

## Preface

Feminist research is not like many other forms of research, because it holds explicit social commitments at the forefront. Beginning with the status of girls and women, but not ending there, feminism is an engaged human rights position that seeks to expose and remedy gender inequities. Feminist research suggests ways forward to a better world in which critical scholarship plays an active role in inspiring and enacting social change. We use the term “feminism” as opposed to a general “human rights” label to acknowledge, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie does, “the specific and particular problem of gender” and how female humans are targeted by these inequalities (2015, p. 42). However, working from an intersectional approach coupled with a nonbinary understanding of gender, we provide a layered view of the problem of “gender” as it is lived by diverse individuals and groups.

*Contemporary Feminist Research from Theory to Practice* offers a comprehensive inter- and transdisciplinary introduction to contemporary feminisms. This book provides a historical context for understanding feminist research, presents the major theories feminist researchers develop and use globally, describes methods for conducting research and practical strategies for “doing” feminist research, and provides information on writing and publishing feminist research in various forms, and on incorporating social activism and advocacy into feminist practice. The literature on feminist research practice often focuses narrowly on traditional approaches to research and Western perspectives. We sought to offer a different kind of text, one that highlights the multiperspectival and socially constructed

nature of contemporary feminist research, including global feminisms, transnational collaboration, digital media and virtual embodiment, and feminist “publics.”

Our perspective is grounded in critical scholarship, intersectionality, and a nonbinary understanding of gender. This book understands contemporary feminist research as that which addresses inequality with an agenda for social change. We believe that critical scholarship—that which problematizes social conditions as they are—can only be addressed intersectionally, or, in other words, in the interwoven ways that it gets played out in real life. Not only are we in bodies that are gendered, but, rather, we simultaneously occupy race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and other positionalities. In order to be wide awake as feminist researchers, we must not only ask about gender, but we must also ask: What about race? What about sexuality? What about ableism? What about class (socioeconomic) inequity? How do these conditions and positions work together or against one another? This book asks you to think about doing research that is embedded in and accountable to “real life,” and making real life better—not just for women, but for all—and to realize that these are not separate projects but interconnected ones.

Further, contemporary feminist research is concerned not only with the conditions of girls and women, but with all gender-based inequities, and today particularly with the highly visible but contested terrain of transgender and noncisgender human rights and the ways in which changing definitions of gender impact all genders and all who fall outside the “gender spectrum” or somewhere fluid within it. In this vein, we are troubling the common he/she binary and instead using he/she/they in this text.

## Why This Book Is Needed

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We wrote this book because we are both committed to the promise and practice of contemporary, inclusive feminist research. We also believe that it’s difficult to find a comprehensive overview and guide to feminist research. Many books focus either on theory or methods, or on particular genres of feminist research. In writing this book, we hope to offer a robust introduction to feminist research that inspires you to delve further into topics of interest. We also wrote this book because as the world has changed rapidly, so too have the academic and social/cultural landscapes. In turn, feminisms have changed. From increasingly nonbinary understandings of gender to the digital landscape that increasingly impacts our personal and research lives, great changes have occurred. We felt a feminist text that

pays homage to the past, but is firmly grounded in contemporary concerns and practices, was needed.

## Special Features of This Book

### **Key Terms Highlighted with Call-Out Bubbles**

Throughout this book, we have identified a number of key terms as central to contemporary feminist research. Throughout this text when there are examples of a specific term, we provide call-out bubbles highlighting the term. We review the significance some of these highlighted terms in Chapter 1, but the box below previews the list.

Ally	Girls and women
Cisgender	Intersectionality
Critical theory/approaches	Methodologies
Ethics	Ontology
Feminist digital media	Power sharing
Feminist epistemologies	Reflexivity
Gender	Representation
Genderqueer, gender-creative, gender-fluid	Socially constructed (gender) categories

### **Profiles of Prominent Feminist Researchers and Online Video Interviews**

In Part I, we offer profiles of prominent feminist researchers, addressing both their overall body of work and individual approaches, and their more recent work. Links to short online video interviews with the researchers themselves accompany the written text.

### **Discussion Questions and Activities**

Discussion questions and more engaged activities are provided at the end of every chapter to help you review the chapter material and take it further.

### **Suggested Resources**

While we have attempted to draw on a wide range of feminist voices in this text, we fully recognize that not all voices can be included. Our own

voices, those of two White, Western feminists, have shaped every aspect of this text. Therefore, we've included a list of suggested resources at the end of each chapter so that you can invite more authors into your study of feminist research.

## Audience for the Book

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This book is appropriate for undergraduate and graduate courses in feminism(s), feminist research, research methods, qualitative inquiry, theory, and women's or gender studies. It may also be of value to individual students and researchers working on a thesis, a dissertation, a research study, or public writing, or those who wish to engage in activism.

## Organization

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This book is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on the historical context of feminist research and the major theoretical frameworks, analyzed from a global perspective. Part II focuses on research praxis, offering chapters on ethics, research with participants (quantitative, qualitative, and community-based), and research with nonliving data in the case of content or media analysis and evaluating programs or other interventions. Part III addresses what happens after research has occurred. We detail the process of writing and publishing feminist research, offering writing instruction for formal academic writing as well as artistic and popular forms. We conclude with a chapter on public scholarship and what it means to be a feminist researcher in the world. Chapters can be read out of order, and chapters not of interest can be omitted.