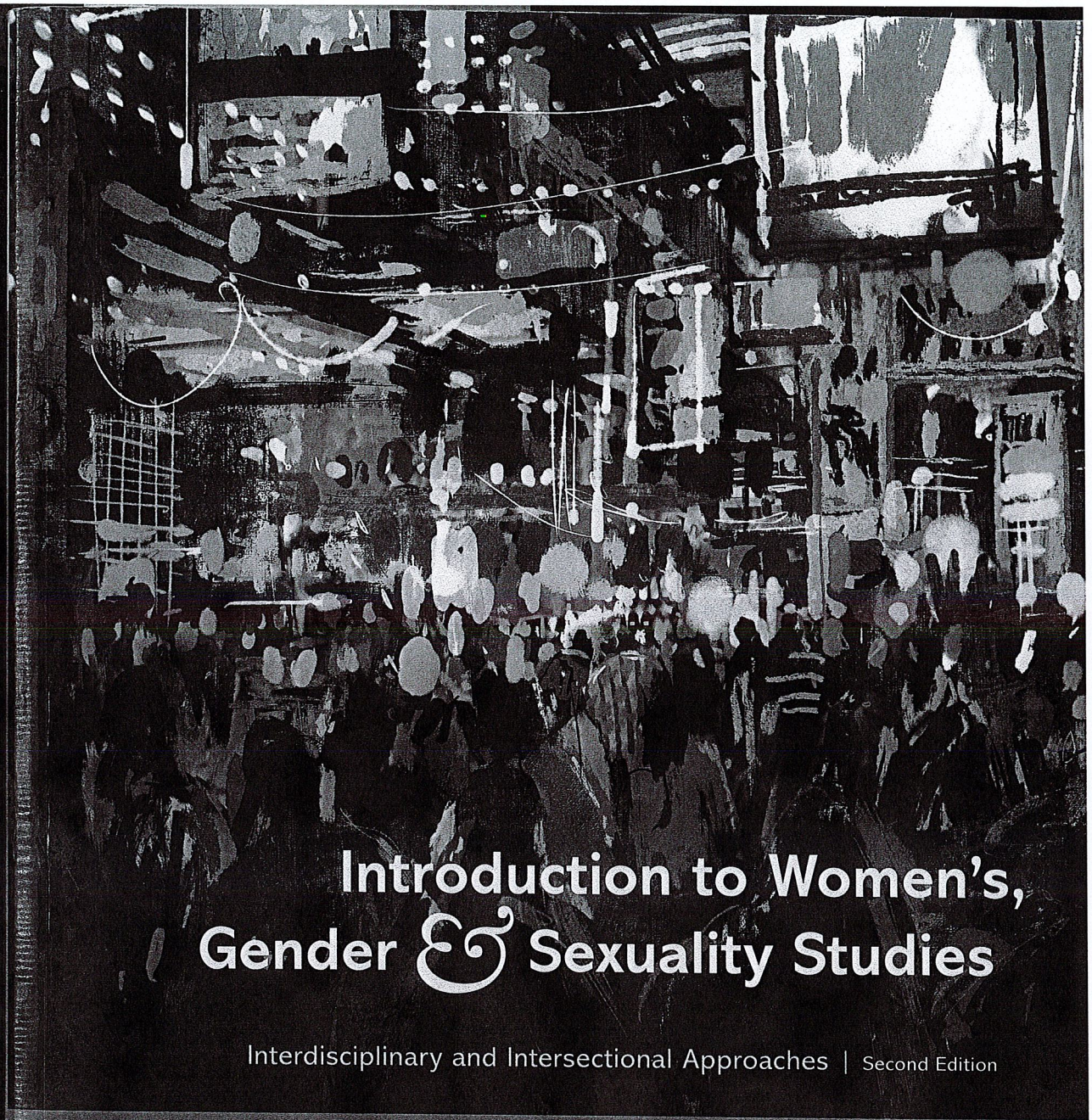

Introduction to Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies

Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Approaches | Second Edition

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of:

1. The connection between social movements and the field of women's, gender, and sexuality studies.
2. How layered meanings of feminist and queer are central to the academic field of women's, gender, and sexuality studies.
3. Key terms and concepts in women's, gender, and sexuality studies emphasizing oppression, privilege, resistance, resilience, and unlearning either/or thinking.
4. Intersectionality and how it is foundational to understanding the complexity of women, men, nonbinary, genderqueer, and transgender people and structures of power in U.S. society.
5. Interdisciplinarity and its centrality to understanding the field.

Women's, gender, and sexuality studies is an interdisciplinary field of study and emerges as part of a long history of feminist, queer, antiracist, anticapitalist, and anticolonial movements. As an academic field it is concerned with issues of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, abilities, age, body size, and religion. It also provides lenses or ways of seeing how sociocultural dynamics of power craft our understanding of gender, transgender, and queer and its effect on our daily life. Scholars, artists, and activists in women's, gender, and sexuality studies (1) question what we know and how we know it, (2) craft theories and practices that work to end oppression, inequality, and inequities and pursue social justice and transformational change, (3) empower individuals and groups marginalized by sociopolitical systems, and (4) generally agree that there is no single or "correct" feminist or queer way of being, doing, and living. In the remainder of this introduction, you will learn key concepts (such as feminism, queer, gender, transgender, oppression, privilege, intersectionality, and interdisciplinarity) that provide the foundation for understanding women's, gender, and sexuality studies.

WHAT DOES FEMINISM AND QUEER HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

In our changing and precarious global political landscape that includes health and environmental crises alongside Black Lives Matter and antiracist movements, historical and contemporary critiques, insights, and re-imaginings that emerge from women's, gender, and sexuality studies are vital for helping make sense of a changing world and contributing to actions toward social transformation. As students will explore throughout this book, women, people of color, and LGBTQPAI+ communities have made some political, social, and economic progress over the decades. Feminist and queer thought and activism have provided foundations for these changes and will continue to provide frameworks for how to pursue justice and freedom. Yet, in popular discourse, feminism can be met with suspicion and sometimes hostility. In the English language, using the "f-word" is considered obscene; it shows anger, contempt, and disrespect to whoever (or whatever) is on the receiving end. Feminism seems to have similar cultural meanings. By now many of us have heard the stereotypes of feminists: angry, unshaven, dykes, bitchy, man-hating, and aggressive. bell hooks in her piece "Feminist Politics" (included in this section) makes the simple statement that feminism is "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" and uses this definition because it "implies that all sexist

thinking and action is the problem," regardless of who is doing it (p. 23). When asked, most individuals may readily agree that people should not be exploited or oppressed. How is it then that when feminists come together to fight against individual, institutional, and systematic sexism for protections, rights, social justice, and freedom, feminism becomes suspect? How or why might this sentiment have taken hold? bell hooks suggests that all of us learn antifeminism through U.S. patriarchal mass media because it seeks to undermine gender justice, which for her moves beyond equality and "the freedom to have abortions, to be lesbians, to challenge rape and domestic violence" (p. 23).

Feminism has a long and contentious history in which its strongest advocates did not always agree with one another on the goals of the movement or the strategies for social change. As you will learn in more detail in Section Two, women (and some men) were inspired by women's personal narratives and public speeches as well as abolition movements in the mid-nineteenth century to begin advocating for women's equality with men while others sought liberation from subjugation. Demanding everything from the right to vote to sexual autonomy, early feminists challenged the cultural belief that white, middle-class, and wealthy men innately deserved respect and dignity that was materially accompanied by access to education, work, and citizenship, while white, middle-class, and wealthy women were expected to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic, thus best suited to be mothers and wives (Welter 1966, 152). Women's, gender, and sexuality studies also traces its roots to movements such as the turn-of-the-twentieth-century antilynching movement led in part by African American journalist, newspaper owner, and grassroots activist Ida B. Wells; the labor movement organized by working-class, Jewish immigrant women in the early twentieth century; and mid-twentieth-century women's groups such as Radicalesbian, WITCH (Women's International Conspiracy from Hell), and the Red Stockings who made it clear that eradicating patriarchal culture and crafting a women-centered one was the only means to liberation. The crucial questions that beget grassroots movements for change form the backbone of feminist and queer inquiry in women's, gender, and sexuality studies. As Marilyn Boxer notes in *When Women Ask the Questions*, "From the beginning, the goal of women's studies was not merely to study women's position in the world but to change it" (Boxer 1988, 13). Given the expansiveness of feminist politics today, it is critical to understand how the last century and a half of movements for civil rights and social justice fundamentally shaped the field and that **patriarchy** remains a central feature that reinforces racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, nationalism, ageism, and ableism in our daily lives.

Patriarchy: Cultural system in which men hold power and are the central figures in the family, community, government, and larger society.

Social institutions: Rule-governed social arrangements that have survived across time and appear natural and normal but in fact represent one way of being in the world (e.g., the nuclear family, a well-armed military, and a capitalist economy).

Some people often assume that patriarchy is the idea that all men dominate and control all women. As Allan Johnson explains in "Patriarchy, the System: An It, Not a He, a Them, or an Us" (included in this section), this oversimplified approach emphasizes individual actions and reactions rather than seeing patriarchy as a system in which we all—men, women, nonbinary, genderqueer, and transgender people—participate. Patriarchy is cultural—knit into the fabric of U.S. society—and upheld by individuals *and* **social institutions**

through the law, media, family, education, and religion. Johnson provides an example that makes this very clear: if we think about patriarchy as the actions of individuals, "we might ask why a particular man raped, harassed, or beat a woman. We wouldn't ask however what kind of society would promote persistent patterns of such behavior" (p. 27). If one in four women experience rape on college campuses, social change will depend on getting to the roots that produce, maintain, and reproduce violence; this means looking closely at cultural myths about sexualities, genders, races, and socioeconomic status and how these narratives become embedded in social institutions that protect violence through silence. As Johnson argues, if society is oppressive, then people who grow up and live in it will accept, identify with, and participate in it as "normal." Feminist and queer inquiry intervenes in systems of subjugation and injustice, and, while there is significant overlap between feminist and queer studies, they are not synonymous.

Queer: Once a pejorative term, it has been reclaimed to describe sexual identities and political issues in lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, polyamorous, transgender, questioning, asexual, and intersexed communities; used to push back against oversimplified and assumed definitions of lesbian and gay identity.

LGBTQPAI+: An acronym used to identify and politically unite lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and queer, pansexual and polyamory, asexual and ally, and intersexed communities. The plus indicates that the acronym is fluid; as more queer identities are named, they can be added. The plus can also signify that people identify with more than one of these categories.

Transgender: Term used to represent a diverse group of people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the gender assigned at birth. Trans may include but is not limited to transwomen, transmen, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, genderfluid, genderqueer, genderless, agender, third gender, and two-spirited.

Genderqueer: Individuals who self-identify outside of the woman/man gender binary.

In her essay "Queer," Jennifer Purvis posits that women's, gender, and sexuality studies "is always already queer," which she defines as "twisting" and "making strange" (Purvis 2012, 190). In this context, feminism is intended to be inclusive of **queer**. Once a derogatory term hurled at lesbians and gay men, "queer" has been reclaimed by **LGBTQPAI+** communities as a term of self-identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, pansexual, polyamorous, asexual, and intersexual. "Queer" is an umbrella term used to bring together people (1) who have been marginalized in U.S. society because of their sexualities and gender identities and expressions and (2) whose descriptions and feelings do not fit easily within and may resist categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or **transgender**. In the latter case, it becomes an inclusive term for those who self-identify as **genderqueer**. Queer can also be its own sexual identity (in some acronyms it can be the "Q"), and it can signify someone's politics. For scholars, practitioners, artists, and activists who fight for the political and legal protections, rights, and freedoms of all queer people, the phrase "queer nation" can represent the need for a continued national political voice. It is also important to note that when "queer" is deployed in the struggle for social justice, it assumes solidarity, which does not always exist between the various groups of people under its purview. For example, the queer community won a significant victory when the Supreme Court ruled in July 2015 that states must allow same-sex marriage. It is also true that this milestone is limited to those who want to participate in marriage—a historically **heteronormative** institution. As such, gay marriage unites and divides the queer community.

Purvis's statement that women's, gender, and sexuality studies "is always already queer" is a bold one, particularly for some feminists. It *still* matters that lesbians, bisexual/pansexual, transgender, and asexual people who identify as women and femme do not have the same unearned privileges, opportunities, and rights as gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and polyamorous men because of sexism *and* have a history of exclusion in feminism. This was true in the late 1960s when the cofounder of the National Organization for Women, Betty Friedan, named lesbians as the "lavender menace" and is happening today as

some trans women fight for acceptance and inclusion in the women's movement, colleges, and other groups and social institutions (both of these examples will be examined closely in Section Two). When feminism excludes queer and transgender people, it replicates the power relations of patriarchy, racism, classism, ableism, and nationalism. Therefore, if feminism is to be queer it will mean that scholars, practitioners, artists, and activists will need to continue challenging the social norms that define the social categories of "women" and "men"—indeed, the binary of gender itself. And if queer communities are feminist, it will require consistent and public challenges to sexism, patriarchy, racism, classism, and ableism. This matters so that all minoritized people's voices and experiences are valued and included in movements, laws, social institutions, creative communities, and scholarship.

Heteronormative: A worldview or ideology that assumes and promotes heterosexuality as a preferred sexual orientation and expression.

LEARNING AND UNLEARNING GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Learning gender begins before any of us can even process it. In the United States, the relatively recent social media phenomenon of the "gender-reveal party" is a case in point. Also, when the baby is born, many doctors still announce, "It's a healthy baby girl!" or "It's a healthy baby boy!" This simple act of looking at the baby's genitals and announcing their sex begins the process of assigning children a **gender status**. If it is a girl, friends may purchase gifts of pink or pastel clothing, exclaim how beautiful she is going to be when she grows up, and comment that she is such a good, quiet baby. If it is boy, he may receive blue or brightly colored clothing and told that he is smart or active or will be the next star athlete or scientist. Knowing the sex of the baby sets the stage for how the child will be socialized into their **gender identity** and treated as a person.

Gender status: The gender assigned to children and used to socialize them into boy/man and girl/woman; may also be referred to as gender assignment.

Gender identity: An individual's gendered sense of self.

As this scenario demonstrates, there is an easy and unconscious slippage between sex and gender. We readily accept that female and male represent the biological differences between men and women and that two sexes exist. In "The Five Sexes, Revisited" (included in this section), Anne Fausto-Sterling, a biologist and gender studies scholar, provides evidence that there is wide variation of sexes in the natural world—including among humans. While the language she uses in this piece reflects its publication date, this foundational piece made clear that a binary system of sex and gender is a powerful **social construction** and has been institutionalized as a scientific fact through medicine, education, family, and religion. If, as Fausto-Sterling estimates, 1.7 percent of all births are people with varying degrees of intersexed development and sex exists on a spectrum, then it is important to consider the implications for gender (Fausto-Sterling 2000, 51). As Sharyn Graham Davies suggests in her research, Western cultures have much that they can learn from more global—and more open-minded—cultures, like the Bugis in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, who recognize five genders.

Social constructionism: Theory that our knowledge of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, body size, ability, religion, and nationality is tied to social processes that have their basis in relations of power and is therefore constantly being created and recreated by human beings within specific cultural contexts.

While gender may *appear* to be a natural and simple outgrowth of sex, it is a social process "constantly created and re-created out of human interaction,

out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life" (Lorber 1994, 99–100). We enact and express gender every day, and it is one of the central ways we organize our lives. From deciding what to wear to how we sit, talk, and generally take up public space to what kinds of labor we perform, gender arrangements shape our lives. They are not built on individual efforts, hard work, or abilities but on hierarchies of power that socialize men/boys to be dominant and women/girls to be subordinate. This structure finds its legitimization through the social constructions of family, religion, law, media, education, work, and language. In her very personal piece "Because You're a Girl," Ijeoma A. recounts her experiences of being raised in a family that embraced traditional customs characteristic of villages in eastern Nigeria. She spent her childhood in Lagos living under her family's Four Commandments that taught her how to become a good woman prepared for marriage: (1) her "office" is the kitchen, (2) she is responsible for all the chores in the home, (3) she is accountable for the children and their actions, and (4) of course, she must pledge complete and total allegiance to the man in charge first, before herself (p. 41). Angered by the patriarchal constrictions, Ijeoma finds pathways through education to rethink what it means to "be a girl" and how to navigate living in-between U.S. American and Nigerian cultures.

Binary gender formations makes sense because they are systematized, reflected, and reinforced in our everyday lives: toy stores are clearly divided; it is still significant to name female astronauts, engineers, and scientists and male nurses, schoolteachers, and social workers. The use of language in the previous sentence represents the power of gendered assumptions. "Gender is such a familiar part of daily life, it usually takes a deliberate disruption of our expectations of how women and men are supposed to act to pay attention to how it is produced" (Lorber 1994, 100). While individuals and communities of people actively disrupt social patterns, gender also continues to exist as a system based on hierarchies of power that is recognizable. For example, how are men perceived if they want to stay home and raise a family or if young women decide to remain single throughout their lifespan? Are they the same if reversed? If the answer is no, systems of gender and power continue to shape our lives. Can transgender people move freely through larger political, economic, and social worlds without being misgendered, diagnosed, and/or discriminated against? If the answer is no, gender continues to matter.

In "Making Masculinity" (included in this section), C. J. Pascoe begins by narrating a scene that may sound familiar: at an annual high school assembly, the most popular boy will be crowned "Mr. Cougar" to the loud cheers of his classmates. In this particular case, when the two highest vote-getting candidates run onto the floor, they are dressed like "nerds" and proceed to perform a skit in which they save their girlfriends from "gangstas" (young Black men who volunteered to be run off the stage) and are transformed into handsome, rugged, all-American guys. This scene illustrates that "[t]his masculinizing process happens through a transformation of bodies, the assertion of racial privilege, and a shoring up of heterosexuality and is a stark reminder of how limiting masculinity is

for boys and men" (p. 47). If adolescent boys are perceived as tough, in control, focused on sports and girls, white, and not to care about others, they will be rewarded for their gender performances (see Gardiner 2002; Halberstam 1998; hooks 1981; Messner 1997; Segal, 1990; Wiegman 2002). If a young man steps outside these narrow bounds, his peers will police and control his behavior by publicly ridiculing him as a "fag," which, as Pascoe learned during her field research, remains an insult for adolescents. She argues in this piece "how heteronormative and homophobic discourses, practices, and interactions (among students, teachers, and administrators) . . . produce masculine identities" (p. 48).

If gender is a form of social control and a social construction that can be changed, in "The Mountain" (in this section) Eli Clare asks us to think about this in relation to disabilities, particularly physical disabilities. In explaining how dominant narratives of disability circulate around us—often as mediated stories of inspiration, medicalized as "disordered," and sometimes as a reason for bullying, discrimination, and violence—Clare draws on the mountain as a metaphor to argue that a "supercrip" narrative (disabled people completing grand challenges) exists so that ableism can persist uninterrupted and the violence of the "supercrip" is made invisible. This is particularly significant since people, for example, in wheelchairs or with cerebral palsy, blindness, deafness, and/or

Down syndrome have material conditions that circumscribe their lives and can result in "lack of access, lack of employment, lack of education, lack of personal attendant services" (p. 56). Clare suggests that it is our bodies that become the places people can call home and where they can find refuge: "I will never find home on the mountain. This I know. Rather home starts here in my body, in all that lies imbedded beneath my skin" and that the body can become home "only if it is understood that the stolen body can be reclaimed" (p. 60, 61). Reclamation here becomes a process for understanding and resisting how a harmful, normalizing culture names and steals what it means to be disabled. Since disability and gender narratives are socially constructed and performed by us every day, we collectively can and do change the ways stereotypes circulate to uphold inequities. Students enter women's, gender, and sexuality studies courses telling personal narratives of how they refuse bullying by finding community, practice self-care, refuse controlling gender expressions, join boys' soccer teams as the only girl, and resist and persist through stereotypes. Feminist and queer inquiry also remains interested in clarifying the underlying material and social circumstances that constrain and can control people's everyday lives. Until relations of power are addressed consistently across social institutions (from families, religion, and the law to media and language), fundamental and sustained sociopolitical change will remain elusive.

BEYOND THE GENDER BINARY

In 1990, gender studies scholar Judith Butler argued in *Gender Trouble* that our understandings of gender are too closely mapped to how we understand the body (for more on the body see Section Four). Rather than think of the body as constituting sex and gender, she and others suggest that it is more productive to understand gender performances as a fluid, social process based on repetition and reinforcement (see Halberstam 1998; Muñoz 2009). Gender flexibility disrupts the static assumption that to be born male equals being a man/masculine/attracted to women and that to be born female means being a woman/feminine/attracted to men. It also challenges the concept that "masculine" and "feminine" have universal meanings. This shift away from the certainty of the social construction of gender is both embraced and challenged by feminists and queer scholars. It is liberating for those who understand gender binaries as too limiting yet of great concern for those who see structural inequalities still tied to the bodies of women, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, pansexuals, transgender, intersex, and asexual people. It is also important to note that Butler articulates how gender fluidity and flexibility may come at a personal cost ranging from possible teasing and being outcast, to bullying and being disowned, to discrimination and physical violence; this again suggests to us that the personal is indeed political and it will take all of us working together to make social change.

In *Transgender History*, Susan Stryker uses the term transgender "to refer to 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" (Stryker 2008, 1). The term describes the full spectrum of someone's gender identity and expression, not their sexuality, and may include people who seek medical interventions to transition from one gender to another. The term **cisgender** is used to describe an individual whose gender assignment, gender identity, and gender expression align with the gender assigned at birth. Its use as an adjective before "woman" or "man" is necessary "to resist the way that 'woman' or 'man' can mean 'nontransgendered woman' or 'nontransgendered man' by default, unless the person's transgender status is explicitly named" (Stryker 2008, 22). And while these terms and their attending politics have received media attention, activists such as Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson were pioneers of liberation movements in the mid-1960s, demanding rights, protections, and justice through political, legal, and sociocultural change; they will be honored for their work in New York City with a new monument. Books, journals, courses, academic programs, blogs, and activist platforms are dedicated to the history and complexity of reimagining what transgender means and the struggle for freedom. Learning the importance of pronouns to avoid misgendering people as well as the general meaning of terms that describe people's everyday lives is a starting place to create community and to take part in feminist and queer solidarity activism and knowledge building.

Cisgender: A term that describes when an individual's gender assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity and gender expression.

The following glossary from the Southern Policy Law Center's "Teaching Tolerance" project provides an overview of key terms:

Affirmed gender (*noun*)	The gender by which one wishes to be known. This term is often used to replace terms like "new gender" or "chosen gender," which imply that a person's gender was chosen rather than simply innate.
Agender (*adj.*)	Describes a person who does not identify with any gender identity.
Ally (*noun*)	A person who does not identify as LGBTQ, but stands with and advocates for LGBTQ people.
Androgynous (*adj.*), Androgyne (*noun*)	Used to describe someone who identifies or presents as neither distinguishably masculine or feminine.
Aromantic (*adj.*)	A romantic orientation generally characterized by not feeling romantic attraction or a desire for romance.
Asexual (*adj.*)	Used to describe people who do not experience sexual attraction or do not have a desire for sex. Many experience romantic or emotional attractions across the entire spectrum of sexual orientations. Asexuality differs from celibacy, which refers to abstaining from sex. Also *ace*, or *ace community*.
Assigned sex (*noun*)	The sex that is assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics. Often corresponds with a child's *assigned gender* and *assumed gender*.
Binary system (*noun*)	Something that contains two opposing parts; binary systems are often assumed despite the existence of a spectrum of possibilities. Gender (man/woman) and sex (male/female) are examples of binary systems often perpetuated by our culture.

Continued

Biological sex (*noun*)	A medical classification that refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic or physical attributes that determine if a person is assigned male, female or intersex identity at birth. Biological sex is often confused or interchanged with the term "gender," which encompasses personal identity and social factors, and is not necessarily determined by biological sex. See *gender*.
Bisexual, Bi (*adj.*)	A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.
Cisgender (*adj.*)	Describes a person whose gender identity (*defined below*) aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.
Cissexism (*noun*)	A system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people whose gender and/or gender expression falls outside of normative social constructs. This system is founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders—usually tied to assigned sex.
Coming out (*verb*)	A lifelong process of self-acceptance and revealing one's queer identity to others. This may involve something as private as telling a single confidant or something as public as posting to social media.
Demisexual (*adj.*)	Used to describe someone who feels sexual attraction only to people with whom they have an emotional bond—often considered to be on the asexual spectrum.
Gay (*adj.*)	Used to describe people (often, but not exclusively, men) whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex or gender identity.
Gender (*noun*)	A set of social, physical, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other. Words and qualities ascribed to these traits vary across cultures.
Gender dysphoria (*noun*)	Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.
Gender expression (*noun*)	External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being masculine or feminine.
Gender-fluid (*adj.*)	A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender and whose identification and presentation may shift, whether within or outside of the male/female binary.
Gender identity (*noun*)	One's innermost feeling of maleness, femaleness, a blend of both or neither. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
Gender neutral (*adj.*)	Not gendered, usually operating outside the male/female binary. Can refer to language (e.g., pronouns), spaces (e.g., bathrooms) or identities.
Gender nonconforming (*adj.*)	A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. Also, *gender expansive*.
Genderqueer (*adj.*)	Describes a person who rejects static categories of gender (i.e. the gender binary of male/female) and whose gender expression or identity falls outside of the dominant social norms of their assigned sex. They may identify as having aspects of both male and female identities, or neither.
Gender roles (*noun*)	The social behaviors and expression that a culture expects from people based on their assigned sex (e.g., girls wear pink; boys don't cry; women care for home and child; men are more violent), despite a spectrum of various other possibilities.

Heteronormativity (*noun*)	Coined by social critic Michael Warner, the term refers to a societal assumption of certain norms: 1) that there are two distinct sexes; 2) that male and female functions and characteristics are distinctly different; and 3) that traits such as attraction and sexual behavior correspond to anatomy. Those who do not fit these norms—be it through same-sex attraction, a nonbinary gender identity, or nontraditional gender expression—are therefore seen as *abnormal*, and often marginalized or pressured to conform to norms as a result.
Heterosexism (*noun*)	The assumption that sexuality between people of different sexes is normal, standard, superior or universal while other sexual orientations are substandard, inferior, abnormal, marginal or invalid.
Heterosexual (*adj.*)	Used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex. Also *straight*.
Heterosexual/cisgender privilege (*noun*)	Refers to societal advantages that heterosexual people and cisgender people have solely because of their dominant identities. This can include things as simple as safely holding hands with a romantic partner in public or having safe access to public bathrooms. This can also include systemic privileges such as the right to legally donate blood, to adopt children without facing possible rejection because of your sexual orientation, or to play organized sports with others of the same gender identity.
Homophobia* (*noun*)	A fear or hostility toward lesbian, gay and/or bisexual people, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.
Intersex (*adj.*)	An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female.
Latinx (*adj.*)	A gender-expansive term for people of Latin American descent used to be more inclusive of all genders than the binary terms *Latino* or *Latina*.
Lesbian (*adj.*)	Used to describe a woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women.
LGBTQ (*noun*)	An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer." Less often, the Q stands for "questioning." Acronyms like LGBTQIA also include the intersex and asexual communities, while acronyms like LGBTQ attempt to envelop an entire community of people who hold identities that are not cisgender or heterosexual.
Misgender (*verb*)	To refer to someone in a way that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify, such as refusing to use a person's pronouns or name.
Nonbinary (*adj.*)	An umbrella term that refers to individuals who identify as neither man or woman, or as a combination of man or woman. Instead, nonbinary people exhibit a boundless range of identities that can exist beyond a spectrum between male and female.
Outing (*verb*)	The inappropriate act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumor and/or speculation) or revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent.
Pansexual (*adj.*)	Used to describe people who have the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. The term *panromantic* may refer to a person who feels these emotional and romantic attractions, but identifies as asexual.
Preferred pronouns (*adj.*)	The pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual personally uses and would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. Can include variations of he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/their/theirs, among others. This term is being used less and less in LGBTQ circles, as it suggests one's gender identity is a "preference" rather than innate. *Recommended replacement: "Your pronouns, my pronouns, their pronouns, etc."*

Continued

Queer (*adj.*)	Once a pejorative term, a term reclaimed and used by some within academic circles and the LGBTQ community to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that are not exclusively heterosexual or cisgender.
Questioning (*adj.*)	A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.
Same-gender loving (*adj.*)	A term coined in the early 1990s by activist Cleo Manago, this term was and is used by some members of the Black community who feel that terms like gay, lesbian and bisexual (and sometimes the communities therein) are Eurocentric and fail to affirm Black culture, history and identity.
Sexual orientation (*noun*)	An inherent or immutable emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people; oftentimes used to signify the gender identity (or identities) to which a person is most attracted.
Third gender (*noun*)	A gender identity that is neither male nor female, existing outside the idea that gender represents a linear spectrum between the two. Sometimes a catchall term or category in societies, states or countries that legally recognize genders other than male and female.
Transgender (*adj.*)	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Not all trans people undergo transition. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or something else. Also, *trans*.
Transitioning (*verb*)	A process during which some people strive to more closely align their gender identity with their gender expression. This includes *socially transitioning*, during which a person may change their pronouns, the name they ask to be called or the way they dress to be socially recognized as another gender. This includes *legal transitioning*, which may involve an official name change and modified IDs and birth certificates. And this includes *physically transitioning*, during which a person may undergo medical interventions to more closely align their body to their gender identity. Transgender and nonbinary people transition in various ways to various degrees; self-identification alone is enough to validate gender identity.
Transphobia* (*noun*)	The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people. This may manifest into transphobic actions, such as violence, harassment, misrepresentation or exclusion.
Transsexual (*adj.*)	A less frequently used term (considered by some to be outdated or offensive) which refers to people who use medical interventions such as hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery (GAS) or sex reassignment surgery (SRS) as part of the process of expressing their gender. Some people who identify as transsexual do not identify as transgender and vice versa. *Only use this term if someone who specifically identifies as such asks you to.*
Two Spirit (*adj.*)	An umbrella term in Native culture to describe people who have both a male and female spirit within them. This encompasses many tribe-specific names, roles and traditions, such as the *winkte* of the Lakota and *nadleeh* of the Navajo people. This term often describes Native people who performed roles and gender expression associated with both men and women. This term should be used only in the context of Native culture.

**University of California, Davis's LGBTQIA Resource Center offers this note on words like this: We've been intentionally moving away from using words like "transphobic," "homophobic," and "biphobic" because (1) they inaccurately describe systems of oppression as irrational fears and (2) for some people, phobias are a very distressing part of their lived experience and co-opting this language is disrespectful to their experiences and perpetuates ableism.*

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Knowing that sex and gender exist beyond binaries and that disabilities are understood through harmful normalizing assumptions helps us to unlearn limiting and harmful stereotypes. This is not just a matter of philosophical or political debate but has material consequences for the freedom, safety, well-being, equity, and social justice people seek.

OPPRESSION, PRIVILEGE, AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Oppression is the primary force that keeps marginalized people from achieving full equality, social justice, and freedom. It is best understood as a system of barriers that operate socially and institutionally to disempower groups of people based on their gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion, body size, and/or nationality and can be internalized. "Oppression" can also refer to how individual people can suppress and control one another psychologically. In Marilyn Frye's classic essay "Oppression," she argues that in patriarchal cultures *all* women are oppressed and men are not because "networks of forces and barriers . . . expose one to penalty, loss, or contempt whether one works outside the home or not, is on welfare or not, bears children or not, marries or not, stays married or not, is heterosexual, lesbian, both or neither" (Frye 1983, 3–4). Frye makes clear that women universally are affected by the **double binds** that oppression creates.

Oppression: A social system of barriers that operate institutionally and interpersonally to disempower people because of their gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, body size, ability, and/or nationality.

Double bind: When a person faces two problematic choices as the only ones socially available (e.g., a woman can be labeled as a "slut" if sexually active and a "tease" or "prude" if not).

While it is true that women face similar oppressions—such as the stigma tied to menstruation or being told never to walk alone at night or wear revealing clothing to "prevent" rape (rather than insisting that boys/men not rape)—**women of color** (and people of color) may experience oppression differently than white women (and white men) and in multiple ways. In Deborah King's "Multiple Jeopardy and Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," she points out that Black women recognize that "the interactive oppressions that circumscribe our lives provide a distinctive context for black womanhood" (King 1988, 42). While white people may experience oppression based on class, sexuality, body size, age, religion, and abilities, whiteness is not marked as a racial category in the United States. Therefore, white people experience unearned cultural privileges *because* they are not Black, Latinx, Native American, and/or Asian American. More broadly speaking, **privilege** is deeply connected to oppression and defined as a set of unearned advantages enjoyed by those who are empowered by U.S. social hierarchies (e.g., male, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied, and/or young adults). It can be differentiated from sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, ableism, ageism, and prejudice because people with privilege may be unconscious of it and not acting overtly to subordinate others. Peggy McIntosh's essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" examines this social process and provides a compelling list of individual examples that detail the white privilege she personally experiences and the male privilege she does not. Robin DiAngelo's reading in this section,

Women of color: A sociopolitical term used in the United States to describe African American/Black, Asian American, Latina/x, and Native American/Indigenous women.

Privilege: Cultural benefits and power granted to people through social and institutional inequalities.

"Nothing to Add: A Challenge to White Silence in Racial Discussions," draws on and pushes McIntosh's ideas to argue that whiteness itself is a framework for understanding why discussions about race and racism are met with silence. She argues that "if silence is not strategically enacted from an antiracist framework, it functions to maintain white power and privilege and must be challenged."

In other words, explaining race and confronting racism cannot be done on the backs of people of color so that they are the bridge to social change. DiAngelo's work investigates how white people might practice speaking up—even if it is for the first time—so that social transformation is possible. Whether it is within families, through education, in the media, and/or through other social institutions, acknowledging individual privileges does not go far enough in changing the material and social conditions of racism.

Intersectionality: Theoretical term used to discuss the interlocking systems of oppression of gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ability, religion, and nationality that shape people's experience and access to power.

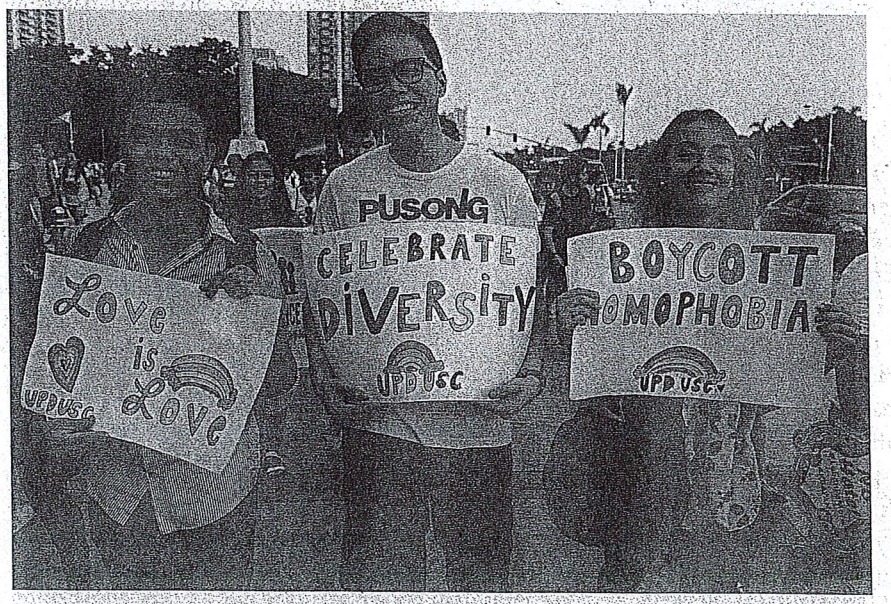
Intersectionality references the two-fold idea that people's identities are complex, often not fitting easily into named social categories of gender, race, class, and sexuality, *and* that sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, ableism, religious persecution, and nationalism are interlocking systems of power that shape our lives and social institutions (Collins and Bilge 2016). People are members of various identity groups *simultaneously*, and their position in each of these groups may bring them more or less power based on U.S. social hierarchies. While we can trace Black women's activism through collective archives to the early days of the republic in the United States, the collective work of The Combahee River Collective (included in Section Two) lay the theoretical groundwork for a contemporary understanding of intersectionality. Emphasizing the centrality of race/gender/class/sexuality as interlocking structures of power, many contemporary feminists honor the work of those who came before them in such foundational texts as Angela Davis's *Women, Race, & Class* (1981); bell hooks's *Ain't I a Woman?* (1981); Hazel Carby's "White Woman Listen!" (1982); Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's edited volume *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983); Barbara Smith's edited collection *Home Girls* (1983); Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1983); Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984); Barbara Christian's *Black Feminist Criticism* (1985); and Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought* (1990). Scholarly and creative writers responded to white, middle-class feminist assumptions that all women experience oppressions similarly. Women marginalized by sociopolitical systems in the United States—Black women, women of color, lesbians of color, working poor women, and **third world women**—argued that feminism and queer communities must grapple with how normalized cultural differences shape people's everyday lives if they are to work together in solidarity for social change.

Third world women: Women who inhabit or whose (familial) origins reflect Asian, African, and Latin American geographies; used as a political term to reflect the colonial power relations between the first world (the West or Global North) and the third world (or Global South).

In a 1988 article, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" as a way for scholars and practitioners to describe these intricacies as well as make clear the impossible "choice" women, lesbians of color, and poor women face in being asked to fight for their rights as women *or* as Black, Chicana/Latina/x, Asian American, Native American, third world *or* queer *or* poor (Allen 1986; Anzaldúa 1990; Asian Women United of California 1989; García 1989; Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991; Moraga 1983). Turning particularly to how the law demands that Black women must "choose" their legal pathway based on race or gender to pursue workplace discrimination cases, Crenshaw theorized the need to see how interlocking oppressions created hierarchies of power. Audre Lorde poignantly and personally elucidates this point in her essay "There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions" (included in this section) with this statement: "I simply do not believe that one aspect of myself can possibly

profit from the oppression of any other part of my identity" (p. 75). She goes on to point out that, in the lesbian community, she is both Black and a lesbian, and in the Black community, she is both Black and a lesbian. How then can she fight against racism and not homophobia and sexism? This question and the insights based on the lived experiences of U.S. women of color now form the intersectional approaches that are foundational in understanding women's, gender, and sexuality studies.

Intersectionality also matters in a global context. Ashley Currier and Thérèse Migraine-George's article "Queer/African Identities: Questions, Limits, Challenges" (included in this section), examines antigay violence that specific African states perpetuate against the people in their respective countries. In asking us to think carefully about what constitutes a nation and its people and how this intersects with queer identity, they argue that violent backlashes most certainly negatively affect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people *and* violence and discrimination does not "predetermine the content and contours of queer African identities" (p. 77). While the U.S. popular media only presents specific African nations as showing open hostility toward queer communities, the authors interview activists in Liberia, Malawi, and South Africa and draw on queer African literature and films to provide more "complicated dimensions of generating, representing, and nurturing queer identities" (p. 77). Rather than showing African queer communities only as victims of the stigma and violence in their homelands (which by itself only serves to reinforce oversimplified and sensational media constructions), Currier's and Migraine-George's research honors the complexity of queer life—the resilience of LGBTQPAI+ people, the continued stigma attached to bisexuality, and the joy and beauty of being queer in Africa—by amplifying the voices of activists who are working to make a difference.



Pride in Global Spaces. LGBTQPAI+ pride rallies take place all over the world and help us to understand that the movement to end discrimination and marginalization of queer-identified people is transnational. Participants here hold posters in support of the LGBTQPAI+ community in Manila during the twenty-first Pride Parade on June 27, 2015. The press reported that thousands marched through main streets to celebrate the queer community.
Source: J. Gerard Seguia/Pacific Press/Alamy Live News

In her poem "Before Intersectionality" (included in this section), M. Soledad Caballero reminds us that while "intersectionality" is a relatively new term in academia, immigrant women, men, trans, nonbinary, and genderqueer people from Spanish-speaking countries have always lived at the crossroads of gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality, yet can be rendered invisible by the culturally-produced Black/white racial binary in the United States. Her poem names the violence Latinx immigrants face; gives voice to the pain, isolation, and invisibility of young people living in between English- and Spanish-speaking cultures; and reaches out to anyone who may feel like they do not belong. It also speaks to the dimensions of what needs to be considered in order for us to care about, empathize with, and work toward social change across cultural borders.

To fully understand intersectionality, it is important to acknowledge that whiteness *is* a racial category—but one that has unearned privileges (including the privilege of remaining silent) and therefore can remain unmarked. Just as

oppression must be understood in relation to privilege, social constructions of Blackness and Brownness are deeply connected to whiteness, and we cannot understand the empowerment of one without the disempowerment of the other. Second, while no one person is *responsible* for this way of thinking, guilt as a response to sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia does very little to contribute to efforts toward social change as it recenters whiteness. Audre Lorde writes powerfully in *Sister Outsider*, "Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change, then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge" (Lorde 130). It is only through **self-reflexivity**, careful listening, and understanding identity, cultural power, and social structures through intersectional and transnational lenses that we can understand, protest, address, and begin to transform systematic inequalities more fully and accurately.

Self-reflexivity: The deliberate examination of how and why people come to their beliefs, ideas, and knowledge in the context of broader (gender, race, class, sexuality, abilities, age, religion, and nationalities) power relations; a necessary step in pursuing feminist and queer scholarship, activism, and institutional practices.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Given the expansive landscape of the field, students and anyone picking up this text may be wondering, "What does *not* count as women's, gender, and sexuality studies?" Indeed, the field encompasses the study of all people and the social dynamics that shape their lives. To tell the stories of people's complex lives, especially of individuals and groups that are marginalized and made to seem invisible and/or hypervisible in the dominant culture, researchers must be self-reflexive about the kinds of questions they ask as well as how they go about collecting information. The same can be said for educators and how they go about sharing knowledge, engaging with one another, and working closely with students. As the final reading in this section, Kimberly Williams Brown and Red Washburn model collaborative, self-reflexive approaches to creating more equitable classrooms. Instructors and students might ask ourselves, as we enter women's, gender, and sexuality studies classes, how we collectively might translate what Brown and Washburn are doing into practice with one another—in the classroom and beyond. Their essay shows us the possibilities of doing feminist-queer solidarity work. It suggests that this is how we can reimagine a future based on connection and reaching across disciplinary and cultural boundaries in the name of transdisciplinarity and in search of utopias.

In addition to entering interdisciplinary work self-reflexively, women's, gender, and sexuality studies values **praxis** and draws on a range of primary and secondary sources to make knowledge claims and frame political issues. Primary sources may include personal narratives, historical archives (official collections and those that are more intimate, such as diaries), quantitative research, ethnographies, art, literature, television and film, newspapers and online sources, scientific experiments, and critical legal analysis. Secondary sources, or those written by other scholars in the field, provide historical and cultural context for framing arguments. Both are necessary for analyzing subject matter.

Praxis: The integration of learning theoretical concepts with social justice actions so that one's own behaviors in the world reflect the liberatory philosophies of feminism and queer approaches.

Naming women's, gender, and sexuality studies as an interdisciplinary field of study and praxis means that there is no one framework, no one method, and no one theory that explains feminist and queer cultures, issues, and politics. Rather, it requires multiple modes of knowing and doing to produce the most accurate and politically engaged work possible. The reading selections included in this book draw from across traditional disciplines (such as English, political science, and sociology) as well as the humanistic interdisciplinary fields that also emerged from twentieth-century social movements (such as Africana studies, ethnic studies, Latino/a/x studies, Asian American studies, Native American studies, Puerto Rican studies, transgender studies, and disability studies) to show the exciting and engaging possibilities for doing interdisciplinary work.

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