

The interesting thing is, in spite of their anti-feminist stance, KADEM representatives frequently refer to the three waves of feminism in the United States. Members selectively appropriate theories of intersectionality and postcolonial feminist approaches to frame left-wing feminist movements in Turkey as anti-religious and foreign. They use the arguments of postcolonial and transnational feminism to criticize the "West" and Western feminism, yet, distort these arguments by omitting the postcolonial critique of the anti-Western, nationalist, and authoritarian governments similar to the AKP in the "non-Western" world. Their narrative is based on the reproduction of the antagonism between the East and the West. The feminist voices in North America and Europe that criticize Western colonialism, US interventions and imperialism are conspicuously absent in their narrative.

KADEM's anti-Western discourse is similar to the Islamophobic discourses promoted by conservative female pundits and politicians in the United States. Both discourses support a distorted and incomplete view of the self and the "other." In a talk that she delivered in Brussels (Bianet 2015), Sümeyye Erdoğan described women's oppression in Muslim societies as exceptional and occasional instances. In her perspective, it is Western societies that are historically plagued with examples of women's oppression. In a weird irony, her talk was titled "Perceptions of Muslim

Woman in the World and the Struggle for Equality" and she criticized the discourse of equality for creating a unidimensional world for women and men. Her talk was also a defense of Islam, criticizing feminism for associating gender injustices with religion.

Under the rule of AKP governments conservative women have gained considerable power, putting the progressive feminists and the women who want to have a secular life in Turkey under constant attack. After Pınar İlkkaracan (progressive feminist and the founder of Women for Women's Human Rights) criticized KADEM's vision of gender justice in an article, Sümeyye Erdoğan filed a criminal complaint about her. The case was eventually dismissed by the attorney general yet it shows the degree of hostility by conservative women toward progressive feminists. In other words, conservative women's discourse and organizations marginalize progressive feminism and the demands of women who look for alternatives outside of the state sanctioned boundaries of heterosexual family and motherhood.

Progressive/left-wing feminisms in Turkey and elsewhere are characterized by their criticism of systemic oppression. They question the role of the state over women's bodies, including restrictions on abortion, virginity tests, and the headscarf. They also question the role of the heterosexual family as an area of oppression, defending lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights and the possibilities for alternative families. Women's rights to have control over their own sexuality in and outside of marriage is also a significant issue for progressive feminisms. Women's full and equal participation in the workforce and resistance to neoliberal policies that cast women as a cheap source of labor is another area of priority. These demands conflict with the political vision and economic policies supported by conservative women. KADEM does not support LGBT rights, alternative families, or sex outside of marriage, and glosses over all of these real demands as corrupt Western influence.

Media are a very important site where this battle between conservative/right-wing women and progressive feminists take place. As CWA and IWF in the United States have spokeswomen in the media, conservative female columnists and pundits in Turkey support KADEM's vision, carry it to the mainstream, and run to its defense whenever it is under criticism. In addition to carrying KADEM and its vision of "gender justice" to the mainstream, these columnists defend the AKP government's agenda in numerous other issues ranging from the restrictions on alcohol consumption to the oppression of Kurds.

Challenges for Transnational Feminist Media Studies in the Twenty-First Century

Clifford Bob (2013) points out that contrary to the common assumptions, transnational civil society is not "the exclusive preserve of left-wing groups" (2013, 71). He draws attention to how right-wing civic groups have become part of transnational activism "distorting, blunting or blocking progressive initiatives—and proposing their own contrary ones" (2013, 71). The idea of transnational civil society as progressive is also a common assumption in transnational feminist writings. As Kristin Blakely points out "little is known about anti-feminist transnational networks" (2010, 171). "Women" usually refers only to women who raise their voices to repressive governments and other "scattered hegemonies" (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). In the future feminist media studies should examine the role played by women in supporting authoritarian governments and other "scattered hegemonies" in national and transnational spheres, as well as how conservative women contest progressive feminist agendas.

This also requires the rethinking of categories such as "Islam," "West," "Western feminism" and "Islamic feminism" that are common in academic literature. In addition to that, we should critically examine the similarities in progressive and conservative political agendas that crosscut national boundaries and how women as active agents take part in them. Patriarchal hegemonies are established and sustained with the support of many active conservative women. We should be wary of practices that conservative women in power use in various locations that create and support especially those hegemonies that marginalize progressive variants of feminism.

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan suggest that "We need to learn more about the varied ways in which a state becomes fundamentalist and how women fare in those locations" (1994, 24). Whether or not to call it fundamentalism, Turkey's journey toward authoritarianism under Erdoğan gives important clues about (1) how women participate in a process in which gender equality and democratic rights gradually erode under neo-authoritarian governments, and (2) how such governments appropriate, manipulate, and silence the media to propagate their vision with the support of not only male but also female writers and journalists in the media, some of whom utilize feminist arguments to that end.

In spite of his open misogyny and sexism, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's received half of the women's vote in the 2013 elections (Tremblay 2014). The question of why women support him and his repressive government

and what progressive feminist organizations can do to connect with these constituents to counter his agenda is an important one. Nickerson's study (2012) on conservative women carries important insights about women's role in populist movements. Donald Trump and the 2016 United States Presidential Election calls for exploring this relationship further. Gaining back women who have been attracted to right-wing populism stands as one of the biggest challenges for progressive feminist movements in the twenty-first century.

Transnational progressive feminism has fights going on in two major fronts: anti-Muslim racism and "imperialist feminism" (Kumar 2014) in Europe and North America; and the popularization of anti-Western sentiments and restrictive interpretations of religion by the neo-authoritarian conservative governments in what used to be called the "Third World" countries. Transnational feminist media scholarship in the twenty-first century can provide tools to fight sexism, racism, extremism, and authoritarianism in different parts of the world by underlining similarities in government practices in controlling the media, and by tracing the images, arguments, and discourses that are employed around the world to marginalize claims for equality.

Finally, what positions can be characterized as progressive/left or conservative/right can be discussed. In spite of the problems of definition and the shifting terrain of politics, I propose that we insert "left" and "right" to our discussions of different feminisms. Only in that way we can align the right-wing feminism of Sarah Palin, a conservative political figure in the United States, with the right-wing feminism of Sümeyye Erdoğan in Turkey and explore the similarity in their strategies to challenge and revert the gains of left-wing feminisms across borders.

Notes

1. See the special issue by *Television and New Media* on "The Reality Celebrity of Donald Trump." http://tvn.sagepub.com/site/misc/DonaldTrump.xhtml.
2. Diner and Toktaş (2010) have left out the Ottoman period and designated slightly different reference points, including the Kurdish women's movements during the 1990s in the story of feminism in Turkey. But they kept the three waves metaphor.
3. Pazartesi, the feminist journal of the 1990s, clearly reflects this ambivalence. See *Pazartesi* (July–August–September 2007). The volume is a compilation of articles published in the journal from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s on women and religion.

4. For the propagation of orthodox religious values in schools, see Arat (2010).
5. For more information on the debates see Tulin Daloglu, *Al-Monitor* (September 24, 2014).

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Gender and the Mediated Political Sphere from a Feminist Theory Lens

Dustin Harp and Ingrid Bachmann

The intersection of women and politics has long interested feminist media scholars. Despite the documented rise of more egalitarian attitudes toward the roles of women and men throughout the world (e.g., Inglehart and Norris 2003), the function of politicians is often understood within a male profile (see Hoogensen and Solheim 2006; also Harmer et al. 2017; Harp et al. 2017; Loke et al. 2011). As a result, gendered assumptions are manifest in mediated discourses (Byerly and Ross 2006). Feminist media theorizations have consistently focused on these problematic media discourses, offering insight into the troubling ways in which women politicians have fared in news media. From the under-representation of women in political news and gender-biased reporting, to taken-for-granted differences among female and

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male politicians and intense media scrutiny (e.g., Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Harp et al. 2016; Ross et al. 2013; Trimble et al. 2013), media often reinforce women's marginalization in the public sphere. The latest presidential election in the United States further underscored how pervasive is gender as an underlying frame of reference for female politicians.

This chapter highlights recent research at the intersection of feminist media theories, women, politics, female politicians, and media, while noting that a majority of research tends to analyze news and mainstream media content. We then discuss some promising theoretical perspectives within the field before offering two areas that they believe are ripe for further investigation. The first of the areas we believe needs additional attention is research that more carefully considers intersectionality. Secondly, we call for investigations that move beyond the analysis of news media content and consider the ways in which women citizens and politicians are producing and using media in an effort to counter hegemonic gender norms, values (including misogyny), and expectations. This last point illuminates strategies for feminist progress in a discursive mediated political sphere.

WOMEN, POLITICS, AND FEMINIST MEDIA STUDIES

Historically confided into the realm of home and family, women around the world have had less power to engage in the political arena. In modern history, women rarely have headed up a government and since 1960, when Sirimavo Bandaranaike of then Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) became the first elected female prime minister in the world, about 80 women have ever served as an elected president or prime minister—several of those in the last decade or so. There is evidence that even today there is politically inspired gender violence, that is, "behaviors that specifically target women *as women* to leave politics"—by pressuring them to step down as candidates or resign a particular political office (Krook and Restrepo Sanín 2016).

Not surprisingly, then, most research investigating female politicians consistently shows that the political sphere is gendered, and that media discourses reinforce such notions. The research—both qualitative and quantitative—has tended to consider traditional media content, particularly mainstream news. Indeed, there is ample evidence that the media consistently treat women in politics qualitatively and quantitatively different than men. Female politicians receive less coverage, are less likely to be quoted, and more likely to be dismissed, marginalized, and trivialized—for instance, by dismissing their viability as candidates, questioning their competence and suitability for office, reducing their expertise to so-called

women's issues such as family and childcare, or focusing on their appearance and wardrobe rather than their platforms (e.g., Bachmann and Correa 2013; Byerly and Ross 2006; Harp et al. 2010, 2016; Ritchie 2013; O'Neill et al. 2016; Ross and Comrie 2012; Trimble 2014). Researchers have consistently found that media coverage of women in politics is regularly stereotypical, sexualized, and sexist, with discourses that even cast gender as a burden for those females trying to climb up the political ladder rather than as an asset or a neutral trait (Ross 2009; see also Harp et al. 2010, 2016). These women often contravene hegemonic conventions of a woman's place and behavior, which subject them to intense media scrutiny, and are often deemed either too masculine—aggressive, ambitious, hard-spoken—or too feminine—passive, emotional, and dependent—to engage in the tough realm of politics (see Harp et al. 2010, 2016). They are often accused of playing the gender card, that is, that their main merit is being a woman (e.g., Falk 2013; Trimble 2014).

The pervasiveness of such media treatment is such that these kinds of findings continue to be reported today in different countries and regions, such as the United States (Harp et al. 2010, 2017; Perks and Johnson 2014), Canada (Trimble et al. 2013, 2015), UK (O'Neill et al. 2016; Ross et al. 2013); New Zealand and Australia (Trimble 2014), Germany (Lünenborg and Maier 2015); Chile (Bachmann and Correa 2013), Nigeria (Ette 2017), Egypt (Hafez 2014), Israel (Lachover 2017), Europe (Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012), and the Pacific Islands (Corbett and Liki 2015). While there have been improvements in media coverage over the last decade, research of traditional mainstream media still points to sexism. Especially important: the situation is even worse when paying attention to minority women (Sanbonmatsu 2015; Ward 2017) though fewer studies have investigated the intersectionality of female politicians who occupy a minority status. Despite inroads, matters of gender equality and intersectionality in politics are still an important issue, and media discourses of women in politics serve as a reflection of the broader phenomenon of sexism and gender biases. Evidence from European countries, for example, suggests that media coverage of female politicians increases in countries where gender equality is progressing in other parts of society (Humprecht and Esser 2017).

Feminist media researchers rely of feminist theorizing when approaching media analysis and building theoretical frameworks from which to analyzing the ways female politicians are portrayed in media. Much of the research approaches the topic from within a framework that acknowledges

public/private binary spheres that situate men as naturally occupying public spaces—including all things traditionally understood as political—and women literally and figuratively residing in private spaces (the home and family). Numerous feminist scholars note Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Karen Ross' (1996) gender mediation thesis, which encourages scholars to consider "the manner in which the mediated presentation of politics is gendered" (103) because of a traditional understanding of politics as an essentially masculine endeavor as well as journalistic practices. Within the context of this thesis, feminist media scholars have looked to various theoretical perspectives to understand the discursive strategies used (not necessarily consciously) in the production of media content about female politicians. Kathleen Jamieson's (1995) double bind also informs much research in this area of feminist media studies (e.g., Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Harp et al. 2016). Jamieson noted people respond to complex situations by separating and "dichotomizing its elements. So, we contrast good and bad, strong and weak … and in doing so assume that a person can't be both at once—or somewhere in between" (5). Jamieson explained, this double bind is a "rhetorical construct that posits two and only two alternatives, one or both penalizing the person being offered them" (14). In the sense of female politicians, these theoretical perspectives explain why women in politics are punished for displaying traditional masculine attributes and at the same time penalized for being too feminine in the political sphere. For example, Hillary Clinton has been discursively punished for being both too emotional (a *feminine* trait seen as incompatible with public life) and also for being emotionally insincere for not showing *proper* gendered emotions (Harp et al. 2016). Feminist rhetorical theorists have also contributed greatly to approaches in the area of women politicians and media, noting the link between language and patriarchy as well as how language helps people understand their world (Foss et al. 2006). Explaining that concepts are shared and noteworthy when they are named, as they then establish "a link with others for whom the concept is meaningful" (Foss et al. 2006, 12). Another theoretical concept that has proven useful and important in this area of study is Judith Butler's (1990) gender performance theory, that has allowed scholars to consider how female politicians perform gender and, in turn, how those gender performances are understood in mediated discourse (Harp et al. 2010; Trimble et al. 2015).

Intersectionality and Counter-Hegemonic Discourse

To date, the literature at the intersection of women, politics, and media has been dominated by considerations of women's visibility, stereotyping, and framing. Within this context, however, there has been a certain neglect of issues of intersectionality—which fits into a longer history of essentializing women in feminist theorizations. We implore more feminist media theorists to investigate women's intersectionality as it relates to politicians and the political sphere. This is particularly important in light of more women moving into the political sphere. That is to say, that as more women enter into and are elected to political offices, the diversity of these women will expand and the intersectionality of these political women as they are made visible, stereotyped, and framed in mediated discourse must be investigated more carefully. To illustrate our view, in the United States there are more women of color now holding office than ever before, as well as those with non-dominant religious views and who identify within the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) spectrum. It is essential that feminist media scholars investigate how these women may be constructed in mediated discourse. For example, in the United States of the "106 women serving the 115th U.S. Congress, 38, or 35.8%, are women of color, 4 in the Senate and 34 in the House" (Center for Women and Politics 2018). Further, of the "1,871 women state legislators serving nationwide, 450 or 24.1% are women of color" (Center for Women and Politics 2018). Additionally, Fayrouz Saad, who is running for elected office in the state of Michigan, will be the first Muslim woman in US Congress if she is elected in November 2018. Similarly, there have now been numerous US legislators who have been openly gay or bisexual (include Oregon state governor Kate Brown and Wisconsin state representative Tammy Baldwin) and in November 2017, citizens in Virginia voted into office the first openly transgender state legislator. These are just some examples in one country, but illustrate the many ways diverse women are entering into political life. It is essential that feminist media scholars consider how multiple identities intermingle when considering women and politics. We strongly believe that through more intersectional investigations at the crossroads of women, politics, and media contributions to the field will be richer and provide important impact to the field of feminist media studies.

Another area of research that is ripe for further investigations is at the intersection of new digital mediated spaces, politics, and gender. As noted, a significant portion of research at the juncture of women, politics, and

female politicians investigates media content to assess marginalization, visibility, and stereotyping. However, some recent feminist media studies have focused on how feminist voices—via social and alternative media spaces—enter into the public sphere to offer a counter to mainstream media's patriarchal worldview (Durham 2013; Harp et al. 2014). Durham's (2013) article investigated reactions to a *New York Times* story about a schoolgirl's gang rape and illustrated how bloggers, commentators, and editorials (and even a Change.org petition) criticized the news coverage for being sexist. As Durham noted, this online critique ultimately brought a feminist critique into the mediated public sphere. Harp et al. (2014) came to a similar conclusion after examining media coverage of another incidence of violence against women. The authors concluded that while mainstream media was prone to reinforce traditional (patriarchal) rape narratives, feminist voices entered into the mediated public sphere to provide an alternative narrative. Both of these studies illustrate how a contemporary digital media system—that no longer maintains a reliance on gatekeepers to choose whose voices are heard—allows for a greater diversity of voices to enter into public discourse and, in doing so, to challenge dominant ideologies. Within the context of this digital media system that has opened up spaces for marginalized voices in public discourse and as more women make their way into the political sphere, feminist media scholars should turn their attention to the mediated public sphere as a place of hegemonic negotiation. It is indeed in this new digital media environment that counter-hegemonic ideologies are provided a space from which to present and articulate alternative perspectives and views. Further, this type of analysis opens up media discourse beyond traditional media spaces and mainstream media, allowing researchers to consider more broadly our discursive mediated public sphere—from news to entertainment, satire, and social media. Considering content more broadly and simultaneously is important, because, as all texts are in conversation with all texts already in existence (Barthes 1964).

We believe research that investigates the ways feminist voices enter into the larger mediated public discourse to counter the stereotyping and marginalization of female politicians is a fruitful endeavor for feminist media scholars. Along with shedding light on hegemonic struggles, this research can offer feminist activists insight into how to use the new mediated public sphere to counter patriarchal constructions of gender while mainstreaming feminist viewpoints. Analysis of how Hillary Clinton's campaign used social media during the US 2016 presidential election provides a perfect

example of this type of mainstreaming. When she was attacked by Donald Trump during the election for "using the woman card," Clinton and her staff used Twitter to promote a literal woman card, using it to both spread her political message and raise funds. The rapid manner in which a female politician was able to frame and respond to an accusation that occurred during a political rally (and that quickly became mainstream media chatter) is significant and informative. Investigations into how female politicians and feminist voices use mediated discourse to assert feminist ideologies is an important area for future research.

As feminist scholars expand on research at the intersection of women, media, and politics, we believe it is also a fruitful endeavor to consider how feminist perspectives and voices enter into issues at the crossroads of gender and feminism. For example, Harp's (2018) analysis of the US 2016 Presidential campaign that lead to the election of Donald Trump offers an example of just this type of analysis. Harp considers ways that misogynistic rhetoric entered into the mediated public sphere and how feminist voices offered a counter to the contempt and prejudice and in doing so focused on a male politician. Focusing on a particular mediated moment during the elections—when on October 7, 2016, *The Washington Post* released an audiotape and video of Trump talking about grabbing women by the "pussy" and trying to "fuck" a married woman—Harp analyzed how patriarchal and feminist ideologies battle in the mediated discourse as the language instills meaning onto the event. Harp illustrated how mainstream news, satire, and entertainment programs, and social media users enter into the discourse. For example, while Trump framed the comments within the context of a patriarchal boys-will-be-boys narrative, explaining it as simply "locker room talk," others entered into the discursive sphere to discredit that explanation and move a feminist perspective into the discussion. Harp's chapter includes many examples of these counter-hegemonic discourses, including a professional baseball pitcher who posted the following on his Instagram account:

> I feel the need to comment on the language that Donald Trump classified the other day as "locker room talk," given my daily exposure to it. Have I heard comments like Trump's (i.e. sexist, disrespectful, crude, sexually aggressive, egotistical, etc.) in a clubhouse? Yes. But I've also heard some of those same comments other places. Cafes, planes, the subway, walking down the street and even at the dinner table. To generalize his hateful language as "locker room talk" is incredibly offensive to me and the men I share a locker

room with every day for 8 months a year. Men of conscience and integrity, who would never be caught dead talking about women in that way. You want to know what "locker room talk" sounds like from my first hand perspective? Baseball talk. Swinging, pitching, home runs, double plays, shifts. The rush of victory and the frustration of defeat. Family talk. Nap schedules for our kids. Loneliness of being on the road so much. Off-season family vacations. (Young 2016)

Harp's analysis illustrates how Trump's original patriarchal excuse for his comments "opened up a counter narrative to the traditional (patriarchal) 'boys will be boys' culture of masculine aggression and power over women. In doing this, it allowed for another model of masculinity in juxtaposition to the hyper masculine and aggressive man. Men took up this alternative narrative, as they were able to speak from experiences in locker rooms" (Harp 2018, 202). This example illustrates how feminist media scholars can investigate feminist and gender issues in the political media sphere within the context of women, politics, and media research.

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Feminist Strategies and Activism

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.
—Sojourner Truth (1851, *Ain't I a Woman*)

From the perspective of the editors of this volume, feminist scholarship in academia is activism as it does not investigate to merely learn about the world we live in but strives to change it. This statement, however, is controversial within the context of an academic field where many scholars hold onto notions of scientific methods that stress distance and objectivity. There is, in other words, a widespread belief that academia and activism are two very distinct worlds. That, however, is not the case with feminism, which at its core *advocates* for women's rights and gender equality. Within the context of much traditional media and communication studies, the notion that research can and should be a form of activism is radical, viewed with suspicion, and too often dismissed as bias research regardless of the methodological rigor. To those with that perspective, we accept (even embrace) the argument that feminist scholars are not objective researchers but rather approach work from a perspective; we accept that feminist research maintains a bias—an intolerance for patriarchy and gender inequality. We do not, however, accept judgment for this as we see the importance of arguing against inequalities.

The third section of this edited volume offers examples of feminist media research that illustrates ways in which feminist scholars grapple with real-world problems, offering a means for understanding how gender and power operate in our material and symbolic global environment. While certainly not exhaustive of the variety of contemporary feminist media research being conducted, the various chapters illustrate the depth and breadth within the discipline. The contributors both offer examples of their own work and viewpoints on—and calls to action regarding—existing work.

"Hashtag Feminism": Activism or Slacktivism?

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During the last debate of the 2016 presidential campaign, then Republican party contender Donald J. Trump called his opponent Hillary Clinton "such a nasty woman." His words reverberated across the Internet, launching heated response from politicians, pundits, and the public (Miller 2016). #NastyWoman trended across social media, accounting for thousands upon thousands of references on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Women reclaimed it as #NastyWomenVote and #NastyWomenUnite, using the term to push back against what had been a campaign marred by Trump's misogynistic statements, which included a video showing him bragging about grabbing women's genitals without consent (Burns et al. 2016). The hashtag morphed into a rallying cry against female subjugation more generally or feminist meme, defined as a "feminist media event that references

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not only an external event, but itself becomes a reference point" (Thrift 2014, 1091). This type of hashtag disrupts how society views misogynistic violence and perpetuates a counter-narrative to "exceptionality discourses by insisting these spectacular tragedies are logical manifestations of a system of gender oppression that condones and facilitates male domination by normalizing gender violence and sexual entitlement" (Thrift 2014, 1091). In the computer-mediated space of social media, it was a watershed event in many ways. #NastyWoman offers a telling illustration of the computer-mediated power of the hashtag to galvanize women through "hashtag feminism." Hashtag feminism—when it realizes its epic best—creates a "virtual space where victims of inequality can coexist together in a space that acknowledges their pain, narrative, and isolation" (Dixon 2014, 34–40).

This chapter critically analyzes hashtag feminism and its use of hashtags across a variety of digital platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, with an aim toward theorizing about who defines feminism in the digital sphere and how this relates to future directions for feminist media research and theory. We examine how the hashtag, which started on Twitter but has since moved throughout social media, provides a potent tool to give voice to the marginalized and silenced, and thus, contributes to social media's role in fomenting social justice, political resistance, and empowerment for women. We draw on Lauren Berlant's (2011) concept of "intimate publics," defined as the "affect of feeling political together" (224) that people may experience as they rally around a hashtag. We argue that the hashtag offers discursive power to galvanize the voiceless into intimate publics that produce a coherently robust form of activism online, particularly among those left out of the traditional mainstream media discourse, such as women of color (Campbell et al. 2012; Johnson et al. 2011; Liebler 2010; Ono and Pham 2009). Yet, at the same time, the agency wrought by the hashtag may offer a constrained empowerment that reinforces hegemonic norms, perpetuates digital subjugation of women, and reifies damaging narratives of victimhood and cultural imperialism. In some cases, even when hashtags appear to be empowering, they do little to change the digital sphere into a more welcoming place for women because of recurrent "regulatory norms" (Butler 1993, 10) that shape the discourse that surrounds these hashtags in the larger context of women's digital social location.

We consider issues of cultural context and computer access, particularly in digitally emerging ecospheres, and how these factors may limit the discursive power of hashtag feminism. In addition, we engage what Jodi Dean calls a "technology fetish" (Dean 2009, 10), where the Internet can

foster an illusion of solidarity with others, resulting in people feeling that small actions online, such as posting a hashtag, have greater meaning than they do. This embraces the concept of "slacktivism," which is engaging in "low-cost, low-risk online activism" (Lee and Hsieh 2013). Slacktivism has been applied to online activism generally, but we explore it through the lens of feminist theory in the specific area of hashtag feminism. We begin by exploring hashtag activism generally and then address specific examples of hashtag feminism and articulate the discourses that inform them and the context that surrounds them, drawing on feminist theory and writings. Finally, we conclude with a larger statement about what this analysis means for how feminism is defined online, and how this discourse expands feminist theorizing.

Hashtags and Activism

The hashtag developed on Twitter in 2007 (Gannes 2010) initially as a means to help sort information, but it has grown into a "user-created meta-discourse convention" (Brock 2012, 534) that enables people to provide context, meaning, and emotion in their tweets. Hashtags have since spread through other social media and have been used as a means for people to highlight to others what they think is news (Papacharissi and Oliveira 2012), draw attention to issues, or find others who share their viewpoints. People imagine an audience on social media and target their messages to this imagined audience (Marwick and boyd 2011), and hashtags are a means by which people tailor these messages. The hashtag has evolved into a tool of those attempting to foment social or political change. One of the most potent examples of the power of hashtags to give voice to the voice-less is in the context of activism is the Arab Spring, a series of democratic uprisings in 2010 that spread across several Arab countries. Activists mobilized social media to organize and plan efforts that evolved into revolution (Eltantawny and Wiest 2011). Social media also played a role as a real-time news reporting device as governments blocked journalists from covering the story or limited Internet access (Chaudhry 2014; Papacharissi and Oliveira 2012). For example, use of the hashtag #Egypt reflected an "expression of solidarity" amid the revolution, according to an analysis of tweets bearing that hashtag before and after the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (Papacharissi and Oliveira 2012). More recently, hashtags have given voice to social movements as varied as a fight against femicide in Turkey (Altinay 2014), the Black Lives Matter

movement that has launched a new battle for civil rights for African-Americans in the United States of America (Jackson 2016), and the lesbian, gay, bisexual ans transgender protest against Facebook's policy of requiring real names on the site (MacAulay and Moldes 2016).

Even in their relatively short history, hashtags provide the means for a movement to gain what cannot be easily obtained through any other means: voice and attention. As Anthony McCosker (2015) explains: "Visibility is the scarce and highly contested currency upon which new modes of digital activism or civic participation depend." Thus, social media platforms have enabled activist publics to emerge through social media, particularly by energizing people through personal stories (Alaimo 2015; McCosker 2015). These stories may have fallen on deaf ears without the power of the hashtag to make their tweets and their photos and their YouTube videos reach a level of readership—called virality—unimaginable in the days before the hashtags. In the Gezi Park protest in Turkey, for example, the use of hashtags on Twitter allowed activists to spread their message instantly across the world and gain support for their cause (Oz 2016).

Feminist activists have utilized this energizing aspect of the hashtag as a means of drawing women together online (Dixon 2014; Eagle 2015; Higgs 2015: Loza 2016; Portwood-Stacer and Berridge 2014; Thrift 2014; Wiliams 2015). In the best instances, hashtag feminism may create intimate publics (Khoja-Moolji 2015), a collective digital space where women who share viewpoints come together virtually. The way this works is followers on Twitter or Facebook or other social-networking sites develop feelings of connectedness with others who use the hashtag, finding kinship in shared language, emotion, and meaning (Dixon 2014). Social media in this sense becomes a virtual feminist community where women can organize, discuss, and critique cultural happenings and identify people who share their embodiment of feminist ideas that, for many reasons, they may have difficulty finding in physical spaces. Tanja Carstensen (2014) explains that this allows social media to "provide spaces for users to empower each other, to establish events and protests and mobilize for political action." Therefore, these intimate publics are part of the public sphere but also hold elements of a private group that is open but requires solidarity of vision for membership (Berlant 2011). Kitsy Dixon (2014) argues hashtag feminism offers potential for voice for a variety of feminisms, and, in so doing is redefining "the ways we view the active components of feminism in our present society." Tweets or Facebook

status updates are a way to start a narrative of women's empowerment (Dixon 2014). It is also crucial to point out many women across the globe who could benefit from the empowerment of hashtag feminism have no access to it because of limited financial resources, Internet access, and digital literacy (Latina and Docherty 2014). Therefore, it is vital to realize that whatever benefits hashtag feminism offers, it does so to a very limited percentage of the global population.

Furthermore, Dixon and others caution that while hashtags may foment community among feminists in much the same ways as publications, festivals, or offline groups did in the past, in the virtual space it is more difficult to decipher whether participants are truly passionate about a cause, leaving women open to online harassment, hate, speech, or violence online (Dixon 2014). In other words, sharing a hashtag may suggest a collectivist intimate public that does not really exist or that exists but lacks a true shared context and history among its participants to be truly viable (Khoja-Moolji 2015). Women may share a feeling of solidarity with others who share a hashtag that actually belies the distance between them. Or a hashtag may become merely a tool of slacktivism, a combination of slacker and activism that has been applied more generally to small acts on social media, such as "liking" a Facebook page for a political or social group, signing an online petition, or forwarding letters or videos about an issue (Lee and Hsieh 2013).

Proponents of this view argue that people engage in activism spurred in part by moral balance. So participating in a small way—through spreading a hashtag, for example—may liberate their consciousness and make them less likely to engage in more involved forms of activism (Lee and Hsieh 2013). For example, Dean (2009) posits that many forms of online activism are actually passive, but the imagined intimacy on the web heightens the emotions and sense of solidarity connected to these actions, making them feel more significant than they are. This perpetuates what Dean calls a technological fetish or fantasy where "technology covers over our impotence and supports a vision of ourselves as active political participants" (2009, 36). A counter-argument proposes that when people make small activist efforts online, such as using a hashtag, they are more likely, not less, to partake in more significant forms of activism offline. The rationale for this is cognitive dissonance theory, which posits that people want consistency, so they would engage in activism both online and offline to achieve this (Festinger 1957; Lee and Hsieh 2013). Using this argument, it would make sense that even if hashtag feminism does not foment significant change on its own, it would lead to actions that would.

The aim of this chapter is not to resolve whether hashtag feminism is more or less likely to lead to offline activism. Our focus is not on whether hashtag feminism is merely good or bad or useful or useless. We are interested in understanding hashtag feminism in the larger discourse of women in the computer-mediated world of social media. We argue that hashtag feminism is a techno-feminist performance that operates within the regulatory norms (Butler 1993) of our digital world offering empowerment in some cases, and containment in others (Newsom and Lengel 2003, 2013). Much as blogging has been found to both empower women and hold them captive through hegemonic regulatory norms (Chen 2013; Lopez 2009), hashtag feminism also offers potential for that uneasy tension. It is impossible, we suggest, to remove any feminist act from the societal power relations in which it operates. One must consider competing discourses of power, social location, and cultural expectations and experience to fully understand how hashtag feminism exists and contributes to a large sense of online feminism. As Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (2000) explain: "There is no such thing as a feminism free of asymmetrical power relations. Rather, transnational feminist practices, as we call them, involve forms of alliance, subversion, and complicity within which asymmetries and inequalities can be critiqued."

Our goal is to explicate the tension inherent in a tool such as the hashtag for feminist empowerment as a means of understanding how feminism is articulated online, who defines it, and what directions this suggests for feminist media theory and research as a whole. To do this, we draw on examples of hashtag feminism and analyze them using a techno-feminist lens that emanates from our own social locations, as one white American woman, one Indian woman, and one black American woman. We also acknowledge that hashtags may be somewhat fleeting. They have been around a decade, but there is no promise they will continue for another decade. Like blogging, MySpace, and other technological developments that rose to prominence and then receded, it is possible or even likely that hashtags will not live on forever. Yet, we urge that their power is still important to document because they will not disappear without being replaced with a more potent tool of activism. Therefore, explaining how hashtags provide voice to the voiceless will offer scholars and practitioners of the future a vital template to understanding how digital media more broadly enable and augment people's efforts to affect social change.

HASHTAGS THAT UNITE AND DIVIDE

The #HowToSpotAFeminist hashtag was started by a politically conservative American radio host in early 2015 as a means to perpetuate the "common 'feminazi' stereotype, ample with misandry and body hair" (Romano 2015). One of the tweets read: "#HowToSpotAFeminist—Usually fat & ugly, always inherently unlikeable, supremely hypocritical, snarky, annoying, deluded, intransigent" (Romano 2015). Feminists co-opted the hashtag, reclaiming it as their own and began using it to educate about what feminism really is (Badahur 2015). Media attention followed the issue, bringing greater prominence to the hashtag. One of the reclaimed tweets read: "#HowToSpotAFeminist Look in the mirror. Do you believe in equality for all people? If yes, congratulations. You spotted a feminist." A year later, the hashtag continues with a mix of tweets that both celebrate feminism and do it violence, "evoking feminism and repudiating it at the same time" (Koffman and Gill 2013). One that remains at this writing reads, "#HowToSpotAFeminist? So ugly that even in a world of rapists they'd always be safe."

This hashtag offers a vivid example of tension over hashtags as a feminist tool. Certainly, the effort by feminist to reclaim the hashtag and perpetuate a positive space of women had some value. It undoubtedly raised some awareness and gave women voice to express their power, even if unheeded by many on Twitter. It certainly appeared to have rallied feminists, forging at least a temporary intimate public of solidarity as those like-minded souls sought to educate others about how feminism is defined and explained. We do not doubt there is value in that. We agree that to challenge subordination "women must first recognize the ideology that legitimizes male domination and understand how it perpetuates their oppression" (Batliwala 1994, 131). Reclaiming the hashtag demonstrates this recognition. We also agree that often the first step for feminism in rectifying subordination is having voice (Wackwitz and Rakow 2006). There is no way to measure the sense of solidarity one or many people may have felt as feminist triumphed—at least momentarily—over hate in the digital sphere. Yet, the limited power of the hashtag to affect actual change is made obvious by the fact that it was so quickly taken back by the misogynists, disrupting any intimate public that may have formed and reasserting a discourse of victimization and powerless for women. Despite feminists' good intentions, the hashtag resurfaced "violent anti-feminist engagement" that operates as a form of disciplinary rhetoric (Cole 2015; Foucault 1995). While reclamation of the hashtag offered a promise of

liberating agency, it actually reinvigorated the "disciplinary gaze" of trolls exerting power over women, casting the digital sphere as threatening. Even though some of the misogynist tweets may be intended to be sarcastic or even humorous does not diminish their sting. "The use of humor by these trolls indicates a cultural logic that is normatively biased towards and comfortable with the violent discipline of women in order to keep them in their perceived place" (Cole 2015, 357). Social media, in the glare of the public sphere, amplifies the violence, suggesting that any agency gained through reclaiming the hashtag was lost in the resulting digital record of oppression that remains with the hashtag.

In 2014, the #YesAllWomen hashtag sprung up on Twitter in response to a killing spree near the University of California, Santa Barbara, where the shooter claimed his motivation was revenge against women for rejecting his sexual advances (Lovett and Nagourney 2014; Thrift 2014). Women worldwide quickly began to share experiences with violence and abuse, creating a virtual record of 1.5 million stories in just four days (Thrift 2014). The hashtag proved a uniting moment for women against violence and oppression, yet this hashtag, and others, should "inspire self-reflexivity among feminists regarding intersectional inclusivity" and highlight the problem with "grounding feminist solidarity in white, middle-class, US-centric, heteronormative privilege" (Rodino-Colocino 2014, 1113). The hashtag generated positive energy for sure. It also led black feminist scholar Jenn M. Jackson to begin tweeting with #YesAllWhiteWomen to assert her fear that if the shooting that spurred the hashtag had taken place at a historically black college, it would not have garnered the same attention in the mainstream press or the Twitterverse (Rodino-Colocino 2014; Venditouli 2014). In a similar vein, the #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen hashtag was used to challenge how hashtag feminism can fall into a trap of focusing on white women (Loza 2016). Susana Loza (2016) argues this hashtag was a method to question feminism's direction more broadly: "Is mainstream feminism destined to remain the terrain of White women? Or can the digital media praxis of women of color, their hashtag feminism and Tumblr activism, their blogging and livejournaling, broaden and radically redefine the very field of feminism." We agree with this rebuke and submit that hashtag feminism has the potential, although not always realized, to usurp traditional feminist boundaries and make a space in the digital sphere for multiple feminisms with, perhaps, some overlapping discourse and camaraderie that acknowledge women for their unique identities but also articulate their commonalities.

Particularly for women who have been "theoretically erased" (Crenshaw 1989) in mainstream media as well as digital media, the hashtag can be a powerful tool. However, in any feminist discourse, it is problematic to ignore the force of intersectionality, which creates the potential for violence from both race and sexual discrimination (Crenshaw 1989) on women of color. Women's experiences online are not a monolith, as women's worldviews differ markedly based not only on their race, but also their cultural history, socio-economic status, education and other intersecting factors. It is also essential to consider a post-colonial view in feminist research and avoid constructing false notions of what is western or what is third world (Sandoval 2000). Therefore, by exploring a wide range of women's experiences with hashtag feminism we urge for a more inclusiveness and more nuanced understanding of feminist theory. We offer the following hashtags as merely examples that resonated with us and illustrate an expansive view on how hashtag feminism operates. We caution this list is not exhaustive. In addition, hashtags constantly shift in their currency, so the ones we list here, may be usurped by others in months or years to come.

Intersectionality in Hashtag Feminism

Cashawn Thompson created the #BlackGirlsMagic hashtag in 2013 to acknowledge and affirm the accomplishments of black women and to counter the narrative of the erasure of black women in mainstream media. As of this writing, it had been used more than 9000 times as a means of black women intervening on behalf of themselves and other black women within the digital space. The hashtag is a way to create a space where radical feminist work online is possible, work that rebukes the notion that digital spaces allow only the empowerment of "white, educated, and non-disabled women" (Carstensen 2014). This is a crucial reason why digital black girlhood needs to be acknowledged and archived through such a hashtag, so their voices are not silenced. This hashtag is an example of a larger potential of the Internet to offer alternative depictions of minorities and to be a place where marginalizing and stereotypical racial portrayals can be contested and refined (Cunningham 2013). Similarly, the #StandWithJada hashtag, which started in 2014, became a means for black women to flout a destructive hashtag called #JadaPose that mocked a 16-year-old African-American girl who was raped (Williams 2015). #FreeCeCe was used to bring attention to the case of a black transgender

woman who was charged with manslaughter after what she says was a defense against a transphobic and racist attack (Williams 2015). These examples, and many others like them, demonstrate how black women, using something as simple as a hashtag, can draw attention to issues that traditional media or others may not notice.

Thus, hashtag feminism offers potential for what Patricia Hill Collins calls "safe spaces" for black women in the digital sphere, where they can be exclusionary in a sense while aiming for greater societal inclusion (Collins 2000, 110). As Sherri Williams (2015) explains: "When White feminists miss opportunities to stand with their Black sisters and mainstream media overlooks the plight of nonwhite women, women of color use social media as a tool to unite and inform" (342). This dovetails with one of the important goals of Black feminism to challenge stereotypical images of black women in media, including "stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients and hot mommas" (Collins 2000, 67). These controlling images are necessary to "the political economy of domination, fostering black women's oppression," and they also give power to those able to "define these symbols" (Collins 2000, 67). The prevalence of these hashtags speaks in direct opposition to these controlling images by offering alternative ones, and also by giving the power to black women, as these hashtags are self-defined, and not produced by white men or mainstream media gatekeepers.

It is also problematic to treat all feminists who are not white as a monolithic "other" or to only consider a black-white binary. In many ways hashtag feminism critiques this worry by allowing individual women from a variety of feminisms to craft hashtags that legitimize their own experiences. For Latinas, for example, feminism involves a need for voice for those symbolically annihilated (Strinati 2004) in traditional media and digital culture, but it also takes on another layer of intersectionality. Latina feminisms cross boundaries of race, ethnicity, nationalism, and transnationalism. Similarly, there is not an "overarching theory of Latin American feminism, but rather related strains of Hispanic feminist practice" (Sandoval 2008, 5). Implicit in these feminisms is the destruction of the stereotypes related to Latinas (Castillo 1992), as emotionally charged temptresses who act more than they think. The #LatinasAreNot hashtag, which started in fall 2015 responds to those stereotypes by asserting that Latinas are not all the same. HuffPo Latino Voices initiated the hashtag to fight against the one-dimensional stereotypes in mainstream media and the response was overwhelming (Ramirez and Moreno 2015). As one

tweeter wrote: "#Latinasarenot to be put in ANY boxes-We're just as diverse of a group of people as it gets. What #Latinasare is proud to create sisterhood!" (Ramirez and Moreno 2015). Another on Instagram reads: "#LatinasAreNot 'spicy', 'exotic'. Mama taught me: If a man wants to see something exotic, send him to the zoo."

In 2013, freelance writer Suey Park started #NotYourAsianSidekick, and it quickly became a trending topic on Twitter with thousands of Asian Americans joining with women worldwide (Capachi 2013) to open up a "space for Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women to critique patriarchy in Asian American spaces and racism of White feminism" (Loza 2016, 12). As Park told *The Washington Post:* "Well, I think the hashtag is interesting because it doesn't say Asian American feminism. I had the intention of building a base and what feminism is without putting a label on it. I think for a lot of women who don't feel like they can really come out as feminist, #NotYourAsianSidekick is a way to come into that conversation" (Capachi 2013).

Both #LatinasAreNot and #NotYourAsianSidekick challenge the performance of feminism as a white space or as a black-white binary, and in so doing highlight the value of intersectionality in all feminist discourse. These hashtags offer the potential for intimate publics (Berlant 2011) to form within specific groups of women, rather than across women as a whole, as well as to educate the larger body of feminists of particular nuances in expressions of feminism that may be unique to some women. They also illustrate that privilege is inherent in intimate publics (Berlant 2011), and that for a true feeling of empowering camaraderie to exist women must be able to find their "safe spaces" (Collins 2000) within the larger feminist discourse. Sometimes, these spaces must exclude other groups of women to be truly inclusive to the subset of women who are affected by the experience the hashtag describes. It is hashtags like these, along with many others, that offer voice and visibility that is so lacking in other media forms.

Hashtag Feminism Worldwide

Digital feminist activism has also played an important role across cultural and global perspectives. For example, in India the reach of social media makes it a potentially valuable tool for feminists (Stache 2015), and feminist hashtags play a pivotal role in highlighting feminist issues and also ensuring the attention of the mainstream media (Guha 2015).

Social media enacts an online space that "allows for 'intertextuality,' or cross-reference between social context, public events and developments, and the political scene" (Warninck and Heineman 2007, ix). In 2015 and 2016, hashtags in the area of women's health saw a rise, breaking the silence around taboo topics and protesting for the reinstatement of basic rights. Twenty-year-old college student Nikita Azad started the #HappytoBleed hashtag on Facebook after the Sabarimala temple, one of the most ancient and prominent Hindu shrines in India, banned all women, ages 10 to 50, from entry for fear they might be menstruating and pollute its holiness (Anand 2016; Richards 2015; Varghese 2015). The hashtag has empowered women to take a stand against the menstruation rules and challenge a larger narrative that reduces women's power at puberty. As Azad wrote on the campaign's Facebook wall: "As soon as a girl starts menstruating, a lot of insecurities around her sexual nature are built, and society starts strenuously guarding her sexual behavior as well as other routine activities." The Facebook page, with a tagline "#SmashPatriarchy" had 8000 likes as of February 2016, and the campaign has received great attention, particularly from young urban Indian women, throughout social media (Why Are Indian Women 'Happy to Bleed'? 2015). In the hashtag, "happy" is a satirical jab at those who see menstruation as impure.

#SafeCityIndia, #BoardtheBus, and #EverydaySexism are hashtags feminists have used to "break the silence around sexual harassment—and document it" (D'Silva 2015; Eagle 2015). The #SafeCityIndia campaign was started after a 23-year-old female intern was raped and killed on a Delhi bus, and it grew into an interactive site with more than 6000 stories from women in India, Kenya, and Nepal and resources to help women in danger. #BoardTheBus started in Delhi to both raise awareness about women's safety and "shift the conversation toward women's rights to claim public space" (Eagle 2015). Women use the hashtag on YouTube to share their experiences of being harassed on buses, and it organizes women into intimate publics of solidarity to board buses together and actively claim that space (Eagle 2015). In a similar fashion, #EverydaySexism brought together women from 20 countries, sharing more than 1000 stories of being masturbated at in public and the violence that brought them (Eagle 2015). The collectivity of the experience emboldens the women. Even those who merely read the stories are moved. As Ryan Bowles Eagle (2015, 352) explains:

> The effect of reading so many similar stories in such sheer numbers, different voices testifying to similar experiences from diverse places, serves as powerful evidence for the pervasiveness of violence against women—evidence that cannot be easily silenced. Collectively, these stories speak to the lack of any physical space or time of day in which women can feel they belong in public. These hashtag feeds also serve as archives of information, a central collaborative hub where women can share and circulate feminist resources among themselves.

These examples show how hashtag feminism can unite women across the world and at least pave the way for real change. Hashtag feminism offers a substantially lower barrier for women to participate in activism (Ahmed and Jaidka 2013), but using social media to raise awareness and emphasize a need for safer spaces for women also has its own special weaknesses. The stark digital divide in countries, such as India, suggest online feminist activism, while potent for those who participate, is out of reach of many who need it. For example, less than 20 percent of the population of India has Internet access, and users of social media there are predominantly men (Belair-Gagnon et al. 2012). Even among women with access, feminist hashtag campaigns are unlikely to succeed unless they spark the attention of mainstream media (Guha 2015). So even a vigorous hashtag campaign on Twitter may reach very few women actually facing oppression (Poell 2015) or do little to change those women's lives. #HappyToBleed garnered attention, but it did not lead to an overturning of the rule banning women from the temple. Particularly in remote areas, hashtag feminism holds little sway compared to traditional media sources, such as newspapers and radio. In areas such as Chhattisgarh, where people are poor and tribal, how does social media activism help? A troubling example occurred in 2014 when a 14-year-old girl was dragged out of her home in Shahjahanpur village, Uttar Pradesh, and set ablaze for resisting rapists (Sabin 2014). She did not need a hashtag. She needed real help.

Even when a hashtag garners the media attention that seems to be needed to lead to action (Higgs 2015), it may produce conflicting discourses. Case in point is #JusticeForLiz, which Kenyan women started after the gang rape of a 16-year-old Kenyan girl in 2013. In four weeks, an online petition spread with the hashtag gathered more than 1 million signatures and led to street protests in Nairobi, elevating the story to international news (Higgs 2015). The girl's case was brought to trial, and problems with Kenya's justice system were illuminated. Twitter made

activism less costly and time-consuming and led to success, but tweets also simplified the issue and fostered a perception of Africa among a western audience that fit the dominant narratives associated with poverty, conflict, AIDS, and oppression (Higgs 2015). The white western audience was cast as liberator, confirming this narrative: "Within the discourse is entrenched a White (feminist) savior complex, positing that African women's apparent suffering can be alleviated through White-Western intervention" (Higgs 2015, 345).

The #BringBackOurGirls hashtag used worldwide after the 2014 kidnapping of approximately 300 Nigeria schoolgirls because they craved education offers another cogent example (Khoja-Moolji 2015). The hashtag united feminists in a seemingly large intimate public, and the hashtag was used to pressure the United States and Nigerian governments to take action. However, Shenila Khoja-Moolji (2015) argues that when disparate groups come together this way it ignores the history and cultural significance of the situation and creates a false equivalence, reifying long-standing colonial and imperial attitudes about "others." In particular, white women can feel emboldened by assisting in such an effort and feel a sense of shared connection with these women that belies the true differences in their social locations and privilege. In addition, Western women may feel an inflated sense of credit for their relatively small actions, perpetuating a "technological fetish" (Dean 2009) that exaggerates a particular person's role in an online movement. Khoja-Moolji (2015, 349) explains:

> While it is important to seek justice for the specific suffering of the schoolgirls kidnapped in Nigeria, this form of feminism produces an oversimplified analysis of the situation …. We are not neutral bodies; we bring with ourselves impressions of history and its affects which make it possible for us to enter into particular kinds of affective relationships, or not, with the objects that we encounter. Thus, the participants' eagerness to take up hashtag feminism on behalf of third world schoolgirls from Nigeria betrays the awareness and histories that they bring to feminist activism.

Future of Feminist Theorizing Online

Our aim with this chapter was to critique the feminist hashtag, as well as explicate the tension inherent in such a tool of empowerment to make larger connections about feminist media theory and how feminism is produced online. Our analysis suggests that the hashtag has great potential for women's empowerment because it allows women themselves from

a variety of feminist perspectives to define their own space online. Hashtag feminism allows particular groups of women to rally around a hashtag and form intimate publics with other women who share their experiences, cultural history, and social locations. Hashtags such as #LatinasAreNot, #NotYourAsianSidekick, #BlackGirlsMagic, and #WhyAllWomen in particular foster specific instances of agency through allowing women to define and articulate their own feminisms. Hashtagging offers an easy and inexpensive means for women, particularly those who lack voice in traditional media, to draw attention to issues they deem as important, unshackling them from the persistent regulatory norms (Butler 1993) that would quell their speech. With a hashtag, women can speak out at will, and, in so doing, define and redefine feminism in the contemporary world by legitimizing what they see and hear and feel. Much like the #Egypt hashtag helped people mobilize and effect social change, hashtags such as #HappyToBleed, #BoardTheBus, and #BringBackOurGirls can aid the progress of real change in women's life, going beyond merely raised awareness of subjugation but altering political realities.

Yet, our analysis also clearly shows the limitations of this computer-mediated tool. Attempts to reclaim violent anti-feminist hashtags, such as #HowToSpotAFeminist may offer bounded success before falling victim to the hegemonic norms that impose a disciplinary rhetoric (Cole 2015; Foucault 1995). Efforts to free women using a hashtag like #YesAllWomen may flout gender violence and entitlement (Thrift 2014) but also divide women by failing to appreciate the privilege inherent in the intimate public the hashtag creates, and, therefore, perpetuate a white feminist worldview (Loza 2016). In other cases, hashtags, such as #JusticeForLiz may elicit the attention from the news media needed to make change, but, at the same time, confirm a Western narrative that Africa and other countries are troubled and in need of white saviors (Higgs 2015; Sandoval 2000). Or feminist hashtags may suggest a solidarity among women that does not truly exists because of differences in culture and history (Koffman and Gill 2013). Finally, hashtags also may target an oppressed population that lacks the digital literacy or web access to benefit from them.

These finding suggest a greater need for studying and theorizing on hashtags from a feminist perspective. While many hashtags have been examined, many more have not. Particularly unexplored theoretically are hashtags that do not attract intense media scrutiny from newspapers, television, and radio. As a result, the corpus of feminist hashtags that have been studied is dominated by those that have been successful enough to

trend on Twitter or to warrant media attention. Less popular hashtags or those that reflect smaller segments of the worldwide population may be left in the dark. Theorizing about the impact of hashtag feminism is in its infancy, suggesting an uneasy tension between the agency and limitations of this particular tool. Our findings suggest that future work must be done to provide a fuller picture of how hashtag feminism both flouts and reinforces the regulatory norms of society (Butler 1993). Black feminists have begun to explore hashtags that relate to black women, but much more theorizing is needed in regard to Latina, Asian, and other feminisms. Hashtag feminism has begun to define a digital feminist culture that is both united and fragmented. It gives voice, but also silences. It boosts agency, but also constrains that agency. To truly harness the power of hashtag feminism, we must continue our exploration of these hashtags as they are used and abused in the digital sphere.

We suggest our analysis offers several fruitful areas for feminist theorizing. First, we believe that hashtag feminism demonstrates that women define their own feminisms online, and that they must take up this power and continue on this path. Hashtags enable women to define their own protests, give voice to their social movements, and to circumvent traditional media in a drive for political and social justice. Yet, hashtags are only a tool, much like blogging or gathering in rallies or handing out leaflets. What brings women power is not the hashtag, which is merely an affordance of the media platform; it is the voice and the agency in which women offer that voice. Feminist empowerment is a process (Batliwala 1994) by which women realize their own oppression and that leads them to see that "they are not only personally oppressed, but that women as a gender are oppressed" (Green 2008). Women cannot just use a hashtag and leave it be. They must connect the hashtag to a larger discourse about oppression of women. They cannot be satisfied with merely forming an intimate public online that raises awareness yet foments little real change. The hashtag— or whatever technological affordance replaces it in the future—is merely the first step to empowerment and equality. To complete the circle of awareness raised by the hashtag, women must connect their activism to real-world protests. They must not just like and click and share a hashtag. They must push for changes in laws. They must fight for equality across countries and be intersectional in their feminisms. They must connect the hashtag they retweet and share to larger issues of women's persecution

and abuse. How do we tangibly do that? We do not limit our activism to merely an obsession with technology (Dean 2009). We must walk away from our computers, and we must write our lawmakers to affect change. We must run for office and support like-minded candidates who share our goal of a world free of oppression. We must get involved as women have for centuries and fight. "Voice is an important—even the most important—goal and strategy for rectifying subordination" (Wackwitz and Rakow 2006) but voice without action is dead.

When thinking of the #NastyWomen hashtag that we used to start this chapter, we cannot help but feel mixed emotions at its use. While it gained currency for a moment, and it shed light on Trump's offensive language, we fear it will soon be forgotten or rendered only a footnote in a campaign season mired by controversy. The true lesson from the hashtag is not that women can mobilize and share in an intimate public (Berlant 2011) that thwarts a misogynistic view of women. Women have always been able to do that. They shared their troubles over picket fences in the days gone by. Later, they blogged about their oppression and lack of societal power (Chen 2013; Lopez 2009). They had voice but affected little real change. We fear hashtags may produce the same results if women do not galvanize their voice into action. So how would this work? When hashtags are used to draw attention to feminist topics, women must challenge the mainstream media to cover the issue behind the hashtag—not merely chronicle how popular the hashtag has become. Women must write their own longer pieces as op-ed articles or as submissions to news organizations to show the violence behind the hashtag and offer suggestions on how to solve the problem, rather than merely point it out. Reflecting back on #NastyWomen, we suggest the goal of feminism today must be to do more than share the hashtag. We must connect to political action to ensure that a presidential candidate could never again feel comfortable on a national stage disparaging his female opponent in such a condescending way. We must create a world where feminism is not an activist group but a way of life. This approach moves the hashtag from theory to practice. It makes more relevant the type of attention a hashtag brings, and it paves the way for whatever technology replaces the hashtag in social movements. The hashtag highlights our words when we speak out—but we must ensure that voice is heard and acted upon. We must not merely retweet #NastyWomen, but we must become the nasty woman who changes our world.

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Teaching Girls Online Skills for Knowledge Projects: A Research-Based Feminist Intervention

Stine Eckert and Linda Steiner

Feminists inside and outside the academy consistently seek not merely to understand and explain the causes of oppression of various kinds, but also to undo oppression, to change social relations and political structures so that these are more equitable and people are empowered. Action orientation is a guiding principle of feminist research (Fonow and Cook 1991).[1] In this chapter, we address the extent to which contemporary feminist media and communication research can and does lead to interventions. We show that intervention and public scholarship remain defining features of feminist research and feminist methodology.

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Interventions emerge in several domains. First, some scholars plausibly argue that feminist research itself is a form of political action. That is, as a political philosophy feminism is inherently transformational and liberating in spirit and ambition. In taking women seriously and in centering inquiry on women's histories, women's problems and unfolding stories of feminist action, doing feminist research becomes a form of intervention. Likewise, feminists can legitimately assert that changing consciousness is itself emancipatory. Classroom teaching and feminist pedagogy can change students, enabling them to understand the operations of sex/gender structures, sexism, and intersections of misogyny with racism, homophobia, religious bias, and other biases or discrimination. Faculty guide and mentor students outside the classroom, for example, by advising organizations that deal with sexual violence, body image problems, and eating disorders. Students can forever apply such insights to their own lives, to the experiences of others, and to abstract problem solving. Feminist approaches to media and communication courses or to courses in the intersecting problems of race, gender, and other identity dimensions with respect to media content and production, as well as in feminist theory per se also "qualify" as interventionist in this sense.

More directly, conducting research whose findings are potentially usable for public policy or that help improve women's situations by producing knowledge that women can directly use (Acker et al. 1991) makes feminist scholarship interventionist. This chapter, however, is concerned with specific and focused attempts at feminist interventions that go beyond the ideational. We are interested in the potential of feminist academics to bring about change outside the academy, whether small and provisional or profound.

To that end, after first reviewing the development and theorization of feminism in the academy, we mention several overlapping and important ways in which feminist scholars in communication and media studies have directed some specific efforts at intervention, with the ambition of producing research that leads to policy change or reform or that returns knowledge to the communities that were researched. Then we describe and evaluate our own efforts to that end, detailing our experiences with setting up an intervention to help middle and early high school girls learn online skills. We conclude with some observations about how or how well the academic triangle of research, teaching and service can accommodate interventionist ambitions, especially for tenure-track feminist media and communication scholars at American universities.

The Development and Theorization of Feminism in the US Academy

Beginning in the early 1970s, the women's movement brought many feminists into the academy. In turn this generation carved out a space for feminist work. But projects for women, women's studies, and feminisms were highly complicated and uneven, whether these feminist scholars found disciplinary homes in women's studies programs and departments, or positioned themselves as cross-disciplinary feminists. As a result, the most common example of an effective feminist intervention by academics has involved changes to universities, on their home turf, specifically to improve the campus climate for women (Hart 2008).

Some of these efforts were led by individuals determined to resist or change what they perceived as a hostile (or insufficiently welcoming) climate for women. Theodore (1986) studied 470 academic women protesters: they worked with internal institutional grievance procedures, filed complaints with government agencies, or even resigned from their academic position because they disagreed with some institutional decision or policy. Because the experiences of these "campus troublemakers" in the 1970s and 1980s were often negative and largely unsuccessful, Theodore concluded that collective strength and institutional strategies were needed. Essentially responding to that call, Hart (2008) compared the efforts of campus grassroots organizations for women faculty at two public Research I universities in the United States, finding evidence of the strategies of both professionalized activism and activist professionals. Hart noted that, as late as the 1990s, many academic feminists felt that conventional career success, marked by achievements in research, teaching, and service, needed to be taken seriously to facilitate incremental institutional change. Of course, feminisms themselves have been mutually shaped by the cultural, economic, political, and professional changes inside and outside the academy over the past 25 years. Meanwhile, Hart wrote, further contributing to a more professionalized and less radical academic feminist culture have been the newest doctoral recipients, who may take women's cultural and economic gains for granted. Yet, obstacles for women in the academy remain. Women academics are still penalized, for example, when (or perhaps for) rearing young children while climbing the ladder to tenure, full professorship, and high administrative positions; in contrast, men academics with children do not suffer from loss in salary or assumptions about their ability to research (Mason et al. 2013).

Several initiatives to address such issues have been implemented. For instance, the Advance initiative of the National Science Foundation has launched a large variety of programs to help women effectively navigate university structures to maximize the likelihood of success and to transform the institutional culture and environment at the local level. Advance programs include, inter alia, monitoring of salary and status differences between women and men; lectures showcasing top women scholars, mentoring programs for women at the assistant and associate levels; and discussions of various problems confronting women academics, such as issues of leadership and work/home balance. The establishment of women's studies programs or departments, other resources for women, and scholarships and fellowships for women and/or for graduate students doing feminist work, arguably, also align with such ambitions. For example, the Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Fellowship for the Advancement of Women in Communication organizes annual workshops and provides a network for addressing and even solving career issues.

But questions of feminist intervention per se that go beyond helping women—even with a highly generous and encompassing definition of feminism—is more fraught. The academy does not reward activist work in the same way as it rewards conventional scholarship; a preference for "thinking" (i.e., knowledge production) versus "doing" (i.e., activism) remains (Hart 2008). Ellen Messer-Davidow (2002) worries that women's studies scholars accepted a mutually hurtful rift with feminist activists in exchange for the benefits of institutional acceptance. Cherise Charleswell (2014), a womanist writer/ blogger who chairs the Women's Issues Department at the Hampton Institute, a working-class think tank, notes one consequence of US feminism's reluctance and slowness to acknowledge racism and classism within feminisms and the institutionalization of feminisms within academia: "despite its grassroots origins and focus on social activism and transformative change, feminism has become the property of academics; which has led to open discussions about whether feminism is still relevant, needed, or useful." Meanwhile, the tension between feminisms and women's studies remains. Charleswell explains that feminisms happen within academic culture but also remain deeply rooted in the larger sociocultural arena. In contrast, women's studies programs (and gender and sexuality studies programs) operate strictly in academia, and are shaped by academic culture and epistemology, ultimately legitimizing academia's role in the larger culture. As outsiders see it, effecting change is a secondary or tertiary concern; their primary focus is publishing

inaccessible research written for other privileged academics (preaching to the choir) and earning tenure and promotions. Such outsider critics (Charleswell is not unique) regard academic feminists as imprisoned by elitist institutional structures, reluctant to seem too "political," and isolated from grassroots feminist movements and from real world problems, meanwhile enjoying their alleged comfortable status.

Part of the issue (which is not to call it a problem) is the continuing fluidity of feminisms. A 2016 national survey by the *Washington Post* and Kaiser Family Foundation found that six in ten women and one-third of men call themselves a feminist or strong feminist. Yet, over 40 percent of their sample see the movement as angry (i.e., in a bad way), and 40 percent claim feminism unfairly blames men for women's challenges. The survey finds a new feminism among young people:

> This New Wave feminism is shaped less by a shared struggle against oppression than by a collective embrace of individual freedoms, concerned less with targeting narrowly defined enemies than with broadening feminism's reach through inclusiveness, and held together not by a handful of national organizations and charismatic leaders but by the invisible bonds of the Internet and social media.

The Women's Marches in the United States and beyond with millions of women and men from all backgrounds in January 2017 were manifest testimony to this spirit, and an expression of frustration after Hillary Clinton lost the US presidential election despite winning the popular vote. Only recently did conversations about how gender figured into her loss emerge. For instance, Rebecca Traiser (2017) writes in *New York* magazine: "The anger at Clinton from some quarters—in tandem with the beatification of her from others—reminds us just how much this election tapped into unresolved and still largely unexplored issues around women and power."

These issues are complex. In a sophisticated essay on the challenges of experimenting with more radical and creative models of the feminist digital archive, Jacqueline Wernimont (2013) notes that "'feminism' has become worse than an irrelevance, a new 'national dirty word': a term that is meaningful as a warning sign, rather than as an entry point to a complex set of historically and geographically specific ideas and practices. The consequence of feminisms' historical trajectory 'from marginalization, to relative centrality and institutional prestige, and now into a perilous kind of irrelevance" is to elide the place of feminist work, renders it invisible, and to appropriate its successes for "a more general, and more palatable, liberatory agenda." Both real and perceived hostility to feminist discourse

and critique, she writes, creates pressure to hide explicitly feminist agendas. Wernimont mentioned foundations that refuse to fund projects that promote particular political or ideological points of view or that advocate particular social action programs. At least some scholars fear that this forces the grant applicants to mask the feminism of their proposals, which means the history of that work is lost.

This assessment may be overly harsh. The situation has changed considerably since the 1970s. Not only can women progress into and through the tenure-track but they can do so on the basis of conducting feminist research (beginning with dissertations from feminist perspectives), teaching feminist content, publishing feminist research (in both non-feminist and feminist journals, such as *Feminist Media Studies* and *Ada*) and providing feminist service. In the context of service, feminist interventions outside academia are evident, fundable, and valued. Rifts within feminisms continue. Nonetheless, more feminists (this should include feminists of any gender, too, including transgender) can partner with community and global activists. That said, the lingering problems of sexism, an anti-feminist backlash, and environmental hostility to women (and/or mothers and families) have not been solved. So, if interventions are (merely) "relatively" safe, what precisely does that mean?

Varieties of Activist Experience

Cataloging all kinds of feminist activism outside academic by media, journalism, and communication professors is impossible, especially given, on the one hand, activities that are relatively removed from scholars' professional expertise in media, journalism, and communication, and, on the other hand, activities whose feminisms are soft-pedaled to avoid political alienation.[2] But a brief tour of some of the relevant work is perhaps helpful to delineate the range of projects. This includes participating in various international and/or global media monitoring projects; tracking women's participation in—especially high-level leadership—in various media professions and industries and then generating policy on the basis of that data; and working with NGOs or governmental bodies that are concerned with gender issues, such as the United Nations and the Association for Women's Rights in Development.

A second path is returning research outcomes or research skills to communities who can use them to their benefit. For example, academics at Cornell University worked with the feminist blog *Hollaback!* to conduct a

large global survey on street harassment, finding that over 84 percent of women globally had been harassed before the age of 18; over half of the respondents reported being groped or fondled without their consent in the year of the survey.[3] Others have built entire centers such as the interdisciplinary team of professors who created the Prevention Innovation Research Center (2016) at the University of New Hampshire. The Center has created campaigns and training sessions for the prevention of sexual and relationship violence and conducted research for a White House task force.

Third is direct involvement in social movements or social/political action. For example, young feminists launched a series of demonstrations—proudly called SlutWalks—after a Toronto police officer told York University students in 2011 that if women wanted to avoid rape they should not dress like sluts. The resulting outrage spread quickly and globally, involving feminists of all ages and stripes, including many faculty who appreciated the movement's significance in challenging patriarchy's attempts to control women and their sexualities through sexual violence and slut-shaming; they used social media and mass media to produce cross-national flows of information about SlutWalk activities and thus transnational solidarity (Carr, 2013). Other feminist scholars are involved in anti-porn and anti-rape projects. These projects also have their critics. Among the moderate critics, Janell Hobson, a black women's studies professor at State University of New York, Albany, did not oppose SlutWalk, but urged black women to consider how to (re)appropriate the term slut to suit their needs, putting black women front and center in the movement. Historically, white women have benefited from the racialized virgin/whore dichotomy embodied in words like "slut," encouraging black women to distrust white women (Hobson 2011).

The last form mentioned here involves acting on research results by becoming a public scholar and writing for news media and/or social media and blogs. The notion of public scholarship remains a subject of debate, including regarding its short-term and long-term impacts, as does the value (or not) of emphasizing topics that the public regards as "sexy" (Mulholland 2015). That said, scholars are running (group) blogs to bring feminist voices into public arenas. For instance, two women professors founded The Feminist Wire group blog to provide "socio-political and cultural critique of anti-feminist, racist, and imperialist politics"; among the blog's editors are several other professors as well as activists, poets, students and artists. Likewise, the Crunk Feminist Collective group blog, also founded by two black women professors,

provides support and camaraderie for feminists of color, queer and straight, inside and outside the academy. Scholars are bringing feminist critiques and analyses to the Huffington Post; RH Reality Check (which focuses on sexual and reproductive health); *Ms. Magazine*; geek.feminism.org; and Bitch Media, which offers feminist responses to mainstream media and popular culture, features activism, and has a Bitch on Campus program. Several graduate students contribute to the blog Everyday Feminism, which emphasizes what it calls "compassionate activism" and intersectional feminism as well as self-help regarding everyday violence, discrimination, and marginalization.

WIKID GRRLS: TEACHING GIRLS ONLINE SKILLS FOR KNOWLEDGE PROJECTS

We launched the Wikid GRRLS intervention after our studies of Wikipedia's gender gap found that women continued to regard Wikipedia, especially its moderators, as unwelcoming to women; the Wikipedia community seemed proud of and determined to retain its geeky quality, even if this alienated women and discouraged submission of materials perceived to interest women (Eckert and Steiner 2013a, b). Our intervention also followed research (see Glott and Ghosh 2010) finding that women remained under 13 percent of Wikipedia contributors (people who edit or write articles), despite initiatives to try to increase the proportion of women contributors. Wikipedia's pool of editors is further dwindling due to a rise in mobile technology (Lih 2015). The gender gap has not been closed.

Part of the problem, besides ever-present time constraints, is the socialization of girls when it comes to working with computers and the internet. Girls and women use computer and online content, of course. But few women work as programmers, software developers or other behind-the-scenes professions to produce computer and internet software and content. Somewhere around middle school girls get the vibe that computer technology is not for them: It's supposedly a "boy's thing" to tinker with the insides and back sides of the computer and internet. It's socialization; it's stereotypes; it's expectations. Nonetheless, action can be taken to change them.

Our Wikid GRRLS program (the spelling intended to evoke the riot grrrls, the underground feminist punk movement that started in the early 1990s, often associated with third-wave feminism) was originally established as a free ten-week after-school program, taught by university students

in local schools. The goal of Wikid GRRLS is to encourage and help middle school-aged girls to think of themselves as tech-savvy and smart, and to give them the confidence and skills to contribute to online knowledge projects. In its pilot semester, both doctoral and undergraduate students from the University of Maryland taught the program in three public schools and one private school around College Park, Maryland. We designed a curriculum, broken down into ten hour-long lesson plans, that taught a variety of online skills, including how to run and contribute to wiki-based knowledge websites (such as Wikipedia). We emphasized skills that are engaging (that girls see as fun) and have wide applicability, across their school curriculum and beyond. These skills involved technical mastery (how to navigate a wiki, incorporate video, design, smart searches with Google), interpersonal/social relationships (team work, collaboration, moderating, editing), and general learning (writing and especially research). We launched a website and blog to publicize the project, post articles relevant to gender and technology, and keep track of our progress (wikidgrrls.wordpress.com).

A seed grant from the Future of Information Alliance (FIA) at the University of Maryland enabled us to run a successful semester-long pilot program, teaching around 40 girls. The grant allowed paying all team members and buying snacks; completion certificates; and lanyards and flash chips as rewards for program participants. The grant also paid for fingerprinting and background checks that some schools required for after-school teachers.

The Maryland Pilot Semester Setting up the program with a team of seven Wikid GRRLS teachers and researchers had both rewarding and challenging moments. In Maryland, we worked with a private school, two public middle schools, and one public high school. All four schools were enthusiastic about partnering with us but two had limited resources. The private school had high tech equipment, a beautiful, newly built sunlit room, and an assigned liaison teacher. In contrast, at another school, the classroom we used was dimly lit, without any equipment to play sound or a video projector; the teacher was dedicated but overworked, with little time to assist. We quickly learned we needed to adapt our curriculum to low tech *and* high tech schools, to make exercises workable without videos or loud speakers. Schools frequently also required seeing in advance any website links we might use; schools often blocked certain websites.

Fitting an after-school spot into the girls' already busy schedule was difficult. For other girls, unfortunately, after-school programs were unworkable, because school busses ran only once classes were over and neither schools nor working parents could provide transportation later. Small as it might sound, our idea to provide snacks before starting our program became for some girls a crucial element for attendance: they arrived hungry to our workshops.

While these conditions differed depending on the school, and sometimes week to week, the universities Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedure was the same for all girls and schools to research how participants experienced our intervention with pre- and post-workshop online surveys. Working with children and the internet prompted extra paperwork. Getting permission took a couple of months. The process was further complicated as each participant needed to sign an assent form while her parents needed to sign a consent form; that is, the participants needed to take the forms home for the parents to sign. At some schools parents attended an information session we offered. But not all parents have time, inclination, or energy to participate. Collecting signatures from all girls and all parents remained a major challenge as the IRB process was very unfamiliar to them; some did not understand why participating in a "fun" workshop would require approval. The assent and consent processes were further complicated as some girls joined late. In sum, keeping track of everyone and organizing logistics consumed the biggest share of time. The teaching itself was the icing and seeing the girls benefit from all our work was a joy.

It was equally challenging to schedule meetings in which all seven busy team members (five students and two faculty advisors) could participate. Often we used Skype for one or two members to discuss our teaching plans, listen to everyone's experience, and adjust our ideas. We learned that recruiting team members requires everyone to understand how much time they must invest, especially when they earn pay or credit. While graduate students and faculty may be flexible in arranging their heavy workloads, undergraduates have more rigid schedules. Nevertheless, that each member understands participating means actively contributing and closely communicating is crucial.

Moving Wikid GRRLs to Detroit After the pilot ended, the first author transitioned from PhD candidate to assistant professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. While the Wayne community welcomed

and encouraged Wikid GRRLs, it took a year to secure two grants, identify interested public schools, organize student-teachers, re-design the research, earn IRB approval, and assemble a new team. In Detroit, the two greatest challenges were working with a public school system that is facing bankruptcy (Pyke 2016) and negotiating a cumbersome IRB-approval process.

In Maryland finding schools to host Wikid GRRLs was comparatively easy. In Detroit, however, the public schools' structural problems (underpaid teachers, building safety issues, overly large classes, insufficient material, outdated curricula, frequent teacher and staff turnover) made it difficult to establish rapport with schools. Countless e-mails, phone calls, and visits to several schools were needed to work with two schools in the 2015 fall semester. A community outreach coordinator and a very dedicated teacher were crucial in making this happen. A third school initially signed up but dropped out due to teacher turnover. This initial semester included about 15 girls; with 10–12 in one school and 2–3 in the second. The first school considered the girls' bus schedule and opened up a slot for an elective class for our program. The second school had not told us about competing sports practices when scheduling the after-school program. Yet, the girls who did participate enjoyed the workshop. Three of them wrote after completing the program:

> Wikid Girls has been an amazing after-school activity to be in. I learned so much here about how to work the computer and how to edit and create a wikispace account. I would recommend it to any girls.
> Wikid GRRLS is a fun, cool place to come learn about more technology on your own computers. … They will teach you how to code, too. I didn't think it was going to be too fun at first but it ended up be [sic] super fun, learning to use HTML. If you want to find out more you should join!!!
> I really enjoyed Wikid GRRLS. What I really like about this whole program was that it was good for me for the time that I have been here. I got taught how to use a computer very well. … This is a really good program for girls. For me knowing that only 13 percent of girls were using Wikipedia was not very shocking because they might have thought that Wikipedia is for not-so-cool people but it really is a good program to be in. (Wikid GRRLs 2015)

Clearly, participants increased their skill levels and gained confidence about the meaning of technology for them. As one teen noted, the enterprise would have been impossible without the Wayne State University

honors program student-teachers who got involved: the Wikid GRRLs project became an undergraduate honor's class through which students can satisfy their service learning requirement. This had huge benefits: it gave the project a regular, mandatory structure, bringing greater cohesion and commitment. It rewarded Wayne State students for teaching with needed credits and attracts those interested in working with/in the community and gender issues. Further, it introduced research to undergraduate students, who became key personnel after completing the mandated IRB training, bringing us to the second challenge.

The University of Maryland IRB had moved its application processes online, making it easier for everyone to sign and process revisions and amendments. At Wayne State University, the IRB-approval processes will not be fully online for some time. This has the disadvantage of requiring applicants to physically collect signatures and walk applications to another part of campus. Furthermore, Wayne's IRB requires training that pertains to medical research even when working as a social scientist without medical components. Additionally, Wayne distinguishes between children 13 to 17 years old and those 7 to 12 years; its two different processes thus increased the paperwork for an intervention to reach girls aged 11 to 17.

That said, four Wayne State honors students navigated the IRB training, including its burdensome medical parts, in fall 2015, during its first iteration. They arrived in class weekly engaged and pro-active, making them valuable team members. Assessing their Wikid GRRLs experience, one of them wrote: "If I could, I would wish to continue to work on the project. It has been an enlightening, uplifting experience bequeathing insight and humility to me." Another noted:

> This class was an eye-opening experience for me. Before, I didn't know about the technological gap between schools so close together. There were adolescents going to school with multiple computers at home and down the road, some who didn't have any computers. I knew there was a gender gap in terms of technological experience, but I never would've thought it was this large. (Wikid GRRLs 2015)

Their statements made clear that honors undergraduates benefited from such interventions as much as participating girls. Additionally, a highly motivated doctoral student joined Wikid GRRLs as a coordinator. Her engagement has alleviated the burden of just one professor organizing schools, honors students, and research. In turn, she gained research

and publishing experience. In the 2016 winter semester, three new honors students joined. One of the two initial Detroit schools abandoned the Wikid GRRLs program because its lone computer lab was needed for student testing. The other school continued, however, and the participation of its new school principal led to another school joining the program. Again about 20 girls participated. Similarly, honors student-teachers, participating girls in the public schools, and the doctoral student expressed that they gained insights into the difficult relationship between gender and technology and designing interventions around the issue. While they all said they enjoyed the program, the also saw more clearly the challenges of interventions.

Conclusion: Fitting in with the US Academy

Wikid GRRLs is set up as a feminist invention that is simultaneously a research project to figure out how girls can learn online skills and become confident in producing content online; a teaching/learning experience for college-level honors students; a mentoring opportunity for doctoral students as research assistants; and a service project that works with/in a local community. Wayne State University, as well as the department and its related college, have supported the project in its holistic nature; this endorsement was reflected in positive evaluations of the first author (who taught the honors course in addition to two mandatory courses per semester), funding, and encouragement among colleagues, including the department chair and dean. This gives hope that such large, complicated projects that reach across the trifecta of research, teaching, and service are sufficiently rewarded to sustain future iterations and encourage others to venture into interventions outside the academy.

But the question remains whether or how interventions such as this one need to fit neatly into this triangle, in which research, at least at research-oriented higher education institutions, carries more weight than teaching and service. Moreover, notwithstanding differences among departments and institutions, research still tends to be judged by quantity and prestige of publications, not the energy, organization, and depth it demands from a researcher or even its impact beyond number of citations. Will projects that continue for several years but only yield a few peer-reviewed published journal articles be just as valued as several publications another scholar might generate within the same time frame using other approaches and methods? In sum, can a tenure-track faculty member afford to conduct

such a study or does it constitute too much of a risk long-term seen through the lens of the tenure-clock rather than through the lens of the feminist activist?

This problematic amalgam—in which intervention is not a separate evaluative category but is either fully submerged as community work into service, or parsed into the three categories of research, teaching, and service—may explain why many feminist scholars locate their interventions in classroom activity. Teaching is already recognized either as the primary lens for merit and tenure processes (at teaching-oriented institution) or as, at least in name, equal to research (at research-oriented institutions). Even more basic, Patricia Hill Collins (1986) advocated recognizing "the outsider within" (especially referring to black women sociologists) who by virtue of navigating this tension becomes an activist. She also argued that any person who recognizes herself/himself as fully human becomes an activist. That is, everyday commitments to activism and intervention are lived simultaneously through research, teaching, and service simply by participating in the academy as a feminist scholar. Some people might prefer this to creating a separate project, which fits none of the three categories well and never gains full recognition in one of the three.

Several ironies and tensions present themselves, including that the universities and colleges most able to afford to support feminist activism (in literal cost and with emotional resources) are not necessarily the most flexible in terms of assessment metrics. Tenured faculty, who are most likely to be able to risk feminist activism (because of their status and their tenure), may not necessarily have the energy and momentum for activism, after years of doing conventional research. And Collins, who famously refused to rank order race and gender, underscores how the situation is even more fraught for multiple "hyphenated minorities," for instance Muslim-lesbian-feminist scholars. Feminists of color, or religious or sexual minorities (nor are these the only important dimensions) are already at risk in terms of tenure and promotion because on one hand they must spend more of their time counseling and mentoring minority students (who are more likely to go to them), and because their interventions can be more controversial with risk-averse campus administrators.

Nevertheless, feminisms remain very much alive, active, and productive in the academy, including media and communication studies, in manifold forms. They flourish in research approaches; pedagogies and course contents; in community projects; in centers and campaigns; and collaborations with NGOs and governmental bodies, and in academic conference

divisions. Clearly, feminist scholarship is not merely safe but thriving, published in both feminist and non-feminist journals. Feminisms have been successfully established in freestanding academic programs and incorporated into a range of disciplines. Despite the oral and written encouragements of like-minded and local colleagues for feminist interventions, however, the nature of feminist studies approaches and the complexity of translating them into tenure-track worthy endeavors remain at a tricky intersection of ambition and reality when judged by numbers of publications and a neoliberal tendency to check the bottom lines in higher education. Feminist scholarship runs the risk of losing its connection to "doing" when "counting" and prestige become more important in the institutions where it is housed. Feminist scholars need to think hard about how to enact their feminist commitments when working simultaneously to satisfy tenure system demands.

Notes

1. Fonow and Cook (1991) add that feminist research also involves critically reflecting on the research process and the researcher's position, considering the consequences of the research process, and using situations at hand.
2. This very problem urges some archival work about feminist interventions to preserve and make concrete and visible a collective sense of scholars' feminist interventions and to show just how dangerous—or safe—it is. Ultimately such a project could involve categorization and evaluation (different kinds of projects, different kinds of feminism) but presumably at this point merely recovering and recording the data would constitute an "intervention."
3. Hollaback! International Street Harassment Survey Project. Available at: http://www.ihollaback.org/cornell-international-survey-on-street-harassment/#cr.

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(Re)writing Women's Lives: A Call for Media Scholars to Renew Their Efforts at Feminist Biography

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The history of biographical inquiry as a scholarly method has been, at best, topsy-turvy, and its purpose has varied over the centuries. Its history can be traced to the Pharaohs in ancient Egypt, whose lives were recounted to preserve dynastic legacy and power rather than to provide an accurate account of history. Medieval biographies were written to inspire readers, and works of the "great man"—not woman—school of biography are and were hagiographic at best.[1] Yet for centuries, many full-length biographies provided us with historical details and accounts of events that were missing from history books.

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it seems as though all these motivations have merged; we certainly have our share of hagiographies; "inspirational" works that are often memoirs; and stories of extraordinary lives that provide a glimpse of the era in which the subject lived. And as anyone who has read the umpteenth biography of Oprah Winfrey

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knows, systematic research and sound historical method are not always the hallmarks of recent biographies of B-list celebrities and film stars.

This chapter will attempt to address the current status of biographies of women in the media in the United States and review its relevance. Because the accomplishments of women have long been overlooked in many—perhaps most—fields, it is important that their stories be told today. But it is even more vital that the stories of communicators and women in media be told, in the United States and in other countries. In modern times, it is these women who are responsible for telling the stories and the history of the times. These communicators play a key role in shaping the views of the citizens of the world; it is through their efforts that information is disseminated and, to some degree, interpreted by the public. Ironically, as communication systems get increasingly advanced, the media become more powerful, to the point where media outlets certainly can match and even exceed the influence of conventional institutions such as family and religious and educational organizations. This makes it vital that the stories of these communicators be told—so as to reveal information about how they lived, what influenced their worldview, and how they achieved the authority to take on the role of communicator. It is perhaps ironic that many of the women in media who overcame overt discrimination and resisted male dominance are the ones whose stories have been ignored or relegated to a few pages or paragraphs in anthologies. Furthermore, the lack of detailed stories about these women builds upon itself, in a way, leading to a lack of secondary sources on the subject and a failure of young scholars and communicators to cultivate an interest in the subject. As Mitchell (1990) wrote in *American Journalism*, the method of biography is an important beginning for historical inquiry because "biographers do much of the documentary spade work, preparing the soil for historians who come later planting more sophisticated questions. The biographers often discover the primary sources that other historians use" (31). And this scarcity of biography triggers a "bigger-picture" question, as media historian Maurine Beasley (2001) noted: "We need to ask why only a relatively few women journalists remain in the American collective memory, while many others have been forgotten. Asking this question broadens our insight into the way society has valued the nature and practice of journalism as well as the work of women in various historical periods."

Over the past few decades, feminist scholarship about women in communication has consistently indicated that the progress of women in newsrooms and in other communication fields has not followed a gradual

progression, but instead has stumbled upward in fits and starts. This holds true in the United States as well as other countries. In her summary of recent studies on gender and journalism, Steiner (2017) summarized what many others have confirmed: the status of women in newsrooms and their representation in the media shows improvement, "but also continuing problems." While women have established themselves as permanent fixtures in newsrooms, she writes, gendered patterns of coverage still exist, particularly in sports and politics. And, she adds, women television broadcasters in particular are routinely sexualized—and nearly invisible at management levels.[2] In her essay about how the increasing digitization of news has affected what were once known "women's pages"—content aimed at women— Dustin Harp (2014) stressed that little had changed over the years "Women's content remains marginalized. What is discouraging and perhaps surprising is how long the issue has been relevant but unsolved" (437).

Other scholars have reaffirmed this "two-steps-forward, one-step-back" phenomenon. In the Introduction to the third edition of the edited volume, *Women in Mass Communication*, Cramer and Creedon (2007) point out that many of the essays in the book confirm this pattern of progress coupled by setbacks: "Several authors in this edition suggest that 'maybe' we have come a long way over the past few decades, but nearly all agree that transformative change has not happened," they write. "Where change has taken place, it has occurred in baby steps, not in long strides … and not universally across media professions" (6). Similarly, in her Foreword to an edited volume about women in media, long-time syndicated newspaper columnist Ellen Goodman notes that authors in that 2009 volume found this same pattern. "The narrative line [in the volume] is that we've made significant strides but we've stalled out" (cited by Nicholson et al. 2009, 8). Summarizing an exhaustive project examining the status of women and journalism in 29 countries, Byerly (2013) identified one constant among nearly all the contributors to her edited volume, *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women in Journalism:* Male control endures in most media institutions in spite of laws and policies that seek to ensure equality. She writes that each of the more than 30 authors in the book "comments on the fact that male superiority manifests itself in newsrooms, even in those where women have risen well into the decision-making roles" (17–18). Women who are preparing to enter the media workforce worldwide should be warned that despite progress in numbers of women hired, they are entering a field that "is still a microcosm of the larger androcentric societies in which they live" (Byerly 2013, 452).

Further, while more women are hired in communication fields, they are as a whole paid less than their male counterparts and excluded from top decision-making posts (Byerly 2013).

Indeed, statistics have borne this out, also. Each year the non-profit Women's Media Center conducts an exhaustive census of the numbers and role of women in media, advertising, online gaming, and entertainment in the United States. Across the board, the group writes in its report for 2017, "Men still dominate media across all platforms—television, newspapers, online and wires—with change coming only incrementally." And the American Society of Newspaper Editors, in its 2017 survey of newsroom employees, found that women made up about 39 percent of the workforce on daily newspapers and about 48 percent of the employees at online-only news sites, up very slightly from the previous year.[3]

There can be little dispute that these studies and essays indicate that women in the communication fields face the same hurdles as their counterparts in most other fields; still, because of the role media play in society, it is perhaps more vital that women achieve parity with their men—after all, it is these media outlets that shape audiences' outlook of the world overall and have become increasingly powerful regulators of behavior and social practices (Kearney 2012, 3).

Indeed, work devoted to telling the story of individual female communicators has mimicked this pattern of mixed progress. By the middle of the twentieth century, their stories were told briefly in anthologies. Two of the first people to devote a comprehensive anthology to solely women in the media were Marion Marzolf (1977) in her *Up from the Footnote*, and Ishbel Ross's (1936) *Ladies of the Press: The Story of Women in Journalism by an Insider*. Ross, a New York *Herald Tribune* reporter, used her position to gather information from her contemporaries, many of whom she portrayed as adventuresome individualists. Still, so few full-length biographies of women journalists were written by the time Marzolf's book was published in 1977 that they could barely be characterized. Beasley (1990) writes that in the few full-length biographical treatments of women in media in the mid-century, women were treated so differently from men that "it's difficult to place these books within a conventional historical framework" (48). Beasley (1990) also noted that in these biographies, colorful aspects of these women's lives were stressed and their journalistic careers secondary.

As the second wave of feminism grew in the 1970s, so did an interest in women's history and the role women played in historical events. As

Friedman et al. (2009) note in their article about the role of women in mass communication history, as feminism evolved, so did many outstanding historical studies of women in media. Still, "textbook authors, journal editors, and conference organizers showed a willingness to 'add the women,' but rarely went beyond noting their presence in the traditional male-centered historical narrative" (160).

Despite a resurgence of women's biography in the United States in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there has been a dearth of well-researched, full-length biographies about American female communicators. It is these long-form venues that allow the researcher to examine women's lives through primary documents and other artifacts. Publicly (and traditionally) women have long exhibited shyness and reticence—they have been reluctant to "blow their own horns" publicly and it is often through letters, personal musings and other similar documents that their true feelings, ambitions, intellect and creativity shine through. This chapter will suggest remedies for this relative lack of long-form biographies about women in the media.

In her assessment of the dozen "best" biographies of United States female print journalists, Lumsden (2007) states that effective biographies do more than just tell a story. "[These biographies] shed light on entire generations that strove to participate in an unwelcoming public sphere. A common thread among women described in the biographies and memoirs…is their temerity in staking a claim in the newsroom despite daunting cultural barriers." Further, she writes, these outstanding biographies of print journalists use the details of their subjects' life as a "prism to illuminate larger social and cultural complexities about journalism and gender." Included in her list are an anthology and several biographies of female African-American journalists whose contributions to journalism are generally unknown. As Lumsden writes of Rodger Streitmatter's (1994) anthology of 11 African-American female journalists, "[the book] offers sympathetic portraits of [these journalists] who embody the most ennobling journalist values: the passion and courage to give voice to the voiceless."[4]

One of the most widely read long-form discussions of the importance of women's biography in the modern era is Carolyn G. Heilbrun's (1988) *Writing a Woman's Life*. Her work was groundbreaking for several reasons, including the fact that she, for perhaps the first time, described specifically how writing about women's lives differs from writing about men's, and that how even accomplished and well-known women tended to judge themselves on how they fulfilled traditional expectations. She also examined the

nature of the way women were written about in the past—primarily as spouses, mothers, relatives—and why this trivialized their true value and contributions. Heilbrun used the arbitrary date of 1970 as the beginning of a resurgence of women's biography because it was that year that Nancy Milford published the best-selling biography *Zelda* about the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Milford 1970). Zelda's own story, Milford wrote, had been hijacked by that of her famous husband. Finally, in 1970, the public was ready to read about her life and its importance.

Heilbrun was not the first to note the inherent differences between female and male biographers and their subjects. As Alpern et al. (1992) and others have noted, the constraints society has traditionally placed on women—and the fact that the achievements of men have historically been valued more than those of women—push their gender into the forefront of their life stories: "This is true even when a woman is unaware of or inarticulate about the effects of gender on her life" (Alpern et al. 1992, 7). Further, they note, women biographers often cannot help but identify with their female subjects and relate to the lives about which they write (3).

Gerda Lerner, in her 1979 book, argued that "history" had long been written by men, and, consequently, from the perspective of men:

> The history of women has a special character, a built-in distortion: it comes to us refracted through the lens of men's observations; refracted through the values which consider man the measure. … Transmitted largely through the reflections of men; how we see and interpret what we know about women has been shaped for us through a value system defined by men (Lerner 1979, 160).

Heilbrun, writing in 1988 and sounding an optimistic note, said that more biographies and memoirs about women were being published than ever before, even though it seemed as though the same few women were the subjects of those biographies (particularly Gertrude Stein, Margaret Mead and a few others). Alpern et al. (1992) were similarly optimistic about women's biography when their volume *The Challenge of Feminist Biography* was published in 1992, stating that nearly 200 biographies of women had been written since 1970 in the United States, and more were expected (5). But this optimism—at least where it applied to women in the US media—may have been misplaced. It is true that in the case of women journalists and writers, many of their lives and accomplishments have been recounted briefly in anthologies; but a relative small amount of

full-length books have described their lives and put them into the context of the era in which they lived. These mentions give readers a passing view of the pioneering efforts of the subjects and the hurdles they overcame; but it is becoming increasingly clear that the stories of many of these pioneering female journalists may be lost. Brooke Kroeger (1994), who chronicled the life of the well-known "stunt journalist" known as Nellie Bly, remarks that many other female reporters in the latter part of the nineteenth century practiced the same type of journalism as Elizabeth Cochrane, who went by the pseudonym of Nellie Bly—that is, they went undercover, often posing as beggars, drug addicts and, in the case of Cochrane, the mentally ill (Cochrane infiltrated what was then called an insane asylum pretending to be a patient).[5] To resurrect these women, Kroeger has attempted to piece together their lives, in part through their writing. But feminist scholars can do more to resurrect and name the women who paved the way for others and who helped shape media in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The question is, how?

Certainly an awareness of the problem can trigger increased inquiry into feminist biography. But this knowledge itself is not enough. This chapter points to other ways this goal can be accomplished. It urges media scholars to expand their definition of who should be subjects of these biographies; suggests historians cast a wider net when considering the relevance of specific women in media outside this country's coasts and major cities; recommends a rethinking of the conventional "cradle-to-grave" format of many biographies; and encourages media studies researchers to continue to think globally.

EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF WHO IS A JOURNALIST OR COMMUNICATOR

As Friedman et al. (2009) note in their call to incorporate more women into the history of journalism, communication scholars today must expand their narrow views of just who is a "journalist." Many historians, they write, think of women and minorities as "exceptions" when telling the stories of prominent communicators. "Yet women and minorities have been present in the media industries for a long time, not just for a few moments of accomplishment. It's worth considering the possibility that a woman who didn't do anything first but had a long career may have been hugely important as a mentor to other women" (163).

This mentorship relationship has been studied extensively by Maurine Beasley, who suggested in 2001 that first lady Eleanor Roosevelt be considered a journalist. The reason? While that was not her profession, her indirect contributions to journalism through her affiliations with women journalists, her activities to further their status and careers, and her own freelance column, certainly make her qualified to call herself a journalist. Further, as Beasley states, the First Lady gave her occupation as "author, lecturer and professional journalist," and, at the time of her death, carried with her membership cards to The Newspaper Guild and the National Federation of Press Women (Beasley 2001, 208). Beasley's (2010) book *Eleanor Roosevelt: Transformative First Lady* examines in great detail Mrs. Roosevelt's relationship with the press, and with female reporters in particular. It outlines how she was the first to hold press conferences for female reporters only, 300 of which were held from 1933 to 1945. As Beasley highlights, the concept and execution of these female-only news conferences had far-reaching ramifications. First, they bestowed legitimacy on the female journalists, in part because of their affiliation with the First Lady of the United States, and also because they ensured that female journalists could write about serious issues—topics other than the usual women's page fare—if they brought up those issues at the news conferences.[6] In an earlier examination of the transcripts of 87 of those news conferences, Beasley (1983) remarked that legislative, political, and national news issues were discussed, as well as softer news topics. "In attributing to the women an important function in the political communication process, Mrs. Roosevelt may have been consciously trying to bolster their self-esteem," Beasley wrote. In addition, Mrs. Roosevelt occasionally brought "guests" to these news conferences: prominent women who held high-ranking jobs in some federal agencies. The all-female news conferences performed even a more practical function: as Mrs. Roosevelt observed, they helped the women keep their jobs during the Depression—jobs that might have gone to men (Beasley 1983).

As could be expected, some male journalists did not think excluding men from the First Lady's news conferences was a good idea. Apparently because women only were present, their content was gossipy and girlish, some male journalists said. Others said the First Lady was coddling female reporters. But this one action taken by Mrs. Roosevelt had far-reaching implications for female journalists and for women in general, many of the women reporters believed. United Press reporter Ruby Black credited the First Lady with helping to provide jobs to jobless

women, raises to underpaid women and "recognition to those who had been shoved off in a corner" (Black 1934, 11). The blurring of lines between "journalist" and other professions is nothing new. Beasley notes that Oprah Winfrey, the first African-American woman to host a television talk show in the United States and a household name all over the world, started out as a newspaper reporter. Similarly, suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and birth-control advocate Margaret Sanger all advanced their cause through newspapers—as either publishers or writers (Beasley 2001, 209). It should be noted, also, that it is perhaps unavoidable for suffrage leaders—and leaders of other movements—to become expert communicators so they can motivate followers and persuade others. Patricia Bradley (2005) in her book about women and the press discusses at length the important role suffrage publications played in the success of the movement. Many of these emerged after the Civil War, and many sprung up in individual states. Interestingly, a regular feature called *The Women's Column,* which had become a feature of the state suffrage publication, *The Women's Journal,* expanded its reach and served as a type of news service about suffrage for editors. It then expanded its services to regular mailings to educators, clergy, and others (Bradley 2005, 160–162).

Educator Donna Allen, a founder of the feminist newsletter *Media Report to Women*, was not a journalist in the strict sense of the word. But her contributions to journalism and women in media make her an interesting and suitable subject. Danna L. Walker, in a dissertation about Allen, called her a leader in "mediafeminism," which she described as "a movement by women as communicators and networkers to take action in media in the way that the ecofeminist movement takes action based on women's connection to the environment" (Walker 2003). It could be argued that the life of Allen, who also founded the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, should be studied to illuminate the origins of feminist activism in the 1960s through the 1990s, Walker writes.

Interestingly, when examining Allen's life, Walker found that conventional texts for examining a life must sometimes be redefined if the subjects are women. She examined primary documents such as speeches, correspondence with government agencies, and the like, but it was in communication forms such as letters, handwritten notes, and photographs that provided the most information into her life. Similarly, in her own *Media Report to Women* Allen excerpted articles of interest to women in mass communication, and, ultimately, recorded parts of the women's movement of the 1970s "in the words of those who carried it out" (Walker 2003).

Certainly when it comes to shaping citizens' views of their own environment and the world, women who own and manage media organizations are pivotal even though their influence may be indirect. Unfortunately, few women are placed in these managerial roles. *The Status of Women in the News Media* study found that 73 percent of the top media management jobs were held by men (Byerly 2011). Similarly, in 2014, only 11 percent of advertising agency creative directors were women, according to the organization *3%*, which tracks the number of women in advertising (Mallia 2014; see also the report at http://www.3percentconf.com). The stories of the women in these positions, with few exceptions, have not been told (see, e.g., Lawrence 2002; Maas 2012).[7]

Expanding the Perspective of Significant Women Beyond the East and West Coasts

In her pioneering and comprehensive anthology of women in media, Marion Marzolf (1977) noted that much of the literature on women in United States media focused on the East and West coasts.[8] And today, the emphasis on national figures—those who worked at national media outlets and networks—remains. It is vital to examine the lives of important regional figures both in the United States and globally for many reasons, including the effect their upbringing and culture had on their careers and the impact they had on their audiences and the industry overall. In addition, regional archives all over the country and world provide primary material for many of these subjects (.e.g., Carter Olson 2017; McBride and Byers 2014; Ware 2005). In today's society, the culture of the "mass media" is seen as monolithic culture—one that reflects nations as a whole. But the true history of women in communication indicates that is not the case, and that the lives, perspectives, and careers of women throughout a country shape media culture. While full-length biographies of female journalists and communicators from outside of the two United States coasts have been written, this is an area that is vastly understudied. Not only do these women play a significant role in media history, but many also influenced the women who work at the nation's largest newspapers and the major networks. For instance, in my examination of Charlotte Curtis, the first woman to have her name on the masthead of the *New York Times*, I learned that the self-described "little girl from Ohio," had a dramatic effect on the changes at that newspaper in the 1960s and early 1970s, including the way it covered women. In addition, Curtis, as society editor,

was the first editor to promote a slightly self-mocking tone to some of the wedding announcements and personality profiles of the august *New York Times*, bringing what some believed was a down-to-earth Midwestern style to a newspaper that took itself very seriously (Greenwald 1999). And it was North Carolina native, managing editor Clifton Daniel, who "discovered" Curtis and promoted her from within because he enjoyed this new and less-than-serious tone of the society pages. Similarly, Susan Ware (2005), in her biography of radio host Mary Margaret McBride, remarks how this Missouri farm girl (who later graduated in journalism from the University of Missouri) brought a heartland sensibility to all three radio networks when she worked there in the 1940s through the 1960s.

Many of the journalists credited with achieving "firsts" worked in the nation's second-tier cities. Dorothy Fuldheim of Cleveland, for instance, was the first woman to anchor a nightly news show (see Mote 1997). Mary Garber, who covered sports in North Carolina for 60 years, is the first woman to receive numerous top sports-writing awards for much of her work, including her pioneering sports coverage of historically black colleges and high schools in the South in the 1940s and 1950s (Goldstein 2008). And the first woman to serve as a lead newscast anchor, Jean Enerson, worked in Seattle—not on either coast (Allen 2003). In his article, "Gender Breakthrough Fit for a Focus Group," Craig Allen found that many of the first female broadcasters of the 1970s worked at local regional television stations, and focus groups in these cities told station executives that they would like to see more female newscasters on the air (Allen 2003).

While Ann Landers, "Dear Abby" and Dr. Joyce Brothers were once household names, few people outside Wisconsin have ever heard of Ione Quinby Griggs, who for five decades wrote an advice column for the *Milwaukee Journal*. In their biography, *Dear Mrs. Griggs: Women Readers Pour Out Their Hearts from the Heartland*, McBride and Byers (2014) make the case that Griggs, with her ubiquitous hats and homespun advice, was a major celebrity in the Milwaukee area, and one whom millions of readers over decades relied on for advice. In addition to writing about the life and career of Griggs, the authors read and analyzed in depth many of the letters she received over the years, concluding that these letters formed a mirror that reflected the thoughts and concerns of the newspaper's readers.

Tracy Lucht and Chunyu Zhang (2014) write extensively about another Midwestern female journalist who was extremely well known regionally, but not nationally. Mary Jane Odell was a popular broadcaster for KRNT in Des Moines for 30 years, shaping the views of women and engaging

them about such topics as divorce, race, war, and many others. The authors, using primary sources, examine her career, paying particular attention to the influence of gender on her understanding of the public interest. But journalists in the "heartland" outside of the country's major population areas did more than just serve as friendly voices, particularly before the advent of television. In rural areas, for instance, female broadcasters served for many women as the only link to the outside world and forged for them a sense of community. In her discussion of South Dakota radio broadcaster Wynn Hubler, who had a large audience of farmers' wives in the 1940s, historian Donna L. Halper (2014, 108) writes how her character of the "Neighbor Lady" was more than a disenfranchised voice to her listeners:

> Women waited eagerly for her show, and several generations grew up listening to Wynn and learning from her. When she married and had children, she moved the show to her house and broadcast from there, giving it even more of the homelike touch her audience loved.

> Over the years, thousands of housewives regarded the Neighbor Lady as a true friend of theirs in a society where women's roles were frequently debated. The show and others like it were a constant in the lives of rural women, giving them membership in an extended radio family and reinforcing the choices they had made.

Halper (2014) also notes that if Marshall McLuhan's theory of the global village could be applied to radio shows, many of these programs certainly made up an electronic community.

While it may seem at first as though female broadcasters in these regional or rural areas were not required to have the talent of their counterparts on the coasts, this was not always the case: if they did not form a bond or establish camaraderie with their audience, they may have soon been taken off the air.

Sharpening the Focus of Biographies to Intersections of Lives and/or Pivotal Events

While the conventional definition of a full-length biography may take into account the subject's life from cradle to grave, some current biographies indicate that it is portions of lives—or even the intersection of several lives—that can effectively meld biography, history, and possibly other

disciplines. Still other contemporary biographies examine a "slice," or specific time period, of the subject's life. For instance, Steve Weinberg (2009) examines the intersection of the lives of investigative journalist Ida Tarbell and Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller in his *Taking on the Trust: How Ida Tarbell Brought Down John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil*. Although this book does examine the early lives and careers of both figures, its main focus is the relationship between them—a relationship that was key in the lives of both. The two main figures in the book were complete opposites: Rockefeller used his enormous wealth to form the close-knit family he lacked as a youngster; the firebrand Tarbell shunned the conventional domestic life of most women of her era to take up "muckraking"—investigative reporting of established institutions. Taking a historical perspective when telling the lives of two people offers another way to look at their impact.

Similarly, Susan Hertog (2009) examines the lives of two female writers whom she believes in some ways lived parallel lives in her dual biography of Rebecca West and Dorothy Thompson. Hertog traces the parallel paths of these two writers—Thompson, an American columnist, broadcaster, and the first female head of a European news bureau, and West, a British journalist and critic. The women were friends, but their lives took dramatically different turns. This approach can be seen clearly in *Stranger from Abroad,* which examines the relationship between writer-philosopher Hannah Arendt and German philosopher Martin Heidegger, focusing on the affair the two had when Arendt was Heidegger's student and its long-term effect on her (Maier-Katkin 2010). Similarly, some recent biographies have examined a specific dimension of a life—an aspect of a life that may or may not be well known to the public. *In Lincoln: the Biography of a Writer,* author Fred Kaplan (2010) analyzes in detail the sixteenth US president's writings to determine how they shaped his own thinking and actions. He traces Lincoln's evolution as a writer and, in some respects, scholar. The subject of historian David S. Reynolds's (2011) *Mightier than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle for America* is a dual one: it draws a detailed picture of the background and impact of one of the nation's most widely read books, while also exploring the background of its author and the long-term legacy of this influential and well-known novel. While much has been written about author and feminist Betty Friedan and her landmark book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Daniel Horowitz (2000) digs into the roots of Friedan's feminism in *Betty Friedan and the Making of 'The Feminine Mystique': The American Left, the Cold*

War, and Modern Feminism and puts Friedan into a broader cultural context. Based on new evidence, Horowitz argues that Friedan's radicalism ran much deeper than previously believed.

DEVELOPING FURTHER AND MAINTAINING A GLOBAL OUTLOOK, AND CULTIVATING AN AWARENESS THAT WOMEN'S STORIES DESERVE TO BE TOLD

As the world gets smaller with the advance of technology, and with the emergence of many newly democratized nations in the late twentieth century, it is easy to assume that media worldwide is becoming more accessible rather than less. This, however, is not necessarily the case and it is women in particular who are often left behind. As Leslie Steeves (2007) writes, the status of women in developing countries—who comprise two-thirds the world's women—may indeed actually decline due to advancing technology. First, costs go up with technological growth, so improvements may not be available to those with limited means. Second, more complex technology may reduce the finances available for cheaper technologies, like radio, that benefit the poor. Finally, the advanced technology that comes with globalization may require more skilled workers—again leaving behind those with limited means—often women (Steeves 2007). Interestingly, it is not just the rural poor or those in newly emerging democracies whose life stories remain hidden or misunderstood. In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism,* Byerly (2013) offers a sweeping look at the status of media organizations all over the world. In Israel, which is considered a socially progressive nation, women's influence in media organizations is diminished despite that nation's anti-discrimination laws. The reason? The nation's focus on national security and the military waters down most other priorities, including equal status of women. The focus on the military "legitimizes the marginality of women…and excludes them from the main political arena," writes Einat Lachover in that volume (Lachover 2013, 122). Dorit Sasson (2016) touches on this culture in her memoir of serving in the Israeli Defense Forces, *Accidental Soldier: A Memoir of Service and Sacrifice in the Israeli Defense Forces.* An American, Sasson volunteered for service in Israel and entered a war zone—the memoir is a coming-of-age story and offers a glimpse into the challenges women face in Israeli society.

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These suggestions—to expand the definition of "communicator," to include biographies of women in regions outside a nation's biggest cities, to implement formats for biographies that go beyond conventional "cradle-to-grave" stories, and to adapt a global outlook—are not a panacea. Although they could cast a wide net, even more is needed in some areas. For example, still more creative ideas are needed so media researchers can intensify their efforts to include women of color or those who do not come from privileged or middle-class backgrounds. As Lerner (1979) already said in 1979, the pioneering work of many African-American club women had been noted by some black historians but "the continuity and extent of this work and its significance have largely escaped the notice of historians" (83–84). The function of local clubs like the National Association for Colored Women, which was formed in 1866, was far from just social. They were organized to remedy societal needs that were not met at the time—to provide education and care, for example, for black children, and to help fulfill other societal needs (Lerner 1979, 84). By the turn of the century, it was a journalist, Ida B. Wells, who exposed the economic motives behind lynching and organized a national anti-lynching crusade. Several full-length biographies of Wells have been written, but that is not the case of many pioneering black journalists, who found that through at least the first half of the twentieth century, getting training in journalism at schools was difficult, so most black female journalists received "training" on the job, often at historically black publications.[9] A previously "hidden figure" in the publishing world was journalist and civil rights activist Daisy Bates who, with her husband L.C. Bates, published the weekly African-American newspaper the *Arkansas State Press.* Daisy Bates, a head of the Arkansas chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), played a pivotal role in the fight against segregation in the 1940s and 1950s, and was active in the fight even in the aftermath of the legendary *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation case in 1954.[10]

One journalist whose pioneering story was "rescued" and told in a full-length biography was *Chicago Defender* Washington bureau reporter Ethel Payne, who covered many of the nation's major news stories in the three decades she worked in Washington. Payne's astonishing career remained largely untold until the publication of James McGrath Morris's (2015) *Eye On the Struggle*.

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It should be noted that while memoirs and autobiographies of women in media are not addressed at length in this essay, they also provide key information about the way women live and work. Obviously, memoir is usually much more subjective than biography, and may not always be the extensive cache of primary sources that excellent biographies rely on for evidence. But well-written first-person accounts and literary autobiographies shed light on the lives and struggles of their subjects. And in developing countries, such first-person accounts may offer important information about women's lives and challenges.

Increased efforts by media scholars to write full-length biographies of women communicators and tell their stories can pay dividends by giving voice to those who have been, to paraphrase Marzolf (1977), consigned to a footnote; to others whose stories may never have been told at all; and to still others whose stories have been conveyed inaccurately or unfairly. To the communicators themselves, the opportunity to tell their stories and the stories of others offers them an important way to actively participate and have a public voice. And work in this area will prompt similar examinations and generate secondary material for future scholars, a phenomenon that is at the heart of all historical research, and one that, in the case of women, will offer a much-needed feminist perspective on larger issues.

Notes

1. For a concise but comprehensive history of biographical method, Feldstein (2006).
2. Data from several independent studies bear this out. For example, the 2017 *Women in the U.S. Media* study, sponsored by the Women's Media Center, reported that despite a slight rise over the last few years in the number of women in managerial positions in broadcast and print newsrooms, their numbers still lag behind that of the general population. And women in broadcasting are still underrepresented as anchors, reporters and subjects of stories. See *Women in the U.S. Media* (*www.womensmediacenter. com/reports/the-status-of-women-in-u.s.-media-2017*).
3. Yearly studies by the American Society of Newspaper Editors confirm that women in newsrooms historically have been excluded from many managerial positions, and the pattern continued in 2017. Of all "newsroom leaders," 38.9 percent were women in 2017, compared to 37.1 percent in 2016 (see http://asne.org/diversity-survey-2017). The Poynter Institute reported in 2017 that while women make up nearly two-thirds of the students in journalism schools, women run three of the top 25 newspapers in the United States (https://www.poynter.org/news/ women-dominate-journalism-schools-newsrooms-are-still-different-story).

4. See also Jane Rhodes' biography, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (1990). Cary, a Canadian journalist, was the first black woman to publish a newspaper in North America. Patricia Schechter writes about pioneering journalist Ida B. Wells and others during her era in *Ida B. Wells and American Reform, 1880–1930* (2000).

5. See Kroeger (1994) and the web site http://dlib.nyu.edu/undercover, that describes other "stunt" reporters like Bly.

6. Roosevelt's relationship with Associated Press (AP) reporter Lorena Hickok is explored in depth in Quinn (2016).

7. Steeves (2007, 197) argues that women's status in the media will not necessarily improve solely if more women take media jobs. In addition, she believes it is necessary to increase the number of women working in high levels in the media.

8. Marzolf chronicles the stories of many women journalists who worked for regional news outlets and not in the nation's largest cities. She also included the stories of female journalism teachers who influenced others.

9. Bradley (2005, 192–194) discusses at length the uphill battle of black women journalists during much of the twentieth century. Two recent biographies of Tarbell are Schechter's (2000) *Ida B. Wells and American Reform*, *1880–1930*, and Mia Bay's (2010) *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells.*

10. Little has been written on Daisy Bates as a journalist and activist. For more about her life and career, see https://www.biography.com/people/daisy-bates-206524.

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The Intangible Stories of War Carpets: War, Media, and Mediation

Minoo Moallem

Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technological resources while maintaining property relations.
(Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility")

Social relations hide in things. When we start looking into them, the long violence of empire reaches home.
(Elaine Freedgood, The Ideas in Things*)*

With the expansion of old and new media technologies, our societies are increasingly influenced by the representation of images, tropes, advertisements, icons, and mediatic discourses that are circulated along with labor, capital, and commodities. While feminist cultural and media studies have reinvigorated feminist scholarship in the last two decades, there is still a pressing need for an understanding of the unequal and uneven neo/

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postcolonial and transnational context within which knowledge and power intersect via representational practices. The field of feminist cultural and media studies is still wide open for scholarly inquiries that bring into light the linkages between systems of representations and the circulation of labor, capital, and commodities. In other words, although it is crucial to interrogate representational practices in the age of global media, it is also essential to investigate the unequal cultural, political, and economic transactions that take place within the context of a network of transnational ties and exchanges.

Also, the new media and cyberspace have become a crucial part of what Foucault calls "the art of government," especially in regulating both discipline and sovereignty producing docile bodies. Bodies that are now located in different parts of the globe, some in the production sites and others in the consumption sites. Also, with the events of new wars and occupations what is emplaced (stuck at a place) and what gets to move around include the war zones in the Middle East and the everyday zone of consumption in the United States and Canada. However, an understanding of the technologies of domination of the self and others as once noted by Foucault prompted by mediatic meditation is necessary for an interrogation of the relationship between ethics, aesthetics, and politics from a feminist perspective at the time of war and militarism. If the ethical justifications of what we know about populations determine our relationship to war, militarism, equality, and justice, then as feminist scholars we must urgently invest in engaging critically with media representations. We also need to interrogate the establishment of material relations that are now costing us new wars and imperial adventures while perpetuating oppressive and exploitative gender relations. As I have argued before, we are living in a world where the circulation of images relies on the force of visibility. The visible, together with the visual, create an order that is not only privileging certain images over others but also mediates the relationship between the spectator and the spectacle. In particular, the ways in which the convergence of the benevolent intentional and the violent relies extensively on the media and mediation (Moallem 2004).

While a significant body of scholarship in feminist cultural and media studies challenges questions of representations, what is less studied are two interconnected issues: first, the consumptive production or production that is generated by consumption. And secondly, how various forms of media from print media to the internet mediate between consumption and production.

This chapter examines war carpets as commodities that connect the exploited feminized labor in the war zones of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other locations in West, South, and Central Asia to the consumption of

these carpets mostly in North America. While a significant body of feminist scholarship on feminized labor[1] focuses on the questions of production, I shift this focus from a "human subject"—centered perspective toward a commodity—or thing-centered perspective—one that privileges objects, matters, things, and commodities, redirecting the scholarly gaze to what is ordinary, banal, lifeless, inanimate, and fetishistic. In my view, what constitutes the subject more than anything else since colonial modernity and especially in our neoliberal era, is the possession of objects, things, and commodities; as noted by Baudrillard, "What you really collect is always yourself" (cited by Apter 2005, 23). There is a significant body of feminist work on the sexual division of labor and systems of exploitation based on feminized labor. However, it would be difficult to analyze labor issues without understanding representational practices since there is a direct relationship between the economy and the everyday life of cultural and social formations. While feminist scholars have become more invested in the study of consumerism and material culture, considerable work is needed to shed light on the significance of commodities and their representation in the context of a global and transnational world.

While the discourse of war and the zoning of it mostly involve human subjects, what interests me is the world of commodities that are moving from one zone to another, from the material to the immaterial, from specific localities to imperial centers, in this precarious neoliberal time. As I have stated elsewhere, I use the concept of commodity to refer to three ideas: commodity as an object of material culture, commodity as an object invested with value, and commodity as the object of circulation and exchange in the market place (Moallem 2018). The binding force of the neoliberal order, more than coercion, is the reliance on sentiments, affects, sensibilities, habits, and the ways in which power is aestheticized. In this context, attachment to the images of war mediates our uneven geopolitical context to keep war at a distance while consuming its images and products on daily bases. Commodities have mediated war and militarism through trade, mercantile capital, and informal imperialism since colonial modernity.[2] Indeed, consumerism and militarism are integrated in everything from "network-centered warfare" in Samuel Weber's terms to the precise targeting of consumers to the operation of the military and police.[3] In a neoliberal order, militarism and war have increasingly become a mediated reality where the embodied materiality of violence is displaced in a fantastical world of traces and signs. War carpets are examples of this binding of the paradoxical presence of a panoptic space of production in war zones and a decorative, spectacular aestheticization of war in the consumptive zones.

War carpets are hand-knotted carpets and the most recent version of what is referred to as Oriental carpets. They were initially produced in Afghanistan. Most recently, they have been made in other regions of the Middle East and South and Central Asia. Currently, a significant number of war carpets are made in refugee camps in Pakistan. Sometimes these carpets are named as "conflict carpets," "crazy carpets," and "terrorist carpets."[4] These names naturalize war and militarism as an inevitable part of globalization. However, war carpets are distinguished from other Oriental carpets because they reproduce the images of modern weaponry including bombers, drones, tanks, rifles, grenades, helicopters, and other technologies of war. Their main motifs are no more natural elements including gardens, flowers, trees, etc. Instead, their design blends modernist forms of naturalism, with local colorations common in carpet weaving across the Middle East and South, East, and Central Asia.

War carpets started after the occupation of Afghanistan and aestheticized military weapons. Produced mostly for the Western market they began with the depiction of Soviet-made artillery from 1980 through 1989. However, with the emergence of the Taliban and the United States occupation of Afghanistan, they started to depict the United States army amunitions, weapons and equipments. Nigel Lendon notes (2017) that since 9/11, an essential component of these carpets is the portrayal of the leaflets dropped in Afghanistan by the US military forces. Currently, these carpets are being sold both in the carpet stores as well as over the Internet (eBay and carpet websites). Some of these rugs could be characterized as memory devices depicting the events that took place during the occupation of Afghanistan.[5]

According to Spooner, there are very few examples of carpets depicting war before 1980. He gives the example of a few Persian carpets depicting airplanes during World War I, emphasizing the commodification of the war carpets and their ample production in the last three decades. There have been some exhibitions, either including war rugs or specifically focusing on them, such as at the Textile Museum of Canada, where Max Allen (cofounder of the Textile Museum and a CBC radio producer) exhibited a collection entitled "Battleground: War Rugs from Afghanistan."[6]

Eleswhere, I suggest that war carpets maintain two contradictory notions. One is the suppression of the traumatic memory of war capitalism that cannot be repeated except as renewed forms of war and violence but can be re-enacted in the spaces of consumerism through repeatable objects (2018). According to Sven Beckert (2015) mercantile capitalism could be described as war capitalism because of the centrality of the violence of slavery in the emergence and expansion of global capitalism.

However, as I have noted before war capitalism may not have ended or been completely replaced with industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century but instead may have persisted in an altered state in neoliberal governmentality (2018).[7] The other notion involves fixing the crisis of meaning resulting from the contradictions and conflicts between the spaces of war and occupation in the Middle East and the spaces of everyday life in the West, creating an occasion where knowledge cannot be repressed. War carpets reveal how war is both desired aesthetically and dismissed ethically. War carpets could be described as by-products of a neoliberal order that is binding the war zones in the Global South (e.x. Afghanistan) with the imperial zones of everyday life in North America.

In this essay, I discuss how the technologies of war are connected with commodity circulation. I argue that the circulation of war carpets has to do with the contemporary neoliberal politics of ethical disengagement and consumerist humanitarianism. I elaborate on the linkage between the aestheticization of militaria (weaponized and militarized commodities) and one's sense of belonging to a national community, interrogating what it means to be moved or not moved by the aesthetic experiences of everyday consumerism. In other words, I ask how the aesthetics become "anaesthetics," in Susan Buck-Morss's (2005) terms, in a neoliberal era.[8]

Consuming the War

Some of the major consumers of war rugs are military service members as well as carpet collectors. According to an article in the *Washington Post,*

> American servicemen and women frequently buy war rugs in Afghanistan, and Afghani rug traders even get special permits to sell them at military bases. Some New Yorkers find them fit for display, too. "You might think it's a ghoulish thing to own, but I look at it differently," says Barbara Jakobson, a trustee at Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art and a longtime art collector. "It's a kind of history painting. Battles have always been depicted in art." Jakobson placed hers in a small hallway in her brownstone (Raghavan 2015).

Also, with the expansion of the new media and the Internet, weavers are increasingly responding to the market and consumers' desires for specific kinds of carpets. According to anthropologist Brian Spooner, "War rugs represent the first effort of Afghan weavers to respond to the international market" (2011, 18). He argues that the consumers of these rugs are not "traditional ruggies." Also, as noted by some scholars and collectors,

the interest these carpets attract is very different from that of the Oriental carpets of the past. While collector and consumer's demands in the Global North might explain continuous production of these carpets, some see the war carpets as protest art, or Afghan women's act of transforming the traditional textile design into modernity, others as tourist art.

As I have argued elsewhere, war carpets depict the dystopian spaces of the current world where the landscape is occupied and destroyed by all kinds of weaponry. They are part of the militarization of space but also the military imagination of the world. They depict a de-territorialized hyper-reality linking the war zone of Afghanistan to collectors' and consumers' homes and the museum spaces of New York and Los Angeles (2018). War carpets may be depicting an aesthetically appealing world for collectors and museums in the United States or Canada but in Afghanistan they are material remains of war under military occupations by the Soviet Union and the United States since 1980. War carpets keep in sight the devastating effects of these occupations on people and landscapes. They are reminders of appalling exploitative conditions under which masses of weavers—mostly women and children—produce these carpets.[9] Indeed, while the producing bodies of these carpets are regularly annihilated as casualties of war or kept in refugee camps, the product of their labor enters the global market place as both an image and a commodity. The aestheticized landscape of the war carpets becomes a place for the convergence of modern naturalism with militarism and consumerism. But the question to ask is how does neoliberal governmentality hold together networks of production, distribution, and consumption with bodies even in a geopolitically fragmented and uneven world? In other words, in what way does consumptive production engender exploitative labor in a global and transnational world? My answer is that consumer culture, along with what Rancière (2000) calls "le partage du sensible"[10] or the distribution of the sensible or what the senses are capable of apprehending, plays a crucial role in holding the war zones in Afghanistan together with the zones of everyday life in the United States. The concept of "aesthetic life" proposed by Gabriel Tarde (2001 [1890, 69]) is useful since it theoretically enables us to draw a connection between the culture of war and the routinization of militarism in everyday life, especially in the context of cyber trade and under neoliberal forms of governmentality. However, if for Tarde the concept of aesthetic life was promising a happy future, in this context it represents a dystopian nightmare.

In addition to the Internet, the distribution of war carpets is mediated by many institutions including military industrial complex and museum exhibitions. For example, "carpet bombing" is the name that has been given

to the unguided aerial bombing that damages every part of an area[11] and has been frequently used by the United States since the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.[12] Also, museum exhibitions entitled "The Weaving of War" in various parts of the United States, including New York and Miami, are part of the aestheticization of war carpets. Furthermore, most collectors of war carpets are part of the Canadian or American military or armed forces. In the exhibitions, the war rugs are exoticized and constructed as coming from a faraway land. As noted by Canadian cultural critique Susan Cahill, "Exhibiting the rugs as crafts from a distant land neglects the current realities of a Canadian military presence in Afghanistan, for example, as well as of Afghan diaspora in the Middle East and around the world" (2009, 231). In this context, the carpet as a material object becomes an image that itself conceals the materiality and spatiality of who makes it and under what circumstances—an image depicting fetishized weapons with magical powers, the power to rule the world. Indeed, military culture and mass culture are tightly woven together in a way that defines our historical moment.

Also, as some feminist scholars have argued, commodities have mediated between the private and the public in colonial modernity, and they continue to bring together "the empire of merchandise" in Barthes's terms with "the empire of the home" in Anne McClintock's terms. Under neoliberal governmentality, selling and buying have increasingly been extended to new media spaces, furthering the blurring of public and private while strengthening the aesthetic and sensorial attachment to the notions of them and us, primitive and civilized, violent and peaceful, and so on.

Beyond museums and collectors' collections, war carpets are used as home decoration. Beatriz Colomina argues that: "This militarization of the house is consistent with Fuller's idea of the house as a 'shelter.' She repeatedly refers to the etymological meaning of the word as that which covers or shields from exposure or danger; a lace of safety, refuge or retreat" (Colomina 2007, 73). Colomina refers to a 1942 article in *Life,* "Gardens for the U.S. at War," that says: "War glares at you from the morning newspapers on your doorsteps. It crowds into the bus with you as you rush for the 8:15. It strikes at you from the grocer's shelves. But there's one place war can't touch you—your garden" (Gate 1943, cited by Colomina 2007, 117).

If the house is a site of military defense, as it has been depicted in war literature in the United States, the Oriental carpet is a permanent reminder of gardens not touched by war. However, war carpets have changed this equation by making the home both a site of defense and a place of offense. In both cases, consumers are pushed into withdrawal and separation. While the labor in the war zone is trapped in the war zone or refugee

camps, the war carpet has become mobile, creating a sense of being at home yet removed from the war in the everyday zones of empire.

FEEL-GOOD CONSUMERISM

War, along with the free circulation of commodities, formally and informally opens up space for neoliberal policies including denying access to credit, neglecting infrastructure, abandoning technical training or any form of technological development, feminizing labor, and transferring commodities to the vulnerable spaces of war zones and refugee camps. Neoliberal governmentality also involves what I call feel-good consumerism. This form of consumerism has diminished if not concealed the violence of war and militarism in the areas where commodities can be produced far more cheaply than anywhere else without any profitable return for the small producers.

This feel-good consumerism includes both the citizens of a nation-state, making them feel included in the economic system, as well as those who are now being placed outside the liberal nation-state into the anonymous spaces of war zones, remote villages, refugee camps, and border-lands—beyond any form of labor regulation. A report on Tory Ferrey, a war-rug collector, states: "Ferrey and Lauer have sold much of Ferrey's larger collection over the past two years to benefit various charities, including Afghan education. They've raised $38,000 so far, and Ferrey is down to about two hundred rugs, which she hopes to sell at two remaining charity auctions, one of them Saturday" (Bauer 2007). Selling war carpet through charity to promote Afghan education is an example of the paradoxical conjunction of neoliberal wars and humanitarian consumerism.

Also, the branding of commodities with an identification of being from a war zone, I argue, is radically different from other forms of branding. This kind of branding is made within the context of new and old forms of Orientalism, linking the discursive economy of Orientalism to material production under neoliberal governmentality. The identity attached to commodities that target those who "buy to help" makes the consumers not only feel better but also feel included in the empire, obscuring the blatant violence of war as well as geopolitical inequalities.

There are many theoretical issues involved in this process, including deregulation, privatization, pro-corporate policies, and militarism. The selective shrinking of states involving market-based transformations with no endpoint, as political theorists of neoliberalism argue, requires continuous variation in the mobile world of commodity circulation. As feminist

scholar Rey Chow observes, "Because of the often accidental nature of the encounter with objects—one can never be sure what may come one's way, when and where—the nostalgia for owning the past that is embedded in collecting is, arguably, inseparable from a utopian sense of anticipation, of holding forward to a future that is not entirely known or knowable" (Chow 2012, 61).

The war carpet as an image is an integral part of neoliberal universalism, reinforcing the power of images as they produce a world of commodities desired, bought, and sold in the marketplace and cyberspace, no matter the local histories of violence and the trauma of war. War carpets are creating a narrative of war as anonymous and not affecting bodies; instead, their consumption results in a feel-good consumerism in the North for those who collect, exhibit, or buy these products to help women, rural people, and refugees, gluing the economy of Orientalism to branding technologies of war. War carpets link the net and the network of trade to the work of those without access to citizenship, attached to a nation-state in the war zone or refugee camps.

Keeping the Suffering at a Distance

As I showed in this chapter, representational practices have been crucial in the circulation of war carpets. The mediation of the internet, the cyber space along with museum exhibitions have mobilized distinctive meanings around the consumption of war carpets, enabling the investment of new value into the war rugs as commodities. The intervention of media technologies not only function as a supplement to a neoliberal capitalist order and its value system, but also produces additional value for the commodities in circulation. While the internet has become a crucial site of selling and buying what is produced in one part of the world and consumed in another part of the world, the museums' exhibitions continue to play a crucial role in mediatization of commodities. In other words, war rugs are produced in the war zones through the feminized labor of women, children and refugees but aestheticized and consumed in the United States and Canada. In this context, the labor is emplaced with little or no capacity to cross the borders while the war carpets are made mobile crossing the threshold of the war zones and its boundaries.

War carpets turn the tragic moment of war into the pleasurable moment of consumption. The aestheticization and fetishization of war carpets reflect the memory of war along with feminized labor, its disavowal, and its ongoing daily life in the sites of production, in the fragments of empire, war

zones, refugee camps, remote villages, and so on. The aesthetics invested in collecting, exhibiting, selling, and buying the carpets are, in my view, rather anaesthetic, since they avoid the shock and trauma of war by domesticating its effects while internalizing them as guilt. Indeed, since the 1980s, war carpets have become a silent form of the cultural repression of war.

We can use Terry Eagleton's suggestion that "aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body" (1990) to understand neoliberalism; it is important to understand the forms of politics that are influenced by aesthetic appeals. Indeed, neoliberalism and aestheticization reinforce each other since both involve a notion of "liberal choice" actualized in the consumerist regimes of commodity circulation. Neoliberalism creates space for the commercialization of war and militarism through further differentiation, categorization, and the marketing of difference on the one hand and the notions of individual and group tastes and choice on the other. As a result, war becomes a commodity of choice in a perverse collapse of agents of war with collectors of war carpets.

If recent wars have been kept at a distance, in Favret's terms, then how can we explain the significance of everyday commodities and, in this particular context, "war carpets"? War carpets serve to overcome this sense of distance, bringing the war home by displaying a picturesque view of smart-weapon technology either for exhibition or for decoration as disposable commodities. We can conclude that what Favret calls "getting the human eye out of the loop" (2010, 196) but, in my view, keeping it on the target is indeed central to the consumption of war carpets. Also, if collecting and owning war carpets is an effort to collect bits and pieces of the history of recent wars and occupations in the Middle East, then history here appears as a culture (not economy), meaning charitable humanitarian acts to preserve a techno-romantic image of militaria peacefully juxtaposed with the landscape. The networks of peaceful means of trade and humanitarian consumerism, as well as modes of knowledge production in the age of global media and new information technologies, have been crucial in the establishment and continuation of a neoliberal empire.

The techno-romantic surface of war carpets both conceal and reveal wartimes linking distant geopolitical locations where consuming the war in one location induce production in another. However, the contradictions caused by the fusion of violence of war and pleasures of consumption are pressing for an interrogation of proximity and distance in the feminist politics of benevolence along with other humanitarian forms of consumerism. Feel-good consumerism is not limited to war carpets, many nonprofit and for-profit organizations, both feminist and not feminist, in the Global

North use humanitarian consumption as a justification for helping subaltern women in other parts of the world. However, this rationale reinvests power in the subjects of consumption while suppressing an interrogation of either the consumers' complicity in this process or the conditions under which certain commodities are produced.

NOTES

1. While masses of weavers in the Oriental carpet industry are women, I use the concept of feminized labor to refer to the labor of women, children, and sometime men that is done under highly exploitative and precarious conditions. According to Ariel Zetlin Cooke, in the refugee camps gender participation in carpet weaving has changed since men have become more involved in weaving war rugs (2005, 61).
2. Anne McClintock refers to "the militant geography of mercantile imperialism and its dreams of dominating not only a boundless imperium of commerce but also a boundless imperium of knowledge" (1995, 23).
3. Remember George Bush's appeal to consumerism after 9/11 and the market exploitation of 9/11 to sell and buy patriotism and nationalism.
4. A number of sellers of war carpets challenge the notion of terrorist carpets. In their view, the emergence of these carpets goes back to 1979 and the reaction of Afghan people to the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviets (http://www.rugrag.com/post/Afghan-War-Rugs-3dCultural-Artifacts--Terrorist-Rugs-3d-Ignorance.aspx).
5. See http://www.warrug.com/price.php for some examples.
6. The Afghan war rugs on exhibit at the Penn Museum from April 30 to July 31, 2011.
7. I believe the Foucauldian concept of governmentality as an ensemble of the practices of the governments, the technologies of power, and the subjects made governable, best grasp our neoliberal social context.
8. Buck-Morss refers to this concept to talk about "the simultaneity of overstimulation and numbness" and the "dialectical reversal, whereby aesthetics changes from a cognitive mode of being 'in touch' with reality to a way of blocking out reality" (2005, 302).
9. Foucault uses to the concept of biopower to explain how modern nation-states invest in some lives while disinvesting in others. Agamben uses the two concepts of the state of exception and the bare life to talk about those subjects that are denied both legal and political representation.
10. Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique.* La Fabrique, 2000.
11. The term carpet bombing is older than the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. It was used during the World War II and the Vietnam War.

12. Marc W. Herod, in his "A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States' Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan," documents the Afghan civilian casualties of these bombardments (http://www.uscrusade.com/vic/). The concept of carpet bombing has also been used in other contexts including Susan Faludi's reference to the carpet bombing of emancipated women in her 1991 book *Backlash*.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.