Feminism in psychology: Aotearoa/New Zealand and beyond

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Abstract

In response to an invitation to contribute to an ongoing feature on contemporary feminist thought in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this article provides an overview of some key aspects of feminist psychology. Feminist psychologists[1] have had a strong influence in the improvement of the status of women in Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere in areas such as addressing domestic violence. Feminist psychologists have also been influential in the development of research methods for exploring feminist issues, for example, discourse analysis and conversation analysis. This paper provides an overview of some key psychological contributions to feminist scholarship, with a particular focus on the work of New Zealanders. It includes a brief disussion of the context, both within academia and more broadly, before moving on to specific areas of endeavour, including the development of research methods and research into violence, body image, objectification and sex, and mental health.

Keywords

Psychology, feminist psychology, psychology and gender, feminist psychological research

Introduction

Psychologists based in Aotearoa/New Zealand have made significant contributions to feminism, both locally and internationally. A special issue of the international journal *Feminism & Psychology* published 15 years ago (edited by New Zealanders Hilary Lapsley, Nicola Gavey, and Fiona Cram [2001]) demonstrated both distinctiveness from and integration with international work across a broad range of topics. New Zealanders continue to contribute extensively to feminist scholarship on the international stage (a few examples include Antevska & Gavey, 2015; Braun, Tricklebank, & Clarke, 2013; Busch, Morgan, & Coombes, 2014; Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2016; Curtis, 2016b; Gavey & Senn, 2014; Jackson, Vares, & Gill, 2013). In recent years, Trans-Tasman Women in Psychology conferences have recommenced, and graduate students in Aotearoa/New Zealand have recently conducted research on a variety of topics, including body objectification, self-harm, teen pregnancy, the impact of changes to social welfare benefits, intimate partner violence and prevention programmes, the sexual abuse of gay men, resilience of immigrant women, and the criminal offending of young women, to name a few (with more detail given below). However, 'feminist psychology' has proved difficult to define for the purposes of this article.

Both feminism and psychology are contestable and layered terms (Macleod, Marecek, & Capdevila, 2014). Further, as noted by local feminist psychologists Nicola Gavey and Virginia Braun (2008), feminist psychology has permeable and flexible boundaries with other areas of critical scholarship and practice and at times has conflicted with 'mainstream' psychology (see Rutherford & Pettit, 2015, for a broader though primarily US-based discussion of gender, feminism, and the psy disciplines and the tensions between them). Thus, scholarship that is included in this review has been chosen on the basis of a feminist engagement with psychological or psychosocial issues rather than attempting to determine the 'label' of the individuals

involved. Additionally, in a work of this size it is not possible to include all of the many and rich contributions of 'feminist psychologists' however defined – even in a country as small as Aotearoa/New Zealand. Nor is it possible to thoroughly canvass all relevant topics; undoubtedly there are many more whose work could have been included. In this modest overview, I hope to equip interested readers with a concise summary of some key strands of feminist scholarship broadly within psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I commence by providing some brief historical context for the development of local feminist scholarship. This includes teaching and the development of research methods. I then discuss some specific key strands of local research, finishing with some observations on the potential of the internet as both a contributor to concerning developments and a potential aid to feminist scholarship and practice.

The context of feminist psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand developed within a university system adapted from the British system and heavily influenced by the USA (Lapsley, Gavey, & Cram, 2001). The growth of an explicitly feminist psychology similarly occurred in the context of a broader feminist movement both within academia and more generally. However, in contrast to many other countries, including Britain, the USA, Canada, and Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand does not have a formal feminist psychologist (or 'women in/and psychology') organisation. Efforts were made to formalise such an organisation within the New Zealand Psychological Society in the 1970s – when arguably they were most likely to be successful given the social and political climate of the day. However, the proposed "Women-only Division" was ruled unlawful (Lapsley & Wilkinson, 2001, p. 388). While less formal groups have arisen over the decades, such as a lesbian psychologist group in the 1980s, no further attempts at a formal structure have been made, including under the auspices of the New Zealand Psychological Society. Lapsley and Wilkinson (2001) provide an interesting review of these attempts and the impact of formal feminist psychologist organisations elsewhere.

Another key point of difference between feminist psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere has been the relatively early attention to issues of indigenous culture; a special issue of *Feminism & Psychology* published 15 years ago included a number of papers addressing such issues as the impact of colonisation on Māori women (Cram, 2001), attempts at cross-cultural power-sharing (Huygens, 2001), the development of bicultural partnerships (Nikora, 2001), and the production of Māori women's (Jenkins & Pihama, 2001) and cross-cultural knowledge (Jones, 2001). More recent examples include Helen Wihongi's (2010) kaupapa Māori analysis of the 1996 National Cervical Screening Programme and Jade Le Grice's (2014) investigation of the meanings of reproduction for Māori for their respective doctoral theses. However, in Aotearoa/New Zealand there is a dearth of Māori psychologists (feminist and overall), both within academia and more generally. While important steps have been taken to address this, such as the establishment of the Māori and Psychology Research Unit at the University of Waikato and the Psychological Society's National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues, it is clear that much is yet to be done to address ethnicity-based inequality. Morgan, Coombes, Neill-Weston, and Weatherley (2011) provide an excellent overview of the historical underpinnings of these ongoing issues. In addition, discussion of class and other potential sources of disadvantage have been largely absent.

Intersectionality – the study of intersections between systems or forms of oppression or discrimination – remains a challenge for feminist psychologists to address, including in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, there has been some useful student research, with just a few

examples being work on geography-based stereotyping (Gatland, 2014), aging and dependency (Williams, 2014), the experiences of immigrant women (Okuyama, 2014), and the experiences of teenage mothers (Banks, 2008) and mothers who are welfare recipients (Scott, 2014).

A corollary of the development of feminist scholarship was the teaching of feminist psychology. Most universities offered papers in women's or feminist psychology/psychology of gender in the 1980s, but these appear to have since reduced. There is some teaching of gender issues in psychology at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), while the Universities of Auckland and Waikato as well as Massey and Victoria Universities offer one or two papers each. However, no such papers are available at Lincoln University or the Universities of Canterbury and Otago. (Although Otago maintains a gender studies programme, and gender papers are available at Canterbury, there appears to be little substantive discussion of gender in the psychology programmes.) While the teaching of gender in psychology seems to have declined, women's participation as psychology students overall has grown. Until at least the 1970s, women were under-represented in psychology courses at all levels. Women are now 40% more likely to engage in tertiary education than are men; approximately two-thirds of bachelor degrees are attained by women (Ministry of Education, 2014); and the majority of psychology students at the University of Waikato are women, as indicated by student surveys.

Although the gender split of psychology department staff overall is approximately even, the majority of academic staff in higher positions are men. Currently in the universities of Aotearoa/ New Zealand, only one of the heads of schools or departments is a woman (Janet Carter, at the University of Canterbury, though Mandy Morgan was Head of School at Massey until recently), and approximately 28% of professors and 63% of lecturers or senior lecturers are women (as surveyed by the author, from university websites). These figures are comparable to those in the most recent *Census of women's participation*, which gives 24.4% as the percentage of senior female academic staff, with 18.7% of professors being women (Human Rights Commission, 2012). In comparison, 14.7% of company directors in the NZSX Top 100 are women, and women make up slightly less than 30% of judges and less than 20% of top legal partnerships. Curtis (2016) suggests that women are structurally disadvantaged in terms of career progress and research assessments. A notable exception to this well-documented 'glass ceiling' (see, for example, Curtis & Curtis, 2011, for a recent discussion) is the vice-chancellor of Otago University, Professor Harleen Hayne, a psychologist. This is particularly ironic given the importance of the psychological study of the formation and maintenance of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

In addition to their own teaching and research, feminist psychologists have also been influential in the development of research methods for exploring feminist issues, from hypothesis testing and the development of surveys (for example, Mary Koss' Sexual Experiences Survey: Busch & Robertson, 1993, 2000; Williams, 2014), scales, and other tools of measurement (such as for the measurement of sexism, e.g. Adams, 2012; Glick & Fiske, 2011) to discourse analysis (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Weatherall & Priestley, 2001; Wetherell, 2015; Wetherell & Edley, 2014; Wetherell, McCreanor, McConville, Moewaka Barnes, & Le Grice, 2015) and conversation analysis (Speer, 2001; Weatherall, 2007; Wetherell, 1998)[2]. These are discussed further below. In addition, New Zealanders have contributed 7.1% of the articles in one of the key journals, *Feminism & Psychology*, between 2000 and 2012 – more than Australians (6.8%) and nearly as many as Canadians (8.1%) (Macleod et al., 2014)[3]. Thus, feminist psychologists have contributed and continue to contribute strongly to feminist scholarship both locally and internationally. The next section provides more detail on psychologists' contributions to feminist research with regard to both the development of methods and fostering the dissemination of research. I then move on to discuss key topics of scholarship.

Feminist research methods

Traditional psychological research emphasises objectivity, is positivist, often involves experiments, and relies on quantitative measures and statistical analysis. Although (as is discussed below) some feminist psychologists have been at the forefront of criticisms of these methods and their underlying epistemology, others have made good use of some traditional research approaches. For example, as mentioned above, experiments (especially into sexist attitudes as revealed, for example, by the implicit associations test) and surveys have proven useful for the study of feminist issues. Quantitative content analysis has also been a powerful analytical tool used by feminist researchers to highlight the enduring patriarchal and sexist characters of popular culture, such as American activist Betty Friedan's quantitative analysis of women's magazines and advertising (Friedan, 1963; Munro, 2013). The gender stereotypes that she documented, showing how women are presented as objects of (male) sexual desire, domestic labourers, or otherwise ridiculed and marginalised, have been reaffirmed by numerous other studies (for a recent example, see the article by Conley & Ramsey, 2011, published in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*; Curtis & Curtis, 2011, provide further discussion of the method). This use of content analysis occurred at a time when feminist scholars were criticising dominant research approaches for being 'malestream' (e.g. Eichler, 1988; Mies, 1983). Some feminists found the quantitative science-like aspects of content analysis very helpful in appearing objective and unbiased when making (for the time) very contentious claims. In addition, influential American social psychologist Alice Eagly's work provides many examples of the marriage of mainstream psychology to feminist interests (Eagly, 1995, and Eagly, Eaton, Rose, Riger, & McHugh, 2012, would be useful start points for readers unfamiliar with her work). Nevertheless, some feminist scholars have developed a thorough critique of quantitative and/or positivist methods, arguing that more useful research attends to women's understandings and representations of their experiences (see Eagly & Riger, 2014, for a recent review).

Feminist psychologists have championed the use of various methods of data collection (e.g. Braun, 2000, on focus groups) and analysis in psychology, including the development of conversation analysis (Weatherall, 2007; Wetherell, 1998) and discourse analysis (some examples of the use of the method by local psychologists or in psychology journals include Busch et al., 2014; Farvid & Braun, 2006; Frewin, Pond, & Tuffin, 2009; McDonald, 2014; Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009; Weatherall & Priestley, 2001; Wetherell, 2015; Wetherell & Edley, 2014; and Wetherell et al., 2015) and more general matters of both epistemology and analysis (Coombes & Morgan, 2004; Curtis & Curtis, 2011; Gavey, 1989; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997). Of course, this work has often been conducted alongside or building on the work of feminist researchers from other disciplines. Women in Aotearoa/ New Zealand have been particularly active in the development of new methods of research and analysis, or innovations in their use, including Virginia Braun (who, along with Victoria Clarke [Braun & Clarke, 2013], won a Distinguished Publication Award from the US-based Association for Women in Psychology for *Successful qualitative research*), Leigh Coombes, Mandy Morgan, Ann Weatherall, and Margaret Wetherell. Wetherell is particularly active in this area, especially with regard to discursive psychology (for example, Wetherell, 2013; Wetherell, 2015; Wetherell & Edley, 2014; Wetherell et al., 2015). In addition to these methods being used extensively by critical and feminist psychologists (and others), the works of these authors often centre on issues of gender and feminism.

As well as contributing to scholarship on research methods as authors, psychologists from Aotearoa/New Zealand have played important roles as editors and in furthering critical

discussion. For example, Nicola Gavey and Virginia Braun were editors of the international journal *Feminism & Psychology* for five years; Heather Barnett, Leigh Coombes, Sue Jackson, Mandy Morgan, and Ann Weatherall have all served on the *Women's Studies Journal* editorial collective, and Hilary Lapsley is the current convenor of the Women's Studies Association. Feminist psychologists have also contributed to scholarship through participation in groups such as the Discourse and Critical Studies Group (AUT), the Psychology Discourse Research Unit and Sexual Politics Now (University of Auckland), and the Gender Research Network (University of Waikato).

In the following section, I briefly discuss some of the contributions of psychologists from Aotearoa/New Zealand to feminist scholarship. These include intimate partner violence; body objectification as it relates to body image; sex and sexuality, sexual objectification, and sexual assault; and mental health. This section is intended to give a brief overview of some key areas, scholars, and works to students and readers from other disciplines rather than to provide a comprehensive discussion or critique. As noted in a previous contribution to this feature on contemporary feminist thought (McDonald, 2014), one article cannot do justice to the depth and breadth of scholarship in a specific area. Therefore, I have taken an illustrative approach in the hope that readers will gain a sense of the richness of the work and be stimulated to read further according to their interests.

Intimate partner and family violence

As discussed by Fanslow (2012), 30 years ago family violence was usually a hidden problem and, on the rare occasions it was discussed, was construed as something that affected a few unfortunate people. However, there is now widespread public awareness that family violence is a national problem, and Aotearoa/New Zealand has hosted some world-leading programmes and research aimed at providing solutions. The contributions of psychologists from Aotearoa/New Zealand include the work of James and Jane Ritchie, in the context of both violence more broadly and child-rearing, such as the detrimental effects of the use of physical discipline, noting its decline over the decades (for example, Ritchie, 2001); as well as the work of Neville Robertson, especially with regard to legal aspects such as protection orders (and their fallibility) and the efficacy of intervention programmes (Busch & Robertson, 1993, 2000; Hoeata, Nikora, Li, Young-Hauser, & Robertson, 2011; Lammers, Ritchie, & Robertson, 2005; Robertson et al., 2007; Somasekhar, Robertson, & Thakker, 2015); and the work by Jackson (2001) on abuse in romantic relationships; along with that of colleagues from other disciplines. This work has resulted in reviews of legal processes and development of prevention programmes. Yet, family violence remains a significant problem.

A report by the United Nations indicated that Aotearoa/New Zealand was the worst affected of 14 countries canvassed with regard to both reported physical violence by a partner and sexual violence (UN Women, 2012). While these figures must be contextualised as being part of a small sample of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, they suggest that, in spite of the significant psychological research in this area, intimate partner violence is more common here than in countries to which we consider ourselves similar. One in three (35.4%) ever-partnered New Zealand women report having experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, with more than half of those surveyed having experienced psychological or emotional abuse (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2014). Approximately half of all murders in Aotearoa/New Zealand are family violence related (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). Herbert and MacKenzie (2014) suggest

that the combination of intimate partner violence and child abuse and neglect cost the country more than eight billion dollars annually. Clearly, more work remains to be done.

Towns and Adams (2009) analysed the discourses of women to explore the sociocultural factors that prevent women's discussion of their male partner's violence towards them. A key finding is the influence of ideologies of patriarchy and of equity, and of individualism and collectivism, on some women's talk of such violence. Examples of the latter include the dilemma posed by individualist ideologies, such that the woman is expected to take care of her own needs or is to blame for her situation ('you've made your bed and you must lie in it'), contrasting with a collectivist ideology wherein the woman is expected to prioritise the care of her partner and children over her own needs.

In *Masculine empire*, Adams (2012) turns explanations for violence from individual 'bad' men to a broader exploration of the social world of men. He argues that the 'masculine empire' of superiority and entitlement pervades social relationships such that men legitimise each other's need to 'be in charge of their women'. This discussion has parallels to the work of Gavey on our rape culture, discussed below. Meanwhile, Robertson and others continue work on community and institutional responses to violence against women and children (Gosche, Robertson, & Masters, 2015; Towns & Robertson, 2015).

Objectification and body image

The study of the objectified body – that is, the body as an object to be looked at, and the negative repercussions of this – has been continuing for several decades. Yet, if anything, objectification and its impacts are worsening (see Szymanski, Moffitt, & Carr, 2011, for a discussion of objectification theory). Dissatisfaction with body shape or size is so common in Western societies that it has been termed 'normative discontent' (Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1984). The majority of adolescent women in Aotearoa/New Zealand wish to be thinner (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005) or are worried about gaining weight (The Adolescent Health Research Group, 2013). Although body image dissatisfaction affects all genders and at varying ages, it is particularly prevalent among young women, especially young European/Pākeha women (for example, Talwar, Carter, & Gleaves, 2012; Turangi-Joseph, 1998). More evidence is necessary before it can be said conclusively that being of Māori or Pasifika ethnicity is a protective factor, and class may be a confounding variable. However, preliminary findings that Māori and Pasifika women are less dissatisfied with their bodies fits with research conducted with regard to African-American and Latina women, where it appears that culture is an important influence on body image and perceptions of attractiveness (see, for example, Lynch & Kane, 2014). As with body objectification, body image dissatisfaction is linked to a number of negative consequences, including poor self-esteem, depression, eating disturbances (Hardit & Hannum, 2012; Maxwell & Cole, 2012), and suicidal ideation (Brausch & Muehlenkamp, 2007).

The media plays a significant role in creating beauty ideals, influencing how girls and women feel about their bodies, leading to body image dissatisfaction (see, for example, Jackson & Lyons, 2012; Miller & Halberstadt, 2005). However, while much attention has been paid to the role of the media, new local research suggests that friends and family are also an important and unwitting influence (Curtis & Loomans, 2014).

Though the literature on body image dissatisfaction has tended to focus on body size and shape, and resultant clinical problems such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa, local feminist psychologists have also taken a broader view. These include Virginia Braun's work on female genital cosmetic surgery, an increasingly common but little-researched practice (Braun, 2010),

and her work with others on the removal of body hair (Braun et al., 2013; Terry & Braun, 2013). These issues speak to an apparent increase in the sexual objectification of women, whether through the obvious route of pornography or the (slightly) more subtle avenue of magazines and other media.

In contrast, Sue Jackson uses a variety of methods to explore the complicated meanings of embodied identities, arguing that the effects of gender and beauty ideals are interpreted, negotiable, and, at times, resisted (for example, Jackson & Lyons, 2012). Through explorations of media representations with men and women with Antonia Lyons, she explored resistance to dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity, while an analysis of 'agony aunt' letters and responses revealed the constraints and constructions of young women's sexuality (Jackson, 2005). The video diaries of young New Zealand girls provides a way of understanding their engagement with popular culture, interrogating post-feminist rhetoric and practices (Jackson et al., 2013).

The role of technology is also the focus of research by Connor and Coombes (2014) on 'pro-ana' websites – sites that support anorexia and provide strategies for weight loss, usually by and for young women with eating disorders – finding that they provide a forum for resistance to intolerable patriarchal femininity by offering a form of control. Thus, women's relationships with various technologies and media are complex, and these same media afford ways of understanding rapidly evolving issues. Some aspects of media engagement are also discussed below with regard to sexualisation and pornography, but also as a potential source of resistance and empowerment for women.

Sex and sexuality

Issues of sex and sexuality have long been an interest of feminists and psychologists. Evans, Riley, and Shankar (2010) argue that the sexualisation of everyday life, as demonstrated by women's adoption of 'raunch culture', 'porno-chic', and practices such as pole dancing that were once considered inappropriate, have created debate within feminist literature on the question of how to value women's choices to participate in this sexualised culture while also maintaining a critical perspective towards the environment that has enabled that culture. In addition, with the ready accessibility of internet pornography (discussed further below), the use of technology to record sexual acts (with or without the knowledge and consent of all parties), and the advent of 'revenge porn', changing standards in advertising, and a greater acceptance of women's expression of their sexuality, this is an area in need of continued attention.

A number of researchers and theorists (psychologists and others as discussed below, for example, Flynn, Craig, Anderson, & Holody, 2016, and Galdi, Maass, & Cadinu, 2013, provide overviews before focusing on the impact of television and music lyrics, respectively) have considered the role of the media in portraying female sexuality – particularly a certain type of sexuality embodied in a certain 'look'. The proliferation of sexualised images in advertising, television, movies, music videos, and other media, theoretically *could* result in multiple interpretations of sexuality and femininity, creating more space for women to express their sexuality (White, 2013). However, it appears to have been more likely to result in stronger acceptance of gender-role stereotyping, dysfunctional beliefs about relationships, and rape myths (Dill, Brown, & Collins, 2008; Kahlor & Eastin, 2011; Kistler & Lee, 2009).

This sexualisation of culture has led to the normalisation of misogyny in various media, including crime television shows in which women are usually shown as passive victims (Kahlor & Eastin, 2011), 'lads mags' (Coy & Hovarth, 2011; García-Favaro & Gill, 2015;

Hopkins & Ostini, 2015), and computer games – from the relatively subtle and common 'damsel in distress' trope to the notorious *RapeLay* and *Grand theft auto* in which players virtually sexually assault female characters (Beck, Boys, Rose, & Beck, 2012; Dill et al., 2008; Fox & Potocki, 2015). As discussed by Beck at al. (2012), most of the top ten video games listed in 2010 include violence against women, and some contain sexual objectification of women. Included in this normalisation is the relative acceptance of sexual objectification and pornography (Foubert, Brosi, & Bannon, 2011). Locally, research into sexuality has included gendered understandings of casual (heterosexual) sex (Farvid & Braun, 2013), the possibilities for individual empowerment in a sexist world (Gavey, 2012), and the minimisation of everyday sexism toward women (Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2016). In the aftermath of the 'Roast Busters' case, Sills et al. (2016) explored young people's experiences of social media sites as spaces of misogyny, finding not only pervasive rape culture but also opportunities for resistance and education. However, these potential positive aspects of new technology appear dwarfed by the negatives, which are elaborated below.

Sexual objectification of women

Internationally, recent research on pornography has resulted in disturbing findings among male consumers, such as unwillingness to intervene as a bystander, increased behavioural intent to rape, increased belief in rape myths (Foubert et al., 2011), and decreased satisfaction with their partners (Seto, Maric, & Barbaree, 2001). In addition, exposure to pornography is now routine among children and young people in Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere, as discussed by Antevska and Gavey (2015), among others. Increased internet access has meant that online pornography is now a key provider of sex education for young people. The average age of first exposure to pornography is 11 years, with 100% of 15-year-old British boys and 80% of 15-year-old British girls reporting they have been exposed to violent and/or degrading online pornography, usually before they have had a sexual experience themselves (Horvath et al., 2013). Adolescent use of violent pornography is linked to increased levels of sexually aggressive behaviour, girls feeling inferior to the women viewed in pornography, and boys worrying that they are less virile than the men portrayed (Owens, Behun, Manning, & Reid, 2012). Calder-Dawe and Gavey (2013) note the apparent normalisation of pornography that features women accepting or enjoying objectification, sexual domination, and abuse. The long-term impact requires the further investigation in which Gavey and others are currently engaged (see http://www.sexualpoliticsnow.org.nz/ for further information). The study of the role of pornography in legitimising sexual assault or increasing rape myth acceptance has attained new importance with the increased availability of pornography via the internet and social media.

Perhaps more pernicious than pornography *per se* because of their extensive normalisation in the Western world is the impact of magazines and music videos that sexually objectify women. The impact in terms of acceptance of adversarial sexual beliefs, rape, and inter-personal violence is increasingly well documented (see Curtis, 2016a, for a summary). 'Lad mags' such as *Ralph* and *FHM* may be considered especially worrying as they are ubiquitous, often feature strategies for manipulating women, and depict 'real women' who conform to ideal (and unrealistic, for the majority) body types and are hyper-sexual and always willing to have sex (Coy, 2009). While some 'women's magazines' (such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Cleo*) also include strategies for manipulating men (see Farvid & Braun, 2006, for some critical analysis by local feminist psychologists), it would appear that much of the focus remains on pleasing men, whether through conforming to an idealised body type (or attempting to), being 'good in bed', or preparing pleasing meals.

Sexual assault

Approximately one-third of New Zealand women and 9% of men report having experienced sexual assault in their lifetime. Three-quarters of these assaults against women and 54% of assaults against men were perpetrated by a partner, ex-partner, or family member (Mayhew & Reilly, 2009). However, only a small percentage of these are reported to the police, with approximately 3,500 sexual violence charges laid annually and approximately 40% resulting in a conviction (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2014). Yet, the prevalence of sexual assault tends to be underestimated, especially with regard to known assailants (Abrahams et al., 2014; Allroggen et al., 2016). Although the majority of sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone known to the victim/survivor, it is fear of sexual assault by a stranger that most limits women's full participation in society, for example, by constraining their choices around travel and night-time recreational and work activities, and the consequences of sexual assault are significant.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Miriam Saphira (Busch & Robertson, 1993, 2000; Saphira, 2001) was a key figure in research on domestic violence, child prostitution, and victims of sexual assault, for example, presenting data on the incidence of local child prostitution (Saphira, 2002) and the abuse of those young people (Saphira & Herbert, 2005) as well as the experiences of lesbian mothers and issues of sexual orientation more broadly. Nicola Gavey's work on rape has been very influential (Gavey, 1992; Gavey, 2005; Gavey, 2012; Gavey & Gow, 2001; Gavey & Senn, 2014); in particular, her book on rape as a social problem underpinned by norms of heterosexuality is a valuable contribution to emerging understandings of our rape culture; it won the (American) Association for Women in Psychology 2006 Distinguished Publication Award (Gavey, 2005).

Mental health

Research into women's (mental) health has often focused on the impact of female biology and reproduction. For example, the idea of moodiness occurring cyclically in women has a long-standing history. However, in a review of 47 studies, Romans, Clarkson, Einstein, Petrovic, and Stewart (2012) found that little more than half of the studies (53%) provided evidence for any link between the menstrual cycle and negative mood, and 85% did not find classic pre-menstrual syndrome; the authors concluded, 'The major finding of this review was that clear evidence … is lacking' (p. 361). Romans et al. cite a 'long-established tendency to label women's behaviour as overly emotional and to attribute this to female reproductive function' (p. 362). Hilary Lapsley, along with colleagues, has also made an important contribution to mental health and New Zealand women's well-being more generally. This includes discussion of the (re)presentation of narrative research, including in clinical settings (Lapsley, 2006), and the editing of a special issue on feminist psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand in *Feminism & Psychology* (Lapsley et al., 2001; also see Barnett & Lapsley, 2006; Lapsley, 2006, 2013; Lapsley and Wilkinson 2001; Lapsley, Nikora, & Black, 2002).

The critique of the biomedical model of mental health has been ongoing for some decades, including by local feminist psychologists. For example, some have charged that many women find therapy to be, at best, ineffective and, at worst, damaging (Curtis, 2006). In particular, the release of the latest version of the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (DMS-5) (the so-called 'psychiatrists' bible') resulted in an outpouring of critique in feminist publications and elsewhere. These include critical feminist interrogations of issues of psychodiagnosis (Marecek & Gavey, 2013), moving on from long-standing criticisms of

apparent gender biases, for example in the diagnosis of depression (e.g. Ussher, 2010, 2013; Ussher, Perz, & May, 2014) to arguments that the 'DSM's authority has stretched into areas far beyond its competence' (Marecek & Gavey, 2013, p. 4).

Women's 'unfeminine' behaviour

Concerns about an apparent increase in (young) women engaging in 'problematic' behaviour, more typically seen as masculine behaviour or that which disrupts gender stereotypes, such as excessive alcohol consumption or engaging in physical fights and crime, have been increasing (Curtis, 2016a provides an overview of women's anti-social behaviour, both international and local). This concern has at times occurred alongside arguments that it is the result of gender equality – 'the dark side of female liberation' (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975). Though some of these concerns date back decades, thorough research into the topic is still rather sparse.

Masculinity, femininity, and alcohol

Recently, the role of alcohol use in conforming to ideals of masculinity and contesting ideals of femininity has been explored. As discussed by Willott and Lyons (2011), public and excessive consumption of alcohol in homosocial groups has long been a traditional indication of masculinity in many Western cultures, including Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, over the last two decades, this association has been eroded, partly through increased alcohol consumption by women. Griffin, Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Hackley, and Mistral (2013) argue that contemporary femininity is profoundly contradictory, calling for young women to be independent but not 'feminist', to look and behave 'sexy' but not be 'sluts', and to drink but not to 'drink like men'. More recently, Hutton, Griffin, Lyons, Niland, and McCreanor (2016) found that young women experience significant tension in expressing 'drunken femininity'. Christine Griffin and, locally, Antonia Lyons (and others) are engaged in work in this important and emerging area of study (McCreanor et al., 2013; Willott & Lyons, 2012).

Women's violence

The number of women involved as offenders in the criminal justice system is increasing across Western jurisdictions, including Aotearoa/New Zealand, and violent crime by women is a significant concern (Murdoch, Vess, & Ward, 2011, focus on women in Aotearoa/New Zealand). This increase in women's criminal behaviour (especially young women) is most dramatic with regard to serious crimes and violence, including more use of weapons (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Despite this, there has been little investigation of the underlying reasons. It has been argued that in Aotearoa/New Zealand (at least) men and women who engage in antisocial behaviour have similar social profiles: low socioeconomic status, dysfunctional family background, abuse, poor educational achievement, un(der)employment, and belonging to a minority ethnic group (Murdoch et al., 2011; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). It would appear that women in Aotearoa/New Zealand who engage in violence frequently have a history of sexual abuse, view violence as normative, and have a negative view of themselves, others, and the world in general (Murdoch, Vess, & Ward, 2010) – possible artefacts of ongoing sexism.

The internet: Friend and foe

Jackson, Vares, and Gill (2013) argue that a challenge for feminists is to find ways to research and work with/for girls that will open up spaces to explore meanings of femininity that escape limiting and repressive boundaries. The internet, social media, and other developing technologies may provide ways of working with and engaging young women in research. In addition, as discussed by Munro (2013), with the importance of the internet as an information source, especially among young people, it is imperative that scholars consider the effects that new technologies are having on feminist debate and activism as well as the psychological impact of their use in terms of influencing norms and contributing to the oppression of women (and others). At the same time, these technologies provide informal avenues for consciousness raising, with public figures that capture the attention of many young women, such as singer Beyoncé and actor Emma Watson, declaring themselves to be feminists (though sometimes problematically) and the development of popular websites and blogs such as *The vagenda* and the *Everyday sexism project*. These developments suggest an increased recognition of the need for further attention to gender issues.

Conclusion

Psychologists have made substantial contributions to feminist causes, both locally and internationally, through the development of research methods and also through direct contributions to research and scholarship in general. In some respects, it appears that much of the 'hard work' of feminism has been done; women are more visible in all walks of life than a few decades ago and have greater lifestyle choices, for example in the expression of their sexuality and access to (and completion of) higher education. Yet, it is clear that several key issues stimulate contemporary feminist psychology, including body objectification, (mis)portrayal of sexuality, assault, and mental illness – which are to some extent related. We have a better understanding of the precursors to these issues, and potential remedies, but progress in ameliorating them is slow. In addition to obdurate issues, new challenges are arising, particularly the normalisation of unrealistic gender stereotypes and harmful behaviours transmitted via new media. Although the previous decade has been characterised by an assumption by some, both within the tertiary sector and elsewhere, that feminism is no longer necessary – women have equal rights under law and increasingly engage in behaviour previously seen as the preserve of men – there appears to be increasing recognition of how much remains to be done.

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Notes

1 My use of the term 'psychologists' should not be taken to mean registered psychologists (registered with the New Zealand Psychological Society). Many people who lecture in psychology and/or hold higher degrees in psychology are not registered. However, under the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act (2003), only those who are registered may call themselves 'psychologists'. As it would be cumbersome to use terms such as 'researchers in psychology', I have chosen to use the term 'psychologist'.

2 Although much of Wetherell's work in this area occurred during her decades in the UK, she was educated in Aotearoa/New Zealand and has now returned to The University of Auckland.

3 New Zealanders Virginia Braun and Nicola Gavey were the editors for about half of this period.

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