

ELIZABETH A. SHARP *Texas Tech University*

SHANNON E. WEAVER *University of Connecticut\**

## Feeling Like Feminist Frauds: Theorizing Feminist Accountability in Feminist Family Studies Research in a Neoliberal, Postfeminist Context

*In this article we name “feelings of fraudulence,” the experience of self-awareness and self-questioning that feminist family scholars often encounter in their work. We propose that such feelings arise from attempting to apply abstract feminist principles to specific research practices against the backdrop of social science’s positivism, women’s studies postmodernism(s), and an overlay of neoliberalism and postfeminism. These feelings of fraudulence should not be dismissed but should be embraced to promote what we theorize as feminist accountability. Using our research projects as sites of analysis, we share dilemmas of accountability in regard to feminist epistemology, agenda, and ethics within the contemporary context. We continue the conversation about feminist-informed methodological practices and hope to offer other feminist family scholars comfort in responding to the uncertainty*

*they encounter in their own feminist research journeys.*

“Are our studies feminist enough?” is a seemingly ubiquitous question among feminist family scholars (see Sollie & Leslie, 1994; Stacey, 1988), and we, too, as feminist family researchers, grapple with it and other similar questions on a daily basis:

- How do we translate feminist thought in our specific research practices? Do all aspects of a study have to be feminist in order to be “authentically” feminist?
- What are the limits of feminist framing in research, and how do we know if or when we slide into “faux feminism” (hooks, 2013)?
- With the existence of various feminist theories, which feminist theory should one privilege?
- Which criteria (and whose) need to be met for us to claim our scholarship as feminist, especially in an era of neoliberal, postfeminist (i.e., widespread belief that equality has been achieved) sensibilities?
- How is being feminist in our research decisions and practices distinct from being ethical and respectful?
- Can we claim that our studies are feminist if they do not promote social justice?
- To whom (and for what) are we accountable when we claim our studies as feminist?

Department of Human Development and Family Studies,  
 Texas Tech University, Box 41230, Lubbock, TX  
 79409-1162 (e-mail: elizabeth.sharp@ttu.edu).

\*Department of Human Development and Family Studies,  
 University of Connecticut, 348 Mansfield Road, Unit 2058,  
 Storrs, CT 06269-2058  
 (e-mail: shannon.weaver@uconn.edu).

*Key Words:* epistemology, ethics, feminist research, feminist theories, methodology.

Embedded in these inquiries are tensions about what it might mean to engage in “authentic” feminist research. Questions of “real” or “faux” feminism (hooks, 2013) have become especially pronounced in contemporary contexts, whereby feminist social scientists simultaneously work in an environment characterized by neoliberalism, postfeminism, postracism, positivism, and postmodernism. Given these contradictory ideologies, which criteria (if any) exist to evaluate whether studies purported to be feminist are “authentically” feminist? Although we appreciate that the “unknowability” of feminism is a strength (Allen, Lloyd, & Few, 2009), the uncertainty can be overwhelming. With the multiple and varied feminist perspectives in circulation, coupled with the opaqueness inherent in applying abstract feminist ideals to actual research practices (Allen, 2001), we frequently ask, did we engage in “authentic” feminist practices and produce feminist works (Stacey, 1988)?

In this article, we seek to answer these questions by first examining feelings embedded in the questions themselves, those we theorize as leaving us “feeling like feminist frauds.” Toward this end, a major goal of this article is to provocatively push for an open acknowledgment and examination of such feelings. We further propose the concept of (more visible) *feminist accountability* as a way to work with and against, and to embrace, feelings of feminist fraudulence. To illustrate feeling like a feminist fraud and feminist accountability, and to explore how they are present in feminist family scholarship, we draw on our research experiences. We continue an ongoing conversation that feminist family scholars started decades ago. Reinvigorating the discussion is especially important today, when “feminist scholarship and practice have become much more challenging, given the advances in interdisciplinary feminist theorizing, intersectional, and transnational perspectives” (Allen et al., 2009, p. 15).

#### FEELING LIKE FEMINIST FRAUDS

Early in our careers, we were inspired by Katherine Allen’s (2000, 2001) call for a “conscious and inclusive” family studies, as well as her urging of feminist researchers to consider carefully their feminist epistemological commitments and engage in “visionary” practices (see also Thompson, 1992). When it came to

applying theoretical feminist principles to specific research practices, however, we questioned which research practices were feminist and what it meant to be a feminist family scholar—could we claim such an identity? We were not alone in feeling this way. Numerous feminist family scholars have questioned whether their work is feminist enough. For instance, Donna Sollie and Leigh Leslie (1994), in *Gender, Families, and Close Relationships: Feminist Research Journeys*, commented that despite being identified as influential feminist family scholars, many authors they approached to write chapters on “feminist research journeys” expressed doubts as to whether their research was sufficiently feminist. Moreover, Sollie and Leslie (1994) did not include chapters of their own research because they were uncertain if their work “lived up to feminist guidelines” (p. 267). In explaining their and the other authors’ feelings, they remarked on the ambiguity and complexity of applying feminist thought to actual research practices. Their edited book exposed the messiness and contradictions within feminist family scholarship, offering substantive reflections. Two decades later, such dilemmas remain (and, arguably, are heightened due to the current neoliberal, postfeminist backdrop) and we wish to continue discussing them openly.

#### *Naming the Feelings*

We propose furthering the conversation by giving these feelings a concise label (“feminist fraudulence”) and suggesting that feminist scholars would do well to attend to feelings of fraudulence they might have. We draw on McIntosh’s 1985 essay “Feeling Like a Fraud,” in which she names generalized feelings of fraud many professional women experience as a result of patriarchy.<sup>1</sup> Feelings of feminist fraud can be shameful and immobilizing, but more importantly, they can be fertile ground for productive and deep dialogues with oneself and with others. In theorizing the phenomenon of “feeling like a

<sup>1</sup>Feelings of fraudulence resulting from a patriarchal system may be exacerbated by one’s accomplishments (the higher one ascends in the hierarchy), given discomfort with a system based on sexism, racism, classism, and heteronormativity. McIntosh (1985) argued that many women feel like imposters in their professional lives, worrying that they are not “good enough” and that someone will find out that they do not belong in their positions.

feminist fraud,” we seek to (a) unpack why feelings of fraudulence might be common among feminist scholars, especially in contemporary contexts, and (b) hone one’s awareness of feelings of fraudulence by pushing for discussions of feminist accountability in research.

We want to be clear that are discussing feelings and are not calling feminist family scholars “feminist frauds,” “bad feminists” (Gay, 2014), or “imperfect” feminists, or implying that feminist family scholars have engaged in “faux feminism” (i.e., not taking structural conditions into account; hooks, 2013). Nor do we assume that all feminist family scholars have such feelings. Instead, influenced by the affective turn in the social sciences and the wider academy (e.g., Clough & Halley, 2007; Cvetkovich, 2012), we emphasize the value of the uncomfortable, uneasy, unsettled, and doubt-filled feelings that are common in the claiming of a feminist scholarly identity. Using a central feminist tenet—the personal is political—we argue, as did McIntosh (1985), that personal feelings of fraudulence are linked to broader, political contexts. We simultaneously depersonalize and personalize the feelings, taking seriously the inner stirrings of feelings of feminist fraudulence. The act of exposing and cultivating such feelings encourages a thoughtful engagement in/with feminist accountability.

Another goal of ours is to demystify practices of accountability for contemporary feminist family scholars. The concept of feeling like a feminist fraud results (in part) from a restrictive hierarchical academic environment with expectations of how to conduct research and what counts as productivity that frequently do not coincide with feminist ideals (Harding, 1991). With the breadth of feminist thought that exists as well as the need to also be competent in one’s content area, feminist family scholars have a great deal of ground to cover. Furthermore, expectations feminists have for themselves, and for other feminists, are especially high (Allen, 2001; Stacey, 1988). Given that feminist thought forges a critical examination of existing power structures (Harding, 1987; Reinharz, 1992), feminist scholars question and critique others to avoid blindly accepting knowledge claims (including our own). The tentative feelings described by Sollie and Leslie (1994) and others reflect not only a high regard for feminist principles but also feminist scholars’ concern that other feminists will judge their

work as not feminist enough. Further, echoing Allen’s (2001) arguments, the abstract nature of feminist principles and shifting epistemological understandings create ambiguities that both free and stymie feminists as they attempt to apply feminist ideals to scholarship.

### *Feminist Fraudulence as Problematic and Productive*

Like McIntosh’s (1985) thoughtful analysis of feeling like a fraud, we propose that feelings of fraudulence related to one’s feminism are problematic and productive. While such feelings can be immobilizing (Lloyd, Warner, Baber, & Sollie, 2009), feelings of fraudulence—if harnessed successfully—are productive because they can hone a deep, critical edge (McIntosh, 1985). We think the repeated expression of feminist scholars who doubt whether their own work is “feminist enough” or whether they produce “partially feminist” work (Stacey, 1988) is indicative of critical insight—these doubts operate as signifiers to push deeper, to take questions further, thus enabling a richer, more complex analysis.

Critical awareness also allows for feminist family scholars to monitor and mitigate dangers inherent in their work (Stacey, 1988). As feminists we are often vulnerable to violating the very ethics we hold important, and attending to our feelings of fraudulence can help ensure (greater) vigilance in our efforts. Therefore, we want to encourage feminist scholars to attend to their feelings of fraudulence—to explore, expose, and respond to them instead of pushing them away, avoiding being overtly feminist, extensively stalling, and/or quitting projects altogether, as, for example, both of us have done.

### FEMINIST ACCOUNTABILITY: HARNESSING FEELINGS OF FRAUDULENCE

As a way to work with, against, and embrace feelings of fraudulence, we propose the concept of feminist accountability.<sup>2</sup> In an era of

<sup>2</sup>We have been inspired by Lloyd, Few, and Allen’s (2007) charge that “feminism requires accountability by researchers” (p. 448). A thread of accountability was evident in virtually all feminist-informed methodological articles and book chapters in family studies (e.g., Allen, 2004; Baber, 2004; Blume & De Reus, 2009; McDowell & Fang, 2007; Menon, 2009; Thompson, 1992; van Eeden-Moorefield & Proulx, 2009; Walker, 2004) but was not the explicit focus of any of these.

accountability in the academy, our use of feminist accountability is in sharp contrast to the neoliberal (i.e., individualist, free-market-based ideology) economic accountability that is permeating universities. The push for universities to embody business models results in a narrow, reductionist, individualistic, and quantifiable understanding of education and faculty productivity. In opposition to the values and practices endorsed in the said business model of accountability, feminist accountability is expansive, non-quantifiable, collective, and engenders deep reflexivity, critical thought, and fundamentally troubles the status quo (Allen, 2001).

Feminist accountability draws attention to ongoing processes by focusing on what researchers do (we account for our participants' experiences) while simultaneously showcasing the responsibilities that researchers shoulder (we are accountable, but to whom and what? To what extent does feminist accountability extend beyond mainstream, academic accountability?). As Allen (2001) asked: "What is my responsibility to the people whose lives I am studying? What do I owe them for giving me the opportunity to get inside their lives? What do I want to give back? What do I now understand about the human existence (my own included) as a result of conducting this work? How can the work benefit the well-being of others?" (p. 806). Being "accountable" as a feminist involves a complex process of avoiding complacency through infusing feminist theoretical questions, assumptions, and principles into the research process—which, of course, ensures that many feminist scholars will experience discomfort and hesitation.

#### *A Key Practice of Feminist Accountability: Critical Reflexivity*

A key practice of feminist accountability is reflexivity, whereby scholars carefully and incessantly scrutinize the role they (and others) play in creating knowledge (Litton Fox & McBride Murry, 2000). Reflexivity demands continuous self-criticism, including careful examination of the myriad ways researchers themselves, through their work and its outcomes, might contribute to furthering the status quo. Feminist accountability is part of engaging in "uncomfortable reflexivity," which is a deep reflexivity, "a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this

knowing as tenuous" (Pillow, 2003, p. 188). As Pillow (2003) argued, critical reflexivity is "a practice of cofounding disruptions . . . an ongoing critique of all our research attempts, a recognition that none of our attempts can claim the innocence of success (even in failure)" (p. 192). Critical reflexivity is a way to respond to, manage, and understand feelings of fraudulence.

In engaging in reflexivity to write this article, we have integrated ideas from a multitude of feminist family scholars to help scholars with the insurmountable tasks required of feminist accountability in research. It is not our intention to simplify or codify feminist research practices; at the same time, we are aware of the intense nebulousness of translating feminist thought to research. As Allen (2001) has explained, "Like sand fashioned into temporary figures, feminism can never be encapsulated in a singular treatise, and neither can it remain static after being printed on the page" (p. 792). Responding to this truism and knowing that some guidance is helpful, we borrowed from Lather's (2007) "miming" of checklists to promote "visibility and enunciation" (p. 129) while avoiding the appearance of prescribing an approach. Table 1 provides a checklist of broad considerations for feminist research; Table 2 offers a more focused checklist that identifies specific feminist-accountable research practices; and Table 3 recommends practices and resources

Table 1. "Miming" a Checklist for Feminist Accountable Research: Broad Considerations

Critical Reflexivity
Authority
Authorship
Subjectivity
Power
"Othering"
Discourses
Feminist Ethics
Contextualize
The Status Quo
Feminist Vision and Agenda
Feminist Epistemologies
Binaries
Circuits of Privilege
Motivations

Note. Drawn primarily from Allen, 2004; Oswald et al., 2009; Sollie & Leslie, 1994; Thompson, 1992.

Table 2. *Miming a Checklist for Accountable Feminist Research: Specific Practices*

Practice	Recommended Source(s)
Having a clear and articulated feminist visions/visionary program line of research	Thompson, 1992
Taking into account how individuals collude and resist oppressive structures in analysis	Lloyd, Emery, & Klatt, 2009
Interrogating oneself	Allen, 2000; Blume & De Reus, 2009
Acknowledging and articulating feminist epistemology	Thompson, 1992
Disrupting structures/avoiding reifying categories	Oswald, Kuvalunka, Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009; Blume & De Reus, 2009
Considering motivations for research	Few, 2009; Allen, 2000
Being open about “the problems and compromises involved in doing research”	Thompson, 1992, p. 10
Avoiding/minimizing “othering”	Oswald et al., 2009
Questioning “the family”	Thompson & Walker, 1995
Showcasing complexity, contradictions (offering layered analysis)	Walker, 2004

*Note.* Borrowing from Lather’s (2007) response to avoid prescription, we use her tactic of “miming” a checklist to encourage “visibility and enunciation” (p. 129).

for managing feelings of fraudulence and moving away from immobilization.

In the following section, which is fueled by our attention and responses to feelings of fraudulence, we discuss our research experiences with “checklist” practices in an attempt to be (more visibly) accountable. We revisit fundamental aspects of a feminist research enterprise—feminist epistemology, feminist agendas, and feminist ethics (Thompson, 1992)—as we relate *specific* challenges we have encountered in our (feminist) research. We move back and forth between our two voices in unison and in separate individual accounts (some reflections are from our separate research journals; others grew out of writing this article).

#### ACCOUNTING FOR FEMINISM IN OUR RESEARCH: EPISTEMOLOGY, AGENDA, AND ETHICS

Reflections in this article are from our separate research programs. We have utilized qualitative (e.g., ethnographic, phenomenological, grounded theory) and quantitative (e.g., regression, multivariate statistics, factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and hierarchical linear models) methods. As feminist family scholars, although our research programs have different substantive foci, at this point in our careers we both are attempting to problematize larger cultural discourses and structures, such as accepting and resisting conditions of partnering

and mothering, including the premises and terms of heteropatriarchal romance and the “Standard North American Family” (SNAF) ideology (Smith, 1993). Additionally, we study groups of women (those who are single or part of a step-family) who are required to frequently account for (justify) their identities as a reflection of their positioning in the social structure.

#### *Feminist Accountability in Epistemology and Theories*

Feelings of feminist fraudulence are largely a by-product of divergent feminist paradigms and the large number of midlevel theories available for feminist scholars to choose from to guide their scholarship (Lather, 1988; Sharp & Blume, in press).<sup>3</sup> Our philosophical and theoretical struggles have been primarily embedded in two key challenges that Allen et al. (2009) identified: (a) advances in interdisciplinary theorizing and (b) intersectionality. We first discuss our struggles with broader interdisciplinary epistemological framings (e.g., positivism, postmodernism)

<sup>3</sup>A scholar can no longer conduct a “generic” feminist study if she wants to meet the standards of feminist theorizing across disciplines. The feminist scholar is (more often than not) asked by reviewers to identify the strand of feminist thought (e.g., liberal, radical, transnational, critical race, Marxist, poststructural, cultural, cyborg, psychoanalytic, etc.).

Table 3. Checklist: Managing Feelings of Fraudulence and Moving Out of Immobilization: Practices and Recommended Resources

Practice	Recommended Resource(s)
Holding other feminist family scholars accountable, asking difficult questions	Allen, 2000
Returning to the literature	Lloyd, Few, & Allen, 2009; Blume, 2004; Thompson, 1992
Engaging in writing	Menon, 2009; autoethnographic work such as Blume & De Reus, 2009
Recognizing and minimizing “androcentric inner critic” (internalized sexism)	Adams, 2009, p. 236
Acknowledging and questioning one’s complicity in oppressive systems	Lloyd, Warner, Baber, & Sollie, 2009
Disrupting dualisms, such as “private/public that implicitly privilege men”	Adams, 2009
Acknowledging tensions	Allen, 2000
Reminding oneself that feminists “chip away a small piece of a big mountain”!	Lloyd, Warner, Baber, & Sollie, 2009, p. 301

and then focus on a central feminist, interdisciplinary theoretical challenge—the question of categories. Extending this discussion, we close with our difficulties in applying intersectionality.

*Accounting for broad feminist epistemological framings.* Epistemological issues are paramount in feeling like feminist frauds. Like Hawkesworth (2006), we concur with the importance of understanding one’s knowledge as well as the means by which we gain it and the implications and issues of what we have come to know. “Outside of philosophy, few feminist scholars receive formal training about ‘problems’ of knowledge or how to begin to address them” (p. 17), which contributes to feelings of feminist fraudulence. This was particularly the case for us when we wanted to experiment with epistemologies outside of our social science training.

Feminist empirical work is multiparadigmatic (Lather, 1988). In one of the only articles devoted solely to feminist-informed methodological issues in family studies, Thompson (1992), drawing on the work of Harding (1986), identified three broad feminist epistemological positions: (a) empiricist, (b) standpoint, and (c) postmodern. Allen (2001) reminded us that the epistemological terrain is always shifting, and more recently, scholars have conceptualized epistemological paradigms by identifying positivist, postpositivist, social constructionist and interpretative, critical, and postmodern positions (Daly, 2007; Lather, 2006), although

these classifications are contested (Mumby, 1997). Feminist family scholars select from multiple (sometimes incompatible) paradigms by incorporating ideas gleaned from feminist thought in women’s studies, where postmodern sensibilities have prevailed for the past several decades, and, within family studies (and social sciences in general), where positivism and postpositivism remain pervasive (Sharp & Blume, in press; Sharp, Zvonkovic, Humble, & Radina, 2014; Walker, 2009). That being said, these struggles may be increasingly complex now: More than ever before, greater numbers of epistemological paradigms and feminist theories exist (Allen et al., 2009).

Using Thompson’s (1992) framings, we have adhered to all three feminist epistemologies—empiricist (both authors), standpoint (second author only), and postmodern (both authors). As a reflection of our social science training in the mid- to late 1990s, our studies until that point had been grounded in empiricism. For the past several years, we have grappled with attempts to shift our paradigms, trying to move away from conventional/positivism/postpositivism. We are both at a place in our careers where we have the status and security of tenure, which allows us to take risks that we thought we could not before being granted tenure. Early in our careers, we were flooded with doubts. We were highly skeptical of our command of and ability to apply non-mainstream paradigms. We were scared to take risks for fear of getting something “wrong.”

We did not want to expose our misgivings. At times, we did not even realize the extent to which we had been enacting conventional research practices. To illustrate this point, we share Elizabeth's unsettling feelings after she reflected on data collection in a project she was assigned to as a graduate student, a longitudinal ethnographic study examining the lives of young, single Black mothers living in poverty (see Ispa, Fine, & Sharp, 2006; Sharp & Ispa, 2006):

### *Elizabeth's Reflection*

After rereading transcripts during my analysis, I was shocked that I had focused on male infidelity and the meaning of *dog* during the interviews rather than "good" aspects of their romantic relationships. My stomach tightened as I read the transcripts. What had I done? Is this research another deficit approach to studying poor Black families? Had I unknowingly done exactly what I had promised myself that I would not do?

In retrospect, I realize that I was (at least in part) attempting to infuse positivistic values into the interview process. I responded to participants' direction of the interviews, trying not to disrupt what they wanted to share. I tried to be objective by letting participants narrate their stories and not asking "leading" questions, instead probing to follow up on what participants said.

After more reading, having other feminists hold me accountable, the lapse of time, and maturing as a scholar, I grew more comfortable claiming a feminist, social constructivist epistemology, which in turn freed me to pursue a more intentional, affirming set of questions about romantic relationships in subsequent interviews. Abandoning my positivistic tendencies, in response to my realization of the prior negativity-infused interviews, I purposely asked more questions in the 10-year follow-up interview about positive aspects of romantic relationships and which processes, behaviors, and ways of thinking encouraged couple maintenance.

We take (some) comfort from other scholars' naming of the powerful influence that positivism has on the field of family studies (e.g., Walker, 2009), and, importantly, revealing the stronghold positivist sensibilities have on one's own research practices (e.g., Rosenblatt, 2012). Using one of her quantitative studies as an example, Shannon adds to these accounts. She exposes her compromises in following mainstream, positivist ways of conducting and writing a study for publication. She reveals her

desires to go back and reassert a feminist framing more consistent with a critical paradigm. She indicates a clear signal that something was not quite satisfactory for her, but she did not feel able to resist larger forces. Such an experience is a helpful reminder of the ways in which feminists may brush aside their feelings of fraudulence and, in so doing, they find themselves compromising more than they are comfortable.

### *Shannon's Reflection*

Years ago I was interested in measurement issues, including the reliability and validity of scales with diverse populations. I wrote a descriptive piece on the factor structure of a well-established relationship beliefs scale (Weaver & Ganong, 2004) in which my coauthor and I found that the factor structure held for European American young adults but not for African American young adults. At the time I did not question why this was the case; I reported the findings with the caution that researchers should explore the reliability and validity of measures with their samples, especially when participants were different from the population with which the scale was developed. Although this is fine for mainstream family studies, a feminist analysis requires more.

At the time, I had an unsettled feeling about the publication but pushed that feeling aside to publish. Upon reflection, my discomfort was a signal for feminist accountability—a push to look deeper at the findings. I now see that I could have cast a more critical eye on the findings, discussed in greater detail how structural and contextual factors were at play in shaping both respondents' relationship perceptions and researchers' assumptions of appropriate methods. My caution in not casting a critical eye was a result of my concern that others would not see me as a "legitimate" authority given my junior status and my understanding of key aspects of feminist accountability was still emerging (I should note that I consider this article informed by feminism but do not claim this as a feminist study).

In addition to the broader epistemological questions already identified, Shannon's example points to another routine practice in the social sciences whereby categories (in this case, categories of race/ethnicity) are foregrounded as fixed, and comparisons between dominant and subordinate groups are frequently made in published studies. With the influx of postmodern epistemologies flowing into the social sciences in the past decade or so, feminist family scholars are (now) asked to carefully think about the

demarcation of race and all other categories, especially the category of “woman.”

*Interdisciplinary theorizing: Accounting for categories.* At the heart of contemporary feminist thought are debates on the existence and use of categories. These debates grew out of an increase of disciplinary blurring between humanities (including philosophy, linguistics, and history) and the social sciences (Allen et al., 2009). Destabilization of categories is a characteristic of interdisciplinary theorizing, akin to queer and postmodern feminisms, which developed in opposition of positivism. Earlier theorizing in feminist family studies relied firmly on categories. Despite the arguments of more recent feminist family scholars who endorse poststructuralism, categories remain pivotal in the field of family studies (e.g., categories of families and a relentless analysis and reporting of the categories of race, class, sex and gender, sexuality, and so on, in published studies). Yet as feminist family scholars taking seriously ideas from postmodern paradigms, we argue that categories are limiting and distorting, and serve to bolster inequality.

Feelings of fraudulence, then, are to be expected in the face of this dilemma. In attempting to account for our own feminist framing, we straddle second- and third-wave feminisms.<sup>4</sup> Not able to align ourselves with just one feminist position, we tentatively think of ourselves as “mid-wavers” or “hybrid feminists” (Snyder, 2008). We argue that the wave metaphor is an imprecise depiction because it gives the illusion of discrete ruptures of feminist thought. We concur with Lewis and Marine’s (2014) suggestion that it is more accurate to consider historical shifts in feminist thought as “strands” in a large tapestry—interwoven, linked, and (more or less) continuous.

We endorse the assumption that a sociopolitical category of women exists and has real,

material consequences. We also agree that feminist theorizing is based on the notion that women are “oppressed/exploited/discriminated/excluded by virtue of their being women” (Gunnarsson, 2011, p. 24) within a heteropatriarchal, capitalist, White-identified society. At the same time, poststructuralists’ skepticism of categories makes us hesitate to delineate a category of women because of the ways binary categories of men/women are limiting devices. Moreover, we also are aware that much theorizing and empirical work based on the category of “women” has been limited to White, middle-class heterosexual women’s experiences (Few-Demo, 2014).

As of this writing, the category of women we are most aligned with is created through gender relations and identities as historical/social products/interactions rather than as universal or “natural”/essentialist claims. Moreover, “... multiple positioning is not the same as no positioning. Although women and men are more than women and men, they are still women and men” (Gunnarsson, 2011, p. 33), and this is our point of departure from poststructuralist theorizing. Thus, on the basis of feminism’s second wave, we use categories (despite the knowledge that they are unstable and problematic); influenced by the third wave, we attempt to recognize and analyze “the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” (McCall, 2005, p. 1771) and to problematize the very categories we use.

This tension sets up a condition whereby every time we bring attention to/mark/use categories in our work, we do so with trepidation. For example, when we identify participants’ status as single or married, as Black, Latina or White, or families as stepdivorced, remarried, or cohabiting—without unpacking these categories—poststructuralists would suggest that we reproduce the discursive, constraining structures. In this way, like other social science feminist scholars, we face a nearly impossible dilemma: We are confined by our existing language and frameworks, which serve to set boundaries and create artificially discrete categories with material consequences. This begs the question: How do we examine race/ethnicity (or any other category—stepfamilies, singles, etc.) “in ways that do not reify the very categories we seek to abolish?” (Blume & De Reus, 2009, p. 210).

<sup>4</sup>Second-wave liberal feminist thought focused on gender (social constructionism) as an organizing concept in society, recognizing and underscoring the ways in which women as a group are oppressed (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). Third wave, poststructuralist, and postmodern feminisms, as well as queer thought, pushed scholars to move away from essentialist ideas (whether biological or cultural) and attend to intersectionality—“the interaction of *multiple* identities and experiences of inclusion and subordination” (Davis, 2008, p. 67).

To illustrate these tensions, Elizabeth shares one example of how feelings of feminist fraudulence and feminist accountability operated in her development of a quantitative measure. In her example, she moves between feminist empiricist and postmodern sensibilities:

### *Elizabeth's Reflection*

Inspired by Dana Jack's (now famous) Silencing the Self Scale (Jack & Dill, 1992; developed by creating items directly from the statements or ideas of women with clinical depression in her qualitative study), I revisited my qualitative data with single women to create a 36-item measure. This process filled me with trepidation. As I developed the items, I realized the extent to which I was reproducing stereotypes, reifying singles as the marked category, priming participants, and restricting options with the content of the items and through forced choices (Likert scale). I was especially panicked after I read Cordelia Fine's (2010) *Delusions of Gender*. I became immobilized and abandoned my work on the scale for many months. I worked through my tensions by considering possibilities, allowing myself not to have to completely solve a huge conceptual problem (Thompson, 1992), and seeking critiques from three feminist-identified colleagues. As a result of these actions, I included an opening statement in the materials given to participants, an excerpt of which reads, "Although some questions may appear stereotypical, the goal of the study is not to reproduce stereotypes but to gain an understanding of the perceptions of a larger number of singles than had been used in previous research."

I also added two open-ended questions at the end of the scale: "If you could tell researchers what to study in relation to singles, what would you say?" and "Any comments you would like to add?"

I remain unsatisfied because my aforementioned concerns about reifying categories were not fully addressed. Nevertheless, to proceed, I reconciled my misgivings about the project, knowing that I had tackled a small portion of the problem. I am currently analyzing these data, with anticipation that information provided by participants in the open-ended questions will provide me with additional insights and ideas for how to be (more) accountable in my feminist work with single people.

*Intersectionality: Accounting for individual and systemic analysis.* A related contemporary challenge that creates conditions ripe for

feelings of feminist fraudulence is intersectionality. Intersectionality acknowledges that identity (subjectivity) is formed by the interconnected structures of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc., and cannot be analyzed separately. Attention has been given to examining how oppressive systems of gender and race have interacted to foster multiplicity in women's experiences. We are attracted to the overriding ideas attending to multiple dimensions (Crenshaw, 1989) but feel uneasy in our ability to adequately apply intersectionality in our research. How does one attend to all the intersections between various forms of oppression and privilege? Although often applied to the intersection of race and gender, intersectionality also includes ethnicity, class, socioeconomic status, sexuality, disability, and so forth. Given the absence of a clearly articulated methodological approach (McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008), we (and others) have been stymied as to how to incorporate such a focus in our work. We echo Davis's (2008) inquiries: "Is intersectionality a theory? Or simply a heuristic device? A reading strategy for analysis? Should intersectionality be considered a crossroad/intersection, an axis of difference, or a dynamic process? Does intersectionality limit our understanding to individual experiences, to theorizing identity, or is it as a property of social structures and cultural discourses?" (p. 68). Moreover, McCall (2005) and Few-Demo (2014) argued that the usefulness of intersectionality is limited without clear methodological directions.

Intersectionality is a stark reminder of heuristic divides between the humanities (theoretical, abstract, postmodern) and the social sciences (largely characterized by empirical studies as well as positivist and postpositivist paradigms). Although it is often perceived by many feminists as the main means of framing our participants' experiences in both identity and oppression, the application of intersectionality in our research projects has given us (and many others) considerable pause (Lloyd, Emery, & Klatt, 2009; McCall, 2005). Below, we offer Elizabeth's attempt to consider intersectionality in her analysis. As you read her musings, notice that her initial attempts of analysis mapped on to ways that participants endorsed Whiteness while missing participants' acts of resistance. Her reading of feminist post-structuralism helped her more readily see the agentic acts:

*Elizabeth's Reflection*

I noticed my attention to the pejorative framing of darkness (colorism; see Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Hordge Freeman, 2010, for a review) and heterosexuality in the data (e.g., when a participant said she didn't want to date a particular man because he was "too dark" and thus found him physically unattractive), but I had not attended to resistant framing in other instances of colorism. For example, another participant told us that she did not want to date "light dudes . . . because they are conceited." I initially analyzed this on a structural level, indicating that norms operating conferred confidence to the "light dude" because he was more White appearing in a system of Whiteness. However, I did not draw attention to intersections of masculinity and Whiteness, nor to how she was resisting dominant norms by not dating light-skinned men. I did not discuss the ways the statement alludes to sexism: that light-skinned men may be less likely to treat women well. Additionally, we had not analyzed a remark by another participant. After taking her picture during one of our interviews, we gave her a copy of the photo. She was upset with the photo because she looked "too light"—she wanted to look darker. In her frustration, she revealed her opposition to valuing light skin. My oversights pushed me to revisit the data multiple times, similar to Lloyd, Emery, and Klatt (2009) and Merrick (1999). Rereading with a different frame (poststructuralism) led me to discover new ideas in the data, helping showcase moments of agency and disrupting notions of Whiteness by devaluing basic assumptions of Whiteness.

In this example, if I had analyzed only the remark from the participant who found "dark-skinned" Black men unattractive and not discussed the other two incidents underscoring resistance to the systematic, inflated value of white skin, I would have committed an act of omission. If only attending to the "dark skinned" as unattractive, I would have offered a systemic critique of Whiteness by highlighting the incident and alluding to internalized racism. But reinserting this incident only (without the other agentic acts in the data) may have (inadvertently) bolstered the existing system of Whiteness and overlooked the ways that sexism was intersecting with ideas embedded with "light dudes" being "conceited." My progression of working toward deeper analysis is a result of careful (re)reading of methodological and theoretical articles, joining a group to discuss race with a Black colleague and a White colleague, as well as having two Black feminist scholars hold me accountable in public (in two separate presentations) in what felt like "intense" questions. Although being held accountable was painful (because of shame in feeling like a fraud in

public) and shocking (forceful critiques in public are rare in many of the academic circles I had traveled), in experiencing the penetrating critiques of my Black feminist colleagues, I later came to appreciate their willingness to engage with me and my work. It takes courage for colleagues to offer hard-hitting, constructive critiques, and the high ethics of feminism presses this burden on us as feminist family scholars.

It is fair to say that the moments when feminist scholars have held us accountable in public created conditions in which we most strongly felt our fraudulence and pushed us the most. The uncomfortable feelings from these exchanges have furthered our thinking and encouraged us to work toward more accountable practices. Shannon shares one pivotal conference presentation at which she was told by a feminist family scholar that her research study on stepdaughter–stepfather relationships did not account for intersectionality:

*Shannon's Reflection*

The scholar's critique of the lack of intersectionality in my analysis and my inability to offer an adequate answer exposed my sense of fraudulence publically. Prior to this, I had read the assertion that intersectionality was "the most significant contribution" in women's studies (McCall, 2005) and so I had reviewed everything I could find on the topic. I had examined, or so I thought, the means by which gender, class, and race had operated to shape both variations and similarities in experiences of stepdaughter–stepfather relationships. And then, when hearing this asked of me by another feminist, the comment, while appropriate, exposed to me how I felt fraudulent in this respect and now she (and the audience) also knew that I was a fraud. The feminist scholar was right to call me on it—I had simply related that reaction to oppressive systems of male privilege combined with regret of loss of primacy of the mother–child relationship were likely behind variations in distancing behaviors by adolescent and young adult stepdaughters from their stepfathers, but I did not take my analysis far enough. The young women in my sample reacted negatively that a man had come into the household and changed dynamics within their families: Why should their once-independent mothers again be "asking for a man's permission"? I noted that for African American stepdaughters, their reaction was tied to the stepfathers' role as breadwinner (if not contributing financially then he was not needed in the family) and the social perception of a mother being powerful and able

to do it all as a modern independent woman. But for European Americans this questioning of male privilege seemed to be related more to the latter. In my discussion, I did not draw attention to how intersecting systems of gender, race, and class were operating, how institutions that have created economic inequality between men and women and between European Americans and African Americans were mutually reinforcing, nor did I further explore how class operated to foster further variations in such experiences.

We have come to appreciate that part of Shannon's struggle is the problem of attending to intersectionality when participants belong to privileged groups (e.g., in the foregoing example, participants identified as predominantly middle class; in her other studies, most participants identified as White). As Jackson (2006) has argued, many scholars have examined how heteronormativity has restricted and regulated gay men and lesbian women, but an examination of the regularity function of heteronormativity on heterosexuals is largely glossed over. In doing so, a simplistic understanding is encouraged, and hegemonic heterosexuality remains propped up. We think a similar issue is happening with race and class within family studies. Similarly, the analysis of intersectionality seems to focus on subordinated groups, paying less attention to intersectional considerations in studies of White, middle-class participants. In particular, bell hooks has implored feminists to consider how White supremacist, capitalist, and male supremacist systems operate in all our studies (hooks, 2013).

Another issue reflected in the previous example pertains to level of analysis. Like Elizabeth's earlier work, Shannon's preliminary analyses remained at the individual level, not (deeply) considering how larger systemic power is operating. This may seem unremarkable given that mainstream family studies primarily focus on individuals (see Sprey, 2013). We echo other critiques about social sciences' hyperfocus on individuals. For example, at the 2012 and 2013 National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) conferences, feminist family scholars raised concerns about a trend in feminist family scholarship (like in the wider social sciences) that is moving away from political understandings and is devoid of systemic analysis. Their concerns resonate with a growing number of scholars who have called attention to the ways neoliberalism

is a pervasive system influencing both the lives of people we study (e.g., Weis & Fine, 2012) and the lives of scholars themselves—as Reay (2012) boldly remarked, “neoliberalism discourses have seeped into all of our souls.”<sup>5</sup>

Taking hold in the last decades of the 20th century, neoliberalism, in which individuals and their families are the focus, is characterized by self-improvement, self-capitalization, and discourses of “personal responsibility” as the primary goal (Reay, 2012). This, along with pervasive popular beliefs in postfeminism and postracism (i.e., beliefs that gender and race equality has been achieved, and thus feminism and antiracism are no longer needed; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013), poses threats to feminist approaches to family research that seek to examine broader, institutionalized patterns of domination, exploitation, and oppression. Chandra Mohanty's (2013) argument resonates with us: “If all experience is merely individual, and the social is always collapsed into the personal, feminist critique and radical theory appear irrelevant” (p. 971). Like Mohanty and feminist family scholar Edith Lewis (2009), we are concerned that a neoliberalist sensibility has taken hold among (some) feminist family scholars, including ourselves (at times). Lewis (2009), in her chapter in the *Handbook of Feminist Family Studies*, named feminists with individualist (neoliberal) agendas “neo-feminists” and carefully illustrated how neo-feminists are likely to be rewarded within a patriarchal system.

Although there has been little public debate within family studies about neoliberalism and its insidious reach, Elizabeth has been working to bring attention to this issue. One way to attend to neoliberalism among participants in studies (and researchers' framing of studies) is to consider the concept of “critical bifocals” (Weis & Fine, 2012), a double lens of analyzing both structures and the lives of individuals through circuits of privilege as a corrective to researchers' glossing over of situated, structural conditions. Weis and Fine (2012) argued that too many researchers (in education) have focused on individual lives,

<sup>5</sup>An overriding neoliberal agenda (i.e., based on individualism) has also gained considerable traction in the past few decades. The neoliberal agenda (promoted inside and outside the academy), with its focus on individualism, is in direct contrast to radical feminist theorizing (Mohanty, 2013).

on individual lives without accounting for larger structures and circuits of privilege, thus offering a distorted and limited picture of the issues. We feared that we, too, had made these acts of omission.

One such dilemma is not having adequate data. Several times, after data collection was completed and Elizabeth was in the throes of analysis, she wanted to bring to bear the new-to-her, provocative theoretical ideas she had read, but the design of the study and the data itself were limiting. Only recently has she started to more explicitly bring together her feminist poststructural ideas with quantitative (and qualitative) data sets:

### *Elizabeth's Reflection*

I recently wrote a paper with a former graduate student, using structural equation modeling to examine links among romantic beliefs, body image, and disordered eating among college students. Most of the literature in this area offers analysis and interpretation at the individual level, discussing individual outcomes and processes in romantic relationships. Drawing on feminist empiricism and feminist poststructuralism to critique postfeminist discourse, I argued that ideologies of mainstream heterosexual romance are "bad." This may be perceived as a radical idea, in that very little has been done to (explicitly) question "institutionalized heterosexuality" inside and outside the academy (Tolman, 2012, p. 753).

My conceptualization of the study was intended to push the reader to consider and question broader ideologies about romance, especially where postfeminism is pervasive in the cultural discourse (Gill, 2008). I position mainstream romance as fundamentally problematic, arguing that that societal discourses (as well as social science discourses) endorse a "bad romance." I have wanted to explicitly argue this for years, ever since I was exposed to Rich's (1980) compulsory heterosexuality argument in college and then later to Tolman's (2006) extension of Rich's argument. Now that I have read more about postfeminism, I feel a greater urgency to acknowledge and trouble its reach. Although I have lectured and spoke about fundamental flaws and the insidious nature of a "conventional romance," I have never been bold enough to openly address it in my written work—it felt too "taboo." Working on this article helped me push through my hesitation.

In the "bad romance" article, we drew on the international bestsellers *Fifty Shades of Grey* (James, 2011) in hopes of leading the reader into a (better) understanding of contextual conditions.

While considering individual outcomes (e.g., adherence to disordered eating practices and normative romantic ideologies), we simultaneously put the focus squarely on normative, unexamined sexual, bodily, relational, and familial ideologies circulating in culture (Sharp & Keyton, in press). Indicative of this, I asked the following systemic question: "What would romance look like in a non-sexist society, devoid of 'intimate (in)justice' (McClelland, 2010), where sexism and heteronormativity were not the bedrock of romance, and women's bodies were not commodified (Gill, 2007), 'normally and banally' used as sexual objects (Evans, Riley, & Shankar, 2010), and masculinities were not conceived in opposition/complimentary to femininities (Tolman, 2006)?"

### *Feminist Accountability in (Shifting) Feminist Agendas*

Just as variation in feminist thought can incite feelings of fraudulence about one's epistemology, it also can cloud feminist research agendas. As Lather (1988) has argued, feminist research must be action oriented. As we modified and expanded our understanding of and engaged in more risk taking with regard to epistemological positions over time, we adjusted our feminist agendas as well. We hold overriding agendas as feminists (including our work and lives outside of scholarship), and as scholars, we have agendas for our programmatic lines of research and agendas for specific research studies. We also take the position that one's epistemology shapes the vision of one's research (Hawkesworth, 2006), and we have questioned (possible) fraudulence of our research agendas in two respects: Is our agenda consistent with our epistemological and theoretical position(s) in the study?<sup>6</sup> And, what happens if our feminist agenda is not met during the execution of the study? Shannon relates how the first issue led her to revise her feminist agenda related to her program of research as she gained research experience and wider exposure to various feminist perspectives.

<sup>6</sup>Feminist family scholars also have discussed the importance and the visibility of a feminist agenda (e.g., Lloyd, Few, & Allen, 2009; Thompson, 1992). Although there are variations among feminists, most seem to be in agreement with the need for social change. For example, the focus on social change can be observed in feminist family scholars who push for a revisioning of families.

### *Shannon's Reflection*

Initially, standpoint theory resonated most closely with my feminist leanings. The focus on centering women's experiences made sense to me, especially as I was interested in relationship formation and role construction in stepfamilies. My approach to studying women in stepfamilies was grounded in Levin's (1997) article in which she asserted that the stepparent role had greater challenges for women because of gendered perceptions of female and male roles in families, which create conflicts for stepmothers but not stepfathers. However, upon examination of the literature, I found, like Bernstein (2003), that gender had been omitted as a "key explanatory principle" (p. 91). Although there were studies that "include gender" in their analysis, most just compared men and women, and theorized gender differences were reported without critically exploring dominant structures of gender and family nor the variations that exist within groups of men and women. However, more troubling to me was that although women had been included in stepfamily research, the central focus was seldom on them (Weaver & Coleman, 2005, 2010), and researchers had not sought to give voice to their perceptions of themselves or their families. Because of my identification with standpoint theory, I tried to focus on women in stepfamilies, help them share their voice in relating their experiences, and find means to challenge the dominant discourse of essential mothering that I came to see as limiting and oppressive. At this time, my analysis was more at the individual and relationship levels, and although I was focused on family structure and social class, I had unintentionally privileged Whiteness and heterosexuality because I had not fully incorporated a consideration of race or sexual orientation.

Through writing this article with Elizabeth and her pushing me to take my analyses further, my epistemological views came to be influenced more by poststructural approaches and intersectionality. As these changed, so did my agenda and subsequent analysis to include more of a systemic critique of dominant institutions. Because the majority of stepfamily research is not conducted from a feminist perspective, many scholars have not explicitly acknowledged (or perhaps even considered) how such general societal beliefs influence their work. With a first-married nuclear family still seen as the norm, positive relationship processes such as relationship formation and maintenance have not been the focus of studies to the same extent that negative experiences and outcomes have (Coleman, Ganong, & Weaver, 2001). Further, (as mentioned previously) traditional institutions surrounding gendered parenting roles disadvantage women in stepfamilies.

However, with few exceptions, how these systems of oppression interrelate with those of class, race, and sexuality have not been considered. As a feminist, I now want to challenge dominant views of stepfamilies as inherently problematic and dismantle the privilege given to first-married family structures. I strongly agree with Allen (2000) that "in presuming the primacy of the heterosexual, two parent, middle-class, White nuclear family, we deny our knowledge of plurality in family life" (p. 12). However, I am struggling to figure out how to use critical bifocals to accomplish my agenda. As my epistemological position further develops, so will my agenda.

Although complications of feminist agendas for one's programmatic line of research might be expected, articulating and pursuing a feminist agenda for a particular study seems like a more straightforward (contained) task, but we have learned that even our feminist goals for small-scale studies can be challenging and tension filled. In Elizabeth's example below, she showcases having her feminist vision dashed in the execution of the study:

### *Elizabeth's Reflection*

I developed a study examining young women's experiences of their wedding day and ensuing transition to being wives (Sharp, 2013b, 2014). I wanted to direct the gaze on superordinates, or people situated in the hegemonic (i.e., most powerful, accepted, "naturalized") category being examined. I purposely wanted to examine and critique the regulation of heterosexuality and femininity within one of the most heterosexist, classist practices (white weddings; Ingraham, 2008) and heterosexist institutions: marriage (see Brook, 2002). My desire to do so was in response to other feminists encouraging more scholars to consider the ways heteronormativity regulates heterosexuals (Jackson, 2006) and Brook's (2002) urging of feminist scholars to reengage in critical dialogues about contemporary marriage.

Inspired by two articles describing the feminist affinities of focus groups (e.g., Montell, 1999; Wilkinson, 1999), I designed the study using this strategy. Focus groups (are thought to) dampen hierarchical relationships between researchers and participants and have the potential to encourage something akin to a "feminist consciousness-raising" session. I envisioned focus groups as space for participants to feel safe to share their (assumed) contradictory feelings and experiences about being a bride and being a wife. I could not have been more wrong! My lofty feminist goals for the project were quickly called into question.

After two focus groups, the moderator, who was a feminist-identified graduate student, requested that we stop the focus groups. She expressed uneasiness conducting the groups because she believed that antifeminist practices were occurring. Some participants were competitive (e.g., gushing about perfect weddings and having the best husband), and a few participants were silenced when they tried to share less-than-positive aspects of being a bride and wife. Responding to her request, I ended the focus groups.

We proceeded to collect data through individual interviews, first following up with participants who we thought had been silenced and then through individual interviews with several women not in the initial focus groups. This experience contributes to the debate that there are not feminist methods per se, and that group membership (social identity) is powerful and evoked in a setting like a focus group. What appeared to be happening was a strong enactment of a hyperfeminine performance (Sharp, 2013a).

In earlier versions of this article, I had written that my decision to stop the focus groups was indicative of how reflexivity can be used to shift the direction of a study veering off course from the intended feminist goals. Now, after engaging with reviewers' comments, I see that perhaps I made a hasty decision (and, thus, not critically reflexive), mostly because of my graduate student's request and my concern that I needed to "protect" participants while "under my watch." I have engaged in the deeper reflection encouraged by two reviewers of this article who were holding me accountable. One reviewer remarked that my initial reflections about the focus groups were "naïve" and another reviewer specifically challenged me by writing, "It seemed like this [focus group problems] was an opportunity to explore what happens when a research project gets derailed because you got into territory for which you weren't prepared. What was that like? The way it is written, it sounds like you just 'bailed,' rather than truly making a reflexive decision." After their prompting, I questioned how I reified structural conditions, promoting a "protective paternalism" in my thinking that participants could not "handle" the competition. One reading of my decision is that it flattened the agency of participants. Additionally, it is safe to assume women in groups do compete, especially if their feminine identities are questioned. Thus, in hindsight, I now feel I realize that we missed out on important data that could have been captured through the conditions set up by focus groups of brides. Putting brides in the same room to talk about their weddings creates a competitive context, yet prescriptions of ideal femininity

dampen outward displays of competition by women (Kimmel, 2008).

### *Feminist Accountability in Applying High Standards of Feminist Ethics*

Although Elizabeth thought she was making an "ethical" decision by terminating focus groups, she now realizes that her understanding of the issues was too simple. Part of what makes feminism complicated is that the ethical standards are high, extending beyond the standard guidelines and principles of mainstream research. Feminist ethical principles are so great that it may be impossible for scholars to fully adhere to feminist principles in conducting studies. There is considerable danger in having such high standards—because of the ethical promises feminist make, they have further to fall (e.g., Stacey, 1988). As aforementioned, feminist family researchers are endlessly questioning: Who is benefiting from this research? To what extent? What are participants gaining from the research? How does the research prop up or maintain existing systems of inequality? How does the research expose, disrupt, or reduce existing inequality (Few, 2009; Oswald, Kivalunka, Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009)? Does the research promote social justice? If not, is the research feminist? In the following section, we take on an overriding aspects of ethical feminist research: harm and benefits.

*Examining harm and benefits to participants and beyond.* Concern about bringing harm to participants and members of the populations being studied can never be fully resolved, which (like most feminist tensions) is a disconcerting and discomfiting reality. When people are involved, there will always be risk, and even researchers who are well intended may (knowingly and unknowingly) collude in harmful forces. Acknowledging this is not enough, we feel compelled to work to be creative and continue to find concrete practices to promote feminist accountable research. Our research must also be ethical in ways that reflect our sense of feminist accountability. For us, feelings of feminist fraudulence came with the realization that what we perceive as benefits/harm might greatly differ from those of others, including members of sampled populations. One such incident is illustrated by Elizabeth's interactions

with a Black community member (male pastor) in an ethnographic research project studying the lives of Black families living in poverty (Ispa et al., 2006). It is important to point out that at the time of her encounter with the Black male pastor, Elizabeth was a new master's student assigned to the project for her assistantship. This was one of her first experiences working on research in her career. The following is extracted from Elizabeth's research journal, written in 2001:

From the onset of this project, I worried about how the research would enhance our participants' lives. These thoughts were a result of a pivotal conversation I had with a pastor living in the neighborhood near our participants. I called him to ask him to participate in a focus group as a key community leader. He asked me how the study would benefit the people in his neighborhood. Finding my answer unsatisfying, he emphatically stated that he did not want the people in his neighborhood exploited by another study conducted by "White researchers who use his people to further their own professional lives." I was shocked, upset, and confused and scared to make another phone call. Were we going to exploit participants in our study?! I took his words to heart, although at the time I did not fully understand his concerns. After five years of working on the project, I feel I am closer to understanding his deep-felt concern. His words have gone through my head thousands of times.

As a result of working on this article and engaging with reviewers who encouraged greater feminist accountability from me, I have written (but not sent) a letter to the pastor detailing what I perceive we offered the participants in our study as well as our how our work attempts to disrupt racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist notions and controlling images of Black families living in poverty and how such images harm all of us. I also have more carefully thought about how Black male privilege may be operating in my exchange with the pastor and how we, as researchers, may have unintentionally propped up Black male privilege by primarily identifying men as key community leaders. Moreover, bell hooks has argued that Black men are frequently the public voices for Black communities, glossing over Black women as representatives. Also, one reviewer of this article cogently asked, "Can he really speak for 'his people'? And how might his claims to 'his people' be overextending similarities between himself as a Black middle-class community member and Black families living in poverty?"

The gnawing sense of wanting more accountability led me to share my initial misgivings (in the foregoing extract) with other researchers (about

10) in various contexts and across social science fields. The conversations did not engender the depth of engagement I sought (i.e., people did not understand or share my tensions). Instead, my colleagues typically responded by telling me that I was doing "good things" and that my concern for participants was admirable. They reiterated benefits people gain simply by being interviewed. I remember feeling frustrated, disappointed, and defeated. Feelings of feminist fraudulence reared their ugly head: Have my concerns overstepped my bounds as a "researcher"? Do I misunderstand the value (and possibilities) of research? I now see the tension and my questions as working against compliancy. In going out in the field, I brushed up against the messiness and the reality that the IRB's purpose is not about social justice. In earnest, I found myself up against two competing discourses (structures that govern the institutional review boards and feminist principles).

We argue that responses from Elizabeth's colleagues largely reflect the culture of research set by Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards. We echo concerns posed by Rosenwald (1996) about the assumptions of most university's IRB standards, which focus on protecting universities (damage control), with less concern focused on promoting the well-being of participants, groups, and society. An emphasis on how we might harm participants lacks the focus on working for change that is a necessary element of feminist research (Allen et al., 2009).

*Influence of the IRB and institutional requirements.* We realize that the overarching (narrow) framing of IRBs does not match feminist standards of accountability to participants, communities, and society. For example, mandatory trainings regarding ethics and research at Shannon's university focus on harm, with little discussion of what is considered a benefit. The IRB forms require researchers specify the potential harms to participants and how those will be managed, and then ask what "benefit" the research will provide to participants. In part, this question asks about incentives for participation (e.g., monetary compensation). In completing the form, Shannon has often written "creation of knowledge regarding this topic will provide a greater understanding that will aid in intervention and prevention efforts with this population," and the IRB committee has not asked her to be more specific or identify concrete and sustainable benefits. The reality is that our work is, and should be, more than this. We

believe the blanket statement is inadequate if we are working toward justice. The statement is too vague for a researcher to be held accountable. More specific and concrete considerations are required to hold researchers to a higher standard, and feminist ethos would push us even further in this regard. For instance, in Shannon's current project focusing on negotiation of child-related issues between stepmothers and biological mothers, she has written in the IRB application that information from the study will also be used in the creation of resources, with specific suggestions and guidelines for managing conflict and fostering effective communication between households. Shannon has resolved to write statements of benefit that are more specific and applied to the particular project and that reflect her focus on social justice in research.

To be clear, we are not arguing that IRB and other university institutions should be unconcerned with potential harm to participants; in fact, this is a necessary requirement for any research promoting justice or purporting to be respectful. We, however, as feminist family scholars, need to continue to pursue social justice. This tension, in part, was illustrated by the feminist family scholar Alexis Walker's analysis of *Journal of Marriage and Family (JMF)* articles during her tenure as editor. She questioned the utility of the research published in *JMF*: Was it helping individuals and families? What is to be gained from reading and thinking about the research produced in a highly respected, mainstream journal? She argued that most of the empirical work published was "disconnected from the lives of so many others, lacking as it was in subjectivity, reflexivity, and certainly intersectionality" (Walker, 2009, p. 26). Her comments helped us more fully appreciate the context in which we are working and echoed questions we had asked ourselves: Was our work and the lives and words of the women we studied merely destined to languish on a dusty shelf, only to be discussed by us and other academics, or could we produce research that could be used for something more? Such questions point to the ideas of transgressive validity, a criterion by which studies are judged by whether they "incited discourse and contribute to a more critical social science" (Lather, 1994, cited in Morrow, 2005, p. 253), and catalytic validity: Did the study result in social change (Lather, 1991)?

### *Pushing Praxis: Finding Spaces for (More) Visible Feminist Research Accountability*

As DeVault (1990) has argued: "The dilemma for the feminist scholar, always, is to find ways of working within some disciplinary tradition while aiming at an intellectual revolution that will transform the tradition" (p. 96). The challenges we have shared in this article reflect this tension. Although we already have offered ways to work within and against the larger structure of the sensibilities of the American Psychological Association (APA), IRBs, and both postfeminist and neoliberal sensibilities, in this section we offer more concrete suggestions. We encourage all feminist family scholars to keep asking, How can we open up the restrictive requirements, and how can feminist family scholars continue to offer each other strategies for working within these constraints? We briefly highlight possibilities and potential spaces to engender (more) visible feminist accountability in family studies research. Our suggestions endeavor to challenge the dominant postfeminist and neoliberal influences upon scholarship, and in contrast to said influences, our recommendations assume strong feminist collaboration. We propose specific strategies with the goals of (a) accounting for structural, normative conditions of privilege; (b) compiling collections of feminist critiques and feminist-informed measures to be used in relationships and families research; and (c) promoting more feminist symposia in mainstream journals and conferences. The means through which some of this can be accomplished is via technology.

### *Accounting for Privilege Using Critical Questioning and Intersectionality*

The incisive questions that April Few-Demo (2009) asked scholars to answer when conducting research with ethnic-minority families could be applied to all families, especially when studying privileged groups. In this way, the normative functioning (invisibility) of privilege is named and considered (Ferber, 2012), and scholars are encouraged to engage in a more critical analysis. Intersectionality reminds us that privilege is not simple or one-dimensional, and we recommend that scholars continue to think about highlighting complex realities in their work (Coston & Kimmel, 2012).

*Transgressive Validity as Explicit Criteria  
for Feminist Research*

We cannot simply highlight complexities but also need to work toward dismantling the unjust conditions and circumstances entangled in said complexities. We, like scholars before us, recommend that praxis be more closely considered in the evaluations of feminist work by reviewers of journal submissions and conference proposals. Although praxis is considered an important aspect of feminist family scholarship, some reviewers give praxis less value in published and presented work because it is not part of larger mainstream standards (e.g., APA guidelines) embedded in neoliberal society. How can we hold one another (more) accountable in our evaluations and feedback and push against neoliberalism? We recommend public, open discussions about the possibilities of more systematically promoting catalytic and transgressive validity in feminist scholars' work.

*Compiling a Collection of Feminist Critiques  
and Feminist-Informed Measures to Be Used  
in Family Studies Research*

Extending this issue, we also promote a more careful examination of how feminists gather/collect data, both in their qualitative and quantitative research. As we have discussed, inadequate data for intersectionality analysis is a salient problem for feminist family studies. With quantitative research, a dearth of family-oriented scales have been developed from feminist epistemologies and theories; this is problematic because measures are the bedrock of quantitative family studies scholarship. However, this may also reflect the status of graduate education in family studies, with its limited focus on psychometrics in general and few family scholars specializing in scale development. Often feminist family scholars use existing scales by revising them, and feminist scholars critique the measures they used in their studies (e.g., Bermudez, Sharp, & Taniguchi, 2015), but we see a need to tackle this issue more systematically.

As a corrective, we recommend public discussions (virtual and in person) about the scales feminist family scholars are using (and have used), including what ideal measures would look like and strategic efforts to develop more feminist-informed measures. For instance,

what might a relationship satisfaction scale from a feminist perspective capture? Current conceptualizations of satisfaction are limited and often measured in restrictive terms (e.g., satisfied or not), not accounting for ambivalence that exists in relationships (e.g., one can love and resent someone simultaneously). Moreover, how might we take circuits of privilege (Weis & Fine, 2012) into account in our measures? Harnois (2013) makes the assertion that using a multiracial feminist approach to social science survey research could foster a much more complex and nuanced view of important topics than we currently have from quantitative studies, given the relative absence of intersectionality in these works so far. By engaging in this discussion, feminist family scholars could work to create a collection of critiques of measures in multiple content areas, to offer feminist-informed modified scales, and to create new scales based on contemporary feminist epistemologies and theories. We recommend creating a virtual resource for measurement issues and propose forthcoming workshops at Theory Construction Research Methodology (TCRM), sponsored by NCFR.

*More Feminist Symposia in Mainstream  
Journals and Conferences*

Using the TCRM 2002 plenary session published in the *Journal of Family Issues* (Blume, 2004) exchange on feminist theory and methods as a model, we suggest that more debates and tensions be made visible in family studies journals and encourage reinvigorated conversations at upcoming TCRM sessions. We have been encouraged by feminist theory discussions held at NCFR annual conferences over the past few years in which feminist family scholars were asked to participate in public exchanges about feminist theories. The 2012 conference in Arizona, for example, offered a provocative space. The discussion was tense at times, in part, because scholars were operating from divergent strands of feminist thought. The participating family scholars held one another accountable and pushed deeper, resulting in a number of important practices and further discussions in ensuing conferences. As a result, the 2013 and 2014 conferences included feminist roundtables, a discussion focused on queer-feminist thought, and a panel on feminist research from seasoned feminist

scholars. Building further on this momentum, a preconference at the 2015 NCFR conference is being planned.

*Expand Audiences Exposed to Feminist Work  
by Seeking Alternative Ways to Conduct  
and Disseminate Research*

To further feminist agendas and ethics, we suggest the dissemination of materials in venues beyond those normally utilized in academia. These may include information and advocacy documents to hold policy makers at higher levels of accountability by making research more assessable to politicians, educators, therapists, and media outlets (and creating "report cards" akin to the Guerrilla Girls' report cards of art museums). We also encourage more engagement with the arts and humanities; for example, see Elizabeth's work with choreographers and dancers, whereby a choreographer engaged in kinesthetic analysis of her data (Sharp & Durham-DeCesaro, in press). We also encourage the further use of blogs, podcasts, and social media.

*Feminist Accountability Through Technology*

A fruitful space for increased visibility of feminist accountability is via technology. In addition to the aforementioned possibilities, we recommend that feminist scholars insert a link in manuscripts to a website with reflexive remarks about the research project, including the researchers' motivations for conducting the study (Allen, 2000). To illustrate, with the encouragement of the *JFTR* editor, formal responses to this article and our replies are available online, and additional suggestions and resources are also available.

The use of the Internet directly responds to our push for more visible feminist accountability by encouraging practices to engage in deeper and more frequent dialogues with other feminist scholars. While print publications are static, online engagement allows for comments, responses, and revisions. We recommend a mechanism similar to what is seen on popular media websites that would allow for comments to be posted by readers of academic articles. One reviewer of this article also pushed us to consider encouraging *participants* to read and respond to scholars' articles and other people's comments.

CONCLUSION

Our goals in writing this article were to be provocative and to begin theorizing about the phenomena of both feelings of feminist fraudulence and feminist accountability in family research. Although many scholars have discussed struggles they encounter as feminists, no one has attempted to embrace the feelings of feminist fraudulence inherent in contemporary neoliberal and postfeminist sensibilities, to explicitly harness those feelings to motivate (more) critical scholarship, and to break through immobilization that often results from constant criticism of self and others. In so doing, we hope to reaffirm the importance of earlier feminist family scholars' work, to spark new ideas, and to offer comfort to current feminist family scholars embarking on their feminist research journeys.

As Lloyd, Warner et al. (2009) reminded feminist scholars, we also must recognize the ways we are already engaging in praxis. Despite the compromises and mistakes we recount in this article, we have tried to push the feminist agenda of social justice forward. We concur with Lewis's (2009) distinction between neo-feminists, focused on individuals, and feminists and womynsts, focused on the collective struggle. We prefer to be the latter.

It is through naming our feelings as fraudulent that we can move forward in ways that capture our strengths and embolden us to push past the limiting boundaries of the neoliberal, postfeminism that is academia (and wider society) today. Through openly sharing our partial understandings and missteps related to conducting feminist research, we continued the dialogue that many others started. Further, although we are not suggesting that there is one way to do feminist work (there are a myriad of ways), we have proposed tenets of accountability that can be used to conduct feminist family scholarship. We acknowledge that we are still (and will always be) grappling with meeting old and new challenges inherent in feminist theorizing and holding ourselves accountable to feminist principles in research.

We wrote this article adhering to the tenets we propose for accountability in feminist family research. Our writing reflects many discussions between us, holding each other accountable as feminists and pushing each other to continue even when uncertain of how to proceed. We have tried to convey how difficult (albeit rewarding) it is to be a feminist family scholar. Our

process of fear and trepidation is similar to Hogeland's (1994) argument that contemporary young women ought to be tentative in claiming a feminist identity because becoming a feminist requires endless intellectual work and is highly political; it requires critically questioning everything in one's environment and living in a world in which they (the young women) disagree with the majority of people (in the case of feminist scholarship, the disagreement is with the majority of scholars, as well as with the larger systems such as the IRB, APA, neoliberalism, postfeminism). We still grapple daily with our feelings of feminist fraudulence, of wondering whether our efforts will ever be "good enough," and now we see this as a productive signal that we are ever seeking to improve our work as feminists and not be complacent (Lloyd et al., 2009). Perhaps as McIntosh (1985) remarked, "The people who are most fraudulent may be those who would never be able to consider really asking themselves if they are fraudulent" (p. 10).

#### AUTHOR NOTE

We wish to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for working with on this manuscript. We also extend our gratitude to Drs. D. Lavigne and R. Lewis and Professor K. Hollingsworth for their helpful insights. The first author would like to acknowledge Texas Tech University and University of Durham, UK Institute of Advanced Study for time and resources to write the manuscript. An earlier version of this article was presented at the National Council on Family Relations conference in 2004.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Please contact the Digital Scholarship Editor at [jftr@ncfr.org](mailto:jftr@ncfr.org) to comment on the ideas in this featured essay and the accompanying commentary.

#### REFERENCES

- Allen, K. R. (2000). A conscious and inclusive family studies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 4–17.
- Allen, K. R. (2001). Feminist visions for transforming families: Desire and equality then and now. *Journal of Family Issues*, 22, 791–809.
- Allen, K. R. (2004). Janet Salzman Chatez plenary: Discussant comments. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25, 984–989.
- Allen, K., Lloyd, S., & Few, A. (2009). Reclaiming feminist theory, method, and praxis for family studies. In S. A. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 3–17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Baber, K. M. (2004). Building bridges: Feminist research, theory, and practice. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25, 978–983.
- Bermudez, M., Sharp, E., & Taniguchi, N. (2015). Tapping into the complexity: Ambivalent sexism, dating, and familial beliefs among Hispanic young adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36, 1274–1295. doi: 10.1177/0192513X13506706
- Bernstein, A. (2003). Gender in stepfamilies: Daughters and fathers. In L. Silverstein & T. Goodrich (Eds.), *Feminist family therapy: Endowment in social context* (pp. 91–104). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Blume, L. B. (Ed.) (2004). Bridging gender theory and research: A symposium on feminist theory construction and research methodology. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25, 959–997.
- Blume, L. B., & De Reus, L. A. (2009). Resisting whiteness: Autoethnography and the dialectics of ethnicity and privilege. In S. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 205–219). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brook, H. (2002). Stalemate: Rethinking the politics of marriage. *Feminist Theory*, 3, 45–66.
- Burton, L. M., Bonilla-Silva, E., Ray, V., Buckelew, R., & Hordge Freeman, E. (2010). Critical race theories, colorism, and the decade's research on families of color. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 440–459.
- Coleman, M., Ganong, L., & Weaver, S. (2001). Relationship maintenance and enhancement in remarried families. In J. Harvey & A. Wenzel (Eds.), *Close romantic relationships: Maintenance and enhancement* (pp. 255–276). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Coston, B. M., & Kimmel, M. (2012). Seeing privilege where it isn't: Marginalized masculinities and the intersectionality of privilege. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68, 97–111. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.2011.01738.x
- Clough, P. T., & Halley, J. (2007). *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Duke University Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139, 139–167.
- Cvetkovich, A. (2012). *Depression: A public feeling*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Daly, K. (2007). Epistemological considerations in qualitative research. In *Qualitative methods for family studies and human development* (pp. 19–41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9, 67–85.

- DeVault, M. (1990). Talking and listening from women's standpoint: Feminist strategies for interviewing and analysis. *Social Problems, 37*, 96–116.
- Evans, A., Riley, S., & Shankar, A. (2010). Technologies of sexiness: Theorizing women's engagement in the sexualization of culture. *Feminism & Psychology, 20*, 114–131.
- Ferber, A. (2012). The culture of privilege: Color-blindness, postfeminism, and Christonormativity. *Journal of Social Issues, 68*, 63–77.
- Few, A. L. (2009). Theorizing with racial-ethnic feminisms in family studies. In S. A. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 28–42). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Few-Demo, A. L. (2014). Intersectionality as the “new” critical approach in feminist family studies: Evolving racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 6*, 169–183.
- Fine, C. (2010). *Delusions of gender: How our minds, society and neurosexism create difference*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Gay, R. (2014). *Bad feminist: Essays*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Gill, R. (2007). *Gender and the media*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2008). Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. *Feminism & Psychology, 18*, 35–60.
- Gunnarsson, L. (2011). A defense of the category “woman.” *Feminist Theory, 12*, 23–37.
- Harding, S. (1986). *The science question in feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Harding, S. (1987). Is there a feminist method? Conclusion: Epistemological questions. In S. Harding (Ed.), *Feminism and methodology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Harnois, C. (2013). *Feminist measures in survey research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hawkesworth, M. (2006). *Feminist inquiry: From political conviction to methodological innovation*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Hogeland, L. (1994, November–December). Fear of feminism: Why young women get the willies. *MS Magazine, 215–218*.
- hooks, b. (2013, October 28). Dig deep: Beyond *Lean In*. *Feminist Wire*. Retrieved from <http://thefeministwire.com/2013/10/17973/>
- Ingraham, C. (2008). *White weddings: Romancing heterosexuality in popular culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ispa, J. M., Fine, M. A., & Sharp, E. A. (2006). Theoretical perspectives and research methods. In J. M. Ispa, K. R. Thornburg, & M. A. Fine (Eds.), *Keepin' on: The everyday struggles of families in poverty* (pp. 19–36). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Jack, D. C., & Dill, D. (1992). The Silencing the Self Scale: Schemas of intimacy associated with depression in women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 16*, 97–106.
- Jackson, S. (2006). Gender, sexuality, and heterosexuality: The complexity (and limits) of heteronormativity. *Feminist Theory, 7*, 105–121.
- James, E. L. (2011). *Fifty shades of grey*. New York: Random House.
- Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The perilous world where boys become men*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Lather, P. (1988). Feminist perspectives on empowering research methodologies. *Women's Studies International Forum, 11*, 569–581.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy within/in the postmodern (critical social thought)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lather, P. (2006). Foucauldian scientificity: Rethinking the nexus of qualitative research and educational policy analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 19*, 783–791. doi: 10.1080/09518390600976006
- Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost: Feminist efforts toward a double(d) science*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Levin, I. (1997). The stepparent role from a gender perspective. *Marriage and Family Review, 26*, 177–190.
- Lewis, E. A. (2009). Group- versus individual-based intersectionality and praxis in feminist and womynist research foundations. In S. A. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp.304–315). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lewis, R., & Marine, S. (2014). Weaving a tapestry, compassionately: Towards an understanding of young women's feminisms. *Feminist Formations*.
- Litton Fox, G., & McBride Murry, V. (2000). Gender and families: Feminist perspectives and family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*, 1160–1172.
- Lloyd, S. A., Emery, B. C., & Klatt, S. (2009). Discovering women's agency in response to intimate partner violence. In S. A. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 264–280). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lloyd, S. A., Few, A. L., & Allen, K. R. (2007). Feminist theory, methods, and praxis in family studies. *Journal of Family Issues, 28*, 447–451.
- Lloyd, S. A., Few, A. L., & Allen, K. R. (Eds.) (2009). *Handbook of feminist family studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lloyd, S. A., Warner, R. L., Baber, K. M., & Sollie, D. (2009). Activism in the academy: Constructing/negotiating feminist leadership. In S. A. Lloyd,

- A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 292–303). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30, 1771–1800.
- McClelland, S. (2010). Intimate justice: A critical analysis of sexual satisfaction. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4, 663–680.
- McDowell, T., & Fang, S. (2007). Feminist-informed critical multiculturalism: Considerations for family research. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28, 549–566.
- McIntosh, P. (1985). *Feeling like a fraud* (Working Paper No. 18), Jean Baker Institute at the Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley, MA.
- Menon, N. (2009). Feminist methodology in practice: Collecting data on domestic violence in India. In S. A. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen. (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 249–263). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merrick, E. (1999). “Like chewing gravel:” On the experience of analyzing qualitative research findings using a feminist epistemology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23, 47–57. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1999.tb00340.x
- Mohanty, C. (2013). Transnational feminist crossings: On neoliberalism and radical critique. *Signs, A Journal of Women, Culture, & Society*, 38, 967–991.
- Montell, F. (1999). Focus group interviews: A new feminist method. *NWSA Journal*, 11, 44–71.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250–260.
- Mumby, D. (1997). Modernism, postmodernism, and communication studies: A rereading of an ongoing debate. *Communication Theory*, 7, 128.
- Nash, J. (2008) Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89, 1–15.
- Osmond, M. W., & Thorne, B. (1993). Feminist theories: The social construction of gender in families and society. In P. Boss, W. Doherty, R. LaRosa, W. Schumm, & S. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 591–622). New York, NY: Plenum.
- Oswald, R., Kuvalunka, K. Blume, L., & Berkowitz, D. (2009). Queering “the family.” In S. A. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 43–55). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16, 175–196.
- Reay, M. (2012). *Writing against othering*. Keynote speech at the 7th International Congress at Qualitative Inquiry, Urbana, IL.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory heterosexuality and the erasure of the lesbian existence. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 5, 631–660.
- Ringrose, J., Harvey, L. Gill, R., & Livingstone, S. (2013). Teen girls, sexual double standards and “sexting”: Gendered value in digital image exchange. *Feminist Theory*, 14, 305–323.
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2012). One interviewer versus several: Modernist and postmodernist perspectives in qualitative family interviewing. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 4, 96–104.
- Rosenwald, G. C. (1996). Making whole: Method and ethics in mainstream and narrative psychology. In R. Josselson (Ed.) *Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives* (pp. 245–274). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sharp, E. A. (2013, March 29a). *Accentuating normative & deficient social identities? Challenges of using focus groups with new brides & individual interviews with single women*. Human Development Methodological Brown Bag Seminar at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA.
- Sharp, E. A. (2013, November 30b). *Betty Crocker vs. Betty Friedan: Becoming a wife in West Texas*. Paper presented at the Women as Wives & Workers: Marking Fifty Years of *The Feminine Mystique* conference, University of London, London, UK.
- Sharp, E. A. (2014, November). *When bridal play becomes work: The tenuous balance between princess and bridezilla*. Paper presented as a part of the panel Contesting Gender and Sexuality Through Performance and Play, annual meeting of the American Studies Association, Los Angeles, CA.
- Sharp, E. A., & Blume, L. (in press). Feminist perspectives on families. In C. Shehan (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of family studies*. New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sharp, E. A., & Durham-DeCesaro, G. (in press). Modeling innovative methodological practices in a dance/family studies transdisciplinary project. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*.
- Sharp, E., & Ispa, J. (2006). Matters of the heart: Romantic relationships. In J. M. Ispa, K. Thornburg, & M. Fine (Eds.), *Keepin’ on: The everyday struggles of families in poverty*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Sharp, E., & Keyton, K. (in press). Caught in a bad romance? The negative effect of normative dating and marital ideologies on women’s bodies. *Sex Roles*.
- Sharp, E. A., Zvonkovic, A., Humble, A., & Radina, M. E. (2014). Cultivating the family studies terrain:

- A synthesis of qualitative conceptual articles. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 6, 139–168.
- Smith, D. E. (1993). The standard North American family: SNAF as an ideological code. *Journal of Family Issues*, 14, 50–65.
- Snyder, R. C. (2008). What is third-wave feminism? A new directions essay. *Signs*, 34, 175–196.
- Sollie, D. L., & Leslie, L. A. (1994). Feminist journeys: Final reflections. In D. L. Sollie & L. A. Leslie (Eds.), *Gender, families, and close relationships: Feminist research journeys* (pp. 263–283). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sprey, J. (2013). Extending the range of questioning in family studies through ideas from the exact sciences. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 5, 51–61.
- Stacey, J. (1988). Can there be a feminist ethnography? *Women Studies International Forum*, 11, 21–27.
- Thompson, L. (1992). Feminist methodology for family studies. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 54, 3–18.
- Tolman, D. L. (2006). In a different position: Conceptualizing female adolescent sexuality development within compulsory heterosexuality. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 112, 71–89.
- Tolman, D. (2012). Female adolescents, sexual empowerment and desire: A missing discourse of gender inequity. *Sex Roles*, 66, 746–757.
- Van Eeden-Moorefield, B., & Proulx, C. (2009). Doing feminist research on gay men in cyberspace. In S. A. Lloyd, A. L. Few, & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 220–233). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Walker, A. (2004). Methods, theory and the practice of feminist research: A response to Janet Chafetz. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25, 990–994.
- Walker, A. (2009). A feminist critique of family studies. In Lloyd, S., Few, A., & Allen, K. (Eds.), *Handbook of feminist family studies* (pp. 18–27). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weaver, S., & Ganong, L. (2004). The factor structure of the Romantic Beliefs Scale for African Americans and European Americans. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 21, 171–185.
- Weaver, S. E., & Coleman, M. (2005). A mothering but not a mother role: A grounded theory study of the nonresidential stepmother role. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22, 477–497.
- Weaver, S., & Coleman, M. (2010). Caught in the middle: Mothers in stepfamilies. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 1–22.
- Weis, L., & Fine, M. (2012). Critical bifocality and circuits of privilege: Expanding critical ethnographic theory and design. *Harvard Educational Review*, 82, 173–201.
- Wilkinson, S. (1999). Focus groups: A feminist method. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23, 221–244.