

Gender and Culture in Psychology

Gender and Culture in Psychology introduces new approaches to the psychological study of gender that bring together feminist psychology, sociocultural psychology, discursive psychology, and critical psychology. It presents research and theory that embed human action in social, cultural, and interpersonal contexts. The book provides conceptual tools for thinking about gender, social categorization, human meaning-making, and culture. It also describes a family of interpretative research methods that focus on rich talk and everyday life. It provides a close-in view of how interpretative research proceeds. The latter part of the book showcases innovative projects that investigate topics of concern to feminist scholars and activists: young teens' encounters with heterosexual norms, women and men negotiating household duties and child-care, coercion and violence in heterosexual encounters, the cultural politics of women's weight and eating concerns, psychiatric labeling of psychological suffering, and feminism in psychotherapy.

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Gender and Culture in Psychology

Theories and Practices

Eva Magnusson and Jeanne Marecek



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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
1 Gender and culture in psychology: a prologue	1
The roots of the new psychological scholarship on gender and culture	2
Gender and culture in psychology: three kinds of issues	4
Aims of the book	5
A road map for reading	6
2 Categories and social categorization	9
Sex categories and gender categories	11
Ethnic groups, “races,” and racialization	12
<i>From ethnicity to racialization: the invidious uses of “nice” words</i>	13
Social class	14
Sexuality and sexualities	15
<i>Heteronormativity</i>	16
<i>Who defines heterosexual sexuality?</i>	17
Intersectionality: the interrelationship of social categories	18
3 Laying the foundation	19
Culture and human psychology	19
<i>Defining culture</i>	20
People as meaning-makers	21
<i>Ordinariness, deviations, and narrative</i>	21
<i>Cultural psychology</i>	22
Who holds the power over meanings?	23
<i>Dimensions of power</i>	24
<i>Power and knowledge</i>	24
Knowledge as social artifact	27
<i>Constructionism in psychology</i>	28
Making language an object of study	29
The historical and cultural specificity of knowledge	29
4 Theories of gender in psychology: an overview	31
Setting the stage	31
The power of situations	32
Toward a cultural psychology of gender	33

vi	Contents	
	Femininity and masculinity	35
	Gendered identities: mastery, appropriation, and change	36
	Power, gender, and psychology	38
	Asymmetries, differences, and thinking from the outside	40
	Thinking intersectionally about psychological gender and identity	41
	Language and gender	42
5	A turn to interpretation	44
	What does “interpretation” mean in research?	44
	The history of interpretative research	46
	Meaning-making always takes place in a social context	47
	Individual meaning-making is always situated in cultural systems	48
	Researchers’ knowledge is always perspectival	48
	A focus on reasons and interpretations	49
	Where and how do interpretative researchers look for knowledge?	50
6	Doing interpretative psychological research	52
	The landscape of interpretative research	52
	Interviews and interviewing in interpretative research	53
	<i>Narratives, rich talk, and interview guides</i>	54
	<i>Creating a good interview situation</i>	54
	<i>How to ask questions in interviews</i>	55
	<i>Historical truth and narrative truth in interviews</i>	57
	<i>Refining the questions and topics as you go</i>	57
	The participants in interpretative research	58
	<i>The grounds for selecting participants</i>	59
	<i>Selecting and engaging participants</i>	59
	Listening, reading, and analyzing	60
	<i>Analyses, rereading, and searching for patterns</i>	61
	The ethics of interpretative research	62
	Reflexivity in research	64
	<i>Personal reflexivity</i>	65
	<i>Methodological, procedural, and epistemological reflexivity</i>	65
	<i>Reflexivity in interaction</i>	66
	Trustworthiness and generalizability in interpretative projects	67
	<i>Generalizing beyond a research project</i>	68
7	Discursive approaches to studying gender and culture	70
	Discourse and discourses in psychology	70
	<i>Discourse and psychology</i>	70
	<i>Discourses and psychology</i>	71
	What is discursive psychology?	72
	<i>Thinking and talking</i>	73
	<i>Critical discursive psychology</i>	74
	<i>Feminism, discursive psychology, and sex differences</i>	75
	<i>Language, action orientation, and meaning</i>	76
	<i>Personal order and the “stickiness of identity”</i>	77
	Doing discursive research: some analytical tools	78
	<i>Ideological dilemmas</i>	78

Contents	vii
<i>Interpretative repertoires</i>	80
<i>Subject positions</i>	81
<i>Subjectification, self-regulation, and productive power</i>	82
<i>Identity practices: constructing one's individual psychology</i>	83
<i>Accountability management</i>	84
From theories and methods to research illustrations	85
8 Gender and culture in children's identity development	86
Thinking about children's development in gendered and culture-specific contexts	87
Girls making themselves into teenagers in multiethnic Oslo	88
From little girl to teenager: heterosexuality as normative development	90
<i>Framed by heteronormativity</i>	91
<i>"Popular girls"</i>	92
<i>"Ordinary girls"</i>	93
<i>The invisible dominant heteronormativity and ethnification</i>	93
<i>The later teenage years: bodily practices and normative heterosexuality</i>	94
Making oneself into a "bigger" boy or a young man	95
Finally: young women, young men, and heterosexuality	96
9 Identity and inequality in heterosexual couples	98
Heterosexual family life and individual identity projects	99
<i>Studying couples' narratives about equality and everyday life</i>	99
<i>Themes of equality and inequality in Nordic couples' talk</i>	100
<i>Parenthood, fatherhood, and motherhood</i>	102
<i>Internal limits and boundaries in modern heterosexual couples</i>	102
The different meanings of gender	104
Taking stock: what can interpretative research tell us about identity and power in heterosexual couples?	105
10 Coercion, violence, and consent in heterosexual encounters	109
From technologies of heterosexual coercion to the cultural scaffolding of rape	109
<i>Studying technologies of heterosexual coercion and their psychological effects</i>	110
<i>The tyranny of "normal" heterosexuality</i>	111
<i>Is it possible to say no?</i>	111
<i>What happens if the woman refuses?</i>	112
<i>Men as "needing" sex and women as nurturant – or pragmatic?</i>	113
Discourses of male (hetero)sexuality and the cultural scaffolding of rape	114
<i>From cultural scaffolding to individual psychology</i>	115
<i>The sexual revolution and modern women's heterosexuality</i>	116
<i>From complementary heterosexuality to complementary femininity and masculinity</i>	117
<i>Conclusions from interpretative research about heterosexual coercion</i>	117
11 Women's eating problems and the cultural meanings of body size	119
Eating problems: setting the stage	119
Feminist approaches to women's eating problems	121

viii	Contents	
	Interpretative research on eating problems: some examples	123
	<i>Probing the relational context of white women's eating problems</i>	123
	<i>Looking beyond white, middle-class women</i>	125
	<i>"Body aesthetics" or "body ethics"?</i>	127
	Stepping back: what can interpretative research uncover about women's body projects?	129
12	Psychological suffering in social and cultural context	131
	Psychiatric diagnosis	132
	Diagnostic category systems	134
	The power of social and cultural contexts	138
	Taking the long view	141
	Conclusion	143
13	Feminism and gender in psychotherapy	145
	Feminist protests against psychotherapy and psychiatry	146
	Feminists as theorists and practitioners of psychotherapy	147
	Gender, power, and ethics in psychotherapeutic relations	149
	Power on the inside	150
	<i>Shifting the role of the therapist</i>	151
	The outside of therapy: an ethics of resistance	153
	Discourses in the mirrored room: productive power in therapy	155
	Conclusion	157
14	Comparing women and men: a retrospective on sex-difference research	159
	"Differences" in the history of gender in psychology	159
	<i>Early evolutionary theory</i>	160
	<i>The early women's movement</i>	160
	<i>Early psychology and difference thinking</i>	161
	Contemporary psychological research on differences between women and men	162
	<i>Are there psychological differences between women and men, and boys and girls?</i>	163
	Results of research on psychological differences between women and men	164
	<i>Cognitive sex differences or similarities: the case of science and mathematics</i>	167
	Critical opinions of sex-difference research	169
	<i>Falsely inflated claims of difference incur serious costs to both individuals and society</i>	170
	<i>Other difference-producing mechanisms are confounded with sex category</i>	172
	<i>Focusing on individual differences draws attention away from group inequalities</i>	173
	<i>A finding of a male-female difference has no meaning in and of itself</i>	174
	<i>The risk of disregarding variations among women and variations among men</i>	174
	Biological explanations and scientific reductionism	175

Contents	ix
15 Psychology's place in society, and society's place in psychology	178
Disciplinary reflexivity	179
<i>Scrutinizing one's own discipline</i>	180
<i>Feminist disciplinary reflexivity close-up</i>	183
Being a critical psychologist: psychology and social justice issues	185
The future of gender and culture in psychology	186
<i>References</i>	188
<i>Index</i>	219

Preface

We wrote this book to place the psychology of gender in conversation with the knowledge about gender and sexuality produced in other disciplines. In our view, gender is best understood as a social practice that is embedded in culture. This book illustrates how psychologists can make use of this way of understanding gender in theoretical work, in research projects, and in applied work and clinical practice.

We are teachers and researchers in psychology. We also count ourselves as members of local and international communities of gender studies scholars. Over the past forty years, these multidisciplinary communities have offered trenchant analyses of social life and have pioneered innovative methods of inquiry. One of our goals is to bring this work into the purview of psychology. We also have worked as professional psychologists, engaging issues of gender, sexuality, and social justice in our work. This has brought us face to face with the vicissitudes of mundane and institutional power. Another of our goals is to argue that a psychology of gender must attend to power in its many forms.

Our collaboration crosses national boundaries: One of us works in Sweden and the other in the USA. Both of us also have spent a good deal of our professional lives working in countries other than our own. Our collaboration and our experiences in societies outside our own have persuaded us that psychology – whether as discipline, profession, or body of knowledge – is indelibly marked by its cultural surround.

Our ideas have been developed in conversation with colleagues and students in psychology, gender studies, and other disciplines. We thank feminist scholars in psychology and in other fields for work that is both inspired and inspiring, as well as for stimulating conversations. We thank the many critical psychologists, theoretical psychologists, and historians of psychology whose close scrutiny of the discipline has spurred our own scrutiny. Over the years, many psychologists who were not specialists in the psychology of gender have called on us to explain it to them. We thank them for their questions, which have compelled us to clarify

xii Preface

our thinking. We are especially grateful to our students. Many of the ideas in this book had their origins in conversations about their research projects or in the classroom.

We thank Umeå University and Swarthmore College for providing intellectual environments that enabled us to grow as scholars. We thank the Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, where we were appointed as Fellows in 2011. Lena Albihn at Natur & Kultur Press provided valuable advice and support on the earlier Swedish version of this book. Finally, we thank Hetty Marx and her staff at Cambridge University Press for their support.

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