# Journal of Feminist Scholarship

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# FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the third issue of the *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, in which we are pleased to offer a broad range of articles that branch out into new territories—a historical and literary discussion of first-wave Irish American feminists, a unique take on Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and its applicability to virtual spaces of the twenty-first century, an exploration of the benefits Black feminist ethnography brings to the field of legislative studies, and a study of agency and complicity in transnational feminist location politics. Once again, the articles featured in this issue represent the diversity of feminist inquiry across the disciplines.

In "Questioning Appropriation: Agency and Complicity in a Transnational Feminist Location Politics," Joe Parker offers an account of a transnational feminist location politics that produces and stimulates an agency of feminist resistance in lieu of perpetuating established divisions of self and Other as a naturalized ground for political work. Parker does not accept a binary separation between agency and complicity, which in his view makes the political stakes of their effective imbrication difficult if not impossible to interrogate. Relying on a Foucauldian interpretation of agency and on the writings of such theorists of transnational feminist politics as Gayatri Spivak, Meyda Yeğenoğlu, and Chandra Mohanty, Parker strives to articulate conditions of possibility for "building social movements that acknowledge difference within the subject or the movement rather than deny and expel their Others."

Nadia Brown, in "Negotiating the Insider/Outsider Status: Black Feminist Ethnography and Legislative Studies," explores how her "insider" identity as a Black woman figured as a decisive factor in the course of her fieldwork on Black women legislators in Maryland. The information Brown obtained, the contexts within which information was offered to her, as well as the amount and forms of her access to information were all mediated through the prism of her and her interlocutors' social identity. As the author argues, the reflexivity valued in feminist ethnography can benefit the field of legislative studies, particularly with regard to a reflexive understanding of identity as a factor in the acquisition of knowledge about political phenomena.

Tegan Zimmerman, in "The Politics of Writing, Writing Politics: Virginia Woolf's *A [Virtual] Room of One's Own*," argues that Woolf's privileging of materiality remains distinctly relevant today, insofar as it can inform and further our understanding of virtual space in relation to women's online and offline writing. Cyberspace, Zimmerman suggests, which is accessible throughout the world, offers women today opportunities to gain visibility and a political voice that they might not otherwise be able to develop. At the same time, material inequality, so salient in Woolf's time (between men and women, and among women of different classes, races, and ethnicities), remains real in the globalized twenty-first-century economy and in the virtual spaces Zimmerman surveys, reinforcing the urgent need for "e-feminist" interventions.

In "Irish American Women: Forgotten First-Wave Feminists," Sally Barr Ebest offers a survey and analysis of first-wave feminism as seen in the lives and works of Irish American writers and activists between the 1830s and 1960s. This historical discussion documents what Ebest argues have been the overlooked contributions of Irish American women to the struggle for women's rights in the United States, particularly in the distinct but overlapping spheres of political activism, journalism, and literature. Ultimately, Ebest concludes that first-wave Irish American feminists deserve further recognition and discussion as they represent collectively the "first and largest group of American feminists."

The "Viewpoint" article continues our tradition of providing space for discussion and commentary on feminist scholarship and engagement. Jill R. Williams's contribution to this series, "Caught between a Rock

and a Hard Place: The Title IX Generation, Mathematics, and the State of Feminist Quantitative Social Science Research," reflects upon the fortieth anniversary of Title IX from a perspective that is both personal and academic. Specifically, Williams argues that more support is needed in the academy for feminist training in quantitative research methods, particularly in the area of demography. As she asserts, creating intellectual spaces for feminist quantitative work and advocating for its greater recognition in the field of women's studies and beyond will in turn help us draw out and use our strengths in varying ways as feminists.

# Questioning Appropriation: Agency and Complicity in a Transnational Feminist Location Politics

## Joe Parker, Pitzer College

**Abstract:** In feminist circles agency is often opposed to complicity and associated with resistance to sexism and patriarchy, yet such binary oppositions make the political stakes of their presumed boundaries difficult to interrogate. By bringing location politics into dialogue with agency theory, boundaries of same/Other and location categories may move from a naturalized ground for political work to the contested center of a politics of resistance. I follow a Foucauldian interpretation of agency to reconsider the ethico-politics of established divisions of self and Other both individually and in terms of social movements. By following Gayatri Spivak, Meyda Yeğenoğlu, and Chandra Mohanty's transnational feminist politics, I argue for the refusal of totalizing binaries and for careful attention to unavoidable complicities. This makes possible practices of agency that can critique the political and ethical limits and effects of its epistemology and take as its central project the intervention into appropriations of the Others into modern notions of the "real." The resulting reconstitution of self-Other relations in their work opens up important new avenues for building social movements that acknowledge difference within the subject or the movement rather than deny and expel their Others.

## Introduction

Location politics places the writing subject in history, rather than allowing her to present arguments for androcentric universalized truth claims as if those claims are not contingent on historical and social locations. Yet the historical itself is a contested category, real for some and constructed or even fictional for others, definitive for a few and contested as hegemonic for a few more, knowable in some approaches and subject to aporias and silences in others.

While location politics inserts a certain difference into the epistemological, the commonplace use in practice of established social categories overlooks historically specific heterogeneities of race, class, and gender; the complexities of intersectionalities and hybridities; and poststructural and postcolonial feminist interrogations of modern liberal notions of knowledge, freedom, experience, and resistance. Modern locations, including practices of resistance, are often or perhaps inevitably complicit with patriarchy, capitalism, neocolonial white supremacy, and other problematic practices under advanced modernity, since complete freedom from such norms may well be impossible. Carefully theorized notions of agency present a way to approach these debates over the contested meanings of established categories of difference in location politics, since the politics of difference and relations to the Others of the modern are precisely what is at stake in feminist social-change work.

In some feminist circles agency is opposed to complicity and associated with resistance to sexism and patriarchy, yet such binary oppositions make the political stakes of their presumed boundaries difficult to

interrogate. For the present purposes, I use agency not as a synonym for resistance but as the taking up of a specific social location, whether the location is established through normalization or through resistance against the grain of the modern discursive regime. Social locations are made available most commonly to agents through subjection to general economies of domination operating through political technologies of the body (Foucault 1979, 25–26, 272). However, agency may become a form of resistance when the subject constitutes power relations in ways that diverge from the location politics and power/knowledge relations of fixed modes of normalization, what Judith Butler terms "desubjugation" in her reading of Foucault (2002). Critically examining a historically specific subject's politicized relation to general economies of domination, by demarcating where she is complicit and where resistant, allows the agent to establish a critical distance from social norms even as she inevitably relies on them to constitute the intelligibility of the object of knowledge and her own subject position. Such critical examination requires attention not only to the complicities of individual actions but also to the complicities of social institutions and movements, even those that claim to resist domination while subjecting themselves to the beliefs, practices, and epistemes of modern masculinized Eurocentric liberalism.

Conversely, there has been little work on how location politics might be useful for thinking through how agency is conceived. With a few important exceptions, theorizations of agency neglect to critically examine the theorizer's location politics. This risks perpetuating Eurocentric cultural and knowledge-based imperialisms, as some activists and theorists in the global North may be representing agency in third world women's social-change efforts in the global South. By bringing a transnational location politics into the frame of examinations of agency, I argue that problems of appropriation and domestication of difference are central to the ethico-politics of feminist projects.

A facile emphasis on agency overlooks the limits to social change always already impinging on subjects from multiple sources. I explore theorizations of complicity to render visible and gain critical traction on the all-too-frequent subordination to these restrictive pressures by even the most successful agents for social change and resistance to structures of domination. An emphasis on complicity also helps bring the specific politics of the subject and of general economies of subjection into visibility in order to guard against the erasure of privilege that facilitates appropriations and domestications of the Other that have been a problem in the practice of location politics.

I argue below for explicitly acknowledging complicities when performing the practices of agency that lead to resistance. Such practices would allow for interrogation and destabilization of seemingly clear boundary lines between the marginal and the center or the oppositional and the complicit, so that the political stakes in such binary constructions may come more clearly into focus for critical interrogation. My central proposal is for a critical examination of an inevitable oscillation between the (unavoidably limited) freedom of agency and the (always incomplete) historically determining pressures toward complicity.

This allows for agency that can name more precisely the political and ethical effects of its epistemology and work more critically with its limits in engaging with and transforming history. Rather than uncritically granting the modern objectivist status of the "real" to the Others of modernity, an agency located in the violent histories of difference that make the modern possible may instead take as its central project the intervention into the categories of difference that such violence naturalizes. Those few transnational feminist theorists of complicity discussed below center their notions of agency on bringing to visibility the points of both naturalization and erasure of such violence through refusals of domestications and appropriations of the Others into modern notions of the "real." The resulting reconstitution of self-Other relations in their work opens up important new avenues for building social movements that acknowledge difference within

the subject or the movement rather than deny and expel their Others (Yeğenoğlu 1998, 9). My hope here is that a dual emphasis on agency and complicity in a transnational location politics will be useful for feminists in positions of multiple privilege, as I am, as well as for those in other social locations.

While difference is at times domesticated to refer only to difference within the boundaries of a single nation-state, I emphasize below feminists working in a transnational frame to interrogate the unavoidable presence of the neocolonial, masculinized, Eurocentric discursive regime both in the countries of the global North and elsewhere. A pervasive and intractable problem remains the unavoidable presence of the logics and political limits of masculinized epistemologies of the "real," with genealogies deriving from modern Europe. The virtually global reach of these epistemologies extends well beyond the boundaries of Europe and the modern via traditions of human rights and travestied claims to democracy, racialized and gendered logics of capitalist markets, mass education and other knowledge systems, and many other channels. It appears that this problem will remain with us for some time, and addressing it requires sharpened skills for working with complicities in order to engage with it in effective resistance for social change.

## Agency in a Transnational Feminist Politics of Location

Some feminist activists and theorists have found a politics of location useful in recognizing the historical force of discursive formations that impinge on particular subjects. Without reviewing the history of location politics theory (Kaplan 1994, 140–41), it may suffice to say that location politics practice has shown how examining the resistance of third world women is insufficient to resist the appropriation of difference into reinscriptions of a modern universalized white androcentric norm (Kaplan 1994; Wallace 1989; Moya 1997; duCille 1994). These appropriations may occur despite recognitions of the contradictory and partial nature of feminist criticism and an explicit refusal of appropriation, as when "activist" texts such as Rigoberta Menchú's autobiography are granted status as "theory" in order to assert a contiguity between the politics of Quiché Indians and first world feminists (Kaplan 1994, 147). Critiques of location politics such as that by Caren Kaplan warn of an apolitical relativism that marks appropriation, Western feminist cultural imperialism, and remystifications and exoticization of difference and objectified "Others."

Recentering location politics on agency can bring to the foreground the highly politicized process by which difference is produced and appropriated. By centering location politics on the agency of the subject's constitution of the "real" or the object of knowledge, the politics of boundaries and categories may be confronted as sites of historicized struggles and refused a problematic naturalization (Kaplan 1994, 144–50). Agency also demands the highly specific historical analyses of linkages of particular subjectivities to power (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xvii; Mohanty 1997b; Frankenberg and Mani 1993, 305; Kaplan 1994, 148), focusing on particular contested categories rather than appropriating difference to erase privilege, claim universal validity for knowledge, or reinscribe homogenized differences. Conversely, approaching agency through the practice of location politics brings the politics of the knowing and writing subject to the foreground. The political importance of this rendering visible of the act of knowing is not to reinstall the problematic location politics of the first world academic and/or activist but to interrogate them; not to erase the privileges and complicities of the knowing and language-using subject but to mark them, track them, and question them in order to transform their political effects. For these reasons, my emphasis here is on an agency that occurs through the constitution of difference that simultaneously shapes the limits and politics of her Others and of the subject herself. This subject is not the privileged subject of the global North existing somehow apart from the subordinated subjects of the global South (found both in the North and in the South), but the subject who cannot know her Others outside of the discursive terms and logics of the

masculinized Eurocentric modern truth regime and so must consistently interrogate the politics of those terms and logics.

Approaching agency through a politics of location makes the particular politics of the writing and activist subject visible, thereby rendering colonizing, essentializing, and other appropriations more difficult. Among important feminist theorizations of agency, Patricia Jeffery and Deniz Kandiyoti neglect to render intelligible their own relations to history in their respective constructions of South Asian feminists and women in patriarchal societies. Both endeavor explicitly to avoid homogenizing difference, but their own relations to difference remain uninterrogated. Jeffery attempts to interrupt homogenized constructions by focusing on South Asia, while briefly mentioning differences of educated, urban feminists from unlettered village and urban slum women (Jeffery 1997, 231–32). Kandiyoti refuses monolithic characterizations of patriarchy by contrasting its Sub-Saharan African forms with patriarchy in areas of what she terms "classic patriarchy," including North Africa, the Muslim Middle East, and India and China (Kandiyoti 1988). Yet their erasure of the particular politics of their own locations as the site for the constitution of the global South obscures the potentially troubled politics of those locations. Some of these troubling politics may be seen in that both share affiliations with academic institutions of the global North, suggesting middle-class privilege, as well as alignments with a Eurocentric objectivist heritage of scholarship whose problematic lineage has been interrogated by many feminists.

The resulting compilation by Jeffery and Kandiyoti of what Rey Chow has called a "factography" of the Other (Chow 1993, 5, 116) not only consolidates certain Others (South Asian feminist, sub-Saharan woman) as "real" but also consolidates the authority of the writing subject. Chow has suggested on different grounds that "we can, as we must, attack social injustice without losing sight of the fact that even as 'women' speaking for other 'women' within the same gender, for instance, we speak from a privileged position" (Chow 1995, 113). Acknowledging such privilege interrupts the production of knowledge that hides "the agendas of the inquirers and naturalizes the 'objects' as givens," Chow suggests. Naming privilege clears room for the reflexive project of the "act of making explicit the historical predicament of investigating 'China' and 'Chinese women,' especially as it pertains to those who are ethnically Chinese and/or sexually women" (Chow 1995, 115–16). While Kandiyoti and Jeffery are in a similar predicament as they investigate women from various regions in the global South, their unwillingness to name their own privilege leaves unchallenged their claim to a naturalized consolidation and objectification through modern knowledge production of women of the global South. To refuse subjection to that modernist, colonizing logic in practicing and theorizing agency, a politics of location asks that writing, speaking, and knowing subjects locate themselves in the politics of those histories as they constitute their "realities" and their "Others."

Some rethinking of agency has responded to theorizations of everyday power relations by Michel Foucault, whose poststructuralist theory of power included a critique of the modern "free" individual. Rather than privileging a single institution (capitalist markets or the state) or variable (such as gender or race), a Foucauldian analysis of modern power examines how apparatuses in multiple institutions work through self-surveillance in everyday behaviors to enforce a general economy of subjection to the modern disciplinary regime. In this approach, the subject's quotidian constitution of power relations often involves subjecting the self to general economies of subjection (what I term complicity below) and at other times involves practicing resistance through the constitution of subject positions that diverge from the sociopolitical norms of the discursive regime. In other words, agency is generally a quotidian subjection to general economies of domination but may become resistance when the subject constitutes herself in opposition to fixed normative subject positions. Foucault's notion of the complex relation between agency

and apparatuses of subjection that I use below understands "freedom [as] found not in our transcendental nature but in our capacities to contest and change those anonymous practices that constitute our nature" (Rajchman 1985, 105; see also Cook 1993, 5). While some feminists have found agency problematic in Foucault, where the discursive regime profoundly limits the subject (De Lauretis 1987; Hartsock 1990; Christian 1987; Butler 1993), Judith Butler and other feminist theorists and activists have suggested that Foucault's conceptualization locates agency in the daily practices on which power relations depend (Butler 1988, 525; Butler 1993, 15; Cook 1993; Martin 1988; Sawicki 1996; Spivak 1993).

Chandra Mohanty used such a Foucauldian conception of power in "looking at the way women are constituted as women *through* these very [kinship, legal, and other] structures," rather than "assuming women as a coherent, already constituted group" (Mohanty 1994, 213, 218). For Mohanty, an assumption that third world women are a coherent group appropriates their pluralities, opens the possibility of a colonizing universality, and obscures their agency by "homogenizing and systematizing the experiences of different groups of women, eras[ing] all marginal and resistant modes of experiences" (Mohanty 1994, 213–14). Mohanty made her well-known argument for "context-specific differentiated analysis" as a basis for "careful, historically specific generalizations responsive to complex realities" as a counter-strategy to this problem (Mohanty 1994, 211–12). Carefully historicizing particular third world subjects makes possible, according to Mohanty, not only agency for third world women but also the transformation of their relations to first world women as they are constituted through decolonized acts of knowing.

Mohanty's critique suggests problems in theorizing agency even in the careful attempts by Jeffery and Kandiyoti to avoid and even disrupt the binarisms that underlie the implicit legitimation of western Man's centrality in modern humanism or the subtle installation of the first world feminist as agent. These attempts fail to recognize the politics of the constitution of the object of knowledge due to fealty to a preexisting realism of gendered binarisms (in Jeffery's case) and of the "reality" of everyday experience (for Kandiyoti), while the troubled politics of the first world subject constructing the object of knowledge (South Asian appropriations, multiple forms of patriarchy) is erased. Yet it is precisely to the contested politics of the particular event of construction in and by historically located (but not determined) particular writing and knowing subjects that Mohanty asks us to give careful attention, a politics occluded in the analyses by Kandiyoti and Jeffery. This site of occlusion erases the location politics and its particular practices as constituted through specific negotiations of the shoals of racist and neocolonialist appropriations of third and fourth world gender politics, a risky step indeed for those engaged in decolonizing feminist practices.

Similar problems are found in Esha Niyogi De's theorization of agency that takes decolonization as her explicit goal. De emphasizes an anti-imperialist universalist humanism as the ground for critical evaluation of social relations, where agency is a transcultural evaluative process resting on an anti-imperialist vision of the human whole (De 2002, 43, 52–53, 57). Her holism develops as a response to Foucault's critique of subjectivity. De turns away from what she sees as Foucault's skepticism towards referential thinking that leads to relativism, and instead turns towards an "absolutist endorsement of cultures alternative to the modern Western and its individualist rationality" (De 2002, 43–44). De turns towards the "real" in order to establish grounds for activist mobilization for social transformation of coercive relations (De 2002, 44, 51, 57), yet this reference to the "real" inevitably obscures the contingency of the "real" on the politics of the social construction even of the realist object of knowledge. While De's linking of the political with the epistemic to shape agency rejecting "coercive knowledge structures" (De 2002, 51, 57)  is in a similar spirit to Mohanty's, she overlooks the epistemic problems with terms like "culture" and "the human whole" that install ungendered monolithic notions such as "colonial India" (centered on Rabindranath Tagore)

that would be subject to Mohanty's critique. While following Satya Mohanty's refusal of an absolutist metaphysics of the whole (De 2002, 52), De's approach neglects the context-specific differentiated analysis incorporating gender and other differences, advocated by Chandra Mohanty, while simultaneously erasing her own complex location politics as an academic positioned in the global North.

In contrast, the theorization of agency by Bronwyn Davies centers on antiessentialist notions of the subject as constituted through specific, highly localized discursive practices that refuse modernist presumptions of freedom and the unified individual (Davies 1991, 42–43, 49–51). Yet even as Davies emphasizes the politicized particularities of the constitution of the subject, she neglects to work with difference, intersectionality, or location politics as it applies to her own location. This has the troubled political effect of implicitly limiting her theorization to European settler colonies of the United States (explicitly linked to Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon Days*) even as she glibly borrows from Trinh Minh-ha, María Lugones, and the Algerian-raised Jewish feminist Hélène Cixous (Davies 1991, 42, 44, 47). As a result, her argument's suggestiveness for transnational feminist work is compromised by its unwillingness to interrogate the limits and politics of the settler colony as the normative setting for her location as well as for her theorization of agency.

Paul Smith, a feminist theorist working without close reference to Foucault, has been critical of modern and postmodern theorizations that privilege the subjection of the subject to social structures without giving sufficient consideration to how the possibility of resistance is theorized (Smith 1988, xxxi). Smith agrees with US third world women theorists of intersectionality in finding the notion of multiple determinations useful in opening space for critique and agency. Smith also argues that the subject is constituted through a constant oscillation from contradiction and dispersal in multiplicity to temporary fixity and coherence, a totalizing process he summarizes with the term "subject" (Smith 1988, 151). Smith and other feminists responding to postmodern and postcolonial theorizations of power (Spivak 1996, 219; Donaldson 2002, 51; Yeğenoğlu 1998, 1–38) have suggested that attempts to make the self seem to cohere despite these contradictions is itself a way of subjecting the self to and enforcing the modern mechanisms of domination. Consequently, Smith has argued that agency may best be characterized as the point at which historically established structures of domination succeed or fail to wholly determine the subject (Smith 1988, 37–39). This emphasis on structural failures links the individual or personal to issues of the (re)production and (re)inscription of subject positions available widely in a society, as many others have done (Nixon 1996, 315–23).

Characterizing this key political moment as a failure of totalization is congruent with Frankenberg and Mani's presentation of a postmodern politics of location as the "effective but not determining relationship between subjects and their histories" (1993, 305–6). Similar constructions of subjectivity and agency are characterized by Rey Chow as operating "both from and against privilege" through "both identification and opposition" (Chow 1993, 113) and by white feminists like Diana Fuss (1989) and Judith Butler as "neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary" (Butler 1990, 147) or, in Teresa de Lauretis's words, as "at once inside and outside" hegemonic institutions and discourses (in *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*; quoted in Phelan 1994, xvii).

These approaches recognize that subjects are not "free" in the humanist sense, yet they retain a sense of agency within the structural limits of their historical moment. This complex process may be named as the ambivalent or conflictual economy of the subject and of discourse, a destabilized process that opens up room for the transformation of subordination into resistance through the refusal of reduction to the place of exploitation (Yeğenoğlu 1998, 24–27, 58–63, 153–54n77; Bhabha 1994). While some have argued that political movements must reject ambivalence if they are to succeed, here I agree with the shared insight of

intersectionality theorists and the poststructural and postcolonial feminist theorists just mentioned that it is precisely through contradiction and ambivalence that moments of resistant agency emerge.

Centering political work on the ambivalent character of the subject may also contribute to a feminist decolonization through the disruption of the truth regime at work in modernity. Interrogating these conflicts foregrounds questions of epistemic violence, which Laura Donaldson, following Gayatri Spivak, has summarized as "the violat[ion] of the most fundamental way that a person or people know themselves" (Donaldson 2002, 51). The modern power/knowledge regime reconstitutes a Eurocentric privileged subject that "constituted/effaced a [colonized] subject that was obliged to cathect (occupy in response to a desire) the space of the imperialists' self-consolidating other" (Spivak 1996, 219). To reject this mode of cathecting or consolidating the subject is to refuse appropriation of the radical Other into an ethico-politics that consolidates the subject of imperialism, what Meyda Yeğenoğlu has termed the masculinized sovereign subject status of the West (1998, 1).

For the present purposes, I would emphasize that displacing this type of obligation constituted through subject/Other relations is possible through refusing such a constitution of the colonized or neocolonial woman as object of knowledge, i.e., as the "imperialists' self-consolidating other," thereby opening space for what Foucault termed subjugated knowledges (1980, 81). Subjugated knowledges for Foucault, largely though not always caught as he was in the nationalist frame, included the unreason of the French delinquent or the psychiatric patient, to which a transnational feminist might add the wisdom of indigenous elders or subaltern women of the global South. Such local, unqualified or disqualified, illegitimate popular knowledges were central to Foucault for considering non- or antiuniversalist epistemes that could interrupt "the tyranny of globalizing discourses" (1980, 83) such as evidentiary procedures and juridico-scientific knowledge regimes, making "an autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production" (1980, 81) possible. Their importance for the present purposes is that "it is through the re-appearance of ... these disqualified knowledges that criticism performs its work" (1980, 82), so that otherwise unquestionable assumptions and limits of the modern episteme and their violent social effects might come under interrogation.

Gayatri Spivak's conception of agency refuses the appropriation of difference into solidarity, and instead begins with a rejection of the presumption that the Other is knowable from the social location of those trained in the liberal European secular imaginary (1993, 170, 175, 183). The language-centered poststructuralist conception of agency that Spivak draws on by way of Derrida's "White Mythology" (Spivak 2002, 18n3) centers on a refusal of the appropriations through logic or reason (the effects of knowing) of disruptions by the figurative or rhetorical (the conditions for knowing), working the dependence of logic on metaphor against the grain (2002, 22). She suggests that much modern practice of agency carries out a minimalization of these disruptions in knowing, and instead emphasizes the need for an unlearning of liberal practices of agency that presume knowability, solidarity, and similitude with the Other (1993, 170, 183). Spivak argues for the "communication and reading of and in love" that refuses to minimalize figurative disruptions in text and society through acts of intimacy and surrender, so that the silences of the founding violence of language and agency itself may be rendered visible (1993, 180–83). Spivak's notion of agency thus ultimately centers on a politics of decolonization and negotiation with structures of violence (1993, 171). Space within the "real" for such agency is made possible as the agent makes visible and engages with the silences and aporias produced and enforced by modern language, meaning, logic, and "reason" in behavior.

Spivak explores this type of agency in a discussion of the character Lucy from J. M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, a possibly lesbian daughter, pregnant after being raped and beaten, who agrees to a concubinage-style marriage to a relative of one of the rapists. In doing so, Lucy does not accept the rape and resulting

pregnancy in the terms presented to her by modern individualism or by the modern family, but rather "cast[s] aside the affective value-system attached to reproductive heteronormativity as it is accepted as the currency to measure human dignity" (Spivak 2002, 21). This is a refusal of rape by individual men and also a refusal of rape by the instrumentalizing forms of reproduction so central to capitalism, imperialism, and androcentric social practices, refusals that clear ground for the normalization in civil society of the multisexed subject (Spivak 2002, 24). So Spivak's notion of agency involves internal refusals of value systems that effect subjection to the terms of major modern institutions, such as the family, rather than modern individualist divergences from norms, as well as practices drawn from divergent value systems and lifestyles that may even seem illegible from within the limits of the terms of modernity.

Spivak's example of how figurative disruptions may render founding violences visible comes from Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, when Sethe reclaims before her daughter the brand left under her breast by her owner (Spivak 1993, 195). This form of the family is marked not by the heteronormative conjugal love offered by liberal reason but by externally and internally imposed violence. Sethe's rememorization of the branding as an act of violence that makes possible her family carries out agency through a communication in love that refuses to be articulated into the "normal" of history and its language, that declines the name of family as liberal humanism would have it. Rather than a practice of agency presuming solidarity and similitude even among family members, this reshaping of motherhood also marks a moment of failure of slavery and colonization in the (fictional) past and of the masculist neocolonial in the (authorial) present. Morrison's appropriation of the liberal silencing of the violent origins of the modern family as found among US slave women, like Spivak's own appropriation, refuses to minimize the disruptions to render this violence simultaneously visible and unreasonable.

The resulting language invites into figuration the (im)possible appropriation of the blankness of that which is outside the historical limits language imposes on reason (Spivak 1993, 170). By keeping a certain focus on liberal silencing of what is unsaid or unsayable within the limits of modern reason, Morrison and Spivak refuse complicity with the modern; they do not claim to speak for the Other but instead point towards the limits of speaking from the Other. They do so to gesture in language towards the "subordinated ways of rusing with rhetoric" (Spivak 1993, 187) that may be disclosed in resistance. By centering on the silences deriving from the limits of reasoned modern language and gesture, Spivak urges agencies that retool the limits of modern epistemology. Through this linking of the political and epistemological we may encounter agency as moments of decolonization in embodied locations (pregnancy, mother-daughter intimacies) where we might otherwise not recognize the political effects of heteronormative masculinized colonization.

While the specific sense of erotic/agency is developed by Spivak with reference to translation, she also explores the ways in which such an agency may be practiced in other venues, such as reading (1993, 197–200; 2002, 18, 22–24), writing (1993, 180), teaching (2002, 27–29; 2003, 29–30), the epistemological (2002, 17), and work in the public sphere (2002, 18–29), including a Marxian emphasis on everyday struggles in the sphere of necessity (2002, 30). For those who might render Spivak's emphasis on translation or reading and writing as a privatized practice, she argues against ethical impulses that do not lead to the political (2002, 24). Rather, she urges "the activated subject, the capital I" that must be secured through entry into the political calculus of the public sphere (2002, 29) to respond to the equalizing disgrace of failures of democracy in India, the US, and beyond (2002, 25ff.). Spivak's emphasis on language, meaning, and social relation generally resists easy normative statements about a particular venue where agency should be exercised, such as the traditional venues of feminist movements, labor centers, classrooms, or research emphasized by other theorists. Yet her notion also makes possible a diffusion of the locus of agency to any

and all sites where language and claims to meaning and reasonableness in social relations are key, such as writing and teaching, quotidian exchanges and organizing, intimate relations, and public advocacy.

In this case, the location politics of agency are defined less by the traditional parameters of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation as understood in liberal Eurocentric terms than by contestation of the modern. For Spivak, these contestations center, first, on the knowledge practices of neocolonial heritage of the European Enlightenment (2002, 21; 1993, 171) and, second, on liberal humanism as it defines the "imperialism-specific" political and ethical limits of individual subjects in such practices as knowing (the Other), the nation-state, and heteronormative marriage (2002, 17–18, 21–29; 1993, 194–95). Yet she consistently problematizes the politics of her own location historically, if not also playfully and ironically, as, among others, the "assimilated-colonial-ethnic-minority (ACEM)" operating unavoidably in colonized space (Spivak 1993, 176), not an easy place to practice ethics and agency in any simple way.

One way I carry out such a problematizing of my own social location is as the "straight-white-able-bodied-masculine-privileged (SWAMP)" operating in the simultaneously colonizing and neocolonial space of the United States academy. While naming my own exploitative middle-class status with the P of SWAMP, my privileges certainly extend beyond the economic to include those based on sexist practices, white supremacy, and heteronormativity overlaid onto the colonization of the lands I grew up calling "home." I have worked to reconstitute the ethics and politics of these privileges through transnational and US rights-derived feminist (Beijing platform) and anti-racist (AWARE-LA) work in the 1990s and into the first years of the present century. Yet I still meet with multiple privileges in the workplace and elsewhere that draw on unequal social norms and continue to render me complicit with multiple inequalities. Most recently, my complicity in the performance of US citizenship, with its chamber-of-horrors list of well-known global and local atrocities, has directed my attention to the subaltern and sharpened my focus on critiques of gendered nationalism and antidemocratic practices in my academic publications, classroom teaching, a blog on democratic organizing, and urban Zapatista community work.

Feminist critiques of the political effects of poststructuralist social theory have sometimes taken the form of cautions against relativism. These debates are often configured by contrasting the "reality" of historical oppression with the seemingly more relativistic "constructed" character of reality, with the realists not wanting either the "reality" of difference or the possibilities of agency to be reduced in significance (Moya 1997, 126; Christian 1987). Some have returned to identity politics and the category of experience as a response to the perceived threat of a relativism seen as facilitating appropriation and the domestication of difference (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xvii; Mohanty 2003, 6; Moya and Hames-Garcia 2000; De 2002), demanding that still existing "relations of domination and subordination that are named and articulated through the processes of racism and racialization" be addressed (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xvii).

Establishing how racialized hegemonic relations are addressed is a profoundly important question not only for location politics, which is fundamentally defined by categories of difference, but also for postmodern politics and ethics generally. Yet the very categories of difference through which domination is carried out and by which much resistance is organized themselves have specific histories linked to modern Euro-American, androcentric, heteronormative, capitalist, and nation-state-centered domination. In exploring ways to practice resistance to this historical legacy, it is crucial to develop modes of resistance that do not reinscribe and thereby reinforce these entrenched categories on which inequalities are founded, even while attacking their effects.

A politics of location is forced to engage with this problem simply by the need to name a location, and it is in the act of naming location that agency may fall into subjection to modern structures of domination or

refuse such subjection. One great risk of a politics of location is that by constantly reinscribing the subject into locations conveniently generated by modern social formations (the "real"), both the subject and her object of knowledge and action (solidarity, silencing) may be effectively subjected to modern forms of domination. By bringing location politics into dialogue with agency theory, this important moment may move from a naturalized ground for political work to the contested center of a politics of resistance.

Some theorizations and activisms usefully confront both horns of this dilemma through confronting the "realities" of domination without falling back into either relativism or a "realist" metaphysics and epistemology that fail to question the problematic history of categories of difference. Gayatri Spivak emphasizes the violence of difference in history in her persistent deployment of Marxism through particular examples of transnational exploitation (1986, 68–70; 1995b, x–xvii, xxxvi–xxviii) while also consistently marking how difference is highly contingent on the analytic frame and highly politicized in its construction (Spivak 1996, 30–35, 46; 1993, 40–41, 49–51). Another feminist closely associated with this type of work is Judith Butler, who has argued for a double movement between an insistence on identity and a simultaneous calling into question the exclusionary procedures by which identity terms are produced (1995, 129). While Chandra Mohanty has not hesitated to deploy a more realist epistemology in engaging with specific histories of domination grounded in differences (Mohanty 1997a, 7–22, 357n10), she is also well known for problematizing the politics of homogenized categories of difference, as described above.

My own work attempts to address both horns of this dilemma through an oscillation between antiessentialist critiques of homogenized difference lodged in an emphasis on agency, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, a confrontation with the politicized histories of domination grounded in differences through acknowledging complicity. In such an approach, agency takes the form of a vigilance about the limits and contradictory politics of the relations between the subject and her Others that produce difference, where the differences produced may affirm historical relations of subordination and privilege or reconfigure them into relations of resistance to such histories. It is to the role of complicity in this complex and contradictory historicized economy of discourse and the subject that I now turn.

## Complicity in a Transnational Feminist Location Politics

Foucauldian conceptions of power find that modern agency is often not enacted in resistance but generally in everyday alignments of subjects with the general economy of subjection, as in capitalist obligations of home loans, heteronormative practices of marriage, and the productive docilities enforced in modern academic classrooms. I find this notion of "complicity" useful to critique certain problematic aspects of agency, particularly as the critical edge of the term urges us towards agency that resists multiple inequalities. The notion of complicity follows the structuralist recognition that deeply formative discursive formations greatly determine our relations of domination and privilege, while avoiding structuralist pretensions to universal, certain, scientific study of these structures. The term complicity also underlines the intransigence even of what some see as socially constructed rather than "real," the recalcitrance even of what others interpret as historical and changeable rather than essentially "true," the entrenchment even of what some view as unstable rather than fixed in meaning, and the persistence even of what some understand as multiple rather than homogenous.

Taking complicity as central to a location politics has the political effect of interrupting the erasure of privilege for members of hegemonic groups, a key problem in location politics (Wallace 1989, quoted in Kaplan 1994, 142). Perhaps more centrally, it also disrupts any claims to political and ethical purity in relations to Others. In calling for an emphasis on complicity, I am endorsing the recognition by feminists of

the need to problematize the positionality of those whose race, gender, class, sexuality, or national locations align them structurally with dominant groups. Yet in this section I broaden the notion of complicity beyond the biographical, to include practices where activist movements and theorists find themselves subtly subjecting themselves to and thereby supporting precisely that which they may wish to oppose politically (Derrida 1991, 99).

Some of the broader implications of complicity are seen in internalized oppression. As Audre Lorde found, "the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situation which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressor's tactics, the oppressor's relationships" (1984, 123). Indeed, Virginia Harris, Trinity Ordona, bell hooks, and others have argued that complicity in the form of internalized sexism, racism, and heterosexism is a major obstacle to developing solidarity among women of color, not to mention coalitions of women of color across other differences (Harris and Ordona 1990; hooks 2000, 3, 10, 14). Gayatri Spivak also agrees in arguing that "internalized gendering perceived as ethical choice is the hardest roadblock for women the world over" (1995b, xxviii). For Spivak, a critique of the modernist notion of the freedom of the subject for feminists, and of internalized gendered social relations, must supplement the traditional feminist critique of male exploitation.

Another broader aspect of complicity may be seen in critiques of affiliation with the modern academy, an aspect closely linked to socioeconomic class division. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty draw on R. Radhakrishnan (1989) to point out that "[w]e cannot overestimate the need for conscious self-reflexivity about the complicity of intellectual frameworks in politics, in the fact that something is at stake, in the very process of reauthorizing and mediating inequalities or regressive politics of different kinds" (Alexander and Mohanty 1997, xviii; see also Mohanty 1991, 32). The anthropologist and playwright Dorinne Kondo has likewise argued for careful practice of what she terms "complicitous critique," describing both disciplinary academic practice and cultural production as interventions that "are never beyond complicity," often serving liberal humanist attempts to domesticate race and power relations (Kondo 2001, 30, 34). These comments by Mohanty, Alexander, and Kondo, who have all been active as feminists in the academy, do not construct a pure space of opposition defined over and against the corrupt space of complicity, but open up a negotiated space of ethics and agency as resistance in an institutionalized site compromised by complicity.

A US-based example of complicity that links internalized sexism with the race and class issues implicit in the academy is found in bell hooks's narrative of her experiences in college as a teen. Her response to the constant questioning of her abilities at Stanford meant that she "began to doubt" herself, after having been "socialized as females by patriarchal thinking to see ourselves as inferior to men, to see ourselves as always and only in competition with one another for patriarchal approval, to … judge each other without compassion and to punish one another harshly" (2000, 14). This "female self-hatred" is complicit with patriarchy, and only through the campus feminist movement was hooks able to come to imagine the unimaginable under patriarchy: "Female bonding was not possible within patriarchy; it was an act of treason" (2000, 14). By practicing that which was not "real" under patriarchy, hooks was able to bond with other feminists to transform not only the academy but also home and work, living out agency that was confronting its complicity to build new epistemes and the new social relations they made visible.

A transnational example of how working with complicity rather than attempting to avoid it at all costs may strengthen agency as resistance is found in Katie King's comments on the work of Rey Chow. Chow remarks that some Sinologists have questioned her directly and indirectly about her use of Western theory and feminism, and she notes that such disapproval of her "complicity" with the West is an attempt to

"demolish the only premises on which I can speak" (1991, 90–91). With a British colonial and US educational background, Chow is very much entangled with the West, making a pure nativist or nationalist Chinese perspective, or some pure position of China-as-East, impossible for her to take up. While King describes Chow as "literally embody[ing] issues of a world historical order," she suggests that these historical issues appear abstract "to those in hegemonic status" (1994, 38). Yet in a Foucauldian critique of the political technologies of the body, white bodies or male bodies or straight bodies or middle-class bodies or the bodies of citizens also "literally embody" historical issues through histories of unearned modern privileges gained through economies of subjection. By noting specific points of the historicized complicities of these bodies with the modern power/knowledge regime, they can lose their unmarked status and its affiliation with the universal to become visible, subject to historical critique as a step towards an agency of resistance.

A third, broader aspect of complicity is seen in Spivak's critique of oppositional writing or activism, where the subject takes up a position distinguishing herself from men or racists or capitalists, attempting to make the self transparent so that the problem can be seen without any interference. Spivak questions the seeming sovereignty of the subject by showing how the international division of labor makes possible the lifestyle to which those in the academy are accustomed (Spivak 1990, 121–22), subjecting it to multiple complicities:

> [O]ur lives ... are being constructed by that international division of labor, and its latest manifestations were ... the responsibility of class-differentiated non-white people in the Third World, using the indigenous structures of patriarchy and the established structures of capitalism. To simply foreclose or ignore the international division of labor because that's complicit with our own production ... is a foreclosure of neo-colonialism operated by chromatist race-analysis. (1990, 126)

This is one aspect of the more general problem Spivak develops in a reading of Foucault: the production of intelligible knowledge is profoundly compromised by having been coded within the legacy of imperialism, a coding which introduces regulative political concepts that are not adequate to articulate claims from postcolonial spaces. This legacy is inscribed in nationhood and democracy, capitalist development and secularism, even as these limits make possible both the practices of ethics and of freedom that change state policies, earn the right to be heard and trusted by the subaltern, and work on behalf of positive social change (Spivak 1993, 48, 51).

Spivak finds that a refusal of totalization helps to make this structure of complicity apparent and she carries out this refusal in her own well-known persistent disallowing of attempts by colleagues to position her as the "marginal." These interventions interrupt both personally and institutionally the claim that the hegemonic has a cleanly defined "Other" to speak to, the attempt to clearly mark "why we should be *there*, why they should be *here*" (Spivak 1990, 122; original emphasis). Her discussion of Gandhi's complicity (perhaps due to "[Indian] business pressure") with the British in the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1930 (2003, 53) performs a comparable critique at the level of the nation of any putatively simple binary opposition between colonizer and colonized, center and margin. Attention to complicity may begin to interrupt such hegemonic foreclosures of marginal and central positionings, opening possibilities to interventions in neocolonial relations of political economy and in biologically deterministic race- or gender-based relations.

Refusals of such totalizations are critical to interrupting the ways in which, as Foucault argued, subjugation of groups is produced through "turning them into objects of knowledge" in modern panoptic society (1978, 28). Being brought into visibility or to "voice" is generally an ominous event in a Foucauldian panoptic of power (Foucault 1979, 28; Kang 2002, 12–21, 215–70), but in cases where the specific location politics of modern hegemonic groups are marked as problematic there may be positive political effects. In

such cases, what is being brought into visibility are not subordinated groups but universalized normative groups that in a Foucauldian analysis are also subject to internalized surveillance and so are comparable to subordinated group members, yet in other ways claim normative status by being rendered invisible. Or, as Spivak argued elsewhere, questioning the transparent ethical subject into specificity and visibility allows us to measure its ethics through research into the ways the subject subjects itself through the ability to know and various modes of objectification (Spivak 1993, 39).

A similar point is made by Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano who argues, in the context of textual interpretation, for a "constant interrogation of the conditions and locations of reading" (1994, 8) and not just the locations of the text, in order to bring historical specificity and critical attention that resists appropriation to "the discursive production of consciousness itself, a consciousness linked with political activity" (24). Such interrogation brings objects of analysis into visibility, but not with the aim to produce knowable objects of power/knowledge to be subjected to the modern disciplinary regime. Rather, such visibility provides opportunities to recognize what is often effected without notice, so that the subject may break with the citizenship of the neocolonial liberal state and make apparent the dissymetries and impossibilities that are, in Spivak's view, the object of all commitment (Spivak 1993, 39–40).

Chandra Mohanty has identified a related problem in her influential critique of neocolonial feminism, "Under Western Eyes." There, she argued that the binary opposition of Western feminists as progressive over and against the monolithic representations of third world women as veiled and tradition-bound installs Western feminists as the only true subjects of resistance, foreclosing third world women as possible resisting agents in historical relations (Mohanty 1994, 199, 213–15). As in Spivak's analysis, Mohanty suggests that the totalizing categories constructed by the critical subject of academic work or activism obscure the ways in which the critical subject's own oppositional politics are, in Spivak's terms, "complicit with what you are so carefully and cleanly opposing" (1990, 122). Interrogating and destabilizing seemingly clear boundary lines between the marginal and the central or the oppositional and the complicit allows the political stakes in such binary constructions to come more clearly into focus.

For Spivak, this attention to complicity is not the politically "irresponsible" practice of the "negative metaphysics which would like to be completely anti-essentialist" (1990, 122). Rather, such attention makes possible the politics of refusing totalization in order to interrupt subjection to power/knowledge apparatuses and open up possibilities of resistance. The political effects of Spivak's reading of complicity as a refusal of totalization are central to my present overall point, for they suggest that "the holders of the hegemonic discourses" (Spivak 1990, 121) should de-hegemonize their position and open up the possibility of broad-based social change, rather than limiting issues of gender oppression to females or issues of race to people of color. In a similar vein, Mohanty has called for a focus on "the consolidation of the self rather than the marginalization of the Other" as particularly productive in resisting "the crafting of white, masculinist, heterosexist, and capitalist citizenship" in the academy (Mohanty 1997b, xiii). My own multiply problematic social location as a white, straight performer of bourgeois masculine citizenship certainly demands this work of de-hegemonizing my positionality.

Such an intervention in totalizing binaries makes it possible to operate within still unknown or even counterfactual possibilities of resistance (Spivak 1995a, 79–82; Povinelli 2011, 6–11, 109–31) that might lead to broad-based sociopolitical change resistant to the already established logics of the modern. Such political practice refuses the blackmail of attempted reversals of the practices of imperialism (by the anticolonial) or capitalist logic (by the proletariat) or sexism (by the modern feminist). Instead, such practice displaces these reversals to enter an ethico-politics that recognizes the anticolonial or the proletarian or the modern

feminist as dystopic representations useful as convenient terms because no other word can as yet be found that may name resistances of the habitat of the modern's radical Others, such as the subproletarian or gendered subaltern (Spivak 1993, 48–49).

By carefully historicizing and critically examining the interrelationship between the consolidation of the self and the politics of the production of the Other, complicity becomes useful in creating a resistance politics of self/Other relations. Tom Keenan's reading of Spivak's recent work suggests that such a displacement of the centralizing subject again and again is a refusal of a certain type of historicized blackmail. Keenan points out how Spivak suggests in her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* that we must "emphasize our complicity, which we must acknowledge in order to act" (Spivak 1999, 370n79). For Keenan, this "acknowledging of complicity, however indeterminate, is as close as we can get to a foundation (and it is precisely not a foundation, not a stable ground, even if it is a sort of inescapable conclusion) for action and politics" (2002, 193–94).

There are very good reasons to suspect a theorization that recognizes and even accepts complicity with the modern discursive economies of subjection and privilege. One danger of such a politics is that it may become a blunt instrument in the hands of those who might wish to reinforce regimes of subjection and domination rather than proliferate openings to resistance. Activists or theorists claiming that they work in pure spaces of resistance along one axis of domination, such as gender or anti-imperialism, for example, might dismiss those who acknowledge complicity as compromised in their politics, without recognizing the stakes of their alignment with structures of domination along multiple axes. Staking the politics of an analysis on the recognition of always already present complicity also runs the risk of falling into domestications of difference and bourgeois compromise with the business-as-usual appropriations of the Other that obscure visions of radical social change. However, linking the acknowledgement of complicity to calls for agency as resistance should address this concern.

A dual emphasis on agency and complicity is useful in naming the ambivalence of the position of work by US women of color "from 'within and against' *both* women's liberation and anti-racist movements" (Frankenburg and Mani 1993, 304) since the 1960s—what was identified in the previous section as being "at once inside and outside" of hegemonic institutions and discourses. For members of other groups, consistently taking the naming of complicity as a mechanism for working towards greater accountability to resistance would be an important way to avoid falling into a depoliticized acceptance of complicity that might come from growing more accustomed to working with the impure political state of compromise that complicity names. Conversely, others may find that increased skill at acknowledging and working with complicity may release them from the avoidance of complicity at all costs at all times in the defensiveness of the ever-elusive pursuit of ethical and political purity.

## Conclusion

An agency of feminist resistance emerges in this sketch of a transnational feminist location politics through focus on the non-totalizable, incommensurable, and contradictory elements that refuse the founding violences of modern Eurocentric economies of subjection and difference. Through historicized concrete confrontations with persistent complicities in the constitution of the subject, enforced through the politics of the object(s) of knowledge, this approach foregrounds the ways in which the apparatuses of masculinized neocolonial modernity attempt time and again to position their subjects as having mastered or unified the heterogeneity of their multiple Others. An emphasis on ambivalences and contradictions that make resistant agency possible may allow us to recognize the failures of totalization and coherence under the modern

power/knowledge regime as sites where founding violence and ongoing epistemic violence and exploitation may come into intelligibility. Through such disruptions of consolidated subject positions and refusals by Others to comply with the terms, presumptions, and ontological politics of liberal modernity, those practicing agency may begin to destabilize aspects of the "real" so that they may come to be named, known, and subjected to categories of difference outside those permissible under the modern. These disruptions of the modern truth regime's claims to omniscience are also partial failures of all-too-conveniently supplied modern social locations to claim the subject or social movement as their own, so that agencies of resistance reconfigure the "real," refiguring the limits of subject and Other, of center and margin, of knowable and aporia.

Working with partially destabilized objects of knowledge that persistently refuse to be completely consolidated under a coherent nation, name, sexuality, or social stratum may be unnerving for those of us more comfortable with claims to a totalizing, coherent fixity of universal knowledge. Perhaps it is through just this destabilizing process of subject/Other constitution known as agency that the founding violences of our social orders and systems of signification may be rendered legible, and the modern limits to politics and ethics may be reconfigured to make more effective resistance possible.

Proliferation of such disruptions, refusals, and failures has as their effects more than just new knowledges of difference or of Others, for they constitute new relations of power and realities of social justice. Moments of construction of our various Others may increasingly interrogate complicities and destabilize deeply entrenched premises of hegemonic relations to the Others that are constituted and enforced by modern social norms and silenced by our power/knowledge regime. Through persistent practice of these resistant constructions, personal political practices shift, as do those of the general tactics of subjection that we in part constitute and uphold (or refuse to uphold) in our daily practices.

Agency, then, is carried out not as an owning or possession of a thing called power or difference outside the subject, in a "true" construction of some distant Otherness. Rather, agency takes shape as a disruption of the subject locations and power relations of the modern discursive regime in two ways. The first way consists of the contradictions that refuse the complete totalization of difference within the subject location and within power/knowledge discourse. The second is the opening up of the subject and her "realities" to heterogeneity and the contradictory economy of the subject that refuses appropriation and clears space for incommensurable difference with Others that is inconceivable within the epistemic terms of the modern. The emphasis on agency through contradiction and failures of totalization resists the domestication of difference both for the writing/activist subject and for the objects of "reality." This brings the specific politics of the subject into visibility to confront the silences of founding violence and the dangers of exoticization and appropriation of difference that so concern Kaplan, Spivak, and others.

This form of location politics does not center on descriptions of pre-given "realities" of social hegemonies that the writing subject somehow transcends or keeps at a distance. Instead, it takes as a central objective the accountability to the politics of how feminists might practice what are perhaps inevitable appropriations of the Other in a way that makes explicit and problematizes such appropriations. Complicity in this approach is not some license to appropriate and domesticate the Other into a totalizing consolidation of the Other. Rather, complicity becomes one part of an ambivalent and contradictory construction of subjectivities and their Others that opens totalizations up to difference, rendering visible the violences of aporias in language and clearing space for agency as resistance for subjects less effectively linked to the general economy of subjection.

This is no naive assertion of some mysterious capability of postmodern textual play or multicultural enthusiasms to somehow right economic injustices. Rather, it is a recognition that unequal practices

across multiple social sectors (including but not limited to the economic) depend, to a profound if rarely acknowledged degree, on the often subtle but always already present complicity with those practices by those whom they harm as well as by those whom they benefit. Giving political attention to these complicities makes it possible to destabilize and intervene in them in ways that invite resistance and make possible an agency that is active, in Meyda Yeğenoğlu's terms, "not in the sense of domination and controlling ... others" but "in the sense of a receptivity and openness to others and otherness" (1998, 9). The ultimate measure of success of such a method may be found in part in economic changes, but also in the reduction of the grip on agents of internalized oppressions, of complicit academic knowledges, and ultimately of the neocolonial Eurocentric power/knowledge regime that links the "reality" of Others to domination.

The increased accountability that comes from explicitly acknowledging and working with complicities has clear benefits for both members of subordinated groups and for those whose politics and ethics are compromised by unearned privileges. Confronting complicities in modernity and in reinforcing certain privileges and dominations is not easy, perhaps a discouraging yet also a leavening and bracing practice from which some may recoil in defensiveness or in despair at how pervasive such complicities are. While the topic of complicity has obvious relevance for a politics carried out from my own profoundly compromised social location, I hope that an approach linking it to location politics, agency, and appropriation will also be useful for those in other social locations ready to pursue social change without the ever-elusive yet violent dreams of universal truths, political and ethical purities, and transcendent freedoms.

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# Negotiating the Insider/Outsider Status: Black Feminist Ethnography and Legislative Studies

Nadia E. Brown, St. Louis University

**Abstract:** This essay bridges the gaps in the literature within legislative studies by illustrating the usefulness of feminist ethnography as a methodological intervention into studying legislative behavior. Black feminist epistemology is a useful tool for making new knowledge claims within an existing body of knowledge. I use anecdotes and examples from my fieldwork in the Maryland state legislature to expose how race and gender impact both the process and the outcome of data collection. I demonstrate how my experience as an African American woman researcher whose work centers on Black women Maryland state legislators, which I situate within Black feminist epistemology, shaped my access to subjects and data interpretation. The points of information that legislators shared with me, my access to them, the assumptions they made about me, gaps in conversation, and the context in which they shared their policy positions, were all mediated by my own identity. By placing my experiences as a Black woman at the center of analysis, this study offers fresh insight on the prevailing paradigms and epistemologies in legislative studies.

**Keywords:** Black feminist epistemology, legislative studies, feminist ethnography

> My window on the constituency life of Black members of Congress has been intermittent and tiny…. I am a white researcher immersed, briefly, in the affairs of black communities. I am, of course, a stranger in any community beyond my own. But the strangeness of race is an extra hurdle in achieving rapport and in trying to figure out what is going on….Very early, I recognized that African American scholars are best equipped to do the job.
> — Richard Fenno, *Going Home: Black Representatives and Their Constituents*

Few legislative studies scholars employ feminist ethnography as a method for exploring legislative behavior.[1] Most studies rely on quantitative data, such as roll call votes, bill sponsorship, and legislative hearings, but rarely are qualitative methods, such as elite interviews, used to explore why elected representatives vote a certain way or how they negotiate with various constituencies. The premier ethnographic studies of legislative behavior, Richard Fenno's *Homestyle* (1978) and *Going Home* (2003), follow the careers of members of Congress both in Washington, DC and in their home districts. Primarily concerned with how the ways in which an elected representative views his or her constituency affect his or her political behavior, Fenno uses ethnography to draw conclusions about how politicians develop strategies to best represent the needs of their constituents while simultaneously achieving their own goals within Congress.

Fenno's ethnographic work does not, however, place significant emphasis on the role of his race and gender identity, or that of his interviewees, in either the research process or the outcome. Fenno (1978, 2003) practices self-reflexivity and acknowledges that his identity influenced what Black and women members of Congress shared with him. However, as he notes in the epigraph to this essay, taken from his 2003 study with Black members of Congress, his study may have produced different results if an African American researcher conducted this research. This recognition draws into question the validity of the claims made throughout the study. Lacking an epistemological and methodological framework to situate

the existing power/knowledge relationships between the researcher, the member of Congress, legislative staff, and constituents, Fenno's study does not readily acknowledge the role that his identity as a White male researcher played in the data collection process. Recognizing that Fenno's study would have produced different results given a different researcher alerts scholars to the perceived objectivity of the research. However, it is important to note that race is a social construction and that both race and gender, neither of which is an objectively or biologically fixed aspect of identity, have real-world consequences for the study of politics. Trained as both a political scientist and a feminist scholar who studies legislative behavior, I argue here that the field of legislative studies can benefit from feminist methodologies.

In contrast to the ethnographic approach taken in Fenno's groundbreaking studies, feminist ethnographers have used standpoint analysis to position themselves within cultural groups or communities. Women's diverse social locations have "contributed significantly to reconceptualization of sociological categories—especially 'politics,' 'work,' and 'family'—typically used to analyze social life" (Naples 1998, 3). As such, feminist ethnographers have employed Donna Haraway's (1988) concept of "situated knowledges" to highlight the partiality and shifting nature of standpoints. Feminist standpoint theorists argue that knowledge is socially situated, that marginalized groups are positioned to ask questions, and are aware of and have a clearer view of what is going on around them than non-marginalized groups, and that research on power relations should originate with the lives of the marginalized (Collins 1990; Haraway 1991; Harding 1991; Hartsock 2004; Smith 1974). Informed by standpoint theories, feminist ethnographers construct self-reflexive strategies for field research to make the often implicit processes of research explicit. The process of reflexivity, characterized by introspection and the willingness to learn about oneself, one's research purpose, and one's relationships with the social world, exposes the varied strategies that are confronted at the beginning of the research process (Naples and Sachs 2000).

This essay bridges the gaps in the literature within legislative studies by illustrating the usefulness of feminist ethnography as a methodological intervention into studying legislative behavior. More specifically, I posit that Black feminist epistemology is a useful tool for making new knowledge claims within an existing body of knowledge. A Black feminist epistemology, which is grounded in Black women's experiences and cognitive styles, contends that the multiply marginalized draw from personal experience as insiders who are oppressed within their social order. Black women's distance from power enables them to critique the system. I use anecdotes and examples from my fieldwork in the Maryland state legislature to expose how race and gender impact both the process and the outcome of data collection.[2] I demonstrate how my experience as an African American woman researcher whose work centers on Black women Maryland state legislators, which I situate within Black feminist epistemology, shaped my access to subjects and data interpretation.[3] The points of information that legislators shared with me, my access to them, the assumptions they made about me, gaps in conversation, and the context in which they shared their policy positions, were all mediated by my own identity. By placing my experiences as a Black woman at the center of analysis, this study offers fresh insight on the prevailing paradigms and epistemologies in legislative studies. I turn now to an overview of Black feminist scholarship to illustrate how knowledge is partial and how one's individual experiences and identities facilitate knowledge production.

**The Outsider Within**

Black feminist academics are positioned to use their social location to distinctively analyze race, class, and gender in various social settings. Patricia Hill Collins (1986) contends, through her concept of "outsider within," that Black women have an epistemic privilege of functioning within the academy both as credentialed

insiders and as outsiders who are decentered in the academic context as women and Blacks.[4] Black women who enter organizations under White men's control, such as the academy, are not afforded the full rights and privileges in hierarchical and cultural structures controlled by this insider group. As outsiders within academia, Black women scholars confront Eurocentric masculinist political and epistemological constraints. Those whose work engages in Black feminist epistemology face the challenge of having their knowledge claims validated or invalidated by a system predicated upon a Eurocentric masculinist framework.[5] As agents of knowledge, Black women draw from their lived experiences, placed within a particular set of material, historical, and epistemological conditions, to anchor specific knowledge claims.[6]

My experience during a presentation of my research provides an example of what it means to be an outsider within. A White female student asked, "How accurate are your findings? Don't you think legislators, particularly White men, would have told you different things if you were a White person?" I informed the student that she was correct. My identity impacts what legislators said and their willingness to interview with me. She pressed me to acknowledge that my project would have had a completely different outcome if I were White. The ultimate implication was that my findings were not generalizable and, as a result, do not live up to the gold standard of good social science research. Before I could respond to this, a Black female student retorted that White researchers who conduct fieldwork on minority groups are not questioned for the objectivity of their identity. Her White female colleague was forced to acknowledge the double standard of academic legitimacy, authority, and validity. I then intervened to add that my research seeks to uncover the partiality of all truths by taking seriously the experiences and claims of African American women. Furthermore, I expressed to the students that the multi-marginalized see the social world with a clarity that others with more privileged identities are unable to command (Matsuda 1992; Wing 1990–1991). My role as a social scientist is to uncover and reveal the numerous truths based on identity, positionality, and experience.

My interaction with the students illustrates that Black women scholars confront challenges as outsiders within—as marginalized academics whose standpoint uniquely equips them to uncover some aspects of reality and truth that are concealed, unnoticed, and masked by conventional methodological and epistemological frameworks (Collins 1986)—and that they are reminded of their marginality in academic settings. The student's questioning of the validity of my research outcomes because I am an African American woman reinforces my claim that legislative studies can benefit from my particular epistemological standpoint, which underscores the way all perspectives are partial and mediated by individual experiences and identities.[7] Black women's voices express both racialized and gendered perspectives, capturing a reality from "the outside in and from the inside out" (hooks 1984). As such, my study on Black women state legislators and the role of identity in political decision making is enriched by the marginality of my outsider-within status (Brown 2010). Informed by a Black feminist standpoint, my ethnographic research on the Maryland state legislature reveals a more nuanced, dynamic, and unique understanding of legislators' behavior than is available through standard methodology.[8] The following section details and describes three ways in which my identity as a Black woman was integral to my research process.

**Sister-to-Sister**

As an African American woman interviewing African American women state legislators, I avoided the position of researcher-as-stranger (Clifford 1986). I was familiar with cultural norms and meanings that are common to Black women. Black feminists assert that African American women have a shared historical reality based on the dual subordination of both race and gender. This subordination enables a clearer

understanding of the relationships among systems of oppression (Collins 1990). The marginalization of Black women, as members of a specific group characterized by their gender and race, creates a shared experience. Black feminists argue that there is a complex dual relationship in both Black culture and the dominant culture that Black women have to negotiate in their daily interactions (hooks 1984). Thus, as a Black woman researching Black women, I was considered a racial and gendered insider. In the following discussion, I pay special attention to four significant and often interwoven insider characteristics: culture competence, morphology, interactionality, and performance.

Black women state legislators were comfortable making culturally based statements during our conversations.[9] As such, we engaged in what Few, Stephens, and Rouse-Arnett refer to as "sister-to-sister talk," defined by them as "Afrocentric slang to describe congenial conversation or positive relating in which life lessons might be shared between Black women" (2003, 205). Participating in sister-to-sister talk requires a form of cultural competence and mandates that I adopt approaches that "both reflect and respect the values, expectations, and preferences" (Pinderhughes 1989, 163) of the Black women Maryland state legislators. What enables sister-to-sister talk is the shared position of Black women. I was introduced to the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland (LBCM) during its meeting on March 12, 2009 by a freshman African American woman delegate. The chair of the caucus, a Black woman, then instructed caucus members to "help the baby and give her an interview" because I was one of their own looking to further research on "us." The LBCM chair served as my liaison to Black legislators. As a result of her urging, a few members of the Black Caucus personally introduced themselves and said that they would be more than happy to interview with me. The endorsement of my research project by the chair of the LBCM was directly related to my identity as an African American doing research on African Americans. Being seen as one of their own encouraged the LBCM members to readily support my project. Several instructed their staffers to set up appointments with me for that afternoon. This introduction ultimately yielded twelve interviews with African American legislators who initially failed to respond to my letter requesting an interview. My identity as an African American influenced the legislators' willingness to meet with me. Compared with Fenno's experience, as captured in the epigraph above, my insider racial identity allowed me to build a rapport with the members of the LBCM.

Even with the use of sister-to-sister talk, my experiences within the Maryland state legislature indicate the complexity of the insider/outsider status. As a "native researcher," I was cautious not to exaggerate this familiarity, as one cannot assume a homogenous culture (Moffat 1992). In the United States, where race-based group membership is salient for one's sociopolitical identity, insider status is still constituted by other factors that may make race an aspect of secondary consequence: "Thus, the meaning and impact of racial difference are complicated by age, class, accent, education, national origins, region, as well as sexuality" (Winndance Twine 2000, 9). As intersectionality scholars argue, conceptualization of Black women's identities requires more than the realization that race, gender, and other categories coincide (Jordan-Zachary 2007; Hancock 2003; Simien 2006; Smooth 2001). Identity is also fluid, though at times it becomes fixed. Salient identities are primed based on the context and situation of a particular phenomenon. As a result, simply sharing the same race and gender as the Black women state legislators did not guarantee that I would be able to gather more data from them (Few, Stephens, and Rouse-Arnett 2003). Instead of *more* data, *different* data was mined and accessed because of my shared or overlapping identity with the legislators.

I was aware of the differences and nuances based on generational, parochial, economical, and motherhood status between the Black women legislators and myself. Furthermore, as a member of non-political elite,

I was cognizant of my outsider status as an ordinary citizen. Lastly, as a resident of New Jersey, I was not seen as an insider, a Maryland resident acutely familiar with the intricacies of Maryland state politics. These differences made it clear that one can be an outsider even when conducting fieldwork in one's own racial/gender in-group. As a result, "identifying with 'them' does not necessarily mean you are like them, or that they are like one another, or that they all trust or identify with you, or that they want to be studied by you" (Moffatt 1992, 207). Namely, my relative insider status as an African American woman could only take me so far.

An example of the benefits of my insider status is the LBCM chair's ability to recruit participants for my study among the legislators who had previously declined my request to interview. After the Black Caucus meeting, the chair asked if I secured interviews with everyone I wished to speak with. I informed her that Delegate A, a Black woman legislator, repeatedly refused my invitation to talk with her and that my study required interviews with all twenty of Maryland's Black women legislators. The chair informed me that she would work on Delegate A to make sure she understood how important it was to my study for me to speak with her. Later that afternoon, the chair's staffer instructed me to wait for Delegate A outside of her committee meeting. After the committee meeting, the LBCM chair and Delegate A met with me to announce that she would indeed grant me an interview. Delegate A apologized for her initial refusal by explaining that she had bad experiences with other reporters and researchers who misinterpreted her words. She further explained that LBCM chair said I would not misconstrue her statements because, as a Black woman doing research on Black women, I would understand her. This statement cued a cultural context that not only presupposed my understanding of the legislator's intent but was also steeped in African American women's vernacular. During our conversation, several sister-to-sister terms were used, such as "girl," "girlfriend," "sistah," and "homegirl," to indicate that we shared a special bond as Black women. Thus, because Delegate A saw me as a "girlfriend" due to my race and gender, she agreed to grant me the interview.

While obtaining access to legislators was initially difficult, once they agreed to meet with me, the conversations with the majority of Black women legislators followed naturally. However, my conversation with Delegate S, a young and newly elected Black woman, was much more constrained. She agreed to meet with me after I contacted her office with a description of my research project in April 2011. She was extremely guarded during our first interactions in the summer of 2011. She provided short responses to my questions or gave one-word answers.[10] However, Delegate S's demeanor and candor immediately changed when I asked her about her decision to wear her natural hair in micro-braids. This young, dark-skinned, and reserved delegate opened up after I expressed interest in learning about her hair. At this point in the interview, our sister-to-sister talk began. The very personal decision of how to style one's hair is embedded in racialized and gendered norms that place Black women and their hair in a unique position. African American women state legislators face hurdles because of the unique texture and appearance of Black hair (Shelby Rosette and Dumas 2007).

Delegate S was most at ease discussing the challenges of wearing natural hair on the campaign trail. We met in the conference room of Delegate S's law office in July 2009. She wore her hair in micro-braids, which she fastened to one side of her face. Delegate S explained that her hair has played a major part in how constituents view her. She struggled with the decision of how to wear her hair in photos featured in her campaign materials, because she learned that voters preferred her with straight hair. As a result, Delegate S does not wear her natural hair out during her legislative duties in Annapolis or while meeting with constituents. This young delegate seemed comfortable in discussing how her approach to hair has matured as she experienced new milestones in her life. Because Delegate S and I are relatively close in

age, and because I shared with her that I am struggling with my own decision to continue to chemically straighten my hair, the conversation was very easy and informal.

After building a rapport based on the challenges of transitioning chemically straightened hair back to its natural state, Delegate S and I bonded by sharing hair-trauma stories. Delegate S was initially the most standoffish and reluctant participant among my interviewees; however, she ultimately proved to be easier than many other legislators to converse with. After our discussion about hair, Delegate S became much more open and frank. Our sister-to-sister talk helped her become more receptive towards both me and my project.

What may be gained from invoking a standpoint defined by race and gender is an interpretative complexity grounded in the racialized and gendered group experiences of Black women. Delegate A viewed me as an insider because my project was endorsed by another Black woman whom she respected, and Delegate S viewed me as an insider because we shared similar hair textures and trials around the transitioning process. Both interviewing experiences centered on my cultural performance as a Black woman. Beyond my morphological and phenomenological characteristics of being a Black woman, my speech and non-verbal communication reflected the "elements and themes of Black women's culture and traditions" (Madison 1993, 213).[11] Because identity is a process we perform (Butler 1988), the interstices of my interactions with the Black women state legislators mirrored a style of raced and gendered performance that elicited specific reactions, reinforcing my group membership.[12] As a result, Delegates A and S trusted me to accurately represent their opinions and views on legislative decision making within my study because they perceived that we shared a common culture.

## As an Insider: How Race and Gender Influence Other Identities

Brackette Williams (1996) illustrates that one's racial identity is perceived differently depending on the individual's fluctuating relationship to members of her community. In her study with elderly Black rural residents of Alabama, this African American woman researcher demonstrated the shifting nature of one's insider/outsider status by showcasing how community members framed, defined, and placed differing values on her identity based on the particular social spaces in which she encountered them. In turn, she was forced to negotiate her identity and justify her work. I, too, experienced the realization that one's fixed features, such as race and gender, require that special attention be paid to one's own social location by renegotiating how identity was defined in the field. This section expands on the interwoven insider characteristics to illustrate how other identities—in addition to race and gender—influence how a researcher's insider status is construed.

Take, for example, my experience with older Black women legislators around marriage equality legislation. The issue of same-sex marriage pivots around an array of societal, religious, and cultural norms that spark contentious debates within Black communities. Same-sex marriage is a racialized issue for African Americans. While same-sex marriage has been queered within the dominant discourse, Blackness also occupies a queered space. Both are constructions of identity that deviate from the expected normalcy of hetero-Whiteness. Moreover, regulation of sexual difference is part and parcel of general regulation of Black culture. The institution of slavery and its aftermath have queered African Americans by constructing them as deviants. As a result, "Blackness" and "queerness" complement each other by signifying race and sexuality in overlapping as well as disparate ways (Johnson 2003, 93). During my field research in 2009, other culturally relevant cues were offered by older Black women legislators when I asked about House Bill 1055 and Senate Bill 565, the Religious Freedom and Protection of Civil Marriage Bill, which would

establish marriage between same-sex partners.[13] Race affects the likelihood that one will support same-sex marriage.[14] There is a trajectory of Black religious intolerance toward homosexuality that influences the perception of same-sex unions by African Americans. Because Blacks face sexual stereotypes tied to their race, such as the emasculation of Black manhood and the devaluation of Black womanhood, it is conceivable that African Americans would have mixed attitudes on same-sex marriage. Therefore, it is not surprising that several older African American women legislators were not supporters of the Religious Freedom and Protection of Civil Marriage Bill. However, through tying same-sex marriage legislation to recollections of de jure prohibition of interracial marriage and to conversations around civil rights, on one hand, and to Black religiosity on the other, African Americans are likely to link queer struggles for marriage equality to their own struggle for full inclusion in the American polity (Brown 2010).

When I asked her to detail the steps she would include in the legislative decision-making process regarding HB 1055, Delegate C, an older Black woman, held up her Bible. Delegate C did not provide a commentary on the role of the Black church in her legislative decision making, nor did she elaborate her views as a Christian who opposes same-sex marriage on religious grounds.[15] I read this gesture as a culturally significant cue because, as a fellow Black woman, Delegate C assumed that I was familiar with biblical scripture and the Black church's position on same-sex marriage. Other African American legislators shared with me that they do not support same-sex marriage for religious reasons. These legislators all responded to my question with culturally relevant tropes. Identifying as either Baptists, Methodists, or Pentecostals—the three major African American Christian denominations—these legislators stated that the Bible views homosexuality as a sin, and that because of their religious beliefs they could not support the proposed legislation. For example, Delegate D, another older Black woman, who also opposed same-sex marriage, said:

> The marriage piece is troubling. It has to do with my upbringing; my father was a Baptist minister... I have my Bible here that talks about the marriage between a man and woman from a moral and religious standpoint that would create some problems for me.

By failing to fully expand on their discussion around opposing the Religious Freedom and Protection of Civil Marriage Bill, these older Black women legislators assumed that I was a part of a Black church or that I shared the common knowledge of the church's position on this matter. The Black women legislators did not quote specific verses from their Bible to condemn same-sex marriage, nor did they offer any other religious evidence to oppose same-sex unions. Instead, the legislators assumed that I was familiar with these passages of the Bible to such an extent where they did not have to offer proof of Old Testament's condemnation of homosexuality. No further details or explanations were given, since these legislators saw me as a religious insider due to my race. In fact, no one allowed that I might not be a Christian. Indeed, throughout the interview I gave off cues that signalled my recognition of what they were trying to communicate. By smiling and nodding, my performance of identity indicated that I understand their non-verbal cues. As such, the legislators were reading my cues just as much I was reading theirs.

The older Black women legislators would most likely share their opposition to same-sex marriage with other researchers. Many of these lawmakers have publicly expressed their opinions on HB 1055 and SB 565 to news media and in meetings with their constituents. However, the older Black women delegates gave me different types of information based on my racial insider status. Although the bill explicitly stated that religious institutions do not have to solemnize a marriage they oppose, this group of legislators made a culturally and racially based assessment of the bill, which allowed them to include their religious beliefs. These assumptions, as expressed in their silences, unspoken indicators, and responses, allowed me to make an explicit connection between their views on the legislation and the influence of Black religiosity. As a

result, the type of data that I gathered is much more nuanced than the evidence of a simple yes-or-no vote. Because of my insider status, I was able to access specific, culturally based reasoning behind their position on this issue.

In addition to considering my race and gender identity, legislators and their staffers made assumptions about my socioeconomic background. These assumptions also proved to offer me an inroad in gaining access to legislators. While I shared the same racial identity, and often the same gender identity, as many of the legislative staff to Black representatives, I found that varying aspects of my being were prioritized by certain staffers. Take, for example, two interactions I had with staff members for Senators G and H.

In gaining access to the legislators, I would often speak with staff members to inquire about being put on the legislators' schedule. The staff members are gatekeepers of these schedules, and I understood that it was important to make a good impression on the staff if I hoped to speak with certain legislators. The staff members made certain assumptions about me based on particular aspects of my identity. One such assumption inferred my class background from my identity as a PhD student: some staff members believed that I belonged to the middle class because I was pursuing a higher degree. For example, a staffer in Senator G's office mentioned that I had an obligation to give back to the less fortunate because I had been blessed with the opportunity to go to school. This staffer commented on her work with inner-city Baltimore youth who do not have Black role models. She said that I should serve as a mentor for young Black girls who did not think college was accessible. During this conversation, the staffer said that I had "no idea what it was like to grow up in poverty and not have a future," having inferred from my professional status and educational background that I grew up in a middle-class family.

My interaction with this staffer indicates that she connected my racial identity to an understanding of the social, economic, or political future of other Blacks. Without asking much about my background, she assumed that I believed I had a responsibility to connect with impoverished Black youth because of our shared racial background. Furthermore, her comments about my class status were clearly tied to the likelihood that upon graduation I would become a college professor. When Black women achieve entry into high-status professions, their work is viewed by African American communities as a source of economic gain and preservation of the family (Roos 2009). African American professional middle-class women are expected to "lift as we climb" (Giddings 1984; Scott 1990; Ruffins 1994). As a major force helping to shape the Black community life, African American women have historically kept their families afloat while challenging disparaging stereotypes of themselves, providing for the children and the elderly, working outside the home, taking care of their home, children, and husbands, as well as being active participants in their church, civic organizations, and sororities. These feats led W. E. B. Du Bois (1920) to remark that of all American women African American women were the most remarkable.

Black feminist scholars have questioned the degree to which Black women can have it all—the professional career and family—while living up to the strong Black woman archetype (Harris Perry 2011; Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2009; Wallace 1979). Hip-hop-era Black feminist scholars[16] Chambers (2003) and Morgan (1999) ask African American women to reassess Black feminist standpoint theory in order to understand whether Black women's marginality is due to an uninvestigated view of gender, class, and race consciousness. Are Black women trying to live up to the "strong Black woman" stereotype at the expense of their mental and physical well-being? Are Black women forcing or shaming other Black women to carry this mantle? The staffer's assumptions tied my race, gender, and both my current and future class status (as she perceived them) to her analysis of my positionality in her request for my involvement in her community organization. For her, my educational opportunities were related to my class status, which is uniquely coupled with the role played by African American women in uplifting our communities.

Varying perceptions of my identity among Black women staffers shaped the data I gathered. While one particular staffer viewed me as a middle-class, educated, and soon-to-be-professional Black woman, other staffers assumed that I was a "poor student." Perhaps because I would eat my lunch (a peanut-butter sandwich and a bottle of water) in the statehouse, while waiting to talk with legislators, the staffers—and at times the legislators—who witnessed my paltry meal assumed that I was economically disadvantaged. For example, when my interview with Senator H was pushed back due to her busy committee schedule, the senator instructed her staff to "feed the child." It was the Senator H's birthday and a staffer prepared a large home-cooked lunch for the celebration. The meal consisted of smoked turkey, macaroni and cheese, greens, and banana pudding. The staffer who was instructed to "feed me" said, "I know you must be hungry. I saw you eating that dry sandwich. I remember what it was like to be in college—you always need a good home-cooked meal." The staffer then asked me about the last time I had a "good meal" and said that she knows college students struggle.

My appearance and graduate-student status opened the door for legislators and staffers to invite me to meals during which they then began to feel comfortable with me and engage in informal conversations. The narrative of being a "poor college student" and my appearance as a petite woman opened up additional spaces where legislators and their staff could connect with me. Numerous comments were made about my small size: "What are you, a size 1?"; or, "I know you don't eat—your pants are falling off you"; and my favorite, "Baby, you look like you need a meal—you're an itty bitty thing." As a member of Generation Y or the Millennials (those born between 1981 and 2004), my age was a focal point for some staffers and legislators. While the words "child" and "baby" are terms of familiarity used by African American elders to denote an informal connection to youth, their use also signaled that older Black women were willing to serve as my "other-mothers," an informal fictive kin network of supporters that take on the responsibilities and roles of kin (Collins 1990; Marshall 1991; Naylor 1988). African American "other-mothers" use their time and resources to tend to the needs of the children, whether they are related or not. In this way, I was looked after by "other-mothers" in the legislature as if I were their own kinfolk. By providing lunch and other meals during my fieldwork, my "other-mothers" went beyond simply providing nourishment; they also helped to provide access to their fellow legislators and explained specific details of the Maryland state legislature that I otherwise would not have access to.

Because of my status as a PhD student, my size, and my age, both staffers and legislators granted me rare personal access in which we engaged in informal conversations about themselves, their families, and their experience in the legislature. Around meals, the legislators and staffers let their guard down as they became more personal and less professional. Political correctness was out the door, as many shared funny stories about their political experiences. The minority legislators and staffers primarily extended invitations to join them in activities such as meals or Delegation Nights because of my outward appearance and my researcher status. However, our conversations progressed into more informal and personal dialogue because of other shared experiences, views, and characteristics. This initial access was granted, I believe, due to my insider status, which in turn was based on my morphology and performance of Black culture.

Also illustrating how my race and gender enhanced the interwoven insider characteristics of cultural competence, morphology, interactionality, and performance are examples of how affiliation with a Black cultural institution enhanced my data collection. Because I am a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, I had an instant connection with some legislators and staff. For example, one staffer was my sorority sister, which I discovered by noticing our sorority crest displayed on her desk. Upon completion of the interview, the staffer/soror asked me how it went. I confided in her that I was a bit disappointed in the interview,

because her legislator gave me canned political answers that were extremely vague. The staffer/soror told me that the legislator acted this way because she was "trying to sound professional," since she was a freshman. She then told her legislator, in front of me, that I was her soror and to "keep it real" with me because I was "good people." The legislator than told me to come back for a "real" interview after voting session, which I did.

My cultural connection to the Black community vis-à-vis my sorority affiliation significantly improved the candor in which the legislators and staffers engaged with me. Most notably, as a sorority insider I was granted access to legislators with whom I originally had not been able to interview. While the relaxed and lighthearted conversations, which were at first about our sorority specifically and belonging to a historically Black cultural institution more generally, helped to ease the formality of the elite interviews with the legislators, they also created easiness with the staffers. The legislators and staffers began to take interest in me as much as in my research project. They began to offer ways to help me after learning that I was a Delta. This connection would not have been made if I had not been a member of a Black Greek Letter Organization. While these fraternities and sororities were established to provide a brotherhood or sisterhood environment for African American college students, the lifelong connections they create remain extremely useful in both professional and personal environments.

**Discussion of Insights**

The multiple intersections of my identity allowed me to make several cultural and race-based connections with Maryland legislators and their staffers. In combination with my appearance and role as a researcher, my identity afforded opportunity and access to key people, which enhanced my study. These connections illustrate that identity is salient in determining how the data is collected and what kinds of data are available to researchers. However, because the formal boundaries between the researcher and the researched were crossed during our informal interactions, I am aware that the legislators may have been more relaxed during our formal interviews than they otherwise might have been with another researcher. Because of this, I have chosen to remove their names from their quotes in order to be respectful of the relationships developed during my fieldwork.

My subjective experience as a Black woman, sorority member, and graduate student began to be a source of anxiety as I have queried the extent to which these identities impacted my access to legislators as well as the quality of my interviews. While I reject the notion of an objective researcher, I am aware of the criticisms that may arise due to the cultural connections that became apparent in the data collection process. However, because my study is rooted in Black feminist epistemology, this concern is countered by the belief that gender and race ought to influence scholarly conceptions of knowledge production and practices of inquiry and justification. My situated knowledge as a Black woman researcher reflects a nuanced knowing attributable to my gender and race, which illustrates how gendered and racialized identities inflect the perspective of the knower. These insider characteristics enabled me to at times feel more like a family friend, little sister, or daughter, rather than a researcher, during some informal conversations with the legislators and their staff.

**Conclusion**

Feminist ethnography was vital for this study because it allowed me to contextualize the experiences of the legislators, as well as better understand how my own identity became part of the data collection process.

However, I pay special attention to the claim that one's racial and gendered identity influences what research subjects share with the researcher. My insider status granted me access to African American legislators that I am sure I would not have gained if I was not a Black woman with several connections to their culturally embedded identities. My identity influenced how legislators interacted with me in addition to what they told me. Moreover, legislators and staffers used their own opinion to inscribe culturally relevant characteristics onto me. Based on what I looked like, they assumed that I must correspond to their idea of what a Black woman graduate student thinks and how she acts. I did not challenge their (mis)conceptions of me. Instead, I willingly allowed them to map their stereotypes onto me in order to gain access to their world.

Legislative studies must include and can benefit from the value that feminist ethnography places on reflexivity in one's fieldwork. The shifting and contextual nature of the researcher's social identity impacts the production of ethnographic knowledge (Nagar and Geiger 2007). The situatedness and positionality of both the researcher's and the subjects' identities are probed in the knowledge-production process. I engaged in self-reflexivity by analyzing my own reactions and experiences as an African American woman under thirty to deepen my understanding of how methodology informs the politics of identity.

Reflexivity in feminist fieldwork implies that the production of ethnographic knowledge is shaped by the relational and contextual nature of the researcher's social identity, as well as by the positionality generated by her race, class, and gender. My identity was not fixed in the field. Instead, it varied based on the legislators' perception of me, which allowed for shifting among network relationships (Takacs 2002). I detailed my experience in negotiating the insider/outsider status because I believe it influenced the legislators' interaction with me. As the White woman student I mentioned at the outset of this discussion pointed out, I must also begin to acknowledge how my own identity impacted my findings and conclusions (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006; Mazzei and O'Brien 2009). Reflexivity, however, does not readily translate into a transparent research process. The notion of transparent reflexivity incorrectly "assumes that the messiness of the research process can be fully understood" (Rose 1997, 314). Yet, because identity is relational, mutually constitutive, and built upon existing social relations, the implications for understanding one's position in any final sense are impossible. As a result, a researcher with another identity who also engages in self-reflexivity might have different access and experiences with the same subjects.

Lessons learned from Black women scholars as outsiders within are still useful in the age of intersectionality. Black women scholars may never feel as if they belong in academia, although they may become influential in a particular field (Collins 1986). Because of the institutionalization of intersectionality, the academy can use Black women's standpoints as a methodological framework without necessarily having to rely on Black women scholars themselves. Due to their outsider status, Black women's cultural belongings—their racial and gendered group identity—are overshadowed by their true value as an individual (Collins 1986). Black women's standpoint as an approach to gathering and viewing societal knowledge is both unique and subjective and cannot be divorced from the specific social location of African American women.

As a discipline, political science favors objectivist truth claims, which prioritize generalizations or causal explanations (Weeden 2010). As a result, ethnography—let alone feminist ethnography—is not frequently used in political science research. Although Richard Fenno's (1978; 2003) work is held in the highest esteem in the American subfield, few Americanists undertake similar projects in 2012. Furthermore, few political scientists engage in self-reflexivity to understand how their research projects are impacted by their insider/outsider status in relation to their subjects.

My study highlights that a reflexive understanding of identity is needed to produce new insights into political phenomena. The effect of the race and gender of the researcher produces different outcomes in the

process of data collection. Scholars must be cognizant of their own identity in preparing for, conducting, and analyzing research. This reflexive account exposes bias and advantages in how researchers understand the experiences, meanings, and politics of those they research. Therefore, all scholars—not just minority researchers—should consider and discuss the effect of their identity on the research they produced. In this way, identity is used as a lens to simultaneously explore power and social relations in a more complex manner than is possible when solely presenting findings on the identity of the researched. Studies that take seriously the complexity of identity must also include a discussion of how context affects the questions asked and answered, the ways in which subjects view the researcher, as well as how privilege and access are built-in markers of identity. This study points to the need for additional and more systematic research to investigate the ways in which a particular scholar's identity impacts what we know about legislative representation.

This discussion alerts scholars to a few necessary considerations in reading and evaluating research interviews. These factors are particularly important for scholars who might be interested in using elite interviews to study the politics of identity. Like those we study, there is only so much control we have over our own identity. Researchers must openly acknowledge that our seemingly objective research is indeed subjective. As such, the issues of researcher identity can affect us all, from the seemingly unmarked White man to the too-often-othered Black woman. Future studies should consider methodologies that discuss the multiplicity of the researcher's identity. Studies using a mixed-mode design—interviews, historical documents, survey data, voting-record data, etc.—and that are reflexive and engaged in identity politics and its manifestations in data collection will help researchers to understand, use, and validate the data they gather.

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## Notes

1. Feminist ethnography is defined here as a contextual and experiential approach to knowledge that challenges the false dichotomies of positivism. Additionally, feminist ethnography is undergirded by feminist theory, which examines women's lived experiences and social roles as it seeks to overcome gender bias in research. Feminist ethnography allows researchers to display diversity within human subjects and advance claims for social change, as well as acknowledge the role of researcher in the production of knowledge.

2. I chose to study Maryland because of its large number of African American state legislators and the structure of the legislature, which makes it easy to identify how race and gender influence legislative behavior. The 2010 census reports that the state of Maryland is 30% African American. The state's high number of Black residents, mostly concentrated in Baltimore City and County and in Prince George's County, makes it necessary for politicians to represent Black interests and dictates that Black constituents have descriptive representation within the legislature. During the 2009 and 2011 legislative sessions, Maryland had 20 Black women delegates. (In 2009, this number was distributed among 15 delegates and 5 senators and between 14 delegates and 6 senators in the 2011 session.) The Maryland legislature is comprised of part-time representatives who dedicate a ninety-day period annually to lawmaking. Maryland's political culture is regarded as individualistic, akin to that of a business, where individual legislators broker deals and orchestrate political favors (Elazar 1972). While the party structure is highly organized, legislators have the ability to act as individuals, especially regarding policy areas in which some have specialized knowledge (Smooth 2001). The 2009 study included 51 in-depth, semi-structured and open-ended interviews that I conducted with Democratic Maryland state legislators. Because all the African American women legislators were Democrats, to control for partisanship I only interviewed members of this party. This restrained association of partisan ideologies, which are often coupled with a

legislator's race and gender. The General Assembly includes 47 senators and 141 delegates elected from 47 districts. The multi-member districts are comprised of four representatives—one senator and three delegates. Maryland's short legislative session requires a structure that facilitates lawmaking at a relatively quick pace. Delegates are only given 90 days to act on over 2,300 pieces of legislation, including the state budget. As such, Maryland has a highly organized committee structure, in which leaders in both chambers are responsible for assigning other members to committees.

3. Throughout the essay I use the terms "Black" and "African American" interchangeably. I capitalize "Black" because "Blacks, like Asians and Latinos, and other 'minorities' constitute a specific cultural group and, as such, require denotation as a proper noun" (Crenshaw 1988, 1332n2).

4. Postmodern and postcolonial scholars have critiqued Collins's concept of the outsider within as a false binary that does not account for the continuum of oppression and privilege (Bourdieu 1984; Baudrillard 1998). Power is not evenly distributed, nor is it independent from group member's demographic and cultural characteristics.

5. Collins (1986; 1990; 1998) emphasizes that social hierarchies reinforce one another within interlocking systems. Thus, no outsider can entirely occupy that status. Each person holds a relatively privileged position in one or more social hierarchies. Ladson-Billings (2005) offers a much more nuanced view to conclude that no one has an unadulterated outsider-within position.

6. However, I do not mean to privilege Black women scholars' race and gender identity over other marginalized identities. Although it is helpful to explore the lived experiences of marginality, it must be acknowledged that certain identity categories "overrule, capture, differentiate, and transgress others" and that both theoretical and empirical research should "read these categories simultaneously" (Simien 2007, 270).

7. Queer, feminist, and postmodern theorists have brought renewed scholarly attention to the importance of individual agency and voice and to the ways in which social structures both enable and constrain individuals functioning within them.

8. Black feminist standpoint theory demonstrates Black women's emerging power as agents of knowledge, which is mediated by their intersectional understanding of oppression. This causes them to be doubly bound by a legacy of struggle that links the individual Black woman to the collective group of Black women.

9. In-depth, semi-structured, and open-ended interviews were conducted with all twenty of Maryland's Black women legislators. I also conducted interviews with a convenience sample of Anglo men, Black men, Latinos/as, Asian American men, and Asian American women legislators. Because the interview questions provided for open-ended answers, the legislators were able to express themselves and narrate their stories freely. During the interviews, I utilized the so-called "soak and poke" method (Fenno 1978; 2003). This method allowed me to delve deeply into the legislators' responses to provide a thick description of their views on identity and representation. Inclusion of the 2011 feminist life histories helped to substantiate information provided through the 2009 elite interviews. Unlike the elite interviews, the feminist life histories are more in-depth and detailed. This method enabled each woman to share her story as well as provide an in-depth view to who she is.

10. I later learned that Delegate S was so guarded because she was going through the beginning stages of a criminal investigation into her campaign finances. In the fall of 2011, she was charged with misdemeanor theft, misappropriation, and embezzlement.

11. In phenomenological terms, a person's lived experiences reflect her position within age, gender, race, and class hierarchies.

12. bell hooks (1984, 11) also contends that because identity is a performative act, the labels of insider or outsider do not sufficiently account for the fluidity of identity or the multiplicity of oppressions.

13. Maryland became the eighth state to legalize same-sex marriage on March 1, 2012. This legislation narrowly passed the House of Delegates on February 17 (by a 72–67 vote) and the Senate by a vote of 25–22 on February 23, 2012.

14. To be sure, the Black community is not monolithic and not uniformly against marriage equality. However, data indicate that Hispanics and Whites are more supportive of marriage equality than African Americans (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2010).

15. Moving beyond the Black church as an institution, this analysis also incorporates Black religiosity in order to understand the symbolic, cultural, and expressive space of Black identities. I resist the conflation of the Black church and a religious identity. This analytical distinction highlights the Black church as both a real and symbolic space and place. Given its status as a cultural institution, most African Americans are familiar with the teachings and traditions of the Black church even if they are not active members or participants in the church.

16. I avoid using the "wave" metaphor for describing time periods, types of activism and scholarship, and political concerns of Black feminism. Kimberly Springer (2005) critiques the "wave" terminology as ignoring the presence of Black women's activism alongside feminist activism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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# The Politics of Writing, Writing Politics: Virginia Woolf's *A [Virtual] Room of One's Own*

Tegan Zimmerman, University of Alberta

**Abstract:** This article revisits *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf's foundational 1929 text on women's writing. I examine from a feminist materialist perspective the relevance of Woolf's notion of a "room" in our globalized and technological twenty-first century. I first review Woolf's position on the material conditions necessary for women writers in her own time and then the applicability of her thinking for contemporary women writers on a global scale. I emphasize that the politics of writing, and in particular writing by women, that Woolf puts forth gives feminists the necessary tools to reevaluate and rethink women's writing both online and offline. I therefore argue that Woolf's traditional work on materiality can be updated and developed to further inform what is now, in the twenty-first century, an urgent need for women writers, a feminist philosophy of sexual difference in relation to technology, and an e-feminism of online spaces and women's online writing.

**Keywords:** Woolf (Virginia), *A Room of One's Own*, cyberspace, e-feminism, materialist feminism, women's writing, virtual room, sexual difference

> ...an already-written text, and at the same time an empty page.
> — Przemysław Czapliński, "The 'Mythic Homeland' in Contemporary Polish Prose"

> ...no woman is a blank page: every woman is author of the page and author of the page's author.
> — Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity"

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides several definitions for a "room," including a sufficient space, to clear a space for oneself, to make "room" by removing other things, a certain portion or area separated by walls or partitions, or a form of accommodation. All of these meanings of keeping in and keeping out can be found in Virginia Woolf's foundational essay *A Room of One's Own*, published in 1929. In this text, originally given as two lectures on women's writing to the female students of Newnham and Girton colleges, Woolf claims that if women want to be great writers they will need an income of five hundred pounds a year and a space all of their own in which to write. Woolf argues that if these requirements are met, Shakespeare's imaginary brilliant sister Judith will reemerge in the future: "Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners ... she will be born.... I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while" (2000, 112). In an age of technology and globalization eighty-three years after Woolf's lecture, feminists must ask if a room of one's own is still meaningful for women's writing today.

In this article, I adopt a materialist feminist perspective to argue that the lack of material conditions, such as a room, which make writing possible according to Woolf, is still a reality for many would-be women writers around the globe (differing in their geographic, cultural, economic, political, racial, and social positions); and, furthermore, that feminists now must confront the specific materiality of virtual, that is

online, rooms.[1] In rethinking offline and online rooms, the first section of this article briefly reviews Woolf's position on the material conditions necessary for women writers in her own time and considers how her thinking continues to relate to women writers on a global scale. In the next section, the main focus of this essay, I argue that Woolf's traditional work on materiality can be updated and developed to further inform what is now, in the twenty-first century, a pressing need for women writers: a feminist philosophy of sexual difference in relation to technology, online spaces, and women's online writing.

## The Material Conditions for Women's Writing: 1929 and the Twenty-First Century

In 1929 Woolf argued that two necessary and interdependent conditions for women writers were an income of five hundred pounds a year and a space of their own in which to write. The act of writing for publication is "liberatory" for Woolf in the sense that it can provide women with an opportunity to earn money and enter into the public realm. Thus Woolf claims that of greater historical importance than the Crusades or the War of the Roses is that at the end of the eighteenth century middle-class women began to write (66). Woolf's demand for a new space for women writers plays with traditional notions of personal and political boundaries by transforming the historical experience of a woman invisibly locked away in her home—as women "have sat indoors all these millions of years" (87), ironically without any privacy—to one of freedom from intrusion. Jane Goldman, citing Peggy Kamuf (1982, 17), writes that

> Woolf's room metaphor not only signifies the declaration of political and cultural space for women, private and public, but the intrusion of women into spaces previously considered the spheres of men. *A Room of One's Own* is not so much about retreating into a private feminine sphere as about interruptions, trespassing, and the breaching of boundaries. (Goldman 2007, 71)

Woolf refers to the private or familial sphere as one of confinement, potential violence, and bereft of actual life or public experiences when it is imposed on women. When women cease "to be the protected sex," she argues, when we "remove that protection, expose them to the same exertions and activities" (41) as men, new opportunities for women to be women will arise; and Woolf's essay, as she notes in her metanarrative, is "opening the door" for this to occur (42). She insists that money will open most doors and transform most lives and is the means for securing a future writing tradition for women, making a room of one's own and the poet Judith Shakespeare both physically and psychically possible.

For Woolf a room of one's own, a room in which a woman can write, is impossible to realize without access to other material goods, such as food, clothing, and shelter. She writes: "A good dinner is of great importance to good talk. One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well" (20). She also questions "what effect poverty has on the mind; and what effect wealth has on the mind" (25). The materiality of spaces is thus clearly tied to imagination, perhaps seen best when Woolf is refused entry to Cambridge's gravel path, library, and chapel, which are reserved for men only. She laments:

> I thought of the organ booming in the chapel and of the shut doors of the library; and I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and, thinking of the safety and prosperity of the one sex and of the poverty and insecurity of the other and the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of a writer…. (25–26)

Woolf makes the case that sexual segregation, both public and private, puts women, particularly those who write, at a social, political, and monetary disadvantage.

While the essay is very much an exercise in establishing the necessity of material conditions for women to have a room in which to write, and in contributing to a literary tradition women can turn to for inspiration,

build upon, and improve, Woolf's discussion of the materiality of rooms is nevertheless imperfect for some critics. Michèle Barrett, in particular, notes that Woolf "retains the notion that in the correct conditions art may be totally divorced from economic, political, or ideological constraints" (1979, 17) and observes that the text's early emphasis on materiality as the necessary precondition for writing evaporates as it progresses (23). I disagree with the claim that Woolf does, or even could, disassociate materiality from art, as she herself argues that "fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible" (43). The necessary connection between women's creativity and the materiality of a space is further evident when considering Woolf's claim for five hundred pounds a year.

The assertion that women writers need an income of five hundred pounds a year deserves much more attention than I can give it here, but I will emphasize its most relevant aspects in relation to the question of space, not only in the context of the colonization and imperialism of Woolf's time but also within today's technology-driven capitalism, the result of which is cheap gendered labor. Historicizing the English room during the nineteenth century, which I argue is still meaningful today, Margaret Higonnet observes:

> While the poorest women lived in quarters so cramped that segregation by sex was scarcely possible and privacy a dream, the architecture of wealthy women's "private" domains subdivided into private and public arenas, such as dressing rooms and salons. The home had a very different configuration of private and public for a mistress or a maid, for an aristocrat or a peasant, "upstairs" and "downstairs," in a city or on the land. (1994, 4)

A room of one's own, a physical space, a separate area with its own walls or partitions is not easily attained by poor women, as Woolf is well aware.

Describing the inspiration a renowned male artist might take from seeing a woman in a domestic setting, Woolf asserts that for a woman to verbalize her experiences when entering a room is too difficult: "The rooms differ so completely; they are calm or thunderous; open to the sea, or, on the contrary, give on to a prison yard; are hung with washing; or alive with opals and silks; are hard as horsehair or soft as feathers— one has only to go into any room in any street for the whole of that extremely complex force of femininity to fly in one's face" (87). Given that women have historically spent so much time inside rooms, according to Woolf, their "creative power differs greatly from the creative power of men. And one must conclude that it would be a thousand pities if it were hindered or wasted.… It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men…." (87). These affirmations of sexual difference suggest that while men and women are different, neither sex is superior to the other, and thus woman's position as inferior and subordinate to man in a patriarchal society needs to be radically challenged: thus "a self-defined woman … would not be satisfied with sameness [to man], but otherness and difference would be given social and symbolic representation" (Whitford 1991a, 24–25). Sexual difference is linked directly to Woolf's thoughts on a women's writing tradition, which begins with Judith, William Shakespeare's working-class sister (a rebellious woman who experiences rape, abuse, obscurity, and suicide). The British women's writing tradition Woolf traces in 1929, which follows Judith Shakespeare, includes Aphra Behn, Lady Winchilsea, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Dorothy Osborne (79, 91), and ends with another one of Woolf's fictitious narrators, Mary Carmichael, thinking "back through her mothers" (96), because this maternal tradition is deemed essential by Woolf for women writers.

Regarding a matrilinear genealogy of women writers, Woolf argues that "one must read it [Carmichael's novel] as if it were the last volume in a fairly long series, continuing all those other books.… For books continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately" (79). One could say Woolf is only speaking of a British women's tradition and that there exist now, in the twenty-first century, various Western

women's writing traditions or canons following Woolf's genealogy. For example, in Canada there is Margaret Atwood, Marie Campbell, Anne Carson, Anne Hébert, Alice Munro, Carol Shields, Annie Proulx, and Jane Zwicky. However, is there a women's writing tradition in the developing world, or does the tradition Woolf espouses merely cater to a Western and patriarchal ideology of the written text that requires subscribing to Western feminist notions of ownership, capitalism, and freedom, and arguably also to the idea of a room of one's own?[2]

What does a non-Western room of one's own look like? And does the Western writing tradition inspired by Woolf come at the expense of other, non-Western women? Jane Marcus argues so, and I would agree: "We have rooms of our own because they don't—our sisters in the former colonies on whose labor the 'first' world largely functions" (2004, 42). Are we in the Western world repeating the oppressions based on race, nationhood, and gender that Marcus (1994, 176) identifies in Woolf's text? One of the most telling examples of these oppressions is provided by Woolf's aunt in Bombay who "falls" from her horse (a Biblical reference to the fallen Eve is clearly suggested, and perhaps also symbolizes the inevitable future decline of the British Empire) (Woolf 38). The woman is Woolf's relative and by extension implicates Woolf herself in colonialism; the narrator's money, which allows her to write in her room, has come from this aunt. Marcus argues that the white woman writer's economic freedom, lauded by Woolf, comes "at the expense of colonial expansion" (1994, 174), which entails the exploitation of women in India and Africa. She concludes that "the precious room of her own ... so symbolic of feminist struggles in the twentieth century has been bought with [women's] blood money" (175). In Woolf's essay, the narrators are white Englishwomen of privilege who are not subject to racial discrimination nor to the restraints imposed on the working class; for them, separate gendered spheres, such as a room of one's own, are possible, though hierarchies based on gender and gendered divisions of labor remain intact.

As Marcus perceptively notes, however, "the salient subtext in every Woolf novel [and essay] is the voice of the working-class women" (1987, 138), while *A Room of One's Own* "is a class narrative that allows Virginia Woolf to imagine the creative writer in her cook, who is home washing the dishes while she is speaking" (2004, 8). But, as Marcus asks, "What about race?" (2004, 8). If we, and Woolf, can imagine Judith Shakespeare as a working-class woman, can we also imagine her as black? Woolf's controversial statement, "It is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wanting to make an Englishwoman of her" (51), has provoked several interpretations and readings in terms of race, nationhood, gender, and economics. Though perhaps it stands as Woolf's attempt to absolve herself, and all English women (though we remember her wealthy colonizing aunt in Bombay), from the acts of patriarchal imperialism, a literal claiming and taking of another's space that aims to make the whole world an English room of one's own, the quotation remains problematic.

A sense of shared gender, a communal space, between women of different races is missing in Woolf. Her definition of "Englishwoman" does not include black women (Marcus 2004, 44). Excluded from the category of woman by virtue of her color, the "negress" is implicitly, by virtue of being black, also excluded from being English. The notion that the woman may in fact be English or at least British never enters Woolf's consideration; as Marcus asserts, "what is necessary for an 'Englishwoman's' identity, the subversive text says, is white skin and aristocratic blood" (2004, 35–36). If the room is Woolf's escape from a patriarchal empire of space-taking, judgment, and gaze, where Englishmen want to make Englishwomen out of fine negresses, then the passage likewise suggests that the woman of color needs her own private domain not only for the same reasons but also to escape being racialized, victimized, and objectified by the gaze of white women such as Woolf. Though Woolf might have believed she was avoiding making a "fine negress" into an

object of patriarchal desire, her act is questionable because it singles out the negress as a stranger, not as a sister. Woolf's statement implies that Judith Shakespeare is not and cannot be black (Marcus 2004, 32), nor can Woolf imagine her own sister as being black. How the negress views a white woman like Woolf is never asked, though potentially she could, like Woolf, also be imparting her own racialized, gendered, and nationalized gaze.

My reservations about race, in terms of who can achieve the traditional materiality Woolf's room stood for in 1929, continue in our globalized twenty-first century and are further linked with the ownership of space. In 1929, Woolf conceived of reflective writing as monopolized by men's ownership of both public and private space—essentially all spaces. This is evident when one night, looking out the window at the anonymous famous university, she visualizes writing in terms of exteriors and interiors: the old stone, the domes, towers, and books,

> pictures of old prelates and worthies hanging in paneled rooms; … the quiet rooms looking across the quiet quadrangles. And (pardon me the thought) I thought, too, of the admirable smoke and drink and the deep armchairs and the pleasant carpets: of the urbanity, the geniality, the dignity which are the offspring of luxury and privacy and space. Certainly our mothers had not provided us with anything comparable to all this.… (25)

Men's luxury and space give birth to dignity, geniality, and philosophical and theoretical reflection, including reflection on women. In male-authored texts, Woolf notes, "Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her [woman's] lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband" (45). Women such as Mrs. Seton, her mother, and her mother's mother are not writing, Woolf notes, but giving birth to children (22–23, 111), as they engage in upholding the material basis of society through domestic work.

The reality of women's poverty and consequent unequal distribution of "rooms of one's own" in the twenty-first century are remarkably similar to the conditions of Woolf's time, though most middle-class women are no longer indoors at home; instead, they are employed in the public realm. Thus, while some women of privilege may have rooms of their own, such as an office or studio, either inside or outside of the home (or both), another common economic reality amongst working women artists, such as China's Lin Tianmiao, is making the room serve double duty as one's workspace and living space. It is a room of one's own, but it is also one's only room. In addition to the difficulty in mapping out and imagining a physical and creative space, either outside of or within the home, women are still expected to perform most domestic tasks, which creates a "double burden" and often entails the sacrifice of any inventive private space or time.[3] When women are "surviving," Woolf suggests, they are not penning their thoughts.

While no longer adequate for a woman writing in any Western society, five hundred pounds a year is sufficient for women writers living in certain "developing" countries.[4] The website MeasuringWorth (2012) indicates that Woolf's £500 correlates today to a middle-class income of roughly £23,700 or 40,000 US dollars, which suggests a modest income for a working woman in the Western world, given that the gross national income (GNI) per capita in UK equals $37,780 (approximately £23,787) (World Bank 2012). For a woman living in 2011 in Zimbabwe or Tanzania, where the GNI per capita is $640 and $540 respectively, 500 pounds, equaling roughly 800 US dollars, would still allow a standard of living well above the average income level. Further, the romanticized writer's room that both Goldman and Barrett identify in *A Room of One's Own* becomes not only suspect but put into yet sharper perspective when looking directly not just at women's global poverty and employment alone but also examining them specifically in combination with the issue of literacy. Though the *OED* defines literacy as "a knowledge of letters, especially reading and writing," this definition, like the one for "room," is outdated and must be extended to include the digital realm.

Gunther Kress, amongst others (Tyner 2010; Burniske 2008; Coiro et al. 2008; Jenkins 2002), argues that effective communication increasingly requires the ability to use computers and gather information by means of communication technologies; thus any understanding of literacy should now encompass the use of sets of skills needed for digital technologies (Kress 2003, 35, 56). Therefore, rethinking women's writing in relation to Woolf's essay must now also take technology into account. In addition to considering Woolfian "offline" rooms, the effects of space, class, race, culture, geography, and sexuality on women's writing must be analyzed also in terms of the online room, and this analysis must consider the direct correlations between women's poverty and both traditional and digital illiteracy.[5]

In sum, the 1929 room Woolf speaks of is still, in many respects, the same today; it is very much a Western concept of the material room that most women cannot achieve, and it reinforces the now well-established term "feminization of poverty."[6] Though Woolf is addressing privileged women from Newnham and Girton Colleges, she does ask why women compared to men are poor (27), a question that the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2012) and Vital Voices Global Partnership (2012) both take up. The UN Women: National Committee Australia (2012) finds that women's wages are still much lower than men's, and that women "bear a disproportionate burden of the world's poverty." According to Vital Voices, women make up 66% of the world's workers and produce 50% of the world's food, but only earn 10% of the income and own 1% of the property. These global statistics suggest women in poverty rarely have the means to learn or purchase new technologies, which are fueled by Western ideologies of consumption.[7] The above-cited evidence of women's poverty is meant to establish the continued relevance of Woolf's traditional room of 1929 in terms of twenty-first century women's work and writing. This is necessary in order to support my overall argument and primary focus, which is that Woolf's philosophy of women's writing is dependent on materiality (meant as money and a physical and psychical room to write) and can, by being updated and extended to include online writing and virtual rooms, offer useful tools for rethinking women's writing and the materiality of technology in the present time. Though difficult questions remain as to what paths to empowerment women can create and achieve, and how both Western and non-Western women can resist and transform gender inequalities in striving towards a material ethics encompassing both a traditional room and virtual "room" of one's own, Woolf's essay, including the women's writing represented in her text, suggests that writing for women is an immediate and necessary political action.

### "Chloe Liked Olivia": The Virtual Laboratory and Women's Writing

The issue of whether Woolf subscribes to a notion of equality between the sexes that is premised on sexual difference (men and women are ontologically different beings and thus have different needs and desires) or that relies on gender as construction (men and women are not ontologically different, but socially constructed as such—which is closely connected to Woolf's concept of androgyny) still stands at an impasse in current feminist theory (Jacobus 1986; Marcus 2010; Moi 1985; Showalter 2009; Solomon 1989) and is relevant to my discussion of online rooms and women's writing. Laura Marcus suggests that Woolf's "accounts of the difference of women's values, in literature and in life, are central to her writings but they are also open-ended, and more relativist than absolute" (2000, 212). Referencing Mary Jacobus, Marcus posits that for Woolf "women's writing, like sexual difference itself, becomes a question rather than an answer" (212). Woolf's position on sexual difference and the construction of gender, while ambiguous, inspires the following questions: Is cyberspace dependent upon sexual difference or is it an androgynous "room" where the writer freely lives? Are websites and chatrooms no longer sexually discriminating, having made realizable Woolf's sense of a space beyond gender? While online, one is typically not meeting another/

the other face to face. Does embodiment matter when one searches a website? Does cyberspace render discriminations premised on gender, race, and class that Woolf discusses obsolete or invisible?

Though online rooms, for example chatrooms, might intuitively appear as *tabulae rasae* for users (reminding us of Susan Gubar's description of how "woman has been defined symbolically in the patriarchy as a tabula rasa, a lack, a negation, an absence" [1985, 305–6]), a space for a Butlerian gender performativity or self-invention because there is no "physical" interaction, Lori Kendall insists that a body behind anonymity is still expected in online relationships, and that discriminations based on visibility (of race, class, disability, and gender) thus continue to persist (2002, 215). Rethinking the division between disembodied and embodied presence is further complicated by users taking up webcams or Skype video, for example; would Woolf, keeping her anger in check, use an androgynous pseudonym on Twitter and avoid using video conferencing or FaceTime?

Elaine Showalter argues that Woolf's recourse to the myth of androgyny "helped her to evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition" (2009, 216). Woolf, for example, accuses Lady Winchilsea of being forced to "anger and bitterness" (61) and Charlotte Brontë of an abrupt disturbance in *Jane Eyre* when she lets her anger seep in (73). At the same time, she herself lets the "black snake" (33) of anger in when she sketches a picture of the author of *The Mental, Moral, and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex*. She writes that upon reading this ridiculous title, "Anger had snatched my pencil while I dreamt…. My heart had leapt. My cheek had burnt. I had flushed with anger" (33). Ellen Bayuk Rosenman reads Woolf as implying that "Brontë's anger disfigures her writing and that anger is a legitimate, essential source of female self-expression" (1995, 109). The same might also be said of Woolf's sketch of the professor, whose own anger, provoked by his attempting to protect his proclaimed superiority, makes her (as she is ashamed to admit?) angry as well (Woolf 36). Showalter, however, contends that "abstracted from its physicality and anger, denied any action, Woolf's vision of womanhood is as deadly as it is disembodied. The ultimate room of one's own is the grave" (2009, 243). That Woolf's room of one's own, dependent on an androgyny that avoids feminist political activism and confrontation, can be likened to woman's coffin by Showalter leads credence to Julie Solomon, who also holds Woolf in contempt for not angrily challenging the Beadle who waves her off the gravel path in Cambridge (1989, 335). There is, however, I argue, a salient anger that runs throughout, and even underneath, the essay and that drives it forward. Woolf's anger, I believe, does seep in—and is tied to the material realities of women's poverty and unequal status in all forms of life within patriarchy and made manifest in her act of writing the essay, which becomes the medium for her anger.

The debate between sexual difference and androgyny plays itself out in a very real way in terms of offline and online space, particularly given that Woolf, for some critics, upholds the status of male writers; in speaking of a generic writer she refers to "his experience" and "his mind" (103). Shakespeare is the ideal, and though Woolf's Shakespeare has an androgynous mind (97, 102), for Showalter this represents another instance of a flight from engaging with feminist anger (2009, 282). Solomon interprets Woolf's idealization of the male or androgynous writer in regards to Judith Shakespeare, claiming that for Woolf "Shakespeare's sister longs to follow in the footsteps of her brother" (1989, 335). Perhaps Woolf too wants to follow in these footsteps when she attempts to enter the library in order to read Charles Lamb (Woolf 9)? This act is strange given that Woolf claims, using imagery of spatial measurement, that for women writers "it is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. Lamb, Browne, Thackeray, Newman, Sterne, Dickens, De Quincey—whoever it may be—never helped a woman yet…. The weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from

him successfully" (76). It is, however, possible to affirm that Woolf deconstructs sexual identity as defined in terms of a masculine/feminine dichotomy.

Woolf's concept of androgyny can be viewed as breaking down rigid barriers that work to keep women from "male" spaces (the university, wealth, science, literature of genius, and so on), and within spaces assigned to women (i.e., the home). She envisions a new space for gender; it is not "a flight from fixed gender identities, but a recognition of their falsifying metaphysical nature.... [Woolf] has understood that the goal of the feminist struggle must precisely be to deconstruct the death-dealing binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity" (Moi 1985, 13). For Mary Jacobus, as for Toril Moi, Woolf's androgyny engages with and negotiates difference (Jacobus 1986, 39; Moi 1985, 3, 9–10); it does not entail, as Laura Marcus points out, "a sublation into a unified, sex-transcendent holism" (2010, 164). Woolf, eager to reject rigid and falsifying definitions of femininity and masculinity as assigned to a specific sex, female or male, nevertheless clearly adheres to an ontological sexual difference that is instrumental in her writing and now can be redeployed in rethinking virtual spaces. While virtual space has the potential to challenge patriarchal sexual difference, like the unity of mind Woolf describes (87–88), presently the individual creators of this space, its users, and the predominantly Western culture that produces online spaces are determined by patriarchal practices to such an extent that it is difficult to conceive of virtual reality outside of, or beyond, these parameters. Thus no space, traditional or virtual, is gender-neutral. Online versions of women's magazines, for example *Cosmopolitan*, which disturbingly describes itself as "The Online Women's Magazine for Fashion, Sex Advice, Dating Tips and Celebrity News," suggest cyberspace is not androgynous, but an extension of sexual difference as defined by patriarchy. The masquerade it stages for women relies on a femininity as defined by masculine desire; its female participants "'envelop' themselves in the 'needs/desires/fantasies of men'" (Whitford 1991b, 77), which keep women in a subordinate and inferior position in relation and opposition to man and masculinity.

My reading of the online room as a virtual gendered space, dependent upon sexual difference, is supported by online publications and subject matter such as *Cosmopolitan*'s website. The existence of such strongly gendered content on the Internet motivates me to ask if the underlying online space, the virtual blank page, can itself be gendered? More specifically, are online spaces conceived as feminine because a patriarchal espisteme informs the Internet? Joan Acker, quoting from Sally Hacker's book *Pleasure, Power, and Technology* (1989), argues that "the pleasures of technology often become 'harnessed to domination, and passion becomes directed toward power over nature, the machine, and other people, particularly women, in the work hierarchy'" (Acker 1990, 153). Characterizing online space in general as feminine is justifiable if one correlates it to Western cultural symbolizations of nature as a mother and vice-versa and recalls feminist responses, both negative (conceptualists Denise Riley or Simone de Beauvoir, for example) and positive (ecofeminists such as Karen Warren or Noel Sturgeon), to this equation.[8] Do the "infinite" areas of the Internet map onto Western interpretations of nature and woman as inferior to cultural, rational *oikonomos* man? Is Woolf's blank sheet of paper "on which was written in large letters WOMEN AND FICTION" (27) the same as the Internet in its infinite white space, a feminine sphere, an artificial, man-made, passive "blank page," to use Gubar's term? Or are these blank spaces "products of the male imagination, objects created for the use of men" (Gubar 1985, 293), destined by masculine offline and online neo-imperialism and global capitalism to be conquered and manipulated? Is cyberspace the new frontier of space to be mastered under the rule of e-imperialism? Are we to think of online rooms as feminine spaces in terms of virtual reproduction, an artificial womb or *mater*iality, an electronic mother to "reproduction and sexuality and the biotechnical appropriation of procreation" (Braidotti 2011, 187) by

techno-savvy men? Gubar writes of the connections between the pen as a penis and the hymen as the page, explaining that "when the metaphors of literary creativity are filtered through a sexual lens, female sexuality is often identified with textuality" (1985, 294). What might be the new pen/penis of the digital age if the blank page is still the hymen?

Criticizing the Western tradition by means of spatial metaphors for its fear of woman's embodiment, Margaret Whitford, articulating Luce Irigaray's viewpoint, writes that "man needs to represent [woman] as a *closed* volume, a container, his desire is to immobilize her, keep her under his control, in his possession, even in his house. He needs to believe that the container belongs to him. The fear is of the 'open container'" (1991a, 28). Rosi Braidotti echoes this assessment when she writes, "Woman/mother is monstrous by excess: she transcends established norms and transgresses boundaries. She is monstrous by lack: woman/mother does not possess the substantive unity of the masculine subject … the indefinite, the ambiguous, the mixed, woman/mother is subjected to a constant process of metamorphization as 'other-than'" (228). Statistics on women's "lack" of both creative and practical involvement with computer technology and on their "lack" of power over the means of textual production would suggest this might be the case. As Acker asserts,

> claims to non-responsibility [by multinational companies] reinforce the underlying gender divisions between production and reproduction and the gendered understructure of capitalist production, as they continually relegate reproduction to the unpaid work of women or to the low-paid work of women in the for-profit economy. These gendered elements in fundamental capitalist processes are exacerbated in present globalizing changes. (2004, 30)

The first section of this paper suggested that in a global context women play little part in developing technology or even using it. However, women are clearly forming and reproducing the material basis for its development, which includes erratic and irregular work schedules, required overtime and enforced part-time labor, sexual exploitation and the threat of one's job being taken away and filled by cheaper labor at any moment, creating potentially political silence for fear of losing one's position, along with rivalry between women over limited resources.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf describes in encouraging terms a new potential space for women: the scientific or technological room. She depicts herself reading Mary Carmichael's fictitious novel, *Life's Adventure*, about two women scientists, Chloe and Olivia, who share a laboratory. Woolf writes that "these two young women were engaged in mincing liver, which is, it seems, a cure for pernicious anaemia" (83). Though Woolf laments that Carmichael does not go further in describing how Chloe liked Olivia within her novel, she commends her for showing the reader a glimpse into the lives of women not in the company of men. Woolf therefore encourages her female audience to take up where Carmichael has left off and to write as many books as possible on as many subjects as possible, including that of science. By doing so, women will "certainly profit the art of fiction. For books have a way of influencing each other" (107). The link Woolf makes between science and fiction is evident today in women's organizations such as the UN's Division for the Advancement of Women and other initiatives that work towards the goal of equality and empowerment of women through literacy. However, it remains clear that traditional literacy, let alone digital literacy, remains a challenge for many women, the Chloes and Olivias around the globe.

Woolf's concern about women's inequality to men, particularly in terms of physical spaces, technology, education, earnings, and writing, is thus pertinent to the virtual room of the twenty-first century. The 2009 factsheet published by the Women's Learning Partnership (WLP) confirms that there is both a gender divide and a digital divide simultaneously and globally working against women's interests. While the challenge,

undertaken by Woolf, of encouraging women to pursue technological and scientific jobs in North America and Europe was difficult in her time, it remains considerable now (as reports like Heidi Seybert's on the European Union [2007] articulate), and more so in non-Western countries.[9] In addition to the problem of women not entering computer-related fields, the percentage of women using the Internet and computers for either personal or professional use remains low globally. While it is quite high for Western countries—for example, in the EU27 65% of women use the Internet at least once a week (Seybert 2011, 3)—the WLP factsheet claims, with regard to Muslim-majority countries, that only 4% of Arab women use the Internet and that Moroccan women represent almost a third of this figure.[10] Also necessary today in this discussion of the woman writer and her access to a writing room, as espoused by Woolf, is the consideration of that room containing a computer connected to the Internet. In most African nations, for example, such connection is not a widely available commodity: the average cost of a local dial-up Internet account for 20 hours a month in Africa is about $60, compared to $22 a month in the US, where the average monthly salary is $3,945, while the average African monthly salary is less than $60 (WLP 2009).

As mentioned previously, and intimated by Woolf in her descriptions of patriarchal sexual difference (which privileges man as superior in relation and in opposition to woman), there are some strong indicators as to why women on a global scale are not partaking equally in using or producing technology. Acker argues that "in today's organizing for globalization, we can see the emergence of a hegemonic hyper-masculinity that is aggressive, ruthless, competitive, and adversarial" (2004, 30) and that "the new dominant growth sectors, information technology, biotech innovation, and global finance, are all heavily male-dominated, although women fill some of the jobs in the middle and at the bottom, as is usual in many old economy sectors" (32). Woolf anticipates this argument when she discusses picking up an English newspaper. She claims that anyone reading this paper could "not fail to be aware, even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the rule of a patriarchy.... His was the power and the money and the influence. He was the proprietor of the paper and its editor and sub-editor" (35). It is not a coincidence that Acker names Rupert Murdoch, Phil Knight, and Bill Gates as leaders in these growth sectors; with the exception of Knight, a direct link of these men to computer technology and the circulation of offline and online texts is manifest.

Research by US Aid (2012) also supports the contention that technology is often seen as "male" and invented or designed by men for male pleasure and for the furthering of men's interests. One illustration of this is the online sex industry, which reaps $57 billion in revenue worldwide. Twelve billion dollars of this revenue generates from the US and equals "more than all combined revenues of all professional football, baseball, and basketball franchises or the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC (6.2 billion)" (Bissette 2004).[11] Certainly women do visit sex-oriented websites as well, but the majority of these statistics comprise male Internet users (given the association of the word "user" with exploitation, the term itself is troubling). Though Woolf herself did not foresee this continuation of the sexual divide in technology (one might consider women's romance novels as a counterpart to male pornography), her thinking supports the position that the Internet (often conceived as a masculine or disembodied social trend) is embedded in gendered materiality. Pornography on the Internet, invading the virtual room through the visually explicit subjugation of women, operates along heterosexual male-oriented parameters and psychological barriers, further deterring women from an authentic Woolfian space, let alone body, of their own. By successfully obscuring women's oppression, the virtual room feels "bodiless" when, of course, it is really all body; there is a materiality to digital texts, a real embodied presence—a version of Woolf's Judith—behind every image. Thus, the currently prevalent form of Woolf's virtual room of one's own challenges epistemological assumptions about the disembodied nature of the digital text.

In addition to the challenge of creating online spaces for women writers and the perception of technology as male, women involved with technology often perceive themselves or are perceived as less sexually desirable (Kendall 2002, 88). Lori Kendall notes that in developing countries further determents include expensive training materials and inconvenient times and locations that work against women's schedules, particularly for women with children. Internet public-access points, such as telecenters and cybercafés, are sometimes considered inappropriate spaces for women and girls, thus additionally reinforcing the divide between the private and the public, women and men, physical (body) and virtual (mind) that Woolf resisted. The US Aid report (2012) argues, in reference to developing countries, that

> Entrepreneurial success is positively correlated with business tools such as Microsoft Excel, accounting software, and access to banking and capital. Women's relative unfamiliarity with these tools means they are at a disadvantage when managing their businesses. Women's physical access to training and encouragement to learn how to use computers, especially for business usage, is much lower than that of men.

The issue of women's access to public spaces, as discussed by Woolf in terms of the library and chapel, remains a reality for women's writing today. Moreover, as the report notes, women often do not have their own personal computer and thus rely on male family or community members to use the technology on their behalf.

Another hindrance to the number of women writing and publishing, online and offline, is that much of the text on Internet sites is in one of four of the major world languages: English, Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish (US Aid 2012). While the Internet might be considered by some as an open-plan space, without boundaries, both in the online realm and when it comes to publishing books, national and linguistic divisions, as Woolf also reminds us, function like walls and clearly discriminate. According to Louis Gereaux (2010), "the top seven countries which publish books in order are Great Britain, the United States, China, the Russian Federation, Germany, Spain, and Iran. After Iran, the number of titles per country is less than 50,000 per year." Gereaux notes that "most of the books published in each country are written in their own language for their native speakers." Thus women writers looking for publication, in hard copy and more likely now online, with a global readership, will need to be translated if they do not write in one of the world's major languages.[12] In relation to publication, and given the immense number of texts freely available online (for example through Google Books), perhaps the most urgent and pressing issues, not only for women's writing but for writers in general, are those of copyright protection, competitive pricing for online books, and fair payment to writers who choose not to publish their work in open-access forums but do so commercially.

Statistics on adult literacy, digital access, and computer usage by women in developing nations can be changed by supporting women's organizations that are committed to creating spaces and the means for women to write. Focusing on an economy of sexual difference outside of and beyond patriarchal discourses is imperative, because patriarchal societies like Woolf's and our own technology-driven one "have vested interests in distorting the terms of the differences" (Marcus 2010, 153). Thus Woolf does not reject sexual difference so much as she does the exploitation of difference that works in favor of patriarchal practices and imprisons women in subordinate and inferior positions to men. One strategy adopted by agencies and indigenous feminisms, which Woolf anticipates with her invention of Chloe and Olivia's laboratory, is to better acquaint women with technology. For example, the Women's Networking Support Programme of the Association for Progressive Communications (2012), Africawoman, and US Aid (2012) encourage young women to overcome, as Woolf suggests we must, the sexual and digital division of labor. Such organizations aim to claim a space for women online in order to raise awareness related to women's issues and concerns, such as politics, education, government programs, health, and AIDS (Alden 2004). Africawoman, for

instance, operates online and through community radio, bringing together women journalists from ten different African countries (Alden 2004).

It is often difficult for feminists to discern when and which traditions are oppressive. Nonetheless, important feminist initiatives in terms of rethinking spaces and rooms have been undertaken toward implementing change for women, for example granting greater access to non-traditionally gendered labor roles, including those that involve working with technology. I believe it is imperative that women work collaboratively across the boundaries of race, class, and nationhood in order to create meaningful material rooms for themselves offline, but perhaps even more importantly online. While differing in approaches, feminists tend to agree that women's exclusion from cultural spaces has been the result of the objectification and domination of nature and women under patriarchal scientism and that such past and continuing practices cannot be ignored. How feminists enter into these cultural spaces is also a concern, and as Woolf's words about the library, gravel path, and chapel invoke, women must confront the politics of the network of web pages as a new room, a new border, even a new frontier for women's writing. To repeat, Woolf argues that "fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible" (43). That one can sit on a beach in Brazil and write a novel, or be sitting directly across from you (wherever you are) writing the same novel is irrelevant. Both acts no longer require the typewriter, or the even more obsolete pen and paper, but merely a device with access to the Internet. Who needs to stroll the Cambridge grounds to the library when with a simple "www" one can be there, or in any library, instantaneously? The visibility of the physical world becomes further and further removed the deeper we go into cyberspace, making it easy to forget, not care, or be ignorant of the women who make such privileged delving possible.

Woolf's retort to Cambridge, "Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind" (76), might seem irrelevant today because the physical barriers she speaks of are simply no longer there. But if we rethink the "library" in conjunction with the statistics provided earlier, as the realm of the virtual and, more specifically, as a feminine virtual space controlled and operated by men, which we daily explore for access to information, dictionaries, and sources of reference, we know that neither women at large nor women writers in particular have achieved global equality. A quick look at winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature between 1945 and 1966 reveals no female recipients, and between 1966 and 2010 there were only six female winners, intimating that Judith's success is still far in the distance.[13] These six women add up to a mere thirteen percent of all winners. Likewise, according to the Barnes and Noble's list of "Year's Best Reading: Editors' Picks" in fiction for 2011, seven of the top ten books were written by men, while nine of the top ten books on "Amazon's 100 Best Books of 2011" are by male authors. With regard to other forms of publishing, in a recent online article Meghan O'Rourke (2011) argues that there is a surprising scarcity of women writers publishing in literary magazines such as *The Atlantic* or *The New Yorker*. O'Rourke, citing the informative website *VIDA: Women in the Literary Arts*, suggests that its "study raises questions about how *seriously* women writers are taken and how viable it is for them to make a living at writing. As we all know, small rewards and affirmations have a concrete but unquantifiable effect on one's writing life. So does silence." Woolf, a writer who should have won the Nobel Prize, like her successors such as Alice Walker or Margaret Atwood, is not permitted to follow in the steps of successful male authors.

Seeking an economy of sexual difference that overcomes patriarchal male authorship, calculation, and ownership in favor of reciprocity and by acknowledging a maternal genealogy based on spatial metaphors, such as Woolf encourages, is well supplemented by Luce Irigaray's insightful essay, "Women-Amongst-

Themselves: Creating a Woman-to-Woman Sociality." Envisioning a space, perhaps an online one, where women can collectively join together—where, in Woolf's terms, Chloe and Olivia in their shared laboratory subvert male relationships—Irigaray takes up Woolf's thinking in her discussion of *affidamento*. *Affidamento* entails women joining together in shared values but without reducing their individuality to a universal concept of "woman." Irigaray further warns against current technology or technocracy, suggesting *affidamento* would operate despite and against "the current reign of technocracy and its often abstract, cold ... and weak rationality" (1991, 193). Irigaray also argues that she as a woman, like Woolf before her, is "physically and mentally somewhat alien to the technocratic 'paradise' and its almost fatal hold over its workers ... [but] that is not to say that women are incapable of entering technocratic society. On the contrary! They can enter it more easily than an economy which demands, for example, more muscular strength, more warlike courage" (195). The problem is not in women entering into technology but in how women relate to this new environment and what transformations, if any, they can make within the patriarchal structure that attempts to both neutralize sexual difference and employ for its own benefit (for example, by reducing women to sex, paying women workers less, or offering them more "flexible" working hours).

To reiterate, I take from Woolf's essay not only the requirement for a room in the traditional sense, a physical space with four walls, but the ever-increasing inclusion today of virtual spaces (websites contained within four virtual walls) created by women for women. Claiming a virtual room of women's own will involve combating techno-patriarchy through e-feminism. This e-feminism, imbued with an ethos of care, would reevaluate the link between textuality and sexuality, and women's access to and use of technology and online space, leading toward fair-trade technology. Ecofeminist Karen Warren suggests that a transformative feminism "would promote values and social processes (such as care, friendship, reciprocity in relationships, appropriate trust, diversity) underplayed or lost in traditional ... ethics; and it would challenge masculinist versions of science and technology" (1987, 18–20). An example of such e-feminist projects, indebted to an updating and expansion of Woolf's position to include a virtual space of one's own, is the recent e-book *Women's Work* (2012), edited by Clare Strahan. *Women's Work* is an innovative collection of short stories written by emerging Australian women writers; its purpose is to recognize women's writing as making invaluable contributions to fiction, and thus warranting a wider reading audience, more critical reviews, and better promotional marketing, both offline and online. E-feminist e-books have the potential to provide women writers with a much needed online platform or space of their own.

Related to the publishing of feminist e-books is the major obstacle that Woolf's essay names: the practical and thus economical aspect of writing. One project designed to combat elitist writing, and which works to include women from the developing world in a meaningful way, is sponsored by the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement and described as a "Knowledge-Sharing Product" in the organization's "Annual Report: Effective E-Feminism Project 2005" (IIAV 2006). The report states that in 2005 IIAV ran two simultaneous projects: 1) a training program to improve women's experiences and involvement with technology in Serbia and Montenegro, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and the Czech Republic; and 2) an information dissemination program entitled Digitall Future (2). Believing that in order to hold a job and be competitive in the job market one must be computer-literate (9), this feminist organization identified lack of funding as one of the major obstacles to women's technology. Attempting to raise funds for the women who need them most, the website presents the first of the above two projects in the following terms:

> WITT [Women in Trades and Technology] aims to strengthen civil society, the women's movement, women's
> organizations and those that work towards gender equality and democratic development through the use of

appropriate ICTs. WITT follows similar principles as how we envision the Internet: free, open, transparent, inclusive, and active. (13)

WITT's contributions to the "E-Feminism Project 2005," especially in terms of free software, not-for-profit legal advice, technical support, creation of local and transnational networks, and "providing accessible information and documentation on issues related to specific questions concerning women and the organisations in which they work" (70), exemplify the kind of materialist feminism that Woolf believed was needed for the women writers of Newnham and Girton colleges and that is now necessary for online spaces.

E-feminist projects thus approach technology differently and might continue to do so in the following ways in regards to women's writing: 1) reconceptualizing the subject or observer (moving away from terminology such as "user" and focusing more specifically on the politics and economics of embodiment in terms of race, nationality, culture, class, religion, and sexuality); 2) designating gendered spaces (for example, for women to be educated by women only); and 3) encouraging subject-object interaction, including the aim to create a visible identity for women writers in the face of discrimination and sexism. Questions about materiality and how for-profit and non-profit organizations can rethink non-capitalistic links and provide safe spaces for women offline and online are both a challenge and a necessary precondition to the success of any e-feminist project. How can knowledge be exchanged, how can women's and men's attitudes about women and technology change to one of serious political and social engagement, and not simply reproduction and/or consumption?

In addition, how might women collectively and transnationally voice the need to work for individuals and companies that organize technological skills training and provide equal access to computer labs and information-technology resources, including the right to both traditional and digital literacy programs? Irigaray posits this kind of thinking by asking, in the same terms in which Woolf envisioned "room" as a separate space for oneself, how women will be able to constitute a "shelter or territory of one's own. How are we to construct this female shelter, this territory in difference?" (Woolf 196). Irigaray's quest is suggested by Woolf when she writes about novelists Jane Austen and Emily Brontë as the only writers who possessed genius and integrity against external authority because, "in the face of all that criticism, in the midst of that purely patriarchal society … they wrote as women write, not as men write" (75). Thus Woolf lauds sexual difference that encourages different economies and takes patriarchy and, I suggest, capitalist patriarchy as the dominant force which must be overcome by women collectively and communally in rethinking a room of one's own, both in terms of traditional materiality and, as e-feminists, with regard to the materiality of virtual spaces.

Tracy Seeley argues that Woolf perceives patriarchy in terms of spatial power and desires. When women define their own subjectivity, she claims, "such incandescence does not mean that women will stop thinking as women, though they will no longer think of themselves as patriarchy does" (2007, 39). Seeley's suggestion for reading Woolf allows one to see sexual difference, once again, as a mode for overcoming the rigid constraints of femininity and masculinity as defined by patriarchy. The US Aid (2012, section "How to Address Gender in ICT Projects") and Natasha Primo in *Gender Issues in the Information Society* (2003, 40, 62, 67–75) recognize such feminist theories and provide some examples of a collective praxis to match, which entails understanding that women in developing nations might embrace and benefit from technology more when it comes from another woman, for instance through renting Internet or telephone time. Training programs aimed at women that offer advice on spreadsheets, e-mail, and management tools, and encompass distance-learning training by other women, are invaluable. Access to safe spaces for free computer time, libraries, and reading rooms, as well as free computer programs, such as those offered by

community centers set up by the Réseau Femmes en Action (Women in Action) network in Burkina Faso, are likewise necessary (Cayré 2011).

Though Woolf testified to patriarchal divisions between materiality and immateriality, man and woman, and body and mind when she strolled the grounds of Cambridge gathering ideas for her lecture, the woman *flâneur* of today can be read in terms of an online engagement with writing as she surfs the web. Maria Bakardjieva argues that an online setting can serve as a social space, particularly for those with an illness, those who are retired, unemployed, suffering from marriage problems, dissatisfaction with work, relocation, those who have globally spread family and friends, or perhaps those who are simply seeking advice or information and want a sense of belonging to an online community, for instance Facebook or Twitter, that is not realized in their everyday lives (2005, 118). In a sense, online spaces can potentially alleviate the loneliness and isolation private rooms create. Free blogs and sites such as YouTube also allow women to access a world audience in a way never before possible. In an ironic way, technology, which does much to discourage women from engaging with it, can also be used as a tool for widespread criticism of multinational corporations and the effects of capitalism, including technological advances that have direct effects on the lived experiences of women. It can be a means for critiquing capitalism's so-called freeing of women from the home only to enslave them in public work that operates, and must do so necessarily, on the principle of gender and racial inequality. Thus it is a way for women to gain visibility and a voice they might not otherwise be able to raise against cultural and political injustices, not to mention abuses by their own governments; one might think here of the much-publicized case of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, who was condemned to be stoned to death by the Iranian government. Ashtiani's case, like so many others, would not have received the media attention it did had not the Internet been used as the primary communication medium to spread the story.

Perhaps through engaging in employment-related and social programs, women worldwide will be able to access education, the Internet, and wordprocessing software, and proceed to write. To express this hope is not to discredit or diminish the merit of already acclaimed women writers from "developing" countries, such as Claribel Alegría, Djenar Maesa Ayu, Amma Darko, Mahasweta Devi, Laura Esquivel, Célestine Hitiura, Vaite, Yvonne Vera, and many others. But what would it be like to write a short story, a poem, or a novel in a computer lab, or on a shared computer in the community? What would a woman's room in a non-capitalist patriarchy look like? Such questions connect back with Woolf when she imagines Jane Austen writing her celebrated tales and creating what Drucilla Cornell names as "the imaginary domain" and "the space of the as if" (1998, 8): "the imaginary domain demands that we lift the prohibitions that prevent us from freeing ourselves" (190). The power of the imagination is expressed by Woolf many times and poses a real threat to a masculine economy; thus we must ask how a woman can reimagine herself as a writer and her relationship with technology after "having been colonized by the male imaginary" (Braidotti 2011, 101)?[14] Woolf's view claims that if imperialist patriarchal culture and its obsession with space does not change, women's writing will remain paradoxically both uncontainable and boxed in (as happens, for example, with the proliferation of chick-lit in today's bookstores). She further mentions Austen writing in her common sitting room, which can be compared with women plagued by interruptions in the communal computer room. Woolf's feminist philosophy nonetheless signals hope for would-be women writers of today. All that is needed is digital literacy and a computer of one's own.

On the one hand, the room is physical, a space between four solid walls, but it is also a free psychic and utopian space of the imagination, a virtual room, which I believe Woolf conceives of in materialist terms. Though I have pointed to the material limits of women in developing nations in terms of physical

and practical access to the Internet, it is also important to see the political value of online tools. Writing online can be a catalyst or way for women to write their lived experiences and gain an identity and visibility outside of their everyday lives. The diverse stories of women, historical references, and statistics provided by Margaret Higonnet (1994) and the UN Women website, to name just two sources, confirm that rooms, both virtual and physical, cannot, nor ever do, exist in isolation. A room, any room, is anchored to the stuff of life and can be a prison as well as means to an escape, the complexity of which is brought to the forefront when Woolf imagines Austen sitting in a common room, Brontë looking solemnly out over the empty fields, and her own self gazing out her London window at the streets below.[15] A containing and confining, limiting and at the same time freeing, a freedom from trespassers while trespassing on patriarchal territory, are all suggested by the meaning of a room. Woolf suggests it is possible to shut one's self off and away, to temporarily experience a privacy that Austen or women in poverty arguably rarely experience, but that it cannot last.[16]

This brings me back to the original discussion of a contemporary online "room" and of how Woolf's modernist approach is still relevant to the twenty-first century in terms of both traditional rooms and online spaces. While the physical limits Woolf discussed in 1929 remain a reality for many women in the world, feminists can no longer ignore the material effects of virtual rooms. When a room is wired to the outside world and provides instant access to our families and strangers simultaneously, it is time to rethink Woolf's feminist notion of a room to encompass the virtual; it is time for e-feminism(s). One could even imagine Woolf, now, not sitting and writing letters but typing e-mails on her laptop, and of course in my imaginary domain Woolf would be Facebook friends with Claribel Alegría, Djenar Maesa Ayu, and Amma Darko. Woolf's encouraging words, thus, should not be forgotten: "I maintain that she [Judith Shakespeare] would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity is worth while" (112). Is this the new motto for the how and why of women's writing in twenty-first-century globalized world? I believe it is, and that a displacing or disruption of patriarchal hierarchies between private and public, mind and body, feminine and masculine, offline and online, physical and virtual, as I have argued throughout this article, is necessary from a materialist feminist perspective. Woolf's lectures show the tenuous and fragile nature of patriarchal capitalism's limits, constructed prejudices, and oppressions, but also their inherent susceptibility to resistance and trespassing. For this reason, Woolf continues to this day, in the era of virtual rooms and e-feminism, to engage and encourage women to wander, muse, and most importantly, to write.

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## Notes

1. Though feminists have written extensively on Woolf's traditional concept of a room, the notion of a virtual room remains unexplored. Curiously, neither Kerstin W. Shands's thorough *Embracing Space: Spatial Metaphors in Feminist Discourse* (1999), which argues that "the spatial boundaries affecting, defining, or determining women's lives are thus both material and metaphorical, involving both the literal, concrete confinement of women in actual domestic space and conditions that are measurable in society at large, that is, legal and economic forms of discrimination that keep woman in certain spaces" (63), mentions virtual space, nor does *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space* (1994), edited by Margaret R. Higonnet and Joan Templeton. Brenda R. Silver connects *A Room of One's Own* to hypertexts in "Virginia Woolf://hypertext" (2001), but does not link the idea of a room with a virtual space.

2. African-American writer Alice Walker traces Woolf's notions of a female tradition in "In Search of Our Mother's

Gardens" (1983). Walker, however, revises Woolf by considering race. As Ellen Bayuk Rosenman claims, "there will be both common ground and divergence in the experiences of black and white women writers.... Walker says that the standards of white women have masqueraded as universal ones for women, absorbing or marginalizing the works of African-Americans just as British [Western capitalist] patriarchy silences women" (1995, 115). Walker's claim can also be updated and developed to include not only African-American writers but all non-white women writers.

3. For an excellent discussion of women's lives within globalization that supports many of the claims I make here, see Joan Acker's article, "Gender, Capitalism and Globalization" (2004). On women's work from a global perspective, see Kim England and Victoria Lawson's chapter, "Feminist Analyses of Work: Rethinking the Boundaries, Gendering, and Spaciality of Work," in *A Companion to Feminist Geography* (2005).

4. "Developing," it must be noted, is not necessarily the right word because it prompts questions such as "Developing towards what?" The term implies that the Western capitalist world is the standard all nations should strive to emulate. Nonetheless, this essay will refer to "developing" countries, albeit cautiously, since feminism itself is often defined as developing social change by opening up for women opportunities that are reserved for men under the regime of patriarchal exclusion. This paper also resists aligning with the notion of gender equality whereby "men" signify, in parallel with the "first world," the ideal standard that women should strive to imitate.

5. Woolf, however, never considers the direct correlation between women's illiteracy and poverty, because she speaks to the privileged women of Newnham and Girton College who do not even themselves have equal funds, opportunities, or support when compared to men. Though, presumably, when Woolf speaks of the privilege to write she likewise implies the freedom to read, the "we" being privileged readers.

6. A recent collection of essays on this subject is *Poor Women in Rich Countries*: *The Feminization of Poverty over the Life Course* (2010), edited by Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg.

7. The idea that women workers in developing countries are strongly affected by this ideology of consumption is suggested by the World Bank (2009), which reports that women constitute around 60-80% of the export manufacturing workforce in the developing world.

8. As early as Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *On the Generation of Animals*, women and nature were associated as objects of both passivity and formless matter in contrast to man's activity and form. This traditional view, or logos, later furthered by Descartes's rationalism in *Meditations* and Bacon's "domination over creation," solidified a shared history between nature and woman and justified woman's so-called natural inferiority and man's natural and cultural superiority.

9. In "Gender Differences in the Use of Computers and the Internet," a recent (2007) report completed for the European Union, Heidi Seybert demonstrates that more men than women use a computer and the Internet in all age groups. While the difference in the number of users between men and women is not great, particularly between the ages of 16 and 24, the number of "Chloes and Olivias" employed in computer-related jobs in the European Union is low, at just 0.7% compared with men at 2.6% (Seybert 2007, 6).

10. Internet World Stats (Miniwatts Marketing Group 2012) supports the WLP's (2009) findings and indicates that Africa accounts for 6.2% of the world's Internet use, though it has roughly the same population as Europe, which accounts for 22.1% of Internet use.

11. David C. Bissette claims that in 2004 pornography on the web accounted for 25% of all  searches, 12% of all websites were pornographic, and child pornography generated $3 billion annually, seemingly proving Gunther Kress's assertion that we have moved from a society dominated by writing to a society dominated by image (2004, 1). Bissette also claims that 90% of eight- to sixteen-year-olds have viewed porn online (most while doing homework), the average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is eleven, and the largest consumer population of Internet pornography is

between twelve and seventeen years of age.

12. Susan Sniader Lanser discusses this problem of translation and excluding, for example, African and Polynesian literatures from comparative literature syllabi, anthologies, and canons in her article "Compared to What?" Lanser, drawing on Woolf, advocates instead a global feminist comparative literature (2004, 298) and questions why comparative literature has resisted both feminism and the global (287).

13. Woolf suggests it will be another century before the likes of Judith Shakespeare appear on the literary scene (112), but she does not clarify which literary scene it will be. One can only assume she means English or English-speaking and writing women.

14. Maureen McNeil argues in *Feminist Cultural Studies of Science and Technology* that by the 1990s there were two separate feminist camps in technoscience: "successor science" associated with Sandra Harding and cyberfeminism strategized by Donna Haraway, which, according to Judith Squires, forgets "both the exploitative and alienating potential of technology and retreats into the celebration of essential, though disembodied woman" (McNeil 2007, 143). How technoscience influences or relates to women's writing, however, is not explored, though it could make for a fruitful dialogue. For further discussion of the threat of a maternal imagination to patriarchy, see Rosi Braidotti's Chapter 8, "Mothers, Monsters, and Machines," in *Nomadic Subjects*.

15. Woolf claims that Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was written in a single sitting room and rationalizes that it would be easier to write a novel under these circumstances than poetry or a play, because less concentration is required for novel writing (67). She also notes that for Austen, who would have presumably been plagued by interruptions, these interruptions actually served her art. Austen felt "at home" in writing about feelings and observing character (68). While she felt at home writing in her bustling common sitting room, there was also "the narrowness of life that was imposed upon her. It was impossible for a woman to go about alone. She never travelled; she never drove through London in any omnibus or had luncheon in a shop by herself" (68–69). Brontë, in contrast, is believed by Woolf to long for a public life, a longing that becomes evident to her when she takes *Jane Eyre* from a library shelf and reads: "And I read how Jane Eyre used to go up on to the roof when Mrs. Fairfax was making jellies and looked over the fields at the distant view. And then she longed—and it was for this that they blamed her—that 'then I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen: that then I desired more of practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character than was here within my reach'" (69).

16. Women with "mental illnesses" were typically shut off and relegated to the home in Woolf's time, as Elaine Showalter (2009) claims. Thus Woolf, who underwent treatment by Dr. Mitchell, the same doctor who "treated" Charlotte Perkins Gilman, was confined to her home with no exercise or intellectual stimulation. See also Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's discussion of women's illnesses, the anxiety of authorship, and a female writing tradition (though criticized for referring to woman and patriarchy as a universal and for not including any non-white writers) in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

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# Irish American Women: Forgotten First-Wave Feminists

Sally Barr Ebest, University of Missouri–St. Louis

**Abstract:** Numerous books have been written about American feminism and its influence on education and society. But none have recognized the key role played by Irish American women in exposing injustice and protecting their rights. Certainly their literary heritage, inherent knowledge of English, and membership in the single largest ethnic group gave them an advantage. But their dual positions as colonized, second-class citizens of their country and their religion gave them their political edge, a trait that has been evident since the Irish first stepped off the boat and that continues to this day. This essay focuses on the first wave of these feminist messages by introducing Irish American writers and activists who emerged between the 1830s and 1960s. It locates Irish American women's influence in three different, yet overlapping milieus—political activism, journalism, and literature.

Numerous books have been written about American feminism and its influence on education and society. But none have recognized the key role played by Irish American women in exposing women's issues and protecting their rights. Certainly their literary heritage, inherent knowledge of English, and membership in the single largest immigrant ethnic group in the United States gave them an advantage (Fanning 2001). But their dual positions as colonized, second-class citizens of their country and their religion gave them their political edge.

This trait has been evident since the Irish first stepped off the boat and it continues to this day. In this essay, I focus on the first wave of these feminist messages by introducing Irish American writers and activists who emerged between the 1830s and 1960s. The following discussion locates Irish American women's influence in three different, yet overlapping milieus—political activism, journalism, and literature:

- Irish American women fostered assimilation by helping ensure union representation for women as well as men (Ruether 2003, 4).
- Irish American female journalists established their reputations by exposing and deflating prejudicial patriarchal practices.
- Irish American women's novels were the first to lament and expose women's second-class status at home and in the church.

Taken altogether, Irish American women represent the earliest, largest, and most enduring body of feminist activists.

## Who Are These Women?

Irish Americans may be defined in a number of ways. The most obvious is by their surnames: "By Mac and

O, you'll always know / True Irishmen, they say" (Lysaght 1986, 57). But many Irish families dropped the "Mac" or "O" when they emigrated; since then, names such as Barry, Brady, Brennan, Carey, Corrigan, Cullinane, Daly, Flynn, Gallagher, Manning, Moore, Sullivan, and many others have also been identified as Irish (Lysaght 1986, 259–80). "Irish American" identity can be defined by geography as well as birth. Maeve Brennan, for example, was born in Ireland but lived in America as an adult (Bourke 2004). Other authors, such as Mary McCarthy and Carson McCullers, were born in America but can trace their lineage through their forebears. This ethnic doubleness allows the authors to draw on what Vincent Buckley calls their "source-country," whether that be through names, myths, speech, or slant (24). As Irish Americans assimilated into the US, measuring these traits became more difficult; nevertheless, these writers' literary works remain recognizably Irish insofar as they are characterized by "a penchant stylistically for formal experimentation, linguistic exuberance, and satiric modes" (Fanning 2001, 3).

Self-deprecation and social anxiety are ubiquitous among these descendants of immigrants (Dezell 2000, 65). Such feelings were often expressed through satire, an Irish habit traceable to Gaelic poets, essayists, and playwrights to parody and deflate anti-Irish stereotypes. In 1835, *Six Months in a House of Correction; or, the Narrative of Dorah Mahoney, Who Was under the Influence of the Protestants about a Year, and an Inmate of the House of Correction in Leverett St., Boston, Mass., Nearly Six Months* was published anonymously to counter Rebecca Reed's anti-Catholic tale, *Six Months in a Convent*, which had resulted in a mob burning down a convent (Fanning 1997, 47). Building on the model of satire exemplified in Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," the author urges fellow immigrants not to learn to read or write, arguing: "Besides, it is a great trouble and expense to build schools and maintain them, and a great botheration to the brains to pore over books. The Catholic Sentinel and the Jesuit, those two admirably conducted reciptacles [sic] of knowledge, contain all that ever was known since the creation of the world" (Anonymous 1835). At the opposite end of the first wave, Mary McCarthy's satire is evident in practically every novel she penned. Satire allowed Irish Catholic women writers to "push the paradoxes of their religion with an irreverence that lessens the severity, although not always the sincerity, of their belief" (Del Rosso 2005, 149). Addressing issues previously excluded from Catholic women's lives, topics include erotic pleasure, egalitarian marriage, homosexuality, engrossing careers, or political activity. These women used their writing to construct an inner life and assert women's dignity so as to overcome, if not deny, the traditional roles they were assigned in society (Del Rosso 2005).

Historically, Irish American women have enjoyed a degree of independence unknown to their European counterparts (Meagher 2005, 173–74). Between 1846 and 1875, half of the 2,700,000 Irish entering the United States were female; by the 1870s, female immigrants outnumbered the males. The typical Irish female immigrant was young, single, and traveled alone or with sisters or female relations. She bought her own tickets, traveled unchaperoned, found employment (usually as a domestic servant), and then saved her salary to bring over family members, build churches, attend concerts, support nationalist movements, and pay parochial school tuition for nieces or nephews (Meagher 2006, 623–24). Three-quarters of these women were hired as domestic servants, a position which ultimately led to their social and economic mobility. This steady work, as well as the daily opportunity to observe models of middle- and upper-class culture, helped Irish American women grow into solid members of the community and promote their daughters' education and independence (Nolan 2004; Diner 1993). By the end of the nineteenth century, these women represented over 60 percent of the Irish American population (Dezell 2000, 91).

As this evidence suggests, the most distinguishing characteristic of Irish American women was their feminist bent—a trait they shared with the banshee. A mythical Irish being, the banshee has been variously

translated as "scold" or "a scolding woman"; "war goddess" or "dangerous, frightening and aggressive being"; "heroic individual" and "threatening" female (Lysaght 1986, 37–39), whereas tales associated with the banshee convey the role of guardian (216). Irish Women United, a radical feminist group, named their journal *Banshee* "not only because the being is feminine, but also because her appearance and behavior do not correspond to conventional male ideas about what a woman should look like and be like" (Lysaght 1986, 243). New Irish authors Emer Martin and Helena Mulkerns revitalized the term for a literary website: "We chose the name *Banshee*," Mulkerns explains, "because we wanted something strong, loud, female, and Irish" (quoted in Wall 1999, 67).

Like the banshee who delivered messages forewarning of imminent death, through their activism Irish American women have repeatedly warned of the death of women's rights. These messages carried the greatest potency at liminal times when feminism was under attack due to the politics of society, the government, or the Church. Similar to the banshee's plaintive lament, Irish American women's writing has been cautionary if not "tutelary" (Lysaght 1986). Moreover, just as the banshee's lament was not heard by everyone, Irish American women—and their contributions to women's rights—have been overlooked in religious, historical, academic, and popular works (Dezell 2000, 89).

The American Catholic church was responsible for women's absence in religious histories. Early works, generally written by and about priests, contained very little information about lay men, but lay women were "invisible" in them due to what Mary Jo Weaver terms the authors' "invincible ignorance" (1985, 11). More recent historians, writing after the women's movement, have simply been guilty of neglect. In Robert Trisco's *Catholics in America 1776-1976* (1976), thirty pictures are of male clerics, only seven of females; out of 331 pages in James Hennessey's *American Catholics* (1981), information about women comprises approximately ten pages. William Shannon's *The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait* (1990), devotes only a few paragraphs to women, most often citing their relationships with Irish men or their involvement with the suffrage movement; however, since suffragists were generally upper-class Catholic women, most Irish Americans of that era were overlooked. Even as late as 2005, Tim Meagher's *Columbia Guide to Irish American History* cites only 36 women within over 300 pages of text. Such oversights are not limited to Catholic historians. Rather, they reflect the fact that throughout much of American history, women's relationship to religion and Catholicism was rarely addressed (Weaver 1985, 11–13).

Such attitudes have long prevailed in the history of the Irish. Apart from the early sixteenth century, when Irish women "esteemed learning" and were allowed to pursue education in convents (Mac Curtain 2008, 229), the years between the Council of Trent in 1563 and the growing enlightenment in the mid-1700s saw patriarchal attitudes increase in government, church, and family structures (237). Nuns were supposed to be contemplative, wives and daughters obedient—beliefs held by Protestants and Catholics alike—which culminated in the "gradual exclusion of women from virtually all spheres of productive work, including intellectual activity" (246). Thus, it is not so surprising that Irish women were also excluded from their country's history.

Between the Famine years and the mid-twentieth century, Ireland remained a backwater known for its "economic isolationism, social conservatism, and Catholicism" (Cochrane 2010, 161), thanks in part to the politics of American-born Eamon de Valéra. When de Valéra was elected Irish Prime Minister in 1937, he revised the 1922 Constitution to deny women equal rights in language implying that woman's place is in the home. Indeed, as *Irish Independent* columnist Gertrude Gaffney wrote,

> The death knell of the working woman is sounded in this new constitution. Mr. de Valéra has always been a reactionary where women are concerned. He dislikes and distrusts us as a sex and his aim ever since he came

into office has been to put us into what he considers our place and keep us there. (quoted in Ellis 2006)

Under de Valéra, culture, politics, and religion became intertwined, with the Catholic Church essentially determining public policy (Cochrane 2010, 165).

Although the election of Sean Lemass in the late 1950s signaled the end of economic isolationism, women's roles in Irish history were not addressed until 1966 when, during the commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising, it became clear that they had been actively involved (Mac Curtain 2008, 81).[1] Coinciding with the rise of second-wave feminism, the fiftieth anniversary became the impetus for the Report of the Commission on the Status of Women, which called for the inclusion of women in Irish history (81). Still, not until Mary Robinson was elected President in 1990 did the "tight corset" that de Valéra and Church leaders had bound around the government begin to loosen (Cochrane 2010, 156). Contraception was legalized in 1985, homosexuality decriminalized in 1988, and divorce officially authorized in 1995 (155).

Nevertheless, Irish women remained largely invisible in scholarly works. In 1991, when the three-volume, 4,000-page *Field Day Anthology of Irish Literature* was published, feminists were outraged to discover that editor Seamus Deane had "overlooked" the contributions of Irish women. As recently as 2002, a survey of Irish literary, historical, and sociological studies revealed that "the women's movement [was] not considered an integral agent of change in dominant interpretations of the development and progression of Irish society, from the foundation of the State (in 1922) to the present" (Connolly 2003, 3). Such oversights were finally corrected in 2002 when the *Field Day Anthology* was updated with a two-volume, 3,200-page addition, *Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*.

In contrast, outside of Ireland and Irish America, women of various nationally defined and diasporic ethnicities have been the object of academic studies since the 1980s. Recent years have seen publications devoted to Jewish, Hispanic, Russian, Chinese, African, African-American, Italian, Korean, Polish, Asian-Pacific, Japanese, Pakistani, Arab, Greek, and Roman women. Studies have focused on lesbians, vampires, lesbian vampires; Islamic, Appalachian, Medieval, and Victorian women, to name just a few groups. But to date no similar efforts have been undertaken on behalf of Irish American women.

Within literary studies, *Making the Irish American* lists only (non-Irish) Betty Smith, Mary McCarthy, and Flannery O'Connor (Casey and Rhodes 2006). Charles Fanning, recognized nationally and internationally as the foremost Irish American literary scholar, devotes portions of *The Irish Voice in America* (1991; 2nd ed. 2001) to women writers; however, since the study covers 250 years, analysis is limited. Conversely, Caitriona Moloney and Helen Thompson's *Irish Women Writers Speak Out: Voices from the Field* (2003) features interviews with seventeen contemporary Irish and Irish American women writers, but only six of them are Irish American. While Ron Ebest's *Private Histories: The Writing of Irish Americans, 1900-1935* (2005) addresses detailed attention to women authors of the period, the book's coverage is limited to just three decades. Sally Barr Ebest and Kathleen McInerney's edited collection, *Too Smart to be Sentimental* (2008), represents the first in-depth study of contemporary Irish American women writers; however, its twelve essays introduce only a fraction of the total. Even the most recent research, such as Christopher Dowd's *The Construction of Irish Identity in American Literature* (2011), includes only one Irish American woman: Margaret Mitchell.

Irish American women have been overlooked by literary scholars because their writing not only avoids classic Irish American themes such as male camaraderie, drink, violence, and pub life, but also because they refuse to reify mothers or glorify priests (Monaghan 1993, 340). Historians and feminist scholars have also ignored Irish American women—historians because the writers were female, and feminists because the writers were presumably Catholic (Del Rosso 2000; Weaver 1985, 11). Irish American women

writers have also been ostracized because of the traditional definitions of the Irish American literary field. Eamonn Wall suggests that "[if] a writer does not write about Irish Americans … he or she will be labeled an American writer. The problem for an Irish American writer is that the field of operation is rather small, but if he or she abandons this field, there will no longer be an Irish American novel, *unless the parameters are extended*" (1999, 37; emphasis mine). Feminist historian Gerda Lerner offers a prescription for what such an extension might mean in this case. In her argument for adding women to historical studies, she recommends that the parameters be extended to include "sexuality, reproduction, role indoctrination, [and] female consciousness," as well as women's culture, which might encompass their "occupations, status, experiences, rituals, and consciousness" (quoted in Weaver 1985, 5, 15).

Irish American women writers have done just that: they extended the boundaries of the Irish American literary canon by moving inside the bedroom, outside the home, and into the workplace. Perhaps as a result, their writing has been overlooked because of their feminist stance. Since they arrived in America, this cohort has protected women's rights by fighting prejudice and refuting political attacks.

## Political Organizing, Labor Rights, and Education

Irish assimilation was fostered in large part by politically active, highly literate Irish American women. In 1914, Irish-born Dr. Gertrude Kelly issued a call for "women of Irish blood" to organize an American chapter of Cumann nam Ban (the Irish Women's Council) to collect funds for Irish Volunteers fighting in the Great War. A medical doctor and secretary of the Newark Liberal League, Kelly also contributed polemics to the individualist periodical *Liberty*. Termed by editor Benjamin Tucker "among the finest writers of this or any other country" (quoted in McElroy 2012), Kelly's first article argued that prostitution stemmed from women's inability to find gainful employment. In subsequent essays she declared that women were victims of prejudicial stereotypes:

> Men … have always denied to women the opportunity to think; and, if some women have had courage enough to dare public opinion, and insist upon thinking for themselves, they have been so beaten by that most powerful weapon in society's arsenal, ridicule, that it has effectively prevented the great majority from making any attempt to come out of slavery. (quoted in McElroy 2012)[2]

Following the 1916 Easter Rebellion and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921, Dr. Kelly was among a group of women who organized the American Women Pickets for the Enforcement of America's War Aims to blockade the British Embassy in Washington, DC. Later that year, this group and the Irish Progressive League organized a strike to protest the arrests of Irish Archbishop Daniel Mannix and Cork Lord Mayor Terence MacSweeney. Among the women participating were Kelly, labor organizer Leonora O'Reilly, suffragist Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, and Celtic actress Eileen Curran. Supported by thousands, the strike halted the loading and unloading of British ships at Manhattan's Chelsea Pier for more than three weeks (Dezell 2000, 97).

Although many in the Irish diaspora were put off by the suffragists' temperance sloganeering, Irish American activists such as Lucy Burns, Alice Paul, and Margaret Foley supported women's suffrage, as did Leonora O'Reilly and Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, who conjoined their activism with support for labor unions (Dezell 2000, 97). Similarly, although her propaganda clearly targeted Irish Catholics, Irish American Margaret Higgins Sanger was a key figure in promoting birth control. Sanger supported her cause by passing out copies of *The Woman Rebel*. The first woman to open a family-planning clinic, she used the periodical as a forum to argue that the Church had "historically sustained an exploitative capitalist system that kept

women in bondage" (Tobin 2003, 203). Unfortunately, she lost the support of Catholic women when she implied that without birth control the high birthrate among the working class would mentally weaken their offspring—even though she went on to argue that making birth control available would help liberate them. Needless to say, the Church hierarchy condemned Sanger's advocacy along with the women's movement and urged good Catholics to participate in neither. In a final irony, Sanger's support for women's sexual freedom alienated the women's movement, although she found proponents among the eugenicists, neo-Malthusians, and Darwinists (Tobin 2003).

As Irish American women moved into the workplace, protecting the domains of family, church, and nation began to seem less important than exposing the injustices perpetrated on their sex. As early as 1892, this group represented "a sizable presence" within the general workforce (Nolan 2004, 1). Among their supporters were Irish American labor activists Leonora Kearney Barry, Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who helped ensure union representation for women as well as men (Ruether 2003, 4). Mother Jones, who emigrated as a child from County Cork, was a teacher and a dressmaker before she became involved with the unions, particularly the United Mine Workers (Weaver 1985, 24). Throughout her life she worked to protect the underdogs—blacks, women, children, and the poor—and recounted that story in *The Autobiography of Mother Jones*. Another dressmaker, Mary Kenney, who later married journalist John O'Sullivan, helped found the Chicago Women's Bindery Union and the Women's Trade Union League. With the support of Jane Adams's Hull House, Kenney formed the Jane Club, a cooperative where poorly paid working women could live together (Simkin 2012).

Labor activist and journalist Dorothy Day also began publishing during this period. Early in her career she worked for the socialist newspaper *The Call* and then moved on to *The Masses*, where she served as a reporter. When *The Masses* closed, she left journalism and entered nursing school, believing it offered a better way to support the troops fighting in the Great War. In 1917, Day was among the forty women arrested and imprisoned for protesting in favor of women's suffrage outside the White House (Forest 1994). Seven years later, drawing on these experiences, she published an autobiographical novel, *The Eleventh Virgin* (1924). A cofounder of *The Catholic Worker*, Day was a lifelong activist, ultimately publishing over 1,000 articles as well as *Houses of Hospitality* (1939), which recounted the founding of the *Catholic Worker*; *The Long Loneliness* (1952), an autobiography; and *On Pilgrimage: The Sixties* (1972) (Simkin 2012).

Despite being dismissed as a "lady tramp," Leonora Barry, a member of the Knights of Labor, rose through the ranks to become a master workwoman in charge of 1,000 female workers and the first woman to be elected to the position of General Investigator (Weaver 1985, 23). In this office she was in charge of a new division—women's work—and helped further the development of unions. A former teacher, Barry drew on this experience to educate her female workers. Elizabeth Flynn, a cofounder of the American Civil Liberties Union, supported women's rights, among them equal pay, birth control, day care, and suffrage; she also wrote a feminist column for the *Daily Worker* (Simkin 2012). These activists were joined by Kate Mullaney, who organized Irish laundry workers; Lucy Burns, a suffragist and militant activist; and Kate Kennedy, Margaret Haley, and Catharine Goggins, who unionized public school teachers to demand equal pay (Dezell 2000, 95).

Unionizing teachers was an important political move, for by 1910 Irish American women—many of them daughters of domestic servants—represented the majority of public elementary school teachers in Providence, Boston, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco (Nolan 2004, 2). By 1939, 70 percent of Chicago's schoolteachers were Irish American women (Nolan 2004, 92). Clearly, teaching was a major entrée into the middle class.

Irish American women's upward mobility was fostered by nuns and teaching sisters. As early as 1884, the American Catholic Church was directing its parishes to build and run their own schools using teaching nuns. These women, many of them Irish, went on to establish the "most extensive and accessible system of higher education in the country" (Dezell 2000, 82). In Maryland, Notre Dame Academy for women opened in 1896 (Shelley 2006, 580). By 1900, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur had established a girls' industrial school; the Sisters of St. Joseph were teaching typing, bookkeeping, and accounting; and the Sisters of St. Francis were operating a nursing school. By 1918, fourteen parishes had collaborated to open Catholic women's colleges such as Trinity (founded by Sr. Julia McGroarty), the College of St. Catherine (founded by Mother Seraphine Ireland), Manhattanville, and St Mary's. In 1925, the Sisters of St. Joseph Carondelet founded Mt. Saint Mary's College in Los Angeles for daughters of immigrants, most of whom were Irish (Dezell 2000, 177). By 1926, twenty-five Catholic women's colleges had been opened; by 1928, 50 to 66 percent of all Catholic college students attended Catholic colleges and universities (Shelley 2006).

Given this degree of support, it is not surprising that Irish American girls were attending school at rates higher than other Americans (Nolan 2004, 81). Moreover, they continued their education: long before it was common or acceptable, a greater proportion of female Irish Americans attended college than did their WASP counterparts (Dezell 2000, 83). These schools were "pioneers in educating women" (96). The Irish religious provided not only strong role models, but also a sense of feminism especially evident among the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd (Shelley 2006, 580). Perhaps most importantly, these women's colleges were academically superior to many of the men's (Gleason 1985, 252).

**Spreading Feminism through the Written Word: 1830s–1930s**

Through their writing Irish American women illustrated the axiom that one need not be an activist to be a feminist. Elizabeth Jane Cochrane, better known as Nellie Bly, is a fine example. Bly got her start after she wrote a satirical response to a sexist article in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* and signed it "Lonely Orphan Girl." Despite the pseudonym, the editor was so impressed by the strong voice and convincing argument that he assumed a man had written it and invited Bly to interview for a staff position. When she appeared for the interview, he initially refused to hire her because of her sex; however, Bly soon managed to change his mind. Once on the job, Bly immediately began turning out stories about the rights of women factory workers—a focus which resulted in her transfer to the women's pages. Bored and discouraged, at age twenty-one she took a position as a foreign correspondent and traveled to Mexico, from where she sent home dispatches that were eventually published as *Six Months in Mexico*. When this work was not sufficient to change her stateside assignments, she left Pittsburgh in 1887 and traveled to New York, where she convinced yet another editor to hire her at the *New York World*. Working undercover, she feigned insanity and was committed to the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell Island. After the *World* secured her release, she published her findings, *Ten Days in a Madhouse*, whose ensuing publicity led to a review of women's commitment policies and better funding for their asylums. Bly's next adventure, and the one which contributed to her lasting fame, was to replicate Jules Verne's fictional journey in *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Unchaperoned, she completed the trip ahead of schedule and famously went on to write about the experience in *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* (1890) (Kroeger 1995).

Early twentieth-century Irish American women writers were unflagging in their focus on women's rights. Kate Cleary, who began publishing when she was thirteen, wrote for the *Chicago Tribune* and published in *Century, Cosmopolitan, Harper's, Lippincott's,* and *McClure's* magazines, churning out hundreds of poems and short stories. "The Stepmother" (1901), one of her best stories, recounts the bleak life of Mrs. Carney,

a former school teacher whose energy and optimism have been drained by lonely life on the prairie. She makes this point abundantly clear on her deathbed when she warns her stepson, "I hope you'll remember … that a woman isn't always—well—or happy—just because she keeps on her—feet—and doesn't—complain" (Cleary 1901, 244).

Margaret Culkin Banning echoed these messages. Writing for *McClure's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's*, *Redbook*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, Banning produced over 400 articles addressing issues such as alcoholism, body image, sexism, the plight of the single woman, marriage and remarriage (Minnesota Historical Society 2012). Like her contemporaries, Banning was an early advocate for women's rights, often making her point by putting female characters in nontraditional roles and calling for their participation in World War II. Like Mary McCarthy, although she married four times, Banning kept her own name. Clara Laughlin, whose parents hailed from Belfast, was a journalist and editor at *McClure's Magazine* and contributed to *Scribner's* (Ebest 2005, 30). Her novel *"Just Folks"* (1910), which evolved out of a friendship with a member of Chicago's Hull House neighborhood, not only represented an early foray into realism but also echoed first-wave critiques of marriage seen in the works of Kate Chopin and Kate Cleary. Laughlin's non-fiction study, *The Work-a-Day Girl: A Study of Some Present Conditions* (1913), based on her experiences as a settlement worker, similarly critiqued women's plight, implicitly reiterating the "almost universal" statement by Irish women, "If I had it to do over again, I'd never marry" (Anthony 1914, 20).

Anne O'Hagan's commitment to women's rights shone through her journalistic pieces. In "The Shop-Girl and Her Wages" (1913), for example, she exposed the mistreatment of working women. Given the social mores of the times, this commitment was possible in large part because O'Hagan was unmarried. As a result, her activism was unrelenting: in her magazine articles, she supported women's suffrage and right to work, exposed the unfair treatment of female schoolteachers, and praised women's clubs, business women, and female athletes. But when questions arose regarding her sexual preference, O'Hagan's Irish satirical talents were awakened (Ebest 2005, 114).

In a 1907 series of essays for *Harper's Bazaar,* O'Hagan began satirizing the idealization of marriage. After *The Survey* published some essays regarding a married woman's wifely obligations, she asked whether the magazine also proposed reviving the stagecoach; when *Vanity Fair* attacked feminism for its supposedly negative effects on married life, she skewered the notion with a story about Mr. and Mrs. Cave Man; in *Harper's* she ridiculed the treatment of single women, while in *Munsey's Magazine* she poked fun at stereotypical romantic depictions of literary heroines. Inadvertently anticipating the actions of some second-wave feminists, O'Hagan even criticized her peers: she considered Charlotte Perkins Gilman an hysteric and dismissed the next generation of women as "trivial and ill versed in the contributions of their foremothers" (Ebest 2005, 116).

Katherine "Kate" O'Flaherty Chopin addressed similar themes in her novels—*At Fault* (1890) and *The Awakening* (1899)—and short stories in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Vogue*, and *The Century*. Perhaps the best known first-wave feminist novelist, Chopin's *The Awakening* dealt with formerly taboo topics such as miscegenation, adultery, and unhappy wives, which led to charges of mental illness, not to mention negative reviews. Eventually critics such as Edmund Wilson helped reestablish Chopin's reputation, but only Per Seyersted's critical biography, published in 1980, ultimately elevated her status (Kolosky 1996, 5). As Seyersted writes, "Revolting against tradition and authority; with a daring which we can hardly imagine today; with an uncompromising honesty and no trace of sensationalism, she undertook to give the unsparing truth about woman's submerged life" (1980, xx).

The novels of Chopin's contemporary, Scots Irish Ellen Glasgow, reveal a consistently strong feminist

stance. *The Romance of a Plain Man* (1909) and *The Miller of Old Church* (1911) imply that women should begin writing their own stories and challenging patriarchal traditions. *Virginia* (1913) argues that a woman must search for and establish her own identity. *One Man in His Time* (1922) suggests that females reject the notion of being a "womanly woman" and focus on developing friendships with each other, while *Barren Ground* (1925) hints that self-denial is not a necessary part of a romantic relationship (Matthews 1995). Further anticipating twentieth- and twenty-first-century gender theory, Glasgow asserted that gender roles should be viewed as socially constructed. She expanded on these issues in "Some Literary Woman Myths" (1928) when she attacked the "subservient" role of women vis-à-vis their male colleagues in the publishing world. In 1938, she incorporated some parts of this essay into her novel *She Stooped to Folly*, noting at one point that the derogatory view men took of women could be traced to the Garden of Eden (Matthews 1995, 10).

Glasgow's contemporary Kathleen Coyle, who was born in Derry, worked as an editor in London, and later emigrated to America, was of a similar mindset. A suffragist, she divorced her husband after four years and took up writing to earn money, ultimately publishing thirteen novels. Using stream-of-consciousness narration (a method emulating her friend James Joyce's approach in *Ulysses*), *A Flock of Birds* (1930) conveys a woman's jumbled thoughts about her life: she hates childbirth yet bears children, she wants to engage in sexual intimacy without losing herself, she enjoys the company of other women who despise their husbands. Also writing during this period was Kay Boyle, who published more than forty books, including fourteen novels that explored power differentials in male-female relationships.

But these writers' accomplishments pale in comparison to Margaret Mitchell. Christopher Dowd maintains that *Gone With the Wind*

> is one of the most significant and popular works by an Irish American woman.... Mitchell offered a unique female voice and created a female character that appealed to Irish American women.... [A]ny study of Irish American literature that ignores the importance of *Gone With the Wind* is missing one of the biggest pieces of the puzzle.... In rewriting the story of Irish America, Mitchell established one of the most enduring myths of post-immigrant Irish identity. (2011, 174–75)

Not coincidentally, Scarlett's character personifies aspects of Mitchell herself. Better known as a novelist than as an Irish American, Margaret Mitchell was the daughter of Irish Catholic suffragist Mary Fitzgerald Mitchell, herself the daughter of Irish immigrants (Pyron 1992, 252) and cofounder of what eventually became the League of Women Voters. Margaret grew up in a staunch first-wave feminist environment, which emphasized the importance of fighting for one's rights (41). Although mother and daughter did not always see eye to eye, this early influence was evident throughout Mitchell's life. After capturing everyone's attention at a debutante ball—much like Scarlett O'Hara in her low-cut gown and casting a provocative gaze—she later took to the stage to belittle marriage, stating that she and her friends were "coming down off the auction block ... and going to work" (quoted in Pyron 1992, 161). Under the nom de plume Peggy Mitchell, she worked as a reporter for the *Atlanta Journal* where she focused her work on women's rights. As her biographer puts it, "She wrote as a woman, with women, and for women, and women dominated the content of her essays" (Pyron 1992, 169).

## 1940s–1960s: Anticipating the Second Wave

Irish American women's feminist practices became more widespread during World War II, when prohibitions against working women changed rapidly: media propaganda encouraged women to support their country

not only as wives and mothers but also "as workers, citizens, and even as soldiers" (Hartmann 1982, 20). By 1945 the female labor force, three-quarters of whom were married, had doubled in size (21). By war's end married women represented the majority of female workers (Chafe 1991, 13). But as the war wound down, the same forces that had encouraged women to work outside the home suggested they should now return to their "true calling" as wives and mothers.

Many prominent Irish American women writers refused to go that route. Although Maeve Brennan's "Talk of the Town" columns appeared to be aimed at the *The New Yorker's* advertisers, she was actually speaking directly to her women readers. Brennan's essays about working, shopping, drinking, and watching her fellow New Yorkers provided a subversive counterpoint to the post-war campaign to rid the workplace of women, to advertising's efforts to compensate them for the absence of paid employment with "fun" household appliances, to Joe McCarthy's attempts to curtail feminism, and to the fashion industry's emphasis on sexy, non-utilitarian women's clothing (Brightman 1992, 189).

Brennan's fiction reiterated these messages. Throughout "An Attack of Hunger," Rose and Hubert bicker, reflecting spousal tensions generally unaired at the time in women's fiction. Rose glares at Hubert. He watches her "with dislike and alarm," shouting, "You shut up! … Do you hear me? Shut up before I say something you won't want to hear" (Brennan 1997a, 161). As the fighting escalates, Hubert accuses Rose of driving their son John from home: "He was sick of you and I'm sick of you, sick of your long face and your moans and sighs—I wish you'd get out of the room, I wish you'd go, go on, go away…. All I want is not to have to look at you anymore this evening" (162). Forcing herself out the door, Rose resists the urge to beg forgiveness. She considers borrowing money from her parish priest to go to John, but realizes "he would disapprove. He would tell her to go back to her husband"; such was the plight of many a married Catholic woman in those days (Dezell 2000, 105).

In "The Shadow of Kindness," Brennan describes the condescending attitude of the working man toward his stay-at-home wife:

> Martin had warned her often enough against thinking, because thinking led to self-pity and there was enough of that in this world. What he had really told her was that she must stop forcing herself, stop *trying* to think, because her intelligence was not high and she must not put too much of a strain on it or she would make herself unhappy. (1997b, 244)

Such portrayals were said to reveal "the emotional landscape of Ireland" (Bourke 2004, 173), but this landscape was not so different from Brennan's America, where, as Betty Friedan famously diagnosed in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), housewives were also unhappy and their husbands resentful.

Mary McCarthy, a descendant of Irish immigrant John McCarthy, married immediately after graduating from Vassar and then married three more times; nevertheless, she worked from 1937 through 1962 as a writer and editor for the *Partisan Review*, the most intellectually elite "old boys' club" in New York City (Brightman 1992; Showalter 2001). McCarthy's prominence in this imbalanced work environment is all the more striking given the low stature of its female contributors: in the *Partisan Review Reader* (1947), a collection of the "best and most representative" essays published from 1939 to 1944, only fourteen of the 92 selections were by women.

Although McCarthy abjured feminism in her personal life, from 1942 to 1967 feminist themes dominated her fiction. These are best exemplified in *The Group*, the most infamous of her novels, in which she attempted to document the "idea of progress … in the female sphere" (McCarthy 1963, 62). In this novel McCarthy explores the aspirations of seven female graduates of the Vassar class of '31, juxtaposing desires for a meaningful career and a happy marriage with the realities of American society in the 1930s. In the

process, McCarthy introduces the reader to formerly taboo subjects such as birth control, women's sexual pleasure, adultery, impotence, mental illness, homosexuality, spouse abuse, and the double standard—nicely illustrated when McCarthy's antagonist, Norinne, visits a doctor to seek advice about her husband's impotence. She reports that the doctor asked "whether I wanted to have children…. When I said no, I didn't, he practically booted me out of the office. He told me I should consider myself lucky that my husband didn't want intercourse. Sex wasn't necessary for a woman, he said" (165).

McCarthy uses *The Group* to remind readers of the unfortunate disparity between young women's liberal theories and the reality of their marriages, for once they marry independence disappears. At the beginning of the novel, Kay is a strong-willed, independent woman, but as the story progresses she becomes increasingly helpless and miserable. Soon she is tiptoeing around husband Harald, eager to please and afraid to upset him. Priss, another group member, is introduced as a political activist; however, after she marries and gives birth she becomes so weak-willed that she lets her newborn cry for hours rather than disobey her husband and nurse the baby before he is "scheduled" to be fed.

Lulu Carson Smith McCullers was half Irish (on her mother's side) (Savigneau 2001, 11). A Southern Baptist, music was her religion until it was replaced with Marxism, and then again with feminism when she began developing the character of Mick Kelly in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940). As Cynthia E. Call claims, McCullers rejected the Marxist view of men in the household as bourgeois and women as the proletariat (Call 2012). She wanted more for her persona, for Mick Kelly goes far beyond the role of women as described by Marx and Engels: she wants to compose music and be a world-famous conductor who wears "either a real man's evening suit or else a red dress spangled with rhinestones" (McCullers 1940, 241). This losing fight against traditional femininity is exemplified in all of McCullers's tomboy characters (Westling 1996). After Mick loses her virginity she essentially loses her freedom, for she is suddenly afraid of what might happen in the dark and so no longer roams the streets. McCullers's fifth novel, *The Ballad of the Sad Café,* epitomizes women's struggles against male domination. Tall and tough, the character of Miss Amelia Evans suggests no need for men (Gilbert and Gubar 1989, 148). However, Miss Amelia's fight with her ex-husband offers a strong allegory for woman's status at the time. After her defeat, Miss Amelia has been transformed from "a woman with bones and muscles like a man" to "[thin] as old maids are thin when they go crazy" (McCullers 1951, 70). Like Brennan's and McCarthy's characters, women might fight but they could not win.

**Conclusion**

Amidst a literary field dominated by male Jewish intellectuals, Irish American women stood out. Through their activism, journalism, and fiction, they reminded readers that in love, marriage, work, and religion, women were second-class citizens and they were not happy about it. Why such a consistent message? Because Irish American women had an advantage unavailable to their peers. Whereas most women found it difficult to organize because they lived in different neighborhoods or lacked a central organizing body and could not build the critical mass necessary to effect political change (Woods 2005, 364), through the mid-sixties Irish Americans were still bound by their religious beliefs and practices, and thus possessed a "collective consciousness" (Cochrane 2010, 2).

First-wave Irish American feminists possessed an iron will. Although their husbands, their culture, and their church told them to stay home after they married, they kept on working. Despite the collective failure of theologians, historians, and feminist scholars to acknowledge them, they continued writing. When politicians, presidents, and priests tried to take away their rights and freedom of choice, they exposed such misogynistic attempts. This cohort merits our sustained attention, for they represent the first and largest

group of American feminists.

## Notes

1. These female leaders were not unknowns: they included Yeats's paramour, the feminist activist Maud Gonne; activist and actress Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington; Kathleen Clarke, widow of republican Tom Clarke, elected representative to the Dial, and outspoken critic of the Anglo-Irish Treaty; and Margaret Pearse, mother of martyred political activist Padraic Pearse. Among the ranks, over 140 women served as soldiers, couriers, nurses, and volunteers who carried food to the soldiers, hid guns, and distracted the British so Irish fighters could take position or take cover (Trotter 2012).

2. Indeed, during the protests disrupting the debut of *The Plough and the Stars* (due to the negative portrayal of women, which in turn downplayed the contributions of women during the Easter Uprising and Irish Civil War), Maud Gonne made sure that her speech was carefully planned to avoid just such attacks (Trotter 2012).

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# Caught between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Title IX Generation, Mathematics, and the State of Feminist Quantitative Social Science Research

Jill R. Williams, University of Colorado Boulder

**Abstract:** In this essay I reflect on the fortieth anniversary of the Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibited discrimination based on sex in federally funded education programs in the United States and inspired educational programs that encourage girls to pursue math and science careers. I argue that despite the feminist underpinnings of Title IX, in recent years feminism has discouraged the advancement of women in math and science by excluding quantitative research from its publications, quantitative researchers from women's and gender studies programs, and quantitative training from its curriculum. I examine my own experience of growing up with Title IX programs, the long-term ramifications of those programs, and my recent struggles to do feminist demography to show how the relationship of feminism to the promotion of quantitative sciences has changed over time. I argue that there is an unfinished revolution in feminism and a stall in the development of feminist quantitative social science research that can only be resolved by creating intellectual space for feminist quantitative work in the academy.

## Introduction

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.
> —*Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 to the 1964 Civil Rights Act*

Title IX, also known as the Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act, first became law on June 23, 1972. The fortieth anniversary of Title IX this year encourages reflections on its impact: the gains we have made and the challenges we still face. Title IX is closely associated with achievements in girls' sports, an arena where there have been many legal battles over Title IX and a great deal of success. As Tables 1 and 2 below demonstrate, girls' participation in high school and collegiate varsity athletics has grown enormously since 1971. Title IX undoubtedly enabled this growth by providing a legal basis from which to argue for equal funding and support of girls' athletic and educational programs.

**Table 1**. Participation in high school athletics since Title IX

|  | **1971–72** | **2007–08** | **Increase** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Female** | 294,015 | 3,057,266 | 940% |
| **Male** | 3,666,917 | 4,372,115 | 19% |

*Source*: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (2008).

**Table 2**. Participation in NCAA varsity athletics since Title IX

|  | **1971–72** | **2004–05** | **Increase** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Female** | 29,972 | 166,728 | 456% |
| **Male** | 170,384 | 222,838 | 31% |

*Source*: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (2008).

Although athletics has been the primary area of emphasis and debate surrounding Title IX, the wording of Title IX does not restrict its use to athletics. Title IX, therefore, has been used to successfully argue for girls' inclusion in traditionally male-dominated academic fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Since 1972, girls' participation in high school science and math courses has increased, in some cases surpassing boys' participation (NCWGE 2008). Additionally, the gender gap between boys' and girls' scores on math and science assessments in high school has dropped significantly (NCWGE 2008). Women have also made great strides in their participation in higher education, including in STEM fields. In 2004, for example, women received more than 50 percent of the undergraduate degrees in biological and agricultural sciences (NCWGE 2008).

While women's progress in many STEM fields has been remarkable, in some STEM disciplines such as engineering, physics, computer science, and mathematics it has been slow or has stalled. In 2004, women earned only 20 percent of the bachelor's degrees granted in engineering and physics. Women's share of mathematics degrees was around 47 percent in the early 1990s, but has been decreasing since 1994 (NCWGE 2008).

Furthermore, significant gains in participation in higher education have not translated into proportional gains in employment. In 2009, women were just 25 percent of workers in computer and mathematical occupations (US Department of Labor 2010). A steady 6 percent increase per year in the number of women earning doctorates in the "hard sciences" between 1993 and 2001 has not led to a proportional increase in the number of women hired onto faculties. The percentage of full professors in engineering and science departments ranges from only 3 percent to 15 percent, despite significant overall gains in female faculty (NCWGE 2008). Research has found that women have higher attrition rates than men in STEM fields or women in other occupations (Hill, Corbett, and St. Rose 2010) and that women earning PhDs in STEM fields don't apply for academic positions because they don't want to remain in an environment that is hostile to women (NCWGE 2008).

This situation affects women's overall status in society. Because STEM fields are among the highest-paying scientific professions, women's exclusion from these fields reinforces occupational sex segregation, which in turn contributes to the persistent pay gap between men and women. For example, pay parity in

higher education has been elusive, as the average salary of faculty women has been 81 percent of that of men since the late 1970s (NCWGE 2008).

Importantly, research suggests that some of the differences in participation in STEM fields can be attributed to the lack of interest in the subject matter on the part of girls. Female undergraduates report that technical majors are not interesting, and research has shown that high school girls who are good at math and science are not as likely as less qualified boys to major in STEM fields (Hill, Corbett, and St. Rose 2010). Some of this reported lack of interest may be due to socialization, discrimination, a lack of role models, or a lack of what might be called "math-esteem." Research has shown, for example, that boys make higher assessments of their mathematical abilities than girls, and that these self-assessments influence enrollment and success in mathematics (Correll 2004). Research also suggests that girls are more likely to pursue careers that are intrinsically rewarding, while boys are more likely to pursue careers that result in extrinsic rewards such as money and power (Shauman 2006). This, again, may be due to socialization and other related factors, but it may also explain why women are better represented in such STEM fields as medicine and psychology, since working directly with people may be more intrinsically rewarding.

In sum, this research suggests that if we give girls and women more intrinsically rewarding applications for math and science training, they will be more likely to pursue it. This leads me to the position that I wish to take in this Viewpoint, which is that feminism as a disciplinary pursuit has contributed to the lack of interesting applications for STEM research and reinforced the message that girls and women should remain innumerate by excluding quantitative research from its publications, quantitative researchers from women's and gender studies programs and departments, and quantitative training from its curriculum. Whereas one would assume that Title IX and the growth of feminist studies would be synergistic, I argue below that they have at times been antagonistic. In other words, the integration of girls in mathematics and science may have fallen short in part because we haven't given girls the opportunity to pursue quantitative avenues in areas that matter to them, such as within the discipline of feminist studies. Furthermore, we have undermined the potential for fully developing and gaining insight from feminist quantitative social science research by discouraging feminist scholars from pursuing quantitative projects.

## Caught between a Rock and a Hard Place: Becoming a Feminist Demographer

Having been born in 1969, I consider myself part of what I call the Title IX generation: girls who have grown up with the legal protection of Title IX in place and have therefore been influenced by the educational environment that it helped to create. Where I went to school and later taught seventh-grade mathematics there was a strong push to include girls in advanced math and science classes. My generation was also influenced, of course, by growing up with the feminist movement writ large in the United States, and we entered college with access to women's studies courses and degrees. As Table 3 shows below, by the time I went to college in 1987 there were around 500 women's studies programs in the United States, and even at the small liberal arts college I attended in Iowa feminism had a profound effect on my collegiate experience.

**Table 3.** Growth of women's studies programs in the US, 1977–2007

| |
| --- |
| **1977:** 276 women's studies programs |
| **1989:** 525 women's studies programs |
| **2007:** 650 women's and gender studies programs |

*Source*: Reynolds, Shagle, and Venkataraman (2007).

I write this reflection from the position of a feminist demographer. This is a term I use to define my scholarly position, which is meant to reflect the contradiction I write about here, between my quantitative social science training in demography and my feminist training. At this point, in academia, the term "feminist demographer" remains almost an oxymoron, as it is very difficult to publish either self-avowed feminist work in demographic journals or overtly demographic work in feminist journals. In fact, the combined influence of Title IX and academic feminism has led me to be caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, I was encouraged to pursue an advanced degree in mathematics through Title IX programs. On the other hand, I have been penalized within the feminist academy for being a quantitative social scientist. This positioning is admittedly personally frustrating, but I reflect on it mainly to point out how the current scarcity of feminist quantitative research and absence of quantitative training in gender studies undermine both our efforts to encourage girls to be mathematicians and scientists and our efforts to fully transform the academy, particularly the production of knowledge about gender and gender inequality.

I make this argument below by examining my own experience from elementary school to graduate school and beyond. The purpose of examining the experience of growing up under Title IX while developing a feminist consciousness and then training as a feminist scholar is to examine the ways in which feminism has at times supported and at other times thwarted my development as a quantitative social science researcher. By illuminating the tensions and synergisms I hope to suggest a way forward or a way to imagine the development of feminist quantitative social science. This essay is a reflection of my own experience and is meant to show how academic feminism both encourages and discourages feminist quantitative research.

I have first-hand experience with many of the efforts to encourage girls to stay involved in math and science since Title IX was passed. I was put in advanced math in seventh grade (1981), completed Calculus I by the end of high school (1987), majored in mathematics in college (1987–1991), and taught middle school mathematics for five years (1992–1997) before entering graduate school in 1997. In graduate school I studied both feminism and demography and wrote an interdisciplinary dissertation bridging the two fields. Since completing my dissertation in 2004, I have struggled to find a comfortable intellectual home in academia. I believe my experience illuminates important opportunities for growth in the feminist academy and I conclude by suggesting new types of questions feminist quantitative social science should be asking and training our students to pursue.

*Elementary School to High School (1974–87)*

My early feminist consciousness developed from issues that are very much related to Title IX. This section describes the discrimination my mother faced as a woman interested in math and computer programming, as well as both discrimination and redress (the latter thanks to Title IX) I faced in sports. I also describe the experience I had as a girl placed in advanced math classes in junior high and high school.

I was born in 1969 in Boulder, Colorado, where some of my earliest memories are of telling everyone that I wanted to be a boy. This proclamation was usually uttered following a statement by someone else that I shouldn't do something because I was a girl. In my little-girl logic, I figured that if they knew I wanted to be a boy, I would be exempt from the rules about what girls can and can't do. What I really meant was, "I want to be able to do what boys do." I wanted to play football, sleep in my Broncos pajamas every night, and I wanted (according to my first-grade *All About Me* book) to be a professional football or baseball player when I grew up.

Although my family and friends were incredibly supportive, many of these early desires were eventually thwarted. In seventh grade I was forced to switch from baseball to softball, and in eighth grade the assistant

principal of my junior high school told me I could not play football for my school. This effectively ended my dream of playing organized tackle football and is representative of a host of experiences that stemmed from being a tomboy and that provided the basis for the development of a feminist consciousness early in my life.

My disappointment in being denied the opportunity to play football was muted, however, thanks to Title IX. As I remember it, soon after I asked my assistant principal if I could play football, it was announced that we would be adding girls' field hockey to the lineup of sports teams that year. So, because Title IX required equal opportunity for girls' participation in sports, I did play volleyball, basketball, softball, and field hockey in school, and was able to secure college scholarships for softball and volleyball. After college, I had the opportunity to coach high school girls' softball, volleyball, and basketball during my five-year stint as a middle school teacher. In relation to sports, then, Title IX helped provide positive experiences, opportunities, and even a career that enabled me to quit saying that I wanted to be a boy and enabled me to be happy being a girl. This shift was significant and is exemplified by my declaration, in junior high school, that I wanted to be the first female president of the United States. Title IX helped to replace the wish to be a boy with the belief that I could be proud to be a girl and strive to be the "first girl" to do things such as become the first female president.

Because I grew up wanting to do "boy things" and was aware at some level that math was supposedly for boys, my own personality is partly responsible for my later pursuit of a degree in mathematics. However, some of my mother's experiences also provided motivation. My mother was not encouraged to go to college, but did attend two years of nurses training. After leaving nursing to raise three children, she enjoyed taking night classes in accounting and computer programming in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, when she finished these classes and considered getting a job to use her training, I remember her crying and saying, "No one will want to hire an overweight, middle-aged woman with no experience and three kids." Instead, she busied herself for several years typing and editing my father's dissertation, overseeing the family budget, and teaching my brother and myself how to use computers.

Despite my mother's continuous tinkering with numbers and computers, I grew to feel insecure about my own math abilities. I think my own insecurity with math started because of grades. I remember that in elementary school my math grades seemed lower than my other grades. I have a vivid memory of my first-grade teacher talking to me about my report card and pointing out that my math grade could improve. Indeed, my first-grade report card shows I got an E (excellent) in Penmanship and Written Language but an S+ (satisfactory plus) in Mathematics. Since I was better at something else, I believed that I wasn't good at math.

I know that I decided early on I wasn't as good at math as at other things, but I don't believe I identified it as a big problem. Ironically, my conscious struggle with my own math-esteem began exactly at the point when my sixth-grade teacher told me he was placing me in an advanced math class in seventh grade, my first year of junior high school. I remember I had just received a B in math on something—an assignment, a test, or perhaps even the end-of-the-year report card—and my teacher called me up to his desk and said he was putting me in advanced math. He said that even though I had a B, he thought I could do it. I'm not sure if I ended up in advanced math because of my aptitude, my general academic success, a desire to encourage girls to take advanced math, or a combination of all of the above. But I do know that being placed in advanced math has had a profound impact on my life and perhaps the opposite impact than it should have had on my math-esteem.

First of all, it was challenging and almost more of a confidence killer than a booster. There were many times in my advanced-level math classes where I was frustrated because I knew the process of getting the

right answer but didn't really know why. I wanted to understand things completely and often did not. At the time, I interpreted these moments as my own lack of intelligence, but looking back I have to wonder if being in advanced math didn't perhaps require me to learn some things I wasn't developmentally ready to learn. And if this was the case, then being in advanced math actually set me up to learn more, but understand less, about mathematical concepts.

Being in advanced math also damaged my grade point average. The only class in junior high or high school I ever got a B in was an advanced math class in tenth grade. After that B, I took a step off the advanced math track and adjusted my classes so that I would finish Calculus I in high school, not Calculus II. At the end of my senior year, I refused to take the AP math test, not feeling at all confident that I could score well or that I should be skipping calculus in college. I was sure, in fact, that the AP test would be the thing that finally revealed I was a fraud—that I didn't belong in advanced math and didn't deserve the grades I was getting in my math classes.

I am not suggesting, of course, that girls should not be encouraged to take advanced math classes. Not all girls are perfectionists like I was or place as much importance on grades as I did, but some are and many do, and I think this is still a point that needs to be addressed when thinking about mathematics education. Girls need to know that they can be good at math even if it isn't their best subject and even if others are better. Being good at math doesn't mean always getting As. Putting students into different levels of math (or "tracking" them) has always been controversial, generally because of the presumed disadvantage of those in the lower levels. But it is important to reflect on how it might also unintentionally affect a girl's "math-esteem" in a negative way. Pushing girls to take advanced math classes needs to be coupled with listening to their concerns, giving them opportunities to take risks that don't impact their grades, and teaching them how to evaluate success differently.

What I note from my experience in elementary and secondary school is that Title IX provided opportunities to play sports and to take advanced math classes. In this sense, Title IX and my experiences as a young feminist were very much aligned.

### Majoring in Mathematics in College (1987–91)

Although I clearly struggled in advanced math, had doubts about my abilities, and even opted off the fastest math track, I didn't give up or quit math. This was at least in part because I was aware it was something girls weren't supposed to be good at, and that because I could do math I should do it. Doing advanced math fit well with my tendency to defy gender norms and do what girls weren't supposed to do. Of course, even if it was somewhat of a confidence killer, it was also a status symbol among my peers and teachers, and the struggles were often balanced with praise for being in advanced math.

Doing math also fit well with my career goals. In ninth grade (1983–84) I took a career aptitude test in English class, which I believe told me I was suited to be, among many other things, a garbage collector or a teacher. Although this was also the time I told my friends I wanted to be president (likely following my successful run as minority whip in our government class), I focused my paper for English on plans to be a teacher and a coach. When I consulted my father on the issue, he told me that if I wanted to be a teacher I should teach math because schools needed math teachers and especially female math teachers. His point was well taken for several reasons. First, he was the director of personnel for our school district, so he would actually know this information. And second, I had zero female math teachers in junior high, and would only have one in high school and none in college.[1] So, my father's advice suggested that I could both be what I wanted and advance the cause of women by being a math teacher.

I went to a small college in Iowa where I majored in mathematics. I wish I could report that I enjoyed the experience of majoring in math, but I can't. I was relieved to not be in "advanced math" anymore and glad to be starting afresh in Calculus I. But there were certainly new disadvantages and obstacles in college. In high school I counted a great deal on friends, mainly other girls in my class, to work on homework or ask for help when I didn't understand the teacher. In my small college, however, there was only one other female math major and, because she was older, she was only in a few of my upper-division math classes. That math was still very much a "boys' club" might not have been a big deal, but the dorms on my campus were sex-segregated. So, whereas the guys could meet easily with each other to do homework in their study lounges or rooms, I could not do so readily. To join their homework sessions, I had to first ask, then go to their dorm, call up, and sign in, and one of them had to come get me. Or, they had to leave the comfort of their normal study areas and come do homework with me in the main lounge (where there were lots of people coming and going) or in the library. I wasn't really comfortable bothering the men in my classes in this way, especially the guys who were good at math, so the only study sessions I really had were with those that wanted my help.

Adding to this, my primary math professor was very religious, and I knew he had left his congregation in protest when it started officially ordaining women into the ministry sometime after 1985. I went to his office for help, but I certainly didn't hang out and talk with him before and after class, or during his office hours, like many of the male math majors. So, being a math major in college became a fairly lonely endeavor, and I depended heavily on learning on my own from examples in books. When independent learning didn't work well, my grades again suffered. In fact, I repeated Calculus III because I got a C in it the first time. I left college with a 3.7 GPA, with most of my lower grades coming from math classes.

During this time, I took a great deal of solace and was greatly inspired by a book I found doing research for my History of Mathematics class. *Women in Mathematics* by Lynn M. Osen (1974) described the lives and works of important female mathematicians such as Hypatia (AD 370–415), who was stripped, beaten, dismembered and burned to death by a Christian mob in part for her propensity to wear men's clothes and inhabit men's intellectual and physical spaces; Sophie Germain (1776–1831), who overcame her parents' opposition and women's exclusion from studying at École polytechnique, and taught herself differential calculus; and Amalie Noether (1882–1935), to whom much of modern algebraic theory can be traced. Osen (1974) described the obstacles to acquiring any education many women faced and the additional obstacles they faced doing mathematics:

> In almost any age, it has taken a passionate determination, as well as a certain insouciance, for a female to circumvent the crippling prohibitions against education for women, particularly in a field that is considered to be a male province. In mathematics, the wonder is not that so few have attained proficiency in the field, but that so many have overcome the obstacles to doing so. (163)

I wrote an essay based on this book, called "Running Twice as Fast to Get Just as Far: An Overview of *Women in Mathematics* by Lynn M. Osen." My male professor gave me full credit for the essay, but made no comment whatsoever on my thesis or the content of the paper. My own conclusion was that I should be grateful I didn't have to study in secrecy, use pseudonyms for my work, or fear for my life just because I was studying math, and that I should take advantage of the opportunity I had to study mathematics in college despite the apparent indifference and possible opposition of my professors.

I struggled through and survived my math classes, shedding many tears along the way. Being a female mathematics major during this period of transition, fifteen years after Title IX, was still difficult and lonely. However, it was somewhat balanced by the opportunities provided by a liberal arts education at a small

school, opportunities ensured by Title IX. I loved playing softball and volleyball at the college level, and this allowed me to maintain important connections to other women. Even though there was no women's studies department at my school, I found feminism in my Literature by Women class, where I read feminist writers such as Adrienne Rich and Toni Morrison. Some friends and I started a Women's Club and ran our meeting using a consciousness-raising book published by the National Organization for Women that was given to us by a professor.

In college, then, feminism and the feminist consciousness I was formally developing were compatible with and helped support my pursuit of mathematics. Sports and feminism balanced out the isolation I faced in the math department and helped me graduate happy and confident that I could make a difference in the world by teaching math and coaching girls' sports.

*Teaching Seventh-Grade Mathematics (1992–97)*

I was a seventh-grade math teacher at a middle school in Colorado from 1992 to 1997, during a time when there was a particular push to reduce gender bias and encourage girls' interest in math and science. As educators, we became much more aware of both overt and more subtle gender bias that girls were facing in the classroom, not only in math but more generally. For example, more and more schools were facing lawsuits based on Title IX for allowing sexual harassment to disrupt the educational environment of girls, and I was one of the teachers who rewrote the sexual harassment policy for our school in response to those suits.

In 1994, Myra and David Sadker released the book *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*. The Sadkers, education professors at American University in Washington, DC, noted that girls begin school equal to or ahead of boys on most standardized tests but that by high school they score lower than boys on SAT and ACT exams, with the biggest gender gaps occurring in math and science. They connected girls' relative loss of achievement to their loss of self-esteem and explained this loss as a result of classroom climates. They argued that boys get a "lion's share of teachers' time and attention" (Sadker and Sadker 1994, 4). Boys, they found, called out in class eight times more than girls and got more useful feedback from teachers. Teachers (regardless of gender) were more likely to do a problem for a girl that asked for help and more likely to help a boy do it himself. I did notice this tendency in myself because I assumed that girls would pay better attention and be able to replicate what I showed them. I also noticed that, being generally shy myself, I was reluctant to call on shy girls because I didn't want to make them uncomfortable. This, of course, was exactly the Sadkers' point: that schools were failing girls because they were failing to engage them in the classroom as much as boys.

This type of research fueled an interest in girls' educational needs across our school district. Teachers attended trainings on diversity and gender bias. We adjusted our teaching practices, set up special projects or opportunities aimed at involving girls in math and science, and even engaged students directly in discussions about gender bias in the classroom. I attended one training, for example, on identifying students for the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program. In this training, it was noted that girls were less likely to be identified for TAG programs because gender norms may keep them from being regarded as needing TAG services. The argument was that girls who are bored in class will not call attention to themselves in the same way that boys might. As a result, we were encouraged to do things like provide self-referral opportunities to help improve our identification of girls and boys for TAG services.

I took girls to the "Expanding Your Horizons in Math, Science and Technology Conference for Girls" at the University of Colorado, where they could learn more about jobs they might get if they took math and

science in college. While the girls learned about math and science careers and participated in hands-on demonstrations, teachers and parents attended sessions on financial aid and on how to encourage girls to pursue math and science. We received a packet that included handouts for teachers ("Tips for Teaching Girls" and "Characteristics of Classrooms Where Girls Succeed in Math and Science") and for parents ("Encouraging Your Daughter in Mathematics and Science," "Doing Science with Your Children," and "Family Math"). These programs taught teachers to change pedagogical practices and use strategies such as group problem solving where there was less emphasis on competition and more on social interaction. During this time, I did the best I could to encourage all students to enjoy math and understand how useful math training would be later in life.

This part of my career was one of the most personally rewarding times for me, as my job as a math teacher was in perfect alignment with my feminist consciousness, and I felt my struggles to stay in mathematics were making a difference. The educational climate in the school district encouraged action against gender inequality in education. The trainings and teaching activities described above fueled a desire to learn more about gender and about feminism. I decided to take some sociology and women's studies courses at night and in the summer. I loved these courses and applied to graduate schools in sociology and women's studies. My new goal in life was to become a professor of women's studies. So, after five years of teaching math and coaching high school girls' sports, I took a leave of absence and returned to graduate school in 1997.

*Graduate School (1997–2004)*

I applied to two programs in women's or feminist studies and three programs in sociology. Perhaps because as a math major I had very little formal training in women's studies (two classes only), I didn't get into a women's studies or feminist studies program. I did get into two sociology programs and chose to go to the University of Colorado because they had a concentration in gender studies. Although deciding to study gender from a sociological perspective might have taken me away from math and science, my background in mathematics ended up being very influential on the direction of my training and dissertation research.

My first year at CU I met my first female mentor in mathematics. Jane Menken is a renowned demographer and was a pioneer in the area of biostatistics in the 1960s and 70s. I volunteered to help her with her undergraduate class on women, development, and fertility, and she later asked me to become her research assistant, because (as she tells it) my first-year statistics teacher suggested I was near the top of the class. Through Jane, I became interested in international women's issues, particularly the relationship of reproduction to women's status. This was, of course, a time when enthusiasm for international research on gender and women's empowerment was fueled by feminist international activism and global policy conferences such as the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. My association with Jane within this environment led me to focus my training in part on quantitative methods geared towards answering demographic questions about the relationship between women's empowerment and health in rural Bangladesh.

During graduate school, I was also fortunate in that the Women's Studies department at CU began offering a graduate certificate that provided training in feminist theory and methods. This training taught me to question quantitative research—its subjects, its questions, its presumed objectivity, and therefore also its findings. Coupled with theoretical training in sociology, my feminist training transformed my concern with getting girls to do math to getting everyone to do math (or, more accurately, quantitative research) differently. This meant including women in research both as researchers and as subjects, formulating different questions or examining the bias within questions, and incorporating various techniques to answer questions appropriately.

I did the best I could to apply what I learned through feminist methods to my work on women's empowerment in Bangladesh. I felt I was in a good position to do feminist research on the issue because the data I was using had a whole battery of direct questions on women's empowerment, which was unusual for that time. Furthermore, the questions were based on previous qualitative research done only three years before the survey. This qualitative research used women's narratives about their interactions with family and in the community, participant observation, and interviews with key informants to identify six domains of empowerment that were described by women as important to their everyday interactions (Sense of Self and Vision of the Future; Mobility and Visibility; Economic Security; Decision-Making Power in the Household; Interacting Effectively in the Public Sphere; Participation in Non-Family Groups). So, through the survey I had quantitative data that could be used to measure women's level of power in the areas of life that women themselves defined as important.

Jane and I decided it was best to construct measures of empowerment using a process called confirmatory factor analysis. Unlike other methods for constructing scales, confirmatory factor analysis uses a hypothesis-testing approach that let me "interact" with the data. I would specify a relationship between the various questions across the dimensions and a relationship between the dimensions. Confirmatory factor analysis would tell me how well the covariance structure of the data (the patterns of answers) fit the hypothesized relationships, and I could adjust the model to improve the fit. This technique, I thought, was "more feminist" than other techniques because it allowed the data structure (women's answers) to drive the model development. It also allowed me to test the theory that women's empowerment was multidimensional and that the dimensions were interrelated.

After I presented my first paper on this research to my methods classes, both of my feminist methods professors told me there was "just something wrong" with my project. It sounds like amazingly vague feedback as I recount it here, but as a feminist I got it. Feminist reactions often come at the gut level—and they range from a vague discomfort to a blinding rage. In my experience, the blinding rage comes most often when the offense to feminist sensibilities is either most blatant or most hidden and difficult to articulate. It is these moments of discomfort that make being feminist in academia difficult; however, finding a resolution to them is key to maintaining sanity as a feminist in academia.

I did understand, therefore, the idea that something was missing from my project and I worked hard to figure out what it was. I took extra classes, studying postcolonial and transnational feminist theory and looking for ways to address the Western bias inherent in my quantitative analysis of a survey in Bangladesh. The result was a poststructuralist analysis of the international development discourse on women's empowerment, where I traced the circulation of "women's empowerment," showing both its roots in radical (non-Western) and liberal (Western) feminist theory and its recent co-optation by the development industry. I argued that accurate measurement of women's empowerment was necessary to maintain its radical functioning, but particularly that gender equality needed to be conceptualized and measured with other forms of inequality such as race, class, ethnicity, and nationality. Otherwise, "women's empowerment" serves as a liberationist discourse that masks other forms of domination, especially postcolonial domination enacted through the development industry of the global North over the global South. I also argued that unless women's empowerment was treated as intrinsically important and therefore as a dependent variable in demographic models, the discourse of empowerment would maintain this position (Williams 2004).

In my dissertation, I first built the epistemological foundation for what I called "feminist demography" in order to generate intellectual space for feminist demographic research on women's empowerment. I then attended to the politics of location, mainly through the discourse analysis discussed above. I reconceptualized

women's empowerment to include an understanding of gender as socially constructed and context-specific. After testing the qualitative hypothesis and finding that empowerment was in fact multidimensional, and building scales to measure each dimension, I analyzed the determinants of empowerment to show that it was related to, but not the same as, women's status or women's household socioeconomic status.

My background in mathematics, facilitated by Title IX and combined with subsequent training in feminism, helped me produce a dissertation on women's empowerment that I felt was truly feminist. My dissertation incorporated what some call dual-vision or "double(d) science," which is "both complicit with and a critique of its methodology" (Langsdorf 2009, 197). Even though it took extra time and effort, my work satisfied my own feminist ethics and my intellectual curiosity; it was interdisciplinary and it advanced the knowledge about women's empowerment.

My dissertation wasn't, however, well suited for publication. At my dissertation defense, when I asked my committee for suggestions on where or how to publish my work, there was marked silence. One member suggested that I could write a demographic article for demographers and a separate article for feminist journals, but no one could think of a place to publish where I could keep the integration of feminism and demography intact. There was a suggestion that I could turn it into a book, but coupled with an acknowledgment that one should always publish an article or two first. Although I had a great interdisciplinary committee, I came away from my defense feeling frustrated and confused about what exactly to do with my research.

Attending graduate school in the late 1990s and early 2000s, then, meant being trained at a time when the global feminist movement had mounted a significant challenge to Western development discourses in part by challenging the epistemological underpinning of science, including quantitative social science. The global academic and development community was responding to and co-opting feminist discourses through a seemingly serious commitment to redressing important gender inequalities throughout the world. In this context, I had blended demographic and feminist epistemologies and methodologies within my dissertation only to find myself without a forum to share the work, and therefore without a clear way forward in my research. This intellectual conundrum demonstrates the surprising tension in the academy between feminism and the push to encourage girls to do math. Although the recent acceptance of mixed-methods work and continued growth of interdisciplinary studies have provided reason to be optimistic, in my own experience the overall failure to fully develop feminist quantitative social science has remained a serious obstacle to my work and advancement.

*Post-Doctoral Fellowship (2004–present)*

After graduate school, I began a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Colorado, funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation working to improve demographic training in Africa. I spent a year on the ground in South Africa, teaching and contributing to the establishment of a new program in population studies and demography at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. This work was very appealing to me because the apartheid government had discouraged quantitative social sciences. South Africa, in fact, provides a salient example of how the lack of numeracy can be as devastating as the lack of literacy, and how populations that lack numeracy are deprived of an important tool for documenting oppression and inequality. My post-doctoral work has again tapped into the mathematical skills I acquired due to Title IX. This work has been very meaningful to me because it helps train African scholars to be able to measure and redress the damage done by apartheid policies; to quantify the astounding impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and to find effective ways to combat disease and poverty.

During my post-doc in South Africa, I did complete a qualitative research project (Williams 2008). But my efforts to do feminist demography since graduating have generally been stymied by several issues, which include a lack of publishing options for my dissertation and the realization that my research on women's empowerment was still not acceptable to feminist scholars because of its quantitative nature. I did try to publish work from my dissertation in the field of demography, but I was rejected (in part) for presenting results that were not generalizable to other contexts.

This, in fact, is a major obstacle to work on gender in demography. Demographers are wed to comparative analysis, and surveys are expected to measure women's empowerment in uniform ways so that results can be compared across contexts. This is in direct contradiction to feminist theory, which has concentrated on showing how gender is culturally constructed and has prioritized contextual specificity and local knowledge. I have, therefore, found myself between a rock and a hard place—unable to publish in demography because my work defines gender as context-specific and unlikely to be able to publish in feminist journals because of their strong critiques of quantitative research (Hughes and Cohen 2010; Williams 2006).

Still, it didn't really occur to me that quantitative research on women's empowerment might never be acceptable to women's studies departments until I went on the job market in 2007. When I didn't get interviewed for a job in a women's studies department, I asked for feedback and advice on my application. A very kind professor on the search committee wrote me the following e-mail:

> My sense re. women/gender studies programs is that there is a tendency to be more interested in qualitative research and fieldwork (vs. stats/surveys). So keeping in mind that search committees read through cvs and cover letters quickly in making their first cuts, I would suggest that you not forefront the discussion of the demographic aspects of your work but rather discuss it after you emphasize the feminist theory/fem epistemology/discourse analysis aspects. Also highlight your on-the-ground experiences (eg. fieldwork) in various regions of the world… Keep in mind that WMST/WGST committees are interdisciplinary, and people from the humanities especially are sometimes alienated from the stats/demographics.

This is not harsh feedback in any sense of the word and is probably something I should have expected by that point, but I was devastated. I can only liken my reaction to what my almost two-year-old son does when he doesn't understand why I'm telling him "no"—for example, why it is fine to throw a ball to people but not to throw a rock at the dog. He immediately plops down on his bottom and covers his head with his hands as if it hurts. His face turns beet-red while he holds his breath and pushes out his lower lip. The first sounds that finally escape are like the howls of an injured animal. He will then settle in to a good cry with crocodile tears that convey a deep sense of confusion and betrayal. My son moves from tantrum to acceptance in a matter of moments; however, my own process of recovery has been much slower. In fact, it took writing the first draft of this paper almost a year later to realize that the tantrum came from the little girl within that wanted to be able to do boy things and did some of them, such as math, because my mother couldn't, Title IX enabled it, and feminism encouraged it. The e-mail seemed to suggest that simply being a quantitative researcher meant I was likely to be tossed out in the first round by search committees and that I should in fact hide the quantitative nature of my work. After all I have gone through to be trained in mathematics and develop feminist demography, I did not want to be told, even nicely, to hide it.

I have recovered from my tantrum and accepted that women's studies as a discipline cannot be all things to everyone and every feminist scholar cannot be a professor of women's studies. In fact, a majority of feminist scholars still reside in other disciplinary homes. What I remain concerned with is feminism's lack of engagement with quantitative research. Hughes and Cohen (2010) suggest in their editorial, "Feminists Really Do Count: The Complexity of Feminist Methodologies," that feminist scholars in primarily

quantitative fields have enacted a certain "practical pragmatism" whereby they "have negotiated their own compromises between disciplinary norms and practices and the feminist critical project," but that there has been "little public discussion or methodological consideration of how this has occurred" (191). I agree that we need to reveal and examine the many compromises feminists make in their home disciplines and their consequences for knowledge production. In demography, I know these compromises often require muting our criticisms and altering our research agendas.

I would add to Hughes and Cohen's statement that although some work has reflected on the issue, not enough has been done to prepare graduate students or young faculty for the psychological impact of those compromises. I've written elsewhere about some of the epistemological and methodological barriers to doing feminist demography (Williams 2010), but there are also institutional and psychological barriers to be overcome. Along these lines, I have begun to pay more attention to my own experience as a feminist within a demographic setting. In my day-to-day functioning inside a population program, surrounded by demographers from various disciplines, I retain many of my mathematical insecurities and have continued to learn the hard way how much extra work it takes to address feminist epistemological concerns. It is not only an extra step that my colleagues do not have to take; feminist theory shifts the whole research process, making it, in my mind, more complex and challenging to accomplish.

While my colleagues are blissfully unaware and unaffected by the vast amount of knowledge about feminist theory and epistemology that they lack, I face a continuous cycle of self-doubt, of always having to defend my own work and to articulate and even reformulate feminist critiques of other work. After more than ten years of struggling to do feminist demography, I question whether it can be done within current institutional structures. While my colleagues remain secure in their idea of "truth," my feminist consciousness can be debilitating and stall productivity. Feminism compounds those worries about being a mathematical fraud in the first place with additional theoretical, methodological, and ethical critiques. When these issues are combined with a lack of feminist community, such psychological barriers are very difficult to overcome.

## The State of Feminist Quantitative Social Science Research

Emily Martin made it look easy. If one considers the typical curriculum for feminist methods classes, there is always a plethora of examples of feminist interventions into other disciplines, such as Martin's 1991 "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." These interventions go beyond feminist empiricism to demonstrate the masculine bias embedded in research and knowledge. These interventions are the bedrock of feminist studies; they open our students' minds to alternate ways of seeing and knowing and illuminate inequalities that were previously shrouded by science.

Looking back, it is easy to see how I came away from my feminist training with the idea that feminist interventions into disciplines much like demography were the most laudable form of feminist work. In my heart, I believed that even if demography never accepted or published my work, I would have a home in feminist studies. Instead, I find myself in a similar situation as my mom in the early 1980s, wondering if anyone wants to hire a middle-aged feminist demographer with a limited amount of publications.

There is certainly much more at stake here than one person's or a generation of women's career paths. My own lack of publications could just be a personal failure. But there is evidence of an institutional bias in overtly feminist journals against quantitative work. Cohen, Hughes, and Lampard (2011) analyzed methodological patterns of articles published in nineteen journals in "gender, women's studies, feminist, and

other women-oriented journals" in 2007. Their findings were that although 51% of articles used some form of quantitative methods, articles with explicit "feminist self-positioning" as the methodological justification were overwhelmingly qualitative. This is further recognition of the difficulty of using feminist methodology and epistemology to motivate quantitative work and publish successfully. Quantitative work may focus on women but not with a truly feminist underpinning. This type of quantitative work does little to resolve the epistemological tensions between feminism and positivism and encourages quantitative work on women that is devoid of feminist methodology. This creates an illusion of moving forward in our development of feminist quantitative social science. As Cohen, Hughes, and Lampard (2011) point out, there is "relatively little overt evidence of the methodological influences of feminism ... even within feminist studies journals" (576).

These findings, along with my own experience, suggest we need to reignite a discussion of feminist methodology. Feminists have successfully transformed quantitative research, but only to a point. They have challenged the notion of the objective observer, exposed the masculine bias of past quantitative research, and ensured that women are included as subjects of research and that results from studies of men are not generalized to women. Title IX has helped ensure that women get training in math and science, so that more women can be the ones asking the questions, designing the studies, and collecting and analyzing the data. This in and of itself is revolutionary.

But feminists seem to have won the battle and abandoned the war. Just as a generation of girls (like myself) growing up under Title IX and fighting their way through math and science programs finished college and entered graduate school, the postmodern turn in feminism took hold. And it was suddenly not in vogue for feminists to do quantitative research. Individual women have been left to fight on their own, in sometimes hostile disciplines, for feminist causes. In my dissertation, I proudly wrote that while postmodern theorists dismantle objectivity, feminists also constructed new grounds for building and assessing knowledge through such concepts as strong reflexivity. Instead, the last ten to fifteen years suggest that feminism has deconstructed "science" and reconstructed it as a qualitative endeavor. We have become complicit with the idea, for example, that methods themselves are neutral, rather than continuing to analyze ways in which they may not be. As a result, we have, in fact, left quantitative social sciences only partially transformed by feminist critiques, and disciplines such as demography therefore remain relatively unaffected by feminist theory.

Even though feminism has disengaged from numbers, they still hold power in our society and to most, including policymakers, represent objective knowledge. To ensure that the feminist challenge to objectivity endures we must reengage with quantitative research. We must train feminists in social statistics so that they can ask the difficult questions such as, Are certain statistical techniques more feminist? What is the best way to quantitatively measure gender or changes in women's power? And we must recognize that, as in the past, our best chance of working out these answers is in collaboration with each other, so we must create rather than discourage communities of feminist quantitative researchers. Feminists fought hard to institute and maintain Title IX, and at this historical juncture it is important to remember that we have girls out there, good at math and science but not interested in technical careers. Like Title IX did for us, we can create a whole new world of possibility for girls if we give them a chance to apply mathematics and statistics to something intrinsically rewarding in their women's studies classes—to social problems identified by feminist theory as important.

## Concluding Thoughts

Recently I've observed that in demography, forty years after Title IX, the pendulum is starting to swing from critiques of demography back towards questions about feminism and the lack of feminist training in quantitative research methods. Feminist scholars in demography, who have worked hard to try to transform demographic work, are starting to question the absence of concern and support from women's studies departments (see, for example, Desai, Greenhalgh, and Riley 2007). Their arguments are often pragmatic. It is hard to see the wealth of resources in disciplines like demography and not suggest that women's studies programs would benefit from some of them. It is hard to watch researchers without feminist training do research on women and without concern for its impact on women or on feminism. But these arguments go beyond pragmatism as well (Hughes and Cohen 2010).

What I hope to have shown by sharing my own experience of growing up with Title IX is that questioning of the exclusion of quantification in feminism is a cry for help and a plea for community. We want an opportunity to create new coalitions within feminism and to work under the umbrella of women's and gender studies departments. Yes, we know that new coalitions will be uncomfortable, as Bernice Johnson Reagan (1983) and others have pointed out, but they are bound to produce knowledge not possible otherwise. In another staple of the feminist curriculum, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," Audre Lorde (1984) wrote:

> Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of *different strengths*, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters. (111; emphasis added)

Title IX can surely only be considered a resounding success. Because of it, girls and women have had access to disciplines previously identified as strictly masculine endeavors. Access to these fields means we have the personnel, tools, and training to renew our challenge to objectivity and to further develop feminist quantitative social science research. We simply have to figure out how to create the intellectual space in the academy to further utilize our different strengths as feminists.

## Notes

1. Women are still less likely to teach mathematics and science than other subjects in K–12 schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey, in 2003–2004 women constituted 75.6% of all elementary and secondary school teachers, but only 60.8% of science and math teachers (Institute of Education Sciences 2008).

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