Women, men, and all the other categories:
Psychologies for theorizing human diversity

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Abstract

This article looks at psychological theory and research that aims to capture and study human diversity in new ways. Human diversity, increasingly framed in terms of intersectionality – focusing the mutual interrelatedness of central social categorizations such as gender, ethnicity/race, social class and sexualit(ies) – has recently come more forcefully onto the research agenda for psychologists. The article argues that for psychological research to be able to usefully theorize and study diversity in everyday lives, it needs to find new ways to incorporate the impact on individual lives of both large and small sociocultural, and sometimes political, contexts into research. Gender studies within psychology, as well as cross-disciplinary gender studies, have developed bodies of theory and empirical research about many diversity issues that can give helpful contributions to such developments of psychological theory and research.

Key words: human diversity, every day lives, intersectionality, social categories, gender, feminist theory

Introduction

Diversity studies are thriving in psychology. Psychological research that aims to contextualize individual psychology in relation to the different social and cultural positions and situations of diverse groups in society has increased its presence in the discipline. This conclusion is borne out by a look at PsycInfo, the major database for psychological research. Today, studies using terminology that points to some aspect of human social and cultural diversity form a distinctly larger proportion of published studies than they did in 1970. Theoretical and empirical sub-fields of psychology that explicitly focus on aspects of diversity have also multiplied in the same period. There are now fields such as cultural psychology; socio-cultural psychology; cross-cultural psychology; narrative psychology; feminist psychology; masculinity studies in psychology: lesbian, gay, trans and queer psychologies; critical psychology; discursive psychology; discourse analysis in psychology; post-colonial psychologies; psychological disability studies; critical race studies in psychology; critical theoretical studies of psychotherapy; narrative and feminist approaches to psychotherapy; psychology approaches to intersectionality theory. In parallel, many new scholarly journals that publish such research have appeared, as well as journals that focus on methodological and theoretical issues that engage scholars interested in diversity. Diversity issues, then, are more explicitly on the agenda in psychological research now than they used to be. It seems a worthwhile task to reflect on what this proliferation might imply for psychology as a discipline – both its research and its theories.

In this essay I argue that, for psychological research to be able to satisfactorily theorize and study contemporary human social and cultural diversity, it needs to be sensitive to both large and small sociocultural dimensions. I will point to some limitations in traditional ways of conceptualizing "difference" in much psychological research, that have been found to stand in the way of truly contextualized study of human diversity. I will also point to cross-disciplinary feminist theory, and gender studies in psychology, as fields that have developed theory and empirical research on diversity issues that move psychological thinking forward. I will argue that psychologists can learn from these fields, but also from the history of their development. Finally I will argue that the vanguard of theory and research about diversity is more easily integrated with some kinds of existing psychological theory and research practices than others, namely those that can be subsumed under the wide umbrella interpretative psychological research.

Categories, metrics and concepts for psychologies of diversity

"Diversity" is not a term that is traditionally used analytically by psychology researchers. It is, however, increasingly being used in many scholarly and/or political settings, often in conjunction with terms such as "multiculturalism". For the purposes of this article, "diversity" stands as a place-holder for the fact that humans live their lives in different societal positions and belong to different groups in society, and that some positions and groupings are connected with more privileges and advantages than others. A scholarly focus on diversity directs attention to the meanings and personal consequences of identifying as part of, or being allocated to, particular categories within a certain cultural setting. This social and cultural focus sets such studies apart from the study of "individual differences", which has a long tradition in psychology, as well as a strong focus on the individual. Diversity scholars aim to study human variability in ways that do not accord privileges to the experiences of some social groups to the detriment of others, or that unaccountably set up some dominant group in society as the norm for other groups. This aim is a result of the critique in previous decades of social science, including psychology, for being western-centered, male-centered, middle-class centered, white-centered and hetero-centered (Cole & Stewart, 2001; Gergen et al, 1996; Kitzinger, 2001; Sears, 1986).

Some often salient dimensions of human diversity are categorized by sex, gender, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age group and occupation. These categorizations are not (only) to be seen as descriptions of individuals. They also carry with them politically and socially charged historical relations that often continue to have an impact on individual lives in the form of inequality and social stigma (Cole, 2009). An interest in diversity leads researchers to problematize how to conceptualize such categories, including the metrics for classifying or measuring research participants. This means consideration of what *types* of categories the above categories and others like them are. For example, are they natural kinds occurring in nature regardless of human intervention, or are some categories best seen as human cultural inventions (Hacking, 1994)? And do the answers to that question make any difference for the researcher? Psychology researchers of different strands often disagree on the status of at least some central categories, such as sex and gender. Some would argue that psychological measurement, for instance by questionnaires or neuropsychological techniques, positions individuals along pre-existing intrinsic dimensions (often conceptualized as person variables; Danziger and Dzinas, 1997). Others argue, instead, that most categories used for classifying or measuring people are created by humans and thus do not necessarily tap intrinsic dimensions (Magnusson and Marecek, in press). A

researcher's answer to this question will therefore inevitably influence both theory and research where human variability is involved; for instance, whether to see it primarily as "individual differences", or as "diversity".

Furthermore and for the present purposes just as central: are the categorizings indifferent or interactive? That is, what kinds of consequences does being placed in a particular category have for the categorized person and her or his surroundings? Typically, sorting humans according to categories such as the above does more than just classify. It creates interactions: a person who is assigned to a salient social category is inevitably influenced by that act of classification. It will contribute to the conditions of the person's everyday life. And he or she will react to the particular meanings given to this category in the settings where he or she lives. The meanings will (often but not always) become a part of the person's experienced personal identity and will in turn influence her or his actions and reactions in many social situations. A person may, *because of* having been classified in a particular way, develop new emotions, behaviors and ways of thinking about her- or himself, that in turn seem to confirm the validity of the classification. The philosopher Ian Hacking (1994) calls this phenomenon *the looping effects of human kinds*. Thus, categorization of humans is not innocuous, and categories therefore need to be scrutinized for what they may "do".

Typical of the new fields of diversity studies is a focus on the implications and consequences that social categorization has for individuals and groups, and, recently, an increased concern with how categories may "complicate" one another (Cole, 2009). This, in turn, has led to attention to power issues in the categorization of people, and in the creation of, and upholding of, important categorizations. Here I briefly describe the most common categories and concepts that diversity research has focused on in studies of everyday life in western high-income countries. These descriptions do not aim to be exhaustive. Other categorizations than these are often relevant (some are age, geographical location, degree of health or ill-health, ability/disability). Obviously not all categories will be equally salient in all settings, or for all research questions.

Sex categories and gender categories

The human sex categories are everywhere imbued with symbolic, practical, and political meaning. These meanings are often of such weight that the sex category of a person decides much of her or his life trajectory and individual fate. As a rule, the meanings given to sex categories are harbored in, and perpetuated by, cultural institutions such as the family, the legal system, the dominant religious doctrines, the educational system and the labor market. Often, important parts of these institutions have been organized around specific meanings given to human sex categories. One of the basic features of most such ways of organizing institu-

tions has been that they assume, and also prescribe, the existence of only two sex categories, and that these categories are to be seen as immutable. Both these prescriptions have been contested by contemporary gender research and queer theory (Clarke et al, 2010; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Another common feature is that the organizing of the institutions centers on perceived differences in traits and capacities between men as a group and women as a group, often in conjunction with explicit value-ranking between these groups.

However, exactly how the sex categories have been seen to differ has varied through history, and between cultures and subcultures (Scott, 1988). Thus, though cultures typically ascribe to sex categories a basic meaning of "difference", belonging to a particular sex category does not have a fixed or universal content, in the sense of opportunities or tasks ascribed. Being a woman, though it has meant being *not* a man, and also meant being seen as *different from* men, has not been filled with exactly the same meaning content everywhere, or in all time periods. It was this mutability that made many feminist researchers in psychology and other disciplines adopt the grammatical term for sorts, *gender* (Latin, *genus*) when studying social and psychological consequences of, and corollaries to, the sex categories. Feminist psychologists in the 1970s, for instance, began using the term gender as a way to point to the cultural, social and psychological meanings that are given to sex categories in specific social settings (Unger, 1979). Much feminist thought has since then developed more complex arguments around gender that move beyond the (today seen as oversimplified) distinction between "biology" and "culture" in these early formulations. A uniting feature of contemporary feminist thought is the use of the term gender to denote a cultural meaning-system, not a characteristic of individuals. This distinguishes feminist theory from much psychological theory, where for instance, expressions such as "gender differences" are often used to denote differences in personal traits or abilities between individual men and women (Ely and Padavic, 2007).

Research that focuses on gender often studies specific aspects of how a certain culture gives meanings to bodies assigned to different sex categories, and to what people inhabiting these bodies do. Sometimes the content of these meanings are in focus and sometimes the processes where the meanings are ascribed. Often the focus is on the consequences for individuals and groups of either the meanings as such, or of the meaning-ascribing processes (Magnusson and Marecek, in press).

Sexuality/sexualities

Issues of sexuality span large fields of human experience: the meanings of (and numbers of) biological sex(es), what combinations of members of the biological sexes are to be allowed to have sexual relations and to form sexual/romantic pairs, and what social group or member of a group gets to define the meaning and

content of a particular sexual relation. This, of course means that issues dealing with sexuality are closely related to issues dealing with power and with gender. Most known societies (but not quite all) have put up, and kept up, legal and cultural fences to regulate the number of sexes and keep the two-sex model in place as the only "natural" one. Such strictures have been increasingly challenged in recent decades. Also, most societies have exerted pressure to keep sexual relations between partners of (the two prescribed) different sex categories as the only permissible form of sexuality, sometimes explicitly forbidding same-sex sexual relations. Since the middle of the twentieth century, in western countries, attitudes among professionals and the general public, as well as legislation about these questions, have grown progressively more permissive. This is true of psychological theory and research as well. However, activists and sexuality researchers argue that even in most "progressive" settings there is still a background of heteronormativity. This is the cultural situation where *hetero*sexuality is seen as the natural, self-evident and appropriate state that makes all other arrangements require some special explanation (Bohan and Russell. 1999; Clarke et al, 2010; Coyle and Kitzinger, 2002; D'Augelli and Patterson, 2001; Diamond and Butterworth, 2008; Kitzinger, 2001; Nelson, 2007).

Scrutinizing heterosexual arrangements, feminist researchers have also challenged traditional definitions of both men's and women's sexuality. For instance, feminist psychologists have questioned the social and cultural forces that define women's heterosexual sexuality in terms of how it fits in with, or serves, that society's ideas of men's sexuality (Gavey, 2005; Tiefer, 2004).

Social class
The term "social class" is usually used to refer to hierarchies between groups in societies that are based on economic resources and positions of status or power, and/or on political and economic interests. Social class may also be defined in relation to a person's sense of social belonging to a certain such social group. Belonging to a particular social class means sharing characteristic attributes, tastes and practices with other members of one's social class. What these attributes are taken to be, depends on the type of definition used. Thus, "working class" may imply some attributes in one system of definition (for instance, not owning the means of production) and other attributes in another definition (for instance, a low standard of living). The same goes for definitions of "middle class" and "underclass" etc.

Social science, especially European social science, has traditionally attributed importance to social class as an analytical category (Ferree, 2009). However, in psychological research and theory, social class has been far less in focus; in large parts of psychological research and theory it is absent. This is reflected in many

psychology textbooks and psychology courses. It is also reflected in the paucity of hits when searching databases for psychological research on social class (APA Task force on Resources for the Inclusion of Social Class in Psychology Curricula, 2008).

Ethnicity and race

Geneticists today agree that the genetic variations among humans do not justify divisions of people into homogeneous and distinct "racial groups" (Bonham et al, 2005; Wang et al, 2005). Today researchers increasingly agree that racial divisions are human cultural inventions; not natural or inevitable. The divisions result from activity and meaning-making by people (Markus, 2008; Zuckerman, 1990). Many psychologists today argue that "race" is a meaningless construct, and that continued use of it will contribute to perpetuating racial stereotypes and societal problems (Helms et al, 2005).

In a society that harbors several cultures, there will always be more or less distinct boundaries between these cultures. The term "ethnicity" is often used to denote these boundaries. For instance the expression "ethnic grouping" tends to be used to designate a group of people who are seen to be distinct in terms of language and/or cultural traditions, history, and identity expressions. "Ethnicity" focuses attention on how groups differ in terms of values, meanings, and ways of living (Markus, 2008). Also, people belonging to an "ethnic" group generally claim the group's common meanings and values as their own. Thus, ethnicity is usually coupled to identification with, and a sense of belonging to, a culturally defined group. However, ethnic groups are not fixed identities but subject to change over time. So is the concept of ethnicity (Smedley and Smedley, 2005). A typical feature of the uses of "ethnicity" is that the dominant ethnic majority in a country seldom designates itself as having "ethnicity", though in terms of the common definitions of the concept, they do. This pattern hints at some other meanings of "ethnicity" than those in the definitions: the word may have a neutral general meaning, but its uses, and thereby it practical meanings, are seldom neutral (Fine et al, 1997).

The intersecting relations between identities and social categories

No single identity category or social category can satisfactorily account for the meanings a person places on his or her social relations, life events and social surroundings, nor for how he or she is responded to by those surroundings. Human identity is inherently complex. The meaning content of each of the social categories I have described here is from the very outset intertwined with each of the other categories (and possibly several other relevant categories) (Crenshaw, 1991; Ferree, 2009). Thus, what it means to be, for instance, a woman, cannot

be determined separately from the other salient social categories of a particular woman's life (Hurtado, 1989). All the same, these "other" categories will probably have somewhat different implications for a woman than for a man belonging to those same categories, *because* she belongs to the category "woman" and he to the category "man". Also, categorizations, as well as relations between positions on more than one category, are often connected to social inequalities (Cole, 2009). A term increasingly used in theory and research that acknowledges these dimensions, is *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991). Studying diversity, then, inevitably means taking the relations between salient social categories and identities into account. This can be done in different ways.

Studies of diversity – and disciplinary reflexivity for psychology researchers

Researchers' approaches to human diversity vary, depending on the level of analysis (social-structural, interactional, individual-narrative etc.) that they pursue. Preferences for certain approaches are also influenced by disciplinary surroundings. Here, the discipline of psychology is in focus, and at this point some disciplinary reflexivity is called for. "Disciplinary reflexivity" is the requirement for each academic discipline, or sub-discipline, to critically scrutinize its own habits, traditions and influence, as well as the cultural and academic contexts in which they have evolved (Wilkinson, 1988). The researcher needs to ask questions such as, is there anything specific about approaching diversity issues in the psychology discipline? Or – is there something about the psychology discipline that makes its approaches to diversity issues specific? These questions necessitate a brief look at traditions in psychological research for theorizing about variation and diversity.

In recent decades, especially historians of psychology and sociologists of science have critically studied psychology's ways of theorizing such issues (Richards, 1997, 2010; Rose, 1989; 1996; Shields, 2008). Their work has influenced feminist psychologists and other critical psychologists, who increasingly argue that psychological research needs to adopt new ways of theorizing about difference and diversity, in order to improve its ways of attending to human variability in a globalized world (Cole and Stewart, 2001). All too often, the critics argue, researchers have focused on one categorization (such as ethnicity or sex), while downplaying or neglecting other categories that may be equally salient for those studied (cf. Silverstein, 2006). Or they have unreflectively regarded categories as given and "natural" without questioning their historical and cultural background (Magnusson and Marecek, in press). Other critics have taken psychology to task for basing the bulk of its theories on research on young university students in Western countries (overwhelmingly in the United States which constitutes only

five percent of the global population), while drawing far more general, and sometimes even universal, conclusions (Arnett, 2009; Gergen et al., 1996; 2009; Sears, 1986).

In a review article about psychological research and theory on diversity issues, Stephanie Shields (2008) claims that psychology researchers' tradition of factorial thinking often "methodifies" their ways of theorizing about diversity. Thus, she argues, psychologists tend to approach human diversity as contained in sets of variables. It is, for instance, common to use analysis of variance or regression. They enable the researcher to study how one variable influences one or more other variables, and how the influence of one variable on another is modified by the influence of other variables. Consequently, as Shields points out, in psychological research human diversity is often studied in the form of statistical interactions or correlations between variables. As part of critically reflecting on these traditions, one might want to ask if theorizing in terms of variables is a promising strategy for approaching human diversity. Might it instead be, as the discursive psychologist Derek Edwards observed, "..that, outside the laboratory (and perhaps inside it too), meaningful human actions are simply not organized on a factors-and-variables causal basis. It could be that experiments do not *reveal*, but rather *make it so*, that human actions can be fitted to predictable causal formats" (1997: 4). Many critical psychology researchers argue that typical psychological factors-and-variables research does not produce knowledge that tells much about people's actual lived daily lives of diverse people (Engel, 2005; Slife, Reber and Richardson, 2005).

A related conceptual argument about the problems of "variable thinking" in psychology was brought forward by the Canadian historians of psychology Kurt Danziger and Katalin Dzinas (1997) in a historical overview of the uses of the term "variable" in psychological research journals throughout the middle twentieth century. The authors found that in parallel with an increased use of the term variable in presentations of the outcomes of statistical tests of research results (where "variable" is the technical term for that which varies in a statistical test, such as F or t), many researchers began using "variable" also to denote the inferred psychological characteristic or ability that was being measured. This usage was not seen earlier. They argue that this use of the word reflected "..a fairly wide-spread, though implicit and unexamined, belief that any psychologically relevant part of reality was already prestructured in the form of distinct variables, and that psychological research techniques merely held up a mirror to this structure" (Danziger and Dzinas, 1997: 46). This belief can be seen as a case of transposing categories derived from research procedures (test variables) to researchers' own cognitive representations of the reality they are studying (human characteristics). Such reification of research practice into "variables"

inside people (in Danziger and Dzinas' words) can sometimes be heuristically fruitful. On the other hand it may also create an invisible bias in research, based on the fact that ideas of human variables that have been derived from statistical procedures will also come to embody assumptions about the nature of reality, in this case, about human characteristics. Thus, when researchers tacitly assumed that "..everything that exists psychologically exists as a variable they were not only taking a metaphysical position, they were also foreclosing further discussion about the appropriateness of their procedures to the reality being investigated" (Danziger and Dzinas, 1997: 48). For psychology researchers interested in diversity these discussions about ways of conceptualizing human variation merit serious consideration.

One argument to consider is that the typical category or variable analyses in psychological research do not go far enough (Cole, 2009). Such analyses, critics argue, tend to assume that the categories or variables that are used can be taken to be, as it were, ready-made and existing one at a time. Diversity scholars argue that the meaning of a category may be far from ready-made, but rather the object of ongoing negotiation. They also argue that the meaning of a particular category for those assigned to it is always dependent on other categories, some of which may not be studied. Being a woman may have different meanings depending on a particular woman's position in relation to other categories, such as social class or sexuality (Ferree, 2009; Shields, 2008). Seen from such a viewpoint, truly diversity-oriented analyses in psychological research need to go beyond factors-and-variables approaches. These arguments are at the heart of diversity as conceptualized by cross-disciplinary intersectionality theory in gender studies (McCall, 2005; Prins, 2006; Buitelaar, 2006). I will consider intersectionality theory, and its possible uses in psychology, later in the article.

If we follow the scholars cited above, taking diversity seriously requires that the researcher scrutinizes the assumptions and underlying worldviews of her discipline, and how they might enable or hinder development of knowledge that is relevant to contemporary diversity issues. Psychologies of diversity, then, need to take into account, for instance, that observations (data, measurements, items etc.) are probably best understood as events occurring within a particular social situation. They also need to consider that the meanings of categories (and thus of "variables") may be uncertain; that the meanings may be objects of negotiation within those social situations, rather than pre-given. And they need to be prepared to question what have become their own taken-for-granted notions of the nature of the psychological variables they study. Also, in some cases, they may have to question whether the psychological reality they study is amenable to be measured by quantitative means (Danziger and Dzinas, 1997; Michell, 2011). In brief, they need to be prepared to take the consequences of the awareness

that both individuals' experiences and researchers' knowledge production are context-dependent. Also, context, though often felt to be local, is always part of larger social and political settings that may need to be taken into account. For instance, larger (as well as local) contexts often harbor or create asymmetrical and unequal meanings of gender and other social categorizations. Feminist psychology researchers who studied gender issues were among the first to learn such lessons. Therefore, the next section reviews the development of thought about gender in psychology.

Learning about diversity from experience: the history of gender in psychology

Gender was one of the first diversity issues to be extensively studied and problematized by psychology researchers (note that we are here talking about gender in the gender-theoretical meaning of the word, as opposed to the study of sex differences as a question of "individual" differences). Feminists in psychology argue that since sex category often is the most pervasive, visible and codified social division, "gender" is a good place to start thinking about diversity in psychology, although it is not enough for such studies to stay with just gender (Cole and Stewart, 2001). This section reviews the history of studies of sex category and gender in psychology, in order to highlight the increasing complexity of the theorizing about these issues. One feature of this history is cross-fertilization: the work by feminist researchers in other disciplines has contributed substantially to development of new psychological theory about diversity (Shields, 2008).

Sex and gender in early psychology: a tenacious interest in "differences"

In the era around 1900, when academic psychology was striving to become established, dominant views in culture and science saw women and men as so different as to be almost separate species. The evolutionary theorists of those days, including prominent psychologists, portrayed the western white man as the most highly developed organism and placed white women lower on the evolutionary scale – and non-white humans lower still (Rowold, 1996). For many psychologists in that period, it seemed a natural task to search for "real", fundamental psychological, and sometimes biological and neurological differences between women and men. The larger political context is of interest here: these studies were done in a political climate where the Women's movement demanded votes for women and equal rights for women and men. Fierce political and scientific debates raged about whether women were fit to take part in societal life on the same conditions, and with the same responsibilities, as men. Those who argued against women's

demands for equal rights emphasized what they saw as biological, psychological and moral differences between women and men and argued that women were congenitally inferior to men on critical traits and abilities. Some of those who argued for women's rights also featured differences between women and men, but they held forth different "differences", that they claimed made women necessary as complements to men. Other activists for women's rights emphasized, instead, what they saw as similarities between women and men. Examples of the latter are a few psychology researchers, including the first women who achieved doctorates in psychology. They did studies of men's and women's psychological performance and abilities that found similarities between men and women, thus contradicting the views of the day among the general public as well as among psychology researchers (Thompson, 1910; Hollingworth, 1916). These psychologists were in a minority, though; many others argued that there were large and insurmountable psychological sex differences.

In this heated political and scientific climate an emphasis on "sex differences", coupled to a sense of political chargedness of "the sex question", was built into scientific thinking about sex categories, in psychology as well as in several other disciplines (Shields, 1975). Both the political charge and the sex-difference focus have shown great staying power in psychological research and theory. According to contemporary feminist critics such sex comparisons (often tacitly) assume that it is meaningful to consider "women" and "men" as two homogeneous categories (Shields, 2008). This assumption, critics argue, should rather be seen as a question worth studying than something to take as given (Magnusson and Marecek, in press).

The tenacity of psychology's focus on differences between the groups "men" and "women" may partly also be a consequence of how researchers more generally chose to study psychological issues and give credibility to their results. In the early decades of the twentieth century, psychology researchers increasingly favored certain kinds of experimental designs and certain kinds of statistical techniques for hypothesis testing. The chosen designs and techniques were constructed so as to emphasize differences rather than commonalities, and also to look for universality rather than context-dependence, of differences (Gigerenzer, 1991; Ward, 2002). The general difference orientation was usually combined with an acceptance of social categories as given and often natural. This in turn may have bent psychology researchers and theorists further in the direction of focusing their research on "sex differences" when studying topics where gender (i.e., the meanings given to the sex categories) could have been a possible diversity issue. Further, the typical research designs emphasized thinking in terms of variables and factors (see Edwards, 1997), and of "controlling for", or "keeping constant", all but the focal variables. Such practices and their accompanying epistemologi-

cal allegiances may in many cases have made contextualization and a focus on diversity difficult to implement. Indeed, sometimes the very idea of a focus on diversity has been difficult for psychology researchers to understand, or at least to see as a possible part of psychology.

Early feminist psychology
Apart from a few pioneers, it was not until around 1970 that a number of feminists who were also psychology researchers or clinicians began developing what was then called "the psychology of women". They argued that psychology and psychotherapy until then had been shaped by white middle-class men in western industrialized countries. This, the feminist critics argued, had made psychology both androcentric and heterosexist, that is, theorized from the perspectives and social positions of men, and taking heterosexuality for granted. This needed righting. Many feminist psychologists saw their task as improving psychology's existing ways of approaching gender issues: they wanted, as it were, to "add women" to the discipline without changing the discipline's traditions and research techniques (Magnusson and Haavind, in press). They took the shortcomings that they pointed out in psychological research as examples of bad science in general. The argument was that if the psychology discipline could be made to better live up to the methodological strictures it had set itself, women would be better represented by psychological theory and research (Weisstein, 1971/1993; 1993). Some feminist critics in psychology disagreed with this reformist view, however (Parlee, 1979). And soon, women of color and women and men who identified themselves as homosexual added their experiences and knowledge to the field of gender and psychology, thereby inevitably increasing its complexity (Hurtado, 1989; Coyle and Kitzinger, 2002). Some feminist psychologists even argued that feminism and psychology were simply incompatible: what they pointed to as psychology's "apolitical" and universalizing approaches would never be acceptable to a feminist, in their view (Kitzinger, 1990). Debates about such issues led some feminists in psychology, influenced by feminist thinking in other fields, to begin rethinking concepts and methods in psychology (Crawford and Marecek, 1989; Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1988; 1990).

Feminist confrontations about epistemology and the
psychology discipline
As some feminist psychologists explored the complexities of identity, gender identity, masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and gender relations in everyday life, they began to overtly challenge the conventional research paradigms and models of mainstream psychology. Everything to do with gender, these feminists argued, defies simple determinism, monocausality, universalism, linear cause-effect

models, and static homogeneous categorizations of groups (Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1988). The critical arguments became increasingly conceptual, leaving behind discussions about good or bad "science" or "method" within the bounds of standard paradigms. Many of the critics moved to a reflexive position at least partly outside the discipline. This was not always a very comfortable position, as witnessed by the feminist psychologist Celia Kitzinger, who wrote in 1990: "..when I write as a feminist, I am defined out of the category of 'psychologist'. When I speak of social structure, of power and politics, when I use language and concepts rooted in my understanding of oppression, I am told that what I say does not qualify as 'psychology' " (1990, p. 124).

In a call to researcher reflexivity, feminist researchers in many academic disciplines have argued for attention to diversity among researchers as well as those they study. These theorists especially emphasize that the researcher is always in an *interested* position that is based on her/his social and political allegiances. This means that "neutrality" is a myth. This situatedness of the researcher influences his or her worldview, including the view of what kinds of topics are interesting, what kinds of people to study, and what ways of studying them are seen as legitimate (Haraway, 1988). In this view the researcher's own experiences as a human being of a certain kind will have a major impact on her or his perspectives and choices of topics, methods and theories. Indeed, the social categorizations of the people that a researcher studies may well be active in the researcher herself. Thinking along these lines, it becomes self-evident for researchers to adopt a reflexive approach to their own research practice (Finlay and Gough, 2003; Willig, 2008).

The feminist turn to discourse in psychology
In view of the topics that feminists in psychology have debated it was not surprising that feminists were among the first psychology researchers to be influenced by the turn to discourse in the humanities and social sciences (Magnusson and Marecek, 2010). Feminists saw this "turn" as creating space to increase the researcher's sensitivity to the impact of traditionally "extra-psychological" matters like discourse, culture, social structures, history and inequality, on individual psychology. The turn to discourse opened up new methods of study, and thereby new fields of study, as well as new ways of conceptualizing the psychological (Kirschner and Martin, 2010). Psychologists who turned to discursive theory argued that questions related to diversity, such as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity and class became amenable to theorizing in new and fruitful ways. Some feminists in psychology also saw the turn to discourse as providing a platform for new kinds of conceptual critique of traditional psychological theories and methods (Morawski, 1994).

Feminist psychologies of complexity and intersectionality

By the beginning of the 2000s, feminist psychological research and theory on gender had diversified into several rich and varied fields of knowledge. The topics had multiplied into studying masculinity, femininity, sexualities, power issues of several kinds – especially gendered violence and coercion, the gendering of institutions, etc. Methods and theories had diversified as well: many interpretative and culturally oriented approaches have emerged, such as variants of discursive approaches, narrative approaches, and post-colonial and intersectional approaches, as well as combinations of approaches and methods (Magnusson and Marecek, in press).

   Now, perhaps more explicitly than earlier, it is not just specific empirical and theoretical topics that are in focus, but also epistemological and metatheoretical issues. It seems that scholars working with questions regarding gender, sexualities and ethnicity/race have become especially tuned in to reflections and critical thinking about research methods and epistemology. Moving to the margins of the mainstream and engaging with ideas emanating from other epistemological domains invites, or sometimes perhaps forces, one to address the "larger" questions. One indication of these interests is the discussion about integrating intersectionality-oriented thought about diversity as a part of feminist psychology (Shields, 2008; Cole, 2009). I therefore turn to a presentation of intersectionality theory.

Intersectionality: Theorizing about the relations between identity categories

Intersectionality theory was developed in cross-disciplinary feminist research as a way of acknowledging that the social meanings and impact of a person's belonging to one sex category are always "complicated" by the person's position in relation to other social categories (McCall, 2005). Its specific origin was among black North American feminist researchers (Crenshaw, 1991). In the vocabulary of this article: intersectionality theory was developed as a way to theorize about diversity. Being a woman may mean very different things, depending on what other salient social categories a particular woman belongs to. Similarly, belonging to the social category "working-class" may have different implications for a man than for a woman, because of their belonging to different sex categories. In recent years, the concept of intersectionality has become central to much social science thinking and research about gender and other categories of diversity. This has been necessary, feminists argue, because the concept captures "..the glaring fact that it is impossible to talk about gender without considering other dimensions of social structure/social identity that play a formative role in gender's operation

and meaning" (Shields, 2008: 303). Some researchers claim that intersectionality perspectives have transformed theory and research about gender, enabling research to better preserve the complexity of human diversity in both empirical research and analysis (McCall, 2005).

Both intersectionality theory and intersectional analyses are multi-faceted, however (cf. McCall, 2005; Ferree, 2009; Walby, 2007). The literature on intersectionality theory, as well as on methodological aspects of using such theories to study diversity, is large enough to defy easy summary. In parallel, both the concept and its uses are energetically debated. These theories and analyses are thus not uncontested among feminist theorists (Lykke, 2005; Staunæs and Søndergaard, 2006). Several kinds of intersectionality theories exist, and consequently several types of empirical analyses. Many theoretical approaches and empirical studies aim at large-scale, structural processes, while some focus on social interactions and individual identity processes (Choo and Ferree, 2010). Self-evidently, then, the meanings given to central terms such as "intersecting" and "category" vary among researchers. They tend to vary between different disciplines but also between researchers within the same discipline whose knowledge aims are different. This is as true for psychology as for other disciplines.

I will refrain from combing through these theoretical distinctions and debates! Psychologists interested in diversity can learn from looking at some typical kinds of responses that demands for intersectionality perspectives have received in our discipline. The next section looks briefly at some of those responses. They are interesting because of what they can tell us about the contemporary possibilities of integrating such studies into psychology. (For more about the debates on intersectionality theory, see Walby, 2007; Choo and Ferree, 2010).

Psychology, diversity and intersectionality

In academic psychology, intersectionality theory is not a common way of theorizing diversity. In searching through databases of psychological research there are few hits for "intersectionality". It is only recently that empirical studies by psychology researchers that explicitly use intersectionality theory have begun appearing (Cole, 2009; Stewart and McDermott, 2004). In parallel to these recent empirical studies, some feminist psychologists have argued for a more general incorporation of an intersectional framework in psychological research and theory (Shields, 2008; Special issue of *Sex Roles,* August 2008; Cole, 2008; 2009). They have also pointed to what they see as the reasons for the slow incorporation of intersectionality theory into psychological theory and research. These reasons are of interest here (whether one ultimately wants to argue for or against an intersectionality framework): when thinking about diversity and

psychology, one may learn from attending to the obstacles to accepting certain types of theory and analyses.

In the introductory article of a journal issue dedicated to psychological research influenced by intersectionality theory, the American feminist psychologist Stephanie Shields (2008) listed what she saw as the most common responses by psychology researchers when social diversity and therefore, in her terms intersectionality, are broached. The first response that she pointed to is to exclude the diversity question by arguing that "that's not psychology". In this way many psychology researchers, Shields argues, define diversity as outside the disciplinary boundaries: "Intersectionality is excluded by defining questions of interlinking identities as sociological, as being about social stratification rather than the psychology of individual experience" (2008, p. 305). Doing this, in her view, requires the assumption, when defining a researcher's subject population in one way, the characteristics of the participants along other dimensions make no difference. This is an assumption that gender researchers would take exception to. A second response that Shields points to defers the diversity question to posterity with the argument that there is not enough information yet. Researchers may thus admit that issues of diversity are important, but argue that there is not enough data or research on these questions in psychology yet, and that therefore they need not take these issues fully into account. This response Shields finds in what she calls "the self-excusing paragraph that simultaneously acknowledges the central significance of intersectionality and absolves oneself from responsibility for attempting to incorporate it" (p. 305). A common variety of this response is to limit oneself to mentioning race/ethnicity-class-gender in one's reports, rather than actually using them analytically. Doing so, to quote Shields, "offers the dual message of being well-informed and politically correct", while leaving "the work of actually incorporating intersectionality into one's work to others" (p. 306; cf. Knapp, 2005).

A third response by psychologists that Shields points to has its origin in the traditions of "methodifying" diversity through a factorial thinking that approaches human diversity in terms of differences between participants on sets of variables. These are deep-rooted research traditions in large parts of the psychology discipline (Danziger and Dzinas, 1997; see also the earlier section here about variables). A typical study might be designed in terms of 2 x 2 or 3 x 3 tables of independent and dependent variables. Such a design, Shields argues, limits the researcher's options for a focus on diversity to statistical interactions between variables. This limitation is especially problematic, intersectionality scholars argue, because thinking in terms of statistical interactions in several ways falls short of capturing the complexity of human social categories. "Variables" in such a design tend to be conceptualized as homogeneous rather than complex, as social cat-

egories are, according to intersectionality theorists. The study of statistical interactions is based on the assumption that the effect of independent variables will be to influence the dependent variables quantitatively. That is, different constellations of values on the several independent variables are expected to "interact" such that they lead to higher or lower quantitative values on a particular dependent variable. This may not always be the case, however. To take a hypothetical contrary example, sometimes the varying types of discrimination that different social groups experience neither add nor interact in any quantitative sense; rather, they may be experienced as qualitatively different from each other (Levin et al, 2002). Such effects will not be amenable to study by statistical interaction techniques.

A focus on statistical interactions, critics argue, leads the researcher's attention away from theorizing about the processes that create the categories used as independent variables. For instance, it may be that the very meaning of one "independent variable" such as social class varies depending on the position on some category such as gender. Such qualitative complexity is not amenable to study by the use of statistical interactions. Thus, these methods will leave possible fundamental bases of diversity un-researchable and therefore invisible.

Limiting the focus on diversity in one's research to statistical interactions consequently prevents the researcher from taking into account how a particular category's very definition – and therefore the way it is experienced by individuals – depends on the presence of other salient categories. This is especially serious in interaction studies that take the definitions and operationalizations of the categories used as straightforward and unproblematic, and thus accept conventional definitions. Such studies will not be able to address the social processes of inclusion, exclusion, and privilege that both create social categories and maintain them (Cole, p. 445).

Testing one's research questions via statistical interaction also invites the researcher to think about social categories as based on the characteristics of individuals, rather than as reflections of larger social practices and structures (Cole, 2009). This makes it quite difficult to integrate the basic ideas of intersectionality, in which social categories are seen as the results of practices by both individuals, groups, institutions, and cultures. Researchers then risk solidifying the often-criticized individualizing traditions within much psychological theorizing. Yet another limitation to the interaction approach is that all social categories are "confounded in individuals" (Cole, 2009, p. 177). Settling for interactions as the measure of diversity requires that the researcher can assume that the studied categories are independent of each other. This may sometimes be an acceptable assumption at the abstract category level, but hardly acceptable for each individual and her or his everyday life, or for groups of individuals.

Against this background of disciplinary responses and obstacles, Shields (2008)

argues that the real challenge for psychology researchers interested in diversity will be how to avoid allowing disciplinary methodological traditions to "take over". Psychology researchers, she claims, need to find ways of approaching diversity issues "..without falling back into the status quo approach of testing for difference" (Shields, 2008: 304). She concludes that since many conventional psychological approaches to both theory and research are heavily steeped in such "testing for difference", they are ill fitted for diversity studies.

Intersectionality theory for psychologists?

Perhaps especially interesting for psychologists who study diversity are constructionist or interactionist approaches to intersectionality (the terminology varies somewhat; see Ferree, 2009; Prins; 2006; Buitelaar, 2006; Walby, 2007). These approaches do not seek to identify intersection or interaction points between assumed pre-existing "pure" categories. Rather, the focus is on the very categories or dimensions themselves as dynamic; and on how the categories mutually constitute each other. Central social categories are seen as existing in mutual relationships from the very outset, relationships from which they cannot even in principle be disentangled. Inevitably, then, any social relation or identity is intrinsically complex. Abstracting any one category from this complexity in order to compare individuals or groups with its divisions as a basis, will be a risky conceptual simplification. It will not reflect any inherent property of the world (Ferree, 2009). However, even so, these researchers emphasize, such simplifications can sometimes be useful as places to begin analysis.

The intrinsic mutual co-formation of categories is at the heart of constructionist theory of diversity and therefore, in the words of the American sociologist Myra Marx Ferree "part of a basic explanation of the social order as such" (Ferree, 2009: 2). Thus the "intersections" should not be seen as something to add on top of other kinds of analyses, nor as something that de-purifies or detracts from the categories themselves. Ferree illustrates: "The 'intersection of gender and race' is not any number of specific *locations* occupied by individuals or groups (such as Black women) but a *process* through which "race" takes on multiple "gendered" meanings for particular women and men (and for those not neatly located in either of those categories) depending on whether, how and by whom race-gender is seen as relevant for their sexuality, reproduction, political authority, employment or housing" (Ferree, 2009: 2). The different institutional systems that exist in a society, in this view, serve as each other's pre-conditions and surroundings, in relation to which each of them adjusts and develops (Walby, 2007).

Closer to the individual level, constructionist approaches to intersectionality focus on the social dynamics involved, and on relational processes. Since statisti-

cal interactions related to locations of groups or persons on particular categories are not in focus, individuals are not seen as "passive bearers of the meanings of social categories" (Prins, 2006: 280). Rather, individuals are theoretically considered as simultaneously being classified and "sorted", and thus subjected to powers of different kinds, *and* as subjects who are the source of their own thinking and acting. In this framework, identity categories are not just seen as limiting the individual to a particular position, but also as enabling different ways of understanding and narrating her or himself (Buitelaar, 2006). Identity, then, is seen not primarily as a matter of naming and categorization, but as based on situated narration (Prins, 2006). Persons are actors and co-authors in their own life-histories, and their actions (both individual and collective actions) can best be seen as enacted narratives. This means that "identity" in this sense will not be understood by creating lists of characteristics or categorical ascriptions that tell the *"whats"* about a person. Rather, identity in this interactional sense is about *who* someone is, in relation to salient social categories. For many researchers this "who" is about how a person narrates herself in order to navigate in complex social settings (Bruner, 2008).

Being sensitive to the vicissitudes of discourse and social power, these approaches acknowledge that the stories that people can tell about themselves (and about others) are never just "individual". The cultural stage for narration is to a large extent already set, as it were, when each person enters it. And there are always some stories that seem more available to a particular person than others, depending on his or her combination of salient social category positions (Magnusson and Marecek, in press). On the other hand, though such culturally prepared stories may be constitutive, they are hardly determinative: social categories never completely determine the potentials for action and narrative of each individual person. Individuals are always simultaneously less and more than the sum of the social categories with which they are identified (Hall, 1996).

Psychologies for theorizing about diversity

The American feminist psychologist Elizabeth Cole has argued that "...intersectional analysis requires a conceptual shift, even a paradigm shift, in the way psychologists understand social categories, such that they take seriously the cultural and political history of groups, as well as the ways these socially constructed categories depend on one another for meaning and are jointly associated with outcomes" (Cole, 2009, p. 178). This paradigm shift is needed, she claimed, for psychological research to be able to take into account the complex social meaning-shaping that goes on in people's everyday lives. Cole may indeed have been right when she claimed that the bulk of existing psychological theory and research

is in need of such a change. However, she did not note that there already existed several theoretical traditions and empirical approaches within psychology that have been developed in order to take diversity, meaning-making, and, according to some, eventually intersectionality, into account (Magnusson and Marecek, in press). Most of these traditions and approaches (several of which I mentioned in the introduction to this article) have emerged in close collaboration with research-ers and theorists in other fields; for instance, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, gender studies, ethnicity studies, discourse studies, narrative studies. Thus, they have emerged at the crossroads between several disciplines. Not surprisingly therefore, these approaches to psychology have consciously constructed them-selves as transgressive in the sense of incorporating cross-disciplinary elements. In doing so, they have also positioned themselves somewhat marginally in relation to "psychology". They have, for instance, disobeyed what Kurt Danziger called the "methodological imperatives" of psychological science. According to these imperatives, following certain technical procedures is seen as the essence of guar-anteeing good research (Danziger, 1985). The alternative approaches considered here have positioned themselves in different epistemological spaces than the bulk of psychological theory and research. They are often influenced by hermeneutics or constructionist metatheory, for instance. Several of them can be seen as part of "the sociocultural turn" in social science (Kirschner and Martin, 2010). These approaches are, not surprisingly, marginal to psychology, in the sense that they are commonly seen neither as part of what in a general sense defines "the discipline" nor as part of the "mainstream" of psychology. This marginalization is actually exemplified in the quote from Cole above. She argues that "psychology" needs a paradigm shift away from an individualizing and variable-focused epistemol-ogy. What kind of "psychology" is she then referring to? The "psychology" she refers to clearly does not include such fields as cultural psychology, discursive psychology, narrative psychology, and the like – approaches that exemplify what her wished-for shift could mean. Such is not the case in other cultural settings, where psychology is being developed while also taking cultural dimensions seri-ously. I want to conclude this essay by presenting some characteristics of such psychologies. I will begin with "culture".

Culture and human psychology

Diversity scholars see culture as an intrinsic part of human psychological life. While there are several definitions of "culture", and no agreement among schol-ars about the details of them, diversity scholars – regardless of definition – see culture as one of the essential conditions for the existence of what is usually meant by "person" or "humans" or "humanity". A human creature without a

cultural support system would simply not be a human being. It is equally true, on the other hand, that it is always people who produce culture (Geertz, 1973). Culture, then, can be taken as something *outside of* the individual, in which it is necessary to be suspended, to be fully human. However, since it is humans themselves who have created their culture and also maintain and develop it, culture is not quite outside, after all. Diversity scholars consequently argue that cultural analysis is an indispensable part of psychological analysis, in research as well as theory. No matter how individual and unique a person's experiences, interpretations or sense of meaning appear, they are always created within some kind of cultural framework (Mattingly, 2008; Mattingly, Lutkehaus and Throop, 2008). Consequently, in order to study cultural diversity, culture has to be seen as *in* people's psychological functioning; not something that might be added or not, to individual "psychology" (Bruner, 1991; 2008).

Diversity-focused and interpretative approaches to psychology

Cultural and diversity-focused approaches to psychology – here for convenience summarized under the umbrella term "interpretative approaches" – have seen an immense increase in both popularity and sophistication over the past couple of decades. I conclude this essay by describing some characteristics that make these approaches to psychology suited for study of diversity. This description will necessarily be too brief and over-simplified. For further reading, see especially Kirschner and Martin (2010).

Diversity-focused interpretative approaches to psychology are based on a view of humans as self-interpreting, meaning-making beings who have to be seen as always culturally and socially situated. This means seeing "psychology" (that is, cognition, emotion, memory, identity, personality and so on) as relational, emerging out of interactions with other humans in specific sociocultural contexts. It also means seeing such psychological processes, while taking place locally, as always also needing to be considered in terms of the sociocultural beyond the immediate interpersonal situation. And it means seeing psychological processes, including such constructs as the mind and the self, as constituted by culture and society, not just facilitated by them (Kirschner and Martin, 2010). The interest in "larger" cultural and social settings and forces is also seen in studies of how relations of power work in society, and how individual psyches become constituted through power relations, both locally in interpersonal relations, societally via social structures, and culturally, for instance through enduring traditions and cultural symbols. Being seen as constituted by culture and society, psychological processes are thus not conceived of as variables that may vary due to particular

contextual or relational changes. Rather, psychological processes are seen as emergent phenomena that do not in principle exist prior to the sociocultural settings in which they occur. This view has led interpretative researchers to question epistemological and ontological boundary-drawings that are often taken for granted, such as the boundaries between self and society, and between the individual and culture.

Many interpretative researchers direct their empirical studies to discourse, that is, language practices seen as imbued with, and also constitutive of, cultural traditions and social forces (Magnusson and Marecek, in press). Some of these researchers are primarily interested in the kinds of activities and performances to which dominant discourses give legitimacy in a particular setting. Especially feminist interpretative researchers with an interest in discourse have pointed to oppressive dimensions of both traditional and contemporary discourses, for instance of femininity and masculinity, and of heterosexuality (Gavey, 2005). Other discursively oriented researchers study how certain discourses, that is, socially situated language practices, serve to enable certain kinds of identity, or experiences of oneself, while disabling other kinds. Such research is based on the idea that study of how a person's sense of identity (or memory, or emotion, and so on) is patterned via the available cultural resources (narratives, symbols, practices) is also study of the processes involved in the sociocultural constitution of individual self and mind (Kirschner and Martin, 2010). Most interpretative researchers would emphasize that in the sociocultural constitution of selves and minds, not just one discourse, or one relationship, is active. On the contrary, these researchers are anxious to provide analytic space for diversity, and thus sometimes engage in intersectionality theorizing. And this, of course, makes these approaches especially interesting for the purpose of this article: psychology that can theorize about diversity in everyday lives.

To end, I want to point the reader, for inspiration, to the burgeoning empirical research done by interpretative researchers in psychology who focus on human diversity, and the theoretical development that moves alongside this research. Here is a small selection of recent publications ranging over a wide field of the psychology of diversity: Diamond (2008), Gavey (2005), Gulbrandsen (2006), Hauge (2009), Kirschner and Martin (2010), McKenzie-Mohr and Lafrance (2010), Moya and Markus (2010), Nelson (2007), Radtke (2009), Renold (2006), Reynolds (2008), Staunæs (2005), Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008), Wetherell (2007; 2008).

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