Toward a World Beyond Gender: A Utopian Vision

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Any utopian essay, even one based on social science expertise, is necessarily and explicitly a value-laden normative project. As invited participants of the American Sociological Association's 2012 "Envisioning Real Utopias" project, we fully embrace this kind of "emancipatory social science" (Wright 2010). As avowedly feminist scholars, we are part of an intellectual community birthed by a social movement. We have always stayed close to our feminist roots, with an explicit goal to do work that helps transform the world toward one in which gender inequality does not exist (Lorber 1994, 2005, Risman 1998, 2004).

Following Wright's distinction between social and political justice (Wright 2010), feminists of all stripes would probably agree that whatever one's sexual identity and gender practices, everyone should have the (social) freedom to choose their own paths as separate persons and the (political) freedom to join collectively with others to affect their broader community.

We will proceed presuming that there is normative agreement that people of all gender and sexual identities should, in a utopian world, be equal. Each person should be equally valuable, equally recognized in the existential sense (Butler 2004), and equally free to choose to live comfortably in their own skins without social requirements to be "feminine" or "masculine." We presume normative agreement that social institutions should not embed invidious gender distinctions into them, as do workplaces that currently presume that good employees have no moral or practical care-giving responsibilities (Acker 1990), or as universities do that spend far more funds on sports and physical activities for men than women. Using Wright's language, we presume that the goal we seek is widely shared, and we shall not spend time in justification. We

start then with a shared vision that social justice includes equality between women and men. While our expertise as sociologists does not give us moral advantage in prescribing normative goals, we believe it does give us expertise in shaping social change strategies. In this short paper, we focus on gender itself, even as we acknowledge that previous conceptualizations of ―woman‖ ignored differences across racial, ethnic, sexual, and class groups. Our utopian vision applies to women and men, privileged and oppressed, and acknowledges that privileged women have often led lives based on possibilities of outsourcing their own ―feminine‖ labor to less privileged women (Glenn 2010). Our theoretical vision encompasses people from privileged and less privileged groups, but we acknowledge that actual research on gender is must always take into account intersectional domains of inequality (Collins 1990. McCall 2005).

In this essay, we make the radically deconstructionist argument that only a world beyond gender will be a just world. We argue that the classification of some human attributes as masculine and some as feminine, and the concomitant gendering of social institutions, oppresses all human beings and renders social interaction and social institutions inherently unequal for the following reasons: All males are shaped and pressured to be masculine and all females are shaped and pressured to be feminine. These attributes and behaviors are not equally valued or rewarded.

The goal of a just world that is beyond gender is not necessarily shared by all, not even by all feminists. There are feminists with essentialist leanings who argue that physical experiences of menstruation and (for some) birth and lactation are so materially significant for psychic development that males and females are inherently different, but that these different potentialities should be equally valued and rewarded (Laws 1990, Martin 1987, O'Brien 1981). Others, more symbolically focused, argue that gender is so deeply built into the structures of

thought and language that we can never deny them, but must revalue the feminine (Chodorow 1978, Gilligan 1982). Others (e.g. Orloff 2009) argue that gender is so firmly entrenched within personal identities that no democratic process could ever lead to a society beyond gender. Our argument, and we shall present evidence to support our claims, is that despite actual biological differences that we do not deny, gender as a socially constructed institution is and can and should be de-constructed because it is inherently unequal. Male advantage and greater valuation is built into gender as a social institution (Lorber 1994).

We organize our argument by first showing how gender is reproduced as an unequal social structure at the level of individual identities, for interactional expectations, and for institutional organization (Lorber 1994, Ridgeway 2011, Risman 1998, 2004). We review the research literature to highlight the means by which inequality is constructed and reproduced at each level of the social structure. We then identify contradictions and crisis tendencies that are now occurring or we expect to occur in the near future within each level of analysis. We present evidence that there are strategies that have begun to dismantle gender as we know it (Lorber 2005). We end with some suggestions for how to quicken the pace of what we project will be an evolutionary process toward our desired goal, a society beyond gender. We argue that quick radical change (ruptural change in Wright's schema) is impossible for gender politics. There is too much attachment to the taken-for-granted habits of gendered lives and too little reflection on gendered behavior to expect rapid change. Few are willing to undergo the gender vertigo that it would require (Connell 1987, Risman 1998). Rather, we argue for a metamorphosis with a cacophony of simultaneous strategies at the level of individual, interactional, and institutional levels to undo and dismantle gender (Deutsch 2007, Lorber 2005, Risman 2004).

We cannot, in the space allotted here, articulate the social processes of gendering in any societies but those similar to our own 21st century Western democracy. To do so would be to wrestle with contextually specific gendered meanings across both geographical and technological diversity. Acknowledging our standpoint as scholars in the Global North, we provide a contextually specific analysis limited to societies where women have the technological ability and legal right to control their fertility and to participate in the public and political sphere. We acknowledge that these rights are unequally distributed in every society and more available to privileged women than others. In our discussions of the social construction of gender, we focus on such post-industrial democratic societies. When we turn to imagining appropriate social change tactics to move us toward a utopian vision, we limit ourselves to the U.S. case because the actual political strategies are dependent on previous policy decisions (see Ferree 2009, on path dependency). We argue that the re-organization of care work is central to moving beyond gender, and the historical, cultural, and economic context of care work differs between the U.S. individualist, neoliberal politic and the more social democratic traditions of the European Union.

We cannot even envision strategies to move to a society beyond gender for any place where women do not have basic human rights. In that sense, we use a modernist progressive view of human societies. Women must be seen as human beings with political rights before we can begin to envision a post-gender utopia. We have yet to see a mass social movement to dismantle gender. And yet we can now identify instances where some individuals and groups are moving in that direction. We hope to provide a blueprint to facilitate this process. We see this project as both an intellectual agenda and a volley in a feminist political movement, part of what Walby (2011) refers to as a feminist ―epistemic community‖ defined by professionals with

recognized expertise and authoritative claims to policy-relevant knowledge with a shared set of normative beliefs.

Gender as a Social Structure: Our Theory of Social Reproduction

Gender is as deeply implicated in organizing human societies as any other facet of human life, perhaps more so, as it has survived from foraging to agrarian, to industrial, and to post-industrial societies (Lorber 1994). Every society has a deeply embedded gender structure (Risman 1998, 2004). That structure may be fully and entirely patriarchal and kinship-based. It may be traditional, with male power and privilege lodged both in and outside of the family. Or it may be –modern‖ with male privilege cloaked in an ideology of choice and bolstered by a hegemonic belief in essentialist sex differences, built into the everyday institutional settings. Below we describe our modern gender structure at the analytic levels of individuals, interactions, and institutions. Every gender structure is multi-dimensional, with implications for individual identities, for interactional expectations of others, and for the formal rules of societal institutions. Change is never uni-dimensional, but always dialectical. Changes in individual identities influence interactional expectations, which may impact on institutional policies. Similarly, changes at the institutional level may reverberate to expectations for others, or individual identity. We suggest changes at each level because change in one level of the gender structure is sure to reverberate, eventually, elsewhere. Our ultimate goal is a post-modern, post-gender society at all levels.

Individuals with Gendered Selves

Although sociologists in the 20th century often pitted structural versus individualist theories against one another (see especially Kanter 1988, Epstein 1990), we argue that gender as a social structure has strong and powerful implications for individual identities and sense of self,

as well as for organizations and cultural meanings. Gender is a strong enough social structure to organize a variety of mechanisms to create gendered individuals, yet ideologically, in Western societies, gender differences are attributed to prenatal genetic programming. Gendering social practices start at birth. From that moment forward, the hospital pinks and blues them, with bracelets and hats, and parents do as well. Many parents now gender their children‘s nursery long before birth, as soon as the ultrasound shows whether the genitals protrude, or not. Behavioral socialization begins at birth, too: parents treat boys and girls differently (Clearfield and Nelson 2006), and adults evaluate and treat same infant differently depending on its attributed sex (research summarized in Fausto-Sterling, Coll, and Lamarre 2011). We expect and allow boys to play rough, to get dirty. Nowadays, some parents allow girls that same freedom. But few parents allow boys the freedom to be anything but boyish (Pollack 1999, Messner, 2011). And if the parents do refrain from explicit reproduction of gender, peers, other adults, and the media counteract their best laid plans (Thorne 1993).

The normative expectation is that children should grow up with strongly gendered selves, and they do. Such socialization also creates some degree of internalization. Once men and women have internalized some aspects of gender, they do a great deal of identity work (Schwalbe 2005) to be good at who they believe themselves to be. If a good woman should have a clean house and well-dressed children, families become gender factories (Berk 1985) where women do much of the labor to prove they are good women. In modern Western societies, we do not need coercion to force femininity and masculinity on human beings: the mechanisms for social reproduction are strong enough. Glenn (2010) argues that this powerful socialization, which leads to the internalization of the gendered belief that women should care for others out of love and with few rewards, is a form of indirect coercion that underwrites the exploitation of

women in the form of the double shift when they also work outside the home. Another aspect of the effects of gender stereotyping is the persistent gender segregation of waged work and the lesser pay when work is done by women.

Interactional Cultural Expectations

Gender cannot, however, be reduced to feminine and masculine personalities. Much of the reproduction of gender can be traced to gender as a frame, a process by which we subconsciously categorize people and react to them based on the stereotypes attached to the category (Ridgeway 2011, Fiske 1998, Fiske and Stevens 1993). The gender-framing perspective posits that gender exists as a background identity that we use cognitively to enforce interactional expectations of one another. We use gender framing to shape or explain our own behavior as well (Correll 2001, 2004). We take the expectation that men are good at leadership and women at empathy into every new setting, even new businesses that are not especially gender-typed. Such expectations create gendered behavior even in settings which are novel and might be expected to allow more freedom from gender.

When gender is used in this way, as a frame for cognition, we invoke established culturally acceptable gender norms as a reference to new situations and new kinds of relationships. As Ridgeway argues, gender then becomes the engine of reproducing inequality between women and men (Ridgeway and Correll 2000). Prokos and Padavic (2005) find that employers perpetuate the pay gap when gender stereotypes factor into their distribution of tasks, jobs, and rewards.

The interactional expectations attached to gender as a status category (Glenn 2010, Ridgeway 2011) are particularly powerful around nurturing, empathy, and caring. We expect women, and women come to expect themselves, to be morally responsible for care work. Thus,

gender remains a powerful cognitive bias at the interactional level of analysis. We ―do gender‖ to prove our moral worth, our acceptability as normal people (West and Zimmerman 1987). We want to meet the expectations that others have for us, and we often perform accordingly even if we resist the stereotypes expected of us. As Butler reiterates, we do gender and in the performance of gender become gendered (1990). These are the processes by which gender as social institution is produced and maintained on a micro level – through the gendering of individuals and the gender stereotyping of interactions in work, families, intimate relationships, friendships, and social media.

Institutional Domain: Regulations and Ideology

Gender as a social institution is organized around the principle of male dominance. Until the 20th century, there was no serious movement to end the institutional, legal, familial, and economic regulations that supported the political, economic, and cultural hegemony of elite men in most societies. Norms and ideology were married synergistically, as in most of human history, with regulatory systems and laws that privileged men supported by a religious or cultural ideology and more recently, by a biological essentialist ideology of male superiority (Bem 1994, Sayers 1990, McCaughey 2007). Traditional religious beliefs enshrine sex differences and male superiority into the sacred. And yet, it is really quite remarkable how much legal and official policy and ideology has changed in the last century, so that most of the legal systems in modern Western societies (including family law) and formal institutional and organizational rules that accompany them are gender-neutral. Progressive modes of religiosity have emerged as well. In many denominations women are now members of the clergy as well as lay leaders. That is, the ideological apparatus that justified secondary legal status for women has crumbled. In the United States, women no longer must take their husband's name, although many still do. Help wanted

ads cannot specify whether a man or a woman is desired, or how attractive a woman candidate must be. Every occupation and nearly every academic institution is open to women, although some women‘s colleges remain with the justification that they are necessary until sexism ceases to exist. There appears to be backsliding toward single-sex public schools, although research does not support their effectiveness overall (Spielhagen 2008, Billger 2009), and they most explicitly reinforce gender as a structure.

Yet such formal institutional equality has no more erased sexism, nor gender-based life patterns, than the civil rights movement and the laws it helped create have erased racism. The cultural ideological apparatus continues to exist, held firm - in the case of gender - by strong, lingering beliefs in biological essentialism and natural sex differences. We continue to have few women at the top of any ladder, except pink ones (Catalyst 2011). When professions and occupations that have lost prestige and have reduced salary levels are deserted by dominant men, leaving a niche that can be filled by women and less advantaged men, women who enter are blamed for bringing down the profession (Reskin and Roos 1990). Men have begun to share more of family and nurturing work, but the gains only look impressive if comparing today‘s men to past generations, and are not at all equivalent compared to the work women do at home (Sullivan 2007). In the United States, women continue to face combative reactionary social movements intent on decreasing their full control over fertility (see e.g. Guttmacher 2011). In many countries that are formally gender-equal, family work is the last bastion of gender inequality. Husbands may be taking on more child care and housework, but the burden of care for children and for the aged and disabled is still mostly borne by women. When privileged mothers outsource the work they are expected to do, it is usually to women of color and immigrant women (Glenn 2010, Macdonald 2011). In many working-class families, especially

where there are single mothers, child care is shared among ―othermothers,‖ who are often women kin in extended families (Collins 1990, Stacey 1991).

Although legal and institutional formal rules governing gendered practices and policies have changed, gender as a formal legal status still structures societies, and cultural beliefs and informal practices continue to support male dominance. Gender equality is legally, politically, and informally ascribed to in some ways, but actual daily practices and interactions are still shaped by unquestioned gender divisions and stereotypical beliefs that continue to reproduce men's advantages. Hegemonic beliefs, particularly in men's competitiveness and leadership abilities and women‘s empathy and care-giving capabilities, reproduce occupational and familial gender imbalances. These practices are usually attributed to ―nature‖ or ―choice.‖ The better rewards for work done by men are justified by an implicit belief that women‘s work is what women are born to do and therefore do not deserve monetary rewards.

Conscious subjectivities are shaped by gender socialization, and hegemonic ideology fosters cognitive biases. As a result, formally gender-equal institutions are still – though more subtly than before – androcentric. In combination, these forces hamper progress toward gender equality. Some argue that erasing the cultural and institutional practices of gender would be imposing an impossible and unwanted utopian vision on others (Shalev 2009, Orloff 2009). We see our vision as offering a positive alternative future to the options now imaginable.

Crisis Tendencies in the Gender Order: Limits, Gaps, and Contradictions

Feminism as a social movement has strategically attacked both formal inequality and cultural beliefs, and has been more successful in decreasing the former than the latter in post-industrial societies. We see several contradictions that are or might quickly become what Connell (1987) has labeled crisis tendencies that de-stabilize gender and open the possibility for further

change. We will discuss just a few of these: uneven change in women and men‘s lives, the critique of compulsory heterosexuality, the impending crisis in the social organization of care work, and the genderqueer youth movement.

The feminist-inspired changes in socialization toward ―girl power‖ have no doubt changed young women‘s lives. They are now encouraged to play sports, to develop their muscles, to compete with boys in school, and they are doing all of these things enthusiastically (Messner 2002). The pipeline for girls moving into math and science, while not clear, is not nearly as clogged as it used to be (Dean 2006, Fox 2011). Young women now outnumber men in colleges, and are reaching parity in graduate education, far surpassing men in doctorates in traditionally women‘s fields (England et al. 2007). But similar transformations are not yet happening for boys. Boys are not encouraged to develop traditionally feminine skills of empathy or nurturance with doll play, nor allowed much freedom to decorate themselves in what is considered a feminine fashion (see *Sociological Images* 2011). Similarly, while women are free to move into men's occupations (at least middle class ones, see England 2010), few men choose to enter traditionally less well-paid women‘s jobs.

We see this as one major crisis tendency in the gender order. Girls and women, as subordinates in the gender order, are allowed, even encouraged, to strive for what used to be solely the province of men. But boys and men are not similarly encouraged, nor even allowed, to move into the province of what was feminine. This imbalance is a logical consequence of the reality that the gender structure is a stratification system, and social movements are not likely to encourage the privileged to move into less valued roles. Rather, a counter tendency when men work in women‘s traditional fields is to restore men‘s superordinate status with fast promotions – the so-called ―glass escalator‖ (Budig 2002, Williams 1992, 1995, Wingfield 2009). Thus, in the

sphere of work, continued gender typing of occupations and men‘s privileges even when doing ―women‘s‖ work are indicators of the incomplete gender revolution (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2004; England 2010).

Another indicator is an impending crisis in heterosexual marriage. Gender equality in the domestic sphere and the opportunity to pursue a career seems to be the goal of both women and men. However, the children of the gender revolution (Gerson 2010) don‘t actually have the same heterosexual marital script in mind. If they cannot achieve a gender-equal balance between care work and paid work, young men say that their second choice is a more traditional arrangement with a wife who will work part-time or be a full-time homemaker. Their potential spouses, however, say that if they can‘t achieve equality with a partner, they‘d rather go it alone. Collective action by husbands and wives might force structural changes in workplaces toward equality that would help guarantee marital gender equality (Jacobs and Gerson 2004). Or it may mean a rise in both neo-traditional households and women-headed families. Without structural changes in workplaces or guaranteed financial support for child care, neither work nor family look like future arenas of gender equality. Perhaps African American families are bellwethers of the future here. Given the traditional definition of husband as breadwinner, the long-term trends of unemployment and under-employment in African American communities have led to more women-only families (Hattery and Smith 2007). If men in other communities fail to meet more egalitarian norms (perhaps for equality in caregiving as well employment), we may see far more single-mother families elsewhere as well.

Our utopian hope and strategy, however, is far different. We argue that to the extent women have greater power and leverage in the future, we may begin to see cracks in hegemonic masculinity. Built both "against" and "over" women, hegemonic masculinity may be

destabilized as women gain power in their heterosexual relationships. In such a scenario, women‘s requirements may lead men to take up their fair share of care work. Or, it might mean even more families with constellations different from the two-parent heterosexual nuclear structure (Stacey 2010). Either outcome would destabilize current patterns of gendered behavior, but wouldn't necessarily lead to gender equality.

Crisis tendencies in gender, however, are most definitely not limited or even primarily apparent among heterosexuals. The increasing visibility of lesbians and gay men in every aspect of cultural representation also destabilizes gender relations. Heterosexuality is deeply embedded in hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, and heteronormativity (the expectation of heterosexuality) is a building block of the gender structure (Ingraham 2006, Jackson 2003, 2006). Gay couples cast doubt on the culture of taken-for-granted heteronormativity and its gendered definitions of men and women.

Beyond disrupting norms about sexual identities, young people are also disrupting norms about the gender binary itself, publicly chafing at the confinement of the gender structure and demanding the freedom to be queer not just in their sexuality, but in their gender as well. Thus far, there is very little research on genderqueer youth (but see Factor and Rothblum 2008 and Shotwell and Sangrey 2009). The reports about them are primarily journalistic (Conlin 2011), but their presence and their demands are being felt internationally. Every day more blogs are written by people identifying as genderqueer[1] and/or transgender.[2] High school students are requesting the right to choose their own pronoun, college students are demanding gender-free

[1] See e.g. Androgyne, GenderQueerView, GenderQueerRevolution, SBearBergman, SexGenderBody.

[2] See e.g. GenderQueerView, NixWilliams, QuestioningTransphobia, RadNichole, Tranifesto, Trans-Fusion (Costello 2011).

bathrooms and dormitories, and Australia now offers passports with an –other‖ category. This rejection of gender as a primary status is distinct from sexual identity. Some genderqueer youth are bisexual, some are not. The issue at hand is the rejection of the expectations that belong to the status of –woman‖ or –man.‖ This is new.

Transgender people have traditionally desired to define their own sex because they have believed they were born in the wrong body (Gagné, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997, 1998). In the past, we did not hear much critique of the binary categorizations of women and men; transsexuals were reported to want to be the other sex -- or at least that's what they told medical gatekeepers who required such a hegemonic belief system to allow access to surgery. While language is totally in flux today, we see transgender identity being adopted both by those who want to transcend the gender binary as well as those who accept the binary and just want to travel across it. (Kessler and McKenna 2006, discuss these multiple meanings of "trans"). This kind of gender vertigo – from people who are genderqueer or trans in any way -- creates a crisis tendency because it destabilizes gender essentialism. It raises the question for all of us: why must our lives be so organized by the legal and bureaucratic binary sex/gender system that relegates everyone to one of two categories purportedly based on genitalia? Beyond procreation (which increasingly can be separated from physical coupling), what is the purpose of this system in the post-modern world?

Since challenges to altering or dispensing with legal sex/gender categories are adamantly resisted by the state (Currah and Minter 2004, Meadow 2010), what are some less revolutionary ways of altering the gender system with the goal of achieving greater equality for those designated, at least for now, as –women‖ and –men‖?

Moving Beyond Gender: Strategies for Transformation

At present, there are countless and ever-growing contradictions in the gendering of children, the opportunities and expectations women and men face in adult life, and the pace of change in the gender practices of families and workplaces. More and more areas of the military, education, religions and other social institutions are becoming gender-neutral. We are, therefore, optimistic that the gender revolution is not stalled forever. The evidence suggests that while there was some slowdown in the first part of the 21st century in decreasing gender segregation of occupations, (Cotter et al. 2004), the percentage of women in higher education has increased, as well as at the higher level of their professions (Cotter et al. 2004, England 2010). Still, change has not been as rapid or revolutionary as during the heyday of the second wave of feminism (England 2010).

Our goal here is to jumpstart gender change, to add fuel to the several slow burns that continue to push the boundaries of our gender structure. We are not going to re-argue the ―sameness/difference‖ debate that has divided feminist theorists (Foster 1999). Instead, we follow Walby's transformational (2011) feminist policies. We do not argue that women should become like men in contemporary society, nor do we want some version of ―women's‖ values to prevail, as in a maternalist politics. Rather than androcentrism or gynocentrism, we want to transform our society so that both caring work and economic production are equally rewarded, and women and men are equally involved in both. We want to create a new society, not integrate women into the male-dominated one, nor re-value what has traditionally been labeled as feminine. So, what specifically is to be done?

Strategies of Degendering

At the individual level, as parents and caregivers and teachers, we can consciously avoid imposing gender on children. But we must go beyond avoiding stereotypes; we must stop using gender as a convenient category to differentiate children. Why not line children up by height or

class instead of boys versus girls? Why can‘t children‘s sports teams, at least until puberty, be organized by their size, rather than arbitrarily by sex? When boys want to join in nail-polishing with mothers and sisters, why not allow it? Rather than warn about being bullied, be sure that schools intervene when gender-restrictive bullying rears its ugly head. We applaud the experiment in Swedish elementary schools to avoid using gendered pronouns entirely (Hebblethwaite 2011).

Feminist-inspired social change has begun to erode the belief that only boys can be agentic and effective (Ridgeway 2011). But the cultural expectations and powerful socialization that defines only girls as empathic and responsible for caring work is a nut yet to crack. We suggest, as have others before us (Pollack 1999; Messner 2011), that boys be socialized to care, not that girls be socialized to care less.

Genderqueer kids and adults are revolutionary actors at the individual level. They defy gender restrictions and try to get us to accept who they want to be. Even if transgender persons believe in the gender binary, and it seems as if more of them reject it partially or entirely, their very existence calls into question the necessary correlation between biological sex (as in genitalia and secondary sex characteristics), the sex one claims (often called sex category or gender identity), and gender norms (Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2007).

Much questioning and defying gender today is occurring online. Some bloggers are calling not for the end of gender, but for the queering of gender and its association with sex category. Two recent examples are illustrative, both by sociologists. First, Costello (2011) makes the distinction between binary-identified trans people and genderqueer people, who may or may not be trans. Costello writes that people with genderqueer identities deserve respect from the binary-identified, but that they also should acknowledge their privilege when they have an identity (not

all do) that allows for passing within the binary. Second, Ward (2011) writes that she is co-parent with a woman known at home as Dad. Ward argues that totally dissolving the gendered "Mom and Dad" concept was not realistic in today‘s world, but that they queer the concept by putting a woman into the role. Those on the gender vanguard, like these bloggers, occupy and enlarge the fissures in the gender structure. They often pay a price for deviating from norms, but their work advances the crisis tendencies that are fruitful for societal transformation.

Perhaps the most coercive practice that remains legal at the individual level is when medical authorities surgically alter intersex bodies to force them into a sex binary, even at the expense of the potential for future sexual pleasure (Costello 2004). This is one practice that must be stopped to end coercive ascription into sex category. The research (Davis 2011, Dreger 2009, Preves 2003) suggests just how slippery social definitions of sexuality, gender, and bodies can be, even as liberatory social movements develop, dissolve, and re-construct the very language around bodies born beyond the binary.

Even traditionally gendered folks feel contradictory longings to sometimes behave in ways that are not traditional for their gender. In order to move beyond gender, we suggest that people take the risk. We have all deeply gendered selves, and yet we all face contradictions where ―undoing gender‖ is possible. At the individual level, we can ―undo gender‖ in our own lives, to a varying extent. Breaking the boundaries is clearly easier for those with race and class privilege, as Weitz (2004) shows how working-class women's livelihoods often require that they perform certain forms of femininity. We suggest that in today‘s world, where many women are no longer dependent on men for financial survival, the time is ripe to take such risks.

Clearly change among individuals cannot happen in isolation from changes in expectations and institutions, nor is it a quick revolutionary strategy. Individuals risk simply being labeled

deviant instead of change agents. And yet, when many people do take the risk, especially if supported by social movements that encourage others to accept diversity, change may begin to happen. It may take generations before doing gender is no longer expected, but no change will ever happen unless we all risk ―undoing gender‖ when possible.

At the level of interactional expectations, we must first accept and support individuals who try to undo gender, from transgender children to genderqueer people. We must stop evaluating gender performances and imputing sexualities from them, as do the teens in "Dude, You're A Fag" (Pascoe 2004). But this is, of course, easier written about than done. Ridgeway and Correll (2000) suggest that one way to beat these cognitive stereotypes is to consciously create situations where women are clearly the task leader and effective (see also Ridgeway 2006). In workplaces, this means insuring that leadership teams include women in non-traditional roles, leading men as well as other women. We suggest that at the level of interactional expectations, we should also expect men to have a moral responsibility to their children to take care of them, and not just contribute economically. When men do not carry equal work in the family we should consider them immoral actors, and use the power of interactional expectations to help create equality of caregiving. More research is needed to understand when and how interactional strategies, including shame, can effectively change expectations instead of reinforcing them.

Deliberate interactional degendering is tied in with what we see to be the most political and therefore most difficult strategies at the macro institutional level -- changing structures and cultures of institutions. At the institutional level, we suggest that the prime target is no longer formal rules and regulations, but re-designing institutions so that gender-neutral rules are no longer undercut by traditional gender logics. Here, we will focus primarily on the U.S. case. We find Gornick and Meyers' (2009) argument, based on Compton‘s earlier work (1999),

compelling in that we also envision a earner-caregiver society. The division of human labor into earner versus caregiver is a modern invention for an industrial era now behind us. As we have shown, gender is deeply embedded in every aspect of modern society, and to move toward a world where earning a full-time paycheck is not incompatible with caring for other human beings requires us to move beyond dividing human beings into categories based on genitalia and dropping all the presumptions that go with such categories.

The history and contemporary politics of the European Union and the United States suggest different paths toward dismantling gender. The EU has the challenge to move from maternalist policies to those that prod men to become nurturers (Walby 2011). The US has no maternalist tendencies, having transformed aid to dependent children to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, forcing poor mothers into the labor force. The US has a history of neoliberal, individualist anti-discrimination laws and a teetering social security system based on labor market participation (Ferree 2009). In this political structure, we suggest incorporating a feminist view of care into the individual claims for citizenship (Glenn 2010). We suggest litigation to firmly establish that wage and promotion penalties for motherhood is gender discrimination (Budig and England 2001, Correll, Benard and Paik 2007). We urge regulations for corporate policy that recognizes that every worker is a human being with moral responsibilities to others.

The most obvious first step is to acknowledge that schools and workplaces that presume the best workers can work forty or more hours per week year-round epitomize the institutionalization of patriarchy in their very blueprint. Only if an organization presumes its workers have no moral or practical responsibility for anyone but themselves, no babies, no aging parents, no sick partner, can such a design continue. To ensure that workers can meet their responsibilities for care giving, re-design of the entire labor market is necessary. Jacobs and

Gerson (2004) provide numerous possibilities for such re-structuring. Perhaps one way to also help solve high unemployment rates is to create thirty-five hour work weeks, with the possibility of decreasing hours temporarily at times when care giving responsibilities impose high demands. Experiments in parental leave from Western Europe suggest that leaves must be split as equally as possible between parenting partners, and short enough so that re-integration into the workplace is not problematic (Gornick and Meyers 2008).

Cultural rhetoric within social institutions must also be a central target for any hope of moving in utopian directions. The sphere where feminism has changed culture the least is the sexualization of women‘s bodies. In fact, sexualization appears to be increasing, encompassing ever younger girls (Levin and Kilbourne 2009). Perhaps the sexual objectification of women is a backlash to the weakening of gender differences (Faludi 2000). Here we do not yet see movement toward a post-gender world, but can imagine feminists who embrace our utopian vision moving into positions of media power in the future.

Cultural beliefs about motherhood itself (Hays 1998, Warner 2006) must also change. We now have a society where women have fewer children than ever before and believe that each one needs intensive mothering. As Macdonald (2011) argues, as long as women, even elite employed women, hold the ideological belief that every childhood moment must be intensively cultivated and controlled by mother herself, structural changes to create an earner-caregiver model for society are bound to fail. Visions of utopia must involve a view of nurturing that is collective and involves the whole village, and is not entirely individualist and private.

None of our strategies for transformation are revolutionary, or ruptural (in Wright‘s language). Gender is too close to home, a source of comfort to many (although pain to others) as well as inequality. We do not think radical social change around gender is probable in the near

future, although given the push from genderqueering and the pull of interchangeability in work and parenting, the existence of gender as a permanent legal status may wither away. Every genderqueer teenager, every househusband, every gay couple that marries, every truly equal Mom and Dad are like drops of water helping to move mountains of tradition (Sullivan 2007). Individuals alone are not likely to make structural changes, but with the collective support of others, they may succeed with their breaks from currently gender-unequal social norms. In our utopian vision, we clearly see a renewed social movement to press for freedom from gender, and to support those who walk the walk in their personal lives.

While some people at the gender vanguard don't want freedom *from* gender, but freedom *with* gender, queering and multiplying genders are part of an evolutionary process toward dissolving the binary (Lorber 1996). Ultimately, these projects oppose the existing gender order and its gendered institutions.

We suggest that to move toward a sustained metamorphosis in society we need both interstitial and symbolic change (once again, using Wright's utopian vision language). Interstitial change includes building new post-gender institutions at the margins of today's world, such as gay couples creating households without using heterogendered scripts, and heterosexual couples equally sharing the work of breadwinning and childrearing (see Vachon and Vachon 2011). Even more radical change outside the institutional norms might include networks of people who create communes with shared family duties. Degendered ways of doing things de-stabilizes taken-for-granted assumptions as new life styles emerge without gender at the core. People can "undo" gender in their private lives as well as do it (Risman, 2009). They not only think the impossible but act on it. However, for permanent change, institutions and their cultural meaning systems have to be transformed with a vision of gender neutrality. To degender institutions, feminists

need to inhabit them from the bottom up, and move up the ranks so they can be re-formed from the top down.

Walby's (2011) *Future of Feminism* provides a series of encouraging changes, primarily gender mainstreaming policies sponsored by the UN and the EU, already in process as a direct result of feminist organizing. She defines gender mainstreaming as ―re-invention, restructuring, and re-branding‖ feminism as it moves within governmental and NGO projects. As gender specialists have moved from women's agencies to become policy wonks within development projects, challenges arise. Should feminists promulgate policies that attend to women's interests or gender-neutral policies that treat women and men the same? How do feminists retain their radical visionary goals while implementing small incremental changes in everyday politically driven bureaucracies? Some suggest that feminists remain outside the halls of power and only push from the margins, but what is needed is a both/and strategy (Collins 1988). In criminal justice, for example, feminist-designed responses to gender violence, both partner violence and sexual assault, should move inside police stations and hospitals to provide better and less sexist care. We now have feminist doctors, social workers, and perhaps even occasionally, police. But that doesn't mean we don't also need independent feminist watchdog grassroots organizations and NGO's to develop policies and monitor progress. In the workplace, change efforts are underway to create best practices based on research, to re-design workplaces with the understanding that workers are people with care-giving responsibilities (e.g. the Work and Family Researchers Network).

In summary, our utopian strategies need to be wide-ranging and for the long-term. The feminist project to move beyond gender needs to envision a multi-generational strategy that seeks to create a better world for our descendants. The strategies we have offered to move

modern post-industrial societies beyond gender would benefit from participatory democratic decision-making, although resistance and backlash can be expected. A feminist social democratic state could go far to enable the strategies for de-stabilizing gender inequality and to reinforce changes, but as we have learned, it‘s a long and constant fight (Walby 2011).

Our utopian vision for gender equality asks feminists to continue the social movement towards what may seem like an impossible dream – a world where people are not forced to live constrained inside one gender, where expectations for interaction are not based on gender identity, and where work and family are organized to combine productive paid work with the unpaid work of social reproduction. While it is true that most can hardly imagine a society with such freedom, our goal here is to create such a vision, to help free the imagination. Twentieth century feminism fought hard, and often successfully, for women‘s rights. The 21st century movement we envision goes far beyond that -- we imagine a world beyond gender.

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