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## Celebrating 30 years of Feminism & Psychology

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Editorial

Feminis Psycholog

### Celebrating 30 years of Feminism & Psychology

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#### Abstract

Feminism & Psychology (F&P) was launched in 1991 with a sense of possibility, enthusiasm and excitement as well as a sense of urgent need – to critique and reconstruct mainstream psychology (theory, research methods, and clinical practice). Thirty years have now passed since the first issue was produced. Thirty volumes with three or four issues have been published each year, thanks to the efforts of many. On the occasion of F&P's 30th anniversary, we, the present and past editors, reflect on successes, changes and challenges in relation to the journal. We celebrate the prestigious awards accruing to the journal, its editors, and authors, and the significant contributions the journal has made to critical feminist scholarship at the interface of feminisms and psychologies. We note some of the theoretical and methodological developments and social changes

**Corresponding author:** Catriona Ida Macleod, PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa. Email: c.macleod@ru.ac.za witnessed over the last three decades. We highlight challenges facing feminist researchers in academia as well as international feminist publishing. We conclude that the initial enthusiasm and excitement expressed by the then editorial collective *was* justified. But, there is still much work to be done.

#### **Keywords**

feminism, psychology, Feminism & Psychology

The launch of *Feminism & Psychology* is predicated on a sense of possibility: both in our awareness of the particular set of social and historical conditions that have made it possible; and our enthusiasm and excitement about the future and what may be possible to achieve. (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 5)

These are the opening words of the editorial published in the first issue of *Feminism & Psychology* (F&P) in 1991. Written by Sue Wilkinson, "aided and abetted" by Susan Condor, Christine Griffin, Margaret Wetherell, and Jennie Williams, the editorial inaugurated a journal that would seek to rectify "our discipline's [psychology's] failure to engage with the lives of the majority of women, and the distortion and damage often produced when it does engage" (p. 5).

Thirty years later, we reflect on what has been "possible to achieve". Was the initial enthusiasm and excitement expressed by the original editorial collective warranted? What do we have to celebrate? How have the social and historical conditions within which feminisms and psychologies are practised changed? How has F&P itself changed? What are the current challenges in publishing papers at the intersection of feminisms and psychologies? As current and past editors, we reflect briefly on each of these questions.

#### Celebrations

*Feminism & Psychology* has much to celebrate. The journal itself, two of the editors and two papers have received prestigious awards in recognition of the leadership and quality of the scholarship featured in the journal. In 2013, *F&P* received the Distinguished Leadership Award from the Committee on Women in Psychology of the American Psychological Association. The citation for the award was as follows:

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Committee on Women in Psychology, we acknowledge the leadership of the editorial team of *Feminism & Psychology*, an international, feminist, peer-reviewed journal, for encouraging, supporting, and showcasing cutting-edge and transformative feminist theory and research. *Feminism &* 

*Psychology* has provided a forum for critical, radical, and provocative feminist scholarship that serves as an impetus for social change and for theoretical and methodological innovations in feminist psychology. *Feminism & Psychology* has contributed to the transformation of psychology, has helped to clarify the dynamics of oppression and discrimination, and has stimulated new directions in the theories, methods, and practices of feminist psychology. We salute the Editorial Boards of *Feminism & Psychology*, who, since the journal's inception, have truly been leaders for women in psychology.

High praise indeed! In addition, two of F&P's editors have received the Carolyn Wood Sherif Award from the Society for the Psychology of Women of the American Psychological Association (Jeanne Marecek in 2017; Sue Wilkinson in 2020), which is given annually to a senior individual based on sustained and substantial contributions to the field of the psychology of women as a scholar, teacher, mentor and leader. In 2013, an article by Lisa Cosgrove and Emily Wheeler, which appeared in Volume 23(1) of Feminism & Psychology, received the Distinguished Publication Award (DPA) of the (US) Association for Women in Psychology. This award is given for published work that makes significant and substantial contributions to research and theory that advances understandings of the psychology of women and/or gender. In 2020, Emily Thomas was awarded Honorable Mention for Psychological Research on Women and Gender by Students in a competition sponsored jointly by the (US) Society for the Psychology of Women and the Association for Women in Psychology. Her article (co-authored with her supervisor, Maria Gurevich) appeared in Volume 31(1) of Feminism & Psychology. These awards acknowledge the value and impact of the *critical* feminist work published in *Feminism & Psychology*; the centrality of such critical scholarship sets F&P apart from its sister journals (Clarke & Braun, 2019).

The work published in F&P has impacted significantly on feminist scholarship. Take, for example, the article by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan (1993), in which they trace across time the thoughts and feelings of two 12-year-old American girls who were interviewed as part of a 5-year longitudinal study of girls' psychological development. The article has been cited 3947 times and continues to be taken up by scholars nearly 30 years later (cited 114 times in 2020 and 2021 at the time of writing this editorial). Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley's (1999) paper, in which they critically analyse the concept of hegemonic masculinity, has been cited 1371 times, including 112 times in 2020 and 2021 at the time of this writing. These are just two examples – there are many others. The continuing interest in these and many pieces of work that F&P has published underscores the enduring importance of the thinking, theorising, researching and writing that F&Phas brought to scholars' attention.

F&P has published 122 issues since its inception (this issue is the 123rd). The range of topics covered in these issues is vast – as illustrated in the analyses appearing in the current editors' inaugural and follow-up editorials (Macleod et al., 2014, 2017). These analyses show that contributions to, and innovations

in, feminist and psychological theories and methods have featured prominently across the years, as have papers on sexualities, parenting, identity/subjectivity, intimate violence, embodiment, psychodiagnosis and psychological treatments, and marriage. We are proud that F&P has served as a significant resource for feminist researchers, thinkers, and teachers working in a range of topic areas both within and outside of the discipline of psychology.

Throughout its history, F&P's editors have made use of special formats designed to explore particular issues in depth, to call attention to emerging issues, or to stimulate critical debates. As Table 1, published in our Supplementary Materials, shows, over 70 such offerings have been published since 1991. They comprise a mixture of formats. Special Features bring together a set of cognate papers, addressing a topical issue. For example, in the wake of Sandra Bem's death, Celia Kitzinger (2015) collected a set of brief essays by social scientists, ethicists, and specialists in end-of-life care concerning feminist perspectives regarding the "right to die" in the face of debilitating conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Special Sections are guest-edited collections of essays on a subject of interest to feminist psychologists. Guest editors invite authors representing a range of perspectives to compose brief essays. A Special Section thus can bring contrasting (or even opposing) viewpoints into abrasive interaction, enabling readers to see what is at stake in holding a particular view. Reappraisals focus readers' attention on scholarly work that has played an important role in shaping feminist thought in psychology or more broadly. Guest editors invite a set of authors to reflect on the historical and contemporary significance of that work, with (if possible) a reprise by the author of the work. These Reappraisals enable readers to trace the trajectory of key ideas in the field, to see the present through a historical lens, and perhaps glimpse pathways not taken. Finally, Special Issues (SIs), helmed by guest editors, bring together a set of cognate papers written by authors responding to a broad call for papers. The SIs may open the way to new concerns or to new developments in key arenas (such as abortion and reproductive justice). By issuing broad calls for manuscripts, SIs often draw in authors from a range of disciplines who have not previously published in F&P, thus expanding readers' vision of feminist scholarship. As Table 1 published in the Supplementary Materials shows, the SIs published over the past 30 years have showcased a rich range of areas and topics.

Virtual Special Issues (VSIs) are a more recent innovation. These are online collections of previously-published articles that are focused on a topic of interest. The VSIs are compiled by guest editors who are experts on the topic. These VSIs are useful to scholars seeking to acquaint themselves with an unfamiliar area of study. They are also particularly useful to teachers who seek readily accessible material for their courses. VSIs can be accessed here: https://journals.sagepub. com/page/fap/collections/virtual-special-issues/index.

The VSIs draw together major contributions that F&P has made to feminist scholarship and praxis on a specific subject. In addition, the editorial introductions provide an intellectual scaffold for those contributions. For example, H. Lorraine Radtke (2017) outlined how the articles she selected for the VSI *Feminist Theory:* 

Dealing with Differences and Negotiating the Biological have contributed to the development of theory and critique of the complex interconnections of the biological and social/cultural worlds, the importance of sensitivity to time and place, the production and regulation of particular subjects, and the construction of contested categories of people. Michelle Lafrance and Britta Wigginton (2019) chose to anthologize a set of 15 F&P articles that speak to key methodological practices "at the heart of critical feminist scholarship" (p. 534). These are: 1) the politics of asking questions, beginning from "an assumption that research questions are never neutral, but rather steeped in, and reflective of, power relations" (p. 538); 2) attention to language/discourse; 3) reflexivity; 4) representation and attention to the mutually constitutive nature of social identities; and 5) mobilizing research for social change.

Much foundational work in feminist thought has been, and continues to be, published in book form. Books allow for the development of more sustained scholarly argument and discussion than do articles. Furthermore, ethnographic and interview-based research often yields an abundance of material that exceeds the space limitations of journals. Book reviews, therefore, have always had a place in F&P. Through the work of the book review editors (Harriette Marshall, Angie Burns, Rose Capdevila, Stephanie Taylor, Sue Jackson and Tracy Morison), the journal has published book reviews that are both informative and incisive, with the intent that they will stimulate discussion and debate around the topics with which they engage. Book reviews take up the author's theoretical, conceptual, practical, political and/or methodological contributions, and move further to develop the place and significance of these issues. The scope of the book reviews extends beyond psychology to include books across the spectrum of feminist scholarship. Through its book reviews, F&P has aimed to make a meaningful contribution to feminist community building among feminist scholars in and beyond psychology.

It is evident that F&P has contributed substantially to the rigour and quality of feminist scholarship. We are pleased that the number of manuscripts submitted to the journal continues to increase; online downloads of papers and the circulation of the journal are on an upward trajectory; and altmetric scores (social media mentions) and academic citations indicate that F&P's offerings are enjoying significant attention. Although scholars in the Anglophone Global North continue to account for a large share of both subscriptions and submissions, we are pleased to note that an increasing proportion of F&P's authors, editorial board members, and readers hail from other regions – Africa, South Asia, South America, and the Middle East. This diversity enriches the scholarship and theory that F&P presents to readers.

#### The more things change, the more they stay the same

*Feminism & Psychology* was initially overseen by an editorial collective led by Sue Wilkinson. Located in the UK, this editorial collective was able to meet annually and to interact face-to-face in various spaces in between. Nicola Gavey and

Virginia Braun, located in Aotearoa New Zealand, took over in 2007. Working in the same institution made collaboration relatively smooth. In 2013, Catriona Macleod, Rose Capdevila and Jeanne Marecek, located in three continents – South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, respectively – took over editorial responsibilities. This globalisation of the editorial office was enabled by the virtualisation of the academic world (monthly meetings held via cloud-based video communications apps, frequent email interchanges, and online manuscript management).

Each set of editors has published inaugural editorials laying out their vision of the journal when they took over. In the first editorial, Wilkinson (1991) declared, "Our title is a statement of intent" (p. 9). In other words, F&P was set up as a journal that features scholarship at the nexus of feminisms and psychologies, with the signifier "feminism" taking precedence over "psychology". This intent has remained the bedrock of the aims of F & P, with Gavey and Braun (2008) and Macleod, Marecek and Capdevila (2014) confirming that the papers published in F&P must contribute in some way to feminist theory and praxis and not simply be about women or gender. Macleod et al. (2014) introduced minor changes to the statement of F & P's aims. These changes fleshed out the statement, with the intent of making it more explicit. In particular, the first sentence now reads as follows (changes in bold): "Feminism & Psychology is an international forum for debate at the interface of feminisms and psychologies." As F&P's international reach has extended, it has become ever more apparent that the perspectives and interests of feminists are inflected by local circumstances. It is also clear that, rather than a universal set of theories, practices, and ways of knowing, psychologies are (and ought to be) historically, culturally, and spatially specific.

The bedrock on which F&P was founded has not changed and remains as relevant today as 30 years ago. Nonetheless, the context within which the journal operates has undergone many changes. In the early days, F&P was unique among feminist psychology journals in publishing qualitative work. As our sister journals have come to recognise the rigour and value of qualitative research, they now publish more articles based on qualitative research than previously (Clarke & Braun, 2019). However, a point of difference between F&P and other genderfocused psychology journals is our commitment to publish *critical* feminist work, or, as stated in F&P's aims, "pieces that provide insights into gendered realities along multiple intersecting dimensions of difference, privilege and inequality" (Macleod et al., 2014, p. 5). F&P also remains committed to publishing critical analyses that scrutinise the knowledge-producing structures and "received" concepts of the discipline of psychology, as well as analyses that promote the reconstruction and reform of aspects of psychological research and practice that have been detrimental to the pursuit of equitable knowledge and social justice.

F&P reflects the theoretical developments and debates in the field as well as social shifts, both local and global. Here we provide just two examples. First, in 2008 Catriona Macleod and Sunil Bhatia noted that "Postcolonial psychology is not in its infancy, but rather in an embryonic stage" (p. 576), with few

psychologists at the time taking up the tools provided by postcolonial theory. Papers in F&P were no exception. The last decade, however, has seen rising interest in decolonisation within psychology, and an increase in F&P papers dealing directly with the gendered coloniality of knowledge, power and being (see the Special Issue (Issue 30(3)) on Feminism and Decolonising Psychology (Macleod et al., 2020)). This shift reflects the uptake of decolonial ideas and practice both in (pockets of) academia generally and in wider society. The transfer to editorship from the colonial centre (the UK) to the former colonies (Aotearoa/New Zealand; South Africa) – albeit still with white or Pakeha editors – may also have played some part.

Second, social media have come to dominate interactive spaces in ways that could scarcely be imagined when the journal was launched. The number of social media platforms has increased dramatically in recent years, along with the technologies and devices required for online connection. In a Special Issue on Feminisms and Social Media, Abigail Locke, Rebecca Lawthom and Antonia Lyons (Issue 28(1), 2018) bring together a set of papers that highlight the complexities and contradictions that social media pose for feminisms. They indicate, "Overall, the papers invite both a sense of optimism about the future potential of social media to enable and activate, but also demonstrate the difficulties involved in social media use, their liminality and the concerning way in which morality is sometimes enacted on these platforms" (Locke et al., 2018, p. 5).

#### Challenges and unfinished business

Despite the significant achievements noted above, *Feminism & Psychology*'s authors, reviewers and editors face important challenges. Some of these are rooted in the global academic environment within which F & P operates. These include audit culture and digitilisation. Some are particular to our place as an international journal navigating the complexities of feminist praxis within and across different localities and languages.

#### Audit culture in academia

Audit culture has become firmly entrenched within contemporary universities and government mechanisms that allocate research funding. In the name of transparency and accountability, the research performance of individual scholars and research institutions is, in many places, measured according to reductive one-size-fits-all ratings. In many cases, ratings translate directly into funding for institutions or, in some cases, individual researchers. Where this occurs, the high-stakes outcomes of these audit processes produce a coercive effect on researchers' decisions about what and how to research, as well as where to publish and otherwise communicate their work. *Measures* of performance inevitably become *targets* (Shore & Wright, 2015). Scholars are often under pressure to publish more and more "outputs" in particular kinds of "high-impact factor" journals, and to keep a

watchful eye on their "h-index" as if it were a suitable proxy for their standing as scholars and the value of their work.

These systems have been thoroughly critiqued, resulting in the production of documents such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) (Bladek, 2014), which has now been signed by almost 20,000 individuals and organisations in 145 countries. Yet, such systems remain pervasive in the current academic environment. At F&P, we have not been immune to them. For example, we have been advised by SAGE on how to increase citations to the articles we publish in order to grow the journal's impact factor.

Indeed, we have watched our impact factor increase with a mixture of satisfaction and disquiet. Our disquiet stems not only from our sense of being complicit in audit culture logic, with its constraining effects on scholarship and the exploitative demands it makes on scholars, but also because of the challenges this logic presents to our day-to-day decision-making (and workload). Against the backdrop of research hyper-production promoted and enforced by audit culture and an obsession with impact factor, the volume of manuscripts seeking publication is increasing, including a rising number of submissions that fall outside of the journal's aims and scope. Processing these kinds of papers demands editorial time and energy, weighing fairness to authors and their manuscripts against the need to hold firm to our vision for F&P as a home for specifically *critical* feminist scholarship.

The strain under which academics work within the current academic audit culture landscape means that they often will not take on the careful and timeconsuming work of reviewing manuscripts. This is an intensifying challenge, which has increased from an occasional challenge in the early days of F&P to what is the present normative situation: finding sufficient qualified reviewers for each submitted manuscript is a constant struggle. The solution provided by publishers, ironically, draws from the same audit logic – measure and reward performance. Now reviewers can opt to have their review recorded on Publons, a site on which peer review and editing are verified so that researchers can track their "research impact".

It seems unlikely that Publons will have a major impact on the researchers' career prospects or funding applications, and we are sceptical about its usefulness (let alone its worth), as a "carrot" to encourage already overworked academics to review (more) manuscripts. Importantly, though, it illustrates how audit culture fails to engage with the labour-intensive cycle of activity academic life has become, the subjectivity of academics within neoliberal universities, and the impacts of these. As Gill (2016) has argued, academics have, in many ways, become model neoliberal subjects: autonomous, self-motivating and responsibilised. But this context produces what Gill calls "hidden injuries". As editors of F&P, we are painfully aware that the pressure on academics is gendered, racialised and class- and ability-based, with many of our authors, reviewers and readers, as Rickett and Morris (2021, p. 87) have cogently put it, "mopping up the tears in the academy".

#### Digitalisation of academia

Younger readers may be astounded to know that, in the early years, submitting a manuscript involved sending multiple paper copies to the editor, who then sent out a paper copy to each reviewer, who then sent in a paper review – all by snail mail! Digitalisation has enabled many new and positive ways of operating in academia. Not only has it enabled smoother submission, reviewing, editing and administrative processes, it also gives scholars ready access to online articles (through university subscriptions, open access, or research repositories). Another advantage is increased accessibility not just online but through screen readers, so those for whom reading (in the normative sense) is difficult or impossible have access to other modes of gaining content/ideas – at least potentially. It facilitates academic collaboration across geographic regions (as is the case with the current editors). Recently, it has permitted the continuation of teaching and learning forced online by the COVID-19 pandemic – albeit with mixed and uneven results.

While there are many advantages of digitalisation, there are also many disadvantages, not least of which is the existence of a "digital divide" that widens existing inequalities within and between countries. A particularly pernicious aspect of digitalisation is its propensity to dovetail with audit culture. While digital platforms create new possibilities for communication, knowledge dissemination, and promotion of intellectual "products", authors are incited to do the added and often uncounted and undervalued work of marketing their papers. They are asked to write a blog about the piece, upload details on social media sites, and tweet about its key messages. As authors vie with one another in an increasingly overloaded space, altmetric scores of papers – the *number* of times they have appeared in research blogs, media, bookmarks on reference managers and social networks – stand alongside the metrics of "citations" on journal sites.

Although some *individuals* have managed to "resist", and to embrace concepts and practices such as "slow academia", successful wider collective resistance seems hard to mobilise, at least in the Anglo-Western university spaces. For any Star Trek fans, it seems that the neoliberal university is, in fact, The Borg, and any "resistance is futile". And perhaps in this context, where so many of us academics are such good neoliberal subjects, resistance is the wrong concept to promote, imagine, or aspire to. Does it just become another measure of failure? Instead, should we imagine a different task? In the very first issue of F&P, Michelle Fine and Susan Gordon (1991) reflected on life at the intersection of feminisms and psychologies. Responding to a question of whether feminism had transformed psychology (their answer: "only somewhat"), they shifted focus, and offered instead a different task – of imagining different (unimaginable) futures, noting "we can and do touch women's material lives by draining limited ideologies of 'what must be' and by pumping elaborated images of 'what could be'" (p. 25). Instead of asking a repeated question of "how can I/we resist the what must be of neoliberalised universities?", might we instead focus on how we - and the journal – can pump elaborated ways of *what could be* and how *we* could be, within these confines?

#### Practising transnational feminisms and psychologies

*Feminism & Psychology* is an international journal. SAGE's annual reports show that organisations across the globe subscribe to the journal, and authors from a range of countries submit manuscripts. Our task as editors, therefore, is to maintain the "both/and" perspective of transnational feminisms: contextual specificity balanced with chains of equivalence *across* contexts. This balancing act is complicated. It requires paying simultaneous attention to cross-cutting issues of interest to readers in diverse locations *and* to the nuances of contextual power relations.

A further complication arises in contemplating the coloniality of knowledge – how what is seen as universal or cross-cutting knowledge is pre-defined within (neo)colonial power relations in which Global North perspectives are taken for granted. As editors, we constantly have to remind ourselves and our authors of this tendency. For example, authors from some Global North countries often fail to locate their work. They often neglect to indicate not only the social, economic, cultural and gendered contexts within which the study was conducted, but also the very country from which the research emanates!

In specifying the aims of F&P, the current editors have purposefully used the plural form of feminisms and psychologies to denote the multiple forms of praxis of these two broad fields within and across locations. We publish critical feminist work and are not interested in articles that measure "gender differences". At the same time, we are aware that what counts as "critical" work in one geographic context is not necessarily so in another. We sometimes receive submissions in which authors rely on concepts or methods that have been thoroughly critiqued in other contexts, but which may continue to have relevance in their contexts. We often debate our role and responsibility in these cases. In the end, our time is limited and we regret not having the capacity to engage in extended conversations that might help to bridge this gap.

#### Language

F&P is published in English. This clearly limits the scope of the journal in terms of ideas, theories, and methodologies conceptualised and written in other languages. It also limits the possibility of publishing in the journal for people who are not fluent in English. This Anglo-centredness restricts our role and contribution as a truly "international" journal.

Overcoming such limitations is in part tied to resources. Authors not fluent in English could, in theory, engage translation or editing services. Or the journal could publish abstracts in different languages. But adequate translations require disciplinary knowledge for sense making, as the practice of translation is not about linguistic equivalence only, but also – and more importantly – conceptual

equivalence. Such translations are very expensive. External editing services are, likewise, not cheap and require disciplinary expertise. In this, material and linguistic realities collide, creating multiple barriers to publishing in F&P for those whose facility in English is limited, and for those papers published in the journal to reach an audience outside of the Anglophone world.

#### Conclusion

Despite the challenges noted above, *Feminism & Psychology* has achieved a great deal over the last 30 years. With the breadth, depth, quantity and quality of papers we have published, *F&P* has created a vital space of cutting-edge critical feminist scholarship in and beyond psychology. It has afforded authors, reviewers, editors, teachers and readers a community of practice from which to draw in research, lecturing, and praxis. The Special Issues, Special Features, and Reappraisals, as well as the Virtual Special Issues, have collated core themes, topics and approaches in critical feminist psychology, affording opportunities for reflection and synthesis.

While there are no easy solutions to the challenges noted, overall our sense is that F&P has a strong foundation that will enable it to thrive and to contribute to feminist scholarship in psychology and beyond for the next 30 years. The gendered, racialised, classed, and locational inequalities foregrounded and exacerbated by the global COVID pandemic are evidence of why such scholarship is essential, and why outlets such as *Feminism & Psychology* are so important and must be supported.

The success of F&P rests on the labour and passion of many people: authors, reviewers, editors, the production office, the SAGE office, and editorial assistants. Reviewers' generosity in providing substantial and constructive feedback to authors, and authors' graciousness in working with feedback both contribute significantly to the rigour of the works we publish. Founded on the inspiration of the original editorial collective, the journal has thrived through the collective energy and efforts of feminists around the world. It has been a privilege to read, review and publish the extraordinary work that has featured in the pages of F&P.

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#### Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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