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Citation: Litosseliti, L. (2021). Language, gender, and sexuality: Reflections on the field's ongoing critical engagement with the sociopolitical landscape. In: Language, gender, and sexuality: Reflections on the field's ongoing critical engagement with the sociopolitical landscape. (pp. 323-338). Abingdon, UK: Routledge. ISBN 9781138200265 doi: 10.4324/9781315514857-26

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Link to published version: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315514857-26>

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Chapter 21

Language, Gender and Sexuality: reflections on the field's ongoing critical engagement with the sociopolitical landscape

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Abstract

Language, gender and sexuality scholarship is a socially-oriented endeavour. In this chapter, I consider three key areas where, in addition to the foundational intimate links with feminism, the LGS field has expanded in recent decades – and which have involved and further led to researchers engaging with the broader sociopolitical landscape. These are: attention to intersectionality; the inclusion of sexuality scholarship; and the development of critical methodologies, including through dialogue with other disciplines. I also draw on my recent work with colleagues, on the notion of postfeminism as an analytical tool for gender and language study, in order to highlight the importance for our field to continue to engage with feminist theory/ methodology, particularly in interaction with other disciplines. Finally, I introduce four further chapters that exemplify a range of engagements with the contours of the socio-political landscape.

INTRODUCTION

I started writing this chapter at a particularly socially and politically turbulent time in 2020. The world was in the grip of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which put many of us in ‘lockdown’ within our homes and cities, and soon started to expose our societies’ various

pressure points and inequalities. At the same time, the death of George Floyd in the hands of the police in the USA sparked the beginning of a wave of anti-racism solidarity protests around the world, which continue globally and locally as I write. During that time, I was reminded by Michel deGraff, in his talk (aovivo.abralin.org – June 2020) on black lives and the politics of linguistics and education in post-colonies, of the Linguistic Society of America’s statement that ‘given our distinct insights into communication and culture, linguists are well positioned to contribute to social justice and equality’. It could not have been a more suitable time, then, to reflect on equality and social justice, and specifically on the focus of this section of this volume, on sociocultural and sociopolitical approaches within the language, gender and sexuality (LGS) field.

The field has been, since its inception, inherently concerned with the examination of language and gender – and later, language, gender and sexuality – as sociocultural phenomena, explored *within social settings, domains, contexts and cultures*. Additionally, LGS scholars have developed extensive and rich analyses of the multi-faceted *relationships between language, gender, sexuality, and society*, and of the *effects of language use within societies and vice versa*. Excluding work in formal linguistics focusing exclusively on parts and features of language such as grammatical gender or pronouns (and not on the *use* of grammatical gender and pronouns), the vast majority of LGS work could be broadly described under the umbrella term of sociocultural or socially-oriented linguistic scholarship, in being concerned with the above-mentioned social contexts, relationships and effects. The work cited in this chapter on sociocultural and sociopolitical approaches, accordingly, comes from all the traditions included in the eight sections of this volume; and scholars in all of these traditions have helped advance the field as a whole, including by engaging with many perspectives in social and feminist theory and other disciplines.

Sociolinguistics is an apt example of a substantial body of work within sociocultural linguistics that reflects the influence of other disciplines (linguistic anthropology, sociology, psychology, communications, literary theory) and shows how linguistic, cognitive, ideological, stylistic, cultural, and social dimensions are inextricably intertwined – for example in studies of the prestige of languages and language varieties. However, the increasingly narrow association of the term sociolinguistics with quantitative studies of linguistic features and their correlation to sociological variables, has led to a distinction between the body of work in *sociolinguistics* and the umbrella term of *sociocultural linguistics* – the latter denoting ‘the broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the intersection of language, culture, and society’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 5). And further, within the diverse sociocultural linguistics scholarship, some theoretical and methodological approaches will be distinct from others in their particular emphasis on *political* dimensions (for example, these are at the centre of Critical Discourse Analysis, see below) and on *cultural* dimensions (which are often key, for example, in anthropology and ethnography).

In this chapter, I map the terrain of the language, gender and sexuality field’s ongoing critical engagement with the sociopolitical landscape, as it expanded and became more diverse over the decades. I have chosen to refer to the *sociopolitical* landscape as a more encompassing term than social or sociocultural and to highlight the field’s development as inextricably linked with sociopolitical struggles – notably struggles for women’s, civil and LGBT+ rights. I start with the field’s long-standing close links with feminism and the practice of feminist politics (section 1). I then consider three broad areas where the field has expanded in recent years – and which have involved/ necessitated and further led to the field explicitly engaging with sociopolitical developments: attention to intersectionality (section 2); the inclusion of

sexuality scholarship (section 3); and the development of critical methodologies, including through dialogue with other disciplines (section 4). In section 4, I also draw from my own work in order to illustrate the importance of a continuing and renewed engagement with feminist theory/ methodology and other disciplines for our field. Finally, I introduce the four contributions which follow in this part of the volume.

The chapter is not intended as a comprehensive review; rather I am being selective in my references to existing studies, in order to illustrate key strands of LGS work and perspectives. In addition, I highlight texts on key developments and debates for those new to the field (in this respect, excellent starting points are Bucholtz 2014, McElhinny 2014, and Zimman and Hall's 2016 Bibliography on Language, Gender and Sexuality).

THE FIELD'S FEMINIST FOUNDATIONS

The feminist movement – a movement of political campaigning for reforms on different sets of ideas such as women's suffrage, access to education and employment, sexual violence, equal pay and reproductive rights – is often described through a wave metaphor. First wave feminism is associated with the suffragette women's movement and the struggles for political equality in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Second wave feminism, from the early 1960s to the 1980s, promoted social equality for women, reproductive freedom and political resistance against women's casual and systemic oppression inside and outside the home. Third wave feminism, from the early 1990s (though there is disagreement about its chronology) can be described as a diffuse movement, embracing intersectional feminism and marginalised groups and advocating for the multiplicity and performativity of gender.

Finally, there is considerable debate about whether the digitally driven, sex-positive, queer, #MeToo, inter-generational feminism of the last decade or so can be described as a fourth wave.

Since the second wave, feminism has been a fundamental influence on language, gender, and sexuality work. The different feminisms developed over time may have different perspectives and emphases, but they share a commitment to addressing social/ gender inequality. In the same vein, feminist linguists share an explicit or implicit commitment to connecting gendered-related linguistic phenomena to gender inequality or discrimination, even though they take varying theoretical and methodological perspectives in fulfilling this commitment.

In her 2014 review of the feminist foundations of LGS research, Bucholtz traces the theoretical roots of feminist linguistics back to the difference-based theories that emerged during feminism's second wave. From the early days of Lakoff (1975) and the 'sexist language' debates, to notions of gender 'dominance' of men over women through small-scale social interactions, to the '(cultural) difference' approach and theorisations of female talk, these theories start from a typically binary 'difference' position (women's/ girls' language use being different from men's/ boys') and with women's experience at the centre. Their merits and omissions have been extensively discussed in both texts (e.g. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013; Ehrlich et al. 2014; Litosseliti 2006) and LGS curricula over time, typically treated as overlapping theories of deficit (liberal feminism), difference (cultural feminism) and dominance (radical feminism) (Cameron 1995).

It is not my intention to reproduce the difference paradigms' contributions and gaps here. Rather, the point in the context of my discussion of the field's long-standing engagement

with feminist politics and social inequality, is that these theories were a product of their political time: a time of second-wave feminist consciousness-raising around civil and women's rights, action to increase women's visibility and participation in the public sphere and campaigns against sexism/ sex discrimination in all domains of social life. Put differently, these paradigms took shape in a particularly fertile environment for both explicit critiques and activism around social and gender inequality. And as the environment kept changing over time, so did the LGS field (more on which later). The field's long-term intimacy with feminism notwithstanding, not all LGS work (back then and today) can be described as *feminist* linguistics work, because its stake 'in feminism as a political movement or theory may not be evident or explicit' (Litosseliti, 2006: 22); and because 'not all of it shares a political commitment to social justice [Rather, some of it] seeks simply to correlate language patterns with categories of gender and/or sexuality' (Bucholtz 2014: 23-24). Nevertheless, feminist linguists have been instrumental to the field's development from the start and continue to take the field in new sociopolitically committed directions (see below).

Not surprisingly, these directions are not necessarily or straightforwardly unified. A case in point is material feminist linguistic approaches (Shankar and Cavanaugh 2012), which arose within linguistic anthropology. These approaches are concerned with the material and physical conditions of language use and their role on the social production of gender/ gender hierarchies – for example, the conditions that enable or restrict access to education, higher or lower economic status and workplace and career opportunities. These approaches cannot be categorised in terms of perspective as easily as the 'difference' approaches can. As seen in reviews of examples of this work (Bucholtz 2014; Zimman and Hall 2016), they include an array of studies, from gender, class, and variation, to gendered linguistic labour in the home, to language and gendered embodied practices. The material effects of language/ discourses of

gender and sexuality are also discussed in several workplace studies within this tradition of research: Hall's (1995) study on the selling of stereotyped women's language in phone sex; Toerien and Kitzinger (2007) on emotional labour in a UK beauty salon; Holmes (2006, 2014) on the gendering of requests and refusals in New Zealand factories; Cameron (2000) on feminine communicative styles in UK call centres; and Ostermann (2003) on affiliative strategies at an all-female police station and feminist crisis intervention centre in Brazil. I return to material feminist linguistic approaches and more recent work on language and political economy toward the end of this chapter.

Since the early days, LGS research has developed to become wider and more diverse. In the mid-1990s, under the influence of the 'discursive turn' in social theory and poststructuralism (see Part VI, this volume), the conceptualisation of gender as something we do or accomplish in discourse and gender identities being constructed in a context-situated and fluid process of negotiation, appropriation and restatement (see e.g. Litosseliti 2006; McEntee-Atalianis 2019) has added greater nuance, context-specificity and analytical complexity to language, gender and sexuality work. The fragmentation of feminism into feminisms (liberal, radical, multicultural, postcolonial etc.), and particularly the third wave emphasis on the multiplicity and performativity of gender, have also led to a problematisation of gender categories as fixed or stable – especially so when categories like race, class, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation are also taken into account.

Over time, the field grew and benefitted from the involvement of new language scholars from a range of fields, such as anthropology, communication, education, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and gender studies. It also benefitted from a wider array of global and cross-cultural perspectives, illustrated in studies mentioned later in this chapter, in examples of

work from Poland, Brazil, Japan, Middle East and North Africa (Ehrlich et al 2014), Japan (e.g. Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith 2004), Sub-Saharan Africa (Atanga et al. 2012), Greece (Canakis et al. 2010) etc.; and in global south geopolitical perspectives that question the dominance of Northern scholarship in our field (see Milani and Lazar 2017).

Moreover, contrary to the studies of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, LGS investigations since the mid-1990s have extended their focus beyond white, straight, middle class women, and have included a focus on men/ masculinity as well as on sexualities (see below). In these ways, the field became more wide-ranging and diverse, as well as more critical (although see section 4 later): while a single defined set of feminist goals became less of a focus, LGS scholars began to interact with critical feminist work on race, colonialism/ post-colonialism, multiculturalism, femininities/ masculinities and sexuality.

In what follows, I consider three key areas where, in addition to the foundational and ongoing engagement with feminism, the LGS field has expanded in recent decades – and which have involved and further led to the field explicitly engaging with the broader sociopolitical landscape: attention to intersectionality; the inclusion of sexuality scholarship; and the development of critical methodologies, including through dialogue with other disciplines.

INTERSECTIONALITY

As the field expanded, it became more engaged with the ways in which gender intersects (particularly evident in close analyses of interaction) with other social dimensions or forms of identity, such as race, social class, age, ethnicity, religion and sexuality. Intersectionality (see

also Leppänen and Tapionkaski, this volume) is a theoretical response by black feminist scholars who sought to understand black women's particular experiences (e.g. Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989), but more generally it is a theoretical response that recognises that the interplay of different dimensions of social life plays an important – and neglected – role in maintaining systems of oppression.

Intersectionality theory can be usefully disruptive. Most evidently, it questions the second wave feminist assumption of similarity of experience among women and its primary focus on the concerns of white middle-class heterosexual women (Hancock 2007; Smooth 2011; Weldon 2008). In this sense, it is a useful tool for holding a movement, or academic field, or research paradigm to account, by questioning some of its own hegemonies and exclusions. In addition, intersectional perspectives further disrupt the idea of a linear singular identity (that there is one way of being a woman, or being black, or being gay and so on), thereby shifting the attention to non-normative categories.

Intersectional perspectives within the LGS field are integral to many sociolinguistic studies (e.g. see Levon 2015; Levon and Mendes 2016) and much of work on the role of language in the doing of racial and ethnoracial identity work (e.g. Bucholtz 2011 on whiteness; Cashman 2018 and Mendoza-Denton 2008 on Latinx communities; Lanehart 2009 on African-American women). In addition, LGS research on masculinities – as part of the post-1990s language and masculinity scholarship (Benwell 2014; Cameron 1997; Coates 2003; Johnson and Meinhoff 1997) which started to examine men's previously neglected gendered lives as well as problematise hegemonic masculinity – have used an intersectional lens to highlight the performance of hegemonic and non-normative masculinities across different social groups (e.g. Kiesling 2005; Milani 2015). In the past five years, there has also been a proliferation of

intersectional perspectives in the field – for example, Candelas de la Ossa’s 2019 study on guidance for domestic abuse survivors, Baker and Levon’s 2016 examination of racialised and classed masculinities in print UK media, Trechter 2014 on language and ethnicity intersections, and several studies in the Gender and Language Special Issue on intersectionality, language and queer lives (Gray and Cooke 2018).

This body of work moves the field forward by showing the inclusions and exclusions made possible at the (previously neglected) intersections, but also by adding to calls for more, and more developed, LGS intersectional approaches. Within language studies, Romero (2017) for example has argued the need to develop variable-with-variable intersectional approaches (rather than a variable-by-variable approach to gender or race identity), to facilitate more complex, nuanced understandings of identities. Levon (2015) has also argued for the need to integrate intersectionality theory and analysis more fully in language, gender and sexuality research, if we want to increase our understanding of how social inequalities are produced (and constructed and resisted) by interacting axes of social differentiation. At the same time, it is important to consider that intersectional perspectives require new and nuanced methodological paradigms that can deal with complexity (Celis et al. 2013). And as importantly, scholars also caution against the ubiquitous use of intersectionality to draw attention to the lived experiences of those in the margins without actually engaging with the intersectional systems that produce and maintain oppression (Nash 2008). This broader point also applies to scholarship on sexuality, to which I now turn.

SEXUALITY

Another way in which the LGS field became wider, as it continued to interact with different social theories and the changing sociopolitical environment, has been through encompassing in the 1990s critical work on the discursive and material character of sexuality. [Sexuality and gender are closely intertwined (see e.g. McElhinny 2014). I discuss sexuality separately here for the purposes of this chapter's structure.]

Similarly to the recognition of the historic lack of intersectional perspectives, language and gender scholars increasingly came to recognise the persistence of gender binaries and heteronormativity that had implicitly shaped previous work in the field (see Zimman et al. 2014), as they began to engage with the emergent field of queer theory/ queer feminism (Butler 1990). Queer theory is an interdisciplinary theoretical approach that draws on a range of methodological paradigms in order to critique and destabilise taken for granted notions of heteronormativity and of gender as an a priori category (see Sauntson, this volume). The LGS field's shift towards incorporating these perspectives is reflected in the inclusion of *sexuality* in how the field is referred to since the mid-1990s and in the establishment in 2012 of the Journal of Language and Sexuality. This shift is discussed by, among others, Cameron and Kulick (2003), and Motschenbacher and Stegu in their 2013 special issue on queer linguistics for *Discourse & Society*.

The overarching aim of queer linguistics scholarship (see Bucholtz and Hall 2004; Cameron and Kulick 2003; Motschenbacher 2010) is to bring a linguistic lens to the critical examination of sexuality and the relationship between gender and sexual identities and practices – including heterosexual identities and practices. Motschenbacher and Stegu (2013:

522) define queer linguistics as ‘critical heteronormativity research from a linguistic point of view’, with a focus on the interrogation of privileged and normative sexualities, and a concern for exposing the resulting forms of discrimination. As part of such interrogation, queer linguistics scholarship also acknowledges that language and gender research does not fully capture the linguistic dimensions of desire, affect and emotion (for debates, see Kulick 2000 alongside Bucholtz and Hall 2004; also Queen 2014). Further, incorporating and building on intersectionality perspectives, this body of work also acknowledges that sexuality needs to be viewed as embedded within broader formations of gender, race, ethnicity, ability, economic status etc. (Leap and Motschenbacher 2012).

Linguistic approaches to sexuality have broadly focused on the ways in which people enact sexuality through language, as well as the ways in which sexual identities are represented linguistically in a range of settings. More precisely, they can be summarised as investigations of three types of questions (Bucholtz 2014: 36): ‘linguistic aspects of the social and political struggle of LGBT groups and individuals’, ‘the linguistic practices of particular LGBT-identified groups’ and ‘discursive representations of LGBT identities by both ingroup and outgroup members’.

For example, several sociolinguistic variation studies have examined the role of different variables of sociolinguistic practice – and their interplay – in the negotiation of sexuality (see e.g. Levon 2010). Such work combines micro level linguistic analysis with a queer linguistics concern with broader social dimensions of power, normativity, inclusion and exclusion. Queer linguistic studies often draw on a range of different methodologies (Sauntson, this volume), but are united in their consistent effort to question gender binaries and heteronormative/ hegemonic gender and sexual subjectivities (see, among others, Barrett

1999; Jones 2012; Zimman and Hall 2010). In many cases, such questioning goes hand in hand with the questioning of Western binaries, as illustrated in, among others, Besnier's 2003 ethnography-based study of transgendered men in Tonga, Kulick's (1998) and Borba and Ostermann's (2007) studies on *travesti* identities in Brazil, Gaudio's 2009 study on the linguistic strategies used by the Nigerian *'yan daudu* and Hall's 2005 work with transgender *kotis* in India. In addition, recent research explores language use and transgender, intersex, and genderqueer identities in different sociocultural contexts around the world (Zimman et al. 2014).

In the final section that follows, I turn to the role of critical and cross-disciplinary methodologies in the LGS field and discuss some recent and new directions.

CRITICAL METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS & CROSS-DISCIPLINARY BRIDGES

In addition to critical theorisations, the language, gender, and sexuality field's attention to sociopolitical issues is also reflected in its development of critical/ feminist methodological approaches. Over the last twenty years, we have witnessed developments in feminist conversation analysis (Kitzinger 2000; Speer 2005; Weatherall and Tennent this volume), feminist pragmatics (Christie 2000) and feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis (Baxter 2008, see also Mackenzie this volume). In addition, probably the most deliberate feminist effort to unite scholarship with political struggle against systemic oppression and discrimination can be found in feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) (Lazar 2005, 2007). FCDA, at the nexus of critical discourse analysis and feminist studies, examines

language use as situated in the sociopolitical discourses that constitute and maintain power hierarchies, with a particular interest in hierarchically gendered social orders. FCDA – like other emerging critical approaches to the study of the environment, technology and the global political economy (I touch on the latter towards the end of this chapter) – bring together materialist and discursive perspectives; this synthesis has the potential to ‘influence the field as a whole, as well as feminism more generally’ (Bucholtz 2014: 32).

The development of critical methodological frameworks in the field has opened up new questions about the nature of LGS scholarship. Notably, it has given impetus to ongoing debates on the strengths and limitations of ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ approaches that focus on micro and macro level analyses respectively. Discussions of these dimensions can be found in, among others, Litosseliti (2018) and in Harrington et al. (2008) – the latter focusing on micro/ macro LGS analyses in sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, discursive psychology, CA, CDA, FPDA and queer linguistics. For the purposes of this chapter, I will only highlight some notable examples of micro-macro considerations here.

Critical discourse analysts, for example, typically take a materialist approach by looking at how discourses in key social domains (media, politics, workplaces, education) construct power relations, hierarchies and ideologies (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Weiss and Wodak 2003) – including those related to gender, sexuality and heteronormativity. They look beyond the text and the data for interdiscursive patterns and macro processes situated in broader sociocultural and historical contexts. They are often criticised (e.g. by conversation analysts) for having an ideological and politically motivated agenda, for cherry-picking texts to suit their agenda (see Murphy and Palma-Fahey this volume) and ‘seeing individuals as an effect of discourse, thereby granting them limited agency’ (McEntee-Atalianis 2019: 23). In

contrast, ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts take an emic approach, starting with a micro-level detailed examination of interaction and speakers' orientations, 'avoiding reference to cognitive processes, discourses or speaker intention. They in turn have been criticised for taking a narrow and decontextualized focus on short extracts of talk without attending to broader cultural, social or political issues' (ibid.: 24).

However, while the questioning of inequalities, ideological hegemonic structures and their consequences (particularly for those less powerful or in the margins) is central and explicit in the 'top down' CDA approaches, other, self-described as 'bottom up', approaches are also interested in such questioning. As Hall and Davis (this volume) put it, ethnographers also engage with questions of power and broader social hierarchies; this engagement helps produce more robust analyses and may also 'persuade our colleagues in other socially oriented fields that language, no matter how small, matters to societal organizations of gender and sexuality' (ibid.).

The development of critical *feminist* frameworks in particular in the field has also raised questions about the field's continuing and/or renewed engagement with feminist theory. I now turn to the importance of such engagement, which, similarly to Bucholtz (2014) and others, I argue is necessary for combining different perspectives, developing new theoretical and methodological approaches and linking more closely to advocacy work. The example from our work that follows is situated within a broader call by other LGS scholars for a continuing engagement with feminism and a dialogue with feminist scholarship in other fields. Many have argued against the field losing sight of its political or 'analytical activism' orientation (Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003; Lazar 2007, 2014; Litosseliti 2006; McElhinny and Mills 2007; Mills and Mullany 2011). Cameron (2006, 2009) notably has warned against a

diminished preoccupation with political collective action as a result of the field's interest in local linguistic practice, and with the wider increased emphasis upon questions of identity – the shift or 'identity turn' away from 'what can be done' to 'who I am' – also echoed in Lazar's (2009) discussion of the shift from 'we-feminism' to 'I-feminism'. Cameron has again recently (2020) argued that the field's focus on social identity and performance has shifted attention away from issues of power and real world inequalities.

In the example of my work with Gill and Favaro (Litosseliti et al. 2019), we reaffirm the importance of a renewed political voice and motivation for the LGS field, while responding to calls for new forms of feminist linguistic analysis in a postfeminist landscape (Mills 2012) – that is, analysis that helps us understand the various shifting postfeminist representations of feminism and femininity (Lazar 2014) vis-a-vis 'the global neo-liberal discourse of postfeminism' (Lazar 2007: 154). In particular, we highlight the analytic value of the concept of *postfeminism as a sensibility* for the LGS field, where it remains under-explored, in contrast with cultural, media and gender studies, where it has become central to feminist scholarship (Gill 2007, 2016; McRobbie 2009; Tasker and Negra 2007). Starting with the work of scholars in these fields, who take postfeminism as their object of critical inquiry as well as an analytic category for cultural critique, we illustrate how postfeminist themes or tropes can play out in contemporary workplace policies. We focus on the analysis of one text on the idea of *agile working*. Using this text, we demonstrate the relationship between postfeminism and language use that on the surface celebrates 'choice' and 'diversity' while in fact co-opting these ideas for profit and erasing any notions of collective struggle for gender equality (see Litosseliti et al. 2019 for full discussion). While this work takes a similar approach to other discourse analytic work with an interest in the discursive resources that structure how gender and gender relations are made sense of, and what inequalities are

created therein, it does so by allying fine-grained analysis of language with critical work outside linguistics on postfeminism as a cultural sensibility. We argue that there is both a need and an opportunity for LGS scholars to engage with such crossdisciplinary work, in order to understand current broader cultural patterns, such as how the mainstreaming of workplace policies on gender diversity can, in a seemingly paradoxical way, have depoliticising effects. By expanding our theoretical and analytical toolkit we can also understand ‘how current policy agendas can create new hierarchies and inequalities in the current moment’ (Litosseliti et al. 2019: 17).

Arguably, in the current moment, the potential for our field to continue to learn (as it always has) in interaction with other fields and disciplines is more important than ever. The contours and practices of the current sociopolitical landscape certainly present opportunities, as well as challenges, for critical LGS examination. Some fertile areas for such examination that have emerged in the field in recent years and are likely to intensify, include, among others, those below:

Gender, Globalisation and Political Economy

Globalisation continues to influence the production of social meaning and the use of language within shifting, and sometimes competing, global and local contexts. McElhinny’s (2007) collection on language, gender and globalisation has provided theorisations of the effect of globalisation on language and gender in different national contexts and settings. Other scholars have looked at the role of English as an index of global prestige, desire and sexual identity (e.g. Hall 2009; Leap 2010; Piller and Takahashi 2006). Much of work in this area falls under material feminist work in language and political economy, which investigates the material conditions of language use and the commodification of language, in spaces such as

workplaces, in late capitalism. For example, Piller and Takahashi (2010) have explored the gendered work of transnational migrant women and the inequalities and ideologies therein. As wealth and social inequalities widen, and as labour mobility, migration, immigration, borders, diaspora and citizenship continue to be contested and controversial issues, there is significant scope for more LGS work and critique in these areas.

Emerging feminisms/ Post-feminism and Neoliberalism

As discussed, LGS scholarship in the proliferation of feminisms and in particular post-feminism vis-à-vis neoliberalism has been emerging (Glapka 2018; Lazar 2014; Litosseliti et al. 2019) and linguistic analyses of the ways in which feminism is appropriated to serve and legitimate neoliberalism are much needed. Examples of LGS studies addressing neoliberalism have included Inoue (2007) on the linguistic governmentality of neoliberalism and analyses of gender and language in the neoliberal university (e.g. Goncalves 2019), among others. LGS scholars are well placed to examine how neoliberalism, austerity and the various processes of de-democratisation (Prügl 2015; Verloo 2011) construct and affect women, men, LGBT+ and trans communities. They can also contribute further to discussions of the recent resurgence of interest in feminism, particularly through the use of new forms of activism, such as social media technologies (Banyard 2010); and of current issues such as sexualised culture, domestic and sexual violence, and the anti-gender populist movements currently becoming more vocal and mainstream (Borba et al. 2020).

Gender and Politics/ Political participation; Intersectional approaches to inequalities

Recent scholarship on gender, language and politics, gender in media coverage of political campaigns, and gender equality policies (e.g. Cameron and Shaw 2016; Lombardo and Forest 2012; Shaw 2020) illustrates the relevance of cross-disciplinary methods from linguistics and

political science for the analysis of women's political representation. Gender and politics scholars have been calling for more robust analyses of the role gender and sexuality language/ discourses play in constituting political actors and structures (e.g. Celis et al. 2013); they also point to the need to integrate accounts of regimes, institutions, and other structural dimensions of gender and politics with issues such as identity, self-understanding, and other subjective, micro-level phenomena (ibid.). Further, there is need for more interdisciplinary intersectional approaches to inequalities, as highlighted by both linguists (e.g. Charity Hudley 2015) and gender and politics scholars (e.g. Krizsan et al. 2012).

On a different and final note, intersectional approaches to inequalities, including health inequalities, are also likely to grow in prominence in the post-pandemic landscape. It is early days at the time of writing, but it is clear that the COVID-19 global pandemic and its management are affecting groups differently at the intersections of gender, race, class, ethnicity and socioeconomic status; and that language and other practices in the workplace, home, education and public life are being altered in far-reaching ways. Language, gender and sexuality scholars are well-placed – especially in collaboration with other disciplines – to contribute new analyses on (to name a few) the language/ discourses/ narratives of the pandemic; public health communications and policies; COVID-19 media discourses; interaction among scientists, politicians and the public; expert discourses in the sense-making and management of the pandemic; discourses and policies on domestic violence during the pandemic; the effects of the pandemic on LGBT+ and other marginalised groups; and the discursive and material dimensions of caring, including shifts in gender roles during and after lockdown measures.

THE FOUR CHAPTERS IN PART V

Sauntson's chapter sees the self-proclaimed political motivations of queer linguistics as a particular strength for investigating gender and sexuality identities in educational contexts, where a social justice orientation is important. The chapter exemplifies how a 'queer applied linguistics' (QAL) framework – as an extension of a critical applied linguistics concern with inequalities – can highlight social inequality problems around gender and sexuality in schools. In addition, Sauntson reinforces the argument that queer linguistics lends itself to being combined with other established methodologies by applying QAL concepts (temporality, spatiality, normativity) to a critical discourse analysis of her interview and interactional data with LGBT+ young people and educators. The chapter adds to our understanding of the discursive construction of restrictive gender binaries and heteronormativity, and their consequences within education settings; and, as importantly, it takes a critical set of tools and methodologies and combines them to enable, in Sauntson's words, 'a greater focus on how macro discourses and ideologies around sexuality are embedded and inscribed within micro interactions'. In both these ways, it is an excellent illustration of how far the field has come in engaging with, adapting and advancing social theory concepts and critical approaches.

Ehrlich and Romaniuk's chapter is also concerned with exposing larger patterns of gender inequalities, in this case through the application of a 'textual trajectory' approach to discourse. Textual trajectories is an approach invested in making visible and denaturalizing the workings of social power, control and inequality. It does this through analysis of the re-contextualisation and meaning transformation of texts across social space and time. Through two examples of analyses in legal and media settings, the authors demonstrate how gendered

meanings are transformed and gender inequalities perpetuated as texts travel across settings/ are re-contextualised. In the first example from a sexual assault trial, Ehrlich and Romaniuk's close analysis shows how a strategic act of submission was reconfigured as a sexual consent signal; in the second example, textual trajectories show how the meaning of Hilary Clinton's laughter was transformed as it moved across media environments, from an interactional strategy to a characteristic of her negative, gendered persona. Crucially, these meaning transformations were captured by looking at the interplay of texts within a trajectory, rather than single, one-time instances of texts. The chapter makes a convincing case for a method with the potential to identify the basis for damaging ideological assumptions in institutional settings, an area where politically engaged scholarship is much needed.

In the third chapter in Part V, Murphy and Palma-Fahey investigate the representation of *gay marriage* and *the Irish Mammy* stereotype in the TV series 'Mrs Brown's Boys'. The particular Irish sociocultural and sociopolitical context – especially the Irish Referendum on marriage equality – is key to understanding the interplay between these representations. The centrality of the changing sociopolitical environment around gender and sexuality in this context guides the authors' use of CDA for their analysis, which they combine with Corpus Linguistics methods/ the use of concordance lines to look at patterns in representation. The chapter emphasises the merits of critically engaging with and combining these methodologies, to usefully bring together micro and macro perspectives. At the same time, the media data presented capture some current political struggles in a rapidly changing society; they offer an insightful snapshot of the intersections of language, gender, sexuality and national identity at the current moment, but which will certainly warrant further investigation as they shift and evolve.

In the last chapter of Part V, Cameron turns to a different, important set of questions: how could LGS scholars make their work accessible and applicable outside academia? What knowledge should scholars seek to communicate, to what audiences and for what purposes? What are the benefits and costs of such advocacy and public engagement work? Those of us who are invited to communicate LGS research to non-academic audiences will find Cameron's discussion invaluable. She first maps the current terrain of public engagement, which is characterised by feminist and non-feminist agendas co-existing and competing in a public marketplace of ideas; increased pressure on researchers to do public engagement; a multitude of media platforms being available for this purpose; overall, increased opportunities for two-way communication between researchers and wider audiences. Cameron then offers a thoughtful, as well as practical, discussion of some of the problems faced by researchers engaging with wider audiences: the pressure to demonstrate impact and optimise its evidence by presenting controversial or sensationalised findings that have greater publicity potential; having their work misrepresented in the media, reinforcing myths and stereotypes which the research was intended to challenge; and being silenced or attacked for resisting such misrepresentation or for being perceived as 'over-critical' or politically contentious. The chapter not only offers guidance to scholars for addressing some of these problems – by suggesting ways for them to *correct*, *contextualise* and *complicate* their findings – but also puts forward an approach to public engagement that is informed, realistic and strategic. As such, it is a worthwhile read for all language, gender and sexuality scholars who navigate the terrain of advocacy and public engagement.

Together, these chapters offer excellent new contributions to the field's ongoing engagement with the sociopolitical landscape and opportunities for fruitful reflection on the role of the LGS researcher in the current moment.

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