

Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks

Gender

Sources, Perspectives, and Methodologies



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Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks

Gender

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Series Preface

Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Gender is an extraordinary project. A handbook traditionally is a treatise on a special subject, often a concise reference book that comprehensively covers a particular subject. Small enough to be held in the hand, intended to be carried around at all times, a handbook can be referred to as a *vade mecum*, the Latin phrase for “go with me.” This project exceeds the traditional definitions of the handbook in practically all respects.

Most obviously and immediately, a series of ten full-length book volumes on gender studies is not likely to be traveling with any one human being at all times, not even on a small handheld device in the form of e-books. Secondly, and more significantly, this series of handbooks does not aim at an all-embracing treatment of its central subject, gender. Thirdly, and relatedly, the series refutes the idea that gender is something that can be conceptualized, analyzed, or experienced fully, outside of—and thus in distinction from—the multiple intertwining frameworks (social, political, critical, theoretical, historical, philosophical, hermeneutical, and economic) in which it functions, socio-historically and culturally as a concrete, material, dynamic force, and as a signifying framework in and of itself. Although breadth and depth are critical aspects of this series of handbooks, comprehensiveness is not, nor can it be.

Indeed, rather than adopting an approach to gender questions from within a variety of distinct disciplinary frames, or thinking gender in relation to demarcated modes of sociocultural expression, praxis, and signification (e.g., gender and religion, gender and science, gender and health), each volume seeks to shake up such (undoubtedly valuable) perspectives on gender by taking on the challenge of ostensibly universal themes. Cutting through and across the specific and shifting contexts and configurations in which they operate, both historically and in the present moment, such all-embracing themes not only organize and naturalize gender in its interrelations and intersections with other forms of differentiation, such as sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, age, and able-bodiedness. Any form of universal conceptualization is also inevitably and fundamentally informed by (questions of) gender, which to some extent explains and effectively sustains, the universalizing power of, for instance, notions of Time, Space, God, Nature, and the grand narratives subtending them. While offering an extraordinary range of topics, perspectives, critical approaches, and theoretical models central to the mature field of gender studies in the twenty-first century, at the same time and as a result of its overall structure and organization, the series critically interrogates and challenges such power so that questions of gender can be asked otherwise.

The entire set of handbooks includes an introductory volume, which orients readers to a broad range of gender theories and practices in and across a variety of (inter)disciplinary fields.

The subsequent nine volumes are dedicated to the following themes: Time, Space, Laughter, War, Animals, Love, Matter, God, and Nature. The titles of the volumes are defined in such broad conceptual terms not only to open up their universalizing power to gendered critique but also to allow for the incorporation of the variety of critical, theoretical, and disciplinary perspectives on the themes, individually and collectively, that characterizes the field of gender studies. The series simultaneously offers an appealingly wide-ranging and inspiring palette of perspectives to the users of each individual handbook, whether students or instructors.

Two features make this series of gender handbooks innovative. First, most (if not all) other handbooks on gender are organized from within or around a particular disciplinary field—for example, gender in/and media, feminist science studies, and queer literary criticism—or, alternatively, appear in the form of readers with abbreviated versions of previously published work and/or classics. This series chooses a conceptual approach that encourages a thoroughly cross-, trans-, and interdisciplinary exploration of purportedly universal themes that raise the seminal questions feminist scholars and scientists typically address, as they are problematized and interrogated from a range of gender and sexually sensitive critical perspectives. Second, all the chapters making up the individual volumes have been newly commissioned and thus are based on fresh, topical research and address debates from a variety of fields—philosophy, anthropology, literature, art, music, social sciences, media (old and new), history, law, management, economics, digital humanities, rhetoric, politics, science, critical race studies, postcolonial studies, religion, and so on.

The target audience for Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Gender consists of undergraduate college students who have had little or no exposure to gender and sexuality studies. The handbooks provide an introduction to the overall theme and varied explorations of that theme from a gendered/sexual perspective. In addition, each volume contains a glossary, bibliographies with suggestions for further reading, annotated filmographies, and an index—all to encourage students to explore both the theme and the critical approaches further. In other words, each handbook combines some features of an introductory textbook with some features of a reference resource. Collectively, the volume chapters familiarize readers with the moments, movements, theories, and problems prominent within feminist and queer thinking on the volume's theme. Authors employ an interdisciplinary lens that exhibits the potential of gender and sexuality studies to contribute to the values and concerns that animate everyday human life. The interdisciplinary lens comprises all the various areas listed above and serves to frame the topic of a chapter in a way that makes it accessible and engaging to novices in gender and sexuality studies. The eminent scholars who have authored the chapters in the series have strived to make their discussions comprehensible to undergraduates and at the same time respectable in the eyes of gender and sexuality studies majors and scholars.

As editors of the series, we believe that Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Gender provides an exceptional opportunity for many people, especially undergraduate students, to become more familiar with the usefulness and joy of “doing gender and sexuality studies.”

renée c. hoogland
Editor in Chief

Nicole R. Fleetwood and Iris van der Tuin
Associate Editors

Introduction

The first of ten volumes in the Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Gender series, *Gender: Sources, Perspectives, and Methodologies* functions as a primer: a textbook or manual that serves as an introduction to a field of study. In this case, the subject is gender and sexuality studies as it has developed, matured, and come into its own since its emergence on the scene of academic research, teaching, and learning in the late 1960s, initially as women's studies. The first accredited women's studies course was held at Cornell University in 1969. The first women's studies program in the United States was established in 1970 at San Diego State College (now University) after a year of intense organizing, rallying, petitioning, as well as negotiations with seven committees and assemblies. Some fifteen years into the twenty-first century, it would be hard to find a college or university in the United States, Western Europe, or Australia that does not offer some kind of education in gender and sexuality studies, whether in the form of graduate and undergraduate degree programs or as stand-alone courses within traditional disciplines. Courses and programs are being increasingly instituted in other parts of the world as well; a master's degree program in gender and women's studies, the first of its kind in Afghanistan, was launched at Kabul University in 2015. By no means restricting its purview to the Western world, this volume focuses on the sources, perspectives, and methodologies of women's studies as it has evolved into a quintessentially interdisciplinary field, which includes feminist studies, queer studies, and men's studies; it extends across virtually all academic disciplines and, furthermore, operates in close alliance with other such politically charged fields as critical race studies, postcolonial studies, and LGBT studies (and its affiliated acronymic designators).

How to provide a manual for a field at once so diverse and so large as contemporary gender and sexuality studies without losing sight of its history, critical edge, theoretical impetus, or political thrust and at the same time doing justice to its inexorable multiplicity? In its overall design the primer opts for breadth of coverage by adopting a variegated approach to its contents. Chapters are organized around topics and themes, which may also represent a particular subfield or trend in gender-specific and sexually specific scholarly theory and practice. Chapter titles therefore range from traditional disciplinary markers, such as "Aesthetics," "Literature," and "Science," to topics such as "Race," "Health," and "Erotics" and additionally include terms that indicate trends of meaning and being that cut across any such categorical boundaries—for example, "Posthuman," "Trans," and "Postsecular." Several chapters ground the discussion of their topic in a specific form of cultural practice, such as film or fine art; others delineate their arguments around, or in response to, major critical debates and/or polemics.

Although this may appear a somewhat puzzling way of mapping out a field, the organization of the primer reflects the complexity and far-ranging implications of thinking about and

through gender and sexuality in a world that is even more complex, as much as it is increasingly swayed by a crossing of boundaries, whether geographical, practical, political, ecological, or conceptual. Gender and sexuality studies today reflects such multiplicity and complexity.

Gender: Sources, Perspectives, and Methodologies will be followed by nine volumes dedicated to broadly defined themes (Time, Space, Laughter, War, Animals, Love, Matter, God, Nature). In thirty-one relatively short chapters of approximately 6,000 to 7,000 words each, the primer covers the extensive terrain of interdisciplinary gender and sexuality studies while introducing relative novices in the field to the wide range of theoretical orientations and thematic emphases within it. The primer offers an appealingly differentiated and inspiring range of perspectives to prospective users of the series, whether students or instructors. In its function as a primary book or manual, this first volume additionally serves to outline the many and diverse ways in which interdisciplinary research has been, is, and/or “ought to be” conducted.

In order to make the book a useful and transparent teaching tool, the chapters follow a consistent structure and format; collectively, the chapters thus form accessible and rich resources for study. Each chapter opens with an introduction and outline of its topic, followed by a section in which the reader is given a strong sense of major concepts and critical frameworks for understanding how the topic, theme, and/or subfield was introduced into, and developed in the context of, both feminist scholarship and queer studies, and, conversely, how critical thought on the topic and in the subfield has been affected by feminist and queer interventions, both in terms of theoretical trajectories and with regard to the politics of theory per se. Each chapter concludes with a section that summarizes the content and highlights the important ideas the reader should take away, followed by a bibliography of works cited and works appropriate for further research. The volume as a whole concludes with an aggregated glossary and a comprehensive index.

A book like this is, by necessity, a work of intense collaboration. I first of all thank the authors, who have contributed their knowledge and insights, often working on a tight schedule and negotiating the relatively strict format that a textbook or primer chapter requires. Second, I am deeply indebted to the members of my editorial team, Nicole R. Fleetwood and Iris van der Tuin, who not only serve as the associate editors of the series as a whole but with whom I have worked side by side on this primary volume as well. Their expertise, astute insight, indefatigable energy, and friendship have and continue to be invaluable for an undertaking of this size and complexity. I am further truly grateful for the support of my graduate research assistant at Wayne State University, Judith Lakämper, who, in addition to offering indispensable editorial assistance and moral support, has translated a chapter originally in German into English. Senior editor at Macmillan Reference USA, Alan Hedblad, played a crucial role in the early stages of the project. Alja Kooistra, senior developmental editor, deserves the highest praise for keeping all the flying parts of the whole undertaking together, for her endless good cheer, and for ostensibly effortless organizing skills. Finally, I thank Hélène Potter, associate publisher of Macmillan Reference USA, for recruiting me as the editor in chief of this project in the first place and for urging me to act as the volume editor of the primer as well.

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