

# Gender, Violence and Self-Defense

Gender Flows

Global Governance 2021/22

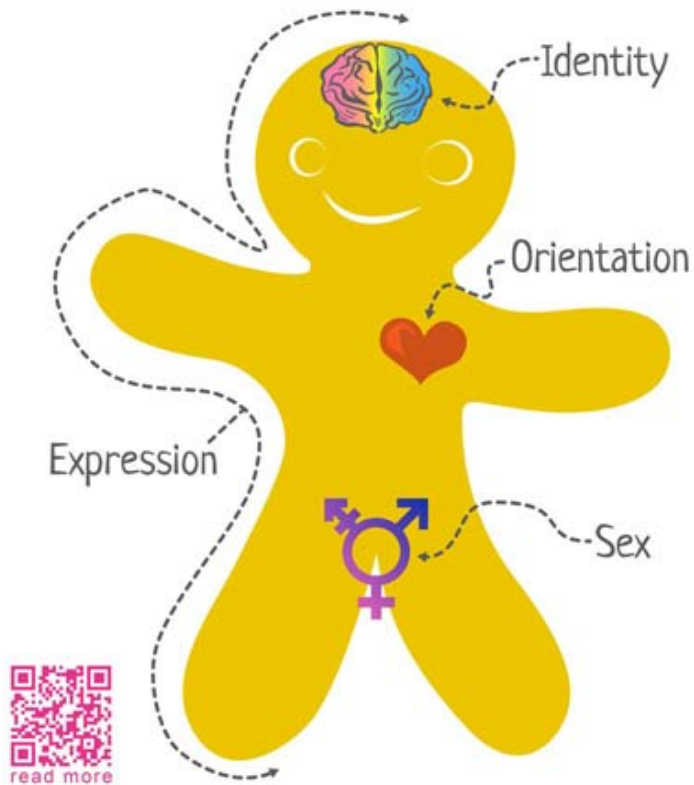
Dr. Alessandra Chiricosta

- Sex?
- Sexual Orientation?
- Gender?
- Gender Identity?
- Gender Expression?

# Sam Killermann

## The Genderbread Person

by [www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](http://www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com)



Gender identity is how you, in your head, think about yourself. It's the chemistry that composes you (e.g., hormonal levels) and how you interpret what that means.



Gender expression is how you demonstrate your gender (based on traditional gender roles) through the ways you act, dress, behave, and interact.



Biological sex refers to the objectively measurable organs, hormones, and chromosomes. Female = vagina, ovaries, XX chromosomes; male = penis, testes, XY chromosomes; intersex = a combination of the two.



Sexual orientation is who you are physically, spiritually, and emotionally attracted to, based on their sex/gender in relation to your own.

# What is Sex/Gender

- **Sex** is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas **gender** is the social elaboration of biological sex.
- But the sharp demarcation fails because there is no single objective biological criterion for male or female sex.

# Activity

- <https://www.genderbread.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Breaking-through-the-Binary-by-Sam-Killermann.pdf>

# Sex

- Sex is based in a combination of anatomical, endocrinal and chromosomal features, and the selection among these criteria for sex assignment is based very much on cultural beliefs about what actually makes someone male or female.
- Thus the very definition of the biological categories male and female, and people's understanding of themselves and others as male or female, is ultimately social.

# sex/gender/sexuality system

- The phrase “sex/gender system”, or “sex/gender/sexuality system” was coined by Gayle Rubin (1984) to describe, “the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity.”
- That is, Rubin proposed that the links between biological sex, social gender, and sexual attraction are products of culture.

# What is Gender?

- Gender is “the social product”, that is an elaboration upon biological sex.
- Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something **we do** (West and Zimmerman 1987) – something **we perform** (Butler 1990).

# Sex/Gender/Sexual Orientation

- People have used biological sex characteristics (chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics and genitalia) to make assumptions about how people should act in social life, and to whom they should be “naturally” attracted.
- In our culture, everyone is assumed to be heterosexual (attracted to men if you are a woman; attracted to women if you are a man) until proven otherwise.

# Gender

- Gender is the very process of creating a dichotomy by effacing similarity and elaborating on difference, and where there are biological differences, these differences are exaggerated and extended in the service of constructing gender.

# Sex/Gender

- While we recognize that biology imposes certain physiological constraints on the average male and female, we treat the elaboration and magnification of these differences and the erasure of differences among males and among females as entirely social.
- This does not mean that individuals are helpless pawns shaped by external social forces: the social emerges as individuals develop their own perspectives, react to others, and interpret others' reactions to them.

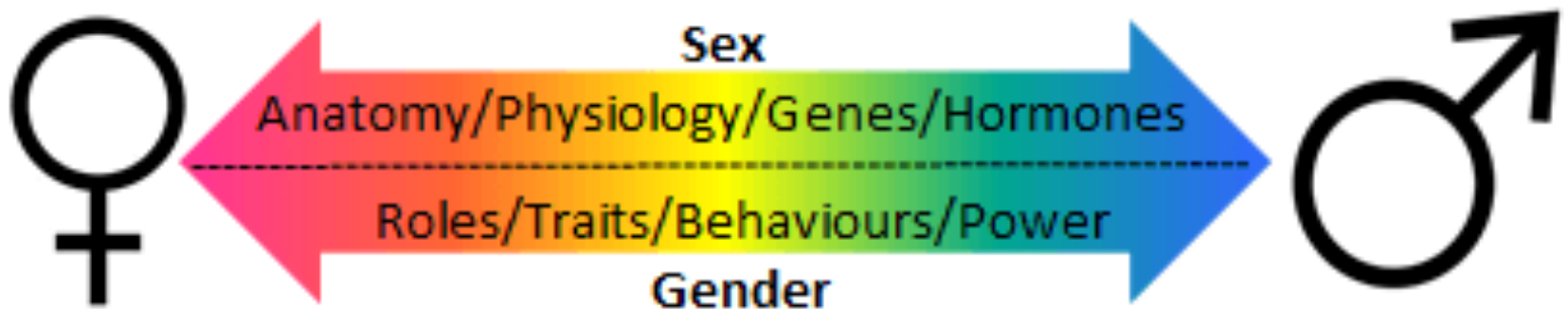
- Nor does it mean that someone's gender identity (or sexual orientation) can just be freely chosen.
- While no adult is literally “born this way” (newborn infants don't, e.g., yet have a sense of themselves as gendered or as sexually attracted to certain kinds of people), everyone is constrained both by their initial biological endowment and by the social environment in which they mature.

# Continuum

Rather than thinking in “Nature” Vs “Culture” terms, it would be better to see the two as a *Naturecultural continuum* (Donna Haraway; Rosi Braidotti).



# Sex/Gender Continuum



# Transgender

- In our culture we often take for granted that someone born with a female body will identify as a woman and that all women are female-bodied. While this is often true, it is not always the case. Some people born as males will identify their gender as women and some people born as females will identify their gender as men.
- Transgender people, or anyone who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, challenge the very idea of a binary sex/gender system.

# Transgender

- For example, transgender women, women born with male bodies but who identify as women later in life, show us that not all women are born with female bodies.
- Actual differences between males and females tend to be scalar rather than dichotomous, with many women and men occupying the same positions on the scale

# Intersex

- Whereas transgender is the term to describe someone who does not identify with the gender identity they were given at birth, **intersex people** fundamentally challenge binaries related to **biological sex**.
- “Intersex” is the term for someone whose hormones, chromosomes, or external genitalia do not fit easily into our binary male/female model of biological sex.

# Compulsory Heterosexuality

- Not all people are heterosexual.
- Heterosexuality is no more and no less natural than homosexuality or bisexuality, for instance. Adrienne Rich (1980) called heterosexuality “**compulsory**,” meaning that in our culture all people are assumed to be heterosexual and society is full of both formal and informal enforcements that make it easier to be heterosexual than not.

# Heteronormativity

- Additionally, there are the every day, taken-for-granted ways in which heterosexuality is privileged and normalized—what theorists of gender and sexuality call **heteronormativity**.
- Heteronormativity is instilled in us at a very young age, teaching us that there are only two genders and that we are or should be heterosexual and married in later stages in life.

# Sexuality/sexual orientation

- Just like gender, sexuality is not binary. There are straight people and gay people, but there are also bisexuals, pansexuals, omnisexuals, queers, heteroflexibles, those who are questioning, and many other sexual identities.
- Most of these other identities recognize both that
  - a) there are more than two genders and thus more than two kinds of people to be attracted to
  - b) you can be attracted to more than one of them at once

# Multiple Identities

- Furthermore, it is important to underscore the fact that people do not inhabit just one category of identity that determines their subjectivity—instead they have multiple identities of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, and ability, all at the same time.
- At certain times, specific dimensions of their identity may be more salient than at others, but at no time is anyone without multiple identities.

# Intersectionality



# M.I. and Power

- A powerful way to understand one's self and the multiple identities we inhabit is to situate one's experiences within multiple levels of analysis—**micro- (individual), meso- (group), macro-(structural), and global.**
- These levels of analysis offer different analytical approaches to understanding a phenomenon in social life.

# Micro Level

- The **micro level** is that which we, as individuals, live everyday—interacting with other people on the street, in the classroom, or while we are at a party or a social gathering.
- Therefore, the micro-level is the level of analysis focused on **individuals' experiences**.

# Meso Level

- The **meso level** of analysis moves the microscope back, seeing how groups, communities and organizations structure social life.
- A meso level-analysis might look at how churches shape gender expectations for women, how schools teach students to become girls and boys, or how workplace policies make gender transition either easier or harder for genderqueer and transgendered workers.

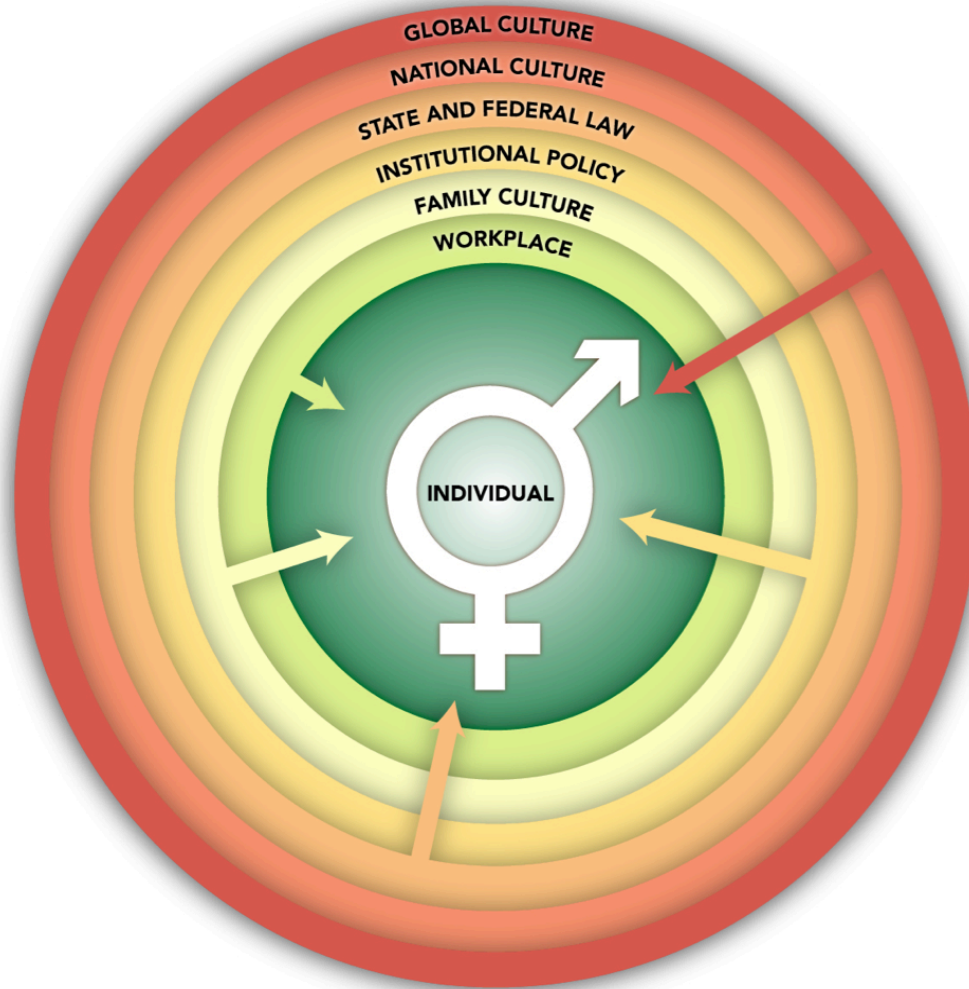
# Macro Level

- The **macro level** consists of government policies, programs, and institutions, as well as ideologies and categories of identity.
- In this way, the macro level consists of *national power structures* as well as *cultural ideas* about different groups of people according to race, class, gender, and sexuality that are shared and widespread through various national media sources.

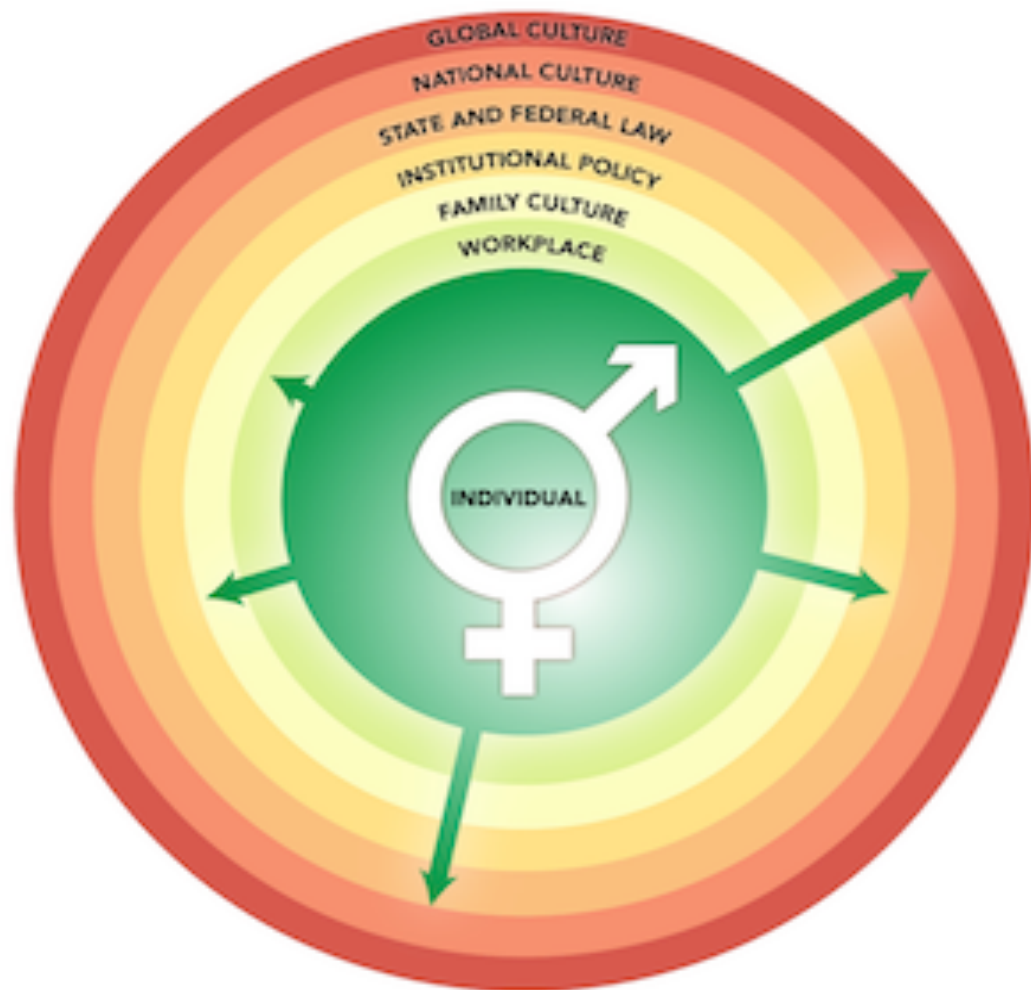
# Global Level

- Finally, the **global level** of analysis includes transnational production, trade, and migration, global capitalism, and transnational trade and law bodies (such as the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, the World Trade Organization)—larger transnational forces that bear upon our personal lives but we often ignore or fail to see.

# GENDER NORMS



## GENDER IDENTITY



# Power

- Overlaying these social structures are **structures of power**.
- By **power** here we mean two things:
- 1) access to and through the various social institutions mentioned above;
- 2) processes of privileging, normalizing, and valuing certain identities more than others.

# Power

- This definition of power highlights the structural, institutional nature of power, while also highlighting the ways in which culture works in the creation and privileging of certain categories of people.
- But there are also other ways to define power...

# Power

- At the higher level of social structure, we can see that some people have greater access to institutionalized power across the board than do others.
- **Sexism** is the term we use for discrimination and blocked access on the basis of gender.
- **Racism** describes discrimination on the basis of race, which is most often based on socially-constructed meanings rather than biological differences.
- **Classism** describes discrimination on the basis of social class, or access to material wealth and the accompanying status.

# Social constructionism

- **Social constructionism** is a theory of knowledge that argues that concepts that are typically thought to be immutable and solely biological—such as gender, race, class, and sexuality—are products of human definition and interpretation shaped by cultural and historical contexts (Subramaniam 2010).
- As such, social constructionism highlights the ways in which cultural categories—like “men”, “women”, “black”, “white”—are created, changed, and reproduced through historical processes within institutions and culture.

# Social constructionism

- Therefore, the social constructionist perspective is concerned with the meaning created through defining and categorizing groups of people, experience, and reality in cultural contexts.

# Social constructionism

- Social constructionist approaches to understanding the world challenge the **essentialist** or **biological determinist** understandings that typically underpin the “common sense” ways in which we think about race, gender, and sexuality.

# Essentialism

- **Essentialism** argues that the characteristics of persons or groups are largely similar in all human cultures and historical periods, since they are significantly influenced by biological factors.
- A key assumption of essentialism is that “a given truth is a necessary natural part of the individual and object in question” (Gordon and Abbott 2002). In other words, an essentialist understanding of sexuality would argue that not only do all people have a sexual orientation, but that sexual orientation does not vary across time and place.

# Biological Determinism

- Essentialism typically relies on a **biological determinist theory of identity**.
- Biological determinism can be defined as a general theory holding that a group's biological or genetic makeup shapes its social, political, and economic destiny.

# Two categories

- For example, “sex” is typically thought to be a biological “fact” divided into two categories, male and female.
- These categories are often thought to be dictated by chromosomes, hormones, and sex characteristics. However, “sex” has been defined in many different ways, depending on the context within which it is defined.

# Social Construction of Reality

- The differential definitions of sex point out two other primary aspects of the social construction of reality.
- First, it makes apparent how even the things commonly thought to be “natural” or “essential” in the world are socially constructed. Understandings of “nature” change through history and across place according to systems of human knowledge.

# Difference and Power

- Second, the social construction of difference occurs within relations of *power* and *privilege*.
- Sociologist Abby Ferber (2009) argues that these two aspects of the social construction of difference cannot be separated, but must be understood together.

# Difference and Power

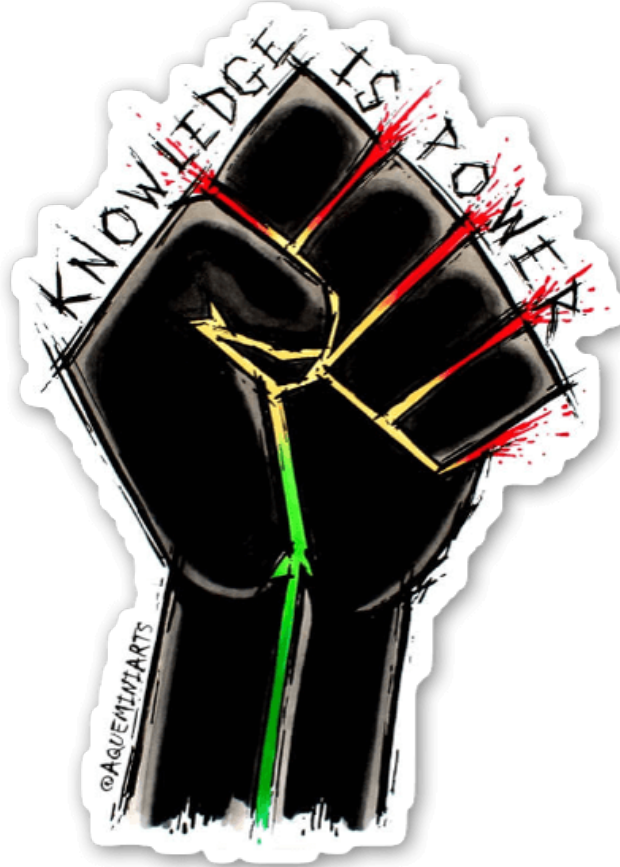
- Discussing the construction of racial difference, she argues that inequality and oppression actually produce ideas of essential racial difference.
- Therefore, categories that are thought to be “natural” or “essential” are created within the context **of power relations**.

# Difference as fluid

- Because social constructionist analysis see categories of difference as fluid, dynamic, and changing according to historical and geographical context, a social constructionist perspective implies that existing inequalities are not inevitable or immutable.
- This perspective is especially useful for the activist and emancipatory aims of feminist movements and theories.

# Knowledge and Power

- Additionally, social constructionist analyses destabilize the categories that organize people into **hierarchically ordered groups** through showing the historical, cultural, and/or institutional origins of the groups under study.
- In this way, social constructionist analyses challenge the categorical underpinnings of inequalities by revealing their production and reproduction through unequal systems of **knowledge** and **power**.



# Androcentrism

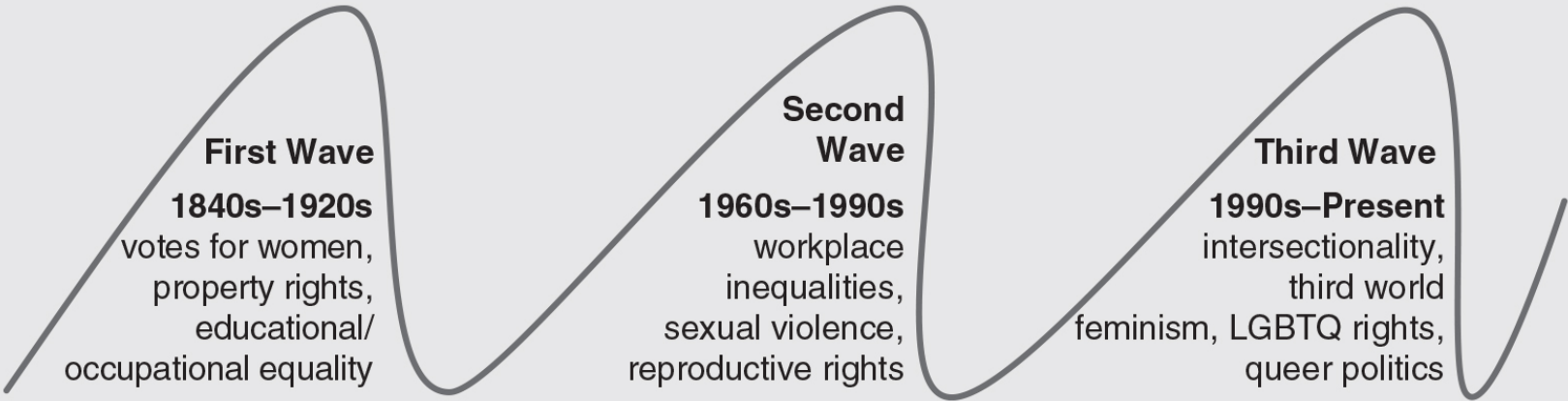
- “Gender Studies” is an interdisciplinary field that challenges the androcentric production of knowledge.
- **Androcentrism** is the privileging of male-centric ways of understanding the world. Gender scholars argue that the common assumption that knowledge is produced by rational, impartial (male) scientists often obscures the ways that scientists create knowledge through gendered, raced, classed, and sexualized cultural categories

# Feminist Theories

- Feminism is not a single school of thought but encompasses diverse theories and paradigms — such as socialist feminist theories, radical sex feminist theories, third wave feminist theories, and queer feminist theories.

# 4 Waves of Feminism





**First Wave**  
**1840s–1920s**  
votes for women,  
property rights,  
educational/  
occupational equality

**Second Wave**  
**1960s–1990s**  
workplace  
inequalities,  
sexual violence,  
reproductive rights

**Third Wave**  
**1990s–Present**  
intersectionality,  
third world  
feminism, LGBTQ rights,  
queer politics

# THE 4 WAVES OF FEMINISM

FIRST WAVE	Early 20th century (1900 to 1959)	Focusing on Women's suffrage, Property rights and Political candidacy
SECOND WAVE	1960s to 1980s	Reducing inequalities in: sex, family, workplace, reproductive rights, De facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities
THIRD WAVE	1990s to 2000s	Embracing Individualism and diversity
FOURTH WAVE	2008 to present-day	Combating Sexual harassment, assault and misogyny



# Reflexivity

- The common thread in all these feminist theories is the belief that all knowledge is shaped by the political and social context in which it is made. Due to this acknowledgement that all knowledge comes out of particular **social locations**, feminist theorists argue that **reflexivity**—understanding how one's social position influences the ways that they understand the world—is of utmost necessity when creating theory and knowledge.

# The Personal is Political

- You may have heard the phrase “the personal is political” at some point in your life. This phrase, popularized by feminists in the 1960s, highlights the ways in which our personal experiences are shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces within the context of history, institutions, and culture

- Public/private
- Personal/political

# The Personal is Political

- A key element to feminist theories and knowledge is a commitment to the creation of knowledge grounded in the experiences of white women, women of color, gay, lesbian, queer, and trans people, poor and working-class people, and people with disabilities.

# The Personal is Political

- Feminist theorists and activists argue for beginning theorizing from the experiences of the marginalized because people with less power and resources often experience the effects of that social system in ways that members of dominant groups do not.

# Systems of Power

- From the “bottom” of a social system, participants have knowledge of the power holders of that system as well as their own experiences, while the reverse is rarely true.
- Therefore, their experiences allow for a more complete knowledge of the workings **of systems of power.**

# Binarism



# Binarism

- **Binaries** are social constructs composed of two parts that are framed as absolute and unchanging opposites.
- Binary systems integrate these oppositional ideas into our culture. This results in an exaggeration of differences between social groups until they seem to have nothing in common.

# Binarism

- Ideas of men and women being complete opposites invite simplistic comparisons that rely on stereotypes:
- Men are practical, women are emotional; men are strong, women are weak; men are leaders, women are supportive.
- Binary systems mask the complicated realities and variety in the realm of social identity. We know very well that men can be emotional and that some women are physically stronger than some men, but the binary system of gender prefigures men and women to have nothing in common.

# Binarism

- By situating identities as definitional opposites, binary systems make these two poles (men and women; gay and straight; black and white) relational to each other;  
that is, men are defined, in part, as “not women” and women as “not men.”

# Binarism

- Binaries assume that there are only two options for gender, race, and class identities among others, and that these two options are complete opposites. Just as men are defined as “not women” in a binary system, straights are defined as “not gay,” whites are defined as “not Black,” and middle class people are defined as “not poor.”

# Binarism

- Oppositional, binary, thinking works strategically such that the **dominant groups** in society are associated with *more valued traits*, while the **subordinate groups**, defined as their opposites, are always associated with *less valued traits*. Thus, the poles in a binary system define each other and only make sense in the presence of their opposites.

# Continuum of Differences

- “Men” provide the standard by which “women” are defined, and masculinity only has meaning by being the opposite of femininity.
- In reality, identities are complex and multi-faceted. For one, all categories of identity are more richly expressed and understood as *continuums of difference*. More than that, all of us have multiple identities that we experience simultaneously

# Continuum of Identities

- Rather than seeing identities like race, gender, class, and sexuality as containing only two choices which are total opposites, it is more useful to look at **identities on a continuum** where there are many points in between, and the poles (men and women, black and white, etc.) may not be so completely different after all.

# Gender Based Violence

## THE 4 TYPES OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE:

control arr

#ARMSTREATY#

SOURCE: W



PHYSICAL  
VIOLENCE



SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE



EMOTIONAL &  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
VIOLENCE



SOCIOECONOMIC  
VIOLENCE

# What is Violence?

- The phrase “gendered violence” highlights not only the manner in which transgendered people, gay men, and women often experience violence, but also how violence takes place more broadly within the context of a society that is characterized by a sex/gender/sexuality system that disparages femininity, nonnormative sexualities, and those who do not fit within the gender binary.

# Violence

- We use Hussein Balhan's (1985) definition of violence, which emphasizes the structural and systematic nature of violence:
- "Violence is not an isolated physical act or a discrete random event. It is a relation, process, and condition determining, exploiting, and curtailing the well-being of the survivor...Violence occurs not only between individuals, but also between groups and societies...Any relation, process, or condition imposed by someone that injures the health and well-being of others is by definition violent."

# Violence

- As Kirk and Okazawa-Rey (2004) point out, this definition not only includes sexual assault and domestic violence between individuals, but also includes **macro-level** processes of inequality and violence, such as “colonization, poverty, racism, lack of access to education, health care, and negative media representations” (Kirk and Okazawa-Rey 2004: 258).

# Victims/Survivors

- Importantly, Bulhan (1985) refers to people who have experienced violence as “survivors” rather than “victims.”
- The difference between the two words is significant, in that the construction of people who have experienced violence as “victims” maintains and reinforces their subordinate position, while “survivors” emphasizes the agency and self-determination of people who have experienced violence.

# Violence and Family

- Whereas our culture tends to think of the home and family as a “haven in a heartless world”, the family and home are common contexts for emotional and physical violence.
- The notion of the normative family—with the concomitant gender roles—as a **privatized sphere**, is an ideological construction that often hides inequalities that exist within families

# Intimate partner violence

- Intimate partner violence refers to emotional and physical violence by one partner against another and includes “current and former spouses, girlfriends, and boyfriends” (Kirk and Okazawa-Rey 2004).
- Intimate partner violence is quite clearly gendered.