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Queer Theory and Feminist Methods: A Review

Ali Erol[1] y Lisa Cuklanz[2]

Abstract. Feminist research methodologies seek to conduct research that aligns with the political and social project of feminism. These research methodologies specifically focus on women's voice, experiences, and contributions, center a feminist perspective and adopt premises and assumptions of a feminist worldview. Some of these premises –raising critical consciousness, encouraging social change, and emphasizing a diversity of human experience related to gender at the intersection of race, sexuality, and other categories of identity– align with the premises and assumptions of queer theory. Since both feminist and queer research methods aim to centralize the experiences of people marginalized under racist, sexist, heterosexist, patriarchal, and imperialist conditions, both methods seek decentralization of and liberation from such experiences in research methodologies. While this paper will briefly discuss these important points of alignment between feminist methods and queer theory, the main purpose will be to distinguish these two broad approaches and to outline what queer theory additionally brings to the table.
Keywords: feminism; methods; queer theory; feminist methods

[en] Teoría Queer y metodologías feministas: el estado de la cuestión

Resumen. La metodología feminista busca aportar modelos para investigaciones que se alineen con el proyecto político y social del feminismo. Estas metodologías de investigación se construyen específicamente desde una perspectiva feminista y adoptan premisas y nociones desde una cosmovisión feminista. Algunas de estas premisas (aumentar la conciencia crítica, alentar el cambio social y subrayar la diversidad de la experiencia humana) van en la línea de las premisas y los supuestos de la teoría *queer*. Dado que los métodos de investigación feminista y queer se encaminan a visibilizar las experiencias de las personas marginadas bajo condiciones racistas, sexistas, heterosexistas, patriarcales e imperialistas, ambos métodos buscan la descentralización y la liberación de tales experiencias a través de metodologías de investigación. Este documento discutirá brevemente estos importantes puntos de unión entre los métodos feministas y la teoría *queer*, y su objetivo principal será distinguir estos dos enfoques generales y esbozar lo que la teoría *queer* específicamente aporta a la teoría feminista.
Palabras clave: feminismo; metodología; teoría *queer*

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1. Introduction: Defining the Problem

Feminist research methodologies and queer theory share points of inflection, but also are divergent in a number of important respects. Whereas feminist methods have been utilized at least since the 1970s, queer theory developed somewhat later, starting in the early 1990s. This development emerged not only as a corrective to some of the gaps and shortcomings of feminist methods, but also in part as a reaction to the growing field of 'Gay and Lesbian Studies' that left out human experiences that did not fit into those identity categories. As such, queer theory introduced a uniquely fresh perspective with new goals and objectives. Thus, while queer theory grew out of feminist research and methods, it cannot be considered a subset or sub-category of feminist methods.

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[1] ali.erol@bc.edu
    Boston College, United States of America
[2] cuklanz@bc.edu
    Boston College, United States of America

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There is no specific, universally agreed-upon definition of feminist research, which encompasses a broad range of research subjects and methodologies. However, feminist research does certainly have some defining features. It should focus on women, serve to empower or privilege a women's point of view, and/or highlight the ways in which women's voices and experiences have been marginalized or discounted in dominant discourses, ideologies, practices, and institutions. Queer theory takes up a similar mission with regard to the privileging of previously marginalized human experiences in various categories of gender expression and sexual desire, and highlights the operation of heteronormative and heterosexist discourses and practices. These two emphases can often converge in one piece of scholarship, and there are many examples of feminist work that are also part of the tradition of queer theory (see for example Annamarie Jagose; Sara Ahmed). Both types of work aim to examine and reveal the operations of power that maintain a power imbalance between groups and ideas, either men and masculinity over and above women and femininity, or heteronormativity over and above queer identities and practices. Both types of work aim to bring marginalized experiences to the center, and to provide a critique of the normal operations of the power of the dominant over the marginal. Both types of research aim toward social change.

The main area of overlap between feminist research and queer studies is through the feminist call to focus continually on the intersectional relationship between gender as a social and analytical category and other markers of subjectivity including sexuality, race, class, and ethnicity. Feminist research should take at least some of these elements into account, and should likewise shed light on the complex operations of power at the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and so forth. Thus, feminist work has always employed queer identity as a key category for analysis of gender and of women's experience, and a good deal of feminist work has focused on research subjects related to queer and lesbian subject matter (see Briones, 2019). For instance, feminist historians have examined discrimination against gay and lesbian people and have documented the measures used to repress the expression of marginalized sexualities. Similarly, feminist media studies scholars have documented various tropes and stereotypes related to the mass mediated representation of gay and lesbian persons and characters. The importance of the unique position of gay and lesbian people and the recognition that their marginalized status contributed to the development of a correspondingly unique political stance can be seen in early discussions of different types of feminist theory that often included "lesbian separatist feminism" as one of only three key theoretical approaches to the social power imbalances of gender. Although some theorists into the early 1980s posited that gender imbalances could never be eradicated without the complete separation of women and men, the impracticality of such a possibility meant that this line of inquiry was never fully explored as a method of inquiry and knowledge production, and lesbian feminist was later dropped as a specific sub-category of feminist theory. Queer theory was later developed to address some of the same issues in a more sophisticated and nuanced manner.

2. Feminist Research Methods

Feminist research methods can be understood as based on three core principles that are in turn linked with three key aims. While all three are based on the centrality of women's voices and experiences, the development of feminist thought has led to a progression of goals and methods. First, feminist research was initially based on the idea that women's experiences were largely overlooked in academic studies. As examples, medical research was conducted on male populations, historical work focused on the actions and decisions of men, and media scholarship avoided contact with lowly "feminine" text genres such as soap operas. Second, feminist methods sought to reveal gender biases in the frameworks and assumptions of existing scholarship. A third stream of scholarship closely related to the first two focused on identifying ways in which some women's experiences were marginalized, and sought to re-center these marginalized perspectives and experiences to produced new knowledge while simultaneously deconstructing dominant perspectives. This section will discuss each of these three types of feminist research and provide examples of each, drawing from different fields to suggest the breadth and depth of the feminist critique of traditional scholarship and the range of unique contributions that resulted from feminist methodologies. The discussion is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive.

As first developed, feminist research methods were designed to redress imbalances in scholarship that seldom studied women, their experiences, and their point of view. Feminist scholarship that grew out of the second wave feminist movement in the United States in the 1970s had the daunting task or bringing scholarship on women into the academic discussion in fields as disparate as history, communication, sociology, biology, and many others. Simply examining what women were doing was the first imperative of this early feminist research in the United States. The central goal of feminist research methods was to give voice to women and their ways of experiencing and understanding the world:

> The feminist principles of respecting women's (and other oppressed groups') unique ways of knowing, destabilizing power relations in the research process, and confronting socially constructed gendered inequalities (DeVault

1996; Chafetz 1999; Jaggar 2008) have underscored a proclivity to give voice to women through qualitative research methods (O'Shaughnessy and Krogman, p. 495).

Feminist research in the United States was initially aimed at developing knowledge about women's work, experiences, and contributions in a range of fields. Thus, feminist research has made contributions to research within traditional frameworks by inserting women's point of view and experiences into existing fields of scholarship. These contributions transformed fields such as history, where women's activities had once been seen as inconsequential and unworthy of academic study. For instance, historian Nancy Cott examined women's role in US history through books on women's sphere, prominent women, and the foundations of the women's movement (1972, 1977, 1987). Sociologists Linda Lytle Holmstrom and Ann Wolburt Burgess interviewed rape survivors and discovered a pattern of post-traumatic stress they called rape trauma syndrome, which was later used to provide an explanation of victim behavior in an effort to protect victims in legal investigations and discussions of crimes of rape and sexual assault. In the fields of media studies and literature, Tania Modleski examined themes and narratives in soap operas (1982), and Janice Radway studied female readers of romance novels (1982). All of these research initiatives placed women's experiences at the center of inquiry and produced knowledge based upon it. All are examples of work that developed in the U .S. context subsequent to the advent of the second wave of the U.S. women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

However, in addition to their focus on conducting research on women's role in a range of fields, feminist researchers quickly noted that, in failing to account for women and their experiences, whole fields of scholarship had developed biased assumptions and skewed results in their studies of human biology, behavior, and creative production. Therefore, feminist researchers also set out to identify, assess, and rectify gender-based biases in their fields of expertise. They also shed light on ways in which cultural assumptions and biases skewed hypotheses, research design, and methodology. For example, feminists critiqued the ways that assumptions about active sperm and passive eggs resulted in specific views of the mechanisms of human reproduction that did not provide accurate information about the process, or ways in which medical advice was often based on incorrect assumptions about women, with harmful effects on their health (Martin 1991; Ehrenreich 1978). In linguistics, feminist researchers showed how gender biases in language use affected beliefs about and expectations of real people based on their gender (Lakoff, 1975).

Beyond revealing gender biases of existing research and investigating the role of women in a wide range of fields, feminist scholars also sought to develop methods that would examine and question relations of power based on gender at the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and other identity formations. They sought to deconstruct and reconsider inequalities both outside of academia and within it, and set about developing methods of analysis capable of revealing multifaceted gender biases that were previously hidden from view as well as those that were evident. Thus, this research also focused on gender as an organizing principle of historical, social, political, and economic experience. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber summarizes:

> Feminist research positions gender as the categorical center of inquiry and the research process. By using a variety of research methods –quantitative, qualitative, mixed– feminist researchers use gender as a lens through which to focus on social issues. Research is considered "feminist" when it is grounded in the set of theoretical traditions that privilege women's issues, voices, and lived experiences. (p. 3)

Feminist methods can be both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative methods including interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic study lend themselves with relative ease to feminist principles of inclusion, voice, and re-centering the marginalized. However, as we will explore below, each of these methods also present certain limitations in relation to feminist research.

Central to feminist research methods is the idea of standpoint theory. According to O'Shaughnessy and Krogman:

> From a standpoint approach, knowledge (and ignorance) is inevitably bound with power and necessarily situated in particular historical and material contexts; the knowledges developed and accessed by different groups tend to represent their systematic interests and values (Harding 2001).

The standpoints of members of marginalized groups including women, racial and ethnic groups, and sexual minorities cause them to be aware of dominant perspectives and discourses while simultaneously understanding their own position in relation to them. This provides them with a more complex understanding of a given reality and a more sophisticated means of generating knowledge in a given situation (Rodriguez, 2015). At its base, standpoint theory posits that knowledge is socially constructed and based in part on standpoint in relation to dominant ideologies. Standpoint theory thus informs feminist research that examines, explains, and offers alternatives to dominant perspectives, voices, and biases. Authors such as Angela Davis (*Women, Race, and Class*, 1983) and Patricia Hill Collins (Black Feminist Thought, 1990) sought to address the of women of color in both scholarship and theory, and to *Black Feminist Thought* reveal some of the existing biases against women of color in culture, society, and academia. This

work has more recently been extended into global contexts (see *Wing, Global critical race feminism: An International reader*: An International Reader, 2000). Standpoint theory thus offers a third central starting point of feminist research; it posits a re-centering of the margins and emphasizes the need to deconstruct existing structures of knowledge in order to examine their assumptions.

3. Limitations of Feminist Research Methods

There have been several important debates about the limitations of feminist research methods in recent decades. In particular, feminist scholarship has been committed to questioning the validity of positioning a researcher or author above research subjects, especially for the purposes of selecting and interpreting data derived from research subjects (DeVault, 1990; Gluck and Patai, 1991; Brisolara, Siegart, and SenGupta, 2014). Feminist researchers often believe that they should do their utmost to facilitate authentic expression on the part of research subjects, and the extent to which researchers can or should intercede through the research process has been called into question. Feminist scholars' commitment to challenging the authority of the researcher or author of a study have led to debates about how best to accomplish this goal, although questions about authority in relation to the researcher/subject relationship have been persistent and difficult to resolve (see Riessman, 1987). While a researcher may design a study to provide for a collaborative research process in which participant voices are given free reign, the degree to which the researcher must shape and represent the resulting data is a frequent subject of debate, and feminist scholars have even gone so far as to note that encouraging subjects to think of themselves as authors or equal participants along with the researcher can be equally misleading and exploitative, although in a different way from traditional research.

Feminist methods along these lines have included innovative efforts to include a range of marginalized voices, but have also sought to challenge assumptions about how knowledge is produced, and how accepted patterns and norms have shaped our understanding of what is real or true. For example, in her film *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam*, scholar and filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha utilizes experimental methods to call into question norms of narrative structure, privileged point-of-view, and relationships between identity and cultural memory. Minh-ha uses an apparent documentary style, interviewing women about their memories of Vietnam. However, near the film's end, Minh-ha reveals that the women who appeared to speak from their own experience are instead actors playing roles within the film, causing the viewers to question their assumptions about what is real or true. Techniques of filmmaking are also used to decenter the subject and call attention to challenges of translation and memory. For instance, subtitles are offered inconsistently or out of sync with the spoken word, and the camera seldom centers on speaker's face (1989). Minh-ha similarly utilizes unconventional methods of narrating and questions our ability to distinguish between truth and fiction in her theoretical work *Woman, Native, Other* (1989).

Similarly, as illustrated in Minh-ha's work as well, how an author can best represent the standpoint of her research subjects is also debated. While Minh-ha's work posits that the author/filmmaker cannot speak for her subjects and that individual experiences cannot be clearly translated into a dominant or universally accessible language, other feminist researchers found different methods to point out some of the same limitations in rethinking dominant paradigms. To what extent can/should researchers quote, paraphrase, interpret, or speak for their research subjects? Before the advent of feminist scholarship, researchers might have interpreted the words of their research subjects through the lens of "false consciousness," or the idea that research participants were unaware of how their own viewpoints and choices served the interest of dominant ideologies and social classes rather than their own. Feminist scholars (and others as well), pointed out that the problem was perhaps a lack of sophistication and complexity in the researcher's understanding of the subject's point of view. Scholars made a concerted effort to understand how participant choices served their own interests and were logical given the circumstances of their lives (Roberts, 1981; Lather, 1991). A good example is Janice Radway's early (1982) work *Reading the Romance*. While prior work understood women's attachment to romance plots as problematic and against their own best interests, Radway argued that her female participants used their engagement with romance narratives as a mode of critique of their own circumstances, imagining for themselves a life in which their choices and preferences were paramount, and providing an escape from the trials of their daily lives. Radway found ways in which romance narratives could be used by readers to make comparisons and form critical perspectives in relation to their own lived relationships. Critics argued that the romance novel fans in Radway's study were perhaps devoting their energies to implausible fantasies that allowed them to tolerate difficult conditions in male-dominated marriages, rather than invest energy in projects or discourses that might create real change in their lives. Thus, readers' engagement with these romantic fantasies, they argued, could also be seen as enabling women to remain content within their existing relationships rather than resist or demand radical changes in the terms of their heterosexual partnerships.

The example of Radway's work illustrates some of the ways in which investigations of women's experiences have provided complex challenges for researchers who wish to show how gender structures social experience (for instance through the provision of particular genres of media and literature based on the gender iden-

tity of the reader), how researchers must make judgments and decisions about interpretation of the standpoint of particular women, and how the production and maintenance of gendered power relations can be understood and critiqued. Minh-ha's work enacts an even more radical intervention into our conventional understanding of knowledge production, as she questions the very possibility of distinguishing between fact and fiction or determining the denotative meaning of a speaker's message across the chasms of difference in historical period, memory, language, perspective, nationality and gender.

Standpoint theory has been subject to three major streams of critique. First, postmodern theory suggests the socially constructed nature of identity itself, as well as the impossibility of absolute knowledge, regardless of perspective or subjective positioning (Lather, 1991). In this case, for feminist researchers, gender becomes an element of analysis among the search for patterns of articulation within intersecting discourses that do not settle on fixed, knowable truths. A second, related limitation of standpoint theory is in the presumption of group membership or categories of identity that can inform one's experience and corresponding knowledge. Feminist research that makes such presumptions is often criticized for a tendency to essentialize, that is, to assume that there is a fixed and knowable category of "woman," and that this category can be characterized by a predictable set of experiences or truths. Any suggestion that biology determines one's experiences and/or reaction to their experiences is oversimplified and subject to the critique of being overly essentializing.

Perhaps the most significant critique of feminist standpoint theory is that the tendency to essentialize a notion of "women's" experience has usually also tended to privilege white, middle-class, and heterosexual perspectives over others. For instance, Betty Friedan's frequently-cited foundational work *The Feminine Mystique* identified a malaise affecting mainly white, middle-class, suburban women. As in Friedan's book, the views and experiences of women of color, those who identify as lesbian or transgender, and those who are marginalized because they do not enjoy middle-class privileges were often omitted or considered less important than those of white, middle-class, heterosexual women.

In recent decades, significant streams of scholarship have provided alternatives and correctives to these privileging tendencies in feminist scholarship itself. Like Minh-ha, other feminists of color such as Patricia Hill Collins, Jacqueline Bobo, and Chandra Mohanty have conducted work that critiques white privilege and provides new perspectives from women of color. An important development has been the analysis of intersectionality both in terms of lived experience, but also in terms of reading and deconstructing categories of ideology, culture, and discourse. Many of these critiques question the foundations of knowledge by examining and deconstructing our beliefs in what is knowable, pointing out the role of identity and experience in the production of accepted truth. As Herr points out, perspectives that are based on Western identity and educational privileges "may pose as a false universal and wield tyrannical influence on the disadvantaged whose different experiences do not resonate with the so-called universal truth" (2014, 23). Queer theory has taken up this project as well, with a specific emphasis on an examination of decentering our assumptions about a range of categories of understanding and knowledge. This work is examined in the next section.

4. Queer Theorizing

Before expanding on the ways in which queer theory addressed some of the aforementioned limitations of feminist research assumptions, theories, and practices, it is important to provide a brief overview of queer theory, its history, and its methodological approach. Queer theory and queer studies made up a reactionary academic movement that emerged in the early 90's against the proliferation of normative approaches to culture and society across academic disciplines on the grounds of sexuality and gender. Warner (1992, p. 19) discusses queer theory in this rather broad sense: "Almost everything that would be called queer theory is about ways in which texts –either literature or mass culture or language– shape sexuality." Over time, theorists began expanding queer theory beyond the realm of sexuality to include gender as well as any advocacy, activism, or theorizing about being in the world that takes a counter position to the normativity of a given context.

To establish a sense of normal and normative, many human experiences were pushed to the margins. Acceptable marginal experiences were coopted into the fold of the normal. Being gay was the most visible of such marginalized experiences that became coopted. Belasius (2001, p. 103) claimed, for instance, "To see oneself as "gay" is to adhere to a distinctly modern invention, namely the creation of an identity and a sense of community based on (homo)sexuality". This modern invention became even more modern with the abolition of the Defense of the Marriage Act by the Supreme Court of the United States in 2013, allowing same sex couples to marry and have the same rights and privileges as heterosexual couples. Another example is Edelman's (2014) take on the binary of being either inside or outside the closet from the perspective of trans-identifying persons. Edelman notes that "a binary conceptualization of the 'closet,' wherein one is either 'in' and shielding one's sexual practices or identity, or 'out' and publically identifying one's sexual practices or identity, renders the complexity of trans experience a politically suspect pathology within a neoliberal civil rights discourse" (Edelman, 2014, p. 150). Moreover, Puar (2007) notes, for instance, supporting imperialism and an imperialist agenda is a way in which one can suspend being queer. Examining the ways in which 'queerness' was used to

push war against terrorism narratives against Iran in the wake of Iran's hanging of two gay men, Puar writes: "Race, ethnicity, nation, gender, class, and sexuality desegregate gay, homosexual, and queer national subjects who align themselves with U.S. imperial interests from forms of illegitimate queerness that name and ultimately propel populations into extinction (Puar, 2007, p. xi). As such, aligning with normal or normative does not limit itself to daily practices and desires that revolve around sex and gender. Political commitments that push imperialist, racist, and classist narratives, occupy a front and center role in the normalizing efforts.

In this sense, being normative did not have anything to do with sexual orientation or identity (Buckland, 2002, p. 156). Rather, it was an indication of aligning with the imposed normativity, which furthered the interests of state structures, and ultimately, sociopolitical practices that benefited from distinctions such as normal/abnormal. Being queer, in this sense, meant to take an anti-normative stance. It also meant to oppose the structures and institutions that reproduce the conditions and concepts of normativity. Queer studies, consequently, took an anti-normative stance, reconceptualizing 'normative' to be relative and changing, consequently understanding queer as a stance that decentralizes whatever becomes central in order to speak from the margins of a changing set of normativities. Today, 'queer-ing' –decentering the taken for granted assumptions in a given field of study or a facet of human life– is well underway across almost all disciplines in social sciences and humanities. Consequently, those who are on the margins and those who are not part of the 'normal,' being intersex, lesbian, bisexual and asexual, trans and non-binary, with later juxtaposition of crip studies (which pays attention to privileging of able bodies as the perceived and invisible norm, just as queer theory pays attention heterosexuality as the invisible norm [McRuer, 2006]) formed the core concerns of queer theory.

Queer theorists argued that academia, as well as society in general, was under the influence of processes and structures of power that simultaneously privileged and marginalized certain groups of individuals in the interests of sustaining existing power structures that created these differences in the first place. Stryker (2014) argues that biopolitics is the primary way in which these differences were imposed and it has been the defining feature of 20th century governance. Stryker defines biopolitics as "the calculus of costs and benefits through which the biological capacities of a population are optimally managed for state or state-like ends… which results in somaticization by individuals of the bodily norms and ideals that regulate the entire population to which they belong" (Stryker, 2014, p. 38). Foucault, who defined and discussed the concept in his College de France Lectures, gives various examples, defining biopolitics as:

> [a] set of processes such as the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on. It is these processes –the birth rate, the mortality rate, longevity, and so on– together with a whole series of related economic and political problems…which, in the second half of the eighteenth century, become biopolitics' first objects of knowledge and the targets it seeks to control (Foucault, 2003, p. 243).

As Foucault emphasizes, control of populations through bodily processes means, ultimately, control of reproduction, identity, and desire. Biopolitical processes achieve this control through imposition of normalizing binaries. Understanding gender, identity, and desire as essentialist binaries allows biopolitical processes to assign particular roles to individuals, and to assign relative values to these binary pairs. These roles are tied to rewards and punishments within the society, making sure that those who align their identities, desires, and lives with the biopolitical undertaking get to have certain rights and privileges that others do not. For instance, the state encourages and subsidizes childrearing marriage through the taxation system. Married couples not only benefit from filing their taxes together, but also get tax credit for childrearing, not to mention tax deductions for expenses related to childcare (Tax Policy Center, 2018). Another example is the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' (DADT), which was the official policy of the U.S. armed forces towards LGBTQ individuals who served among their ranks. According to Department of Defense (DOD) directive published in 1994:

> *A person's sexual orientation is considered a personal and private matter, and is not a bar to service entry* or continued service unless manifested by homosexual conduct *in the manner described in subparagraph E1.2.8.2., below. Applicants* for enlistment, appointment, or induction shall not be asked or *required to reveal whether they are heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. Applicants also will not be asked or required to* reveal whether they have engaged in homosexual conduct, unless independent evidence is received indicating that an applicant engaged in such conduct or unless the applicant volunteers a statement that he or she is a homosexual or bisexual, or words to that effect. (DoD Directive, 2019)

Repealing DADT meant that LGBTQ individuals could openly serve in the U.S. military and claim all the privileges that would come with such service. These privileges include healthcare for members and their families, housing, education and retirement benefits, and financial assistance with college tuition and life insurance (Military Programs and Benefits, 2019). However, similar to the taxation system, it also meant that under the guise of expanding civil rights and holding the privileges that come with being a member of the U.S. armed forces, the state encouraged participation in the U.S. war effort and imperialist foreign policy. It is also impor-

tant to note that DADT began to be challenged after 9/11 and was being openly discussed for repeal in the U.S. Senate in 2010–aligning the rising recruiting efforts with the rise of the war against terrorism.

As such, assigning rights and privileges to those who align with the agenda of biopolitical process and denying rights and privileges for those who do not are the simultaneous normalizing and marginalizing poles of contemporary structures of power and governance. Structures of power code these processes to law and culture, benefiting and actively sustaining biopolitical processes. As this example shows, treating childrearing couplehood, a form of desire that ultimately benefits the state structure, as the norm and discouraging other kinds of being in the world and desire through state structures are ways in which binaries become intrinsic parts governing.

These processes have been the springboard for queer theorizing, which relies on deconstructing such binaries to bring the voices and concerns of marginalized people to the center. While 'queer' as a concept occupies a different position in popular culture, often used as an umbrella term for LGBT individuals or as an identity marker, queer studies specifically designated the term to mean anti-normative and anti-binary with an emphasis on anti-capitalism. In this sense of the word, being, theorizing, researching, or engaging in the world in any way with a queer orientation would mean "a way to inhabit the world that gives 'support' to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 570). More explicitly, Berlant and Warner (1995) expand on the mission of queer theorizing in the mid-90s as such: "Queer theory aims to debase debates that surround marginal lives and decenter the comfort in binary identities such as gay and lesbian" (p. 347). In other words, queer theorizing stems from a drive to disrupt the binaries that allow structural exploitation of biopolitical governance to exist by placing the concerns of the marginal at the center and exploring collective paths through which such binaries can be dissolved.

This project is not an individual path. Berlant and Warner (1995), in their collaborative work as well as in their own individual works, have highlighted the importance and necessity of creating 'publics':

> This work aspires to create publics, publics that can afford sex and intimacy in sustained, un-chastening ways; publics that can comprehend their own differences of privilege and struggle; publics whose abstract spaces can also be lived in, remembered, hoped for. By *publics* we do not mean populations of self-identified queers. Nor is the name queer an umbrella for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and the transgendered. Queer publics make available different understandings of memberships at different times, and membership in them is more a matter of aspiration than is the expression of an identity or a history. (p. 344)

Such aspiration towards this sense of public-hood is a push against the individualizing reflex of the late capitalist moment and its various tools of normalizing a sense of loneliness, alienation, and disconnectedness that is central to its project. For this reason, queer scholars have applied the antinormative reflex of queer scholarship to normative understandings of time, space, and economy. For example, by engaging how this moment in time drives people towards a sense of individuality in a way that coheres with capitalist logics of zero-sum existence, queer scholarship hoped to deconstruct and document the very tools of normative oppression. Consequently, queer scholarship has widely analyzed aspects of life that drive people away from each other and towards normative flows of social organization, temporality, spatiality, and capitalism.

In terms of temporality, Freeman (2010), for example, commented on "chrononormativity or the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity…that people are bound to one another, engrouped, made to feel coherently collective, through particular orchestrations of time… a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate what the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel calls hidden rhythms; forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege" (p. 3). Similarly, Halberstam (2005) noted "[q]ueer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification" (p. 1). Gandy (2012), building on Halberstam, argues "There is an innate connection between public space and sex, which has always existed in tension with the controlling discourses of urban design" (p. 729), making the same argument that Freeman made about time, but for space, understood as the ways in which institutions who have power benefit from normalizing sterile and anti-queer ways of being in the world.

Cruising –the practice of finding a sexual partner in public spaces in order to engage in sexual behavior in those public spaces– is an example of how queer being in the world contradicts normative modes of desire. Normatively, the planning of cities, squares, and malls centers around capitalist logics of state surveillance, consumption, and exclusion (Gunder, 2010; Kamel 2010; Newman, 2013; Venkatesh, 2014). Such logics are based on and are entangled with normative and capitalist logics of time, space, family, location, and accessibility. However, cruising challenges such notions and logics. Krause (2015) argues that cruising assigns meanings and significations of gender, sexuality, and desire onto spaces that are meant to be devoid of such an assignment due their normative significations based on *family values* and the primacy of existence via consumption as opposed to the expression of non-normative gender or sexual desires. As such, queering in this sense challenges, disrupts, and ignores the normative and capitalist logics that constructed the world in a way which prioritizes certain desires and being in the world over others.

In other fields, queering took the form of privileging marginalized perspectives over time tested traditional ones. In international relations, for instance, queering meant deconstructing traditional approaches to statecraft by centering those who cannot or will not place themselves within the normative bounds of statehood or nationhood as it contributes to projects of empire building. It therefore questions the central concept that builds the entire discipline of international relations on itself: sovereignty (Weber, 2016, p. 3). Another example is in linguistics, where the aim of queer linguistics is to "expose the assumptions that lead researchers to view gender [and sexuality] in terms of a predetermined, static framework" (Leap, 2012, p. 558). Last but not least, in historicizing, Traub (2013) talks about queer engagements with history as "unhistoricism… [which] fueled epistemological and methodological innovations, productively disturbing developmental and progressive schemas whether such schemas are conceived in psychological, narratological, social, or historical terms" (p. 22) by privileging "a mode of inhabiting time that is attentive to the recursive eddies and back-to-the-future loops that often pass un-detected or uncherished beneath the official narrations of the linear sequence that is taken to structure normative life" (Jagose, 2009, p. 157-74). In other words, queer historicizing favors those moments that might go undetected or erased within official historical narratives of those whose sense of power aligns with particular ways emphasizing *big moments* in a given historical narrative.

5. Queer Theory and Feminist Research Methods

Queering as a methodological approach has a certain formula to it. It starts with finding out which structures or cultural and social practices hold power over others. Which aspects of life can exist at the expense of others, existing precisely because others' lives are pushed to margins, seen as expendable, not worthy of living? Then, in tandem, it is vital to find out which social processes sustain these operations of marginalization. Queering happens when these processes are turned on their heads, when the concerns of the marginalized become central, when those who are not supposed to have a voice end up occupying the center stage, and these processes and structures of marginalization and power are subject to a critique from the perspective of those who are marginalized. Such processes accompany a critique of binary constructions of the world that sustain center/periphery divisions. This, in essence, is the process of queering.

This process is not limited to a particular facet of life. There is a particular queering of pop culture through various mediums. Perhaps one of the most famous examples is *Paris is Burning*, which brought the life of NYC drag shows and trans-identifying persons of color to the big screen. With the documentary, of course, came the voices and concerns of those who were pushed to the margins. Since then, the medium of cinema has established itself as an important tool to 'queer' the popular culture via an accessible means. Other forms of popular culture also participate in this 'queering': music, literature, comic books and other aspects of self-expression apply this formula through their art. Queer theory and its proliferation through various academic disciplines attempts to achieve this in the realm of academic and scholarly life through prioritizing certain research philosophies.

A queer methodology has a common goal with feminist methodologies. Both queer and feminist scholarship partially stem from questioning the assumptions as well as the consequences of mainstream research agendas. They both have offered perspectives that have consistently challenged the key components of life as it is understood and lived in normative terms. They both strive for social change. However, queer theory takes some steps in different directions due to its commitment to speak from the margins.

Perhaps the most important distinction between feminist and queer methodologies is queer theory's insistence that "identities are not stable constructions and can never be permanently claimed" (Leap & Lewin, 2009, p. 6). Methodologically, this leads to an inquiry into "how the fluidity of particular categories gains the appearance of stability and permanence" (Leap & Lewin, 2009, p. 6), and how these illusions of permanence ally with existing power structures to push marginalized human experiences further into the margins. As such, queer theory does not take the central concern of feminist methodologies, 'woman', to be a stable category position. Instead, queer theory focuses on the historical as well as contemporary processes of claiming such a position, how claiming such a position for oneself or for a group of people aligns itself with existing power structures and asks who gets pushed to the margins because of such an alliance. These kinds of criticisms often favor centralizing non-stable positions and human experiences such as existing in the world as a trans or non-binary person. In addition, it focuses on how these categories intersect with further strands of marginalization through race, class, ability, and so on.

Another important distinction between queer and feminist methodologies is queer theory's lack of commitment to a single subject area –instead its commitment is to an approach to any and all existing power structures. Proliferation of queer methodology and perspective through various disciplines is an important insight in this regard. Since 'queer' refuses any sense of stability, even the illusion of stability that the term 'queer theory' or 'queer methods' brings forth in favor of centralizing the perspective of the margins, there is no fixed focus of study analogous to the concept of womanhood in feminist studies. In other words, anything can be queer as long as it fits within the idea of queering or queer theorizing– that is, it provides an opportunity wherever

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one can flip the places of the center and margin in a given social context. As such, the focus of queer theorizing does not have to be limited to a study of the politics of gender expression/identity or sexual desire. While it is true that the origin of queer theory was concerned with questions regarding gender and sexuality, queer theory's methodological push meant that scholars studied topics such as terrorism, religion, animal rights, and crip rights using queer theory, without delving into gender and sexuality. Queer theory enables such broad applications to human experience, simply because so much of human experience is intentionally pushed to the margins in favor of creating processes whereby illusions of stability contribute to sustaining existing power structures in economy, politics, law, and other aspects of society. Consequently, it is not surprising that queer theorizing and analyses of 'queering' through academia as well as pop culture are rising in a time when biopolitical processes dominate state structures and governance.

However, queer theory, especially early queer theory, has been the subject of similar criticisms–that it had mainly been concerned with privileged experiences. The issue stems mostly from queer theory's location within academia. Early queer theory scholars, especially until late 2000s, have been located in literature or English departments. Consequently, early queer theory, and some of the most influential works that established what queer theory should be, was saturated with literary and film criticism. The struggles of a fictional character were placeholders for lived experiences of queer individuals. While this worked to some extent and produced profound and foundational work, some scholars noted that such scholarship excluded people of color and those who lived under poorer conditions, such as homeless LGBTQ youth, sex workers, trans-identifying individuals, and those who lived at the intersections of these identities (Johnson, 2001). In response, the strand of queer theory that began in the late 2000s and early 2010s dealt with ethnographic data and applied the basic principles of queer theorizing and methodology to the lived experiences of human beings.

Both feminist research and queer theory have responded to criticism and become more nuanced and complex in their efforts to explicate operations of power in the structures of language, society, politics, media, and other institutions and forms of domination and privilege. It is fair to say that queer theory grew out of some strands of feminist research and was initially based on a foundation of feminist research and insight. However, while queer theory developed from feminist origins and is an important branch of scholarship based in this work, much of the work of queer theory can no longer be considered feminist research, as it no longer focuses on, and indeed may not even accept the notion of, the experiences and voices of women. As we have elaborated here, queer theorizing relies on deconstructing binary structures that contribute to existing regimes of power. Moreover, queer theory suggests that binary structures, such as the gender binary, are necessary for power structures to sustain their positions. For this reason, queer theory's commitment lies with finding ways to analyze, deconstruct, decenter, and destabilize binaries, instead of supporting one part of the binary over the other.

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