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Gender

What is it, and What Do They Want it to Be?

I teach an undergraduate philosophy class in feminism. I can talk to the students about the way that women have been treated throughout history, the way that ideals of womanhood create constraints that make it harder for women to realize their potential, and the way that women have been excluded from, or discriminated against in, certain domains. Little of this is considered controversial. But there is always confusion at the point that any of this is named as ‘gender’. Isn’t gender *identity*?—they ask each other, or their tutor. It seems that there is a generational divide over the concept of gender, with older people generally understanding gender as a system of external constraints, and younger people generally understanding gender as a subjective identity. But it is not the case that the people on both sides of this divide understand each other and their disagreement. Rather, many of my students seem to be unaware of the alternative understanding of gender. This chapter is for them, and anyone else whose primary concept of gender is about identity. The chapter aims to explain what gender was, and still is, to many people, and to provide the resources for a more productive conversation across the conceptual divide.

2.1 What gender has been

In 1405 in *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine de Pizan wrote of herself in a study surrounded by books, a woman with a passion for the pursuit of knowledge.¹ As she reads, she becomes frustrated, wondering ‘why on earth it was that so many men, both clerks and others, have said and continue to say and write such awful, damning things about women and their ways’ (Pizan [1405] 1999, pp. 5–6). She notes that ‘It is not just a handful of writers who do this... It is all manner of philosophers, poets and orators too numerous to mention, who all seem to speak with one voice and are unanimous in their view that female nature is wholly given up to vice’ (p. 6). But these men’s view of women doesn’t fit well with all the women Christine actually knows. Still, she reasons, given that so

¹ Rosalind Brown-Grant writes: ‘Christine’s catalogue of illustrious heroines appears within the framework of an allegorical dream-vision in which she herself is the chief protagonist’ (Pizan [1405] 1999, p. xvii).

many men have this view of women, and these are men with ‘such great intelligence and insight into all things’, surely it must be they, and not she, who are getting it right (p. 6). Christine begins to despise herself and all women (‘the whole of my sex’) as an aberration (p. 7).

In 1792 in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft drew an ingenious parallel between women and the rich, in order to argue that women’s inferiority was caused by her situation, not anything intrinsic to her nature. She saw women’s situation as containing a surplus of pleasure, and wrote rather scathingly: ‘Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch’ (Wollstonecraft [1792] 2017, p. 77). In this respect, women are like the rich; greatness does not emerge from excessive pleasure and idleness.² Wollstonecraft noted that members of the nobility are admired for traits like ‘gracefulness’, ‘majestic beauty’, and ‘deportment’, rather than more substantial traits like talent, virtue, justice, heroism, knowledge, or judgement (Wollstonecraft [1792] 2017, p. 83). She does not blame men alone for women’s situation, declaring that women have ‘chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labour to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality’ (p. 76). Ultimately, Wollstonecraft denied that woman was ‘created merely to be the solace of man’, and argued that changes to her situation—particularly, providing women with an education—would transform her (p. 74).

These are two important insights that would come to inform the explosion of feminist thinking from the 1960s onwards.³ First, women are up against serious amounts of propaganda that attempts to convince them of their own inferiority and their ‘natural’ role in relation to men. Second, the social context women find themselves in can itself *produce* a version of womanhood that looks to vindicate the male propaganda. But how women are at a time and in a context is not sufficient to reveal a woman’s ‘true nature’, for how she is may itself be *created* by that context.⁴ Early feminists pointed at differences in women’s opportunities and

² Wollstonecraft is best understood as talking about middle- and upper-class women, given that many women in that period were engaged in domestic labour; some took on additional work inside the home e.g. childcare, textile work, or farm work; and some worked outside the home e.g. as domestic servants, nannies, or laundry workers.

³ The start of the second wave of feminism in the United States is generally thought to be Betty Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), with the first specifically radical feminist books emerging in 1970—including Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex*, and Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*.

⁴ For the social version of this claim see (Mackinnon 1989, p. 122; Haslanger 1995, p. 103), for the developmental version of the claim see (Jordan-Young 2010, Chapter 10). Kate Phelan writes that if ideology creates reality, then ‘we stand before those who claim to suffer a moral wrong with no sense at all of whether they do, of whether they are the oppressed speaking a truth that ideology makes incredible or the deluded speaking nonsense’ (Phelan, 2022, p. 20). If a sexist ideology *causally constructs* women’s inferiority, then woman really is inferior, and we will not know until we have rejected her inferiority and tested the possibilities for her equality whether she *really was* equal all along and subject to ideology, or *really was* inferior all along and feminism was subject to delusion. Phelan

treatment relative to men, as potential explanations for the differences between men and women that were observed. This was the start of a long, and ongoing, debate about sex differences. Are men and women fundamentally the same, but *made* different by society and culture? Or are men and women fundamentally different, in ways that society and culture are merely able to do better or worse at accommodating? And—to the extent that women are made different—what is the relationship between the making of women as feminine, and the *treatment* of women as subordinate? The fact of being made to be a certain way might be a violation of autonomy; if the way women are made to be serves men's interests it might be a form of exploitation. But *that* women are made to be a certain way might also justify *treating* her in a particular way, and depending on the treatment that might be oppressive. Catharine MacKinnon, for example, saw pornography as propaganda, presenting a view of women as objects which in turn legitimated men's *treatment* of women as objects.⁵ The making, and what it justifies, are two distinct things.

These questions are at the heart of what gender is and what we should want it to be. Consider one of the upper-class women Wollstonecraft wrote about, preoccupied with her own adornment. Second-wave feminists used the terminology of 'sex' and 'gender' to mark the difference between what she *is* ('sex': she is female) and what she has been *made to be* ('gender': she is feminine).⁶ Making a sex/gender distinction allowed feminists to decouple femininity from woman herself, and to challenge and work to eliminate the making of women into feminine beings.⁷ And this paved the way for a number of important feminist projects, such as articulating the content of femininity, identifying the most harmful

argues that imagining her equality is an act of faith, not reason; and that this has implications for what we can demand from others in terms of acceptance.

⁵ She writes: 'Men treat women as whom they see women as being. Pornography constructs who that is' (MacKinnon 1989, p. 197).

⁶ As explained in the note on language at the start of the book, 'feminine' is helpful because it's an adjective, a description attached to a noun (she, the woman, is feminine). But some people prefer to use the noun 'woman' as a success term here, as in, those female people who are made feminine *are women*. If 'woman' names the class, and the class is characterized by subordination/oppression, then 'oppressed woman' (as in the Rubin quote in fn. 7) is redundant. We need to pay close attention to how each feminist is using these particular terms and how they fit in with her conception of what woman really is, and what she has been made to be.

⁷ For example, Gayle Rubin wrote: 'A woman is a woman. She only becomes a domestic, a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human dictaphone in certain relations. Torn from these relationships, she is no more the helpmate of man than gold in itself is money... What then are these relationships by which a female becomes an oppressed woman?... one begins to have a sense of a systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products... I call that part of social life the "sex/gender system", for lack of a more elegant term. As a preliminary definition, a "sex/gender system" is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied' (Rubin 1975, pp. 157–210). Rubin refines her understanding of this system throughout her essay, describing gender as 'a socially imposed division of the sexes' (p. 179), and saying that we should aim for 'the elimination of the social system which creates sexism and gender' (p. 204), a 'genderless (though not sexless) society' (p. 204).

aspects of femininity, identifying the mechanisms through which femininity is taught and reproduced, and opening up new ways of being for women—relating to her capacities, her aspirations, her skills, her behaviour, her sexuality, her dress, her body language, and more. ‘Gender’, here, refers to everything that woman is made to be, and which generally works in the interests of men by producing a class of support persons *for* men.⁸

Radical feminists in particular made substantial contributions to understanding these mechanisms through which femininity is taught, and their impacts on women’s lives. They wrote about the historical origins of ideas about male superiority (Lerner 1986; Eisler 1987), and the way they became entrenched through religion and philosophy (Lerner 1986; Daly 1973). They wrote about historical injustices against women as a caste (Dworkin 1974, pp. 91–150). They analysed popular literature to reveal its view of women (Millett [1970] 1977). They wrote about love (Firestone 1970, pp. 113–19; Atkinson 1974, pp. 41–5; Greer 1970, pp. 157–275); the family (Firestone 1970, pp. 65–94); sexual intercourse (Atkinson 1974, pp. 5–7 and 13–23; Koedt 1973, pp. 198–207; Dworkin 1987); prostitution (Pateman 1988, pp. 189–218); pornography (MacKinnon 1989, pp. 195–214); (MacKinnon 1987, pp. 127–213); (MacKinnon [2005] 2006, pp. 247–58); (Dworkin 1974, pp. 51–90); rape (Brownmiller 1976); abortion (Firestone 1968); (Atkinson 1974, pp. 1–3); religion (Daly 1968); marriage (Cronan 1973, pp. 213–21); (Pateman 1988, pp. 116–88); women’s domestic, sexual, and emotional servicing of men (Frye 1983, pp. 1–16); and more. Once the nature of these practices and institutions has been explained, it becomes less tenable to think that what women are like, and how women are treated, is just a natural expression of sex difference. If it were, why would it need so much institutionalization and enforcement?

I’ll refer to this understanding of gender as ‘gender as sex caste.’⁹ In the second part of the chapter, I’ll say more about the empirical evidence we have for this

⁸ This is narrower than taking ‘gender’ to refer to the social meaning of sex, whatever it is. Whatever real sex differences exist between men and women, they may come to have social meaning, and that is not necessarily social meaning that feminists have particular reason to be concerned about (I’m grateful to Kathleen Stock for discussion on this point). There would be reason for concern, however, if such social meaning would inevitably expand into something oppressive. Rubin, following Lévi-Strauss, suggests that a division of labour based on sex creates gender (Rubin 1975, p. 178). Cailin O’Connor suggests that some such divisions of labour are simply efficient solutions to coordination problems, given physiological sex differences, and provides evidence that some such divisions are chosen in virtually every society (O’Connor 2019, pp. 17–18 and 97).

⁹ For a discussion of the aptness of the term ‘caste’, and speculation as to why some resist it, see (Daly 1973, pp. 2–3). Readers may wonder about the relation between the ‘gender as sex caste’ of this chapter and the ‘gender as norms’ of the previous. These concepts are related, but have a different emphasis. Gender norms—specifically norms of femininity applied to females—are a central mechanism by which females are made feminine (some would say, made into women). Once females are made feminine, there is sex caste: not just a social group, but a socially subordinated group. The previous chapter explored ways of making the world better by challenging those mechanisms, while this chapter is more interested in explaining what those mechanisms (and perhaps others) bring about.

understanding of gender. In the third part of the essay, I'll explain how this motivated the feminist project of gender abolitionism, and the disagreement between some feminists over whether we should abolish gender while leaving sex in place, or attempt to abolish sex itself, thereby making 'gendering' impossible. In the fourth and final part of the chapter I'll explain the newer view of gender that some feminists have taken up, and assess whether it offers any improvement on the older understanding.

2.2 What gender still is (whether or not it is also other things)

Before I say more about the empirical evidence, let me be clear about exactly what I'm trying to establish here. One question we might be interested in is, *what accounts for femininity?* That is an explanatory question. Supposing that there is something that accounts for it, it wouldn't really matter what we called it; we could stop calling it 'gender' and start calling it something else. Another question we might be interested in is, when we use the word 'gender', what phenomenon are we picking out? It might be that at one point in time the term was picking out the same phenomenon that accounts for femininity, but that at another point in time it started picking out something else. The meanings of words can change over time. In this chapter I'm *not* interested in what the word 'gender' picks out in the world. What I'm interested in is what phenomenon accounts for sex-differentiated behaviour and treatment, particularly the behaviour and treatment that casts women as the support persons for men, and what oppression and injustice there is in the vicinity of sex.

There are two ways to argue that gender—or to be more precise, at least some of what we think of as gender¹⁰—is socially enforced. One is to argue that it is *not* a result of sex differences in the brain, or otherwise biological. If it's not biological, then it's not biological-via-social (nature via nurture); it can only be social. The other is to argue that there are differences in how the sexes are treated, that could be creating the sex differences we see. This does not establish that such differences are in fact socially enforced, but the *more* that differences track differential treatment, the less tenable it becomes to suppose that there's no causal connection between the two. (Conversely, if it can be established that there is no differential treatment, then that can be eliminated as the explanation of the differences we see). We can draw on evidence within a particular context at a time, such as modern-day Australia, and also on evidence that makes comparisons between cultures and historical periods. There are many books on these subjects, which I don't have a chance of covering here, so instead I'll just mention some highlights.

¹⁰ This caveat makes room for the possibility that *some* of what we currently think of as femininity and *some* of what we currently think of as masculinity is socially enforced, but not all of it.

In *Delusions of Gender*, Cordelia Fine takes both of the approaches just mentioned, systematically working through the research that declares gender to be biological and revealing its weaknesses, and surveying the evidence for differential social treatment (Fine 2010, esp. Parts 1 and 2). I'll focus on the latter. Included in her survey is data from interviews with the parents of young children, studies of birth announcements, a study of baby names, a study on the home environments of children, a study on the impact of body language on children's attitudes, interviews with children on parents' approval of gender non-conforming play, work from developmental psychologists on the way that sex can be used to create tribes; a report from parents who went to great lengths to provide their children with a gender-neutral upbringing; observations of gender norm policing in pre-schoolers; and studies on the representation of the sexes in popular children's picture books and in educational readers. The overwhelming impression from all of this is that sex stereotypes are virtually invisible to us, they start being enforced before a child is even born, they show up all through a child's developmental environment, they are reinforced by peers, and anyone who thinks they tried 'gender-neutral parenting' but it didn't work probably didn't *really* try, because it's hugely difficult to pull off, if not entirely impossible.

Parents interviewed about whether they wanted girls or boys and why revealed sex stereotypes, e.g. that boys would be good to teach sports, and girls would be good for emotional connections (Kane 2009, p. 373; in Fine 2010, p. 192). Pregnant women who knew the sex of their babies described the babies' movements differently to pregnant women who did not know the babies' sex; boys were 'vigorous' and 'strong' while girls were 'not violent', 'not excessively energetic', 'not terribly active' (Rothman 1988, p. 130; in Fine 2010, pp. 192–3). An analysis of birth announcements revealed more *pride* about boys, and *happiness* about girls (Gonzalez and Koestner 2005, p. 407; in Fine 2010, pp. 194–5). There were also slightly more birth announcements for boys than girls, and boys were more likely to be given names that started with the same letter as their father's (Jost, Pelham, and Carvalho 2002, p. 597; in Fine 2010, p. 196). A study looking at the toys of boy and girl children found that boys tended to have more vehicles and machines, while girls tended to have more dolls and housekeeping toys, and that was true even for babies aged 6–12 months (Nash and Krawczyk 2007; in Fine 2010, p. 198). Another set of studies found that mothers conversed more with their girl babies and toddlers (Clearfield and Nelson 2006; in Fine 2010, pp. 198–9), were more sensitive to changes in the facial expressions of what they thought were girl babies (Donovan, Taylor, and Leavitt 2007; in Fine 2010, pp. 198–9), and had different perceptions of babies' (same) crawling and risk-taking abilities (Mondschein, Adolph, and Tamis-LeMonda 2000; in Fine 2010, pp. 198–9). Mothers have also been found to talk about emotions in different

ways with boy and girl children (Dunn, Bretherton and Munn 1987; in Fine 2010, p. 199).

Another great source of evidence for differential treatment on the basis of sex is meta-analyses, which survey findings from a number of different research papers. One such meta-study—the first ‘quantitative review of studies of sex-differentiated socialization...to our knowledge’ (Lytton and Romney 1991, p. 268)—analysed 172 separate studies, with the goal of discovering ‘whether parents make systematic differences in their rearing of boys and girls.’¹¹ The authors hypothesized that parents’ differential treatment of boys and girls would increase with the children’s age; that greater effects would be found from observations and experiments than from interviews, because parents could be expected to minimize their own differential treatment in interview answers; and that earlier studies would show more significant effects, because a commitment to sex equality could be expected to produce less sex-differentiated parenting.

The authors of the meta-study assessed existing studies for parental socialization effects in a range of areas (Lytton and Romney 1991, p. 270).¹² Many areas showed only small, non-significant differences. But some significant differences did emerge. For example, the authors found that in North American studies there was a significant effect for the ‘encouragement of sex-typed activities and perceptions of sex-stereotyped characteristics,’ with fathers doing this more than mothers (Lytton and Romney 1991, p. 283). (They class the magnitude of the effect as ‘fairly modest’). In studies from other Western countries, a significant effect of parents’ encouraging achievement more in boys than girls was found, although the researchers suggest that this result is driven by a single anomalous study (pp. 283–4). There was a significant effect for parents of both sexes in other Western countries inflicting more physical punishment on boys than girls, although this finding was based on a small number of studies (p. 283).

The hypothesis that parental sex-differential treatment would increase with the child’s age was not supported, and the researchers suggest (albeit cautiously, because there were few studies on older children in the meta-study) that the opposite might be true, ‘that parents treat older children less differentially than younger children’ (Lytton and Romney 1991, p. 285). The hypothesis that studies

¹¹ Note that this is specifically about the role of parents, rather than the broader question of whether sex differences can plausibly be explained by differential social treatment, so a negative answer to these researchers’ question wouldn’t entail a negative answer to the socialization question. They say ‘Null results would stimulate the theoretical and empirical search for other possible influences that may account for behavioural differences between the sexes’ (Lytton and Romney 1991, p. 269).

¹² These areas were amount of interaction (including physical, verbal, and play); encouragement of achievement; care (including warmth, nurturance, responsiveness, and praise); material rewards; encouragement of dependency; restriction or low encouragement of independence; discipline (including physical punishment, non-physical strictness, and discouragement of aggression); encouragement of sex-typed activities and perceptions; encouragement of sex-typed activities in boys more than girls; and clear communication/reasoning.

based on observation and experiment would show greater effects was only weakly supported, with a non-significant effect (p. 286). Finally, the hypothesis that earlier studies would show more significant effects because of social trends toward sex equality was not supported (p. 286). The authors say ‘the effect sizes in different socialization areas over the years seem to fluctuate almost randomly’ (p. 287).

The finding on parents’ encouragement of sex-typed activity drew on twenty-one studies from between 1956 and 1986. (More recent studies show similar results).¹³ In one such study from 1985, researchers filmed play between 19–27-month-olds and their parents, in the family’s home. Types of play (e.g. rough-and-tumble) and types of toys (e.g. dolls, kitchen toys, trucks, hammers, books, and board games) were categorized as masculine, feminine, or neutral in accordance with previous studies’ classifications. Most children played with masculine toys if they were available; few children engaged with feminine toys. Nearly all parents brought neutral toys to the play sessions. Boys played with both neutral and masculine toys more than with feminine toys, and girls played more with neutral toys than either feminine or masculine toys. Parents did not give positive reinforcement in accordance with sex-typed play or toy choices, but children’s choices about how to play/what to play with were related to what the parents brought to the session. The children who played more with feminine toys were the children whose parents brought more feminine toys to the session (either in number, or in proportion). The authors conclude that ‘apparently, in the home, parents exert influence over their young children’s play primarily via their selection of available toys’ (Eisenberg et al. 1985, p. 1512). They say ‘parents picked toys that were consistent with the child’s sex (especially for boys). Parents of boys chose neutral and masculine toys more than feminine toys; parents of girls picked neutral toys more than masculine or feminine toys. Thus, merely by means of the process of selecting play items, parents “channelled” their children away from opposite-sex toys and, for boys, toward same-sex toys’ (although they acknowledge that parents’ choices could be partly due to their children’s preferences) (Eisenberg et al. 1985, p. 1511).

In another of the twenty-one studies surveyed, researchers looked specifically at fathers’ interactions with their male and female children. They observed father-child pairs in a ‘waiting room’ in which there were sex-typed toys (dolls, trucks) and also objects with the potential to produce disaster (ashtray, vase with flowers in it, jug of water). They found that fathers and daughters remained in closer proximity, fathers were more likely to give toys to girls than boys, were equally likely to give trucks to boys and girls, and were significantly less likely to give dolls to boys than girls. (They gave boys dolls less often than trucks, but gave girls both dolls and trucks the same amount). Boys were more likely to attempt to

¹³ See e.g. Erden and Altun (2014), looking at Turkish parents and children, and Kollmayer et al. (2018), looking at Austrian parents and children.

touch the disaster-producing objects, and in response fathers were more likely to use verbal and physical prohibitions with boy children (Snow et al. 1983, p. 230).

What are the implications of parents' encouragement of sex-typed activities? This includes both play activities and household chores. The authors follow earlier research in suggesting that 'boys' toys provide more opportunity for manipulation and inventiveness, and that girls' preferred play activities contribute to a more structured world that elicits less creativity and more compliance, and that 'masculine sex-typed play may also afford an opportunity for practicing visuo-spatial skills' (Lytton and Romney 1991, p. 287). They note a lack of research on the connection between parental pressures in these areas, and the later sex differences we see in choices about occupation and interests in adolescence and adulthood (p. 287).

Michael Bailey's work on feminine boys is also instructive. In *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, Bailey writes about Danny Ryan, who as a 1-year-old would dress in his mother's shoes. His father disapproved and would verbally prohibit the behaviour. His sister told him that her things were not for him to play with. His mother was tolerant, and considered it a phase. When Danny got older he was bullied, especially by other boys. There are a number of boys like Danny, who are feminine in their boyhoods. Psychiatrist Richard Green followed sixty-six feminine boys in a longitudinal study, starting from an average age of 7 years old. These boys—compared to a control group of typically masculine boys—cross-dressed (nearly 70% of the feminine boys did this regularly, and none of the control group did); played with dolls (more than 50% of the feminine boys did this, and less than 5% of the control group did); took female roles in games (nearly 60% of the feminine boys did this, and none of the control group did); related better to girl peers than boy peers (true for about 80% of the feminine boys, and less than 5% of the control group); wished to be girls (80% of the feminine boys occasionally stated this wish, compared to less than 10% of the control group); and were less interested in rough-and-tumble play and playing sports (true for nearly 80% of the feminine boys, but only 20% of the control group) (discussed in Bailey 2003, pp. 17–18).

75% of the cohort of feminine boys, who were on average 19 years old at the final interview, were same-sex attracted. Only one of the cohort of masculine boys used as the control group grew up to be same-sex attracted. Bailey thinks 'it is conceivable that every one of the feminine boys grew up to be attracted to men' (Bailey 2003, p. 19) (contact was lost over time with about a third of the feminine boys in Green's cohort). The experiences that feminine boys report, from disapproval through to physical bullying, from a range of people including parents, siblings, peers, teachers, doctors, and more give us insight into the 'other side' of gender socialization—not the socialization of females into femininity, but of males into masculinity, and the weight of social pressure, including both rewards

and punishments, brought to push people into the right boxes. A recent study looking at 829 young Australian males associated their higher suicide risk with non-conformity to norms of masculinity, finding that ‘greater conformity to heterosexual norms was associated with reduced odds of reporting suicidal ideation’ (King et al. 2020).¹⁴ If ‘masculine’ were just a way that boys were by nature, and ‘feminine’ a way females were by nature, it is hard to see why there would be such policing of non-conformity to norms (or why there would need to be norms at all). As Marilyn Frye put it: ‘The fact that there are such penalties threatened for deviations from these patterns strongly suggests that the patterns would not be there but for the threats’ (Frye 1983, p. 36).

Of course, these are just small peeks into the empirical evidence supporting the view that gender is socially enforced—that gender is sex caste. It’s not just parenting that may make a difference, but peers, schools, television, advertising, history, social attitudes, social institutions, and much more. To fully assess the weight of the evidence we would have to go through all of these, which couldn’t be done in a single book, let alone a single chapter. But we should, at least, be in a position to see that it is highly likely that differential socialization, broadly understood, is a strong candidate explanation of ‘gender’; that is, the correlation of femaleness and femininity, and maleness and masculinity, that we see all across the world today.¹⁵ And if it is, then it is indispensable to feminist theory and activism that we have the language to talk about it, and that we do indeed keep talking about it and working to reveal, critique, and ultimately dissolve it. As we will see in Section 2.4, though, there has been a shift in the conceptualization of gender that risks undermining this project.

2.3 What they want gender to be

One of the most influential and most-cited papers in feminist philosophy is Sally Haslanger’s ‘Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?’ (Haslanger 2000).¹⁶ Haslanger starts with the observation that among some academics, ‘not only is it unclear what gender is and how we should go about

¹⁴ The authors write: ‘Such results do not indicate that being heterosexual is protective, but rather, highlight: firstly, the broader buffering effect of conforming to heterosexual masculine norms; and secondly, the potential to avoid the penalties that arise if deviating from socially accepted norms’ (p. 6).

¹⁵ For a contemporary presentation of gender as an external process that makes (or tries to make) female people feminine, and male people masculine, see Manne (2017). Manne focuses in particular on the imposition of gender onto women, with sexism working to justify our belief in women’s inferiority and misogyny working to keep women in their place (especially through sanctions for non-compliance). In a footnote, Manne pays lip service to the idea of gender as identity, but she provides no indication of how a social system that treats people differently on the basis of sex could make exceptions on the basis of how some people subjectively identify.

¹⁶ As of October 2022, Google Scholar showed its ‘cited by’ number as 1010.

understanding it, but whether it is anything at all' (p. 32). She explains that she takes an analytical approach to answering the question of what gender is, which means we ask why we have the concept, what cognitive or practical tasks the concept helps us with, and whether the concept does the job or some other concept would do it better (p. 33). Answering these questions might result in revision; we replace inadequate concepts with other ones. Hence the title of her paper: not only what gender *is*, but what *we want it to be*.¹⁷

There is an assumed 'we' throughout Haslanger's paper: '...on an analytical approach, the questions "What is gender?" or "What is race?" require us to consider what work *we* want these concepts to do for *us*; why do *we* need them at all? The responsibility is *ours* to define them for *our* purposes' (p. 34, my emphasis). She continues, 'On this approach, the world by itself can't tell *us* what gender is, or what race is; it is up to *us* to decide what in the world, if anything, they are' (p. 34, my emphasis). These words—'we', 'our', 'us'—suggest a single heterodoxy, taking a critical approach to widespread assumptions about what gender is, and/or to what, and *whether*, we want it to be. Even if we grant, for the sake of argument, the idea that there was a single heterodoxy at Haslanger's time of writing, her approach has since been embraced by one camp of *multiple* heterodoxies about gender today, the camp who prefer to see gender as a subjective, internal identity (whether or not it is also other things).¹⁸

Haslanger herself identified her task as being to develop a concept of gender that would be an effective tool in fighting against injustice (p. 36). This requires a concept able to explain sex inequalities, including 'to identify how social forces, often under the guise of biological forces, work to perpetuate such inequalities'; able to track sex differences *and* similarities (which will allow us to identify 'interlocking oppressions'); able to track how gender is implicated in broader social phenomena, like religion or science; and able to take women's agency seriously (p. 36). Haslanger took gender to be social class, following in the tradition of materialist feminism (p. 37). It is a matter of social position: how one is viewed, treated, and how one's life is structured. She also acknowledges that sexual difference is the marker used to distinguish the two groups that are then sorted into social classes. Her by-now familiar account is that someone is a woman if and only if they are 'systematically subordinated along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.)' and are "'marked" as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction' (p. 39). The social classes men and women stand in a

¹⁷ This approach has come to be known as 'ameliorative analysis', a specific kind of conceptual engineering. For an excellent critique see Sankaran (2020).

¹⁸ Things are further complicated by the fact that Haslanger herself now seems to agree with the gender identity camp, even though the paper whose method this camp seem to be following is, on its own terms, in the gender as sex caste/class camp (more on this below).

hierarchy; women are subordinate (p. 42). This view is not identical to the gender as sex caste view, mainly because it is worded in a way that allows that sex itself may be constructed ('...presumed to be evidence of...'). But it is close enough to be treated together with it for our purposes. Both see gender as something external to the individual, *done to her*: the female (or, *the human we think of as female*) is made feminine. Because Haslanger uses the word 'woman' to name the social position, she is thereby a 'woman abolitionist'.

A number of more significant changes to the understanding of gender—and so both the intension and extension of 'woman', at least for those feminists who paired that term with their gender concept—would follow in later years. One of these was an attempted revision of Haslanger's account, offered by Katharine Jenkins in 2016. While Haslanger followed Catharine MacKinnon and other feminists of the second wave (1960s–1980s), Jenkins appears to have been influenced by third wave feminism. Claire Snyder-Hall wrote that third wave feminism is 'a form of inclusiveness' (Snyder 2008; quoted in Stock 2021, p. 244).¹⁹ Inclusiveness is a central preoccupation of Jenkins' throughout her work on the concept 'woman'. To her credit, Jenkins doesn't throw out gender as sex caste (unlike some activists who seek to supersede sex and sex caste with gender identity), but supplements it with gender as identity, revising an understanding of gender to be disjunctive: 'woman' picks out *both* gender as identity and gender as sex caste.²⁰

She writes that 'it will be my contention that feminism needs both senses of gender and that a truly inclusive ameliorative inquiry into the concept of *woman* is only possible when gender as class and gender as identity are given equal consideration' (Jenkins 2016, p. 407). She accepts Haslanger's understanding of gender as class, but not gender as identity.²¹ On Jenkins' account (which borrows from Haslanger's account of *racial* identity), gender as identity refers to 'the way that gendered subject positions are taken up by individuals' (p. 408). But what does this mean? She explains it in psychological and metaphorical terms, as

¹⁹ Snyder-Hall was then publishing as R. Claire Snyder.

²⁰ As this makes clear, Jenkins follows Haslanger in using 'woman' as a term for the class rather than the people in it. It's not clear whether this make her a woman-abolitionist, like it did Haslanger. If gender identity has independent value, then it shouldn't. We'd be working to abolish *part* of the class 'woman' but not the whole class. The goal would be no-more-women-by-way-of-the-sex-caste-disjunct, leaving only women-by-way-of-the-gender-identity-disjunct. Eliminating sex caste would leave only female people and transwomen (who would just be called 'women'). If gender identity *doesn't* have independent value, then it might. Perhaps it is coherent for some male people to identify with women, and so to *be* women by way of the gender identity disjunct. But once we have eliminated sex caste, there will be no women left to identify *with*: only female people. Insofar as having a 'woman' gender identity is parasitic on there being women, gender identity will disappear when women disappear. On Stock's account of gender identity, which I think is the most promising currently on offer, it is parasitic in this way (see discussion in Stock 2021, Chapter 4). So then it would make sense for Jenkins to be a woman-abolitionist.

²¹ Haslanger had earlier defined gender identity as 'a broad psychological orientation to the world', which is not particularly clear or precise (Haslanger 2000, p. 228; quoted in Jenkins 2016, p. 403).

someone having an ‘internal map’ of the type that guides people classed as women (or men) through particular social or material realities (p. 410).²² There are ways that women are expected to behave, and these expectations cause people to form ‘maps’ that tell them how to navigate social space; for example, to use women’s bathrooms rather than men’s bathrooms. But while these ‘maps’ may be followed and thus result in public expressions of gender identity, they need not. Jenkins writes: ‘some trans women make their gender identity public through the use of feminine pronouns, names, or forms of presentation, while others choose to keep their gender identification private’ (p. 399). On this account, gender as identity refers to something internal, subjective, and private, which *can* be signalled in various more public ways if the person with the gender identity chooses to do so. But they need not. All transwomen have ‘woman’ gender identities, but these can have different content for different transwomen, because different ‘maps’ can pick up on different ‘aspects of existence’ (p. 413).

Jenkins’ revised concept was operationalized in the publicity materials for a women’s march she was involved in organizing. They advertised it in the following way: ‘The march is open to all self-defining women. If you do not define as a woman but experience discrimination because you are perceived as female, you are also welcome to attend’ (Jenkins 2016, p. 420). The march was a protest against violence against women. The publicity materials put gender as identity first: ‘the march is open to all *self-defining women*’. It doesn’t include gender as sex caste as the second disjunct, but something closer to Haslanger’s gender as class: ‘discrimination because you are *perceived as female*’. Both disjuncts are trans-inclusive, but the first is inclusive on the basis of gender identity alone, while the second is inclusive on the basis of passing as female. Because it is gender as identity that is at the fore in this statement, female people become an afterthought *in the women’s march*, in the interests of being ‘inclusive’.

What justification does Jenkins offer for the addition (and, as I see it, prioritization) of gender identity in the concept ‘woman’? She stipulates early on that ‘trans gender identities are entirely valid’, and that it will be ‘a foundational premise of my argument’... ‘that trans women are women and trans men are men’ (Jenkins 2016, p. 396). She claims that ‘trans people...are a severely disadvantaged and marginalized group’, and links ‘Failure to respect the gender identifications of trans people’ to ‘transphobic oppression and even violence’, and states that on these grounds, feminist analysis of gender concepts must include trans people in the categories they identify with (p. 396). There are three distinct claims being made here: we should include transwomen as women because they *are* in fact women (trans identities are valid); and because they are marginalized; and

²² In a later paper, she presents a slightly different account, in terms of taking particular norms to be relevant. For example, a transwoman would take the norms that are imposed upon women to be relevant, and may choose to act in accordance with them (Jenkins 2018).

because if we don't, that might cause oppression and violence. But gender identities can be 'valid' (whatever that means) without making the person who has them a member of a different sex caste; we have been offered no reason to accept Jenkins' understanding of the terms 'men' and 'women' such that it is coherent for gender identities to determine who they apply to; the fact of being marginalized alone does not justify the classification practice; and there is no evidence that feminists continuing to theorize gender as caste will cause oppression or violence against trans people.

Even if we were concerned to ensure that 'women who are members of other oppressed social groups' were not excluded or marginalized from the concept 'woman' (Jenkins 2016, p. 394), that doesn't provide any justification for expanding to include people who are not women at all. If gender is sex caste, then men's gender identities are irrelevant to the concept of women, to feminism, and to protesting violence against women on a women's march. If someone doesn't already accept the importance of 'inclusion', or does but doesn't think it takes precedence in any conflict of values, then they have no reason to accept Jenkins' revision of the concept. Concepts track phenomena in the world, they're not decided on the basis of who wants to be picked out by them. They are tools that help us to do particular jobs (see also discussion in Stock 2021, Chapter 5). Even if that job is normative rather than descriptive, it will be about finding the concept of 'woman' that is likely to do the best job of eliminating sex/gender injustice. That's very different to the concept being inclusive for inclusiveness' sake.

Even those who value inclusion highly would surely agree that the imperative to be inclusive stops somewhere. If it doesn't, that undercuts the possibility of having social definitions at all. To put this in terms of another example, if there is no limit to inclusivity about blackness, then anyone at all might be black, and if our inclusive concept forces us to count enough people as black who would not have counted on a narrower concept, we may no longer be able to use the concept to talk about race, or to do anti-racism activism. Social definitions are useful to social groups, especially those pursuing a politics based on their shared situation (see also discussion in Barker 1997). Jenkins' reconciliation of gender as class and gender as identity in a disjunctive concept of 'woman' is *ad hoc*. There appears to be no theoretical justification for it; only a political motivation.

Jenkins' disjunctive revision of the concept 'woman' is a radical revision relative to gender as sex caste, because it no longer means that women as a social group are subordinated. Jenkins says 'a woman who is not subordinated at all and therefore does not count as a woman in the class sense may still count as a woman in the gender identity sense. This ensures that if there are any *prima facie* women, trans or cis, who are not subordinated at all and who are not classed as women for this reason, their gender identities will still be respected by the account' (Jenkins 2016, p. 416, fn. 48). She seems to count it as a positive that she has produced an

account that can respect gender identities, rather than a negative that she has produced an account that cedes the very feature feminists were trying to explain—women’s subordination to men. If women need not be subordinated, then it cannot be an essential feature of woman that she is subordinated, and so we ought not be woman-abolitionists. (Or for those who talk instead in the language of femininity, if the social group contains some people who are female-made-feminine, and other people who are male with a particular identity, why does *that group* need a politics?)

One way to attempt to justify Jenkins’ revision is to argue that including males with ‘woman’ gender identities as women²³ (or as part of the constituency of feminism, or in women’s spaces) will not undermine any important political, social, legal, or economic interests women have. If inclusion isn’t bad for women, and is good for some men, then we have a reason to include and no reason to exclude.²⁴ Whether some individual males with ‘woman’ gender identities are in fact ‘the same’ as women in the relevant respects, so that including them would be no worse than including any woman, and excluding them would be as bad as excluding any woman, depends on a slew of empirical questions about which there isn’t much, if any, evidence yet.²⁵

For example, some people are gender non-conforming, despite the fact that femininity and masculinity are socially enforced. What explains why some people are conforming, and others are non-conforming? If a girl can grow up to be a butch lesbian, despite all her socialization toward femininity and heterosexuality, why can’t a man grow up to be relevantly woman-like, despite all his? One possible explanation, which does not depend on making an exception for people with gender identities, is simply that some people are what Cristina Bicchieri calls ‘trendsetters’; relatively immune to social sanctioning, and so the kind of people who will often pose an early challenge to particular social norms (Bicchieri 2017). This is an intriguing idea in that it has broad explanatory power. It would predict that there are some people in *all* domains of life who are prepared to go against social norms, and many people who are not. Gender is no exception, and the fact that there are gender non-conforming people does not alone establish that there must be ‘gender identities,’ internal feelings that are so strong that people are willing to take on substantial social costs to live in accordance with them (which is the parallel of a narrative that is often given for being gay) (Lawford-Smith 2022, pp. 110–11).

²³ As Jenkins rightly points out, a male person can identify as a woman but not with femininity, so it would be misleading to use ‘feminine’ in place of ‘woman’ to signal the type of gender identity here (Jenkins 2016, p. 409).

²⁴ I think this route is a non-starter, for the reasons given elsewhere in this volume: inclusion *is* bad for women. See Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

²⁵ See also discussion in Lawford-Smith (2022, Chapter 5).

Still, for this explanation to justify treating males with ‘woman’ gender identities *as women* for the purposes of feminist theory and activism, or for all purposes, it would have to be the case that: i) all trans people are trendsetters; and ii) being a trans trendsetter indicates that gender socialization didn’t have any influence on you, rather than that it did, but you were nonetheless willing to reject some component of it. Again, these are empirical matters. But recent work suggests that at least some people who adopt trans identities are *following* trends, rather than setting them (Marchiano 2017; Littman 2018; Schrier 2020), and given the pervasiveness of gender socialization, simply being willing to declare a ‘woman’ gender identity doesn’t seem to be a secure guarantee that a person has not internalized or been shaped by male socialization at all. That a male should identify as a man is only one small part of how males are made to be masculine. The visibility of transwomen in the trans movement compared to transmen, the sexual entitlement demonstrated by some transwomen,²⁶ and the confidence of the trans movement in asserting its political demands, are all anecdotal evidence that masculine socialization is still very much present.

Regardless of what the empirical evidence eventually shows, however, including transwomen as women may still be misguided. Even if it turns out to be the case that there are some males with ‘woman’ gender identities who are ‘the same’ as women in all relevant respects, so long as they are still *visibly male*, there is reason to include them in a blanket exclusion of males from the subject of feminist theory and activism, and from women-only spaces. Women cannot know whether *this particular male* is ‘the same’ as women in this way, or what the details of his precise socialization are. Blanket exclusions overgeneralize; they exclude many males who would be unlikely to undermine particular feminist interests, not only transwomen. If we want to include the relevantly socialized transwomen *who look like women*, then we’re not in the domain of gender identities any more, we’re in the domain of appearance/expression. So that would not be an argument for adding gender as identity to gender as sex caste, it would be an argument for extending the conception of gender as sex caste from female people to female and female-appearing people. But that is not what those interested in gender as identity are trying to do. It is certainly not what Jenkins is trying to do.

Gender as sex caste is the primary conception of gender that should interest feminists. It captures the target phenomena that feminists are interested to explain and dissolve, namely, women’s subordination to men. It picks out a very large

²⁶ I’m thinking particularly of the claim made by some transwomen that it is ‘transphobic’ or involves being a ‘genital fetishist’ to have a sexual orientation, e.g. for lesbians to be unwilling to sleep with transwomen with penises (which is the great majority of transwomen—88% according to James et al. 2016). This is despite the fact that lesbians are actually *more* willing to date trans than straight men or women are (Blair and Hoskin 2018). For examples of those making the ‘transphobia’ claim in relation to sexual orientation see discussion in (Stock 2021, pp. 89–98, esp. 96–7).

marginalized constituency, where that constituency is clear and unified.²⁷ Subordination may look different for different women in different times and places, but it is always on the basis of, or ultimately explained by, sex. Even when it misfires and impacts some people who are not female, the ultimate explanation of their treatment is (assumptions about) sex. That doesn't mean there isn't closely related subordination and marginalization. In fact gender as sex caste helps to explain other types of marginalization, like the marginalization of femininity. Because women are subordinated, if there's an association between being a woman and being feminine, femininity will come to have negative associations, and these associations can explain why femininity is penalized in men. That doesn't make feminine men women, and it doesn't mean feminism has to be about men's femininity.

2.4 Is reconciliation possible?

Haslanger's use of 'we' created a false impression of consensus about what feminists (and more specifically feminist philosophers) want when it comes to gender and gender terms. Feminism is in fact marked by disagreement on this point. Some think gender is sex caste, some think gender is identity, and some think it is both at once. I am a gender-critical feminist: *we* think gender is sex caste. Jenkins, and many other feminist philosophers besides, are not gender-critical: *they* think gender is identity (or, gender is *also* identity).²⁸ We should be careful not to confuse what *they* want it to be with what it really is. We should also be careful not to confuse what *they* want it to be with what it should be. For the gender-critical feminist, gender should be abolished, not merely transformed.

Many feminist philosophers today seem to feel the pull of both understandings of gender. The pull of understanding gender as identity seems to come less from the inherent plausibility of the concept of gender identity,²⁹ and more from

²⁷ Opponents are likely to point out that the constituency for gender as sex caste is not in fact 'clear and unified' because it assumes that everyone in the caste is female, but intersex people complicate unambiguous 'femaleness'. Intersex people do complicate this; some people who appear physiologically female externally nonetheless have a Y chromosome (and appear male internally in at least some respects). But there are hard cases for every definition and concept, and most importantly, the complexities some intersex people pose for understandings of femaleness do not establish anything at all for non-intersex people of the opposite sex who have a 'woman' gender identity.

²⁸ I have focused on the detail of Haslanger and Jenkins here, but as Elizabeth Barnes notes: 'Contemporary gender metaphysics can be (roughly) divided into two main camps: social position accounts and identity-based accounts' (Barnes 2020, p. 706). Gender as class/caste is a social position account; gender as identity is, obviously, an identity-based account. So the detailed disagreement I've presented here is representative of a more general division between feminist philosophers over what gender is.

²⁹ See critical discussion in Gheaus (forthcoming).

worrying about ‘exclusion.’³⁰ Some proponents of gender as identity seem less concerned to displace gender as sex caste (or at least gender as class) with gender as identity, and more concerned that we simply include everyone with a gender identity *as if* the gender as caste/class analysis applied to them. For example, Kate Manne presents misogyny as the policing of women in accordance with norms of femininity. But she acknowledges that ‘Perhaps the biggest omission...in this book’ is ‘a discussion of transmisogyny’ (Manne 2017, pp. 24–5), and talks about the vulnerability of transwomen. Norms of femininity are not applied to most transwomen, so it is hard to see why Manne would consider this an omission. If there’s an intersectional issue connecting misogyny to transphobia, it would appear to be about *transmen*, not *transwomen*, for those are the people who are both subject to norms of femininity and also contending with biases against trans people. Manne does note that ‘trans men are also highly vulnerable,’ but this comes *after* the discussion of transwomen.³¹ Intellectually, this is baffling. Politically, it is not.

Or to give another example, in a recent piece for *Boston Review*, Robin Dembroff and Dee Payton seem to accept gender as caste/class when they say ‘gender inequality is rooted in historical and continuing manifestations of sexism and misogyny, from policies that economically exploit women and undermine their reproductive autonomy to social practices like sexual harassment and rape culture.’ So far so good, except that they go on to say ‘Young girls inherit the same sexism and misogyny that their mothers faced as young girls, *regardless of whether they are transgender or cisgender*’ (Dembroff and Payton 2020, my emphasis). Suddenly young people are facing sexism depending on how they identify, rather than how they appear or in fact are. The authors partially justify this claim by assuming a wide understanding of misogyny, following Julia Serano, as ‘rooted in the deeply entrenched social assumption that “femaleness and femininity are

³⁰ It’s worth distinguishing exclusion from the *male concept* of woman, which feminists should not be concerned with, from exclusion from the *feminists’ concept of woman*, which they should. But it is less obvious that the latter is a genuine worry; tropes about ‘exclusionary white feminism’ are often overstated for political effect.

³¹ (Manne 2017, pp. 24–5). In a footnote, she says ‘whether or not the transphobia to which trans men are subject counts as transmisogyny will depend on whose definition of transmisogyny one is working with’ (p. 30). She seems herself to assume that it obviously counts for transwomen and only maybe counts for trans men. It seems much more consistent with her analysis to say that it obviously counts for trans men (at least for all those who don’t pass as male) and only maybe counts for transwomen (e.g. it counts only for transwomen who pass as female). Julia Serano, alternatively, thinks misogyny is the devaluing of femininity, so following Serano *can* generate an understanding of transmisogyny that applies to transwomen. But if Manne followed Serano, her analysis would fail at crucial points. Manne wants to be able to explain misogyny as the enforcement branch of patriarchy, and that means women’s non-conformity with femininity is sanctioned in order to bring women into line. Her account predicts that a masculine woman (e.g. a butch lesbian) will be sanctioned for failing to be feminine. Serano’s understanding of misogyny would predict that such a woman is not subject to policing, because she is not feminine, and so her traits are not devalued. Thus Manne cannot simply buy into Serano’s understanding of misogyny and transmisogyny, at least not without losing a lot of what was useful about her own account.

inferior”’ (Dembroff and Payton 2020, quoting Serano in Carstensen 2017). But they offer no evidence to substantiate the claim that transgirls are systematically subject to the same norms and treatment as girls are. Some transgirls may be subject to this treatment, namely those who are considered by sexists to be girls, but other transgirls will not be subject to this treatment, including all those who are considered by sexists to be boys. It’s not one’s private gender identity as a ‘girl’ or ‘woman’ that causes sexist treatment, it’s one’s expression of that identity (whether through femininity or in public claims to be a girl).

There is also a sleight of hand in Serano’s presentation of misogyny, putting femaleness together with femininity. If we assume that misogyny is exclusively about femininity (in either sex) rather than femaleness, then we can talk about it in a way that accommodates most transwomen’s self-conceptions. Everyone who is detectably feminine is subject to misogyny; we get to retain one of the crucial parts of the gender as caste/class approach, as something that is imposed externally upon people, while also vindicating transwomen’s self-understandings. For people who place a high value on inclusion, this will be appealing. The problem, of course, is that not all women are feminine. Some women are visibly female, but identify as men, or as nonbinary, or as ‘genderfree’ (having a sex, but not having a gender identity). Some women are visibly female, but masculine in terms of presentation, whether in hairstyles, grooming, clothing, posture, gait, or body language.

On the gender as sex caste approach, how one is socialized depends on what sex one is. All visibly female people will be rewarded for femininity and sanctioned for masculinity. Sometimes they will also be sanctioned for femaleness regardless of femininity or masculinity, as with pregnancy and breastfeeding discrimination in the workplace, or put at risk because of femaleness regardless of femininity and masculinity, as with sexual violence. Serano’s account of misogyny seems to give the wrong results: effeminate gay men are subject to misogyny; butch lesbians are not. Serano’s addition of ‘femaleness’ was presumably meant to sidestep this problem. But what is the justification for having both? One can be female without being feminine, and feminine without being female. We cannot simply assume that the relevant social mistreatment targets one or the other or both, and especially not just because that assumption is convenient to transwomen.

Returning to an understanding of misogyny as being about femaleness can still account for the devaluing of femininity which Serano points to, because the sex caste system not only makes female people feminine, but also positions them as inferior. Because being feminine is a way for a boy to fail to be masculine, it is something that *he* will be sanctioned for. But this latter claim is not universal: *males* are sanctioned for femininity, because they are ‘supposed to be’ masculine, but *females* are rewarded for femininity, because they are ‘supposed to be’

feminine. If we lose sight of this, we lose explanatory and predictive power when it comes to how sex-based oppression works. And that is not just bad for women, it's bad for trans people too. If we have the wrong explanation of the mistreatment of transwomen, we are likely to come up with the wrong solutions to it. Rolling together the targeting of females for failing to be feminine (or, indeed, for being female/feminine—that's the double bind) with the targeting of males for failing to be masculine in the one concept 'misogyny' is not conceptually helpful.

In summary, gender *was* and *is* sex class (whether or not it is also other things). Gender identity activists want gender to be identity. (Some, like Jenkins, want it to be class *and* identity). But gender as identity means losses that are not justified or counterbalanced by the value of inclusiveness, which is the only thing that is gained by the revision. Feminism doesn't have to be kind or inclusive. Gender as sex class/caste is descriptively accurate, and normatively helpful. It answers a central concern of feminism, namely women's subordination, and it creates a unified constituency for feminist theory and activism. It picks up a large enough constituency of people who have serious enough problems that it has no reason to apologize for not extending its scope to more people, or more issues. Standing for women is enough. Unless empirical evidence can be furnished to substantiate the claim that any male who declares a 'woman' gender identity is like a woman in the relevant respects, and until such a time as women themselves can tell which males really have these gender identities and which don't (which is likely to be never), males with 'woman' gender identities have no place in feminism, and no place in women-only spaces or in accessing women-only services or provisions. The reconciliation of gender as sex caste and gender as identity fails. Gender *is* sex caste and gender as sex caste *should be* abolished.

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