From sex roles to gender structure

Barbara J Risman University of Illinois at Chicago, USA

Georgiann Davis Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, USA

abstract This article has two goals, an intellectual history of gender as a concept, and to outline a framework we suggest for moving forward theory and research on gender conceptualized as a structure of social stratification. Our first goal is to trace the conceptual development of the study of sex and gender throughout the twentieth century to now. We do this from a feminist sociological standpoint, framing the question with particular concern for power and inequality. We use a modernist perspective, showing how theory and research built in a cumulative fashion, with empirical studies sometimes supporting and sometimes challenging current theories, often leading to new ones. We then offer our theoretical contribution, framing gender as a social structure as a means to integrate the wide variety of empirical research findings on causal explanations for and consequences of gender. Our framework includes attention to: the differences and similarities between women and men as individuals, the stability of and changing expectations we hold for each sex during social interaction, and the mechanisms by which gender is embedded into the logic of social institutions and organizations. At each level of analysis, we are interested in the organization of social life and the cultural logics that accompany such patterns.

keywords gender ◆ gender structure ◆ sex ◆ stratification

The study of sex and gender is now such a vibrant field of inquiry in the social sciences that it is easy to forget how recently research and theory on the topic was rare. At the start of the twentieth century, psychoanalysis was the state of the art, and the Electra and Oedipal complexes presumed to account for sex differences. Much has changed since then. In this article, we offer an intellectual history of scientific research and theory about gender, with particular although not exclusive attention to traditions developed in the North American context. We start with a brief overview of the evolution of biological theories that help explain sex differences. We then discuss how psychological theories built upon research findings to sharpen the conceptualization of gender as a personality trait throughout the twentieth century. We focus most attention on dueling theories, and subsequent integrative ones within sociology. Here too, we argue that theoretical arguments framed research that often refuted the theory itself, thus spawning new research traditions. We discuss how sociology of gender has followed a normative scientific model as it has developed over time, with theories tested by research, and reformulated based on evidence. Research findings have led to new theoretical formulations. In the conclusion, we argue for the efficacy of using Risman's (1998, 2004) conceptualization of *gender as a social stratification structure* with consequences for individual selves, interactional expectations of others, and embedded in organizations because it helps to organize and advance research, analysis, and social justice projects.

The birth and evolution of biological theories for sex difference

Endocrinologists, medical doctors with expertise on the production, maintenance, and regulation of hormones, long believed masculinity and femininity to be the result of sex hormones (Lillie, 1939). William Blair Bell, a British gynecologist, first made this

explicit in 1916 when he wrote 'the normal psychology of every woman is dependent on the state of her internal secretions, and … unless driven by force of circumstances – economic and social – she will have no inherent wish to leave her normal sphere of action' (1916: 129). Gendered behaviors began to be justified by sex hormones, rather than religion (Bem, 1993). Further research discovered that the existence of sex hormones did not distinguish male from female, but rather both sexes showed evidence of estrogen and testosterone (Evans, 1939; Frank, 1929; Laqueur et al., 1927; Parkes, 1938; Siebke, 1931; Zondek, 1934a, 1934b). It became clear that estrogen and testosterone not only affected reproduction and sex but also other aspects of the body including, but not limited to, the liver, bones, and heart (David et al., 1934). The possibility that sex hormones directly caused sex differences began to be suspect.

In 1965, Young et al. suggested that sex hormones during gestation create brain differentiation, and thus were indirect causal agents for sex differences (Young et al., 1965; see also Phoenix et al., 1959). Young et al. wrote, 'The realization that the nature of the latent behavior brought to expression by gonadal hormones depends largely on the character of the soma or substrate on which the hormones act. The substrate was assumed to be neural' (1965: 179). This was quite a provocative claim when it was made, as it classified the brain as involved in reproductive functions. The brain began to be seen as responsible for sexual differentiation, as well as sexual orientation and gendered behaviors (Phoenix et al., 1959).

Although arguments about brain sex first originated in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Phoenix et al., 1959; Young et al., 1965), there has recently been a resurgence of such research (Arnold and Gorski, 1984; Brizendine, 2006; Cahill, 2003; Collaer and Hines, 1995; Cooke et al., 1998; Holterhus et al., 2009; Lippa, 2005). Cooke et al.'s (1998) review article concluded that 'there is ample evidence of sexual dimorphism in the human brain, as sex differences in behavior would require, but there has not yet been any definitive proof that steroids acting early in development directly masculinize the human brain' (quoted in Diamond, 2009: 625). Hrabovszky and Hutson (2002) and Collaer and Hines (1995) claim prenatal androgen exposure is strongly correlated with postnatal sex-typical behavior. Juntti et al. (2008) have more recently argued that, at least for mice, sex hormones are capable of controlling gender-specific behavior. In other words, contemporary brain sex theories continue to be centered on how sex hormones in utero shape brain function. Brain sex theories of the twenty-first century maintain that

brains are the intervening link between sex hormones and gendered behavior. Some sociological research (Rossi, 1983; Udry, 2000) presumes that biological sex differences interact with cultural experiences to exacerbate or diminish sex differences. There has been little concern with inequality between women and men in this research tradition. Rather, the goal has been to isolate biological contributions to sex difference.

Research on sex differentiated brains is not without its critics (Epstein, 1996; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Jordan-Young, 2010; Oudshoorn, 1994). For example, Jordan-Young (2010) conducted a synthetic analysis of over 300 brain sex studies and interviews with scientists who conducted them. She concludes that brain organization research does not pass the basic litmus tests for scientific research: they are so methodologically flawed as to produce invalid results, because they rely on inconsistent conceptualizations of 'sex,' gender, and hormones. When conceptualizations of one study are applied to another, findings are often not usually replicated. The major deficiency of brain theories of sex differences is that there are few consistent results across studies, and they also depend on inconsistent definitions and measurement of concepts, and so lack validity. This research continues albeit mostly in the form of animal research or quasi-experimental data about human beings. Nevertheless, research continues but scientists only rarely integrate social and biological theories (see an important exception in Udry, 2000, and the critical responses that followed: Kennelly et al., 2001; Miller and Costello, 2001; Risman, 2001).

The birth and evolution of social science attention to sex and gender

Few social scientists were concerned with issues of sex and gender before the middle of the twentieth century. The field has literally exploded in the last several decades. Today, the Sex and Gender section of the American Sociological Association is one of the largest sections of the organization, and in 2013, both ASA President and Vice-President are self-identified feminist scholars who write about gender, Cecilia Ridgeway and Jennifer Glass. In this section, we present a brief social history of the fast and furious development of social scientific thought on sex and gender.

We argue that during the heyday of functionalist sociology, family sociologists (e.g. Parsons and Bales, 1955; Zelditch, 1955) were those primarily interested in sex and gender and wrote about women as the 'heart' of families with male 'heads'. Psychologists (Bandura and Waters, 1963; Kohlberg, 1966) used

Figure 1. Unidimensional measure of gender

The psychological measurement of sex roles

Serious attempts to study sex and gender followed the movement of women into science, and the influence of the second wave of feminism on intellectual questions. Psychologists (e.g. Bem, 1981; Spence et al., 1975a) began to measure sex role attitudes using scales that had been embedded in personality and employment tests (Terman and Miles, 1936). These measures implicitly assumed that masculinity and femininity were opposite ends of one dimension,

socialization theory to explain how girls and boys became socially appropriate men and women, husbands and wives. Little research or theoretical writing focused on sex or gender, and almost none on inequality between women and men (Ferree and Hall, 1996). This changed as women entered the academy (England et al., 2007). We choose to highlight in this article the research traditions that we identify as having been the intellectual foremothers of where we are today.

and thus if a subject was 'high' on femininity, she was necessarily, by measurement design, 'low' on masculinity. See Figure 1.

Research began to suggest, however, that measurement itself was creating meanings that didn't accurately reflect individual personality traits (Edwards and Ashworth, 1977; Locksley and Colten, 1979; Pedhazur and Tetenbaum, 1979). The research evidence led Bem (1981, 1993) to offer a new conceptualization of gender that has become the gold standard in the social sciences, now so taken-for-granted that she is no longer even cited with the innovation. Bem suggested that masculinity and femininity were actually two different personality dimensions. For example, an individual could be high on masculinity and also high on femininity or low on both masculinity and femininity. Traditional women would be high on femininity and low on masculinity, and traditional men would be high on masculinity and low on femininity. An aggressive and agentic woman might be low on femininity and high on masculinity, or high on both masculinity and femininity. See Figure 2.

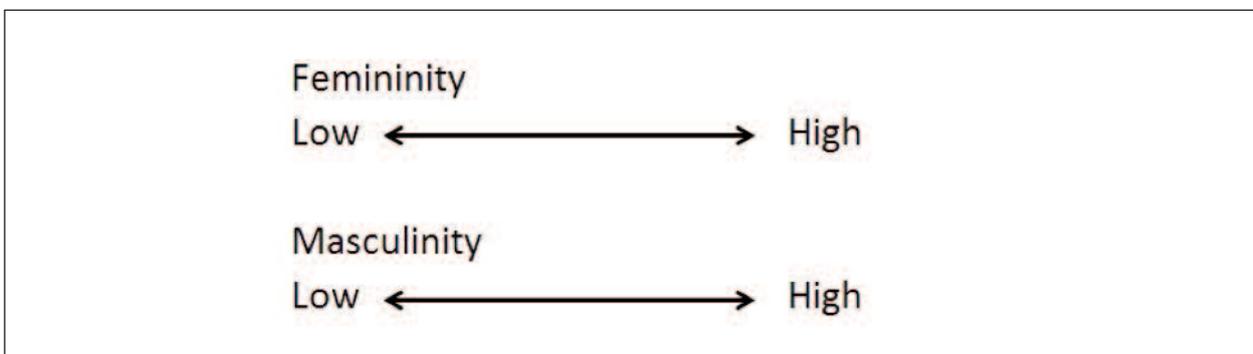A decade of debate ensued on the best use of and

Figure 2. Masculinity and femininity as independent measures

Figure 3. Gender as personality trait, sex role inventory

measurement for this new conceptualization (Bem, 1974, 1981; Spence et al., 1975a, 1975b). Particular controversy focused on whether the label 'androgyny' should be defined by similarity on both measures or only strong identification with both masculinity and femininity, with the consensus emerging that only those high on both should be labeled androgynous (Bem, 1974, 1993; Taylor and Hall, 1982; White, 1979). See Figure 3.

The most recent writing in this tradition (Choi and Fuqua, 2003; Choi et al., 2008; Hoffman and Borders, 2001) suggests that psychologists no longer find the language of masculinity and femininity useful, but rather suggest that the personality concepts in the scale labeled 'masculine' actually measure efficacy/agency/leadership and the personality concepts in the scale labeled 'feminine' actually measure nurturance and empathy (see Gill et al., 1987, for the first formulation of this rhetorical critique). While we agree this linguistic change is the best trajectory for the future, we continue to use the language of masculinity and femininity here when discussing research about individuals because that is the rhetoric in the literatures we are reviewing.

Sociological evolution from sex roles to gender

When sociologists turned serious attention to sex and gender, they too focused on the differences between individual women and men rooted in childhood sex role socialization (Stockard and Johnson, 1980; Weitzman, 1979). They studied how babies assigned to the male category are encouraged to engage in masculine behaviors, offered boy-appropriate toys, rewarded for playing with them, and punished for acting in girlish ways, while babies assigned to the female category are encouraged to engage in feminine behaviors while being limited to girl-appropriate toys such as dolls and easy bake ovens (Weitzman et al., 1972). Sex role socialization

theory maintains that children are accordingly rewarded for displaying the gender-appropriate behaviors that they are encouraged to perform. The result of endemic socialization is what creates the illusion that gender is naturally occurring. This differed from earlier versions of sex role socialization and functionalist family sociology with its critical edge, presuming that female socialization disadvantaged girls (Lever, 1974).

Lopata and Thorne (1978) published a path breaking now iconic article in which they argued that sociologists were ignoring the functionalist presumptions and empirically problematic evidence when they used 'sex role' explanations for gender differences. They suggested that the very rhetorical use of the language of 'role' requires conceptualizing a functional complementarity void of questions of power and privilege. Lopata and Thorne suggested that social scientists would rarely, if ever, use the language of 'race roles' to explain the differential opportunities and constraints of majority and minority members of a western society. More empirically substantive problems existed as well. The language of 'sex role' presumed a stability of behavior expected of women (or men) across their social contexts, their life-cycles, and whatever culture or subculture they might enter (see Connell, 1987; Ferree, 1990; Lorber, 1994; Risman, 1998, 2004). Lorber's exhaustive review of gender research in the twentieth century showed that a role conceptualization was inaccurate and also that limiting a sociological understanding of gender to personality was inadequate. Chafetz (1998) argued that in a North American context, where students were so individualist that they were ready to assume all behavior freely chosen, we should ban the world 'socialization' from the classroom until other avenues of explanations for gender inequality had been explored. While that may have been an extreme position, the die was cast, as sociologists began to explore gender beyond
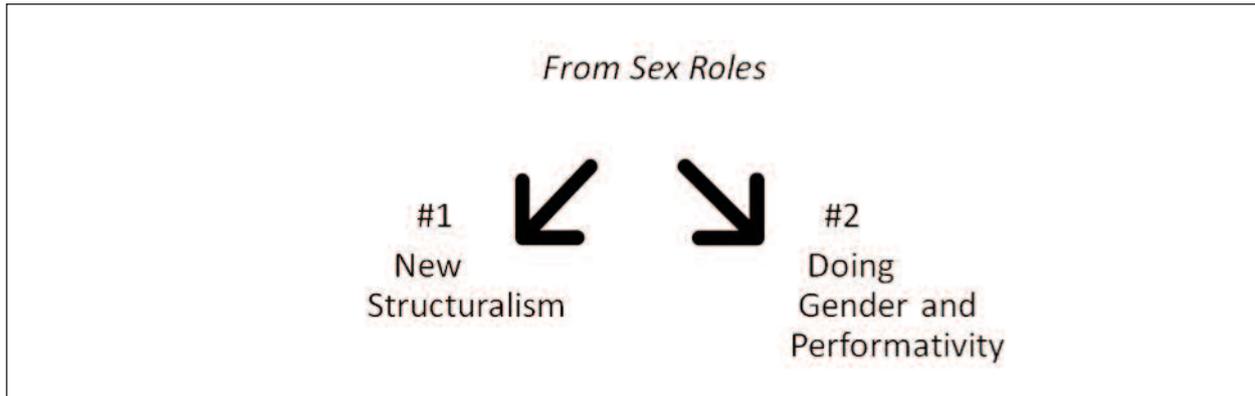
Figure 4. Sociological alternatives

its definition as a personality trait. Kimmel (2008) summarizes a widely held contemporary position when he writes that 'sex role theory overemphasizes the developmental decisiveness of early childhood as the moment that gender socialization happens' (2008: 106). With such critiques of sex role theory, relying on socialization alone became controversial. Social scientists began studying gender inequality beyond socialized selves.

Moving beyond gender as an individual trait

As sociologists began to specialize in gender, the focus on how individuals internalized gender was problematized. There were two very different theoretical alternatives developed within a sociological framework to move the analysis of gender beyond a focus on individuals: those who worked in an interactionist tradition, a framework which came to be known as 'doing gender', and those who were based in more inequality literatures, the new 'structuralists'. In 1987, West and Zimmerman published their classic article arguing that gender is something we are held morally accountable to *perform*, something we do, not something we are. They founded the 'doing gender' paradigm. In 1977, Kanter's book *Men and Women of the Corporation* was perhaps the first application of the new structuralism (Bielby and Baron, 1986) to gender. Kanter's case study provided evidence that organizational structures in the form of unequal opportunity, power, and tokenism were at the core of gender inequality, not the differential behavioral patterns or personalities of women and men as individuals. These two research trajectories developed independently, but eventually came to be tested against one another, with complex and contradictory results. We trace the development of each tradition below. See Figure 4.

The new structuralist framework for gender

Kanter's (1977) research showed that workers who held positions with less formal power and fewer opportunities for mobility are less motivated and ambitious at work, less perceived to be leadership material, and more controlling autocratic bosses when they do enter the ranks of management. Because women and men of color were then overwhelmingly in positions with limited power and opportunity, they were seen as inferior leaders. When women and men of color were in leadership positions, they were also usually tokens, and the imbalanced sex and race ratios in their workplaces meant they faced far greater scrutiny, leading to role encapsulation and extra negative consequences of scrutiny. Kanter suggested that those women and men of color who made it to management embodied the leadership style of bosses with little power and opportunity for advancement themselves. The evidence suggested that white majority men who were in positions with little upward mobility and low organizational power also fulfilled the stereotype of the micro-managing female boss. Kanter's case study suggested that apparent sex differences in leadership style represented women's disadvantaged organizational roles, not their personalities.

The new structuralism soon came to research on explanations for women's roles in families. In a study based on life histories of baby boom American women, Gerson's *Hard Choices* (1985) found similarly that women's socialization and adolescent preferences did not predict their strategy for balancing work and family commitments. The best explanations for whether women 'chose' domestic or work-focused lives were marital stability and success in the labor force. Once again, the structural conditions of everyday life proved more important than feminine selves. In a massive meta-analysis of the sex differences research on both public and private spheres,

Epstein concluded that most of the differences between men and women were the result of their social roles and societal expectations, and were really *Deceptive Distinctions* (1988). Epstein argued, as did Kanter before her, that if men and women were given the same opportunities and constraints, the differences between them would vanish. The structuralist argument is similar to the argument in Tilly's theory presented in *Durable Inequality* (1999), where the dynamics between superordinate and subordinate groups are based on power and numerical domination, and not the cultural characteristics of either group. Here, gender is defined more as deception than reality. The core of a structuralist argument is gender-neutral; the same structural conditions create behavior, regardless of whether men or women are filling the social roles.

In a review of research that explicitly tested structuralist theories about workplaces by studying men in female-dominated occupations, Zimmer (1988) found that there was more to gender inequality in organizations than the structural placement of women as a subordinate group. The gender-neutral component of structuralism simply did not have empirical support. When men were the minority group, they were not marginalized into less powerful positions with less mobility. Instead, men benefit from occupying a token status within female-dominated occupations and ride glass escalators to the top. Williams (1992), for example, found that token white men in female nursing quickly became administrators and were more likely to socialize with doctors then other nurses. More recent research suggests that this glass escalator may only be available to white men, while men of color in female-dominated positions get left at the ground floor (Wingfield, 2009). Thus, racial privilege is embedded as a status characteristic of employees just as is gender. Neither gender- nor race-neutral theories of structuralism receive empirical support (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Risman, 2004).

Research about women and men's roles in families has also been used to test the importance of structural factors to explain gendered behavior. Nearly all the quantitative research suggests that women continue to do more family labor then their husbands, even when they work outside the home as many hours per week and earn equivalent salaries (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bittman et al., 2003). Tichenor's (2005) qualitative research shows strong empirical evidence that high earning wives, even those who earn significantly more than their husbands, are compelled by the cultural logic of intensive mothering to shoulder more of the family work. While Sullivan (2006) and Kan et al. (2011) show convincingly that trends have changed over time,

with men doing more family labor each decade cross-nationally, no one disputes that gender still trumps the structural material variables of time and economic dependency when it comes to housework and care work (Risman, 2011).

Doing gender framework
During the same era, but on a parallel track, the importance of symbolic interactionism for the understanding of gender became clear. In 1987, West and Zimmerman published their classic article in which they argued that gender is something we are held morally accountable to perform, something we do more then something we are. West and Zimmerman (1987) distinguished sex, sex category, and gender from one another in a way that illustrated the importance of the performative link between bodies and gender. An individual's sex is determined through societally defined agreed upon biological distinctions, usually at birth. Sex category, on the other hand, is used as a proxy for sex but depends upon performing gender appropriately to be accepted as claimed. Sex category does not always coincide with one's biological sex, as it is established through 'required identificatory displays' (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 127). These required displays include, but are not limited to, sex-specific clothing, hairstyles, and appropriate behavior. That is, to claim a sex category, women and men have to do gender. By conceptualizing gender as something that we do, West and Zimmerman (1987) were able to draw attention to the ways in which behaviors are enforced, constrained, and policed during social interaction.

West and Zimmerman's (1987) doing gender perspective is similar in its deconstructionist tendency to Judith Butler's theory of gender (Butler, 1990, 2004). West and Zimmerman's (1987) doing gender perspective and Butler's (1990, 2004) conceptualization of gender performativity share the focus on creation of gender by the activity of the actor, they differ on the ontological reality of the possibility of a self, outside the discursive realm (see Green, 2007). Social scientists study the flexibility of the self, the constructivist self, but presume some version of a self comes to exist, if only temporarily. On the other hand, Butler (1990, 2004), a philosopher and queer theorist, deconstructs the possibility of even a temporary self outside of discourse. In this queer theory tradition, the self is more imaginary figment than constructed, even temporary, self-identity. Queer theorists such as Butler (1990, 2004) have added to the discussion of 'doing gender' in critical ways, helping to sharpen the focus on performativity.

The 'doing gender' framework has become perhaps the most common perspective in contemporary

sociological research. A 2011 citation search indicates the article has been cited 4195 times since its publication. Qualitative research has provided a great deal of evidence that women and men do gender, but do so dramatically differently across time, space, ethnicity, and social institution. Households have become 'gender factories' (Berk, 1985) where women do more of the labor because by doing so, they are doing gender itself. Connell (1995) shows clearly that there are numerous 'masculinities' that exist simultaneously, although one is most rewarded and performed by the most privileged men. Similarly, researchers have described a myriad of ways that girls and women do femininity, from 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1998; Lareau, 2003) to 'femme' lesbians appropriating traditional emphasized symbols of womanhood such as heels and hose (Levitt et al., 2003). Lorber's (1994) meta-review of gender research through the twentieth century provides a dazzling overview of the quantity of research showing how gender is performed and then institutionalized into society.

Acker (1990, 1992) transformed gender theorizing when she expanded a 'doing gender' argument to organizations. Instead of gender-neutral organizational structure, she found gender deeply embedded in organizational structure. While Kanter (1977) conceptualized gender inequality as the result of women occupying lower positions in an organization, Acker (1990, 1992) argued the very definition of jobs and organizational hierarchies are gendered, constructed to advantage men or others who have no caretaking responsibilities. Acker writes, 'The term "gendered institutions" means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life' (1992: 567). Acker contended there is little place for those (usually women) who hold positions as caretakers outside the workplace to fulfill elite ranks of modern corporations, as it is the abstract worker who 'is actually a man, and it is the man's body … that pervades work and organizational processes' (Acker, 1990: 152). While creating opportunity for women to enter the workplace may increase their overall numbers within an organization, Acker argues it will not confront the underlying sexism that blocks women's overall mobility within organizations. Others have furthered this argument by showing that elite and privileged women may indeed enter masculine spaces by outsourcing their domestic labor to other, less privileged women (Macdonald, 2011; Nakano Glenn, 2010).

While consensus exists that 'doing gender' is ubiquitous, recently there has been criticism of what counts as evidence of 'doing gender' has become. Deutsch (2007) suggested that when researchers find

unexpected behaviors, rather than question whether gender is being 'undone', they simply claim to discover different femininities and masculinities. Risman (2009) builds upon this critique by suggesting that the ubiquitous usage of 'doing gender' creates conceptual confusion as we study a world that is indeed changing. Both Deutsch (2007) and Risman (2009) suggest that researchers must know what they are looking for when studying gendered behavior and be willing and ready to admit it when they do not find it. If researchers take the search for 'undoing gender' as seriously as the search for 'doing it', then they will notice when changes actually happen, when boys and girls, men and women, do not follow traditional scripts, whatever these are in their own cultural setting (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009).

Intersectional and integrative theories

During the 1980s and 1990s, feminists of color were also theorizing about gender as something beyond a personality characteristic, with a focus on how masculinity, femininity, and gender relations varied across ethnic communities, and national boundaries. For example, Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), Deborah King (1988), and Audre Lorde (1984), conceptualized gender as *an* axis of oppression intersecting with *other* axes of oppression including race, sexuality, nationality, ability, religion, etc. Feminists of color were critical of gender theory that positioned white western women as the 'universal female subject' and race theories for situating men of color as the 'universal racial subject'. Nakano Glenn (1999) describes the situation as one where 'Women of color were left out of both narratives, rendered invisible both as racial and gendered subjects' (Nakano-Glenn, 1999: 3). Mohanty (2003) was similarly critical, suggesting that feminist scholars were too often focused on the white western world instead of integrating a global perspective into their theories, and when such was attempted it was done in an additive rather than comparative fashion.

Although scholars labeled the experience, and ultimately the theory, of being oppressed in multiple ways and in multiple dimensions differently (e.g. Crenshaw, 1989; Harris, 1990; Collins, 1990; Mohanty, 2003; Nakano Glenn, 1999), they shared a goal of highlighting how social location within gender, race, sexuality, class, nationality, and age must be understood interactively as opposed to studied as distinct domains of life. In *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) builds on earlier intersectionality work (e.g. Crenshaw, 1989; Lorde, 1984) by arguing for the 'matrix of domination' as a concept that seeks to understand

'how … intersecting oppressions are actually organized' to oppress marginalized individuals (Collins, 2000: 16). Hill Collins moves beyond *acknowledging* various axes of oppression by challenging us to understand *how* individuals situated in various locations throughout the matrix of domination are differently oppressed. Building on this tradition and the earlier work of Judith Butler (1990) discussed earlier, Ingraham (1994) claims that feminist sociology is 'losing its conceptual and political edge' to the humanities for ignoring sexuality in studies of gender (1994: 203). Instead of centering sexuality as an institutional source of oppression, Ingraham contends feminist sociologists reside in a 'heterosexual imaginary' where gender is studied separately from sexuality in ways that '[conceal] the operation of heterosexuality in structuring gender [by closing off] any critical analysis of heterosexuality as an organizing institution' (1994: 203–4).

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the conceptualization of gender as a stratification system that exists outside of individual characteristics (e.g. Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994; Martin, 2004; Risman, 1998, 2004) and varies along other axes of inequality (e.g. Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Harris, 1990; Ingraham, 1994; Mohanty, 2003; Nakano Glenn, 1992, 1999) became the new consensus. Most social scientists embraced the definition of gender as not merely a personality trait, but as a social system that restricts and encourages patterned behavior. We briefly discuss three of these leading multidimensional gender frameworks (e.g. Lorber, 1994; Martin, 2004; Risman, 2004) below before focusing on the one we have been developing over the last decade.

In 1994, Lorber argued that gender is a social institution. She located its existence in both micro- and macro-level politics that effect domestic work, family life, and the workplace. Lorber concluded that gender, as a historically established institution, has created and perpetuated differences between men and women and exists to justify inequality. Although Lorber (2005) presents gender as a social institution, she believes it can be challenged and deconstructed. She challenges us to eliminate gender inequality, but also acknowledges that 'society has to be structured for equality' (Lorber, 1994: 294). Gender equality can only occur, Lorber (1994, 2005) maintains, when all individuals are guaranteed equal access to valued resources and society is de-gendered.

Building on Lorber's (1994) conceptualization of gender as a social institution, Martin (2004) presents criteria that characterize institutions to show that gender meets each one. Martin maintains that institutions include, involve, and/or are capable of: (1)

collectivities of people; (2) existence across time and space; (3) reoccurring social practices; (4) constraining and facilitating behavior; (5) expectations, rules/norms, and procedures; (6) exist because of active embodied agents; (7) are meaningful and embedded throughout participants' identities; (8) include a legitimating ideology; (9) are infiltrated with conflict; (10) repeatedly change; (11) are controlled by power; and (12) are inseparable from individuals. Martin concludes that gender meets each of these criteria, and thus suggests that gender should be studied like other social institutions, such as the family and religion.

Risman (1998, 2004) builds on both of these theories, as she offers a broader and more theoretically diverse framework by conceptualizing gender as a social structure that has consequences at the individual, interactional, and institutional levels of analysis. Below we argue that this theoretical framework holds promise for the future. In the rest of this article, we outline our argument in some detail.

Gender as a social structure

Just as every society has a political and economic structure, so, too, does every society have a gender structure (Risman, 1998, 2004). While the language of structure is useful, it is not ideal because no definition of the term 'structure' is widely shared. Still, all structural theories share the presumption that social structures exist outside individual desires or motives and that social structures at least partially explain human action (Smelser, 1988). Beyond that, consensus dissipates. We use Giddens' (1984) structuration theory to help conceptualize gender as a structure that creates stratification, with an emphasis on the recursive relationship between structure and individuals. Like Giddens, we embrace the transformative power of human action. Social structures not only act on people; people act on social structures. Indeed, social structures are created not by mysterious forces, but by human action. We are therefore interested in why actors choose their acts, not only their verbal justifications, but also the part of life so routine and so taken-for-granted that actors often cannot articulate, nor do they even consider, why they act.

In order to present how we use structuration theory to conceptualize gender as a structure, it is useful to compare structuralist theories and voluntarist ones to Giddens' structuration theory (Bryant and Jary, 2003). Structuralist theories generally assume that structures and cultures determine, shape, or heavily constrain human action. We previously discussed both Kanter's (1977) and Epstein's (1988) theories for gender as examples of such structuralist theories. Choices in these models are illusory,
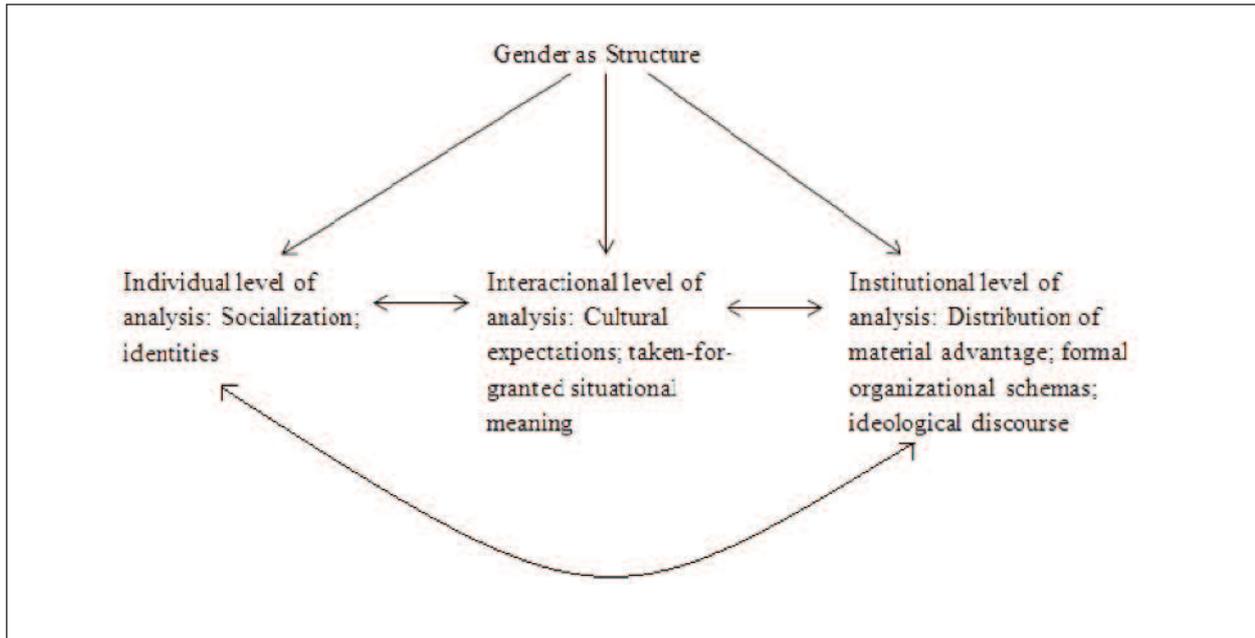
Figure 5. Gender as structure
See Risman (1998: 29).

marginal, or trivial. Actors are victims of circumstances. On the other hand, in voluntaristic theories, for example, rational choice theory, structures are the easily constructed products of totally free agents (Coleman, 1994). Actors make real choices and determine their life outcomes, and the collective social structure. In many ways, Giddens' structuration theory combines structural and voluntaristic frameworks (Bryant and Jary, 2003) and we incorporate this dialectical paradigm into our argument. Structure is the medium and the outcome of conduct which recursively organizes it. Actors are knowledgeable and competent agents who reflexively monitor actions. The taken-for-granted and often unacknowledged conditions of action do shape behavior, but do so as human beings reflexively monitor the intended and unintended consequences of their action, sometimes reifying the structure, and sometimes changing it. It is this definition of 'structure' that is most useful for conceptualizing gender as a social structure.

This conceptualization of structure embeds cultural concepts within it as the non-reflexive habituated rules, patterns, and beliefs which organize much of human life. The taken-for-granted or cognitive images that belong to the situational context (not only or necessarily to the actor's personality) are the cultural aspect of the gender structure, the interactional expectations that each of us meet in every social encounter. Connell (1987) applied Giddens' (1984) concern with social structure as both constrained and created by action in her treatise on

gender and power (see particularly chapter 5). In her analysis, structure constrains action, yet 'since human action involves free invention … and is reflexive, practice can be turned against what constrains it; so structure can deliberately be the object of practice' (Connell, 1987: 95). Action may turn against structure but can never escape it. We must pay attention both to how structure shapes individual choice and social interaction and how human agency creates, sustains, and modifies current structure. Action itself may change the immediate or future context.

A theory of gender as a social structure integrates this notion of reflexive causality and cultural meanings with attention to multiple levels of analysis. Gender is deeply embedded as a basis for stratification not just in our personalities, our cultural rules, or institutions, but in all these, and in complicated ways. The gender structure differentiates opportunities and constraints based on sex category and thus has consequences on three dimensions: (1) at the individual level, for the development of gendered selves; (2) during interaction as men and women face different cultural expectations even when they fill identical structural positions; and (3) in institutional domains where both cultural logics and explicit regulations regarding resource distribution and material goods are gender specific. See Figure 5.

When we are concerned with the means by which individuals come to have a preference to do gender, we should focus on how identities are constructed through early childhood development, explicit

socialization, modeling, and adult experiences, paying close attention to the internalization of social mores. To the extent that women and men choose to do gender-typical behavior across their own social roles and over the life-cycle, we must focus on such individual explanations. Indeed, much attention has already been given to gender socialization and the individualist presumptions for gender. The earliest and perhaps most commonly referred to explanations in popular culture depend on sex role training, teaching boys and girls their culturally appropriate roles. Bem (1993) writes elegantly about the enculturation that creates cultural natives, embedding the logic of essential gender differences and andocentrist beliefs as internalized aspects of young children's selves. She suggests that gender schemas depend both on gender relations in contemporary society and the socialization practices of parents themselves. As discussed above, such individualist research and theory has been important since the beginning of social scientific attention to gender as 'sex roles'. In this integrative framework, we suggest that continued attention is necessary to the construction of the self, both the means by which socialization leads to internalized predispositions, and how once selves are adopted, people use identity work to maintain behaviors that bolster their sense of selves (Schwalbe et al., 2000). It is clearly the case that women and men internalize norms and become gendered cultural natives. The important lesson from the accumulation of research over the twentieth century is not that culture doesn't matter for individual selves, but that socialization and identity work alone do not explain all of gender stratification.

Social psychology also offers us a glimpse of pos-sibilities for understanding how inequality is reconstituted in daily interaction. Gender organizes the interactional expectations that every human being meets often in every moment of life. Ridgeway and her colleagues (Ridgeway, 1991, 1997, 2001, 2011; Ridgeway and Correll, 2004) show convincingly that the status expectations attached to gender and race categories are cross-situational. These expectations can be thought of as one of the engines that recreate inequality even in novel situations where there is no other reason to expect male or white privilege to emerge. In a sexist and racist society, women and all persons of color are expected to have less to contribute to task performances than are white men, unless they have some externally validated source of prestige. Women are expected to be more empathetic and nurturing, men to be more efficacious and agentic. Status expectations create a cognitive bias toward privileging men with agency and women with nurturance (Ridgeway, 2011). Cognitive bias of this sort helps to explain the reproduction of gender inequality in everyday life.

Gender structures social life not only by creating gendered selves and cultural expectations that shape interactions, but also by organizing social institutions and organizations. As Acker (1990) and Martin (2004) have shown, economic organizations embed gender meanings in the definition of jobs and positions. Any organization that presumes valued workers are available 50 weeks a year, at least 40 hours a week, for decades on end presumes that such workers have no practical or moral responsibility for taking care of anyone but themselves. The industrial and postindustrial economic structure presumes workers have wives, or do not need them. In many

	Dimensions of the Gender Structure		
	Individual Level	Interactional Cultural Expectations	Institutional Domain
Social Processes[a]	Socialization Internalization Identity work Construction of selves	Status expectations Cognitive bias Othering Trading power for patronage Altercasting	Organizational practices Legal regulations Distribution of resources Ideology

a. These are examples of social processes that may help explain the gender structure on each dimension. They are meant to be illustrative and not a complete list of all possible social processes or causal mechanisms.

Figure 6. Dimensions of gender structure, by illustrative social processes
See Risman (2004: 437).

societies, the legal system also presumes women and men have distinct rights and responsibilities. For example, some western governments allow for different retirement ages for women and men, thus building gender into legislative bureaucracy. It is clear, however, that much has begun to change in western democracies, as laws move toward gender-neutrality. Even when the actual formal rules and regulations begin to change, however, whether by government, courts, religion, higher education, or organizational rules, the cultural logic often remains, hiding patriarchy in gender-neutral formal law (Williams, 2001). Within the institutional domain, the distributions of both actual resources which privilege men and ideological androcentrism often outlive formal legislative male privilege. See Figure 6.

The multidimensionality of gender structure theory has already begun to provide a useful framework for empirical research (Armstrong et al., 2006; Banerjee, 2010; Davis, 2011; Davis and Risman, 2009; Legerski and Cornwall, 2010). Within gender structure theory, research can explore the dialectical relationships between the individual, interactional, and institutional levels. When does an individual choice of gendered options reflect internalized femininity or masculinity, and when do the expectational pressures of others prevail? How does the behavior chosen by individuals impact the expectations of others, and eventually institutions themselves? When are gendered choices the only ones even imagined? And do institutional changes affect individual imaginations of the possible? Can we study when we are doing gender and recreating inequality without intent? And what happens to interactional dynamics and male-dominated institutions when actors reflexively rebel? Can we explore when people refuse to do gender whether they 'undo' it or simply do gender differently forging alternative masculinities and femininities that are then internalized as identities? And when does changing social policy effectively change the expectations people hold of others, or of themselves? Future research should follow the causal relationships, as dominoes, to see when, and in what contexts, change begets change, and when it does not. These are some of the possibilities fostered by using gender as a social structure to design research.

Conclusion

In summary, gender inequality is produced, maintained, and reproduced at each level of social analysis (individual, interactional, and institutional). At the individual level, the development of gendered selves emerges through the internalization of either a male or female identity. There is no reason to deny

the influence of bodies, by shape or size, on how selves develop. The debates about the influence of biology on possible predisposition of personality solidly fall within such analyses (Miller and Costello, 2001; Risman, 2001; Udry, 2000). The enculturation creates feminine women and masculine men, but not entirely, nor consistently, nor always. The interactional dimension of the gender structure involves the sex categorization that triggers stereotypes about women and men. These involve cultural logics that shape what we expect from each other, and ourselves. The institutional dimension of the gender structure perpetuates gender inequality through a variety of organizational processes, explicitly sexist or newly gender-neutral, but with cultural logics still embedded within them.

Theoretical understandings of gender have changed dramatically since the birth of serious attention in the last century. First, research was limited primarily to the biological sciences (Evans, 1939; Frank, 1929; Laqueur et al., 1927; Parkes, 1938; Phoenix et al., 1959; Siebke, 1931; Young et al., 1965; Zondek, 1934a, 1934b). While the biological sciences continue to contribute to the vibrant collection of studies on gender (Arnold and Gorski, 1984; Brizendine, 2006; Cahill, 2003; Collaer and Hines, 1995; Cooke et al., 1998; Holterhus et al., 2009; Lippa, 2005), we have also seen the explosive growth and development of social scientific research and theory. The cumulative research traditions started with a focus primarily on the individual level of analysis of gendered selves, and then expanded to include concerns with the structure of organizations and the interactional processes that create inequality. We have offered a synopsis of our contribution to the contemporary theory, conceptualizing gender as a social structure (Risman, 1998, 2004) integrating complex causal arguments across individual, interactional, and institutional levels. We have focused primarily on the development of gender studies within the US and we look forward to incorporating more information about how sex and gender has evolved in other parts of the world, and with more attention to the state and political economy.

There have been dramatic changes in understandings of sex and gender over time. And while we offer a theory that may be useful for today, we acknowledge that today's theoretical frameworks about gender will continue to develop as they are used in research, tested, supported, or refuted. The most important finding from this meta-review of previous work is that the social scientific understanding about gender continues to be cumulative, building on empirical research which verifies or challenges whatever cutting edge is today. We hope our essay contributes to further revisions and greater

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knowledge in an attempt to use scientific inquiry to help create a more just world.

Acknowledgments

Annotated further reading

Collins PH (1990) *Black Feminist Thought*. New York: Routledge.
In this key work, Patricia Hill Collins offers a comprehensive understanding of the way in which various axes of inequality (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality) intersect with one another to form a matrix of domination that is perpetuated by different domains of power.

Davis G (2011) DSD is a perfectly fine term: Reasserting medical authority through a shift in intersex terminology. In: McGann PJ and Hutson DJ (eds) *Sociology of Diagnosis*. Bingley, UK: Emerald, pp. 155–82.
In this piece, Georgiann Davis documents how medical professionals reclaimed jurisdiction over intersexuality by renaming intersex traits as disorders of sex development (DSD). Prior to the DSD diagnostic nomenclature, intersex activists were successfully framing intersexuality as a social rather than medical problem.

Jordan-Young RM (2010) *Brainstorm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Differences* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
A soon to be classic book that, through a synthetic analysis, documents how brain organization research is methodologically flawed because of its reliance on inconsistent conceptualizations and inadequate measurement.

Lorber J (1994) *Paradoxes of Gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

A now classic text that analyzes gender as a social institution that permeates all aspects of human life. Lorber identifies gender inside and outside of our homes through a variety of social structures operating though micro- and macro-level politics. She shows how gender effects domestic work, family life, and the workplace. Lorber argues that the historically established institution of gender has created not only differences between men and women but also serious inequality. The key paradox of gender is that it must be made visible in order for it to be dismantled.

Ridgeway CL (2011) *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Building on her earlier work that maintains gender is a primary frame in the organization of social relations, Cecilia Ridgeway theorizes in this book that status expectations create a cognitive bias toward expecting men to be effective and agentic, and women to be nurturant. She draws on experimental social psychological and sociological evidence to support her theoretical claims.

Risman BJ (2004) Gender as a social structure: Theory wrestling with activism. *Gender and Society* 18(4): 429–51.
In this piece, Barbara Risman introduced her theory of gender as a social structure, with implications beyond the family. She argued that gender should be conceptualized and studied as a social structure with consequences at the individual, interactional, and institutional levels. Each dimension helps frame the processes by which gender inequality is produced, maintained, and recreated. The argument from this article has been integrated and advanced in the current publication.

West C and Zimmerman DH (1987) Doing gender. *Gender and Society* 1(2): 125–51.
This influential piece argues gender is a performance that we are all held morally accountable during social interaction to accomplish. To support this claim, West and Zimmerman distinguish between sex, sex category, and gender; they argue that we use gender to claim a sex category, which may or may not be identical to our assigned biological sex.

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Barbara Risman is Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is the author of *Gender Vertigo: American Families in Transition* (Yale University Press, 1998), *Families As They Really Are* (Norton, 2010), and over two dozen journal articles in venues including *American Sociological Review*, *Gender and Society*, and *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. She has been editor of the journal *Contemporary Sociology*, and is currently one of the editors of a book series, The Gender Lens, a feminist transformation project for the discipline of sociology. [email: brisman@uic.edu]

Georgiann Davis is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. Her research interests center on the social construction of medical knowledge, specifically how diagnoses are defined and experienced through a gendered framework by medical professionals, patients, and their families. She is currently studying intersexuality and the intersex rights movement. [email: geodavi@siue.edu]

résumé   Cet article se compose de deux objectifs de investigation, une histoire de genre intellectuelle comme un concept et, suivant notre conseil, la préparation d'un plan par avancer la théorie et l'investigation de genre, conceptualisé comme une structure de classement social. Le premier objectif est faire l'historique du développement conceptuel des recherches de genre, tout au long du XXe siècle jusqu'à présent. Nous realisons cet objectif du point de vue sociologique féministe, encadrant le question d'attention au pouvoir et l'inégalité. Nous employons une perspective moderniste et montrons comment la théorie et le recherche sont construites d'une façon cumulative, avec des études empiriques qui parfois supportent et parfois défient les théories courantes, et souvent entraînent des théories nouvelles. Ensuite, nous donnons notre apport théorique, dans lequel nous encadrons le genre comme une structure sociale comme un moyen d'intégrer la grande variété des résultats d'investigations empiriques sur les explications causales à le genre et sur les conséquences du genre. Notre cadre comprend les différences et les similarités avec les femme et les hommes comme des individus, la stabilité des sexes au cours d'interaction social, et les mécanismes selon lesquels le genre est incorporé dans la logique des institutions sociales et des organisations. A chaque niveau d'analyse nous sommes intéressées à l'organisation de la vie sociale et à la logique culturelle attachées à ces modèles.

mots-clés   genre ◆ sexe ◆ stratification ◆ structure de genre

resumen   Este artículo tiene dos objetivos, exponer una historia intelectual de género como un concepto, y esbozar un marco para adelantar la teoría y la investigación sobre el concepto de género como una estructura de estratificación social. Nuestro primer objetivo es el de trazar el desarrollo de los conceptos género y sexo desde comienzos del siglo 20 hasta este momento. Basándonos en una perspectiva sociológica feminista enmarcamos estos conceptos en el contexto del poder y la desigualdad. Utilizamos una perspectiva modernista para mostrar cómo la teoría y la investigación son construidas progresivamente y cómo los estudios empíricos a veces dan apoyo y otras veces retan las teorías, pero usualmente engendran nuevas teorías. Nuestra contribución teórica enmarca al género como una estructura social la cual puede ser utilizada para juntar los resultados empíricos que señalan a las causas y consecuencias del género. Nuestro marco de trabajo presta atención a las diferencias y similitudes entre mujeres y hombres como individuos, la estabilidad y el cambio de expectativas que tenemos de cada sexo en la interacción social, y los mecanismos por los que el género está integrado a las instituciones y organizaciones sociales. Es importante prestar atención a la organización de la vida social y las lógicas culturales que acompañan a dichos patrones sociales en cada nivel de análisis.

palabras claves   género ◆ género como estructura social ◆ roles sexuales