

Editors' Introduction

Genealogies of Feminist Media Studies

Feminist media studies has observed a series of significant milestones in recent years: 2015 marked the fortieth anniversary of Laura Mulvey's landmark essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"; *Camera Obscura*, a groundbreaking journal in our field, celebrated its own fortieth anniversary in 2016; 2017 was the fortieth anniversary of the Combahee River Collective Statement on Black feminism outlining the interlocking systems of oppression faced by all Black women; and 2019 will be the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of Console-ing Passions, the longest-running scholarly group devoted to fostering feminist work in media studies.

These milestones prompted us to take stock of all that has been accomplished in feminist media studies and to document how four decades of feminist thought on media and media cultures have transformed our discipline. At the same time, we wanted to chart the work that remains ahead of us, to plot a course forward by marking absences, elisions, omissions, and marginalized perspectives, identifying what feminist media studies, too long dominated by white feminists, cis women, and the Global North, has neglected or obscured.

For various reasons this feels like a transitional moment. Many of the founding members of our field are retiring or contemplating retirement, including the scholars Laura Mulvey, Constance Penley, Jacqueline Bobo, Christine Gledhill, Michele Hilmes, Rosa-Linda Fregoso, and Judith Mayne, among many others. The impact they have had on the field—as scholars and personal mentors—is still very visible. Several generations of scholarly influence and individual mentorship remain palpable in feminist media studies, yet might soon be fading from view. In this moment of anniversaries and career passages, a feminist perspective on media seems more imperative than ever. As we prepared this issue, histories of gender bias and sexual violence in media industries became all the more apparent, misogyny and white supremacy gained increased valence, and we were reminded

of how tightly white patriarchal voices continue to control much of our media landscape.

To mark this moment we have collected genealogies of thirty-five fields that have been key to the development of feminist media studies, or where a feminist perspective has been particularly significant. The fields represented in these essays are by no means exhaustive, of course. Indeed, they are the result of considerable debate among the editors. We recognize that whole swaths of scholarship are not present, most notably perhaps animal studies, Afrofuturism, authorship, Marxism and class, material culture, phenomenology, science studies, and visual culture studies. Nonetheless, in settling on the fields profiled in this issue, we aimed to mark the impact of feminist thought on the wider field of media studies—both in fields like television studies, where feminist work has been, and continues to be, absolutely fundamental, and in newer fields, like platform studies, where feminist scholarship is only beginning to emerge. Some fields are defined by medium, like television, radio, film history, and video games and playable media; others are defined by object of study, for instance star studies, fan studies, or censorship and regulation; others are defined by methodology, like queer media studies, postcolonial media studies, or transnational media cultures; and still others are defined by genre, like porn studies or melodrama and soap opera. In some cases we felt it was important to have separate entries on fields like documentary and nontheatrical media, or girls' media studies and children's media, in order to capture the breadth of these endeavors. In other cases vast, varied fields got squeezed together, challenging authors to condense enormous volumes of quite diverse scholarship into one genealogy or to select a particular thread for emphasis. In the case of media policy and governance, for instance, Vicki Mayer chose to explore the topic from one particular avenue. Kimberly Icreverzi's essay on psychoanalysis and contemporary theory became focused on theories of the gaze.

We sought a diverse range of perspectives on these topics, from both established scholars and emerging voices. We felt it was important to hear from those with the long view—those who have charted these histories—as well as from those relatively new to media studies who might map genealogies in very different ways. We also quite deliberately sought authors from a range of disciplines, not just media studies per se, but also related fields like communication, critical race and ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, and sociology. As a discipline, media studies spans arts, humanities, and the social sciences, and we wanted to capture as broad a view as possible.

The parameters that that we set down for our contributors were few. We invited scholars to adopt their own approaches to these genealogies, welcoming everything from personal reflections to more “objective” chronicles. Some authors attempted to capture the full scope of their field, as Mary Desjardins does with star studies, providing a vast history while also noting places where much had to be left out. Others focused on a few key influential texts or moments of transition in their field. For instance, Marina Levina considers surveillance and Donna Haraway’s conception of the cyborg in her essay on technology, and Bambi Haggins focuses on just four influential scholars in her history of feminist television studies. In all cases, though, we encouraged authors to adopt an intersectional approach, tracing not only the impact of gender in their field, but also race, ethnicity, class, age, disability, and/or sexuality. We encouraged authors to adopt an international approach as well, mapping genealogies in different global contexts whenever possible. And we encouraged an intermedial approach, asking authors to plot genealogies across multiple formats and industries in film, television, radio, digital media, gaming, and beyond. What emerges is a blend of styles, voices, fields, approaches, perspectives—a diversity of feminisms and genealogies that highlight the multiplicity of voices from which we, as media studies scholars, speak.

The fundamental questions of feminist media studies, as articulated by contributor Manoucheka Celeste in her article on Black media studies, are: Who represents? and Who is represented? These were, in many ways, the guiding questions for a vast number of our authors. Questions of power and privilege, of race and sexuality, of archive and origin story, do not equally structure authors’ answers to these seemingly simple questions. As Angharad N. Valdivia notes in her article on Latina media studies, underrepresented voices seeking to assert themselves are rarely welcomed with open arms. Instead, more often they face “omission—which is seldom total, as marginalized populations sign in through absence, their implicit presence a backdrop against which theories implying purity and practices perpetuating homogeneity can be inscribed,” or “the tokenistic special sidebar.” While some of the fields represented in our special issue have ascended to institutional legitimacy, others are still fighting to break free of stereotyped presumptions and cultural dismissal. It is precisely for this reason that we felt it was important for some of these areas to be represented here.

In answering questions about who represents and who is represented, a number of the authors trouble assumptions, from binaristic thinking to origin

stories. As Kishonna L. Gray notes, where feminist scholars highlight the complexities of gender, masculinity studies moves the conversation “beyond men’s bodies and biology” to a “politically, socially, physically, and emotionally charged identity experience.” Joanna Hearne’s article on Native American and Indigenous media troubles the narrative of female exclusion, for she points out that not all film communities experience the hegemonic patriarchy of white North American cinema: “Of the films and videos screened at the 2017 imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, 72 percent were made by Indigenous women directors.” This, she notes, “is the exact inverse of the notoriously dismal numbers in Hollywood and the independent film industry; of independent films screened at high-profile festivals in the United States in 2016–17, 72 percent of those working in key behind-the-scenes roles were men.” Isra Ali troubles origin stories of feminist documentary that work to create explicitly political and “visible categories of women as filmmakers, distributors, and audiences,” suggesting that these stories reinscribe white Western women as central subjects of the cinematic gaze. In her genealogy of film history Maggie Hennefeld challenges the long-standing assumption that the “historical turn” in film studies resulted in a rejection of feminist theory, arguing that “this founding myth conceals the profound degree of imbrication between feminist film history and feminist film theory, which has been vital to the field since the inception of feminist film studies.”

The articles collected here demonstrate that just as the media in “feminist media studies” are plural, so are our archives, our methodologies, and our approaches. For instance, Laura Helen Marks and Suzanne Scott combine their fannish enthusiasm for the texts they study with a critical attention to marginalized subjects. Krystal Cleary and Marina Levina underscore the relationship between disenfranchisement, the bodymind, and technology. In her genealogy of scholarship on censorship and regulation, Ellen Scott emphasizes the decisive impact of feminist methodologies, noting that “feminist scholarship deserves much of the credit for moving the study of censorship beyond the macro level and the legal to account for censorship’s textual and audience affects. Perhaps because of its preference for daring, tramontane methodologies, it has embraced the media text’s throbbing, vital connection to the human and institutional bodies that produce, cut, and receive it.” In her entry on postfeminism and popular feminism, Sarah Banet-Weiser writes that scholarship on both post- and popular feminism, as “a set of ideologies, strategies, and practices,” necessitates archives of “media, merchandising, and consumer participation.”

The authors' approaches are also quite varied. Some wrote overwhelmingly personal pieces, while others maintained a more traditional distance. In the personal pieces, a number of the authors take the opportunity to unabashedly pay homage to their scholarly heroines. In his entry on queer media studies, Hollis Griffin describes "having my mind blown by Janice Radway's and Tania Modleski's work as a graduate student," while Lori Kido Lopez writes similarly of Celine Parreñas Shimizu in her entry on Asian/American feminist media studies, and Madhavi Murty praises Stuart Hall in her article on postcolonial media studies. Many of the authors point out that while these scholarly giants played a fundamental role in the creation of their fields, not all of these people produced work directly in their subfield. In her article on critical race theory and feminist media studies, Katherine M. Bell notes that Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks, while "generally considered neither feminist media studies nor CRT scholars," have a vast legacy that "continues to resonate in feminist media research."

While eager to track the relationship between intellectual fields and confident that these brief genealogies would reveal patterns of scholarly influence, we knew these essays could only tell a partial story of the influence of feminist scholars on media studies. We were curious to see if we could identify other ways in which individuals and institutions had impacted the discipline. There were two areas in particular we wanted to examine further: patterns of scholarly influence and genealogies of personal mentorship.

In order to build a genealogy, we tried to capture data through a survey about institutions, influential scholars, and significant mentors. We imagined a feminist family tree of media studies scholarship, in line with user-content-driven web databases like the Mathematics Genealogy Project or the Academic Family Tree, which are fascinating examples, but generally reinforce the predominantly white and patriarchal lineage of these fields. What we found as we began to code the data was not just names of scholars with significant mentoring track records and generations of mentees, but an astonishingly long trail of advisors and advisees that crossed generations, institutions, countries, and areas of study. We saw that quite a number of respondents listed peers among their mentors. One respondent stated: "In addition to the feminist media scholars who mentored me, I had the privilege of having important peer influences and relationships with scholars." Peer networking has been common, and often seen as a lifeline for those who cannot find support from official advisors. Much of the work that women are asked to do in this field includes the emotional,

participatory labor of mentorship and community building. As designer Fabiola Hanna writes in the statement accompanying her visualization of this data, creating a framework to capture the full extent of these scholarly and personal interrelationships presented considerable challenges—and necessitated moving beyond traditional, patrilineal forms of visualization.

In gathering data from this survey, we realized all that had been left out. What about publications (journals like *Feminist Media Studies* or book series like the University of Illinois Press's *Women and Film History International*), conferences (Women's Film and Television History), scholarly websites (Fembot Collective, Women Film Pioneers Project), community portals (FemTechNet), graduate seminars, colloquia (like those organized by Ana M. López at Tulane University), or formal and informal caucuses within HASTAC, ASA, ICA, IAMCR, SCMS, IAMHIST, ECREA, MeCCSA, and AoIR?¹ These venues, as one respondent detailed, "support intellectual exchange, activism, and friendship." Our labor as academics is not confined to the classroom, the written page, or (for some) administrative duties. As scholars, much of our time and energy is taken up by service work as official advisors, unofficial mentors, and informal cheerleaders to our students, colleagues, and other scholars both at our home institutions and broadly within the field. Research shows that women and people of color are far more likely to carry the burden of the emotional labor of mentorship and advising within academe—work that is rarely rewarded, if even acknowledged.²

After the survey had ended, we realized all the questions that we wished we would have asked. If we were to survey people again, we would be curious to hear more about the places—both physical and virtual—where scholars have found intellectual community and fertile ground for professional growth, such as gatherings like QGCon, Different Games, and Console-ing Passions. Console-ing Passions began in 1989 as a place for feminist media scholars and media artists to share their research and creative work on issues of television, culture, and identity, with a particular emphasis around gender and sexuality. Feminist media studies scholars, many of them frustrated or bored by the masculinist spaces of many media-oriented conferences, as well as the particularly cinema-centric space of what was then called the Society for Cinema Studies, were looking for alternate spaces to create a scholarly community around feminism, television, and video. The conference has never been a membership organization, but rather a community guided by a board of scholars. The original board included Julie D'Acci, Jane Feuer, Mary Beth Haralovich, Lauren Rabinowitz, and Lynn Spigel. The current subheading of the organization—"the International Conference on

Television, Video, Audio, New Media, and Feminism”—speaks to the flourishing scholarship within this area, as well as the desire by the board to bridge feminist media scholars and artists across platforms and across national boundaries. Alternately, what about informal gatherings at other conferences—for instance SCMS’s long-running *Grrrls Nite Out*—that have provided springboards for mentorship, community, and connection? A number of scholars mentioned particular seminars in graduate school that had focused on feminist methodologies and made a profound impact.

In conceiving this project on feminist genealogies, our hope is to expand and reshape understandings of how feminist media studies is related to other areas of study. As editors, we also want to consider how feminist media scholars can chronicle, develop, and expand citation practices and the associated forms of recognition and extension of the field(s). We want to think more broadly about feminist work and the women, gender-fluid folks, and other people who produce this important research. Our experience with the survey suggests that it would be useful to consider all of the people who have mentored us and the numerous texts that have inspired our writing and thinking. Condensing these lists makes them appear to be a canon rather than the more wholesale recognition that we intended. Our genealogy essays also provided challenges that might be addressed in continued writing and editorial work. In crafting these essays with other scholars, it became clear that participants found it much easier to chronicle a series of intermeshed research areas than to imagine how to expand their work into other ways of thinking, different queries, and articulations of new scholarship. As feminists facing challenging political times, it is difficult to think about the future, especially fields and areas that presume incremental developments and improvements. With such developmental and future-oriented mindsets, scholarship is supposed to be supplanted by something inherently “better” and individuals are expected to become more empowered.

One challenge of thinking about future work and genealogies is the definitional problem of who “we” are. Media studies has emerged from an array of departments and disciplines, and feminist media studies continues and elaborates on the possibilities of studying in different places and working with diverse people and texts. While our editorial sketch of research areas is provisional, is intended to promote research considerations, and has admitted gaps, the wealth of other areas and topics that respondents submitted to the survey provide a reminder of our diverse identifiers and practices. The “we” of feminist media studies is a complicated and ambivalent term that threatens to limit what can be done and who can be included. The genealogical project and essays that

follow were solicited because of the editors' concerns about the continuing consolidation of "we," especially as it relates to research citations and the recognition of a small, core set of scholars. We began this project as an antidote because too many citations still point to scholars who are men, white, heterosexual, and/or from a small number of Western countries.

Identifying as "we" can also offer vital collective connections and political commitments. The feminist engagements that allow a provisional we, or the kinds of political and hybrid affinities that are proposed in Donna Haraway's work and that are addressed in the genealogies, are particularly important in this contemporary moment where society continues to curtail women's choices and dismiss their voices.³ Feminist media studies interrogates such limitations of women's rights, representations, and experiences. The structural control and objectification of women are also countered by the resistant practices of women who remind us #YesAllWomen and #MeToo. These hashtags, and the related activist engagements, are everyday reminders that women and other disenfranchised people continue to be raped, sexually assaulted, and threatened while speaking up and living their lives. The #MeToo hashtag points to the need for feminist genealogies that keep Alyssa Milano's use of the term and her media appearances in tension with the activist work of Tarana Burke, who was not initially cited for her articulation of and earlier use of the term.⁴ For feminist media studies scholars, #MeToo should also encourage considerations of the ethics of engaging auteurs and aesthetic work without considering how greatness is defined and who is oppressed in the continued celebration of producers who have abused women. A genealogy of these questions might look back to the foundational work of such scholars as Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock, which chronicled how gender norms prevent women artists from participating in practices and meeting criteria that are associated with greatness.⁵

In a related manner, our genealogy project underscores how difficult it is to reject citation practices that focus on the classic works of white heterosexual men. Many of the authors found it challenging to tell the story of their area in a different manner—a distinctive method that would include the very texts that they find important. Feminist research continues to underscore how women are disenfranchised through reference methods. In Mira Schor's research on patrilineage, she identifies the tendency to reference male producers and theoreticians when creating a lineage for women producers, even among feminist women who base their work on the practices of other women.⁶ Danica Savonick and Cathy N. Davidson's annotated bibliography on the HASTAC site highlights work that addresses gender biases in academia.⁷ These biases should be countered with

increased force as they are now combined with online and local pressure to dismiss women and other people with nonnormative positions.

Feminist and queer scholars such as Robyn Wiegman, Kathryn Bond Stockton, and Lee Edelman indicate the problems with growth and development narratives, which tend to be buttressed by investments in heterosexual unions and traditional family structures.⁸ For instance, Wiegman asserts the difficulties with progress narratives that are a part of academic disciplines. Investments in research progress and developing fields are accompanied by indications of what is wrong and missing in previous scholarship, including the ways women's studies and feminist research have been displaced by gender studies. Progress narratives suggest that new methodologies and new areas of study can supplant previous problems and be more inclusive. Wiegman encourages a consideration of what is condensed and displaced in such progress narratives, as well as the unlikely goal of establishing all-inclusive and functional research practices. Wiegman's argument encourages a review of feminist texts and areas of inquiry that have been displaced through such developmental practices, and thus research that refuses the inherent movement forward and incorporation of the new. In this issue, Roshanak Kheshti's genealogy of sound studies prompts her to propose that perhaps we should "dispense with the presumption that the feminist margins should always wish to be incorporated into the non-feminist hegemonic center. Feminist sound studies reveals that there has always been a sonic undercommons and gendered outside."

As an alternative, Kathryn Bond Stockton proposes the possibility of "growing sideways" rather than the relentless imperative to grow up and move forward. This directive to move up might be related to the debilitating and sometimes impossible mandates for developing academic careers and recognition. Stockton's evocation of the ghostly queer (and feminist) child, who still lingers in many people's lives and informs political and affective practices, should not be seen as a testimony of childish wrongness, but instead as an indication of the narrowness of cultural categories and values. The echo of the ghostly feminist and queer child grows sideways and can therefore take an array of research paths, including some of the liberties our authors discovered. This ghostly figure points to the possibility of finding childish research pleasures and angrily resisting media texts.

Inspiration is also offered through the sex debates, queer erotics, women's desires, and assertions of other bodies and minds that are mentioned in a number of the genealogies.⁹ A rethinking of canonical authors and texts, and the continued generation of feminist media studies genealogies, might be linked

to such practices as rebuffing established research rules, delightedly reusing scholarship that has been dismissed, redefining the media under study, articulating diverse intersectional practices, inaugurating feminist media studies approaches to ethics and care, and repudiating media products that have been made under conditions that oppress women, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Our hope as editors is that these essays, rather than functioning as staid histories or conclusions, will encourage continued consideration of the relationships between and across areas of feminist media studies and related disciplines. ■

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NOTES

1. HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory), ASA (American Sociological Association), ICA (International Communication Association), IAMCR (International Association for Media and Communication Research), SCMS (Society for Cinema and Media Studies), IAMHIST (International Association for Media and History), ECREA (European Communication Research and Education Association), MeCCSA (Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association), AoIR (Association of Internet Researchers).

2. Marcia L. Bellas, "Emotional Labor in Academia: The Case of Professors," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 561, no. 1 (1999): 96–110; Shelley M. Park, "Research, Teaching, and Service: Why Shouldn't Women's Work Count?," *Journal of Higher Education* 67, no. 1 (1996): 46–84.
3. Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," *Socialist Review* 15, no. 2 (1985): 65–107.
4. Tarana Burke, "The 'me too.' Movement," Just Be Inc., January 6, 2017, <http://justbeinc.wixsite.com/justbeinc/the-me-too-movement-cmml>.
5. Linda Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988).
6. Mira Schor, "Patrilineage," *Art Journal* 50, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 58–63.
7. Danica Savonick and Cathy N. Davidson, "Gender Bias in Academe: An Annotated Bibliography of Important Recent Studies," HASTAC, January 26, 2015, <https://www.hastac.org/blogs/superadmin/2015/01/26/gender-bias-academe-annotated-bibliography-important-recent-studies>.
8. Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
9. Mariana Valverde, "Beyond Gender Dangers and Private Pleasures: Theory and Ethics in the Sex Debates," *Feminist Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 237–54; Carole S. Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).