

Introduction

Kathy Davis, Mary Evans, and Judith Lorber

The *Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies* is first and foremost an indication of the coming of age of academic work on women and the meaning of gender in the twenty-first century. This area of study, born out of second-wave feminism, has initiated and enabled the rethinking and the rewriting of previously taken-for-granted understandings of gender and its place in the social and the symbolic world. As this handbook demonstrates, there is no discipline in the university curriculum which remains untouched by the intervention of thinking about gender.

This process, accomplished in the past forty years, has overturned previous certainties about the fixed order and meaning of gender. As the chapters in this collection demonstrate, there is no subject or context which cannot be seen differently when examined through the lens of 'gender thinking.' No author in this handbook would claim to represent the consensus of this new understanding of the world, but all would agree on the centrality of gender to any coherent understanding of the world.

The handbook shows the theoretical plurality and diversity of gender and women's studies, and also demonstrate the political and national range of gendered thinking. Even if the historical roots of feminism lie in the European Enlightenment, the growth of the subject has not been subject to the same geographical limits. The handbook is, in the same way as feminism itself, literally international. Both the editors and the authors are drawn from different countries and different academic interests, but what is shared is greater than what is distinct: namely, a commitment to extending our understanding of arguably the greatest human division, that between female and male. In these pages, readers can find comprehensive reviews of the literature on gender in particular contexts. Just as significantly, the authors also suggest ways in which the existing richness and excitement of work on gender can be further extended. All in all, this handbook attests to the dynamic global work in progress on gender.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

The concept of women's studies, thirty-five years ago a radically new idea in an academic world where White Western men were considered the generalized

'human,' is now well enough established to have been complemented by gender studies and studies of men and masculinities. Each of these areas includes elements of the other areas, but in examining the current state and future potential of gender and women's studies, we take as our focus the research and theories that have developed around women, and, more recently, around gender as encompassing women and men in relation to each other. In addition to analyzing women's and men's interactions and the processes of domination and oppression of women by men, gender studies, more so than women's studies, has focused on the way the organization and structure of society itself and its cultural and knowledge productions are gendered.

By gendered, we mean the division of people into two differentiated groups, 'men' and 'women,' and the organization of the major aspects of society along those binaries. The binary divisions override individual differences and intertwine with other major socially constructed differences – racial categorization, ethnic grouping, economic class, age, religion, and sexual orientation – which interact to produce a complex hierarchical system of dominance and subordination. Gender divisions not only permeate the individual's sense of self, families, and intimate relationships, but also structure work, politics, law, education, medicine, the military, religions, and culture. Gender is a system of power in that it privileges some men and disadvantages most women. Gender is constructed and maintained by both the dominants and the oppressed because both ascribe to its values in personality and identity formation and in appropriate masculine and feminine behavior. Gender is hegemonic in that many of its foundational assumptions and ubiquitous processes are invisible, unquestioned, and unexamined.

There is still debate over whether a focus on *gender* rather than on *women* undoes the accomplishments of the past thirty-five years in bringing women and women's standpoints to the forefront in research, knowledge, and cultural production. Some scholars of women's studies are concerned that the concept of gender neglects sexual and emotional differences between women and men. For the more psychoanalytically minded, the concept of gender is too sociological and may obscure the centrality of the sexed body for understanding our culture. Others have worried that gender may water down the powerful concept of *patriarchy* as the source of women's oppression. Patriarchy, to some scholars of women's studies is much more encompassing than gender, in that it reflects the violence and misogyny that imbues many of the social and emotional encounters of women and men. More recently, the concept of gender has been criticized for not doing justice to the intersectionality of women's (and men's) multiple identities and the ways they are shaped by other socially constructed categories of difference.

A central concern of many of the authors is with the way in which the 'masculine' (whether as behavior or as a conceptual system) is both rewarded and hegemonic because it is taken for granted as the dominant perspective. Challenging the hegemony of the masculine in its many shapes

and forms has been the prime endeavor of second-wave feminism, but as numerous feminists have pointed out, that hegemony is institutionalized in complex and subtle ways. Social prohibitions clearly excluding or discriminating against women are easy to challenge and dispute (always assuming a form of civic society which allows such challenges), but more difficult to confront are those patterns of discrimination that have the appearance of either universality or the authority of the 'natural.'

One of the more famous binary oppositions posed in the history of second-wave feminism was outlined by Sherry Ortner in 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' In that paper (first published in 1972), Ortner proposed that Western thinking in the years since the Enlightenment had been founded on the assumption that men inhabited the domain of understanding and rational thought, while women's 'natural' habitat was that of reproduction and the care of others, those 'naturally' vulnerable and unable to care for themselves. Despite Mary Wollstonecraft's best efforts (in 1792), it has taken over 200 years to challenge effectively those traditions and ideologies which locate women 'outside' knowledge, and hence outside the realms of power. We can recognize – as authors in this collection collectively do – the evolving global paradigms that impinge on the autonomy and well-being of women. It is another question of how those paradigms might be resisted or countered. Two strands are possible in considering this issue: one is to revisit those apparent certainties about the normative order of the world in order to define an agenda which is more assuredly both feminist and gendered. The other is to consider the transformation of the realm of the personal and public which has taken place in the West since the 1960s and ask if these 'new' people (or certainly people acting within new normative boundaries) will, through the politics of the personal, transform public politics.

These arguments and debates in the theory and scholarship of women's and gender studies draw on Western second-wave feminism, that explosion of creative and critical energy that played a large part in the recent transformation of Western civil society and its pedagogy. As the slogan of the 1960s states, 'the personal is political,' and that concept, challenging the division of public and private which had been part of Western assumptions since the nineteenth century, came to overturn many previously held divisions and distinctions between the world of men and the world of women. That distinction was, of course, always more ideal than real, but the repudiation of different spheres was one that second-wave feminism claimed as a platform from which to demand the reordering of the social and intellectual world.

Women's studies was thus first the claim by women for the study of women, a paradigm shift in focus which would (and did) demonstrate the biases of the academy's male-centered viewpoint. Gender studies was made possible through this process of the recovery of women: once the human subject had been gendered, there arose the possibility of extending the knowledge of the

complexity of human gender to the study of both women and men and their interactions in the personal, in civil society, and in public and political life.

CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES, GENDER STUDIES, AND STUDIES OF MEN

In this context, it is entirely appropriate that the chapter that opens this collection, 'The Life and Times of Academic Feminism' by Clare Hemmings, raises those issues which have always been of concern to scholars working in women's/gender studies, namely, the question of the disciplinary status of women's/gender studies and the relationship of the area (or discipline, depending on how the debate is resolved) to the institutional context of the academy. Far from being a matter of intellectual history, women's/gender studies is very much a matter of the present and future, as Hemmings argues: 'I remain enthralled by a thirty-year endeavor that has developed an institutional life that intersects with, but cannot be reduced to, feminist political movements, and that has been brave enough to take its own history and presumptions as critical objects of inquiry' (p. xx). To be critical of others is never problematic, to be critical of one's own positions is something unknown in the academy, and it extends that project of 'humanization' where second-wave academic feminism began.

In the second chapter, 'The Shadow and the Substance: The Sex/Gender Debate,' Wendy Cealey Harrison lays out the complexities of the intersection of sex and gender, taking the debate beyond the foundational assumption of the distinction between them that second-wave feminists originally promulgated. She asserts that the exciting and challenging work that remains to be undertaken in feminism is research that recognizes and understands the biological yet 'takes full account of the fact that human beings are pre-eminently social and cultural creatures who, in shaping the world around them, also shape themselves' (p. xx).

The growing acceptance of gender studies saw the parallel burgeoning of studies of men and masculinities. Jeff Hearn and Michael Kimmel, in 'Changing Studies on Men and Masculinities,' review the material which has made explicit the dynamics of gender as applied to men as well as women, and has problematized the meaning of 'masculinity.' As they comment, 'Men's outlooks and culturally defined characteristics were formally generally the unexamined norm for religion, science, citizenship, law and authority' (p. xx), but gender studies has shifted that assumption towards the now general analysis that masculinity, quite as much as femininity, is socially constructed. Yet in their concluding remarks, Hearn and Kimmel point out that research on the social construction of gender remains a 'First World' concern and that theories about gender which 'de-construct' biological gender have so far largely made an impact mostly in those rich societies where biology, in all senses of human identity and human need, is more likely to be negotiable.

CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS AND CRITIQUES

It is the changing meaning of gender in modernity that is the focus of the chapters by Gabriele Griffin and David Morgan in the part on cultural representations and critiques. Addressing this key question, Griffin in 'Gendered Cultures' and Morgan in 'The Crisis in Masculinity' pursue ideas, first voiced at the beginning of the twentieth century, about the ways in which ideological change has made previously traditional expectations about gender redundant. Griffin highlights how shifts in discourse from 'women' to 'gender' have impacted on cultural practices, generating popular interest in women's performance, film, and popular cultural work. She documents how the 'cultural turn' has changed the content of women's and gender studies courses around the world.

The 'crisis' in masculinity to which Morgan refers is the moral panic about what seems to be – to some men – the claiming of public and institutional space by women. As he points out, this 'crisis' tells us as much about the fragility of masculinity as about the strength of the feminine; nevertheless, he cites evidence which suggests that 'structures of male power are remarkably resilient' (p. xx). To many feminists, that remark would be judged as one of the great understatements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Yet, as Morgan goes on to point out, while gender identities and differences are remarkably resistant to social change, they are always complicated by differences of class and ethnicity. Those whose social status is not dominant, which includes women, have challenged the traditional and conventional with their 'outside' perspectives and views 'from below.'

In the third chapter in this part, Bronwyn Winter points out in 'The Social Foundations of the Sacred: Feminists and the Politics of Religion' that religion is constitutive of social organization and power relations and central to the collective and individual internalization of cultural identity. To the extent that feminists have challenged long-standing taboos in religious belief and practice, they have created major changes in traditional religions, yet they have not been able to resolve the question of whether symbols of religious identity that mark women, such as Islamic veiling, are demeaning or distinctive.

KNOWLEDGE

An important contention of second-wave feminism is that the shaping of the world takes place through the production of knowledge. Thus, those who control and influence that production create the intellectual world we live in. The chapters in this part are particularly concerned with the ways that women's and gender studies have problematized the taken-for-granted meaning of gender. All three chapters argue that feminist standpoints have

forced rethinking and reframing of research and scholarship, and have left deep marks in what and how we think and know.

Carolyn DiPalma and Kathy Ferguson in 'Clearing Ground and Making Connections: Modernism, Postmodernism, Feminism,' tackle one of the most important debates within academic feminism, namely, between modernism and postmodernism, showing how this debate has left a lasting imprint on feminist scholarship. Rather than resolving the debate, they argue that feminist thinking is best served by productively engaging with tensions between modern and postmodern thinking. Lorraine Code, in 'Women Knowing/Knowing Women: Critical-Creative Interventions in the Politics of Knowledge,' shows how feminist critical, gender-sensitive, and political inquiries have produced not only better but different knowledge by creating epistemic standards 'stringent enough to enable knowers to participate intelligently in the world, both physical and human' (p. xx).

In 'Gender, Change, and Education,' Diana Leonard reviews the many changes that have taken place in educational practice and notes the assimilation of women into both the institutions and values of schools and universities. At the same time, she observes the shift towards 'gender-blind' educational policies, a shift which, she notes, can frequently obliterate the interests of women. The drift towards the 'masculine' remains very powerful, entrenched as the masculine has been within the discourses of both Western religion and philosophy.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE STATE

Gender politics with the goal of more structural change are played out in national and international arenas. In the four chapters on globalization and the state, the authors confront state-sanctioned differences between women and men as citizens and members of particular nations with particular national identities and ideologies. If gender politics are complex within societies, they reach the heights of Byzantine complication between societies. Western assumptions about gender in the twenty-first century generally take for granted a formal equality of citizenship; outside the West, this equality cannot be taken for granted. Global agendas and rhetoric about 'democracy' and 'freedom' are sometimes deeply flawed by their limited appreciation of gender difference.

In 'Insiders and Outsiders: Within and Beyond the Gendered Nation,' Barbara Einhorn presents vivid evidence about the difference political change can make to women and gender politics: the dismantling of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the coming of what is described as the 'free' market radically altered women's ability to participate in civil society. In 'Mothers and Muslims, Sisters and Sojourners: The Contested Boundaries of Feminist Citizenship,' Baukje Prins takes this discussion to the heart of our

individual dilemmas as citizens and feminists, asking who we should include as our 'co-citizens' in a world which, as Miri Song points out in 'Gender in a Global World,' is assumed to be 'glocal' – both local and global. There is a very important role for feminist interventions that do not ignore local differences and diverse cultures.

Song makes evident the erasure of gender in most mainstream writings about globalization. This erasure provides an important context for Dubravka Zarkov's chapter, 'Towards a New Theorizing of Women, Gender, and War.' Women over the centuries, but most notably in the twentieth century, as in *Three Guineas* by Virginia Woolf, have observed that war and organized violence are the province of men. The responsibilities of citizenship involve understanding the motivations for war and military action, yet while Western nations assume that this responsibility will be shared by women and men, none of them fully integrates women into the military. Some definitions of the 'feminine' remain resistant to transformation; yet just as certainly, women are as likely as men to be the civilian victims of violence and aggression. The conclusions drawn by Einhorn and Zarkov are pessimistic about the possibilities of a specifically feminist resistance to the globalization of evermore brutal neo-liberal economies and unprecedented global militarization.

WORK AND FAMILY

One of the major challenges to traditional thinking has been the feminist confrontation of the intersection of the public and the personal in work organizations, families, caregiving, and the welfare state. The transforming impact of second-wave feminism on state policies about social care and welfare provision is founded on distinctions between women and men which largely assume stable gendered behavior. We know, for example, that the majority (although not all) of family carers are women, but in saying this we also have to recognize the cultural baggage implicit in that recognition. The precise nature of that cultural baggage and how it is changing under the impact of new thinking about men and women workers, family members, and caretakers is the subject of the chapters in the part on work and family.

The conventional understanding of gender, as Rosemary Crompton in 'Working with Gender' and Clare Ungerson in 'Gender, Care, and the Welfare State' point out, underpins much of the structure of the labor market, paid and unpaid caregiving, and the welfare state. Ungerson and Crompton draw on the particular case of the British welfare/labor structure, but their essays make the more general point that while gender is paramount in defining the organization of paid work and patterns of unpaid work, these aspects of society are also complicated by factors of racial and ethnic discrimination. Europe in general has far more extensive welfare provisions (notably in health services) than the United States, but other global divisions exist which

demand further attention to the different extent of the impact of gender on the individual lives of women and men.

Molly Monahan Lang and Barbara Risman, in 'Blending into Equality: Family Diversity and Gender Convergence,' argue that recent changes in families are increasingly minimizing the differences in women's and men's roles. If that convergence continues and becomes normalized (which is, of course, a matter of conjecture), it may arguably be the case that divisions of gendered behavior and ideologies about them will be overtaken by radical social changes and realignments.

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITIES

Even more drastic changes in gender and sexuality are outlined by Chrys Ingraham, Sasha Roseneil, and Wendy McKenna and Suzanne Kessler. These authors take as their subject matter the question of gender, sexuality, and intimate relationships; their shared argument is the social construction, and indeed the possible deconstruction, of gender and sexual identities. Although second-wave feminism drew on the rhetorical possibilities of the binary distinction between female and male, women and men, and homosexuals and heterosexuals, feminists at the beginning of the twenty-first century increasingly look beyond those binaries to the theoretical and social possibilities of what Ingraham, in 'Thinking Straight, Acting Bent: Heteronormativity and Homosexuality,' describes as 'thinking (and acting) bent.'

Ingraham proposes a major challenge to feminists and others who want to change the sex/gender system: to recognize the power of 'thinking straight'; that is, thinking in terms of heterosexuality (not gender) as the dominant social paradigm. Change, she argues, must take place by undermining the hegemony of heterosexuality. Roseneil, in 'Foregrounding Friendship: Feminist Pasts, Feminist Futures,' suggests that focusing on friendship enables a challenge to the heteronormativity of the social sciences, and makes visible 'some of the radical transformations in the organization of intimate life which characterize the early twenty-first century' (p. xx). Taking the transformations even further, McKenna and Kessler in 'Transgendering: Blurring the Boundaries of Gender' lay out the ways that this phenomenon 'radically deconstructs the meaning of gender categories and presents feminist scholars with possibilities for linking theory and practice' in producing social change (p. xx).

EMBODIMENT IN A TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

The body, the environment, and science and technology are the focus of three chapters that explore the intersection and interaction of gender, bodies, and

technology. The authors point out the various tensions that exist between the individual choices which women make (or wish to make) and the social norms defining women's social position. In 'Gendered Bodies: Between Conformity and Autonomy,' Sharyn Roach Anleu argues that conformity to gender norms, while more restrictive for women than for men, does not always compromise or reduce women's autonomy and power.

Indeed, as Irmgard Schultz suggests in 'The Natural World and the Nature of Gender,' the concept of the feminine can play a key part in rethinking social organization. For example, the ideas of 'provident economy' and 'everyday life ecology,' ideas drawn from gendered perspectives about the conduct of daily life, take women's experience as the conceptual basis for the renegotiation of social relationships, in this case the particularly sensitive relationship of women and men to nature. In 'From Science and Technology to Feminist Technoscience,' Jutta Weber interprets recent cultural studies of science and technology as reactions to the feminist reorganization of knowledge.

MAKING CHANGE

The final part explores the possibilities for creating social change. The contributions in this handbook do not share the same political aims or strategies or, for that matter, moral views. In 'Moral Perspectives: Gender, Ethics, and Political Theory,' Joan Tronto explores the way people develop their moral views, and how those moral views are so deeply structured by context. Nevertheless, Tronto points out that the ethic of care is now an undisputed part of feminist challenges to the conventional post-Enlightenment assumption that individual citizens must be free to act in their own interests. For feminists, an ethic of care means responsibility for others as well. The concept of autonomy and agency, therefore, must encompass the recognition of that responsibility.

The goal of knowledge that accurately reflects our gendered lives is widely accepted by feminists, but there are major disagreements about how to do the research that will produce that knowledge. In 'Having It All: Feminist Fractured Foundationalism,' Sue Wise and Liz Stanley offer a 'toolkit' for practical use that they suggest will produce 'unalienated feminist knowledge.' In political activism, as Manisha Desai points out in 'From Autonomy to Solidarities: Transnational Feminist Political Strategies,' the aims of feminists vary considerably if one takes a transnational perspective.

In the final chapter, we offer our own utopian views on what social changes we would most like to see, and how these can be accomplished. At this point in the twenty-first century, the study of gender, in all its many forms, offers an endlessly challenging way of thinking through, and past, the banal rhetoric of public politics. One of the paradoxes of the twenty-first century is that as intellectual life allows increasing doubt and speculation

about the clarity of previously entrenched 'natural' categories, including male and female, it brings, as Judith Lorber argues in 'A World Without Gender?', the possibility of 'degendering' to the fore as a viable form of resistance to existing gendered social orders. Against the backdrop of global inequalities of power and a growing tendency towards fundamentalist politics, Mary Evans in 'Getting Real: Contextualizing Gender' reminds us that the task for feminism is to be critical of its liberal underpinnings, even as it remains committed to preserving its longing for a more egalitarian and democratic future for women and men. Taking a transnational perspective, Kathy Davis, in 'Feminist Politics of Location,' concludes on a hopeful note. With a little 'geographical imagination,' a feminism of the future may become the site for dialogues across cultural, regional, and national borders. Taken together, we provide a vision of how women's and gender studies can become a richly subversive challenge to the authoritarian construction of knowledge and an opportunity for a radical politics of social justice and transformation.

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