Identity Politics: Gender, Religion and Ethnicity

	Module Descriptor: Identity Politics: Gender, Religion and Ethnicity
Title:	**Identity Politics: Gender, Religion and Ethnicity**
Reference	BAIRDS
Description:	Identity Politics has become a prominent subject in the world politics few years. Rise of castes, religious identities, linguistic groups and ethnic conflicts have contributed to significance of identity politics in the discourse on Identity, many scholars feel, is distinctly a modern phenomenon. This is primarily a modern phenomenon because some scholars feel that emphasis on identity based on a central organizing principle of ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual preferences, or caste positions, etc, are a sort of "compelling remedy for anonymity" in an otherwise impersonal modern world
Teaching Hours:	50 hours directed study. 100 hours independent study. 150 hours in total
Module aims:	**Seek to internationalize the understanding of identity: gender, Religion and Ethnicity.** **Guide students to understanding the linkages between global distribution of power and 'difference' in gender**
Rationale:	
Learning Outcomes:	By the end of this course the students should be able to perform duties to do Identity and its components in their day to day operations as professionals in the careers evolved from Bachelors in international Relations and Diplomatic Studies
Syllabus	**Identity, Gender and Religion: Global and Local** **Development: Ethnicity and Gender Perspectives** **Gendering Social History** **Legal Terrains: Religion, Ethnicity and Gender Concerns** **Course (Thematic)** Course (Thematic) would focus on themes outlined as priority areas under the identity politics **Background, concepts and theoretical perspectives** **Debates on the theme at the global level: Issues and perspectives** **Debates at the national and regional levels: Comparisons and reflections** • Issues in practice **Gender, Culture and Development: Theoretical Perspectives** **Culture: Gender and Religious Perspectives**
References	Basu, A. (ed.), The Challenge of Local Feminism: Women's Movement in Global perspective, Boulder Co, West View Press, 1995. Nicholson, L. (ed), The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory, New York: Routledge, 1997. Schneir, M, The Vintage Book of Historical Feminism, London: Vintage, 1972.

The Gender Gap in Religion around the World

Women are generally more religious than men, particularly among Christians
Standard lists of history's most influential religious leaders – among them Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) – tend to be predominantly, if not exclusively, male. Many religious groups, including Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews, allow only men to be clergy, while others, including some denominations in the evangelical Protestant tradition, have lifted that restriction only in recent decades. Yet it often appears that the ranks of the faithful are dominated by women.

In the United States, for example, women are more likely than men to say religion is "very important" in their lives (60% vs. 47%) , according to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey. American women also are more likely than American men to say they pray daily (64% vs. 47%) and attend religious services at least once a week (40% vs. 32%).1 According to media accounts, women so outnumber men in the pews of many U.S. churches that some clergy have changed decor, music and worship styles to try to bring more men into their congregations.
Noting similar gender differences in other countries, mainly in Europe, some social scientists have argued that women are universally more religious than men across all societies, cultures and faiths.2 More controversially, a few sociologists have theorized that the gender gap in religion is biological in nature, possibly stemming from higher levels of testosterone in men or other physical and genetic differences between the sexes.3

How and why men and women differ in religious commitment has been a topic of scholarly debate for decades. Even today, it continues to inspire much academic research, as well as discussions among the general public. To contribute to this ongoing conversation, Pew Research Center has amassed extensive data on gender and religion in six different faith groups (Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and the religiously unaffiliated) across scores of countries, including many with non-Christian majorities. Data on affiliation in 192 countries were collected from censuses, demographic surveys and general population surveys as part of the Center's multiyear study projecting the size and geographic distribution of the world's major religious groups from 2010 to 2050. 4 Data on religious beliefs and practices come from international Pew Research Center surveys of the general population in 84 countries conducted between 2008 and 2015.5
Based on these wide-ranging and comprehensive datasets, this study finds that, globally, women are more devout than men by several standard measures of religious commitment. But the study also reveals a more complex relationship between religion and gender than has been commonly assumed. While women generally are more religious, men display higher levels of religious commitment in some countries and religious groups. And in other contexts, there are few, if any, discernable gender differences in religion.6

On all the standard measures of religious commitment examined in the study, Christian women are more religious than Christian men. By contrast, Muslim women and Muslim men show similar levels of religiousness on all measures of religious commitment except frequency of attendance at worship services. Because of religious norms, Muslim men attend services at a mosque much more often than Muslim women do.
Varieties of religious commitment

Measuring levels of religious commitment in widely differing societies and faiths is a tricky endeavor. Rather than trying to use a single indicator, this report looks at a variety of measures

of commitment, including religious affiliation, frequency of worship service attendance, frequency of prayer, and whether religion plays an important role in a person's life. Depending on the specific measure, data are available for varying numbers of countries because not all surveys asked the exact same questions.

Globally, women somewhat more likely to affiliate with a religious faith

The first measure the study looks at is affiliation – that is, whether people belong to any particular religion. An estimated 83.4% of women around the world identify with a faith group, compared with 79.9% of men , according to Pew Research Center's analysis of censuses, surveys and population registers in 192 countries and territories. This gap of 3.5 percentage points means that an estimated 97 million more women than men claim a religious affiliation worldwide, as of 2010.7

In 61 of the 192 countries, women are at least 2 percentage points more likely than men to have an affiliation. In the remaining countries, women and men display roughly equal levels of religious affiliation because in many cases nearly all people of both genders identify with some religious group. There are no countries in which men are more religiously affiliated than women by 2 percentage points or more.

Among Christians, women attend religious services more often, but among Muslims and Orthodox Jews, men attend more often

Another useful indicator of religious commitment is how often women and men say they attend religious worship services. The biggest exceptions to the overall pattern of women exceeding men in religious commitment can be found on this measure. Among Christians in many countries, women report higher rates of weekly church attendance than men. But among Muslims and Orthodox Jews, men are more likely than women to say they regularly attend services at a mosque or synagogue.9 Higher levels of weekly attendance among Muslim and Jewish men are due in large part to religious norms that prioritize men's participation in worship services. In Orthodox Judaism, communal worship services cannot take place unless a minyan, or quorum of at least 10 men, is present. And in most Islamic societies, Muslim men are expected to attend communal Friday midday prayers in the mosque, while women can fulfill this obligation individually, either inside or outside the mosque.

Worldwide, this results in a mixed attendance pattern. Out of 81 countries where Pew Research Center surveys have asked about worship service attendance, women report greater levels of weekly attendance in 30 countries, most of which have Christian majorities or large Christian populations. In 28 countries – mostly places with Muslim majorities or large Muslim populations – men report greater weekly attendance than women. In the remaining 23 countries, the difference between women and men in self-reported attendance is not statistically significant.

Generally, more women than men pray daily

Another measure of religious commitment concerns prayer, which can take place privately as well as publicly. Pew Research Center surveys have asked people in 84 countries how often they pray. In about half of those countries (43), substantially more women than men say they pray on a daily basis. Only in Israel, where roughly 22% of all Jewish adults self-identify as Orthodox, does a higher percentage of men than women report engaging in daily prayer. In the remaining countries, women and men are about equally likely to say they pray daily.

The difference between women and men in self-reported rates of daily prayer is the biggest average gender gap found in this study. Across the 84 countries for which data are available, the average share of women who say they pray daily is 8 percentage points higher than the average

share of men. Even religiously unaffiliated women in some countries, including the United States and Uruguay, report praying daily at higher rates than unaffiliated men do.

Religion equally or more important to women than to men

Many Pew Research Center international surveys ask people to assess the importance of religion in their daily lives. Is religion very important, somewhat important, not too important or not at all important to them? In 46 of the 84 countries for which data are available, women and men are about equally likely to say religion is "very important" in their lives. But in 36 other countries, women are more likely than men to regard religion as very important – often by notably large margins. Only in Israel and Mozambique are men more likely than women to consider religion very important to them personally.

Women and men about equally likely to believe in heaven, hell and angels

Another way to measure religiousness is to look at what people believe. Survey data from 63 countries regarding beliefs in heaven, hell and angels indicate that men and women usually display similar levels of belief in these concepts. For example, out of 63 countries, both genders are equally likely to believe in heaven in 47 countries and to believe in hell in 52 countries. But where there is a discernible gender gap, women are more likely than men to believe in these concepts. For example, women are more likely than men to say they believe in heaven in 15 countries and more likely than men to say they believe in hell in 10 countries. Women also are more likely to say they believe in angels in 14 of 63 countries. There are a few exceptions: Men are more likely than women to believe in heaven and hell in Lebanon and to believe in angels in Pakistan.

Christian and Muslim gender gaps differ

By most key measures of religious commitment, Muslim men and women are more alike in their levels of religiousness than are Christian men and women. For example, in the 40 countries where data were collected on Muslims' prayer habits, Muslim women report praying daily more often than Muslim men by an average difference of only 2 percentage points. A similar pattern occurs in religion's importance. There is virtually no difference between the shares of Muslim women and Muslim men who say religion is "very important" to them in the 40 countries with data on this topic. When it comes to weekly attendance at religious services, however, the pattern is very different: Muslim men are more likely than Muslim women to regularly attend services by an average of 28 percentage points across the 39 countries where Muslim attendance data were collected.

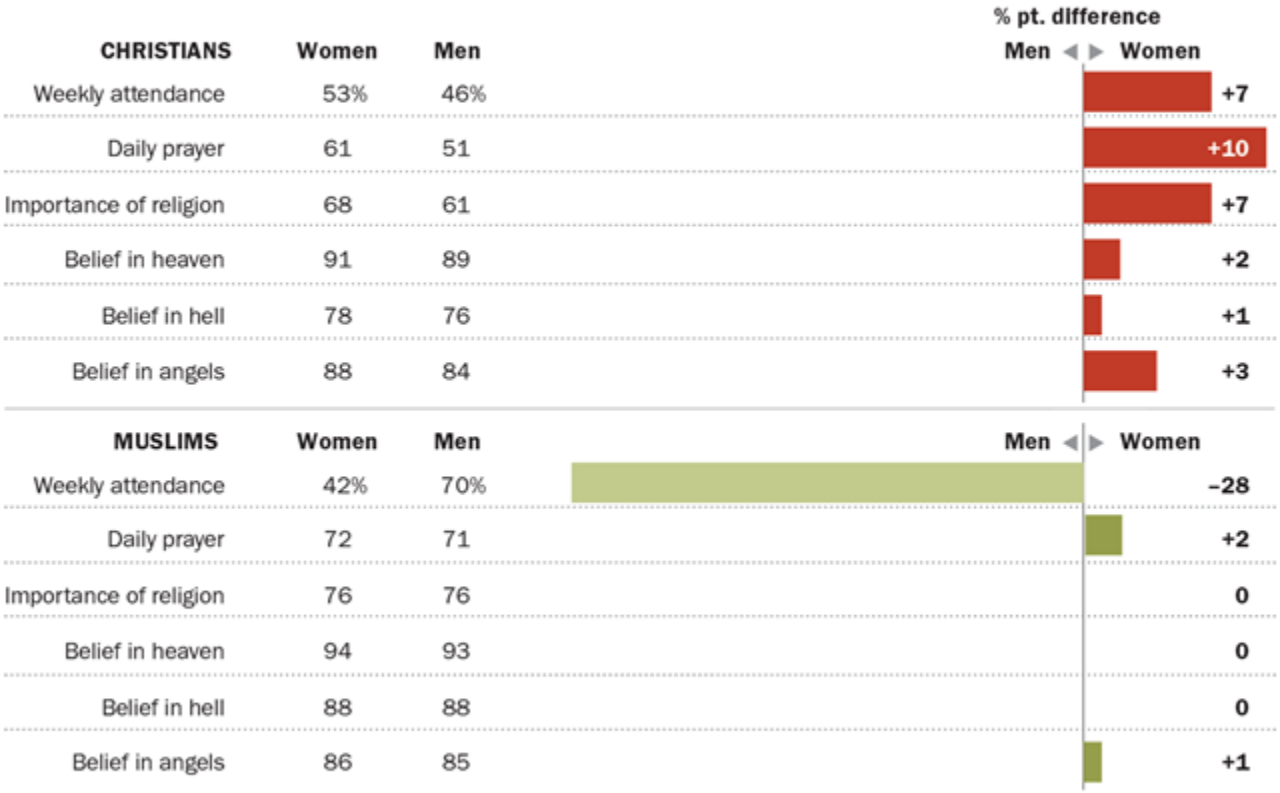
To explore gender differences in religious commitment among general populations as well as among Christians and Muslims, check out this interactive.

By contrast, the gender gaps between Christian women and Christian men are more consistent than the Muslim gender gaps. Across all measures of religious commitment, Christian women are more religious than Christian men, often by considerable margins. In the 54 countries where data were collected on Christians' daily prayer habits, Christian women report praying daily more frequently than Christian men by an overall average gap of 10 percentage points. In 29 of those countries, more women than men reported praying daily by margins of 10 percentage points or more, ranging upward to 25 points in Greece.10 Similarly, Christian women are more likely than Christian men to say religion is "very important" to them by an overall average of 7 percentage points across 54 countries. In 15 of those countries, more women than men say this by margins ranging from 10 percentage points in Peru, Chile and the United States to 23 points in South Korea. When it comes to attendance at worship services, Christian women are, on average, 7 percentage points more likely than Christian men to report attending services weekly

across 53 countries with data on Christian attendance patterns.11

Among Christians, women are more religious than men on all measures; gender gaps among Muslims are less consistent

Average percentage-point difference between men and women on measures of religious practice, commitment and belief



Note: Values in difference column are calculated based on unrounded numbers.

Source: Pew Research Center surveys, 2008-2015

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Explaining the religious gender gap

Scholars of religion have been examining possible reasons for the gender gaps in religious commitment for some time. They have advanced many different theories, which cover a wide range of sources: biology, psychology, genetics, family environment, social status, workforce participation and a lack of "existential security" felt by many women because they generally are more afflicted than men by poverty, illness, old age and violence. Lately, a growing consensus in the academic community is that the religious gender gap probably stems from a confluence of multiple factors. But there is still no agreement on exactly which factors are most responsible for the gender differences.

Chapter 7 of this report outlines some possible explanations scholars have suggested for the religious gender gap. It also discusses a Pew Research Center analysis of data looking at a possible link between women's religious commitment levels and their labor force participation (see page 59). Women who participate in the labor force tend to show lower levels of religious commitment than women who do not work outside the home for pay. As a result, when these two groups of women are compared with men (most of whom are in the labor force), the gender gaps differ. Indeed, Pew Research Center's analysis finds the gap between women who are in the

labor force and men tends to be smaller than the gap between women who are not in the labor force and men. This pattern holds even after accounting for other factors that are also associated with religious commitment, such as education level, age and marital status. Moreover, further analysis shows that across predominantly Christian countries, the overall gender gaps in daily prayer and importance of religion are smaller in countries where more women are in the labor force.

That analysis, along with the finding that women are not universally more religious than men, lends support to explanations of the religious gender gap that include "nurture" (i.e., social and cultural forces) and not just "nature" (i.e., biological or evolutionary forces). By drawing on data from more Muslim-majority countries and non-European countries than previous studies, this report demonstrates that the gender gap is not consistent across societies or religious traditions; differences in religious commitment between men and women vary considerably around the globe. This does not mean explanations that lean heavily on "nature" might not also help explain the religious gender gap and its prevalence throughout the world. But it does suggest that social and cultural factors, such as religious traditions and workforce participation, play an important role in shaping the religious gender gap.

Other key findings in this report include:

The gender gaps among Christians, as well as some gender differences in other faith traditions, vary in size in different regions of the world. This suggests that while gender differences in religious commitment may be driven in part by the teachings of a particular religion, they also may reflect national habits or cultural views intrinsic to a particular part of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the study finds only minor gender differences in both Christian and Muslim populations (with the exception of weekly worship attendance) because of the generally high degree of religious commitment among both genders. For example, in Ghana, 89% of Christian women and men say religion is very important in their daily lives, as do 98% of Muslim women and 96% of Muslim men. In Latin America and the United States, by contrast, the gender gaps among Christians on religion's importance and daily prayer are noticeably wider than they are in sub-Saharan Africa. In Argentina, for example, there is a 20-point gap between men and woman on self-reported rates of daily prayer – 32.5% of Christian men report praying daily, compared with 52.9% of Christian women.

Men and women in the United States differ from each other in their levels of religious commitment to a greater extent than men and women differ in other economically advanced countries for which data are available, including Canada and the United Kingdom. And while American men generally display less religious commitment than American women, both genders are more religious than men and women in other economically advanced countries.

In the United States, the pattern of women being more religious also appears among the unaffiliated (people who identify as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular" and sometimes are called the "nones"). Fewer American women than men (19% vs. 27%) are religiously unaffiliated. Moreover, unaffiliated women report higher levels of engagement with religion than unaffiliated men across several indicators, including weekly attendance at religious services (5% vs. 3%), daily prayer (26% vs. 15%) and saying religion is very important to them (15% vs. 12%).12

A note about this analysis

This report highlights country-level differences in religious commitment between men and women that pass conventional tests of statistical significance – that is, there is at least a 95%

confidence level that the observed differences are not due to sampling error, after taking into account the size of the sample and the design effects of the survey. On some charts, gender differences that may appear to be large are labeled as not statistically significant because of small sample sizes of women and men in particular religious groups. Data for a particular religious group in each country are used only if that group had at least 300 survey respondents. Except for the measure of religious affiliation, countries are weighted equally when presenting the average gender gap across a number of countries – that is, the size of their populations is not factored into the calculations. In the case of religious affiliation, the population size of each country is considered when computing country and global averages.

Figures for the United States are from Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study. Percentages used in this report are based on respondents who provided answers. The percentages in the published Landscape Study are based on the full sample, which includes respondents who replied "don't know" or declined to answer a question. ↩

For example, see Argyle, Michael, and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi. 1975. "The Social Psychology of Religion." Also see Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin. 2014. "Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity," in which Beit-Hallahmi asserted the "greater religiosity of women, demonstrated in consistent research findings over the past 100 years, is one of the most important facts about religion." Rodney Stark has argued that the pattern of women being more religious than men "borders upon the universal." See Stark, Rodney. 2002. "Physiology and Faith: Addressing the 'Universal' Gender Difference in Religious Commitment." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. ↩

See Miller, Alan S., and Rodney Stark. 2002. "Gender and Religiousness: Can Socialization Explanations Be Saved?" American Journal of Sociology. Miller and Stark said differences between men and women in risk preference explain the religious gender gap; they posited greater risk-taking among men has a physiological or hormonal basis, such as testosterone. The article inspired many subsequent papers on the gender gap, which frequently used a common pool of 1990s World Values Survey data, predominantly from Christian-majority countries. ↩

In an 85th country (Thailand) Pew Research Center collected data on the Muslim minority community but not the general population. ↩

The idea that women are universally more religious than men was prominently challenged by D. Paul Sullins. Yet Sullins conceded the possibility of some universal gender differences, writing, "it appears that the thesis of a universal gender difference should be stated more narrowly: it may apply to affective , but not to active , religiousness." Sullins, D. Paul. 2006. "Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity." American Journal of Sociology. ↩

This analysis is based on adults ages 20 and older. Because women live longer than men, on average, there were about 23 million more women than men in these countries as of 2010. ↩

Data on affiliation levels of men and women in 2010 come from a mix of 2010-era census and survey data as well as, in some countries, population projections based on data from a slightly earlier period. Due to the complex nature of this data, Pew Research Center selected a 2-point difference as a substantive threshold for measuring differences in the affiliation levels of men and women. ↩

When this report discusses Jewish populations, it is referring to Jews who identify as Jewish by religion, as opposed to those who identify as Jewish only by culture and not by religion. Survey data on Jewish attendance at religious services are available for only two countries, Israel and the

United States, which together account for about 80% of the world's total Jewish population. In Israel and the United States, Orthodox Jewish men report higher rates of synagogue attendance than Orthodox women. ↩
The modalities of prayer among Christians and among Muslims may seem different enough that comparisons are not valid. While Christian prayer is often done alone, Muslim prayer is often done publicly. However, that is not always the case. Christians, particularly Roman Catholics, often make it a daily practice to attend Mass, a public worship service, and Muslims often say their five daily prayers in the privacy of their homes or in their personal work spaces. ↩
Sociologist Linda Woodhead of Lancaster University argued that women's greater religiosity is a feature of Christianity more than other religions. Woodhead said that Christianity, to a greater degree than other religions, extols women's traditional roles as unpaid homemaker and caregiver for family members as the ones closest to the self-sacrificing ideal exemplified by Christ.

The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World
Varieties of religious commitmentChristian and Muslim gender gaps differExplaining the religious gender gapA note about this analysis
Women more likely than men to affiliate with a religion2. Gender differences in worship attendance vary across religious groups3. Women report praying daily at higher rates than men4. Religion is equally or more important to women than men in most countries5. Women and men about equally likely to believe in heaven, hell and angels6. In the U.S., religious commitment is high and the gender gap is wide7. Theories explaining gender differences in religionAbout this report

Race, Gender, and the Development of Cross-Race Egalitarianism

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Over the course of development, children acquire adult-like thinking about social categories such as race, which in turn informs their perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. However, children's developing perceptions of race have been understudied particularly with respect to their potential influence on cross-race egalitarianism. Specifically, the acquisition of racial constancy, defined as the perception that race is a concrete and stable category, has been associated with increased awareness of racial stereotypes and group status differences. Yet, little work has investigated behavioral outcomes stemming from the acquisition of racial constancy beliefs. Here, we investigate whether the presence or absence of racial constancy beliefs differentially predicts inequality aversion with racial ingroup versus outgroup members for young children. White children (N = 202; ages 3–8) completed three sticker resource-allocation games with either a White or a Black partner shown in a photograph, after which racial constancy was measured. Results revealed that the acquisition of racial constancy interacted with partner race to predict inequality aversion outcomes in one game; however, age and gender also exerted strong effects.

Introduction

Children exhibit a range of social behaviors and preferences as early as the first year of life such as sharing their toys (Svetlova et al., 2010; Schmidt and Sommerville, 2012) time, and resources to help others (Warneken and Tomasello, 2006). However, children's motivation to resolve inequality can be moderated by a number of factors, including children's sharing options (Fehr et al., 2008) the gender of the child or the sharing recipient (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2005; Dunham et al., 2011) and a child's temperament and parenting style (Russell et al., 2003).

Of particular importance in inequality aversion outcomes is the child's relationship with the partner in question (Birch and Billman, 1986; Maccoby, 1990; Rose and Asher, 2004; Chernyak and Kushnir, 2013; Li et al., 2017). For example, children are less likely to be egalitarian with outgroup members (Fehr et al., 2008; Dunham et al., 2011; Weller and Lagattuta, 2013). However, testing egalitarian beliefs with racial outgroup members has been relatively understudied. Specifically, we do not know developmentally when or how awareness of race as a social category may shift children's cross-race egalitarian behaviors. Past work shows that as children develop, they learn to adopt adult norms regarding the social construction of race. This change in social perceptions directly affects children's endorsement of racial biases and stereotypes (Aboud, 1988; Bigler et al., 2001; Cameron et al., 2001; Nesdale and Flesser, 2001; Baron and Banaji, 2006) which in turn, may influence their egalitarian behavior toward racial ingroup versus outgroup members – the empirical question we test here. We expect that as children learn more about the social construction of race – and, in turn, consider race as a fixed social concept – children will show increased racial ingroup preferences and decreased racial outgroup inequality aversion.

Understanding children's cross-race inequality aversion may lend critical insights into the emergence of either positive or fraught adult race relations. Thus, in the current study we examined children's allocation of resources for both racial ingroup and racial outgroup members. We extend previous work by specifically investigating the social-developmental underpinnings of cross-race egalitarian concerns. In this paper, we focus on the acquisition of racial constancy (the perception of race as an immutable characteristic) as a developmental predictor of shifting children's cross-race egalitarian perceptions. Additionally, we test whether gender, which has previously been shown to differentially impact children's egalitarian beliefs, interacts with racial constancy endorsements. In the sections that follow, we discuss our reasons for emphasizing these two social-developmental factors in predicting cross- or same-race egalitarian behaviors.

Racial Constancy Development and Cross-Race Egalitarianism

Inequality aversion is likely to be influenced by children's *essentialism* – the tendency to think of social categories as fixed, unchangeable, and informative (Medin and Ortony, 1989; Gelman, 2003). If, as a child, I think that my social group is better or more important than another, that should surely influence my egalitarian behaviors toward that lower status outgroup. Developmental work on essentialism shows that children use essentialist views to categorize others by both race and gender by age four (Hirschfeld, 1995; Rhodes and Gelman, 2009; Pauker et al., 2010; Gaither et al., 2014). Importantly, psychological essentialism is multi-faceted and measures multiple ways children see different types of categories, including gender and race (Medin and Ortony, 1989; Gelman, 2003, for reviews). Here we focus on *racial constancy*, which represents one specific component of essentialist beliefs – that *race* is an unchangeable category (Rothbart and Taylor, 1992).

Children's development of essentialized social categories, particularly regarding race, are known to lead to the development of normative intergroup biases and perceptions (Semaj, 1980; Hirschfeld, 1995; Levy and Dweck, 1999; Rhodes and Gelman, 2009; Pauker et al., 2010;

Gaither et al., 2014). This, in turn, predicts increased levels of stereotyping toward racial and ethnic minority outgroups, particularly by dominant group members (White individuals; Levy et al., 1998; Levy and Dweck, 1999; Haslam et al., 2002; Rutland et al., 2005; Williams and Eberhardt, 2008; Pauker et al., 2010). These findings align with seminal psychological research demonstrating that all children regardless of their racial/ethnic background tend to learn a "White is good" bias early in development (Clark and Clark, 1947; Spencer, 1988; Hirschfeld, 2008) which directly influences their treatment of racial/ethnic minority group members. Thus, once children believe that their own and others' racial group memberships are fixed and permanent, they will then be much more likely to also seek out either perceived similarities within, or differences between, racial ingroups and outgroups (Cameron et al., 2001; Rutland et al., 2005).

Moreover, these attitudes also manifest behaviorally. For instance, Leman and Lam (2008) showed that African Caribbean, South Asian, and White children often prefer playmates with a majority group membership (i.e., White). However, in terms of egalitarian behaviors, White children are more egalitarian with other White children compared toBlack children, highlighting an ingroup behavioral bias (Zinser et al., 1976, 1981; Zimmerman and Levy, 2000; Weller and Lagattuta, 2013). Taken together, this body of work suggests that children's developing racial essentialism beliefs in combination with their own racial group membership and status in society may influence their egalitarian behaviors for racial ingroup versus outgroup members.

However, despite ample research demonstrating a link between essentialist beliefs and prejudiced attitudes (Levy et al., 1998, 2006; Levy and Dweck, 1999; Haslam et al., 2002; Rutland et al., 2005; Williams and Eberhardt, 2008; Pauker et al., 2010) research measuring how the acquisition of racial constancy may predict social outcomes such as inequality aversion has been overlooked (Stürmer and Snyder, 2009; Abrams et al., 2015). Since racial constancy – a touchstone of adult-like thinking about race – is generally associated with increased levels of stereotyping (and has also been studied primarily with White, high status children to date), one might expect racial majority group children who gain these adult-like views about race to be less egalitarian toward racial minority outgroup children and to show a stronger preference for egalitarian choices with other White racial ingroup members.

In an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse nation U.S. Census (2012) it is now both theoretically and practically important to investigate the impact of developmentally adopting adult-like views about race on intergroup behavior during early childhood, particularly for White majority children. Knowing egalitarian preferences are important for fostering positive intergroup relations (Fong et al., 2006) we set out to understand how racial constancy acquisition – one of the early developmental features of racial essentialism – influences White children's interactions with racial ingroup (White) versus outgroup (Black) members.

Gender and Cross-Race Egalitarianism

In addition to race, gender is another social identity that is likely to independently, and in interaction with race, influence egalitarian behavior. Although gender bias is well established in children across a variety of dimensions (for reviews, see Ruble and Martin, 1998; Miller et al., 2006) there remains mixed evidence supporting gender differences and egalitarian behaviors. Specifically, some findings highlight an absence of a gender differences regarding egalitarianism (Renno and Shutts, 2015; Sierksma et al., 2018) some work shows girls have a stronger ingroup bias (Dunham et al., 2011) and other work, finds that girls tend to behave more egalitarian than boys overall (Maccoby, 1990; Chung and Asher, 1996; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Rose and Asher, 2004; Rose and Rudolph, 2006). However, none of this past work assessed race in addition to gender within egalitarian decision contexts.

However, one study examining children's perceptions of unequal allocations of stickers found that more girls than boys made choices to rectify perceived unequal sticker allocations (LoBue et al., 2011) suggesting girls may be more aware or cognizant of status group differences within egalitarian-based contexts. Moreover, past work suggests that White girls are more willing than White boys to engage prosocially with Black children (Zimmerman and Levy, 2000). Additionally, boys generally possess stronger explicit racial biases and gender ingroup biases than girls (Signorella et al., 1993; Baron and Banaji, 2006) with White girls tending to be more likely than White boys in attempting to ameliorate the learned status difference that Black individuals occupy a lower status in society (Nesdale and Flesser, 2001; Bigler et al., 2003; Pauker et al., 2010; LoBue et al., 2011). Knowing these social perceptions remain consistent throughout adulthood (Johnson and Marini, 1998; Eagly et al., 2004; Hausmann and Ryan, 2004) research needs to better understand the developmental origins of these biased behaviors (Sutter, 2007; Fehr et al., 2008).

The Current Study

The present study had two primary questions: (1) does the developmental acquisition of racial constancy beliefs influence cross-race sharing behavior in young White children? and (2) does gender influence cross-race egalitarian behaviors for White children? We used a previously established inequality aversion paradigm (see Fehr et al., 2008 for full details on method development), which involved resource allocation using stickers in three games to measure the concern for the welfare of others across racial group lines (see the "Materials and Methods" section for a more detailed description). We tested this paradigm with White children ages 3–8 years – the age-range in which White children typically begin to exhibit racial constancy beliefs and endorse stereotypes (Bigler et al., 1997; Quintana, 1998; Rhodes and Gelman, 2009; Pauker et al., 2010; Gaither et al., 2014) as well as the age range assessed by Fehr et al. (2008). Moreover, White children have been studied most often in cross-race perception work because of their majority high status position in society. Children were randomly assigned either a White or Black, male or female partner for all three games, after which their racial constancy beliefs were measured. Importantly, we included Sharing Partner Gender in the model to account for its potential effects, but our real interests were focused of Sharing Partner Race and Racial Constancy effects.

Based on theories of ingroup favoritism (Tajfel, 1974) we predicted that White children's emerging racial constancy beliefs would result in diminished egalitarian tendencies with racial outgroup members. Specifically, we hypothesized that children would be less egalitarian with cross-race sharing partners after the adoption of racial constancy compared to before developmentally adopting these beliefs. We did not have any *a priori* hypotheses regarding how results from each game would differ. The three games selected individually measured distinct egalitarian behaviors, serving as a robust test of the role racial constancy knowledge may play in shaping cross-race egalitarian choices. Additionally, based on previous research, we expected that girls would be more egalitarian than boys regardless of the group membership of their partner, and that boys may be less egalitarian with racial outgroup members in comparison to girls.

Materials and Methods

Since our methods were directly adapted from Fehr et al. (2008) their sample size of 40 children per condition was also used as a recruitment guide for the present study. Since we were interested in the effects of both participant gender and sharing partner race on egalitarian

behaviors, our recruitment goal was 200 White children, which would give us approximately 50 children per cell and variation regarding racial constancy endorsements. Notably, this study surpassed the sample size from previous egalitarian-focused child experiments (Fehr et al., 2008; Dunham et al., 2011; Renno and Shutts, 2015). Additionally, since we were interested in testing how racial constancy endorsement may shift egalitarian behaviors for racial ingroup versus outgroup partners, White children (N = 202; 59.4% female; age range: 3–8 years, M_{age} = 4.97, SD = 1.30) were recruited from two schools (n = 24) and a museum science center (n = 178) in the greater Boston area from 2012–2013. Parents were informed about the study, including its focus on race, from either a letter sent home by the school administration (25% response rate) or through an in-person invitation to participate at the science center (85% response rate). Parents at the science center were asked not to interfere with the testing session and to watch from behind the child so that social referencing would not affect our results. Parents at the science center also confirmed the child's demographic profile through a short survey administered on site. Based on parent-reported demographics from the school's returned consent form, as well as the science center's data on the average visitor, approximately 68% of our participants were from families earning $75,000 or more per year and approximately 75% were from families in which at least one parent had a college degree.

Measures and Procedure

For participants recruited from schools, parents completed an optional demographic form. At the science center, parents were asked this in-person. After receiving parental consent, the experimenter asked for children's verbal assent and made clear that the child could stop at any point. Children completed the study in either an area separate from the classroom or an area separate from other children at the science center. Each participant completed two tasks: a sticker allocation task and a racial constancy task. To avoid carry-over effects from the racial constancy measurement which explicitly asked about race, the sticker task always came first and then the racial constancy measurement. The three sticker games were counterbalanced across participants to ensure no order effects.

Sticker Task

Using methods directly adapted from Fehr et al. (2008) participants were seated in front of two cardboards with two circles and arrows on them (see Figure 1). One arrow pointed to the participant, indicating that the stickers in that circle would go to them, while the other arrow pointed to a photo of either a White or Black child. To ensure generalizability, one of twelve color photos of a White (n = 6, racial ingroup) or Black (n = 6, racial outgroup) smiling girl or boy was used across all participants. These photos were pretested by adults (N = 20) to be equivalent on perceived age (mean perceived age was around 5 years to equate with the middle age of our participant sample), affect, attractiveness, and perceived racial group membership. Children had the same partner across both the training and target trials. Therefore, children were randomly assigned to a 2 (partner race: White, Black) × 2 (partner gender: male, female) between-subjects design.

To create a more realistic interaction, participants were given an envelope and told: "You will put any stickers from this circle [*pointed to it*] that is pointing toward you in your envelope. And I will put any stickers from this circle [*pointed to it*] that is pointing to the other child in their envelope for us to give them when they come back to our lab" (see Figure 1). Participants then

made three choices across three different games with three different types of stickers to ensure engagement with the task. In each game, participants chose between two options that were depicted on the cardboards (left board and right board choices were counterbalanced) and each game was explained in detail to the participant to ensure the participant completely understood the associated outcomes. Following Fehr et al. (2008) Game 1 (prosocial trial) asked participants to choose between an allocation of (1,1) – one sticker for themselves and one for their partner – and an allocation of (1,0) – one sticker for themselves and zero for their partner. Thus, participants can give a sticker to their partner at no cost to themselves. Game 2 (envy trial) presented (1,1) and (1,2) allocation choices. Although for both choices the participant gains one sticker, the (1,2) option gives their partner an extra sticker (i.e., disadvantageous inequality), and thus can promote envy. Game 3 (sharing trial) presents (1,1) and (2,0) allocations, where choosing to share equally with one's partner (1,1) comes at a cost to one's self (i.e., advantageous inequality). In other words, selfish children should never choose the (1,1) allocation (see Fehr et al., 2008 for more detailed game definitions). After the three games, the experimenter asked participants which sticker they liked the best and the least to ensure sticker types did not influence allocation selections.

Racial Constancy

After the sharing task, participants completed a three-item measure adapted from previous tasks to examine children's racial constancy beliefs (Semaj, 1980; Hirschfeld, 1995; Tyler, 2000; Ruble et al., 2007; Pauker et al., 2010; Gaither et al., 2014). In the first item, children were shown three faces (all photos were matched to the child's gender). A photograph of a Black or White child was placed above a photograph of a Black adult and a photograph of a White adult. The experimenter asked, "When this child grows up, will they look more like this adult [White] or that adult [Black]?" (the order of the adult photos was counterbalanced across all participants). In the second item, children were shown a similar picture array except they now saw either a Black or White adult pictured above a Black child and a White child (in counterbalanced order). The experimenter then asked, "When this adult was little, did they look more like this child [White] or that child [Black]?" Finally, the experimenter pointed to the picture of a White child and asked, "If this child really wanted to be Black and change his/her skin color could he/she do that?" Children then explained *why* they believed that the child could or could not change their racial group membership. Two coders rated all children's responses to this question in order to examine their reasoning and understanding of racial group membership with 100% agreement.

Children were categorized as having racial essentialist thinking if they: (a) correctly made a race match in the first two questions and answered "no" to the last question, indicating that they believe race is both stable across the lifespan and immutable, and (b) utilized essentialist reasoning in their explanation for why someone could not change their skin color (referencing either immutability, i.e., "you can't change your skin color"; inheritability/biology, i.e., "she looked that way when she was born"; examples of responses clearly not showing racial constancy endorsement included phrases such as "maybe painting her face" or "she could get a crayon." These responses were coded as incorrect reasoning since they show the child does not consider race a stable trait; see Ruble et al., 2007; Pauker et al., 2010; Gaither et al., 2014 for similar coding strategies). If children did not provide reasoning for their answer or if that reasoning did not fall into any of the above categories (e.g., "they like it like that"), they were coded as not having racial constancy. In other words, children needed to answer all questions correctly and provide essentialist reasoning to be coded as having racial constancy understanding. Therefore, children were divided into two groups: non-essentialist and

essentialist. Investigating children's social reasoning by asking for their explicit reasoning gives us unique insight into children's understandings of concepts not available through simple forced-choice measures (Killen and Stangor, 2001; Gimenez and Harris, 2002; Taylor et al., 2009) which is why children had to answer all questions correctly, in addition to providing supportive reasoning, to be designated as having adopted racial constancy beliefs. Importantly, each yes/no question leading up to the reasoning question does not increase in difficulty, which is why this particular measurement of racial constancy is measured categorically rather than continuously.

Gender history

Gender history is a sub-field of history and gender studies, which looks at the past from the perspective of gender. It is in many ways, an outgrowth of women's history. The discipline considers in what ways historical events and periodization impact women differently from men. For instance, in an influential article in 1977, "Did Women have a Renaissance?", Joan Kelly questioned whether the notion of a Renaissance was relevant to women.[1] Gender historians are also interested in how gender difference has been perceived and configured at different times and places, usually with the assumption that such differences are socially constructed. These social constructions of gender throughout time are also represented as changes in the expected norms of behavior for those labeled male or female. Those who study gender history note these changes in norms and those performing them over time and interpret what those changes say about the larger social/cultural/political climate.

Women's historians and gender histories

Women's historians and scholars have made the differentiation between the terms "gender" and "sex." Sex was determined to be the biological makeup of an individual, while gender was determined to be the chosen identity of an individual. Natsuki Aruga has argued that the work of women's historians regarding gender has helped to solidify the distinction between gender and sex. Women's studies and feminism form part of the base of gender studies, of which gender history is a sub-field. Kathleen Brown has stated that there is a level of difficulty in determining a distinction between women's and gender studies as there is no singular and overarching definition of what it means to be a woman. This in turn leads to difficulty in determining a distinction between women's and gender histories.

While some historians are hesitant to accept the title of "women's historian," others have taken on the title willingly. Those who have accepted the title tend to place a large emphasis on the study of the welfare state in relation to feminist history and the role that gender has played as an organizational factor of the state. The focus of feminist historians has also drifted to Democratic Party policy and the realm of policy, including pay-equity, which is a part of both social and political history.

Impact

Despite its relatively short life, gender history (and its forerunner women's history) has had a rather significant effect on the general study of history. Since the 1960s, when the initially small field first achieved a measure of acceptance, it has gone through a number of different phases, each with its own challenges and outcomes, but always making an impact of some kind on the historical discipline. Although some of the changes to the study of history have been quite obvious, such as increased numbers of books on famous women or simply the admission of greater numbers of women into the historical profession, other influences are more subtle, even

though they may be more politically groundbreaking in the end. By 1970, gender historians turned to documenting ordinary women's expectations, aspirations and status. In the 80s with the rise of the feminist movement, the focus shifted to uncovering women' oppression and discrimination. Nowadays, gender history is more about charting female agency and recognizing female achievements in several fields that were usually dominated by men.

Within the profession

According to historian Joan Scott, conflict occurred between Women's History historians and other historians in a number of ways.[6] In the American Historical Association, when feminists argued that female historians were treated unequally within the field and underrepresented in the association, they were essentially leveling charges of historical negligence by traditional historians. Notions of professionalism were not rejected outright, but they were accused of being biased.

Supplementary history

According to Scott, the construction of Women's History as "supplementary" to the rest of history had a similar effect. At first glance, a supplement simply adds information which has been missing from the greater story, but as Scott points out, it also questions why the information was left out in the first place. Whenever it is noticed that a woman found to be missing from written history, Women's History first describes her role, second, examines which mechanisms allowed her role to be omitted, and third, asks to what other information these mechanisms were blind.

Gender theory

Finally, the advent of gender theory once again challenged commonly held ideas of the discipline, including those scholars studying Women's History. Post-modern criticism of essentialising socially constructed groups, be they gender groups or otherwise, pointed out the weaknesses in various sorts of history. In the past, historians have attempted to describe the shared experience of large numbers of people, as though these people and their experiences were homogeneous and uniform. Women have multiple identities, influenced by any number of factors including race and class, and any examination of history which conflates their experiences, fails to provide an accurate picture.

History of Masculinity

The history of masculinity emerged as a specialty in the 1990s, evidenced by numerous studies of men in groups, and how concepts of masculinity shape their values and behavior. Gail Bederman identified two approaches: one that emerged from women's history and one that ignored it:

> Two types of ‘men’s history’ are being written these days. One builds on twenty years of women’s history scholarship, analyzing masculinity as part of larger gender and cultural processes. The other . . . looks to the past to see how men in early generations understood (and misunderstood) themselves as men. Books of the second type mostly ignore women’s history findings and methodology.

Gender in religion

All over the world, religion is formed around a divine, supernatural figure. While the idea of the divine, supernatural figure varies from religion to religion, each one is framed around different concepts of what it means to be male and female. In many religions, Christianity in particular, women or symbols of female deities are worshipped for their fertility. Furthermore, the religion

of a culture usually directly corresponds or is influenced by the culture's gender structure, like the family structures and/or the state. Therefore, the religious structure and the gender structure work together to form and define a culture, creating the defining structures of equality and uniformity.

Introduction

The Indian Supreme Court's judgement in *Shayara Bano*,[1]1 *Shayara Bano v Union of India and Others* AIR 2017 SC 4609.View all notes wherein the Court declared the Muslim form of divorce by triple *talaq* invalid, and the current debates about a *Talaq* Bill once again demonstrate the actuality of the discourse around personal laws. The case was initiated by five Muslim women and their petitions were supported by a number of Muslim women's rights organizations. A variety of questions featured in the hearings, judgement and the media discourse around the case: Can religion-based personal laws be tested against the fundamental right to equality (Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution)? Is triple *talaq* protected under Article 25 as an essential practice of Islam? And can the Supreme Court interfere in the matter, or do either the religious communities or the Indian legislature have the authority to amend the personal law system? Not all of these questions were fully and satisfactorily answered by the Court. Thus, even after this landmark judgement, it would appear that key questions remain unanswered in the area of personal laws, making it a contested terrain where not only is religious freedom played out against gender equality, but these aspects are also intertwined with arguments around identity, nationalism, modernity and secularism.

This literature review seeks to evaluate the scholarship that engages with the Indian personal law system through a gender lens. According to this system, certain family and property matters (marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship, adoption, succession and inheritance) of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians as well as Jews are governed by their respective religious laws.[2]2 Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs are counted in the Hindu-category: see for instance, Hindu Marriage Act 1955, s 2(1)(b).View all notes Notwithstanding the debates about a replacement of this system with a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) which date back to pre-Independence times,[3]3 Granville Austin, 'Religion, Personal Law, and Identity in India' in Gerald James Larson (ed), *Religion and Personal Law in Secular India: A Call to Judgment* (Indiana University Press 2001).View all notes to date, the personal laws have been maintained and the Constitution's directive principle to "endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code" (Article 44) remains unfulfilled. Using Gopika Solanki's terminology, this plurilegal system of family law could be described as one of "shared adjudication": the State enjoys only restrained autonomy in this area and willingly splits its adjudicative authority with religious and societal actors and organizations.[4]4 Gopika Solanki, *Adjudication in Religious Family Laws: Cultural Accommodation, Legal Pluralism, and Gender Equality in India* (Cambridge University Press 2011).View all notes

The key question that lies at the centre of this review is the following: Which aspects of the personal law system are problematic from a women's rights perspective and how can these problematic aspects be addressed and reformed?

The literature that this overview engages with derives from three broad fields of research. The first strand of literature stems from feminist legal studies and looks at family law and jurisprudence from a feminist or gendered perspective. It deals with those norms among the personal law system that are discriminatory from a women's rights perspective as well as with the shortcomings in the application of personal laws by the judiciary and the executive. An

engagement with this scholarship reveals that when positioning themselves on the issue of personal laws, many feminist scholars find themselves facing a conundrum. On the one hand, the fact that personal laws often discriminate against women has led them to criticize these laws as patriarchal and in need of reform. On the other hand, they do not necessarily regard the centralization, secularization and unification of the law as a panacea but also seek to accommodate cultural and religious identity. Broader debates on Third World Feminism,[5]5 The terminology refers to Mohanty's understanding of Third World women as an "imagined community". Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism' in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (eds), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Indiana University Press 1991) 4.View all notes intersectionality,[6]6 Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics' [1989] The University of Chicago Legal Forum 139.View all notes legal universality and cultural relativism play a central role here.

The second strand of literature comprises studies of legal anthropologists on how women "on the ground" manoeuvre through the intricacies of state law, religion-based personal law, sociocultural norms and claims for gender justice. This literature deals with the fact that India is a country where the state "never had and most probably never will have a legal monopoly in the area of family laws",[7]7 Mengia Hong Tschalaer, *Muslim Women's Quest for Justice: Gender, Law and Activism in India* (Cambridge University Press 2017) 52.View all notes but where its "fractured" and "partial" sovereignty[8]8 Shalini Randeria, 'Entangled Histories of Uneven Modernities: Civil Society, Caste Solidarities and Legal Pluralism in Post-Colonial India' in Yehuda Elkana and others (eds), *Unraveling Ties: From Social Cohesion to New Practices of Connectedness* (Campus 2002) 308.View all notes allows societal institutions to claim authority over adjudication and lawmaking. Scholars in this field apply the concepts of legal pluralism,[9]9 John Griffiths, 'What Is Legal Pluralism?' (1986) 24 Journal of Legal Pluralism 1.View all notes interlegality[10]10 Boaventura De Sousa Santos, 'Law: A Map of Misreading. Towards a Postmodern Concept of Law' (1987) 14 Journal of Law and Society 279.View all notes and vernacularization[11]11 Sally Engle Merry and Peggy Levitt, 'Vernacularization on the Ground: Local Uses of Global Women's Rights in Peru, China, India and the United States' (2009) 9 Global Networks 441. The authors define vernacularization as "the process of appropriation and local adoption of globally generated ideas and strategies".View all notes to the context of personal laws in India to describe the coexistence of legal systems as well as the large "variety of formal and informal, rural and urban, large and intimate" dispute resolution fora.[12]12 Srimati Basu, *The Trouble with Marriage: Feminists Confront Law and Violence in India* (University of California Press 2015) 97.View all notes Drawing on insights gathered during fieldwork in different parts of the country, such as court observations or interviews with women's rights activists and litigants, the authors depict the advantages and disadvantages of India's plurilegal landscape.

The third strand of literature deals with the Indian women's movement's activism vis-à-vis the personal laws. This scholarship is largely situated in the area of women's and gender studies and ranges from early seminal works on the Indian women's movement[13]13 The key examples here are Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah, *The Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in the Women's Movement in India* (Kali for Women 1992); Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800–1990* (Kali for Women 1993). In both works, campaigns with regard to the personal laws feature among other aspects of women's rights activism. Gandhi and Shah point out that "[t]he subject of family or personal laws is probably one of the most complex and sensitive issues in today's political climate":

Gandhi and Shah (n 13) 229.View all notes to more recent engagements with Islamic feminist activism. The field of women's and gender studies emerged in India in the late 1970s – parallel to the emergence of the Indian women's movement. In fact, it is sometimes hard to distinguish scholarship on the women's movement from the movement itself, as in many cases scholars were also active participants of the movement and women's studies centres have even been described as "[t]he other arm of the women's movement", complementing women's activism "on the ground".[14]14 Neera Desai, *Feminism as Experience: Thoughts and Narratives* (Sparrow 2006) 68.View all notes This overlap between research and activism has led to the creation of new knowledge and innovative methodologies in the area of women's and gender studies.[15]15 Ibid 69.View all notes Scholarship in this area highlights how campaigning, awareness raising and approaching the parliament and courts can lead – and has led – to legal (and social) reforms vis-à-vis the personal laws. This literature has much in common with studies that assess the impact of the Global South's women's movements on the law – often against resistance from religious communities.[16]16 On the legal activism of women's movements in North Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, see Mulki Al-Sharmani (ed), *Feminist Activism, Women's Rights and Legal Reform* (Zed Books 2013). On the Moroccan women's movement, see Amy Young Evrard, *The Moroccan Women's Rights Movement* (Syracuse University Press 2014).View all notes A key paradox in women's rights activism, that Gandhi and Shah formulated in 1992 and which is still of relevance today is the fact that on the one hand, "every campaign in the movement has demanded legal reform", while on the other hand, the movement has severely criticized "the legal system, the hopelessness of achieving legal redress, and the endless squabbles with law makers and implementors".[17]17 Gandhi and Shah (n 13) 267.View all notes

As this brief overview indicates, this scholarship deals with the personal law system on two different levels: Firstly, it directly engages with the personal laws and those (formal and informal) institutions that interpret, apply and shape these laws (the first and the second strand of literature). Secondly, it indirectly engages with personal laws, when it portrays the Indian women's movement and individual activists who have sought to reform these laws (the third and to some extent the second strand of literature).

In dealing with the personal laws, the three fields of literature necessarily address different actors that shape the discourse around this topic: "the state" (the legislature, the executive and the judiciary), religious communities, the media and civil society. These actors feature not only in the scholarship's engagement with the challenges of the personal law system (elaborated in the section on "Contestations around the personal law system: where do the problems lie?"). Here "the state" is critiqued as patriarchal, malfunctioning and avoiding confrontation with the religious communities, and the religious institutions are seen as equally patriarchal and biased against women. The different actors also play a role in the scholarship's engagement with potential remedies to the ills of the system (elaborated in the "Curing the ills: reform suggestions and women's rights activism" section). Here the authors point to the responsibilities of the parliament, the courts, the religious communities and civil society, especially women's rights groups.

A final point that this introduction should mention is that although the personal laws of *all* religious communities are regarded as problematic from a gendered point of view, both in the general discourse as well as in academic scholarship, Muslim personal law plays a special role. In the popular debate, the personal laws of India's largest minority community (constituting 14.2% of the population) often function as a crucible in which larger conflicts between Hindus and Muslims are played out. While for many Muslims, their personal laws are a crucial marker of minority identity, for some Hindu nationalists, the laws are an example of Muslims being

granted a special status in society in which they unjustifiably enjoy more rights than other communities. Scholarship has critically dealt with Muslim personal law provisions, while at the same time attempting to disrupt stereotypes and wrong understandings about Muslim personal law. It has depicted Muslim women's rights activism and the everyday life of Muslim women under personal laws by speaking with the women concerned rather than speaking only about them.

Contestations around the personal law system: where do the problems lie?

That personal laws are problematic from a gendered point of view is not news to many readers. However, it is important to notice that although the gender aspect of the personal laws features prominently today, this was not always the case. The feminist critique of the personal laws was for a long time a minority perspective. However, due to the continuous feminist critique of the "mainstream" scholarship on the personal laws, the gendered dimension has gained a foothold in the discourse. "Mainstream" literature on the personal laws, such as handbooks and student literature on family law or specific studies on the legal systems of the different communities, tended to restrict itself to a normative engagement with the provisions of the different personal law systems and case law emanating from the Indian higher judiciary. Popular debate, when engaging critically with the personal law system, largely focused on issues of secularism, national identity and modernity. The large amount of scholarship that exists on the issue has put the personal law system into its historical context and depicted its shaping during the colonial period and its developments since then.[18]18 Rina Verma Williams, *Postcolonial Politics and Personal Laws: Colonial Legacies and the Indian State* (Oxford University Press 2006); Parta S Ghosh, *The Politics of Personal Law in South Asia: Identity, Nationalism and the Uniform Civil Code* (Routledge 2007); Nandini Chatterjee, 'Religious Change, Social Conflict and Legal Competition: The Emergence of Christian Personal Law in Colonial India' (2010) 44 Modern Asian Studies 1147; Narendra Subramanian, *Nation and Family. Personal Law, Cultural Pluralism, and Gendered Citizenship* (Standford University Press 2014).View all notes In particular, it has addressed the aspect of secularism and religious identity[19]19 Gerald James Larson (ed), *Religion and Personal Law in Secular India: A Call to Judgment* (Indiana University Press 2001).View all notes or compared the Indian personal law system with the legal systems in other countries,[20]20 Ghosh (n 18); Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin, *Muslim Family Law, Secular Courts and Muslim Women of South Asia: A Study in Judicial Activism* (Oxford University Press 2011); Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin, *Cases on Muslim Law of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (Oxford University Press 2015); Subramanian (n 18); Shimon Shetreet and Hiram E Chodosh, *Uniform Civil Code for India: Proposed Blueprint for Scholarly Discourse* (Oxford University Press 2015).View all notes for instance in order to suggest guidelines for the process of preparing and implementing a UCC.[21]21 Shetreet and Chodosh (n 20).View all notes While the aspect of gender equality features in some of these works, it tends to play a subordinate role.

This "gender blind spot" has been criticized by feminist scholars. Nivedita Menon very pointedly states,

[T]here always circulates in the public domain some version of the argument that, to be truly secular, India needs a UCC. But the question we must ask is, to what extent is the issue of the Uniform Civil Code about "secularism"? Is it about the relationship between religious communities and the state? Is it not really about gender-injustice – that is, the constitutionally enshrined inequality between men and women?… The fact is that all personal laws on marriage,

and inheritance and guardianship of children, discriminate against women in some form or the other; surely, this should make the issue of the Uniform Civil Code visible in a different way? Should it not be debated as "India cannot claim to be truly *gender-just* as long as discriminatory personal laws exist"? However, only feminists pose the question in this way.[22]22 Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like a Feminist* (Penguin 2012) 151.View all notes

Other than making the gender dimension prominent, feminist scholars have also stressed that indeed *all* personal laws contain aspects that discriminate against women. They thereby sought to disrupt the common notion that it was only Muslim personal law that was problematic from a gendered point of view. Agnes, for instance, stresses that her aim was to disrupt the notion that pits "progressive" Hindu law against "regressive-fundamentalist" Muslim law – an understanding that emerged after the reform of Hindu personal law in the 1950s.[23]23 Flavia Agnes, *Family Law Volume I: Family Laws and Constitutional Claims* (Oxford University Press 2011) 21. See also Williams (n 18) 15; Vrinda Narain, *Reclaiming the Nation: Muslim Women and the Law in India* (University of Toronto Press 2008) 138–39; Menon (n 22) 26. On the problematic depiction of Muslim personal law by the Indian media, see Nadja-Christina Schneider, *Zur Darstellung von "Kultur" und "kultureller Differenz" im indischen Mediensystem: die indische Presse und die Repräsentation des Islams im Rahmen der Zivilrechtsdebatte, 1985–87 und 2003* (Logos 2005).View all notes

The feminist critique of personal laws is part of a broader set of scholarship that deals with legal norms from a critical feminist perspective or that engages critically with Indian women's situation in the broader sociolegal conditions under which they live.[24]24 In feminist literature, the personal laws thus often feature as one among many aspects, including the situation of rural, tribal or Dalit women, women's economic rights and work participation, women's right to health, women's sexuality, sex work, domestic violence and custodial rape. Publications that address the personal laws in such broader context include the following: Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law and Citizenship in Postcolonial India* (Duke University Press 2003); Geetanjali Gangoli, *Indian Feminisms: Law, Patriarchies and Violence in India* (Ashgate 2007); Neera Bharihoke (ed), *Rights of Hindu and Muslim Women* (Serials 2008); Archana Parashar and Amita Dhanda (eds), *Redefining Family Law in India: Essays in Honour of B. Sivaramayya* (Routledge 2008). Kirti Singh has tackled the socio-economic components of the family laws and the gap between the law and the lived reality: Kirti Singh, *Separated and Divorced Women in India: Economic Rights and Entitlements* (Sage 2013).View all notes Scholars who have combined an in-depth legal analysis of the personal laws with a feminist critique include, among others, Flavia Agnes, Farrah Ahmed, Indira Jaising, Ratna Kapur, Catherine A MacKinnon, Vrinda Narain, Archana Parashar and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan. Agnes and Jaising could both be described as "scholactivists" – scholars whose work is enriched with very valuable first-hand experiences from their work as practising lawyers and women's rights activists. In addition to feminist legal scholarship, legal anthropologists, such as Srimati Basu, Livia Holden, Gopika Solanki, Mengia Hong Tschalaer, or Sylvia Vatuk, have described in detail where either state institutions such as the family courts or religious dispute settlement fora such as *darul qazas* or other informal institutions create hurdles (but sometimes also opportunities) for gender equality. The critique that these scholars provide takes into account various actors. This section is thus structured along the lines of the aspects, actors or institutions that the scholars find fault with: the personal laws as such, the higher and the lower judiciary, the religious clergy as well as religious non-state dispute settlement fora.

The personal laws

The critique of the personal laws is linked to some degree to their heritage. Thus, much scholarship first contextualizes the laws historically. Authors point out that while on the one hand the British colonizers exempted parts of religious law from the purview of their regulatory action,[25]25 Most prominently, the Warren Hastings Plan of 1772 provided that Hindus and Muslims were to be governed by their own laws in disputes relating to inheritance, marriage, caste, and other religious usages and institutions.View all notes at the same time the colonial system largely shaped the content of the personal laws as the British interfered with these laws through legislation as well as through judges' interpretation.[26]26 See for instance Archana Parashar, *Women and Family Law Reform in India: Uniform Civil Code and Gender Equality* (Sage Publications 1992); Werner Menski, *Hindu Law: Beyond Tradition and Modernity* (Oxford University Press 2003); Siobhan Mullally, 'Feminism and Multicultural Dilemmas in India: Revisiting the Shah Bano Case' (2004) 24 Oxford Journal of Legal Studies 671; Rina Verma Williams, *Postcolonial Politics and Personal Laws: Colonial Legacies and the Indian State* (Oxford University Press 2006); Rochana Bajpai, *Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India* (Oxford University Press 2011).View all notes In fact, as Williams points out, more than 20 legislative Acts were passed between 1865 and 1939 that affected the personal laws in some form.[27]27 Williams (n 26) 73.View all notes In addition, scholars have convincingly argued that the colonial jurisprudence led to a "Brahmanization" of Hindu personal law and an "Islamization" of Muslim personal law as well as a general rigidification of the personal laws as such.[28]28 Agnes, *Family Law Volume I* (n 23) 5; Janaki Nair, 'The Foundations of Modern Legal Structures in India' in Raka Ray (ed), *Handbook of Gender* (Oxford University Press 2012); Serajuddin, *Muslim Family Law* (n 20) 29.View all notes At the same time, British concepts have found their way into the interpretation of personal laws, so that the laws as in place today have been described as a "curious amalgam of religious rules and English legal concepts".[29]29 Parashar, *Women and Family Law Reform* (n 26) 307.View all notes

An extensive overview of the Indian family law from a feminist perspective and in depth critical analyses of the problematic aspects of different personal laws is provided by Flavia Agnes,[30]30 Agnes, *Family Law Volume I* (n 23); Flavia Agnes, *Family Law Volume II: Marriage, Divorce, and Matrimonial Litigation* (Oxford University Press 2011).View all notes Laura Dudley Jenkins[31]31 Laura Dudley Jenkins, 'Diversity and the Constitution in India: What is Religious Freedom?' (2009) 57 Drake Law Review 913.View all notes or Archana Parashar.[32]32 Archana Parashar, 'Just Family Law: Basic to all Indian Women' in Indira Jaising (ed), *Men's Laws, Women's Lives: A Constitutional Perspective on Religion, Common Law and Culture in South Asia* (Women Unlimited 2005).View all notes They address in detail the different norms related to marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, adoption and guardianship and make an effort to distinguish the many different rules and exceptions. They do not stop at criticizing triple *talaq* or polygamy among Muslims, but address the problematic features among Hindu, Christian or Parsi law, leading them to the conclusion that "[a]ll religious personal laws manage to treat women less favourably than men".[33]33 Ibid 286.View all notes Flavia Agnes' two volumes on *Family Law* are worth special mention here as the author's feminist viewpoint on the topic is definitely what makes her books stand out from regular textbooks on family law. Agnes seeks to challenge "the traditional notion that law is a neutral, objective, rational set of rules, unaffected in content and form by the passions and perspectives of those who possess and wield the power inherent in law and legal institutions".[34]34 Agnes, *Family Law Volume I* (n 23) xxvi.View all notes She understands law as being "determined by the actual practices of courts, law offices, and political stations, rather than as rules and doctrines set forth in statutes or learned treatises".[35]35 Ibid xxii.View all notes

Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the process of theorizing and learn to appreciate the dynamic and flexible nature of this process. Much of our understanding of the world, our societies, and ourselves, today, rests on **theories** and knowledge generated historically and predominantly by men of certain nationalities and economic classes. Male-dominated and culturally specific theorizing and knowledge have generally resulted in the exclusion of women and other groups from the process of formal theorizing and knowledge-building. When applied in research, policy, and action, such theories and knowledge not only ignore women's contributions in all spheres of activity but also exclude consideration of issues particularly relevant to women.

Feminist scholars have argued that knowledge based mainly on male, culturally specific experience represents a skewed perception of reality and is only partial knowledge. The best way to correct this is to take women's daily experiences and their informal theorizing into account and, on this basis, adopt feminist approaches to building theory and knowledge.

Rationale

Theorizing and theory-building have generally been seen as the business of academics in ivory towers, yet all individuals make choices and decisions based on **assumptions** or theories about the world. These formal, mainstream (or "male-stream") approaches to theorizing are being challenged by various groups of women who have engaged in different approaches to the process of theorizing. These women are bringing their unique perspectives to bear on issues affecting their daily lives. Women have used these new perspectives to **deconstruct** traditional knowledge bases and build new ones. Such reconstruction of knowledge has influenced policy and action affecting the lives of women.

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are the following:

- To introduce the concept of theory;
- To understand that theorizing is one way in which people use their assumptions to achieve, interpret, or impose meaning;
- To understand how feminist theorizing has challenged mainstream theorizing;
- To understand how diverse assumptions about the same phenomenon result in diverse explanations, theories, and **power** positions; and
- To understand how theory and knowledge are interrelated and how feminist theorizing and knowledge have influenced research, policy, and action.

What is theory?

Although we have no precise, universally accepted definition of theory, certain recurring elements appear in the literature, which allows us to roughly draw the boundaries of the concept. Theory is defined most commonly as scientific theory, which emphasizes a logically unified framework, generalization, and explanation. Ornstein and Hunkins (1993, p. 184) indicated that a theory is a "device for interpreting, criticizing and unifying established laws, modifying them to

fit data unanticipated in their formation, and guiding the enterprise of discovering new and more powerful generalisation." Common-sense understandings of theory often use the concept to describe the rules that guide action, opinion, ideals, or a particular philosophy. Stanley and Wise (1983) suggested that the majority of persons, particularly women, have been brought up to think of theory as something mysterious and forbidding, produced by clever people, most of whom are men. Nowadays, people are questioning this divide between experts and nonexperts and adopting a more inclusive approach to theorizing.

The nature of theorizing

The traditional, mainstream process of theorizing rests on the scientific method. This is summarized in the **model** presented in Figure 1.

The male-centred approach to theorizing has produced particular views of many issues, including those affecting women. These views rely on **androcentric** assumptions. An example of such an assumption is that women's work is biologically determined and therefore is or should be home based and restricted to nurturing and domestic chores. Such assumptions provide the basis for hypotheses such as, in this case, the hypothesis that the waged workforce tends to be predominantly male and women work at home. The information gathered during the testing of such an **hypothesis** has traditionally been limited to quantitative data, which are used to support the general principles posited as offering valid explanations about this issue. Researchers have, for a long time, uncritically accepted these explanations as factual and have produced theories about women's work based on questionable assumptions. Despite their questionable nature, such theories have also informed policy and action.

The process of theorizing: the knowledge spiral.

Some problems associated with mainstream theorizing are listed below:

- Unrecognized and value-laden assumptions, based on the (male) researcher's biases;
- Overemphasis on empirical and quantitative data and the denial of the validity of qualitative data;
- Lack of involvement of the researcher with the subject(s) of the research;
- Impersonal and detached nature of the process; and
- The supposed "objectivity" of the researcher and knowledge.

Sandra Harding expressed the following view of the traditional, scientific approach:

Scientific knowledge-seeking is supposed to be value-neutral, objective, dispassionate, disinterested, and so forth. It is supposed to be protected from political interests, goals, and desires (such as feminist ones) by the norms of science. In particular, science's "method" is supposed to protect the results of research from the social values of the researchers.

— Harding (1987a, p. 182)

When researchers use this traditional approach to theorizing, however, their biases can affect the process at every stage:

- In the identification of the problem;
- In the formulation of hypotheses and calculated guesses;
- In the design of the research to test hypotheses; and
- In the collection and interpretation of data.

Nonetheless, theories based on this approach have been a major force in shaping perceptions of reality.

An investigation of women's work conducted by researchers with a feminist perspective would, in all likelihood, rely on a variety of assumptions related to their own experiences, as well as to the experiences of women in other situations. Such assumptions would differ according to factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and age. An investigation such as this would therefore be more likely to give the following results:

- Some women do unpaid work in the home;
- Some women do both unpaid work in the home and waged and unpaid work in wider society;
- Some women work only in wider society and employ other women to work in their homes;
- Women are found in a variety of occupations;
- Women work at all levels in the workplace; and
- Women, both in their paid and in their unpaid work, contribute greatly to the national economy.

Based on this wider view, the general principle would be that women's work is not restricted to the home. Female perspectives and experiences would help to challenge the hypothesis (generated from the male perspective) that women's work is in the home and show it to be invalid. Theorizing is therefore an important, flexible, and dynamic process.

We each have assumptions about people, events, issues, etc., in our everyday lives. We may explicitly state these assumptions or allow them to remain implicit in our opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. We each interpret things differently as we bring our assumptions to bear on a situation. We test some of these assumptions formally and others informally. Informal testing of our assumptions is, in fact, a process of hypothesis testing, and the results often cause us to change our assumptions. Sandra Harding's views, reprinted in Box 1, are particularly interesting.

Feminist empiricism

Though feminist empiricism appears in these ways to be consistent with empiricist tendencies, further consideration reveals that the feminist component deeply undercuts the assumptions of traditional empiricism in three ways: feminist empiricism has a radical future. In the first place, feminist empiricism argues that the "context of discovery" is just as important as the "context of

justification" for eliminating social biases that contribute to partial and distorted explanations and understandings. Traditional empiricism insists that the social identity of the observer is irrelevant to the "goodness" of the results of research. It is not supposed to make a difference to the explanatory power, objectivity, and so on of the research's results if the researcher or the community of scientists are white or black, Chinese or British, rich or poor in social origin. But feminist empiricism argues that women (or feminists, male and female) as a group are more likely than men (non-feminists) as a group to produce claims unbiased by **androcentrism**, and in that sense objective results of inquiry. It argues that the authors of the favored social theories are not anonymous at all: they are clearly men, and usually men of the dominant classes, races, and cultures. The people who identify and define scientific problems leave their social fingerprints on the problems and their favored solutions to them.

Second, feminist empiricism makes the related claim that scientific method is not effective at eliminating social biases that are as widespread as androcentrism. This is especially the case when androcentrism arrives in the inquiry process through the identification and definition of research problems. Traditional empiricism holds that scientific method will eliminate any social biases as a hypothesis generated by what men find problematic in the world around them. The problem here is not only that the hypotheses which would most deeply challenge androcentric beliefs are missing from those alternatives sexists consider when testing their favored hypotheses. It is also that traditional empiricism does not direct researchers to locate themselves in the same critical plane as their subject matter. Consequently, when non-feminist researchers gather evidence for or against hypotheses, "scientific method," bereft of such a directive, is impotent to locate and eradicate the androcentrism that shapes the research process.

Finally feminist empiricists often exhort social scientists to follow the existing research norms more rigorously. On the other hand, they also can be understood to be arguing that it is precisely following these norms that contributes to androcentric research results. The norms themselves have been constructed primarily to produce answers to the kinds of questions men ask about nature and social life and to prevent scrutiny of the way beliefs which are nearly or completely culture-wide in fact cannot be eliminated from the results of research by these norms. A reliable picture of women's worlds and of social relations between the sexes often required alternative approaches to inquiry that challenge traditional research habits and raise profound questions which are no longer marginalized as deviant.

— Harding (1987a, pp. 183-184)

Making assumptions

Answer the following questions.

1. What assumptions do you think are held by various groups across cultures about the following issues?

(a) Parenting

(b) Abortion

(c) Violence against women

(d) Marriage

2. Identify and state assumptions that women could propose to challenge the assumptions you listed in answer 1.

3. What are the essential differences between the assumptions in answers 1 and 2?

The differences identified in this activity can reveal the ways the perspectives of men and women differ, and these differences also relate to the problems experienced by men and women. As Harding noted,

Many phenomena which appear problematic from the perspective of men's characteristic experiences do not appear problematic at all from the perspective of women's experiences — On the other hand, women experience many phenomena which they think do need explanation. Why do men find child care and housework so distasteful? Why do women's life opportunities tend to be constricted exactly at the moments traditional history marks as the most progressive? Why is it hard to detect black women's ideals of womanhood in studies of black families? Why is men's sexuality so "driven," so defined in terms of power? Why is risking death said to represent the distinctively human act but giving birth regarded as merely natural?

— Harding (1987b, p. 6)

If we concede that men and women often view issues differently and have different experiences, it follows that we must consider a phenomenon in relation to the individuals who experience it. Harding therefore further suggested that

Reflecting on how social phenomena get defined as problems in need of explanation in the first place quickly reveals that there is no such thing as a problem without a person (or group of those) who have this problem: a problem is always a problem for someone or other. Recognition of this fact and its implications for the structure of the scientific enterprise quickly brings feminist approaches to enquiring into conflict with traditional understandings in many ways.

— Harding (1987b, p 6)

Feminists have challenged the view of women that has developed from male theorizing. Hilary Rose explained the nature of the challenge:

Increasingly, the new scholarship drew on the concept of gender to illuminate a double process of a gendered science produced by a gendered knowledge production system. Was the seemingly taken for granted androcentricity, even misogyny, of science, a matter of "bias" which good unbiased science turned out by feminists and their allies would correct, or was the problem more profound, one that only an explicitly feminist science could displace, so as to become, in the language of the enlightenment, a "successor science"?

— Rose (1994)

Feminist approaches to research and theorizing

Once we undertake to use women's experience as a resource to generate scientific problems, hypotheses and evidence, to design research for women, and to place the researcher in the same critical plane as the research subject, traditional epistemological assumptions can no longer be made. These agendas have led feminist social scientists to ask questions about who can be a knower (only men?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men's experiences and observations?); what kinds of things can be known (can "subjective truths," ones that only women — or some women — tend to arrive at, count as knowledge?); the nature of objectivity (does it require "point-of-viewlessness"?); the appropriate relationship between the researcher and her/his research subjects (must the researcher be disinterested, dispassionate, and socially invisible to the subject?); what should be the purposes of the pursuit of knowledge (to produce information FOR men?).

— Harding (1987a, p. 181)

The aim of feminist theorizing is to deconstruct and redefine concepts previously defined from a male perspective and generally accepted as factual. The deconstruction and redefinition of concepts, as well as the creation of new ones, have emphasized the following:

- Women's experiences and knowledge;
- Conduct of research FOR women;
- Problems that, when solved, will benefit both researcher and subject;
- Interaction between researcher and subject;
- Establishment of nonhierarchical relationships;
- Expression of feelings and concern for values; and
- Use of nonsexist language.

The result is the generation of theories from a view of the world through feminist lenses. The aim has been to change conditions adversely affecting women's lives by critically analyzing existing theories and developing new policies and social action. Hilary Rose (1994) elaborated on this in her address entitled "Alternative Knowledge Systems in Science," an excerpt of which is set out in

Feminist theorizing

The problem for feminist materialists is to admit biology — that is, a constrained essentialism — while giving priority to the social, without concluding at the same time that human beings are infinitely malleable ... the very fact that women are, by and large, shut out of the production system of scientific knowledge, with its ideological power to define what is and what is not objective knowledge, paradoxically has offered feminists a fresh page on which to write. Largely

ignored by the oppressors and their systems of knowledge, feminists at this point necessarily theorised from practice and referenced theory to practice.... thinking from the everyday lives of women necessarily fuses the personal, the social and the biological. ... while there is general agreement that the first move is to challenge and overthrow existing canonical knowledges, the question of what we might replace them with produces broadly speaking two responses. The first is feminist stand-point theory which looks to the possibility of a feminist knowledge to produce better and truer pictures of reality; the second is feminist post-modernism which refuses the possibility of any universalising discourse but which argues instead for localised reliable feminist knowledges.

— Rose (1994)

Feminist theorizing seeks to uncover

- The pervasiveness of gendered thinking that uncritically assumes a necessary bond between being a woman and occupying certain social roles;
- The ways women negotiate the world; and
- The wisdom inherent in such negotiation.

The social roles and the ways women negotiate the world also differ among women in diverse contexts (cultural, social, political, racial or ethnic, religious, etc.) and with diverse personal characteristics (age, education, sexual orientation, etc.). The excerpt from Sandra Harding's "Is There a Feminist Method?," reprinted in expands on this point.

Women's experiences

Notice that it is "women's experiences" *in the plural* which provide the new resources for research. This formulation stresses several ways in which the best feminist analyses differ from traditional ones. For one thing, once we realized that there is no universal *man*, but only culturally different men and women, then "Man's eternal companion 'woman'" also disappeared. That is, women come only in different classes, races, and cultures: there is no "woman" and no "woman's experience." Masculine and feminine are always categories within every class, race, and culture in the sense that women's and men's experiences, desires, and interest differ within every class, race, and culture. But so too, are class, race, and culture always categories within gender, since women's and men's experiences, desires, and interests differ according to class, race, and culture. This leads some theorists to propose that we should talk about our "feminisms" only in the plural, since there is no one set of feminist principles or understandings beyond the very, very general ones to which feminists in every race, class, and culture will assent. Why should we have expected it to be any different? There are very few principles or understandings to which sexists in every race, class, and culture will assent!

Not only do our gender experiences vary across the cultural categories; they also are often in conflict in any one individual's experience. My experiences as a mother and a professor are often contradictory. Women scientists often talk about the contradictions in identity between what they experience as women and scientists. Dorothy Smith writes of the "fault line" between women sociologists' experience as sociologists and as women. The hyphenated state of many self-chosen

labels of identity — black feminist, socialist feminist, Asian-American feminist, lesbian feminist — reflects this challenge to the "identity politics" which has grounded Western thought and public life. These fragmented identities are a rich source of feminist insight.

— Harding (1987b, pp. 7-8)

In examining problems and carrying out analyses, feminists recognize that factors other than gender shape perceptions and understandings. Class, race, and culture are also powerful determinants and therefore create differences that must be taken into account. The category "women" is pluralistic, so treating women as a homogenous group results in a theorizing process no better than that of the traditional, androcentric approach.

To further accommodate these differences, feminist inquiry highlights the importance of placing the inquirer on the same "critical plane" as the subject of inquiry, with the aim of ensuring less bias and distortion. Researchers can then no longer hide behind the language of "objectivity"; they must situate themselves in their research. The excerpt from the work of Sandra Harding in elaborates on this point.

Feminist research

The best feminist analysis goes beyond these innovations in subject matter in a crucial way: it insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint. This does not mean that the first half of a research report should engage in soul searching (though a little soul searching by researchers now and then can't be all bad!). Instead, as we will see, we are often explicitly told how she/he suspects this has shaped the research project — though of course we are free to arrive at contrary hypotheses about the influence of the researcher's presence on her/his analysis. Thus, the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests.

This requirement is no idle attempt to "do good" by the standards of imagined critics in classes, races, cultures (or of a gender) other than that of the researcher. Instead, it is a response to the recognition that the cultural beliefs and behaviours of feminist researchers shape the results of their analysis no less than do those of sexist and androcentric researchers. We need to avoid the "objectivis" stance that attempts to make the researcher's cultural beliefs and practices invisible while simultaneously skewering the research objects, beliefs and practices to the display board. Only in this way can we hope to produce understandings and explanations which are free (or, at least, more free) of distortion from the unexamined beliefs and behaviors of social scientists themselves. Another way to put this point is that the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of research. This evidence too must be open to critical scrutiny no less than what is traditionally defined as relevant evidence. Introducing this "subjective" element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the "objectivism" which hides this kind of evidence from the public. This kind of relationship between the researcher and the object of research is usually discussed under the heading of the "reflexivity of social science."

— Harding (1987b, p. 9)

Feminists have proposed various theories to explain their experiences on the basis of differences in their class, race, and culture. Substantial discourse among feminists has focused on these various theories. Discussing a paper by Amrita Chhachhi (Chhachhi 1988), Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen noted that

The variety of approaches within feminist theory reflect, on the one hand, divergent perceptions, and on the other, different social and historical locations in which feminists exist. From Chhachhi's point of view, the rejection of all feminist theory as "western," "eurocentric," or **"ethnocentric"** results from a failure to distinguish between the application of feminist theories to the historical, political and socio-cultural specificities of black/Third World women, and the notion of all theory as "white." She distinguishes ... three levels of analysis in most contemporary social theories, including feminism.

1. Basic concepts which are abstract and function as tools of analysis (e.g. relations of production, relations of reproduction, etc.);

2. Intermediate level concepts (such as patriarchy, mode of production, etc.);

3. Historically specific analysis of a concrete social phenomenon (e.g. slavery in nineteenth century Caribbean society, dowry in north India, etc.).

— Baksh-Soodeen (1993, p. 31)

Chhachhi had argued that at the first level of basic conceptual analysis (that of basic concepts), little disagreement occurs between black and white feminists who share similar approaches. However, she noted that black-Third World feminists have encouraged an important sensitivity to the need for historically specific research at levels 2 and 3 (those of intermediate-level concepts and historically specific analyses). As Baksh-Soodeen remarked,

most often the limitations of Euro-American feminist studies lie at the second and third levels of analysis in that abstract concepts are imposed mechanically and historically, and hence become a substitute for an historically specific analysis which takes into account the complexities of social reality.

— Baksh-Soodeen (1993, p. 31)

Let us examine how women from different social contexts might have divergent perceptions and explanations of the same phenomenon.

Activity

Considering poverty

In this activity, we consider the phenomenon of poverty — Why are people poor?

1. State the assumptions you think the following women would have about this question:

(a) The wife of a successful professional who does not work outside the home

(b) A retired civil servant on a pension

(c) A rural subsistence farmer

(d) An executive from a donor lending agency

2. Based on the assumptions you have identified, what explanation would each women likely give for poverty?

3. Are there any commonalities or differences among these explanations?

4. How do you account for these commonalities or differences? (The differences in the explanations you identify are due to the fact that each of the individuals considered in the above exercise occupies a unique position, role, and status in society. These positions are usually unequal. Some women exercise greater authority and power than others. As a result, their assumptions and interpretations are more valued than those of others with less authority and power.)

5. In your opinion, which of these four categories of women would have the most, the least power? Give reasons for your choice.

Hilary Rose's comments in Box 5 illustrate how theoretical positions can also be used to exert power and influence over the lives of women.

Biological determinism and patriarchy

The recrudescence of biological determinism during the seventies was committed to the renaturalisation of women; to an insistence that, if not anatomy then evolution, X chromosomes, or hormones were destiny; and to the inevitability of patriarchy. Such views fed upon the work of IQ advocates, whose views had become an important location for social and political struggle around issues of race and class. Within the U.S. these interventions were greedily taken up by a government looking for ways to justify the withdrawal of resources from the Poverty Programme, as a laissez-faire approach to welfare was more in accord with nature. Despite resistance by the Welfare Rights Movement, scientific racism helped justify cutting welfare benefits of poor — primarily black — women and their children, thus enabling more resources to be committed to the Vietnam War. In Britain, IQ theory was extensively cited by the racist campaign for immigrant restriction and fed racist sentiment that genetic inferiority explained high levels of unemployment and thence excessive demands on the welfare system by black people. The critical counter attack mounted by anti-racists helped prevent the new scientific racism spreading unchallenged.

In the prevailing political climate, the relationship between biological determinists — especially in the guise of the new sociobiology — and the New Right was a love match. In Britain, a New Right government happily seized on biological determinism as a scientific prop to their plan to restore women to their natural place, which at that point was not in the labour market. (By the mid-eighties the view changed and part-time women's work became the ideal solution to achieve unpaid labour at home and cheap labour in employment. From then on we heard little about women's natural market place.) No one put the government's view in the early 1980s more succinctly than the Secretary of State for Social Service, Patrick Jenkins, in a 1980 television interview on working mothers: "Quite frankly, I don't think mothers have the same right to work

as fathers. If the Lord had intended us to have equal rights, he wouldn't have created men and women. These are biological facts, young children do depend on their mothers."

While it was perhaps overkill to draw on both creationism and biology to make his point, in the political rhetoric of government ministers and other New Right ideologues, the old enthusiasm for biological determinism was given fresh vigour by the fashionable new sociobiology. This at the height of the struggle of the feminist movement to bring women out of nature into culture, a host of greater or lesser socio-biologists, their media supporters and new Right politicians joined eagerly in the cultural and political effort to return them whence they came.

— Rose (1994)

Activity

Learning from a case study

Read the case study of women's work in the Philippines that follows (Case Study 1) and then answer these questions:

1. What factual information about women's work in the Philippines can you extract from this case study?

2. What principles about women's work in the Philippines emerge from these facts?

3. Do these principles coincide with those obtaining in your own society?

4. Have the facts in the case study caused you to change your assumptions about women's work? How?

5. Based on the data and your own experience, what explanation or theory would you develop of women's work?

Case Study 1

Women's work in the Philippines

In the mid-1970s, Gelia Castillo noted that about 60 percent of the women in the rural areas of the Philippines were engaged in agriculture or related activities, such as fishing, an increase from the 1965 figure of 53.6 percent. In roughly two decades (from 1956 to 1974), the proportion of all Filipinos in agricultural and related activities decreased from about 59 to 55 percent, and the proportion of all women and girls over ten years old decreased slightly more (from 48.1 percent to 36.6 percent). The overall decline in the proportion of women employed in agriculture coupled with the increased proportion of rural women in agriculture from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s could suggest that there were more opportunities for urban employment and/or fewer opportunities for non-agricultural rural employment. It is also possible that farm women were counted differently in the 1970s, if, as may people contend, agricultural women are generally underenumerated, the 1970s figures could reflect greater accuracy (Castillo did not address this issue in her study).

Of these agricultural women, the vast majority are crop workers in rice and com farming, and the burden of the women's work is in non-mechanized tasks such as weeding and transplanting. In one study carried out in the provinces of Bulacan and Tatangas, planting/transplanting, harvesting, and post-harvest activities accounted for nearly 70 percent of the female contribution to farming those regions. These are activities that can be done in a relatively short span of time, so they are compatible with the major household duties for which the women are also responsible. The kind of work Filipinas do helps to explain why there are substantial seasonal variations in the agricultural employment of women. Castillo notes, for instance, that the

percentage of women working full time in agriculture can increase between 6 and 10 percent between February and May.

A detailed study of time allocation in rural households in Laguna, a province of the Philippines, showed that mothers were less involved in agricultural activities than either fathers or children. On the average, the women in the sample spent slightly over one hour a day on pre-and post-harvest activities, vegetable production, livestock raising, and the like — men and children spent well over three hours a day on these same activities — but the 5 percent of the women in the sample who reported that their primary occupation was farming averaged about three and one-third hours a day on farming alone. Overall, farming and non-farming women in this rural area spent an additional seven and one-half hours on household work or home production.

As in most countries, rural women are among the most economically disadvantaged people in Filipino society. There are more unpaid family workers among women than among men, and almost 90 percent of all male unpaid workers in 1975 were in the rural areas and engaged in agricultural work. Despite this general condition, however, both rural and urban Filipinas are viewed by a number of scholars as having considerable status and power compared to women in other Asian countries, and Filipina influence extends to important decision-making roles in agricultural matters. Justin Green, for example, noted that women are better educated than men, and he has also argued that women have a good deal of behind-the-scenes or privately exercised power. People who think that the traditional method of reckoning kinship and the prevalence of bride price or dowry are indicators of male-female status might note that historically, Filipinos have traced kinship through both parents and bride price has been common (whereas dowry prevails in India). For rural Filipino women, a practical consequence of this relative equity is that the sexual division of labor is not as rigid as in many societies. Women can handle a plow if necessary, and a husband will do the cooking if his wife is away or do the laundry if his wife has just delivered a child.

Conclusion

The differential gendering of a social role in Han and Aborigine religious traditions impacted cultural content when the actual social order resulted in a person holding that role who did not match gendered expectations. The actual holder of the gendered social role of spirit medium influenced both the social rules for who could achieve that role in the future and the religious practices and meanings for which that role holder was responsible. Analysis of this case in terms of the dynamics of social power relations and cultural meanings sheds light on why gender and ethnicity are so important in shaping people's lives.