

EDITED BY SHELLY GRABE

WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON
RESISTANCE, LIBERATION, AND JUSTICE



Women's Human Rights

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*A Social Psychological Perspective
on Resistance, Liberation, and Justice*

Edited by SHELLY GRABE

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

The art pictured on the cover is produced by Favianna Rodriguez, a celebrated interdisciplinary artist based in Oakland, California. Rodriguez is renowned for artwork that deals with issues such as war, migration, globalization, and social movements. Her pieces reflect grassroots struggles and tell a history of social justice through images. Favianna produced the image that was selected for the cover of this book for the organization Public Services International for the celebration of International Women's Day, March 8, 2012. The piece titled "Solidarity is Uplifting" depicts women workers throughout the world "who are always at the very heart of our struggle for human and labour rights and equality" (<http://www.world-psi.org/>). Favianna invites those serving social justice, radical, and revolutionary causes to use her images for noncommercial purposes. Rodriguez has lectured widely on the use of art in civic engagement and is on social media promoting art and activism. Contact her, follow her on social media, schedule her for a talk, or purchase her work at www.favianna.com.

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PREFACE

Across the world significant numbers of individuals are subjected to marginalization, discrimination, harassment, and violence simply because they are women. These experiences occur unabated across countries and cultures, despite widespread commitments internationally to draw increased attention to the prevalence and consequences of women's human rights violations. At a United Nations conference in 1995, 189 governments adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, an international agenda for women's equality and a statement of women's rights *as* human rights (United Nations, 1995). Since that time, violations of women's human rights have become a widely documented problem across many academic disciplines, international organizations, and activist social movements. Given that a focus on the centrality of women's rights as human rights was first put forth two decades ago, the question remains, Why do egregious violations of women's rights continue? The purpose of this book is to establish that to have a better understanding of women's rights and justice, contributions from a social justice-oriented psychology that integrates feminist scholarship and empirical findings based on women's grassroots resistance and activism is necessary.

My strategy with this volume was to recruit critical psychologists doing work related to psychology, women's rights, and social change/activism. Even though psychologists, unlike sociologists and legal scholars, have not traditionally contributed to the examination and understanding of women's human rights, contributions from critical psychology can facilitate a better understanding of the mechanisms that sustain and reproduce violations of women's rights, and provide an analysis of how knowledge

and action emerging from the grassroots hold a key to sustained change. Given the dearth of work on human rights in psychology, I sought contributors who would take risks and use this volume as an opportunity to push the field in a new direction. Although many of the contributing authors do international work, that was not required for this volume. In fact, a premise of the volume is that addressing the injustices inherent in women's rights violations requires uncovering the mechanisms underlying women's rights by shifting the focus away from examples that affect only so-called third world women to an analysis that examines how psychological mechanisms uphold the structures of power that women all over the world, in diverse contexts, are subject to. For example, just days after taking office in January 2017, US president Donald Trump put women's rights at risk by reinstating the so-called global gag rule to block federal funding for nongovernmental organizations that provide abortion counseling or referrals, thereby restricting many women's access to preventative healthcare such as screening for cancer or STDs.

My own program of feminist research emerged, albeit accidentally, out of a scholar-activist partnership. I was originally trained as a mainstream clinical psychologist, but having finished my PhD and being disillusioned with academia, I began participating in community mobilization around women's human rights. This effort eventually led me to join a social delegation to Nicaragua that was focused on women's empowerment. Although I was strongly committed to women's issues, the trip seemed a bit far afield from my focus as a psychologist, and I suspected, given my limited knowledge of Latin American politics and culture, and my inability to speak Spanish, that it was perhaps even inappropriate that I be part of the delegation. Nevertheless, a human-rights lawyer and solidarity activist organizing the trip convinced me these were the very reasons I should attend. During my first trip to Nicaragua, in 2005, we visited several key women's rural grassroots organizations that were working on women's human rights by transforming conditions that exacerbated gender inequity. Despite that initial conversations with these organizations during my first visit to Nicaragua included "solidarity" language, I had yet to contribute anything substantive. However, as I listened to the processes by which women were resisting marginalization and implementing social change, I found the psychologist in me asking whether research that documented their efforts might play a role in their commitment to social justice and the actualization of women's rights. A determinedly emphatic response indicated that, yes, being able to empirically demonstrate the efficacy of the transformational processes they were engaging could afford their efforts

more credibility with people in positions of power. I have since collected and disseminated data based on large-scale mixed-methods investigations, conducted in partnership with grassroots organizations in Nicaragua and later Tanzania, that document how processes of power impact women's human rights (Grabe, 2010, 2012, 2015; Grabe & Arenas, 2009; Grabe & Dutt, 2015; Grabe, Dutt, & Dworkin, 2014; Grabe, Grose, & Dutt, 2015; Grose & Grabe, 2014). More recently, in partnership with Nicaraguan activists, I produced a book that analyzes testimonies of women's resistance to the intersecting powers of patriarchy and neoliberalism in the pursuit of women's rights (Grabe, 2017).

Despite my growing focus on scholar-activism, when Abby Gross, the psychology editor from Oxford University Press (OUP), approached me to consider writing a book on women's issues in psychology I initially rebuffed the inquiry. I informed her that the research in which I was engaged had not stemmed from my academic training as a clinical psychologist, but rather from my commitment as an activist. For those reasons I understood my work to exist at the margins of academic scholarship and I viewed OUP as existing anywhere but at the margins. I shared with Abby that I had entered my research relationships with no formal training in feminist studies or international psychology and rather, had learned a women of color, decolonial, and rural feminism from activists in Nicaragua that continues to influence most of the work I do today. Thus, as I became involved in research on women's rights I violated the traditions of mainstream social science by *not* arriving with ready-made theories or an agenda driven from the literature. I went into my research partnerships, though unaware at the time of something called "scholar-activism," to use my tools and training in active engagement with and in the service of a progressive social movement (Sudbury & Okazawa-Rey, 2009). When I explained this to Abby I suspected it was a deal-breaker; but after listening carefully, she said something to the effect of, "That's a great story; write about that," and told me that she had strategically looked for an author who could produce cutting-edge work that would move the field forward; our meeting was no accident.

Oxford's interest in cutting-edge work produced from within psychology provides an exciting opportunity in this volume. One challenge to advancing social justice and scholarship in the area of women's human rights has stemmed from a lack of comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms by which women's status puts them at risk for violations of their basic rights and how these circumstances can be transformed. Even though research psychologists (with exceptions; Lykes, Brabeck, Ferns, & Radan,

1993) have not contributed substantively to the advancement of women's human rights, the perspectives and methods offered by the discipline of psychology have the potential to uncover how structural and ideological conditions function to threaten women's rights and to analyze how the resistance and grassroots efforts of local change agents can be best used in the defense of human rights.

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INTRODUCTION

The Potential for a Feminist Liberation Psychology in the Advancement of Women's Human Rights

SHELLY GRABE

It is now well documented that the neoliberal shifts in globalization that characterized the decades of the 1980s and 1990s—free-trade agreements, structural adjustment of social welfare policies, increased international activity by multinational corporations, and the deregulation of markets—exacerbated already-existing gendered power imbalances, thereby increasing women's risk for human rights violations (Moghadam, 2005; Naples & Desai, 2002). In particular, issues of poverty, militarization, housing, reproductive and sexual injustice, and violence rose to disproportionately impact women (Kennett & Chan, 2010; Kingfisher, 2013; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2000; McClain & Grossman, 2009). Therefore, in response to globalization, the discussion of women's human rights has become ever more relevant, presenting a “political urgency of critical research” (Fine, 2006, p. 86). This book is designed to think through how research in psychology, in particular, can provoke greater awareness of women's rights violations and contribute to social change efforts aimed at the defense of women's human rights.

The world over, efforts across sectors (e.g., governmental, civil society, development) to address human rights have made use of United Nations (UN) declarations and conventions that outline various rights. The original UN Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person, was largely in response to the

world wars and was designed to protect individuals from abuses of the State (UN, 1948). A second generation of rights followed, based on the right to freely determine one's political status and freely pursue economic, social, and cultural development (e.g., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; UN, 1966). However, many views of the majority world,¹ as well as the rights of women, were not well represented in these universal declarations (Lykes, 2000, 2001). As such, women throughout the world sought to expand the existing human rights covenants by introducing the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was meant to bring to light the areas where women are denied equality with men (UN, 1979). Regarded widely as the international bill of women's rights, CEDAW explicitly acknowledges that "extensive discrimination against women continues to exist," and that such discrimination "violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity." By affirming commitment to the equal rights of men and women and stating that fundamental human rights and worth should consider the context of discrimination, CEDAW plays an important role in challenging the universal notion of rights that assumes individuals exist independent of structural inequities. Although CEDAW has been ratified by 189 countries (the United States is not one of them), there exists a large gap between the equal rights outlined in the convention and those that are actualized in women's lives. A report produced by the UN in 2011 detailed sobering evidence that many violations of women continue unabated, in part because justice systems reinforce unequal power relations between men and women and are biased against women's interests and well-being (UN, 2011).

The decade of the 1990s, influenced greatly by UN advancements, was a period of monumental political transformation that witnessed a growing international women's movement linked through subregional, regional, and international networks collaborating on efforts calling attention to unequal rights and mechanisms through which female subordination is sustained and reproduced (Kabeer, 1994; Razavi, 2003). The Beijing Platform for Action, an international agenda for women's empowerment and a statement of women's rights *as* human rights, introduced in 1995, was a springboard for many actions that made use of international human rights discourse (UN, 1995). The mission statement of the Beijing Platform for Action explicitly states:

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies

for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development. A sustained and long-term commitment is essential, so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Despite the international attention to women's rights from local grassroots organizations, solidarity groups, scholars, and the UN alike, what remains unclear in this growing global awareness is how women's rights become *actualized*. At a 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform, the 49th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2005 emphasized that implementing the Platform for Action was essential to meeting UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) #3, which was "to promote gender equality and empower women" by 2015. In 2015, the failed MDGs were replaced with a "bold and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" that includes the goal to "achieve gender equality and empower all girls and women." Although the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing is said to have marked a significant turning point in the global agenda for gender equity and women's rights, the hoped-for progress in the past couple of decades has simply not been achieved. This book aims to establish that contributions from psychology that integrate feminist scholarship and grassroots community action aimed at transforming the structural inequities that put women at risk for violations are necessary to making the progress critical to advancing women's rights.

To contribute to the defense of women's human rights, scholars need to embrace a culturally grounded and inclusive vision of rights and justice for women. In one attempt toward inclusivity, scholars across disciplines have adopted a *transnational* feminist approach. *Transnational* feminism is distinct from *international* feminism or *global sisterhood*, because international and global models of feminism have traditionally turned a blind eye to diverse expressions of feminism, instead favoring a Western model that

universalizes women's experiences (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Naples & Desai, 2002). Transnational feminism arose during the 1980s out of the interplay between global and local practices influenced by neoliberalism that were denying women's rights, permitting exploitation, and reproducing subjugation, regardless of the respective location or country (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Naples & Desai, 2002). In contrast, the Western model of feminism that has traditionally been cited and exported internationally has largely been a white, middle-class feminism focused on power imbalances that are rooted primarily in gender. Given the multiplicity of knowledge and practices that emerge from a transnational perspective, feminist scholars interested in an inclusive vision of rights for women underscore that there is and must be a diversity of feminisms—responsive to the varying needs and concerns of women throughout the world and defined by them for themselves (Sen & Grown, 1987). To be clear, because transnational feminism involves understanding gender in the context of unfavorable global systems, this perspective can and should also be applied when conducting research in the United States.

In another example of a grounded and inclusive agenda, many scholars, including some in psychology, have urged thinking beyond the homogenization of the category “gender” to understand the intersectional effects that other social locations related to power—such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class—have on women's lives (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994; Hurtado, 1989). In other words, it has become increasingly clear that gender must be understood in the context of power relations embedded in multiple social categories. As important as the growing use of intersectional approaches to the study of gender and power within psychology has been (Bowleg, 2008; Cole, 2009; Fine & Sirin, 2007; Hurtado, 1989; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Mahalingam, Balan, & Haritatos, 2008; Stewart & McDermott, 2004), many initial investigations have reflected a largely Western bias. In addition to the other dimensions of social location that are often of focus in a US context, transnational and decolonial feminist scholars suggest that women's experience is also inextricably linked to the systemic inequities of global power (e.g., colonialism, globalization; Bose, 2012; Grabe, Grose, & Dutt, 2015; Lugones, 2010; Narayan, 1997; Sen & Grown, 1987). Therefore, psychological investigation into women's human rights needs to take into account the theoretical frameworks offered by third world feminisms,² which argue that gender oppression operates through unfavorable social systems such as global power that exacerbate or maintain violations of women's human rights (Crenshaw, 1989; Lugones, 2007; Sen & Grown, 1987). The

attention given to women's human rights in this volume is therefore not rooted in the notion that women have universal experiences; rather it is rooted in a shared criticism of and resistance to how policies and societal practices create structural conditions that limit women's rights in their respective communities and locations.

Because a main tenet of transnational feminism involves critique of how systems of global power exacerbate or sustain gender oppression, a focus on social structures and systems of power in understanding women's rights violations and social justice is crucial. For example, across countries and cultures, one of the most ubiquitous group-based inequalities is based on gender, whereby men and women hold different roles that reflect the bias of male structural and social power (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). A quick glance at international data immediately demonstrates that almost without exception women *everywhere* in the world, regardless of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, income level, and so forth, are, on average, disadvantaged by power differentials and are in more subordinate positions than are men (Acosta-Belen & Bose, 1990). For example, globally, women hold only 22% of seats in national parliaments (UN, 2016). International percentages of women in parliament range from a high of around 41% in Nordic countries, to 27% and 24% in the Americas and Europe, respectively, to 18% in Arab states (UN, 2016). It has also been consistently demonstrated across the world, including in the United States, that women's earnings are approximately 70% of men's earnings (UN, 2010a). Similar findings, which have been static since the 1970s, suggest that women perform 66% of the world's work, but earn around 10% of the income and own around 1% of the world's property (UN, 2010b).

Feminist authors from the majority world have articulated that gendered "public" space (i.e., male dominated)—a key to power, privilege, opportunities, and wealth—limits and controls women's access to resources and hinders women's ability to administer laws that protect their rights (Tamale, 2004). The theory of gender and power (Connell, 1987) postulates that gender-based inequalities are pervasive societal characteristics that result in men's disproportionate power in society. The lack of women in powerful positions in the United States, in particular, was exemplified in the media when the first Latina, and third woman ever, was appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States in 2009. During a news interview with the white political commentator Pat Buchanan (who served as a senior US advisor during the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan administrations), the white female talk show host Rachael Maddow asked Buchanan, "Why

do you think it is that of 110 Supreme Court Justices we've had this country, 108 of them have been white?" His response:

"Well, I think that white men were 100% of the people who wrote the Constitution, 100% of the people who wrote the Declaration of Independence, 100% of the people who died at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Probably close to 100% of the people who died at Normandy. This has been a country built basically by white folks in this country, who were 90% of the nation in 1960 when I was growing up, and the other 10% were African Americans who had been discriminated against. That's why." (Maddow, 2009)

Buchanan's statement, focused on race and gender, reflects not only who has written and defended the laws that govern the United States, but also whom those laws are intended to protect. That these statements were generated out of a conversation surrounding the appointment of the United States' first Latina Supreme Court judge reflects how granting women, and in particular women of color, political rights is not something that women can take for granted everywhere. We live in a *world*, not only a country, with laws and customs that have been largely designed, and strongly upheld, by men.

Nevertheless, universalizing claims can be fraught with intellectual and political complexity. The widespread concern for women's human rights often involves universal language similar to that used previously that reflects homogenizing categories of "women" and "men." Although there are clearly documented inequalities based on gender, notions of universalism in regard to women's human rights can raise concern for several reasons. First, a central idea behind universal human rights is that they are afforded to autonomous individuals who are assumed to be free of historical and social conditions (such as poverty, heterosexist discrimination, etc.). An obvious consequence of this is that in many cases women's oppression not only is a matter of gender but also is influenced by factors that may include sexual orientation, class, race/ethnicity, and global economic exploitation of which their male counterparts also suffer. As such, intersectional perspectives interrupt a homogeneous or universalizing feminism that assumes the focus on achieving women's rights should be placed solely on power imbalances between men and women, but rather should take into account the multiple locations of power that may be contributing to women's risk and vulnerability.

An additional concern is that in many locations universal discourse is often taken to mean rights defined by the West, with the activist

efforts of other women evaluated based on standards established by white women, straight women, and/or Western feminists (Lal, McGuire, Stewart, Zaborowska, & Pas, 2010; Lykes, 2001). Holding standards of human rights based on Western definitions, for example, may be construed as another example of domination and an imposition on women who are capable of determining their own definitions of rights and justice (Phillips, 2002). A related consequence of conflating human rights with Western values is that when human rights language is introduced by women who live and work within a non-Western country (as it often is, the world over; Lal et al., 2010) the women are commonly accused of pandering to a Western political agenda (Nussbaum, 2000; Tripp, 2002). However, this reaction assumes women are incapable of mobilizing around their own rights without Western influence, which is, of course, untrue and serves to discredit numerous movements organized around gendered justice across the globe. Furthermore, it is offensive to suggest that commitment to enforcing women's rights emerges from the West when the United States has not passed the Equal Rights Amendment proposed in 1923, nor ratified the UN's CEDAW, which was open for signature in 1980.

Yet another consequence of conflating universal rights with those defined by the West is that, through much that is written about women's human rights, we have come to understand rights violations as a non-US-based phenomenon (Powell, 2005). This is reflected in the examples widely written about to represent violations of women's rights (e.g., veiling; female genital cutting; women trafficked for involuntary prostitution). These examples also reflect how various countries or cultures are positioned in terms of having human rights monitored by international bodies such as the UN. Specifically, Western/Northern countries (e.g., North American and European countries), whose status as harbingers of rights is seldom questioned, are comfortably positioned to discuss women's human rights violations in countries from the majority world (e.g., Southeast Asian, Central and South American, and African countries) that are often dependent on economic aid and intervention coming from the West/North. Invoking women's human rights in this context creates a powerful dichotomy whereby the West evaluates the Rest of the world (Powell, 2005). The West/Rest dichotomy shields from scrutiny the cultural roots of gender inequality that contribute to women's rights violations in Western countries, including the United States, and thereby limits a comprehensive structural analysis of what contributes to violations against women or the upholding of their rights.

In contrast to universalism, a culturally relativistic approach argues that rights and norms of justice are always relative to the community and society in which they are formed, reflecting values and practices that vary enormously from one society to another, and that it is therefore inappropriate to take the norms that emerge within one society as the standard against which to assess the norms of another (Phillips, 2002). Certainly, attention to historical and cultural specificity is imperative to creating any substantive change and without local demand for recognition of rights, no universal principles, however broad, could ever be implemented. Although cultural relativism may address the contextual nature of justice and women's human rights, it carries its own set of concerns. In particular, cultural relativism does not take into consideration that norms of justice are not constructed under the principles of equity. In many contexts, those who defend policies and practices that are harmful to women, in the name of preserving "culture," are often the same individuals or leaders who make decisions and allow change that serves to protect their own political and/or economic interests (Phillips, 2002; Tripp, 2002). For example, many of the structural adjustments and development interventions stemming from global neoliberal policies produce substantial cultural changes approved by the country's male elite; however, because these changes are often advantageous to those already in positions of power, concerns of cultural relativism are not invoked in these instances. Similarly, in the United States and abroad, cultural claims surrounding women's bodies are sometimes manipulated to advance other political interests, and are frequently contested by the very women in whose names these claims are made (e.g., abortion laws). More recently, the hotly contested transgender bathroom laws in the United States have been proposed by mostly heterosexual white men interested in legislating based on traditional values at the risk of trans women's (and men's) right to safety and security.

Similarly, although practices such as veiling or genital cutting have been commonly used as examples of violations of women's rights, the imbalanced focus on these examples in Western media and scholarship suggests that the West is assumed to have a culturally neutral baseline against which to evaluate other women's rights. Despite that cultural claims are often genuine expressions of shared ways of life, claims regarding how women should or should not be treated *based on culture* should not always be taken at face value as means to protect women's rights. Take, for example, how the United States has advanced cultural claims surrounding women's rights to further its own political interests (Powell, 2005). An illustrative example is that women's rights were an important backdrop in the US

invasion of Afghanistan. The invasion was, in part, justified as a means to save “women of cover” (US president George W. Bush’s term for burka-clad Afghan women). However, less than a year after the United States used concerns regarding cultural restrictions on women’s human rights in the Muslim world to advance the “War on Terrorism,” the United States failed to ratify the UN’s CEDAW because it was a form of “cultural colonialism” that would force women from the United States into work and children into day care. In a Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting to discuss US support for CEDAW, the attorney Kathryn Balmforth testified, “CEDAW, in requiring equality for women in the workplace will threaten U.S. culture and values. These matters go to the core of culture, family, and religious belief and would undermine the traditional role of women as mothers who pass on cultural values” (Bayefsky, Reid, & Balmforth, 2000). These culturally relativistic examples illustrate that women can be marginalized *within* cultures and that it is important to ask “whose culture?” when culture is being invoked in the discussion surrounding women’s human rights in *any* given context or country. What this suggests is that cultural practices and change are tied to broader political and economic contexts that extend beyond gender and, in this way, the suppression of women’s rights is not essential to the uniqueness of any particular culture or society (Tripp, 2002).

In this volume we use both US and international examples to interrupt the notion that the United States is the norm by which women’s rights and rights-based activism ought to be understood. As has been suggested, human rights discourse, though widely employed in other countries (e.g., Nicaragua; see Grabe, 2017), is conspicuously missing in the discourse in the United States. For example, although several theorists have traced gender-based violence to inequitable relationships between women and men that are based on normalized ideologies of male dominance and female submission (Morash, Bui, & Santiago, 2000), violence against women within the United States has largely been discussed as a public *health* problem, rather than a violation of women’s human *rights* (e.g., Heise, Raikes, Watts, & Zwi, 1994; Koss, 1990; Krantz, 2002). In contrast, scholars and activists throughout Latin America discuss violence against women as “femicidal violence,” a term intended to explicitly uncover the systemic nature of violence that is based on gendered power imbalances (Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010). From this perspective, violence against women is due to women’s exclusion from power structures and is rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities that violate women’s rights. Viewing violence as a health issue, or simply a domestic

matter, reinforces the political structures that perpetuate gender inequality and that fail to recognize or guarantee the rights of women. In this volume, women's inequities are discussed as structural issues and the topics addressed in this book (e.g., rape, sexual orientation, homelessness, civic participation, violence) are understood within a human rights framework.

Psychology and Human Rights

Despite growing evidence that structural and ideological factors related to globalization are involved in women's human rights violations (Grabe, 2010, 2012), very little exists in psychology to understand women's human rights from this perspective. This raises the question: Why have investigations of women's rights been conspicuously missing from our discipline? Michelle Fine (2012) suggests that in an increasingly neoliberalized context in social science, questions of method and what counts as evidence have contributed to the narrowing of investigations related to matters of justice for women. Fine states, "dominant methodologies systematically strip women (and men) of the material and political contexts of their lives; randomly assigning them to condition and/or assessing their outcomes on standardized indicators deemed appropriate by 'experts'" (Fine, 2012, p. 10). The result of this narrowing is that social structures and systems of power (e.g., patriarchy, neoliberalism) related to women's rights violations cannot easily be considered through the use of standard methods.

There are, however, a couple of exceptional researchers seeking to fill the striking gap in the area of women's rights and psychology. Perhaps one of the most prolific psychologists who has investigated women's human rights through an analysis of the socioeconomic and political context is M. Brinton Lykes, who first began publishing on the effects of state-sponsored violence on women in Latin America in the 1990s (Lykes, Brabeck, Ferns, & Radan, 1993; Lykes & Liem, 1990). Lykes is one of the first authors in psychology to point out that although women disproportionately suffer from policies that deny them a living wage, access to healthcare, and protection from sexual and physical violence, and so forth, these experiences seldom enter the public discussion of human rights (Lykes et al., 1993). In fact, limited focus on rights violations from mainstream psychologists has been concentrated on mental health in conflict regions, and does not necessarily reflect the systemic and structural contexts in which women are socially embedded (Lykes, 2000, 2001). Lykes has pushed scholars to extend thinking and investigation on women's

human rights by considering the contributions of liberation psychology and collaborations with grassroots efforts (DeJesus & Lykes, 2004; Lykes, 2001; Lykes & Coquillion, 2001).

Another notable psychologist focused on women's justice, and one of the first scholars to bring many of these ideas together in one place, is Geraldine Moane (1999). In her book *Gender and Colonialism: A Psychological Analysis of Oppression and Liberation*, Moane articulates what she calls a "feminist liberation psychology." Liberation psychology, more generally, emerged out of a Latin American context when the social psychologist Martín-Baró (1994) urged psychologists to free the discipline from investigations that responded to the interests of the wealthy minority which thereby served the economic, political, and intellectual power structures rather than developing an understanding of the lives of the majority population. In particular, liberation psychology emerged in response to criticisms that conventional psychology had produced theories based on research conducted predominately with white, middle-class, undergraduate men and was therefore failing to generate knowledge that could address social inequalities, such as those that were experienced in the context of repression and civil war in Latin America. Martín-Baró argued that psychologists can and should reframe standard methods to consider that the root causes of oppression lie in the structures and ideologies that underlie inequity. Although critical psychology, more generally, also critiques conventional psychology because it fails to consider the way that structural power and related ideologies operate to impact individuals' psychological well-being, liberation psychology attempts to go further by actively addressing oppressive sociopolitical structures. In particular, according to liberation psychology, psychological analysis of oppression should involve a systematic exploration of the links between social and political conditions and psychological patterns, with explicit emphasis on taking action to improve those conditions (Moane, 1999, 2003).

Feminist liberation psychology, more specifically, takes into account the effects of globalization, international human rights discourse, and activism surrounding women's issues when linking women's well-being to structures of power (Moane, 1999). Approaches to research taken from a feminist liberation psychology perspective, therefore, would attend to the social conditions that are embedded in global structures of gender inequality by examining processes related to structural power differences at local, national, and transnational levels (Lykes & Moane, 2009). In this way, feminist liberation psychology is an ideal paradigm from which to begin investigations of women's human rights from within psychology.

Because liberation psychology has become an increasingly used approach to understanding how individuals develop critical perspectives that get directed toward social change, the discipline of psychology has the potential to help uncover understandings regarding how individuals resist human rights violations and work toward liberation by transforming structural inequities (Burton & Kagan, 2005; Grabe, 2017; Martín-Baró, 1996; Moane, 2003, 2010). The Brazilian social theorist Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of *conscientización* is central to a liberation psychology paradigm and refers to a process in which those working to create bottom-up social change participate in an iterative, ideological process whereby analysis and action develop together in a limited situation. In his understanding of liberation, Freire argues that individuals are most likely to change their own circumstances by simultaneously working to challenge the social structures that disadvantage them (Brodsky et al., 2012; Moane, 2003). Among the first steps in this process is the development of critical understandings of how adverse social conditions undermine well-being (Prilleltensky, 2008). These critical understandings are used to problematize one's social conditions, a process that results in reconstructing understandings of one's lived experience based on rejecting dominant ideologies that justify social oppression (Montero, 1994, 2009). Problematizing injustice may begin a process of conscious mobilization leading to transformations in understandings of certain phenomena (Montero, 2009). As critical psychological processes, *conscientización* and problematization may facilitate "oppositional ideology" and action that can address conditions leading to injustice and rights violations. In these ways, liberation psychology may be well positioned to examine how women resist social structures of domination, work toward structural transformation, and mobilize grassroots strategies for action.

In the context of large systems of global inequality, liberation psychology may also be well suited to understand ubiquitous violations of women's human rights because it recognizes that "limit-situations," or circumstances that constrain people's lives, are also places where possibilities begin (Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero, 2009). Through awareness and dialogue of limited situations, broader analyses give rise to conditions of action. Specifically, as awareness of context-specific patterns that limit life circumstances (i.e., situations whereby power differentials are a result of structural rather than individual factors) develops, possibilities for action are explored and further awareness develops in a cyclical process (Moane, 2010). In this way, resistance to oppressive structures is not the end goal of political struggle, but rather its beginning—an emergent

behavior that moves toward justice and liberation. The decolonial theorist María Lugones defines resistance as the tension between “subjectification (the forming of the subject) and active subjectivity, that minimal sense of agency required, without appeal to the maximal sense of agency of the modern subject” (2010, p. 746). An overemphasis in traditional psychology on topics such as empowerment and agency may preclude an optimal understanding of how processes involving resistance can help to understand the social conditions in which people live their lives and the practices or interventions that transform the social and psychological patterns associated with oppression.

Despite that Moane’s book was published almost two decades ago, work in the area of feminist liberation psychology is still in its nascent stages. In a groundbreaking special issue of *Feminism & Psychology*, Lykes and Moane (2009) discuss the importance of liberation psychology in understanding the links between globalization, international human rights discourse, and the activism of social movements that demand gender equity. In the 2009 special issue they sought to identify researchers who were interfacing feminist psychology with the work of feminist social movements to focus on liberatory processes in their investigations. Many of the articles in the special issue emphasize systems of global inequality and the role of structurally embedded power differences in the limited situations in which many women experience their lives (e.g., Crosby, 2009; Madrigal & Tejeda, 2009). Two investigations, in particular, examined processes linked to *concientización* and gender-based violence and found that although women’s agency remained constrained by their limit-situations, women’s narratives reflected critical awareness of how everyday struggles were shaped by structures of power (Pakistan; Chaudhry & Bertram, 2009; India; White & Rastogi, 2009). Although empirical investigations in this area remain sparse, more recent investigation among a group of Afghan women mobilized within a revolutionary organization (i.e., the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan; RAWA) found that processes involving conscious awareness, intention, and action were all important to maintaining a sense of community that could lead to changes in women’s well-being over time (Brodsky et al., 2012). Similarly, other scholars have used feminist liberatory frameworks to demonstrate that self-mobilized groups of women in Nicaragua and Tanzania problematize and resist traditional gender arrangements to renegotiate structural and relational injustices that reduce women’s receipt of violence (Grabe, Dutt, & Dworkin, 2014). Emphasizing the role of women’s resistance in social justice highlights the importance of psychological processes in the