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Un/Re/Doing Gender in Consumer Research: In Conversation with Pauline Maclaran, Lisa Peñaloza, and Craig Thompson

JENNA DRENTEN, PAULINE MACLARAN, LISA PEÑALOZA, AND CRAIG J. THOMPSON

In line with this issue of the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* on “Genders, Markets, and Consumers,” this article documents a panel conversation with three exceptional scholars in the domain of gender and consumer research—Pauline Maclaran, Lisa Peñaloza, and Craig Thompson (see fig. 1). These scholars were among many who paved the path for gender-focused consumer research, taking it from a fringe discipline to a fundamental domain of inquiry in the marketing academy. Panelists were selected by the co-editors of this issue. Questions were provided in advance and sought to better understand the panelists’ perceptions of the current state of gender and consumer research and potential pathways for the future of the field.

The panel conversation is as much a celebration of progress and breakthroughs in the field as it is a continued call to action—a call for scholars to critically explore the role of the marketplace and consumption in doing, undoing, and redoing gender, with consideration for the interlocking nature of race, class, sexuality, class, age, nation, religion, and so on. Classic conceptualizations of “doing gender” highlight how gender is reproduced through interactions and the inevitability of gender inequality (West and Zimmerman 1987). However, some scholars suggest an overemphasis on manifestations of gender conformity obscures the ways in which gender might be “undone” to upend gender inequality (Butler 2004; Deutsch 2007; Risman 2009). A rebuttal argument posits gender can be “redone” but never “undone” (West and Zimmerman 2009). These un/re/doing gender debates are reflected in the panelists’ comments and central to gender-focused scholarship in consumer research.

The panel conversation took place on June 23, 2020, via Zoom (see video S1, available online). The timing of the June 2020 panel conversation intersected with sociocul-

tural, political, and economic factors, namely, (1) the global coronavirus pandemic and (2) the series of protests against police brutality and racial injustice. These events, among others (e.g., the #MeToo movement), reflexively shaped the conversation. Such forces represent a critical juncture for doing, undoing, and redoing gender in and through marketplace interactions. To that end, this article invites scholars to reflect upon what it means to be a “gender scholar” in the field of marketing—at this particular moment in time—and to reimagine possibilities for the future of gender-focused consumer research.

ON BEING A GENDER SCHOLAR IN THE MARKETING ACADEMY

Jenna: We’ll start out with open question to each of you. What does it mean to be a “gender scholar” in the field of marketing? Craig, can we start with you?

Craig: I don’t consider myself a gender researcher per se. It goes back to my sort of prep days in the PhD program. I was originally trained in working in a domain known as existential phenomenological psychology, which was about how people experience the world, how they make sense of their experiences and construct their identity. That sphere of study aligns itself with a lot of the qualitative turn that happened in the field, but it was kind of weak on thinking about how social structures influence those experiences. My turn to thinking in a more sociological perspective, away from the psychological framework, was through gender. It was through the work of people like Susan Bordo and Judith Butler that I became introduced to the work of Michel

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Pauline Maclaran

Professor of Marketing and Consumer Research, Royal Holloway University of London



Pauline Maclaran is Professor of Marketing and Consumer Research at Royal Holloway University of London. Her research interests are in consumer culture especially in relation to gender issues and feminist perspectives. Pauline earned a Ph.D. from the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. She previously served as faculty at The Queen's University of Belfast, De Montfort University-Leicester, and Keele University.

Lisa Peñaloza

Professor of Marketing, KEDGE Business School



Lisa Peñaloza is Professor of Marketing at KEDGE Business School in Bordeaux, France. Her research explores how people collectively produce identity and community in consumption—and how they integrate such identities and communities in marketplaces, with attention to the politics of market activity. Lisa earned a Ph.D. from the University of California-Irvine. She previously served as faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder and EDHEC Business School.

Craig J. Thompson

Churchill Professor of Marketing, University of Wisconsin-Madison



Craig J. Thompson is the Churchill Professor of Marketing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Craig's research addresses the sociocultural shaping of consumption practices, the gendering of consumer culture, and the dynamics of power and resistance that are enacted through the marketplace. Craig earned a Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee and is a Fellow of the Association of Consumer Research.

Figure 1. Discussion panelists.

Foucault, who has been a foundational theorist for me. That started me down this path of thinking about how social structures affect people's identities and their social interactions. Gender became an important sociological category—by the ways people get socialized into these gender categories, they shape social behaviors, masculine and feminine ways of acting, multiple masculinities and multiple femininities. My dissertation and a lot of my early work was focused on gender dynamics. Over the years, I've been more interested in looking at the intersection of gender and social class. Intersectionality has become the term to describe research looking at those things, and there's other components that come into intersectionality aside from class and gender. There's sexual orientation. There's ethnic background, some of the things that Lisa looks at, but you know, there's only so much you can do. I've been busy enough just kind of working the class by gender intersection. I would probably consider myself more of an intersectional theorist than a gender theorist per se.

Jenna: Moving from the intersectionality point. Lisa, what are your thoughts on being a gender scholar?

Lisa: I'm going to answer that a little differently. I think it's a great time to be a gender scholar. I think there are openings for it. There are real opportunities for tackling important issues that companies, government, and nonprofits are really trying to figure out right now, partly because of a lot of the activism—around #MeToo and around Black Lives Matter—and so that's the way I was approaching this question. Although, I'll add, like Craig, it's interesting how the work you do shapes how people see you. In doing the early work, I was very interested in people who didn't quite fit into the categories. One of the things that we're still dealing with is this male-female dichotomy. There are still opportunities to look at how society is so far beyond that. You see all this fluidity and, at the same time, when you get into our marketing journals, there's a real opportunity to get up to speed. Pauline, I think it's your testimony.

Pauline: I approach [the question] from a feminist perspective, because I think I would define myself as a feminist scholar, more than just a gender scholar. I'm constantly questioning how gender ideology permeates markets, marketing activities,

and the way that if we unpack this—don't take it for granted—we reveal differing power relationships at the intersections that Craig and Lisa have talked about. That's where our work comes together as well. I think really unpacking the invisible power relations and dynamics that go on in marketing and that marketing activities contribute to. Constantly questioning; exploring. That's what it means for me.

ON BREAKTHROUGHS IN GENDER-FOCUSED SCHOLARSHIP IN CONSUMER RESEARCH

Jenna: Going off of that, with these different social dynamics, power dynamics, and how we even define what gender is or means—what do you consider a key breakthrough in our gender and marketing research throughout the past few decades?

Lisa: I think a breakthrough is increasing recognition about how marketing activity enables social formation. We're really seeing some dynamic work about some innovations around gender. At the same time, it really appropriates these kinds of social difference, so you get this kind of spectacular effect—this notion of some of the radical change that many people are trying to make happen. And I say people in consumption, people in markets as well. I think that breakthrough is really for the better. I do see this capacity for pretty dynamic change. At the same time, for the worst side of that, you see this kind of reactionary backlash where, building off of what Craig and Pauline are saying, you have this systemic domination—where social hierarchies in society get reinforced in the marketplace in that sense.

Pauline: Building on what Lisa says, I think a breakthrough has been this recognition that it's not just about the categories of males and female (see Bettany et al. 2010). We're talking about multiple femininities, multiple masculinities, multiple genders, in fact, and how marketing intersects with those, and of course, how gender overall intersects with the various categories—the intersectional categories that Craig spoke about. I think it's an exciting time actually with these new dimensions, the fluidity of gender and how the market facilitates or reinforces certain masculinities, certain femininities, and maybe works against others, go-

ing back to underlying power relationships. That's what, for me, makes a breakthrough. Craig?

Craig: I think we're in a stage of localized breakthroughs. In the field of consumer research and in marketing, you still see many segments of the field that basically treat masculinity and femininity as independent variables you code, and that becomes a point of emphasis, thereby erasing the sociocultural complexity that Lisa and Pauline have been addressing. You've got that problem, but I think there are certainly a lot of people pushing back against an essentializing view of gender and looking at the way in which gender functions as an axis of power and resistance in the marketplace (see Peñaloza 1994). A lot of critical gender studies tend to want to view the market as being a source of gender hegemony, sort of the reproduction of dominant roles or regressive roles or orthodox gender roles—what Judith Butler would call the reiteration of dominant gender categories (Butler 1993). In the consumer culture theory realm and consumer research realm, I think we've highlighted, in many cases, where the marketplace can be utilized by consumers to push back against that, and to try to transform this gender hegemony. The Hegelian synthesis that comes out of that are more recent studies. And I think the work I did with Tuba [Üstüner] was kind of looking at this, to say, it's always two steps forward, one step back (Thompson and Üstüner 2015). You push back against it, but then the dominant forces tend to kind of reconfigure in ways that can absorb and adapt to these changes and sell them back as a kind of commodity. So you've got this endless cycle of power and resistance and almost like a cat-and-mouse game, because hegemony is never easily toppled.

ON THE HISTORY AND RELEVANCE OF GENDER-FOCUSED SCHOLARSHIP IN CONSUMER RESEARCH

Jenna: Definitely. All of you have been touching on that—Pauline, your comments on power dynamics, and Lisa, your comments on the structural, systemic issues we need to attend to. Going off of that—and Lisa, you mentioned specifically things like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter—to my next question, why

at this moment in time, do you think gender and marketing scholarship is particularly relevant?

Lisa: I think part of it is because you've got powerful people speaking out. The conversation has moved to a much broader arena, but I think it's also in our field. Specifically, editors who are gender savvy and the reviewer pool is growing—that kind of attention to the to the dots. GENMAC¹ is a really exciting place. A lot of our brother or sister disciplines have had these kinds of gender focused parts of their organizations for decades now—that kind of institution. You see this also in the CCT² group and in the TCR³ group, where we're not only doing research with or about activists but making links with nonprofits and bringing people to our conferences who are engaging, either as entrepreneurs or they're doing these other things. Some of our work at that institutional level or looking at the assemblages is bringing us out and bringing in bringing those kinds of perspectives in. That's also why our research is more relevant.

Jenna: Definitely. Other thoughts on why it's relevant right now or possibly, to this point that Lisa was talking about partnering with activist groups or different ways that we can, on our side of things, make an impact?

Craig: Let me follow up on Lisa's point, and I think it comes back to the issue of intersectionality. I'll defer to Pauline on this one because she's the historian of feminism in our field (see Catterall, Maclaran, and Stevens 2005; Maclaran 2012), but I think a lot of the early feminist movement, second wave feminist movement, the big critique coming out of the next generation of feminists was it was a predominantly white middle-class social movement, who were oblivious to the specific concerns and issues that face women of color and women of different class

backgrounds. Then you get women of color who are lower middle, lower class backgrounds—they've got a particular set of socioeconomic struggles from power relations to face that are entirely different from those that are faced by upper middle-class women. There was a paper I did with Fleura Bardhi and Paul Henry, where we were looking in Australia, at upper middle-class women who had been divorced and experienced downward mobility as a result of that divorce (Thompson, Henry, and Bardhi 2018). We came up with a concept known as "reactive reflexivity," which was a variation of an idea that you'd seen in the men studies tradition, which is referred to as the cultural bribe—the idea that men are willing to accept a certain degree of social class domination, like working class men, in return for patriarchal privilege. We showed in this context, that middle-class women were willing to accept a degree of patriarchal subordination in order to attain class privilege. When you look at these sorts of issues, it can be really tricky and perhaps obfuscating if you just focus on the one dimension of gender and not look at the way in which these gender relationships are embedded in social class and these other points of ethnicity.

Pauline: Building on that, I agree in that historical overview, Craig, and I think we're at a point over the last 5 years, speaking from a feminist perspective, it has become more in vogue to be a feminist, which is great to see because, as Lisa says, more people are speaking out. More people in general are standing up to be counted. We see this from the feminist aspect as well. There's an exciting number of new younger scholars taking up feminist positions. I've really noticed that over the last 5 years, within consumer research and marketing, and I think that's really exciting. I think that has been provoked by #MeToo and the increasing realization, although we've come a certain way, there's still all these systemic barriers to progress. Again, this goes back to the intersectional aspects that we've all been raising and that Craig has just voiced. Particularly, looking past white feminism to global feminisms and the different cultural contexts of the growth of other women's movements. I think it's a very exciting time where people are prepared to voice their views more strongly, and I think that's great for our discipline.

1. GENMAC (Gender, Markets, and Consumers) is an academic and advocacy organization seeking to galvanize the gender community in marketing academia and practice: genmac.co.

2. CCT (Consumer Culture Theory) Consortium is an organization seeking to promote research, education, and other activities that contribute to the understanding of consumer culture in business and society: cctweb.org.

3. TCR (Transformative Consumer Research) is a movement within the Association for Consumer Research community that seeks to encourage, support, and publicize research that benefits consumer welfare and quality of life for all beings affected by consumption across the world: acrwebsite.org/web/tcr.

Lisa: If I could also build on what you're saying, Pauline. Some of that is drawing historical attention to what was going on at the time. I'd like to kind of suggest a counternarrative: I'm not sure that second wave [feminism] was just white women. I think that's the way it's been depicted. But if you look at what was going on, within people of color, they were activists as well, and there were issues within those communities. I think that's important to bring out, as well, in our work from a historical perspective. This idea, to come back to your question, Jenna, and this notion of why it's relevant now is, when we were doing some of that early work, that was like, "a women's issue" and then you had this sense of, "Oh, well, okay, let's do critical studies of masculinity and sexuality, et cetera, et cetera." But I think what's happening now is this story—and let's just take Black Lives Matter; it wasn't just about Black men. It started out to be, and it rightfully should continue to be, but then there was also a transgender movement, there was also attention to Black women who had been victims of violence—so I think that story quickly became one of privilege, of white privilege. I really took a lot of encouragement from that, because I think that's really what it's going to take. That's the kind of research I think is really promising, where we can understand that you don't exactly have one without the other. Intersectionality is great to bring some of that to attention, but let's not lose sight in terms of this structuring of power because some of those intersections align in some important ways.

Jenna: Absolutely. This is off script a little, but you might have seen the Merriam-Webster story where a young woman campaigned to have them change the definition of "racism" (Hauser 2020). Right now, the definition is essentially racism is if you don't like someone for the color of their skin, and she said, that's not entirely the case. So, they are re-evaluating racism's definition to include systemic issues and microaggressions.

Craig: I like the off-script stuff. It's interesting going back to what Lisa pointed out, about the collective response, and I'm being somewhat US-centric in my perspective here. I'm not sure quite how this is being perceived in the UK or in France, but in the US, it's striking to me how different it feels in 2020 versus, let's say, 2016, after the emergence

of Black Lives Matter, after the Eric Garner murder in New York, and of course, the Colin Kaepernick NFL protest. How this, again, I'm not saying everybody felt this way, but in terms of just the popular cultural discourse, the structural factors got lost very quickly, right? You had the counternarratives of "all lives matter," "blue lives matter," "people are disrespecting the flag by these protests." Reactionary forces in the US are trying to evoke those counternarratives now, and they're being squashed. There are really sophisticated responses that you're seeing being delivered, and they're getting traction in response to the "all lives matter" saying, that's not what it's about. Michael Che, the comedian, had this great statement where he said, "how would it have been after 9/11, if I wore a T-shirt that said, all buildings matter?" (Rosen 2020). People have figured this out, and there seems to be a resonance for this pushback. You're seeing people acknowledging and talking about white privilege, which is of course a recognition of structural racism. There was an NFL football player Drew Brees, who went on social media, and said he would never support anybody who kneeled during the National Anthem because his family fought in World War II (Belson 2020). Very quickly, social media responded and said, Black folks had family members who fought in World War II, and they came back to a segregated society where they couldn't eat at certain restaurants and they couldn't buy homes in certain neighborhoods. Drew Brees was put back on his heels. He apologized. That didn't happen in 2016. My question back to the panel is: is this more of people have learned the language to speak in a woke fashion, or is this an actual change in consciousness that we're seeing?

Lisa: It's a good question, and I think there is a shift. When you have the NFL Board saying we messed up, that's huge—just bring this back to the marketplace—it seems like it's kind of been the one-two punch. The other issue that is really a game changer has been this virus. COVID-19 has made a lot of folks more vulnerable. . . . The new normal has kind of shifted. I hope, maybe that's just the optimism in me, that it is a shift because it happened so quick. It changed that narrative to these issues, and these folks have done their homework in terms of intersectionalities of race. Yeah, I think it's great.

Craig: I feel a little different, and this actually comes back to the gender issue. In some respects, several of my colleagues have been posting on social media, very critical of brands that seemed to be jumping on this bandwagon, supporting Black Lives Matter, just the same way people were critical of saying that [brands] were appropriating the feminist movement and those sorts of things. I see this as a bit of a cycle, right? I understand that these companies are pivoting because they feel, in some sense, there's probably some positive public relations value and that the NFL has been pushed to this. But when these big brands, these big sort of influencers in popular culture, come out and support a movement like this, this gives it a domain of legitimacy. That makes it harder for people to delegitimize the movement or to basically say, "it's not important" or "they don't really know what they're doing." When you have the big brands, including the NFL, coming out and saying, we want our players to protest now, we support that. That's a key moment. I think it's part of that cycle of cultural change. Even though these brands may not be truly authentic in their motivations, the fact that they're doing it has consequences in popular discourse (see Vredenburg et al. 2020).

Pauline: That ties in with Craig's earlier point about resignifications, because, in a way, it's helping effuse Butler's theory (Butler 1999) to redefine or take the conversation forward, even if it's done inauthentically. It's an action. It has a performative effect.

Lisa: You're absolutely right. Let's also keep in mind, the statements that [brands are] making are not without risk. If you go back and think about some of these early movements, you had the Chicana movement. Before the gay and lesbian market, you had the movement (see Peñaloza 1996). You had Stonewall, which there were many "stonewalls" before Stonewall, but you had a lot of activism that was happening way before companies came on board. Even when they did, it's important to note that so many other smaller companies within these communities have been a part of those movements. I think this is another opportunity for scholarship to help understand that gender domain. When companies do these kinds of things and the climate around it, they may be getting the signal right now

because of social media; well, let's also put that in perspective of who are the ones that are really railing on these things?

Jenna: That's a great parallel between the gay and lesbian movement, and companies jumping on board because even things like gay pride parades—now you see multiple companies, and it means something. Craig, what you were saying, and Pauline, as well. It actually signifies something to the people watching, to the people working at those companies, and certainly, in the US, we have seen recent legislation changes, or administrative changes with Supreme Court decisions in recent weeks (Totenberg 2020).

Lisa: That's right. At the same time, when you see these kinds of presence at the gay pride, there's still some kinds of chasms in the communities: is this a great thing? For some of them, they do make contributions to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force or other organizations. The institutions are talking, but it's still a challenge at the ground level for consumers, for workers. That's where that social dynamic plays in. It does seem that this ground is shifting. One way is by shifting that narrative to the relationality between gender, which, Pauline, going back to your book (Catterall, Maclaran, and Stevens 2000), that was that was one of the key points that we were all trying to make in that book.

Pauline: Yea, absolutely.

ON SHAPING PUBLIC DISCOURSE AROUND GENDER-FOCUSED ISSUES

Jenna: To jump ahead on this discussion of discourses and narratives, what role do you believe gender and marketing researchers could play in shaping the public discourse?

Lisa: It's a really important arena. Some of us are better at that than others—of launching blogs and responding on panels really quickly about some of these things. Our organizations also. Jenna, some of the work that you've been doing with GENMAC, in terms of communications. Certainly, ACR⁴ has

4. ACR (Association for Consumer Research) is an organization devoted to advancing consumer research and facilitating the exchange of scholarly information among members of academia, industry, and government worldwide; see acrwebsite.org.

been trying to have a forum to deal with these kinds of issues, and I think that's important. In terms of shaping the discourse, we have to be aware of it. Drawing from current events in our work is a motivation now. Our work has a little bit of a longer pipeline certainly than journalists, but the opportunities to take those issues and fold them through the kinds of theories and methods we use are a very important source of inspiration and energy.

Pauline: To reinforce what Lisa said, I do think we've come a long way actually in gender research—to get more recognition and be considered less marginalized, less quirky. You see gender publications in all the major journals now—Craig getting the theorizing into *JCR* on the roller derby girls really testifies to that. It's much more of an acceptable topic now, which again, is great, because then I think we're getting more exciting theorizing and taking it forward. Craig, over to you.

Craig: I tend to want to be very pragmatic about this in terms of what kind have specific institutional change can we make? I think a lot of times, it's very easy as an academic to say, "oh, I'll write a paper about a topic that's relevant" or "I'll put some public policy implications in my discussion section, and I've changed the world." And it doesn't work that way. We all know that. Our actual means for doing this, I'm going to credit Alan Bradshaw, because I did a podcast with him a couple weeks ago, and he got me thinking along these lines, but essentially one thing we can do is make sure we have our own house in order, right? We control our own academic sphere—ACR, the CCT community, the TCR community, GENMAC—we can make sure we're doing a really good job and trying to be as exemplary as we can, and creating a diverse, tolerant fair world where there's sensitivity and respect for these kinds of gender issues, or gender concerns. That's one thing: we can try to make sure our own house is in order. The other thing is, we have to actually reach out to other institutional quarters. We don't make the change, but we can certainly facilitate and be an asset to other people who are on the ground trying to make that change, whether it's activists. I say that realizing sometimes, as academics, we may change hats. We may be an academic and put another hat on and really work on the ground as an ac-

tivist. We bring with us our knowledge, but we're still in a different kind of domain, a different set of actions. We can certainly reach out and work with activist groups. We can try to help companies be more aware of these gender issues and these intersectionalities, so they can make more socially relevant discourses, and discourses that help create positive change rather than reiterate gender stereotypes through their advertising and promotional campaigns. It's more of an outreach model and forming alliances. But the one thing I'd want to take away is, anyone that thinks they're going to write a paper that solves a problem, it just doesn't work that way. If you really want to change something, you have to get beyond just writing papers.

Lisa: At the same time, complementing with that, Craig, one of the things that I think Saul Alinsky (1971) tells in terms of his "lessons for radicals" is to stay current in keeping up with these issues and educating ourselves but also thinking through how current issues serve as a kind of a case for thinking through some of our basic constructs or some of our basic issues. A lot of us, when we came into this career, we were motivated with different things, and I believe for many of us, it was to make a difference—to understand what was going on in the world, in consumption, and in markets particularly. A lot of that is like an acid test of relevance. To circle back to your question earlier, Jenna, that's why a lot of this is relevant because the world is changing. Some of the old concepts, even in our in our field, are having to be updated. That was certainly the motivation for this textbook on market management that Luca Visconti and Nil Toulouse, and I edited (Visconti, Peñaloza, and Toulouse 2020), and people came on board because a lot of the things we were teaching just didn't work—not only because of the blurring of markets and consumption, because of the changing sociodemographics, because of these kinds of things—also because of technology. That's the real training ground. And you're right, Craig, with that pipeline, we're not going to publish a paper tomorrow, but we can spin out a conference presentation and really start to seed something and think about it. In working with organizations with that other hat, that a lot of times does need some kind of marketing or public relations, or welcomes that role.

Craig: There are other forums that are coming up, like *The Conversation*,⁵ which are designed to help people take academic work and translate it to a broader audience. Some of our journals now do that—they have PR groups that try to get work out to the press. There are institutional means out there to help facilitate that translation from the academic world, to a world where people might actually use this on the ground.

Pauline: Let's not forget our students, as well, because a lot of the time, we're changing their views about the world, and then they're going out into industries. Even if we're not actually making an impact directly with industry, working with businesses, then at least students, we are redirecting their thoughts. We're giving them new ways of thinking about the world around them, and they're taking that knowledge as well.

Lisa: To add to that, sometimes students are the ones who are seeing these issues going on, and they're scratching their heads saying, "hey, you know, this is what the field is telling me. This is what I see that's going on." That becomes a wonderful avenue for academic work.

ON CRITIQUING GENDER-FOCUSED SCHOLARSHIP IN CONSUMER RESEARCH

Jenna: I want to circle back. I think all of you talked about different ways that our literature and our academic institution as a whole are still facing issues. What might be some critiques that you have for the current state of gender and marketing research or consumer research?

Pauline: I think the need to bring more macrolevel thinking to the micro, everyday lived experience. We still see a lot of research on gender and marketing/consumer research, staying at this more microlevel of identity without really going into the more macro aspects, looking at the structural effects that cause inequality or cause privilege. We don't bring enough of the macro and the micro

together. I know Craig does this in his work frequently, brings the two together, but we still need to do a lot more of that to get depth into our research and to get more insights.

Lisa: Regarding gender, it also is something that is built into the epistemology that really focuses on difference. It's such a challenge to really look at what the kinds of similarities across gender mean. I think that's another real challenge in terms of, when they are variables, how they get operationalized, but even when they're not, even when we're thinking about these kinds of constructs, we do have these kinds of oppositions. In terms of the scholarship itself, the challenges of addressing the kinds of assumptions that we have—about roles, about what's appropriate, about what constitutes markets and marketing—these really basic constructs. That, I think, is an opportunity, but it's also a real challenge to our canon.

Craig: In terms of iterative cycles and a need for correctives, in the pushback against essentializing gender—it's not just your biologically determined masculinity or biologically determined femininity; to say, it's more complicated and fluid—and still, we shouldn't lose sight of how these gender positions are institutionally constructed. They're not just arbitrary. There's always an interest that's served when somebody inhabits a gender position, or there's an interest served when someone gets upset because someone is deviating from a gender position. It's interesting to look at the rhetorical ways and cultural ways that gender is getting used. Like in social media, there are all these videos that go around now where white women go up to people of color and get in their faces in ways they shouldn't, asking them the questions, "Why are you here?" That kind of thing. And there's a category that's been named for that: Karens (Romano 2020). You'll see on social media, people say, "hey, look, I'm a white woman named Karen, why are you making me the stereotype?" And you start to think, actually, there is a trade-off, a kind of a gender bias that's being utilized. One form of diversity is being serviced now by demonizing and vilifying one social category of middle-class white women, which is a very specific identity position. Although there have been some efforts to say, "what's the masculine equivalent of that?"; you

5. *The Conversation* is a global news network dedicated to unlocking the knowledge of researchers and academics to provide the public with clarity and insight into society's biggest problems; theconversation.com.

don't see the Ken thing, catching on the same way that Karen did. There seems to be a cultural resonance about middle-class white women engaging in these activities, even though I'm pretty sure middle-class white women are no more prone to these behaviors than middle-class white men. This is a privileged position, but yet the Karen thing seems to be what stuck. Even with the presidential primaries going back to the 2016 debacle, at least I see it as a debacle, I think Hilary Clinton's identity as that icon of upper-middle-class white femininity worked against her. It's interesting why an identity position, which is associated with class privileges, becomes a kind of liability. It becomes the cultural punching bag. Everybody can make fun of people who occupy that category. That's just one particular example. You're in that position, and then you're surrounded in a matrix of other identity positions that are trying to use that symbolic boundary for particular ideological purposes. Those are kinds of questions we can look at well beyond that specific example.

ON THE PATH FORWARD AND THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD

Jenna: That's such a good example. Lots of gender dynamics, and Pauline, to your point, it goes to that macrolevel of how a category gets created culturally. In the interest of time, I will move to a positive note, ending on, what makes you most excited about gender research in our field going forward? I ask this as myself, being a more junior scholar in the field and interested in where the field is headed—being a part of it but also hearing from those of you who have been a part of it, in shaping it.

Pauline: It's exciting because there's so much left to do. We're only just starting. There are so many issues to explore, particularly the whole global idea for me, and from the feminist side, the global feminisms—all the things we've discussed. These all raise very exciting areas for new research. I want to look at Karens now—interestingly, as you raised Craig, it's the feminine position that gets devalued again, taking the heat off the masculine equivalent. I just think there's huge scope to go forward, partic-

ularly as marketing is so dynamic. We haven't even really spoken about the technology side, but that intersection is fascinating. There's so much ground to cover there, with new technologies and how that intersects with gender and other categories. For me, it is continually dynamic, exciting and new—too many new things, actually.

Lisa: What gets me excited, in terms of the future, is this fluidity that is across and between categories. It really tests categories and at the same time, it makes them visible. I'm really encouraged by the work that's coming out at the meso-level. The field is really strong, as Pauline mentioned, in the micro where it started, and Craig, in terms of the macro. But I think there's some really exciting work to do in a meso-level, in terms of how these kinds of positionality get changed. In fact, I'll an example of some work I've been doing with Delphine Godefroit-Winkel about how Moroccan women are getting empowered in the supermarket (Godefroit-Winkel and Peñaloza, 2020). A lot of gender roles that they're dealing with at home start to change when they get in the store. They're served by men and correcting how guys are shopping. You can look at other exciting work in terms of the family, and certainly some challenges regarding families, trying to deal not only with the virus, but dealing with work transitions. Some of the work, Jenna, that you that you and Lauren have done, really points to some meso categories that are undergoing tremendous stress and change and transition. I'm really excited about it; at the same time, I'm very alarmed about it. I think these are really important areas where gender work at this nexus of consumption and markets is poised to help us figure out what the hell is going on.

Craig: Building on Pauline and Lisa's points, I think it's things that are going on with GENMAC and a lot of other sectors in the field. I feel like we've reached a tipping point, in a way, where the study of gender has kind of crossed over from being seen as a niche specialization to having people recognize its broader significance. Even just going back to job talks and job market advice that we get. Five years ago, "Oh, you don't want to be seen as just a gender person; that's too narrow." But someone who comes out doing choice optimization, they're seen as being inherently broad, right? It was a weird way that our

field looked at that. I don't want to be too Pollyannic about it, but I think we've shifted a little bit now. There's an awareness that people who are studying these kinds of major cultural categories, like the construction of gender or social class, are actually dealing with things that are very, very fundamental. I think industry has probably been ahead of the academic side of this for quite a few years, so we're kind of late to the game. But I feel that we're starting to catch up now. There's a lot more people that are coming in—younger scholars coming in with an interest in gender. I always get very excited when I see the next generation picking up the mantle, pushing forward, and going into domains that were sort of beyond the pale of what folks of our generation would have thought about doing.

Jenna: I'm very encouraged by your experiences, your advice, and the hopeful nature that you have for the future of our field and being leaders in it. Thank you so much to our panelists—Pauline, Craig, Lisa—we are so grateful that you could join us today and share your experiences of being researchers with a gender-focus and where the field might be headed in the future. Thank you.

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