Engendering Culture in Psychology

Erica Burman
MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT. This paper explores the politics of gender circulating within the discourse of culture in psychology. Two complementary conceptualizations of culture are considered in relation to the politics of gender representation they either afford or disallow. Notions of dominant or mainstream culture typically portray gender as marginal or else as indicative of other markers of difference (whereby the over-visibility of gender reflects its tokenized, reified and homogenized status). Either way, both the centrality and intersectionality of gender and culture are overlooked in ways that bolster the liberal pluralism of multiculturalist discourse. Alternatively, discourses around culture that presume minority status currently function to indicate racialized difference. These not only reify cultural practices in ways that abstract and separate them from the contexts of their emergence and function and so feed into discourses of cultural pathologization, but they also privilege 'race' over gender and so, paradoxically, marginalize and even exclude some minority women's positions, interests and experiences. Within both discourses of culture, the contemporary romanticization and abstraction surrounding notions of 'community' is shown to marginalize gender-specific issues posed by the position of minoritization. Drawing on conceptual-political problems posed by prevailing discourses of culture and gender in relation to domestic violence, some examples are offered to indicate how re-conceptualizing the relations between culture, 'race' and gender can challenge and change theory, policy and practice.

KEY WORDS: domestic violence, gender, racism, minoritization

This paper explores the politics of gender circulating within discourses of culture in psychology. I should make clear that my project here is not to define or specify what 'culture' is, but rather to interrogate the role this is accorded as discourse. Rather than an exercise in cultural psychology, then, this is an analysis of the ways in which assumptions about what culture is function within psychological (and other) practices. My aim is to illuminate some political and practical consequences of the conceptual limitations of prevailing notions of culture as a discursive or deconstructive intervention, without presuming or prescribing what 'culture' itself is or should be. While not specific to psychology (but rather in circulation throughout popular and policy discourses), these notions are reproduced within psychology and

permeate psychological practices. This is of importance since, through their insertion within the 'psy complex' (Rose, 1985), they acquire a technical, normative status that bolsters their incontestability and renders innovative practical and political intervention difficult. Clearly, as culture and gender are two key longstanding and current markers of 'difference' that are both much at play within national and transnational politics—through discourses of immigration, labour and citizenship, for example—unravelling the complex interplay of their discourses offers a vital diagnostic site for political vigilance and theoretical intervention.

In terms of the theme of this special issue, then, my concern with 'critical engagements with culture and self' is with the ways a proper attention to gender requires a reconceptualization both of notions of culture and self, and of the relationships between these. I will be taking policies and practices around domestic violence as a key and urgent conceptual-political lens through which to pressurize (in the sense of identifying key areas of conceptual muddle and difficulty) prevailing discourses of culture and selfhood. Following current practice, I take domestic violence to be physical, sexual or psychological violence (often occurring in combination) by a known family member or members. That is, without entering into essentializing definitions, there is a need to highlight the gendered and usually heterosexed character of these relationships of violence (see Mooney, 2000, pp. 26–27). This violence is usually towards a woman (and often also involving her children), usually by her husband or intimate partner (but may also include other relatives—male or female). I will suggest that elaborating an adequate analysis of gendered selves in culture involves not only grounding cultural practices within social-political relations but also embedding these within broader historical and economic frameworks that extend to, and beyond, the state. In this sense the 'domestic' character of gendered violence has to be questioned for, as I will argue, we need to look beyond the private familial or cultural sphere for adequate analyses of why and how this comes about. To anticipate my argument, the example of domestic violence graphically illustrates how discourses of culture and self typically work to occlude the role of both state-level and transnational structures in their constitution and regulation. The issue we face as theoretical psychologists, therefore, is to challenge such occlusions as a key component within discourses of psychologization, thereby making an important contribution to international antiracist and feminist struggles.

In terms of theoretical psychology, then, the challenge of engendering culture draws on theoretical frameworks from outside psychology—principally from feminist and post-colonial studies. Importing these into psychological debates has the effect of connecting the latter with more general currents within social theory, but also of exposing the limits of prevailing psychological conceptualizations around identity (both individual and cultural). In particular we have to counter the legacies of the rational

unitary subject (e.g. Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984) which treat the self as somehow prior to culture, such that culture and gender (for example) become figured as qualities or variables to be added. Not only does this clearly offer only a (politically, conceptually) inadequate notion of both culture and gender (Spelman, 1988), it also allows only an impoverished understanding of the relationships between culture and gender.

Beyond 'Culture'

Critical discussion of what culture is and how it works is vast, so my focus here is limited to how this engages and intersects with gender. This invites an attention to the ways in which power relations inform representations of both culture and gender. I am going to briefly consider two complementary conceptualizations of culture that appear to structure not only the range of discourses of culture in circulation but also have consequences for the politics of gender they either afford or disallow. To reiterate, my concern is with how received notions of culture work, and work themselves through (in the sense of acquiring particular effectivity—and affectivity), within theoretical and policy practices. I address some specific ways in which the notion of culture circulates within prevailing structures of governmentality, that is, under neo-liberalism and globalization, which also owes something to the historical complicities of psychology as a discipline (Richards, 1997), as do other social sciences (Haraway, 1990; Harrowitz, 1994).

In terms of shifts in racist discourse, it has been widely noted (e.g. Barker, 1981) that discourses of cultural difference have come to supplant old scientific racism in a cosier, more apparently tolerant form. Typically this tolerance is discretionary and only at a distance—in the guise of each 'culture' inhabiting its own (preferably national) space. Thus the separation between 'races' became warranted through an appeal to notions of cultural differences—which are constructed as natural and thus inevitable. This sleight of hand—from attention to power relations (here structured around the fictional but pernicious notion of 'race') to that of difference—has generated some incisive critical commentary from feminists. This is because 'difference' has become the acceptable idiom for discussing power inequalities between women that paradoxically also threatens to 'level' these out in favour of some generalized notion of common entitlement to difference (Maynard, 1994). Gupta (2003) identifies some links between current discourses of culture and the depoliticization of an equality-based analysis:

> Culture, as seen in the new language of cultural diversity, is not just defined in terms of race and religion but is linked to attributes such as gender, sexual orientation, age or income levels. In recognising difference within communities, it is an advance on multiculturalism although there is

> a danger of atomisation in that some definitions of cultural diversity point
> to the truism that no two people are alike. Worryingly, it dispenses with the
> notion of equality and replaces it with equity, in much the same way that
> multiculturalism displaced notions of racial equality with respect for
> cultural difference. (p. 19)

Nevertheless, this cultural turn within racist discourse has afforded it extensive institutional credibility and circulation. Thus Madood (1997, p. 160), subverting the liberal discourse of 'multiracialism' that still maintains 'race' as a discursive entity, has claimed that Britain (for example) is now 'multi-racist': that is, we ignore at our peril the multiple and shifting forms of racism in circulation that no longer have any necessary tie with old biologically determinist racism. As I will hope to show, discourses of gender—in their multiple forms—both play particular roles in bolstering such notions of culture and in turn are fuelled by them. They demand urgent challenge on the dual charges of perpetuating gender oppression and racism.

Clearly this approach could apply to any other axis of social structure (in particular class and sexuality), for each of which equivalent arguments (about intersectionality and the consequences of the failure to articulate with culture) can be made. Indeed historical work has explored links between sexuality and imperialism (e.g. McClintock, 1995) and between gender and orientalism (Lewis, 1996). So my focus here should be regarded as methodologically indicative and generative rather than exhaustive. Although, as I will try to show, each set of articulations necessarily has its own political textuality, that of culture with gender produces some particularly clear conceptual, political and practical conundrums in need of resolution.

While gender once reigned supreme as the purportedly universal axis of attributed difference, this position has been supplanted by culture. Moreover, insofar as gender in many contexts remains the prototype of difference (e.g. in psychoanalysis, as in 'sexual difference'), this is at the cost of failing to address what is 'different' about specific differences (Leary, 1997) and hence, paradoxically, this works to homogenize those different 'differences' into spurious sameness. However, psychological and psychotherapeutic circles (see Burman, 2003) have started to become more sophisticated, moving from 'sex differences' to gender relations, and even transgendered possibilities, just as within social theory both gendered and cultural identifications are now treated as fluid, mobile and hybrid. Yet, significantly, within policy contexts it seems that gender proliferations occur at the cost of an equivalent rigidity emerging around cultural definitions, which appears to link with the ever more draconian classifications surrounding definitions of citizenship and welfare entitlement from both state and interstate immigration systems (as in the harmonization of legislation across the European Union). Thus it seems that while gender has become androgynized and hybridified for a significant number of people, or at least gender norms are

acknowledged as subject to variability, culture has now acquired a fixed quality. While such relativizations of gender are neither as clear nor as widespread as this description implies, these forms of conceptualization nevertheless give rise to further difficulties—not least, as we will see, because of the ways the designated static character accorded culture produces untenable conceptions of gender. A second position, which hybridizes both concepts (gender and culture) to portray each as fluid, also emerges as not without equivalent problems.

From 'Race' to 'Culture'

Although my analysis is elaborated from and in relation to the British context, my sense is that it extends further—precisely by virtue of globalization and the post-/neo-colonial legacies that structure Fortress Europe, with bizarre and shifting discourses of nationality and transnationality mobilized in relation to immigration legislation, asylum seekers and the 'refugee problem'. In this sense my intellectual resources reflect this background, although I will draw on and connect also with relevant US (feminist) literature and debates. Two main discourses of culture seem to be in operation within what we might variously (all inadequately) call late capitalist, post-industrialist or post-colonial urban centres. The first notion of culture is as the dominant or mainstream culture, which—precisely by virtue of the dominant/minoritized (or, more typically, invisibly normalized/ visible-and-problematized) binary (Phoenix, 1987)—is thereby portrayed as unitary, in the sense of internally stable and homogeneous. This is the first key error, which recent antiracist and feminist analysis has deconstructed in various ways: firstly, by 'colouring in' 'whiteness' (charles, 1992) as a strategy to ward off notions of collective responsibility for the impetus towards assimilation (by showing that the apparently separate cultures have in fact informed and constituted each other, e.g. Gilroy, 1993); but also, secondly, by historicizing the process of emergence of received notions of dominant culture and so exposing their impossibility as well as undesirability (Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong, 1997).

Once located within this worldview, similar things happen to gender. For as an abstracted category, not surprisingly, gender also tends to be portrayed within an invidious binary: either it is seen as marginal to culture (as ignored, unimportant or unrelated to culture, with the corresponding effect of subordinating gender to cultural difference); or it is accorded representative status, as indicative of other markers of (cultural) difference (as in 'our women are liberated') that bolster cultural/national chauvinisms. From this last point the over-visibility of gender indicates not only its tokenized, reified and homogenized status, but also its key role in the perpetuation of new racisms within the remit of colonialist/paternalist themes. Here new

discourses of feminization may paradoxically work to cloud analysis further (Burman, 2004a).

But this also shapes discourses of cultural practice. As feminist social policy and legal theorists have pointed out (e.g. Pateman, 1989; Phillips, 1991), the public–private distinction that structures western legal and political systems is profoundly gendered. This also clearly reiterates the longstanding set of associations between woman, nation and state that antiracist feminists have been highlighting for some time (e.g. Brah, 1996; McClintock, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997). There is a slippage in women's accorded positions from biological to cultural reproduction whereby women come to be treated as responsible not only for bearing and raising children, but also for their moral welfare—and so by extension the maintenance of particular national or cultural identities. This slippage is central to the oppressive focus on the regulation of women's sexuality and reproduction discernible within all societies. Challenging the equation between traditional gender relations and cultural practice (whether dominant or minoritized) is therefore a vital arena for feminist intervention.

What is particularly noteworthy about these two versions of reading gender and culture is that, either way, both the centrality and inter-sectionality of gender and culture (and each of their complex relations with class and sexuality) are overlooked and, moreover, where one axis is treated as variable the other seems to acquire an equivalent rigidity.

I want to take this analysis a bit further. When we move from discussion of the (implicitly assumed) dominant culture to that which is explicitly indicated as deviant or 'other' (through being marked with notions of 'ethnic' or 'ethnic minority'), further problems arise. As is widely acknowledged (e.g. Donald & Rattansi, 1992), discourses around culture that presume minority status typically indicate racialized difference. Now—given the role accorded women as bearers of culture—this move has consequences for, and perhaps even relies upon, particular conceptualiza-tions of gender relations in order to work. For not only does it reify cultural practices in ways that abstract and separate them from the contexts of their emergence and function but, as I will elaborate, it also privileges 'race' over gender and so marginalizes and even excludes some of those culturally designated women's positions, interests and experiences (see also Razack, 2004).

To elaborate these arguments, I will outline five consequences, exempli-fied within two recent research projects I have co-directed on services around attempted suicide and self-harm for South Asian[1] women within my locality, in which domestic violence emerged as a key precipitant (Chantler, Burman, Batsleer, & Bashir, 2001) and domestic violence and minoritisation (Batsleer et al., 2002). The latter study[2] generated and analysed accounts from service providers associated with, as well as dedicated to working around, domestic violence in the Manchester area,

and from self-identified African and African-Caribbean, South Asian, Jewish and Irish[3] survivors of domestic violence, some of whom had used these services.[4] We used the term 'minoritization' (rather than 'minority' or 'minority ethnic group') to highlight that groups and communities do not occupy the position of 'minority' by virtue of some inherent property (of their culture or religion, for example), but rather they come to acquire this position as the outcome of a socio-historical and political process. This was an intentional theoretical and discursive intervention whose implications we considered at some length, including how this indicated areas of continuity as well as differences of positions between women from different minoritized groups—so spanning the black/white divide that usually structures such discussions.[5] We were acutely aware of the controversial character of the study, since any work drawing attention to abuse within minoritized communities elicits charges of fuelling racism further (also see Pratt, Burman, & Chantler, 2004).

Our analysis also had to engage with how a focus on cultural or racialized positionings can work either to obscure or alternatively and spuriously to racialize the overwhelmingly classed issue of access to services around domestic violence. Here it is important to note how this class dimension works in truly paradoxical ways, in terms of its dynamic of inclusion and exclusion from service access, alongside the stigmatizing character of many interventions with, and much support for, working-class minoritized women. For, while domestic violence is widely acknowledged to cross classes and cultures (see, e.g. Hamner & Itzin, 2000, and especially Haaken, 2002), violence in middle-class families is subject to a double invisibility: first, on the grounds that middle-class women can typically access other resources to leave a violent relationship without having to claim public (statutory) or voluntary sector services; and, secondly, because many services such as women's refuges are resourced by the welfare and housing benefit entitlements of their residents, this intensifies the invisibility of those who do not exercise such entitlements or do not qualify for them (Burman & Chantler, 2004, 2005; Larner, 2000). As discussed later, some minoritized women facing domestic violence were deemed ineligible for help by virtue of their immigration status. But other than these, those women who were middle class, in employment or with financial resources faced demands for prohibitively high rent to stay in refuge accommodation, and so would be unlikely to be resident there. Thus middle-class women were largely invisible within our research material, reflecting a broader pattern of (non-)representation within the domestic violence literature.

Thus both studies were local, policy-relevant action research projects that were controversial in trying to work feminist and antiracist analyses and practice in relation to each other (cf. Burman, 2004b; Burman & Chantler, 2004). My analysis here is generated from this engagement with practice, albeit informed by feminist and antiracist theory. I draw on these examples

to indicate the urgent issues at stake within the complex interplay between culture and gender. For each of the five following problems I will draw also on a range of British and international feminist critiques to highlight alternative responses and counter-discourses.

From Individual to Cultural Privacy

Addressing the limits and critiques of multiculturalism involves under-standing how liberalism and individualism are linked, historically and politically. Both share commitments to notions of democracy, rationality and universal humanity that warrant claims to equal rights, but these same commitments reiterate the gender and cultural chauvinisms of western androcentrism in three ways: firstly, by failing to acknowledge how citizens are not equally enabled to exercise their democratic rights through legacies of disadvantage; secondly, by employing standards of 'rationality' that covertly sanction western enlightenment and culturally masculine modes of reasoning so that, thirdly, claims to equality on the basis of universal humanity work to normalize culturally specific (western, masculine) models of subjectivity (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Phillips, 1991). This normal-ization has, in turn, two key consequences: first, a particular (cultural, classed and gendered) model underlies a supposedly universal 'culture-free' political theory; while, second, difference (whether gendered or cultural) becomes marked as a problem of the 'other'. Hence critiques highlight how liberal democracy privileges the already dominant with a model of univer-sality that treats differences as deviant, and fails to analyse the power relations that produce and sustain this. (Clearly other models—of critical, participatory democracy—address some of these problems: see e.g. Phillips, 1998.) Moreover, this liberal framework informs the representation of differences, as exemplified in the 'normalized absence/pathologized pres-ence' binary that Phoenix (1987) has identified as structuring the representa-tion of black (and here, by extension, also minoritized) women. In relation to domestic violence, as we discuss elsewhere (Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004), this works to structure service responses to minoritized women and in turn to make those women wary of approaching mainstream domestic violence services for fear not only of encountering racism but also of fuelling racist perceptions of their cultural or community background.

Moreover, under neo-liberalism this individualism extends further to inscribe all discourses of social practice—spanning the explicitly disciplinary/governmental and the apparently autonomous structures of civil society. Furthermore, even this binary is fast collapsing given the ways the 'third sector' is being recuperated, via a process of professionalization, as the new route for trans-state-sponsored social and financial regeneration (Larner, 2000). Analyses and interventions around domestic or familial

violence highlight both the collusions and tensions between these different sectors, for institutional and community responses to domestic violence typically bring analyses of women's rights and positions into stark contest with discussions of cultural rights and prevailing discourses of multi-culturalism.

In the first place, interventions around domestic violence challenge the public–private distinction. Current social policy, at national and international levels, struggles to determine whether domestic violence is a public order, public health or mental health issue. At the very least these practical problems indicate the futility of separating culture from gender or gender from 'self'. Further, both conceptualizations of, and practical responses to, the situation of minoritized women facing domestic violence indicate a crucial collusion between notions of individual autonomy (enshrined in the public/private divide which also until recently allowed a husband to rape his wife in England and Wales, as is still the case in many countries) and cultural autonomy. Notions of what might be called 'cultural privacy' as warrants for minority rights arise as an extension of individual rights (see also Bhattacharjee, 1997, for an equivalent US-based analysis). This means that the default position within the British brand of multiculturalism—with its reification of tradition and culture (Hall, 2000; Sivanandan, 1985)—is that communities can do what they want as long as they do not bother anyone. *Laissez-faire* cultural, as well as industrial, capital prevails (see Burman et al., 2004).

These were the kinds of responses we encountered from mainstream statutory services within our studies. Gupta's (2003) recent review of the activities of the British black feminist organisation, Southall Black Sisters, who have been at the forefront of struggles in the UK against the combined effects of racism and sexism through campaigns around domestic violence and immigration legislation, echoes these sentiments:

> Multiculturalism—as an aspect of institutionalised racism, which impacts on gender inequality—has not received the attention it deserves from anti-racist activists or commentators. But on the ground it remains one of the most pressing challenges that we face in our day-to-day struggles for freedom. At best it is a laudable attempt to promote racial tolerance and respect for cultural diversity; at its worst it challenges neither the structural basis of racism nor inequality. Indeed it bypasses the need for local democracy because it relies on self-appointed community leaders who historically have no interests in social justice or women's equality. The problem lies not merely with the multicultural approach but with the way in which the notion of 'community' is constructed. (p. 18)

Gupta highlights the 'informal contract' that the state establishes with minority community leaders, who are thus strengthened in their power over community, familial, cultural and religious affairs—thus 'concealing power relations between men and women and legitimising women's subordination

within minority communities' (p. 19). This systematic disempowerment of minoritized women undermines contemporary initiatives to dismantle in-stitutionalized racism, and is bolstered by a multiculturalism that, as well as portraying culture itself as only a minoritized attribute, is predicated on concepts of minority culture and religion as fixed and homogeneous rather than dynamic and changing. Thus we see how discourses of autonomy not only reify community practices—including the interactive and mutually constitutive character of dominant and minority cultural practices—but also thereby naturalize and legitimize gender inequalities.

This is also an area that UNIFEM (2003) recently addressed in its worldwide review of progress in ending violence against women. Whilst framing its analysis in terms of the links between violence against women and women's devalued social status generally, its report consists of specific examples of campaigns against traditional cultural practices that have bolstered the oppression of women. By claiming, and championing the implementation of the claim, that women's rights are human rights, cultural norms are no longer sacrosanct but become subject to struggle and change. The recourse to indigenous women's campaigns therefore warrants inter-national evaluation and intervention to support changing women's status.

> These examples show how complex a task it is to challenge cultural norms. Clearly, culture is not the static entity described by opponents of change. It is constantly changing in response to shifts in society, new developments in the world and pressure from various groups. Around the world, in many different cultures, women are struggling to free themselves of norms that have stifled their lives. In this context, awareness-raising campaigns that seek to respect the best of traditions and honour the public's attachment to the past while promoting positive change have the greatest hope of success. (UNIFEM, 2003, p. 35)

Hence examples that UNIFEM gives of changing cultural practices include supporting women to develop alternative rituals to female genital mutilation to mark girls' transition to womanhood, whilst—in a move to ward off accusations of neo-colonial interventionism—also acknowledging how such rituals themselves have acquired their power in part through being fostered as cultural practices of resistance to colonialism and imperialism.

'Race' Anxiety

Once admitted, however, this cultural privacy or specialization produces particular barriers to intervention and provision. Within our studies, main-stream services typically appeared either unable to deal with the cultural and language barriers they attributed to, or actually encountered when faced by, some minoritized women seeking support. There are clear practical and training implications here, in terms of countering racist assumptions enacted through their response to the violence. Yet in terms of service development

implications, we were also struck by the sense of helplessness these workers indicated, for they presented themselves as insufficiently culturally equipped to work with minoritized women. They talked of being worried about being culturally inappropriate or (eliciting accusations of being) racist if they questioned or criticized particular practices occurring within minoritized groups. According to the logic I have identified regarding the elision of gender within discourses of culture, this included what were perceived to be 'culturally specific' practices (whether of the 'it doesn't happen here', 'they look after their own' or 'it's their culture' varieties sanctioning non-intervention, as opposed to the more explicitly pathologizing '[x community] men like to beat up their wives' version that warrants service intervention within the frame of an imperial-paternalist rescue narrative). Albeit generated through the fear of, and often precisely through the effort to try to avoid, being racist, this discourse of cultural respect paradoxically seemed to feed racist myths by fostering the suggestion that particular communities condone violence or are particularly oppressive to women. In the UK context of our research this particularly applied to Muslim women and also to some women of African descent.

The discursive complexes surrounding this (institutionally constituted but individually experienced) 'race' anxiety are thus particularly pernicious and exercise a major grip on practitioners and policymakers alike. So the counterpart to discourses of cultural privacy/autonomy is a form of cultural relativism that not only disables critique but also hampers intervention. UNIFEM noted how the deployment of such argumentation is specific to interventions around violence against women. Hence the Special Rapporteur to the UN on violence against women was quoted as saying that 'it is only with regard to women's rights, those rights that affect practices in the family and the community, that the argument of cultural relativism is used' (in UNIFEM, 2003, p. 77).

How can 'race' anxiety be overcome without resorting to paternalist/ colonialist assumptions, or busybody moralizing multiculturalism? UNIFEM's rhetorical strategy has been to challenge claims to cultural autonomy both by warding off the essentializing of culture and by subordinating discourses of respect for cultural norms to a human rights agenda. Rather than focusing on specific cultural practices (but without denying these), it emphasizes the common cultural norms that condone violence against women. This is politically useful because it grounds critique within a broader analysis of general responsibility and so also wards off specific cultural pathologizations that form such a central part of racism and warrants minoritized community defensiveness in owning up to and addressing violence.

> Despite attacks by conservatives and traditionalist forces, much of the strength of the women's human rights movement comes from the fact that women from different regions, classes and cultures have all adopted

human rights language and frameworks to articulate their demands for
gender equality. Activists have pointed out that although traditional
practices such as virginity tests, 'crimes of honour' and widowhood rites
are specific to certain cultures and explicitly undermine women's rights,
in all cultures violence persists because it is culturally acceptable. Around
the world, most perpetrators of violence against women count on the fact
that their community will not censure them for their behaviour. Challeng-
ing this impunity and the almost universal acceptance of a culture of
violence against women is central to diminishing this problem. (UNIFEM,
2003, p. 77)

Similarly, Black and Asian feminist activists in Britain have called for
'honour killings' and forced marriage to be treated as forms of domestic
violence and acted on accordingly, rather than as culturally-specific practices
(Siddiqui, 2003a, 2003b).

Privileging 'Race' over Gender

Once in existence, a key effect of this 'race' anxiety was that cultural issues
were accorded greater priority by service providers than gender issues.
Gender thus became subordinated to cultural identification, as a particular
effect of discourses of cultural autonomy/privacy. This arose because
dominant discourses of culture reify minority community practices that in
fact have developed in interaction with (whether in accordance with, or in
reaction to) the dominant culture. Included in this are the seemingly
'positive' ways of representing minority cultures by romanticizing or
exoticizing them. Either way, culture was treated as static, and often equated
with religion.

This combined with a political climate of escalating racism—currently in
Britain as elsewhere especially towards Muslims and people identified as in
some way 'Asian' or 'Middle Eastern'. It also meant that women who
sought refuge from violence and abuse outside their supposedly natural
cultural communities to maintain their safety often encountered so much
racism that they ended up returning to the abuse. It is worth noting here that
there is nothing new about this phenomenon, in the sense that the Irish and
Jewish participants in our study indicated similar issues, and their reserva-
tions were attributed to longstanding memories—including those of their
parents and other family members—of encountering racism when seeking
service support.

UNIFEM and other agencies deal with the privileging of 'race' over
gender by elaborating an analysis of culture that transcends specific (major-
ity or minority) national contexts and imports a conceptualization of gender
and culture that not only sees these as mutually constitutive but also
problematizes culturally dominant forms of masculinity. A section in UNI-
FEM's review on 'Causes of Violence against Women' identifies as state-of-

the art analysis a multidimensional account that includes 'cultural factors', 'social and economic factors', 'impunity and lack of recourse' and 'individual and psychological explanations'. Here the 'cultural factors' specified are:

> . . . sexual double standards; norms of chastity and fidelity applied only to women; the objectification of women's bodies that justifies violence as a way to control their sexuality; attitudes that celebrate aggressiveness and violence as markers of masculinity; national or religious extremist beliefs built on protecting 'good' women and punishing 'bad' ones; and acceptance of violence as an appropriate way to resolve conflict. (UNIFEM, 2003, p. 61)

Other feminist analysis explicitly challenges the privileging of 'race' over gender by showing how this analysis produces additional problems for minoritized women seeking support, as indicated below.

Warding off 'Specialization'

The sensationalist discourses of 'specialness' or 'specialization' that are central to representations of cultural difference work to deny the mundane and common aspects of the effects of domestic violence for women from both majoritized and minoritized groups. Thus in our reporting we tried to accord equal emphasis to both similarities and differences—what we called a 'both/and' analysis—since minoritized women were subject to all the general problems all women face in leaving violent relationships—such as finding housing, childcare, facing poverty—plus all the additional and intersecting ones around language, immigration status, loss of community in the context of a racist society, and so on (Burman & Chantler, 2005). In fact the general focus in our study on minoritization (rather than on specific cultural communities or comparisons) was useful, for we were able to document how every negative stereotype that was mobilized in relation to a specific cultural group (e.g. '*x*-cultural/religious/minority group'- identified men like to beat up their wives' or 'it's acceptable within *x* culture to treat women badly', etc.) was in fact generated about all four of the identified groups within our study. (Here we should also note that one other effect of the focus on minoritization was to draw attention to how abusers were not always or only intimate sexual partners but could include extended family members. This clearly has implications for re-evaluating current approaches to domestic violence.) This thereby indicated a generally racist tactic, rather than colluding via our research design, in re-stigmatizing any particular community or cultural identity.

   The widespread discourses of specificity or specialization—whether specificity in terms of the presenting problem (e.g. of attempted suicide and self-harm or domestic violence), or in terms of cultural origin or

identification—produced some key material effects, for they functioned as warrants for service provider disengagement or passing on to some supposedly better qualified or specialized practitioner, producing a cycle of negative referral. So a culturally specific voluntary sector organization would refer a woman to statutory services on the grounds of not having the experience to deal with her acute distress or the complexity of the presenting problem, while the statutory services were documented as referring them back to the same culturally specific services on the grounds of cultural or linguistic knowledge. Thus forms of specific (minoritized or professionalized) 'expertise' were elaborated in such exclusive ways as to avoid providing any service at all! The attributed identification of 'special', far from generating extra resources, paradoxically worked to deny these claimants access to even ordinary facilities. Hence the combination of the privileging of 'race' over gender with 'race' anxiety worked to produce an exclusionary kind of specialist engagement with minoritized women that deprived them of support (see, e.g., Burman, Chantler, & Batsleer, 2002).

In a sense what we have here is the solipsism and ethnocentrism of identity politics writ large (Amos & Parmar, 1984; Bondi, 1993), alongside discourses of resource allocation that match budgets to (supposedly) representative groups that, according to market-led health care provision, have to offer 'value' in terms of their size. Minoritized women are often numerically small in any particular geographically-based service 'patch' and so are not prioritized for support. Moreover, by being so 'special', they are often presumed to require a level of 'cultural matching' they may not even want (although language is clearly an issue)—especially in the context of domestic violence or mental health issues, where concerns about compromises of confidentiality in relation to safety or stigma may predispose a woman to request delivery by someone from outside her own identified community. Yet liberal efforts at cultural matching function alongside standardized models of service provision that, even where they are not gender-blind, are usually not culturally sensitized. Hence instead of modelling services around an abstract universalized (but perhaps gendered) subject that actually fits no one, let alone the most marginalized or excluded service users, our strategy has been to argue for the design of services to start from the position of the most excluded as a way to ensure inclusion for everyone (Batsleer et al., 2003; Chantler, Burman, & Batsleer, 2003).

The Missing Link: State and Multinational Levels

So far, analysis has addressed service-level responses, but it extends further. Alexander and Mohanty (1997) argue:

> To talk about feminist praxis in global contexts would involve shifting the unit of analysis from local, regional, and national culture to relations and

> processes across cultures. Grounding analyses in particular, local feminist praxis is necessary but we also need to understand the local in relation to larger cross-national processes. (p. xix)

Significantly these national and cross-national perspectives are precisely what local and national practitioner and public media reports of our studies have been most reluctant to publicize. The specificity of focus obscured the ways the state creates the conditions for, and sometimes actively colludes in, violence against women. This happens through explicit state structures of immigration legislation and deportation, and less overtly through the with-holding of work permits from asylum seekers. These trap women within oppressive relationships and are often used explicitly as threats by perpe-trators to prevent women from leaving. Beyond these, yet even more perniciously, there is the withholding of entitlement to benefits to women who came to the UK as spouses if their marriages break up within two years (see, e.g., Cohen, 2002; Hayes, 2000).[6] This often works to exclude such women even from access to battered women's refuges[7] (which rely on claiming such benefits as their revenue).

Alongside these major practical difficulties, this occlusion of state respon-sibility clearly bolsters cultural pathologization as well as, or crucially by virtue of, the specifically gendered version of it in terms of the question: 'Why doesn't she leave?' This is the question that media representation of our research focused upon, irrespective even of whether journalists or radio interviewers directed asked us about it. This characteristic popular and professional question that surrounds women living with violence ignores the state and institutional barriers that prevent women leaving. Hence the intersection of discourses of culture and gender works to portray minoritized women as either particularly trapped or particularly weak-willed and maso-chistic. Once again, the contemporary romanticization and abstraction sur-rounding notions of 'community' marginalizes the gender-specific issues posed by the position of minoritization, whilst also reinforcing a conception of 'community' that is always already racialized.

But two other aspects of state and transnational conditions for perpetuat-ing violence against minoritized women come into the picture. Both are important to ward off the pathologizing effects of the 'specializing' focus on culture. First, we need to consider the widespread movement of peoples under neo-liberalism—as refugees or economic migrants. This heightens the scope for violence and exploitation (including sexual violence) against women. UNIFEM (2003) documents how the destabilization of traditional communities through impoverishment and the promotion of mobility for economic survival both foster conditions for trafficking in women. More-over, notwithstanding the widespread focus on antiviolence campaigns in legal reform and the move towards promoting a culture of implementation (i.e. challenging the patriarchy of the legal system and its practitioners), it highlights how very few countries have laws addressing violence against

women during times of war and political conflict. Yet organized public violence against women, including rape, has become a key military strategy within recent civil wars across as diverse contexts as the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Guatemala. As feminists have pointed out, these crimes can only be understood in terms of prevailing discourses on the role of gender within (attacks on) the maintenance of cultural-national identities (e.g. Coulson, 1993). And, significantly, they all build on ethnic-national systems of differentiation that have their roots in colonial-imperialist interventions.

Taking up these themes but offering a more nuanced analysis, Khan (2003) highlights the paradoxical role of the state and current economic conditions in both creating the conditions for and protecting women from familial violence and regulation. Investigating the application of the *zina* laws in Pakistan (which allow the imprisonment of women sometimes on the grounds of merely having been accused of being sexually adulterous), Khan links the maintenance and mode of application of this legislation to current contexts connecting economic development and human rights in Pakistan, including the impact of globalization and the continuing costs of militarization. She suggests that the laws work not only to regulate the behaviours of daughters, mothers and wives, but also to control them as workers who may be more prepared to accept difficult and poorly paid working conditions without organizing for change. Against the background of other analyses that address the complex relations between Islam, the women's movement and the Pakistani state (Ali, 2000), her analysis connects the politicization of communal and religious identities around ideas of the nation in South Asia with the impoverishment of women. This politicization occurs alongside structural adjustment politics linked to international aid which have worked to restrict basic government services such as health care and education. Southern economies are now—through globalization—being integrated into northern-dominated markets, increasing poverty and violence in third world societies. In a post-September 11 context of economic and cultural retrenchment, Khan argues that the project of modernization (as a way of dealing with systematic state corruption and marginalization) has been replaced by the desire for morality connected to a reassertion of Islamic identity that has produced a proliferation of measures aimed to regulate women. Thus Pakistan's military budget commitments (in particular through the dispute with India over Kashmir) heighten the need for a docile workforce to keep multinational investors happy, while there have been increases in both social unrest, resulting from the rising price of basic foods, and high unemployment, due to restructuring. Hence her analysis offers a particular case example of how culturally-specific definitions of gender come to function within and for wider political agendas.

> Through the practices associated with the *zina* charges, a particular economics gets transferred into symbolic idioms of sexuality and morality. At the same time the patriarchal myth about the protection of women in

exchange for feminine ideals of docility provides an opening for renegotia-
tion. . . .paradoxically the state both helps families intimidate the women
and helps the women to escape the grip of their families by providing them
shelter in state-run institutions. . . . At the same time regulation of women's
sexuality helps build a case for national morality on a base of societal
corruption and injustice. The state considers lower-class [*sic*] women
expendable, and their liberty is sacrificed for the moral health of the nation.
Increasing structural inequality and growing societal violence can then be
explained away as a lack of individual morality, rendering the cost of
globalization and military spending invisible. (Khan, 2003, pp. 93–97)

Integrating Concepts of Culture and Gender

I have offered this analysis alongside some examples of interventions around
the conceptualization of the intersections of 'race' and gender as challenging
to and capable of informing changes in service policy and practices. While
linked, the five key 'problems' I have identified follow from a core set of
mistaken and unhelpful renderings of the relations between gender and
culture. At the level of practice, I have discussed in particular the ways
gender and culture work together within a context of racialized majority/
minority relations to produce discriminatory practice and to deny support to
the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. At the level of cultural politics
the gender–culture elision works to reinscribe discourses of cultural differ-
ence in ways that—albeit in the name of cultural respect—turn into practices
of pathologization, and also position minoritized women as culturally and
communicationally alien and inaccessible in ways that deepen their isolation
and exclusion from support. Finally they write out of available accounts a
macro-state- and multinational-level analysis that would implicate broader
cultural-political conditions as producing culturally mediated forms of
gendered violence.

   Clearly this analysis could be extended: for example, by exploring how
the limitations of prevailing conceptualizations of the connections between
women and children—manifest in domestic violence work—reinscribe the
position of women both as subject to and as bearers of culture. So, within
our study, mothers' espoused cultural commitments *for* their children either
could work as a ('cultural') barrier to leaving a violent relationship (as
where access to specific culturally or religiously identified schooling was a
priority) or could be an instigator and resource for leaving. Equally,
community identification—in the form of fear of losing one's cultural
community in the context of minoritization—could deter women from
leaving. (Indeed isolation—both individual and cultural—is a major condi-
tion enabling domestic violence.) Such matters indicate the impossibility of
disaggregating gender and culture, alongside the impossibility of analysing
gender outside culture. Nor can an understanding of culture be elaborated

that does not presume some notions of gender. As theoretical psychologists committed to antiracist and feminist politics, we have an urgent responsibility to conceptualize the complex ways in which culture is engendered, including how the mobilization of 'race' and gender work as both state tactics and technologies of oppression. As Alexander and Mohanty (1997) argue, 'our goal is to elaborate the way a feminist democracy must interpret the hierarchies of governance, their interconnectedness and effects, while moving from an individual to a collective practice' (p. xxx).

Notes

1. It should be noted that within a UK context, the designation 'South Asian' carries different meanings to those circulating within North America (so highlighting their constructed and contingent character, and relationship with colonial-imperialist projects). Typically within the UK, 'South Asian' is used to refer to people originating (including often at several generations remove) from the Indian subcontinent.
2. The Suicide and Self Harm–South Asian Women Project was funded by Manchester, Salford and Trafford Health Action Zone, between March 2000 and July 2001 (see Chantler et al., 2001), while the project *Domestic Violence and Minoritisation: Supporting Women to Independence* (Batsleer et al., 2002) was funded jointly by the European Social Fund (under the remit of Policy Field 5), Measure 2 (dossier number 91164NW3) and Manchester Metropolitan University between September 2001 and July 2002. I am grateful to the other authors of that report (Janet Batsleer, Khatidja Chantler, Hindene Shirley McIntosh, Kamal Pantling, Sophie Smailes and Sam Warner) for their involvement in and contribution to the project, which forms the basis for the analysis developed here.
3. Clearly such self-identifications span diversities of experiences of migration, including first and second (at least) generation. These issues varied considerably within as well as between each specific cultural grouping. It is also important to note that our sample of survivors included older as well as younger women.
4. Survivors were identified and approached either via services they were already in contact with (mainly refuges)—hence also ensuring that they were within the 'safety net' of service access—or via other networks of survivors. We did not include women in the immediate circumstances of leaving violent relationships for ethical reasons, while our focus on exploring pathways into services and how successfully these met the woman's needs meant that it was useful to research with women who were some way into the process of accessing services. The fact that some of the survivors in our study—notably the Jewish and Irish women—were not identified through referral from contact with general statutory services itself indicates gaps in provision. Within the region studied there were only two culturally specific dedicated domestic violence provisions—a refuge for women of African descent and one for South Asian women (although both accepted women with wider and conjoint cultural-racialized identifications). Since the only Jewish refuge in Europe is in London, we also included some workers and survivors from there too (as a potential or actual provider for Manchester-based Jewish-identified women).

5. In so doing we were both challenging the usual separation between 'black' and 'white'—which excludes mixed heritage and also threatens to polarize difference, even as it acknowledges the specific and different experiences produced through skin-colour-based racisms—and rearticulating discussions of racism to include antisemitism and anti-Irish oppression.

6. Until early 2004 this was the 'one-year rule', but pressure for the harmonization of measures across Europe has extended this to two.

7. Women's refuges in Britain are largely affiliated to the national Women's Aid Federation, although there are some autonomous refuges working as part of other projects. Women's Aid and especially other black feminist campaigning groups, such as Imkaan (linked to the Newham Asian Women's Project), have been drawing attention to this problem of 'no recourse to public funds'. However, so far it seems that it has largely been the (disproportionately fewer and under-resourced) black-identified refuges which have been accepting women with 'no recourse'.

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ERICA BURMAN is Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University, where she co-directs the Discourse Unit and the Women's Studies Research Centre. She is author of *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (Routledge, 1994, 2nd ed. in preparation), co-author of *Challenging Women: Psychology's Exclusions, Feminist Possibilities* (Open University Press, 1995) and *Psychology Discourse Practice: From Regulation to Resistance* (Taylor & Francis, 1996), editor of *Feminists and Psychological Practice* (Sage, 1990) and *Deconstructing Feminist Psychology* (Sage, 1998), co-editor of *Discourse Analytic Research* (Routledge, 1993) and *Culture, Power and Difference* (Zed/UCT Press, 1998) and consulting editor to *Critical Psychology* (Juta, 2004). She is currently working on projects addressing intersections between methodological paradigms and practices in feminist and qualitative pedagogies; gender, culture and models of psychological therapy provision and practice; and the role of representations of childhood and memory within culture and international development (with a forthcoming book in progress *Developments: Child, Image, Nation* to be published by Routledge). She is also a group analyst. ADDRESS: Discourse Unit/Women's Studies Research Centre, Department of Psychology and Speech Pathology, Manchester Metropolitan University, Hathersage Road, Manchester M13 0JA, UK. [email: e.burman@mmu.ac.uk]