

## Feminist *Mein Kampf* (2018)

Three self-styled liberal scholars were given the academic green light for a rewritten version of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* by a leading feminist journal. "We rewrote a section of *Mein Kampf* as intersectional feminism and this journal has accepted it," James Lindsay said in a YouTube video revealing a year-long project he worked on with other self-described left-wing academics, Peter Boghassian and Helen Pluckrose.

The trio submitted 20 papers with absurdities and "morally fashionable political ideas" to significant peer-reviewed academic journals exposing a corrupt political agenda in fields such as women's and gender studies, race studies, queer studies and cultural studies, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

The summary of the feminist version of *Mein Kampf* reads: "Feminism which foregrounds individual choice, responsibility, female agency, and strength can be countered by a feminism which unifies in solidarity around the victimhood of the most marginalized women in society." The paper was based on a rewriting of Chapter 12 of Volume I of *Mein Kampf*, in which Hitler lays out a multi-point plan why the Nazi Party was needed and what it required of its members. The paper was accepted after being peer-reviewed by *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, which analyzes gender inequality.

The co-editor in chief of *Affilia* wrote: "Reviewers are supportive of the work and noted its potential to generate important dialogue for social workers and feminist scholars." The trio did the hoax experiment as a plea to their progressive counterparts and minority groups to think for themselves and analyze the work coming out of academia. "There's this kind of like religious architecture in their mind where privilege is sin. Privilege is evil," Lindsay said, "and they've identified education as the place where it has to be fixed."

Here is a portion of "Our Struggle Is My Struggle: Solidarity Feminism as an Intersectional Reply to Neoliberal and Choice Feminism," which hints at Hitler's work in the very title: "Put another way, if more feminists had, rather than becoming distracted by seductions of choice, the baubles of neoliberalism, or male approval, implacably guarded the interests of oppressed people especially those dominated by racism, colonialism, imperialism, ableism, homophobia, classism, and all other manners of oppression that intersect with feminism and if in matters of remaking society more feminists had avowed only their commitment against all oppressions with equal intensity as they defended their will to female choice, and if with equal firmness they had demanded justice for all those oppressed by systems of power, today we would very likely have equality."

They point out this sort of "biased research" would not be accepted in any other industry, but is pervasive in higher education. "This is deeply concerning because the work of grievance scholars goes on to be taught in classes, to design educational curricula, to be taken up by activists, to influence how media is produced, and to

misinform journalists and politicians about the true nature of our cultural realities,” Lindsay said. The trio points out that, if you agree “whiteness” and “masculinity” are problematic, you can come up with a lot of “nasty arguments” as long as you “frame it in terms of overcoming privilege.”

Fox News (4 October 2018)

## HOAXING THE FEMINISTS:

### Academic Grievance Studies and the Corruption of Scholarship

Posted on October 2, 2018 47 minute read by  
Helen Pluckrose, James A. Lindsay and Peter Boghossian

This essay, although hopefully accessible to everyone, is the most thorough breakdown of the study and written for those who are already somewhat familiar with the problems of ideologically-motivated scholarship, radical skepticism and cultural constructivism.

#### Part I: Introduction

Something has gone wrong in the university—especially in certain fields within the humanities. Scholarship based less upon finding truth and more upon attending to social grievances has become firmly established, if not fully dominant, within these fields, and their scholars increasingly bully students, administrators, and other departments into adhering to their worldview. This worldview is not scientific, and it is not rigorous. For many, this problem has been growing increasingly obvious, but strong evidence has been lacking. For this reason, the three of us just spent a year working inside the scholarship we see as an intrinsic part of this problem.

We spent that time writing academic papers and publishing them in respected peer-reviewed journals associated with fields of scholarship loosely known as “cultural studies” or “identity studies” (for example, gender studies) or “critical theory” because it is rooted in that postmodern brand of “theory” which arose in the late sixties. As a result of this work, we have come to call these fields “grievance studies” in shorthand because of their common goal of problematizing aspects of culture in minute detail in order to attempt diagnoses of power imbalances and oppression rooted in identity.

We undertook this project to study, understand, and expose the reality of grievance studies, which is corrupting academic research. Because open, good-faith conversation around topics of identity such as gender, race, and sexuality (and the scholarship that works with them) is nearly impossible, our aim has been to reboot these conversations. We hope this will give people—especially those who believe in liberalism, progress, modernity, open inquiry, and social justice—a clear reason to look at the identitarian madness coming out of the academic and activist left and say, “No, I will not go along with that. You do not speak for me.”

This document is a first look at our project and an initial attempt to grapple with what we're learning and what it means. Because of its length and detail, it is organized as follows, putting the factual information up front and more detailed explanations thereafter.

Our methodology, which is central to contextualizing our claims;

A summary of this project from its beginning until we were eventually exposed and forced to go public before we could conclude our research;

An explanation of why we did this;

A summary of the problem and why it matters;

A clear explanation of how this project came to be;

The results of our study, including a full list of all of the papers we submitted, their final outcomes, and relevant reviewer comments to date;

A discussion of the significance of the results;

A summary of what may come next

## Part II: Methods

Our approach is best understood as a kind of reflexive ethnography—that is, we conducted a study of a peculiar academic culture by immersing ourselves within it, reflecting its output and modifying our understanding until we became “outsiders within” it.

Our objective was to learn about this culture and establish that we had become fluent in its language and customs by publishing peer-reviewed papers in its top journals, which usually only experts in the field are capable of doing. Because we came to conceptualize this project as a kind of reflexive ethnographic study in which we sought to understand the field and how it works by participating in it, obtaining peer reviewers' comments about what we were doing right and what needed to change to make absurd theses acceptable was central to the project. Indeed, the reviewers' comments are in many ways more revealing about the state of these fields than the acceptances themselves.

While our papers are all outlandish or intentionally broken in significant ways, it is important to recognize that they blend in almost perfectly with others in the disciplines under our consideration. To demonstrate this, we needed to get papers accepted, especially by significant and influential journals. Merely blending in couldn't generate the depth necessary for our study, however. We also needed to write papers that took risks to test certain hypotheses such that the fact of their acceptance itself makes a statement about the problem we're studying (see the Papers section, below). Consequently, although this study does not qualify as being particularly controlled, we did control one important variable: the big-picture methodology we used to write every paper.

Our paper-writing methodology always followed a specific pattern: it started with an idea that spoke to our epistemological or ethical concerns with the field and then sought to

bend the existing scholarship to support it. The goal was always to use what the existing literature offered to get some little bit of lunacy or depravity to be acceptable at the highest levels of intellectual respectability within the field. Therefore, each paper began with something absurd or deeply unethical (or both) that we wanted to forward or conclude. We then made the existing peer-reviewed literature do our bidding in the attempt to get published in the academic canon.

This is the primary point of the project: What we just described is not knowledge production; it's sophistry. That is, it's a forgery of knowledge that should not be mistaken for the real thing. The biggest difference between us and the scholarship we are studying by emulation is that we know we made things up.

This process is the one, single thread that ties all twenty of our papers together, even though we used a variety of methods to come up with the various ideas fed into their system to see how the editors and peer reviewers would respond. Sometimes we just thought a nutty or inhumane idea up and ran with it. What if we write a paper saying we should train men like we do dogs—to prevent rape culture? Hence came the “Dog Park” paper. What if we write a paper claiming that when a guy privately masturbates while thinking about a woman (without her consent—in fact, without her ever finding out about it) that he's committing sexual violence against her? That gave us the “Masturbation” paper. What if we argue that the reason superintelligent AI is potentially dangerous is because it is being programmed to be masculinist and imperialist using Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Lacanian psychoanalysis? That's our “Feminist AI” paper. What if we argued that “a fat body is a legitimately built body” as a foundation for introducing a category for fat bodybuilding into the sport of professional bodybuilding? You can read how that went in Fat Studies.

At other times, we scoured the existing grievance studies literature to see where it was already going awry and then tried to magnify those problems. Feminist glaciology? Okay, we'll copy it and write a feminist astronomy paper that argues feminist and queer astrology should be considered part of the science of astronomy, which we'll brand as intrinsically sexist. Reviewers were very enthusiastic about that idea. Using a method like thematic analysis to spin favored interpretations of data? Fine, we wrote a paper about trans people in the workplace that does just that. Men use “male preserves” to enact dying “macho” masculinities discourses in a way society at large won't accept? No problem. We published a paper best summarized as, “A gender scholar goes to Hooters to try to figure out why it exists.” “Defamiliarizing,” common experiences, pretending to be mystified by them and then looking for social constructions to explain them? Sure, our “Dildos” paper did that to answer the questions, “Why don't straight men tend to masturbate via anal penetration, and what might happen if they did?” Hint: according to our paper in *Sexuality and Culture*, a leading sexualities journal, they will be less transphobic and more feminist as a result.

We used other methods too, like, “I wonder if that ‘progressive stack’ in the news could be written into a paper that says white males in college shouldn't be allowed to speak in class (or have their emails answered by the instructor), and, for good measure, be asked

to sit in the floor in chains so they can ‘experience reparations.’” That was our “Progressive Stack” paper. The answer seems to be yes, and feminist philosophy titan Hypatia has been surprisingly warm to it. Another tough one for us was, “I wonder if they’d publish a feminist rewrite of a chapter from Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*.” The answer to that question also turns out to be “yes,” given that the feminist social work journal *Affilia* has just accepted it. As we progressed, we started to realize that just about anything can be made to work, so long as it falls within the moral orthodoxy and demonstrates understanding of the existing literature.

Put another way, we now have good reasons to believe that if we just appropriate the existing literature in the right ways—and there always seems to be a citation or vein of literature that makes it possible—we can say almost any politically fashionable thing we want. The underlying questions in every single case were the same: What do we need to write, and what do we need to cite (all of our citations are real, by the way) to get this academic madness published as high “scholarship”?

### What Did We Do?

We wrote 20 papers and submitted them to the best journals in the relevant fields (more on this below) with considerable success, even though we had to take the project public prematurely, and thus stop the study, before it could be properly concluded. At the time of publishing this, we have:

7 papers accepted.

4 of these have been published online.

3 more have been accepted without having had time to see publication through. (This can take months).

7 papers still in play when we had to call a halt.

2 have been “revised and resubmitted,” and are awaiting a decision. (A judgment of “Revise and Resubmit” usually results in publication following the satisfactory completion of requested revisions. A judgment of “Reject and Resubmit” can result in publication following more substantial ones. It is very rare for papers to be accepted outright.)

1 is still under first review at its current journal.

4 are left hanging with no time to submit them to journals after rejection (2), revise and resubmit (1) or reject and resubmit (1).

6 retired as fatally flawed or beyond repair.

4 invitations to peer-review other papers as a result of our own exemplary scholarship.

(For ethical reasons, we declined all such invitations. Had we wished to fully participate in their culture in this way, however, it would have been an unrivaled opportunity to tinker with how far we could take the hypothesis that the canon of literature within these fields gets skewed in part because the peer-review process encourages the existing political and ideological biases.)

1 paper (the one about rape culture in dog parks) gained special recognition for excellence from its journal, *Gender, Place, and Culture*, a highly ranked journal that leads the field of feminist geography. The journal honored it as one of twelve leading pieces in feminist geography as a part of the journal's 25th anniversary celebration.

To summarize, we spent 10 months writing the papers, averaging one new paper roughly every thirteen days. (Seven papers published over seven years is frequently claimed to be the number sufficient to earn tenure at most major universities although, in reality, requirements vary by institution.) As for our performance, 80% of our papers overall went to full peer review, which keeps with the standard 10-20% of papers that are “desk rejected” without review at major journals across the field. We improved this ratio from 0% at first to 94.4% after a few months of experimenting with much more hoaxish papers. Because we were forced to go public before we could complete our study, we cannot be sure how many papers would have been accepted if we had had time to see them through—papers typically take 3-6 months or more to complete the entire process and one of ours was under review from December 2017 to August 2018—but an estimate of at least 10, probably 12, eventual acceptances seems warranted at the time of having to call a halt.

The final submitted drafts totaled just shy of 180,000 words and the entire project totaled between 300,000 and 350,000 words, including all notes, drafts, summaries, and replies to journal reviewers. The papers themselves span at least fifteen subdomains of thought in grievance studies, including (feminist) gender studies, masculinities studies, queer studies, sexuality studies, psychoanalysis, critical race theory, critical whiteness theory, fat studies, sociology, and educational philosophy. They featured radically skeptical and standpoint epistemologies rooted in postmodernism, feminist and critical race epistemology rooted in critical social constructivism as well as psychoanalysis. They all also endeavored to be humorous in at least some small way (and often, big ones). The project so far has generated more than 40 substantive editorial and expert reader reports, constituting a further 30,000 or so words of data that provide a unique insider's look into the field and its operation.

Our papers also present very shoddy methodologies including incredibly implausible statistics (“Dog Park”), making claims not warranted by the data (“CisNorm,” “Hooters,” “Dildos”), and ideologically-motivated qualitative analyses (“CisNorm,” “Porn”). (NB: See Papers section below.) Questionable qualitative methodologies such as poetic inquiry and autoethnography (sometimes rightly and pejoratively called “mesearch”) were incorporated (especially in “Moon Meetings”).

Many papers advocated highly dubious ethics including training men like dogs (“Dog Park”), punishing white male college students for historical slavery by asking them to sit in silence in the floor in chains during class and to be expected to learn from the discomfort (“Progressive Stack”), celebrating morbid obesity as a healthy life-choice (“Fat Bodybuilding”), treating privately conducted masturbation as a form of sexual violence against women (“Masturbation”), and programming superintelligent AI with irrational and ideological nonsense before letting it rule the world (“Feminist AI”). There

was also considerable silliness including claiming to have tactfully inspected the genitals of slightly fewer than 10,000 dogs whilst interrogating owners as to their sexuality (“Dog Park”), becoming seemingly mystified about why heterosexual men are attracted to women (“Hooters”), insisting there is something to be learned about feminism by having four guys watch thousands of hours of hardcore pornography over the course of a year while repeatedly taking the Gender and Science Implicit Associations Test (“Porn”), expressing confusion over why people are more concerned about the genitalia others have when considering having sex with them (“CisNorm”), and recommending men anally self-penetrate in order to become less transphobic, more feminist, and more concerned about the horrors of rape culture (“Dildos”). None of this, except that Helen Wilson recorded one “dog rape per hour” at urban dog parks in Portland, Oregon, raised so much as a single reviewer eyebrow, so far as their reports show.

Near the end of July 2018, a clear need arose to call the project to a premature end after our “dog park” paper attracted incredulous attention on social media generated by the Twitter account Real Peer Review, which is a platform dedicated to exposing shoddy scholarship. This deserved incredulity led to small and then larger journalistic publications investigating our fictitious author, Helen Wilson, and our non-existent institution, the Portland Ungendering Research Initiative (PURI) and finding no credible history of either. Under this pressure, the publishing journal, *Gender, Place and Culture*, asked our author to prove her identity and then released an expression of concern about the paper. This generated further attention that eventually got the *Wall Street Journal* involved, and far more importantly, it changed the ethics of utilizing deception within the project. With major journalistic outlets and (by then) two journals asking us to prove our authors’ identities, the ethics had shifted away from a defensible necessity of investigation and into outright lying. We did not feel right about this and decided the time had come to go public with the project. As a result, we came clean to the *Wall Street Journal* at the beginning of August and began preparing a summary as quickly as possible even though we still had several papers progressing encouragingly through the review process.

### Part III: Why Did We Do This?

Because we’re racist, sexist, bigoted, misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, transhysterical, anthropocentric, problematic, privileged, bullying, far right-wing, cishetero straight white males (and one white female who was demonstrating her internalized misogyny and overwhelming need for male approval) who wanted to enable bigotry, preserve our privilege, and take the side of hate?

No. None of those apply. Nevertheless, we’ll be accused of it, and we have some insights into why.

To many not involved in academia, particularly those who are skeptical of its worth generally, it may seem like we’re addressing yet another obscure academic squabble of little relevance to the real world. You are mistaken. The problem we’ve been studying is of the utmost relevance to the real world and everyone in it.

Alternatively, those who are positively inclined towards academia and ethically and/or politically in support of social science and humanities research that focuses on social justice issues may think the work researchers are doing on these topics is important and generally sound. You'd be right that it's important but not that it is always sound—some of the work being produced is positively horrifying and surreal while exerting considerable influence on the field and beyond. You also might acknowledge that there are problems arising from the pressures of a publish-or-perish culture driven by broken university business models and taken advantage of by an opportunistic publishing industry, but be skeptical that there are any serious integral epistemological or ethical issues at work.

As liberals, we recognize that you might be resistant to acknowledging that our evidence points to an undeniable problem in academic research on important issues relevant to social justice. The work done in these fields claims to continue the vital work of the civil rights movements, liberal feminism, and Gay Pride. It seeks to address oppression of women and racial and sexual minorities. Surely, you might therefore believe, these bodies of literature must be essentially good and sound, even if you recognize some overreach and silliness.

After having spent a year immersed and becoming recognized experts within these fields, in addition to witnessing the divisive and destructive effects when activists and social media mobs put it to use, we can now state with confidence that it is neither essentially good nor sound. Further, these fields of study do not continue the important and noble liberal work of the civil rights movements; they corrupt it while trading upon their good names to keep pushing a kind of social snake oil onto a public that keeps getting sicker. For us to know anything about injustice in society and be able to show it to those who are unaware or in denial of it, scholarship into it must be rigorous. Currently, it is not, and this enables it, and social justice issues with it, to be dismissed. This is a serious problem of considerable concern, and we must address it.

### What's the Problem?

We have stated firmly that there is a problem in our universities, and that it's spreading rapidly into culture. It is aided in this by being tricky to understand and by intentionally using emotionally powerful words—like “racist” and “sexist”—in technical ways that mean something different than their common usages. This project identifies aspects of this problem, tests them, and then exposes them.

The problem is epistemological, political, ideological, and ethical and it is profoundly corrupting scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. The center of the problem is formally termed “critical constructivism,” and its most egregious scholars are sometimes referred to as “radical constructivists.” Expressing this problem accurately is difficult, and many who've tried have studiously avoided doing so in any succinct and clear way. This reticence, while responsible given the complexity of the problem and its roots, has likely helped the problem perpetuate itself.



This problem is most easily summarized as an overarching (almost or fully sacralized) belief that many common features of experience and society are socially constructed. These constructions are seen as being nearly entirely dependent upon power dynamics between groups of people, often dictated by sex, race, or sexual or gender identification. All kinds of things accepted as having a basis in reality due to evidence are instead believed to have been created by the intentional and unintentional machinations of powerful groups in order to maintain power over marginalized ones. This worldview produces a moral imperative to dismantle these constructions.

Common “social constructions” viewed as intrinsically “problematic” and thus claimed to be in need of dismantling include: the understanding that there are cognitive and psychological differences between men and women which could explain, at least partially, why they make different choices in relation to things like work, sex, and family life; that so-called “Western medicine” (even though many eminent medical scientists are not Western) is superior to traditional or spiritual healing practices; that Western liberal cultural norms which grant women and the LGBT equal rights are ethically superior in this regard to non-Western religious or cultural ones that do not; and that being obese is a life-limiting health condition rather than an unfairly stigmatized and equally healthy and beautiful body-choice.

Underlying these alleged “social constructions” is the most deeply concerning of them all. This is the belief that in urgent need of “disrupting” is the simple truth that science itself—along with our best methods of data-gathering, statistical analysis, hypothesis testing, falsifying, and replicating results—is generally a better way of determining information about the objective reality of any observable phenomenon than are non-scientific, traditional, cultural, religious, ideological, or magical approaches. That is, for grievance studies scholars, science itself and the scientific method are deeply problematic, if not outright racist and sexist, and need to be remade to forward grievance-based identitarian politics over the impartial pursuit of truth. These same issues are also extended to the “Western” philosophical tradition which they find problematic because it favors reason to emotion, rigor to solipsism, and logic to revelation.

As a result, radical constructivists tend to believe science and reason must be dismantled to let “other ways of knowing” have equal validation as knowledge-producing enterprises. These, depending on the branch of “theory” being invoked, are allegedly owned by women and racial, cultural, religious, and sexual minorities. Not only that, they are deemed inaccessible to more privileged castes of people, like white heterosexual men. They justify this regressive thinking by appealing to their alternative epistemology, called “standpoint theory.” This results in an epistemological and moral relativism which, for political reasons, promotes ways of knowing that are antithetical to science and ethics which are antithetical to universal liberalism.

Radical constructivism is thus a dangerous idea that has become authoritative. It forwards the idea that we must, on moral grounds, largely reject the belief that access to objective truth exists (scientific objectivity) and can be discovered, in principle, by any entity capable of doing the work, or more specifically by humans of any race, gender, or

sexuality (scientific universality) via empirical testing (scientific empiricism). (This particular belief is sometimes referred to as “radical skepticism,” although philosophers also have other meanings for this term.) Although knowledge is always provisional and open to revision, there are better and worse ways to get closer to it, and the scientific method is the best we have found. By contrast, the means offered by critical theory are demonstrably and fatally flawed. Particularly, this approach rejects scientific universality and objectivity and insists, on moral grounds, that we must largely accept the notion of multiple, identity-based “truths,” such as a putative “feminist glaciology.” Under critical constructivism, this gains an explicitly radical political motivation.

Any scholarship that proceeds from radically skeptical assumptions about objective truth by definition does not and cannot find objective truth. Instead it promotes prejudices and opinions and calls them “truths.” For radical constructivists, these opinions are specifically rooted a political agenda of “Social Justice” (which we have intentionally made into a proper noun to distinguish it from the type of real social progress falling under the same name). Because of critical constructivism, which sees knowledge as a product of unjust power balances, and because of this brand of radical skepticism, which rejects objective truth, these scholars are like snake-oil salespeople who diagnose our society as being riddled with a disease only they can cure. That disease, as they see it, is endemic to any society that forwards the agency of the individual and the existence of objective (or scientifically knowable) truths.

Having spent a year doing this work ourselves, we understand why this fatally flawed research is attractive, how it is factually wrong in its foundations, and how it is conducive to being used for ethically dubious overreach. We’ve seen, studied, and participated in its culture through which it “proves” certain problems exist and then advocates often divisive, demeaning, and hurtful treatments we’d all do better without.

We also know that the peer-review system, which should filter out the biases that enable these problems to grow and gain influence, is inadequate within grievance studies. This isn’t so much a problem with peer review itself as a recognition that peer review can only be as unbiased as the aggregate body of peers being called upon to participate. The skeptical checks and balances that should characterize the scholarly process have been replaced with a steady breeze of confirmation bias that blows grievance studies scholarship ever further off course. This isn’t how research is supposed to work.

Though it doesn’t immediately seem obvious—because financial incentives for the researchers, for the most part, aren’t directly involved (although the publishing houses are definitely raking it in)—this is a kind of blatant corruption. In this way, politically biased research that rests on highly questionable premises gets legitimized as though it is verifiable knowledge. It then goes on to permeate our culture because professors, activists, and others cite and teach this ever-growing body of ideologically skewed and fallacious scholarship.

This matters because even though most people will never read a single scholarly paper in their lifetimes, peer-reviewed journals are the absolute gold standard of knowledge

production. And these concepts leak into culture. A good example of this is Robin DiAngelo's concept of "white fragility," which posits that white people have become fragile because of their privilege and will act out like spoiled children if it is challenged. DiAngelo forwarded this concept in the *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* in 2011. Seven years later, in 2018, she landed a major book deal on white fragility, even as activists pushed it into the common parlance and started putting it on billboards around Portland, Oregon.

As a society we should be able to rely upon research journals, scholars, and universities upholding academic, philosophical, and scientific rigor (because most academic journals do). We need to know that the hardline stand against corruptions of research taken in domains like financial and personal conflicts-of-interest will extend to political, moral, and ideological biases. Our project strongly suggests that at present we can neither rely upon nor know these things in fields that bow to or traffic in grievance studies. The reason is because grievance studies based in critical constructivism (a class of descendants of cynical postmodern philosophy and poststructuralism) have corrupted research journals. This needs to be repaired.

This is why this matters, but how did we get here, to this specific project? And what guiding principles did we adopt and why?

#### Part IV: The Plan—How this Came to Be

In May 2017, James and Peter published a paper in a poorly ranked peer-reviewed journal arguing, among other things, that penises conceptually cause climate change. Its impact was very limited, and much criticism of it was legitimate. The journal was poor, and its quality was by far the dominant factor in how it was published (in that it provides very lax review standards and charges authors a fee to have their papers published). This muddied the water so much that "The Conceptual Penis" could not prove much about the state of its intended primary target: academic gender studies (which relies heavily upon critical constructivism). To do that, a much larger and more rigorous study was needed.

We approached this new effort by asking two central questions: Are we correct in our claim that highly regarded peer-reviewed journals in gender studies and related fields will publish obvious hoaxes? (By "hoaxes," we meant papers featuring at least one of the following: clearly ludicrous and/or outrageous theses, visibly amateurish construction, a transparent lack of rigor, and that clearly demonstrate little understanding of the field.) And, if not, what will they publish?

We set out with three basic rules: (1) we'll focus almost exclusively upon ranked peer-reviewed journals in the field, the higher the better and at the top of their subdisciplines whenever possible; (2) we will not pay to publish any paper; and (3) if we are asked at any point by a journal editor or reviewer (but not a journalist!) if any paper we wrote is an attempted hoax, we will admit it. These rules were meant to ensure that any conclusions we derived from the field came from the field itself, not the unrelated but significant problem that also corrupts academic pursuits: the proliferation of predatory

and quasi-predatory journals with extremely low standards. With these rules guiding us, we committed to transparently reporting the results, whether we succeeded or failed.

In the year that followed, and with the help of Helen, who joined us in September 2017, we wrote twenty academic papers for journals in fields we have come to identify as being particularly susceptible to grievance studies and critical constructivism. The results have gone a long way toward answering both of our central questions.

The first question has a clear answer. “Are we correct in our claim that highly regarded peer-reviewed journals in gender studies and related fields will publish obvious hoaxes?” was answered nearly unequivocally and in the negative by November. It only took us a few months and a few papers to learn that while it is possible that some journals in these fields may fall prey to an outright hoax so long as it plays upon their moral biases and preferred academic jargon, nothing like “The Conceptual Penis” would have been published in a highly regarded gender-studies journal. In believing that some might, and on having said so in the wake of that attempt, we were wrong.

In pursuing the second question (“What will they publish?”), we learned a great deal of useful information about academic grievance studies. First, by taking a reflexive ethnographic approach, seeking reviewer comments, complying with them, playing more strongly to biases we were explicitly told would help us be published, we became well-versed not only in the scholarship of the fields we are studying but also in the culture that favors it. Second, we amassed what appears to be significant evidence and sufficient expertise to state that we were correct in claiming there is a problem with bias in fields influenced by critical constructivist approaches and assumptions.

#### Part V: The Results (of all 20 papers)

(All the papers and reviews can be found here)

#### “Dog Park”

Title: Human Reactions to Rape Culture and Queer Performativity in Urban Dog Parks in Portland, Oregon. By Helen Wilson, Ph.D., Portland Ungendering Research (PUR) Initiative (fictional)

*Gender, Place, and Culture*

Status: Accepted & Published

Recognized for excellence. Expression of concern raised on it following journalistic interest leading us to have to conclude the project early.

Thesis: That dog parks are rape-condoning spaces and a place of rampant canine rape culture and systemic oppression against “the oppressed dog” through which human attitudes to both problems can be measured. This provides insight into training men out of the sexual violence and bigotry to which they are prone.

Purpose: To see if journals will accept arguments which should be clearly ludicrous and unethical if they provide (an unfalsifiable) way to perpetuate notions of toxic masculinity, heteronormativity, and implicit bias.

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“This is a wonderful paper – incredibly innovative, rich in analysis, and extremely well-written and organized given the incredibly diverse literature sets and theoretical questions brought into conversation. The author’s development of the focus and contributions of the paper is particularly impressive. The fieldwork executed contributes immensely to the paper’s contribution as an innovative and valuable piece of scholarship that will engage readers from a broad cross-section of disciplines and theoretical formations. I believe this intellectually and empirically exciting paper must be published and congratulate the author on the research done and the writing.” Reviewer 1, *Gender, Place, and Culture*

“Thank you for the opportunity to review a really interesting paper. I think it will make an important contribution to feminist animal geography with some minor revisions, as described below.” Reviewer 2, *Gender, Place, and Culture*

“As you may know, GPC is in its 25th year of publication. And as part of honoring the occasion, GPC is going to publish 12 lead pieces over the 12 issues of 2018 (and some even into 2019). We would like to publish your piece, Human Reactions to Rape Culture and Queer Performativity at Urban Dog Parks in Portland, Oregon, in the seventh issue. It draws attention to so many themes from the past scholarship informing feminist geographies and also shows how some of the work going on now can contribute to enlivening the discipline. In this sense we think it is a good piece for the celebrations. I would like to have your permission to do so.” -Editor of *Gender, Place, and Culture*

### “Fat Bodybuilding”

Title: Who Are They to Judge?: Overcoming Anthropometry and a Framework for Fat Bodybuilding. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College (a real person who gave us permission to use his scholarly identity for this project)

*Fat Studies*

Status: Accepted, Published

Thesis: That it is only oppressive cultural norms which make society regard the building of muscle rather than fat admirable and that bodybuilding and activism on behalf of the fat could be benefited by including fat bodies displayed in non-competitive ways.

Purpose: To see if journals will accept arguments which are ludicrous and positively dangerous to health if they support cultural constructivist arguments around body positivity and fatphobia.

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“The topic of this essay is certainly novel and addresses an issue relevant to a disenfranchised demographic. The essay addresses bodybuilding as a stigmatizing activity toward the fat body and presents fat bodybuilding as a “way to disrupt the cultural space” of traditional bodybuilding.” Reviewer 1, *Fat Studies*

“I thoroughly enjoyed reading this article and believe it has an important contribution to make to the field and this journal. For the most part, I wholeheartedly agree with its argument. It is well written and structured.” Reviewer 3, *Fat Studies*

“On p. 24, the author writes “a fat body is a legitimately built body”. Absolutely agreed.” Reviewer 3, *Fat Studies*

“[T]he use of the term ‘final frontier’ is problematic in at least two ways. First – the term frontier implies colonial expansion and hostile takeover, and the genocidal erasure of indigenous peoples. Find another term.” Reviewer 3, *Fat Studies*

“Dildos”

Title: Going in Through the Back Door: Challenging Straight Male Homophobia and Transphobia through Receptive Penetrative Sex Toy Use. By M. Smith, M.A., PUR Initiative (fictional)

*Sexuality & Culture*

Status: Accepted, Published

Thesis: That it is suspicious that men rarely anally self-penetrate using sex toys, and that this is probably due to fear of being thought homosexual (“homophobia”) and bigotry against trans people (transphobia). (It combines these ideas into a novel concept “transphobia,” which was suggested by one of the paper’s peer reviewers.) Encouraging them to engage in receptive penetrative anal eroticism will decrease transphobia and increase feminist values.

Purpose: To see if journals will accept ludicrous arguments if they support (unfalsifiable) claims that common (and harmless) sexual choices made by straight men are actually homophobic, transphobic, and anti-feminist.

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“This article is an incredibly rich and exciting contribution to the study of sexuality and culture, and particularly the intersection between masculinity and anality.... This contribution, to be certain, is important, timely, and worthy of publication.” Reviewer 1, *Sexuality and Culture*

“Sorry for so many questions, but this paper is so rich and exciting, I’m just overwhelmed by so many new questions—which is a sign of a marvelous paper!” Reviewer 1, *Sexuality and Culture*

“Overall, this paper is a very interesting contribution to knowledge.” Reviewer 1, *Sexuality and Culture*

“Thank you for this exciting research. I enjoyed reading your paper, and I recommend publishing it after significant revisions.” Reviewer 2, *Sexuality and Culture*

### “Hooters”

Title: An Ethnography of Breastaurant Masculinity: Themes of Objectification, Sexual Conquest, Male Control, and Masculine Toughness in a Sexually Objectifying Restaurant. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College

*Journal: Sex Roles*

Status: Accepted, Published

Thesis: That men frequent “breastaurants” like Hooters because they are nostalgic for patriarchal dominance and enjoy being able to order attractive women around. The environment that breastaurants provide for facilitating this encourages men to identify sexual objectification and sexual conquest, along with masculine toughness and male dominance, with “authentic masculinity.” The data are clearly nonsense and conclusions drawn from it are unwarranted by it. (NB. One reviewer did raise concerns about the rigor of the data)

Purpose: To see if journals will publish papers that seek to problematize heterosexual men’s attraction to women and will accept very shoddy qualitative methodology and ideologically-motivated interpretations which support this.

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“The reviewers and I were positive about many aspects of the manuscript, and we believe that it could make an important contribution to the field.” Editor, *Sex Roles*

“I agree that the breastaurant is an important site for critical masculinities research that has been neglected in the extant literature and this study has the potential to make a significant contribution.” Reviewer 2, *Sex Roles*

“While the author clearly has a solid grasp of the relevant research and scholarly works related to breastaurants and male subcultures where traditional forms of masculinity are embraced and promoted, it is not presented in a way that is easy to follow and understand.” Reviewer 2, *Sex Roles*

“I thank the authors for addressing an important and interesting issue in gender research viewed through a masculine perspective.” Reviewer 3, *Sex Roles*

“Following external review of the manuscript, we have decided not to publish it. However, the material you write about is certainly interesting and will doubtless find a receptive audience in another publication.” Editor, *Men & Masculinities*

“This article is certainly interesting to read and to think about, and I can imagine this article being valuable in an undergraduate or graduate class on masculinities.” Reviewer 1, *Men & Masculinities*

“Overall, this article is an interesting contribution that provides much to think about and through.” Reviewer 1, *Men & Masculinities*

“Hoax on Hoaxes 2” or “HoH2”

Title: When the Joke Is on You: A Feminist Perspective on How Positionality Influences Satire. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College

*Hypatia*

Status: Accepted

Thesis: That academic hoaxes or other forms of satirical or ironic critique of social justice scholarship are unethical, characterized by ignorance and rooted in a desire to preserve privilege.

Purpose: To see if journals will accept an argument that shuts down critiques of social justice scholarship as a lack of engagement and understanding, even if one engages fully and knowledgeably with the ideas to the extent of having a paper on them published in a leading academic journal. (This paper is also to anticipate and show understanding of the feminist epistemological arguments against our project and demonstrate their high estimation in the field by having them accepted in the leading academic journal of feminist philosophy. That is, to criticize our work that way, they have to cite us.)

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“This is a very promising essay and so revisions will be very helpful.” Reviewer 1, *Hypatia*

“The paper is well written, accessible and clear, and engages in important scholarship in relevant ways. Given the emphasis on positionality, the argument clearly takes power structures into consideration and emphasizes the voice of marginalized groups, and in this sense can make a contribution to feminist philosophy especially around the topic of social justice pedagogy.” -Reviewer 2, *Hypatia*



“The topic is an excellent one and would make an excellent contribution to feminist philosophy and be of interest to Hypatia readers.” Reviewer 2, Hypatia

“Excellent and very timely article! Especially nice connection with pedagogy and activism.” Reviewer 1, *Hypatia* (second review)

“I have a couple of personal, very minor comments that I’ll put in below the referee’s praise. I hasten to add that I like your paper very much as well!” Editor of *Hypatia*, acceptance letter

### “Moon Meetings”

Title: Moon Meetings and the Meaning of Sisterhood: A Poetic Portrayal of Lived Feminist Spirituality. By Carol Miller, Ph.D., PUR Initiative (fictional)

Journal: *Journal of Poetry Therapy*

Status: Accepted (without any requested revisions or comments)

Thesis: No clear thesis. A rambling poetic monologue of a bitter, divorced feminist, much of which was produced by a teenage angst poetry generator before being edited into something slightly more “realistic” which is then interspersed with self-indulgent autoethnographical reflections on female sexuality and spirituality written entirely in slightly under six hours.

Purpose: To see if journals will accept rambling nonsense if it is sufficiently pro-woman, implicitly anti-male, and thoroughly anti-reason for the purpose of foregrounding alternative, female ways of knowing. (NB: It was written entirely by James, who is male.)

### “Feminist Mein Kampf” or “FMK”

Title: Our Struggle is My Struggle: Solidarity Feminism as an Intersectional Reply to Neoliberal and Choice Feminism. By Maria Gonzalez, Ph.D., and Lisa A. Jones, Ph.D., of the Feminist Activist Collective for Truth (FACT) (both fictional)

*Affilia*

Status: Accepted

Thesis: That feminism which foregrounds individual choice and responsibility and female agency and strength can be countered by a feminism which unifies in solidarity around the victimhood of the most marginalized women in society.

Purpose: To see if we could find “theory” to make anything grievance-related (in this case, part of Chapter 12 of Volume 1 of *Mein Kampf* with fashionable buzzwords switched in) acceptable to journals if we mixed and matched fashionable arguments.

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“This is an interesting paper seeking to further the aims of inclusive feminism by attending to the issue of allyship/solidarity.” Reviewer 1, *Affilia*

“As I read your manuscript, I found your framing and treatment of both neoliberal and choice feminisms well grounded.” Reviewer 2, *Affilia*

“I am very sympathetic to the core arguments of the paper, such as the need for solidarity and the problematic nature of neoliberal feminism.” Reviewer 1, *Feminist Theory*

“While I am extremely sympathetic to this article’s argument and its political positioning, I am afraid that I cannot recommend publication in its current form.” Reviewer 2, *Feminist Theory*

“The reviewers are supportive of the work and noted its potential to generate important dialogue for social workers and feminist scholars.” Co-Editor in Chief, *Affilia* (1st Review)

“The reviewer(s) have been very favorable although there are a few minor outstanding issues to address. Therefore, I invite you to respond to the editorial and reviewer(s)’ comments included at the bottom of this letter and revise your manuscript quickly so that we can move toward publication.” Co-Editor in Chief, *Affilia*, second review

“Porn”

Title: Agency as an Elephant Test for Feminist Porn: Impacts on Male Explicit and Implicit Associations about Women in Society by Immersive Pornography Consumption. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College, and Brandon Williams, Ph.D., unaffiliated (fictional)

*Porn Studies*

Status: Revise and resubmit.

Thesis: That “feminist” porn is good for improving explicit and implicit attitudes about women in society while other porn is bad for this. The paper seeks to upset the female-friendly/female-degrading dichotomy in favor of feminist/non-feminist as read according to perceptions of scene authenticity and female performer agency.

Purpose: The original hypotheses for this paper, were two, one of which survived an initial request to rewrite the paper. The first, which survives, is that taking the Harvard Implicit Association Test (on gender and science) immediately before and after two-hour blocks of immersive pornography consumption can serve as a reliable metric for whether that pornography improves or damages attitudes about women in society (in all, it posited that four men watched 2,328 hours of hardcore pornography over the course of a year and

took the same number of Implicit Association Tests). The second, in addition to any commentary made by the thesis it forwards, is that it is acceptable to override ambiguous statistical results with ideologically interpreted qualitative results, but because the journal's editor (Feona Attwood) seemed not to understand the statistics, the second draft largely abandoned this hypothesis in favor of a more clear "feminism good" position. As such, the paper under review still forwards the IAT hypothesis and attempts to position extremely female-degrading scenarios as being pro-women when they can be construed as "feminist."

#### Selected Reviewer Comments:

"I found this article to be weird, fascinating, fun and provocative. I would very much like to see it published in some form. It's trying to do something genuinely new – and the fact that it doesn't get it exactly right first time is to be expected given its experimental status. The authors should be supported in this project." Reviewer 1, *Porn Studies*

"My first piece of feedback on how to make this hybrid article work is that they should remove the quantitative data. As they note in the article, quantitative and qualitative approaches each have strengths and weaknesses. The strength of quantitative data is that it allows you to simplify a massive group of data to make it comprehensible, by ignoring complexity, subtlety, idiosyncrasy and meaning. It makes no sense to undertake quantitative analysis for four people – when you flatten the detail out of a sample of four you're not left with anything interesting. Besides which, everything interesting in the article comes in the analysis of the qualitative data. My second recommendation is that this analysis should be more self-reflective." Reviewer 1, *Porn Studies*.

"It's vitally important that the story in this article is about the researchers own voyage of self-discovery otherwise it becomes mansplaining – 'we're four male scientists, we watched lots of porn, and you know, we've discovered that actually some women can really have agency in BDSM. No, really, we're men, listen to us telling you about how women can have agency!'" Reviewer 1, *Porn Studies*

"I appreciate your dedication/contribution to the field." Reviewer 2, *Porn Studies*

"Your work affirms several theorists' claims that mediated sex positive sexual practice has a note-worthy impact on consumers and your methodological contribution helps unpack the facile, as you state, distinction between female-friendly and female-degrading" Reviewer 2, *Porn Studies*

#### "Progressive Stack"

Title: The Progressive Stack: An Intersectional Feminist Approach to Pedagogy. By Maria Gonzalez, Ph.D., FACT (fictional)

*Hypatia*

Status: 3 Reject and Resubmit decisions

Thesis: That educators should discriminate by identity and calculate their students' status in terms of privilege, favor the least privileged with more time, attention and positive feedback and penalize the most privileged by declining to hear their contributions, deriding their input, intentionally speaking over them, and making them sit on the floor in chains—framed as educational opportunities we termed “experiential reparations.”

Purpose: To see if journals will accept arguments which advocate rating students by their identity, privileging the most marginalized and discriminating against the most privileged to the extent of having them sit on floor in chains and have their contributions discredited. (This was accepted. No requirement for revision took issue with that).

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“This is a solid essay that, with revision, will make a strong contribution to the growing literature on addressing epistemic injustice in the classroom. The focus on the Progressive Stack is interesting yet focused and it is great that the author is trying to suggest some specific approaches.” Reviewer 1, first review, *Hypatia*

“I like this project very much. I think the author’s insights are on target and I think that the literature on epistemic injustice has lots to offer classroom pedagogies, I encourage the author to continue working on this project.” Reviewer 2, first review, *Hypatia*

“This is a worthwhile and interesting project. The essay is just not ready yet.” Reviewer 2, second review, *Hypatia*

“Feminist AI”

Title: Super-Frankenstein and the Masculine Imaginary: Feminist Epistemology and Superintelligent Artificial Intelligence Safety Research. By Stephanie Moore, Ph.D., unaffiliated (fictional)

*Feminist Theory*

Status: Revise and Resubmit

(Minor revision to length and style)

Thesis: That AI is inherently dangerous because it is being programmed with masculinist, imperialistic, rationalist data. Straight, white men know this and fear that they will be subordinated as they have subordinated women and minorities. Therefore, AI needs to be programmed with plural and irrationalist knowledges and given control over humanity.

Purpose: To see if journals will publish dense and incoherent psychoanalytic and postmodern theory that problematizes whiteness, maleness, science, and reason as oppressive.

Selected Reviewer Comments:

None available. This is the extent provided: “Your article has now been peer-reviewed by two experts. Their comments are attached at the bottom of this letter. As you can see, the reviewers felt that this was a strong piece but suggested some minor revisions. We invite you to revise and re-submit your manuscript, responding to the reviewers’ comments and in accordance with the attached Style Guide.”

Those comments at the bottom read only this: “Please reduce word length and bring in line with journal requirements.”

“Feminist Astronomy”

Title: Stars, Planets, and Gender: A Framework for a Feminist Astronomy. By Maria Gonzalez, Ph.D., FACT (fictional)

*Women’s Studies International Forum*

Status: Revise and Resubmit

(Out of time)

Thesis: The science of astronomy is and always has been intrinsically sexist and Western, and this masculinist and Western bias can best be corrected by including feminist, queer, and indigenous astrology (e.g., horoscopes) as part of astronomical science.

Purpose: To see if the same result put forth in the very successful and thoroughly non-scientific feminist glaciology paper can penetrate into feminist and postcolonial studies of astronomy.

Selected Reviewer Comments

“This paper addresses feminist critiques of science, focusing specifically on astronomy. As such, it is an interesting topic, and would make a useful contribution to the journal”  
Reviewer 1, *Women’s Studies International Forum*

“For existing proponents of feminist science studies, this also makes sense as a next step—to cast a feminist eye on scientific disciplines beyond the “soft” sciences of biology and environmental studies, and to move increasingly towards critiques of and interventions into “hard” sciences, such as physics and astronomy. The main goal is relevant and interesting” Reviewer 2, *Women’s Studies International Forum*

“This manuscript holds much promise and is interesting. The goal of a feminist astronomy is very thought-provoking—one that I would be excited to read and learn more about....I wish them luck as they move forward on this interesting piece and hope

to someday see it discussed in classrooms, labs, and plenary halls“ Reviewer 2, *Women’s Studies International Forum*

“The originality of the author’s contention is a success. Its contention at the most basic level—that feminist astronomy is/should/could be a thing!—would be exciting to readers in feminist science studies, women’s and gender studies, science and technology studies, and maybe even, hopefully, astronomy” Reviewer 2, *Women’s Studies International Forum*

“CisNorm”

Title: Strategies for Dealing with Cisnormative Discursive Aggression in the Workplace: Disruption, Criticism, Self-Enforcement, and Collusion. By Carol Miller, Ph.D., PUR Initiative (fictional)

Gender, Work, and Organization

Status: Under review

(Rejected after mixed but mostly critical reviews by *Gender & Society*.)

Thesis: That trans people are all oppressed and constrained by cisnormative language in the workplace even if they don’t think they are, that trans activists who are avoided at work are proof of transphobia and trans men who are skeptical of trans activism are afraid of transphobia and/or taking advantage of male privilege.

Purpose: To see if journals will accept a methodologically shoddy study of a small sample of trans people and clearly ideologically-motivated interpretations of it which are not at all supported even by the recorded answers.

Selected Reviewer Comments:

“Overall, I find this four-part framework to be helpful in advancing an understanding of cisnormativity, particularly through the agentic responses of trans and gender non-conforming people to systems of power.” Reviewer B, *Gender & Society*

“This paper offers an interesting and important empirical case for understanding how workplace inequalities persist even as many workplaces are at least formally more inclusive. A strength of this paper is its focus on trans and gender non-conforming persons’ first-hand experiences and interpretations of the aggressions they endure even in workplaces that may appear to be inclusive. It further highlights the enduring rigidity of the traditional gender order.” Reviewer C, *Gender & Society*

“Masturbation”

Rubbing One Out: Defining Metasexual Violence of Objectification Through Nonconsensual Masturbation. By Lisa A. Jones, Ph.D., FACT (fictional)

*Sociological Theory*

Status: Rejected after peer review

(Out of time)

Thesis: When a man privately masturbates while fantasizing about a woman who has not given him permission to do so, or while fantasizing about her in ways she hasn't consented to, he has committed "metasexual" violence against her, even if she never finds out. "Metasexual" violence is described as a kind of nonphysical sexual violence that causes depersonalization of the woman by sexually objectifying her and making her a kind of mental prop used to facilitate male orgasm.

Purpose: To see if the definition of sexual violence can be expanded into thought crimes..

Selected Reviewer Comments:

"One aspect I thought about was the extent to which metasexual violence, and non-consensual masturbation specifically, introduces uncertainty into all relationships. It is not possible for women to know if a man has masturbated while thinking about them, and I think it might be possible to get theoretical leverage out of this "unknowable" aspect of metasexual violence. I could also imagine scenarios where men might weaponize this unknowability in very tangible ways. For example, the ambiguous statement "I think about you all the time" said unprompted to a woman by a man is particularly insidious given the structural context of metasexual violence in the world. I am not sure if this is a direction you want to go with the paper, but I can imagine a section discussing the ambiguity and anxiety metasexual violence introduces to interpersonal relationships and how metasexual violence exacerbates or compounds other tangible forms of violence."

Reviewer 1, *Sociological Theory*

"I was also trying to think through examples of how this theoretical argument has implications in romantic consensual relationships. Through the paper, I was thinking about the rise of sexting and consensual pornographic selfies between couples, and how to situate it in your argument. I think this is interesting because you could argue that even if these pictures are shared and contained within a consensual private relationship, the pictures themselves are a reaction to the idea that the man may be thinking about another woman while masturbating. The entire industry of boudoir photography, where women sometimes have erotic pictures taken for their significant other before deploying overseas in the military for example, is implicitly a way of saying, "if you're going to masturbate, it might as well be to me." Essentially, even in consensual monogamous relationships, masturbatory fantasies might create some level of coercion for women. You mention this theme on page 21 in terms of the consumption of non-consensual digital media as metasexual-rape, but I think it is interesting to think through these potentially more subtle consensual but coercive elements as well." Reviewer 1, *Sociological Theory*

## “White Mein Kampf” or “WMK”

Title: My Struggle to Dismantle My Whiteness: A Critical-Race Examination of Whiteness from within Whiteness. By Carol Miller, Ph.D., PUR Initiative (fictional)

*Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*

Status: Rejected after peer review

(Out of time)

Thesis: This paper is an autoethnography that tracks a white lesbian woman who becomes radicalized against “Whiteness” (intentionally capitalized) by engaging with critical race literature.

Purpose: To see if we could find “theory” to make anything (in this case, selected sections of *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler criticizes Jews, replacing Jews with white people and/or whiteness) acceptable to journals if we mixed and matched fashionable arguments.

Selected reviewer comments:

“In “problematizing her own whiteness,” the author seeks to address a void within critical whiteness scholarship. Given that most reflexive commentary on whiteness is relegated to “methodological appendices” or “positionality statements,” I found the author’s effort to center this self-critical struggle refreshing. The author demonstrates a strong ability to link personal narration to theory, particularly by highlighting the work of several women of color writers.” Reviewer 1, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*

“This article “My Struggle to Dismantle My Whiteness: A Critical-Race Examination of Whiteness from Within Whiteness” focuses on extremely important subject matter with a significant and thoughtful methodology. With revision particularly for precision, clarity, explanation of assertions and adding concrete examples, the article has potential to be a powerful and particular contribution to literature related to the mechanisms that reinforce white adherence to white supremacist perspectives, and to the process by which individuals can come into deeper levels of social and racial consciousness.” Reviewer 2, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*

## “Queering Plato”

Title: Queering Plato: Plato’s Allegory of the Cave as a Queer-Theoretic Emancipatory Text on Sexuality and Gender. By Carol Miller, Ph.D., PUR Initiative (fictional)

*GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*

Status: Desk rejected after several months and retired.



Thesis: Plato's allegory of the cave is best read as a queer-theoretic text that positions overcoming binaries of sexuality and gender as a kind of enlightened state and thus accepting those binaries as a kind of blindness.

Purpose: To see if it would be possible to foist a ridiculous and ideological reading of Plato's Allegory of the Cave upon gender and sexualities studies if it sufficiently flattered the notion that "overcoming binaries" constitutes a kind of personal and societal enlightenment.

"Feminist Bodybuilding"

Title: "Pretty Good for a Girl": Feminist Physicality and Women's Bodybuilding. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College

*Sociology of Sport Journal*

Status: Retired.

(Last rejection: *Sociology of Sport Journal*, after peer review)

Thesis: The primary reasons women bodybuilders are smaller than their male counterparts isn't biology; it's sexism that exists explicitly and implicitly in gym environments, broader culture, and specifically bodybuilding judging criteria.

Purpose: To see if biological denialism could be published in favor of social constructivism if it sufficiently flattered certain moral orthodoxies.

"BJJ" or "BJ-Gay"

Title. Grappling with Hegemonic Masculinity: The Roles of Masculinity and Heteronormativity in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College

*International Review for the Sociology of Sport*

Status: Retired.

(Last rejection: *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, after peer review)

Thesis: The primary reason men engage in "grappling-based martial arts" like Brazilian jiu jitsu and wrestling, is because hegemonic forms of masculinity prevent their access to homosexual (and homoerotic) male touch in general, which is exacerbated in specific through the focus on "submission" into a repressed need to do so via socially acceptable activities that amount to performative gay BDSM.

Purpose: To see if a truly ridiculous argument about men's sports could be published by attempting to situate it in their literature and by accusing men of harboring unfalsifiable socially repressed urges.

“Hoax on Hoaxes (1)” or “HoH1”

Title: Hegemonic Academic Bullying: The Ethics of Sokal-style Hoax Papers on Gender Studies. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College

*Journal of Gender Studies*

Status: Retired.

(Last rejection: *Journal of Gender Studies*, never peer reviewed)

Thesis: The ethics of attempting to perpetrate academic hoaxes depends entirely upon the position the relevant journal or field of inquiry takes with regard to social justice. Specifically, it is unethical to hoax journals that favor social justice scholarship, neutral to hoax journals like physics, and an ethical imperative to hoax journals (like evolutionary psychology) that obtain results used against social justice. “The Conceptual Penis as a Social Construct” and The Sokal Affair are given as examples of this form of “hegemonic academic bullying.”

Purpose: To see if journals will accept a blatant double standard where it comes to criticizing fields dedicated to social justice. (As Hoax on Hoaxes 2 demonstrates, this hypothesis wasn't entirely wrong.) Also, that we could publish a paper criticizing “The Conceptual Penis” which actually cites us (again, not entirely wrong).

“The Autoethnography”/“SZE”

Title: Self-Reflections on Self-Reflections: An Autoethnographic Defense of Autoethnography. By Richard Baldwin, Ph.D., Gulf Coast State College

*Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*

Status: Retired.

(Last rejection: *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, never peer reviewed)

Thesis: Autoethnography is best defended by using autoethnography. It's not clear that this outright attempted hoax has a thesis beyond this, but it would generally be that a young man can discover the importance of feminism, the “situatedness of his perspective,” and a feminism-oriented masculinity by putting his masculinity to the test in keeping with other autoethnographies.

Purpose: To see if a truly ridiculous hoax paper could be perpetrated.

"As SZE"

Title: Masculinity and the Others Within: A Schizoethnographic Approach to Autoethnography. By Brandon Williams, Ph.D., unaffiliated (fictional)

*Qualitative Inquiry*

Status: Retired.

(Only submission: Qualitative Inquiry, never peer reviewed)

Thesis: No clear thesis beyond that "schizoethnography" in which one considers the varying lines of thought in one's mind to be different selves with different insights. A rambling autoethnography incorporating many 'selves' which interrogates the author's masculinity as problematic.

Purpose: To see if journals will publish utter nonsense if it comes in the form of autoethnography and reflects fashionable negativity about masculinity.

NB: This paper was only rewritten as SZE specifically to test Qualitative Inquiry, and that we thought it might have a chance there by the end of our year in the project says a great deal about the need to critically examine that journal.

"Fem-Mein Kampf" or "FemMK"

Title: Rebraiding Masculinity: Redefining the Struggle of Women Under the Domination of the Masculinity Trinity. By Helen Wilson, Ph.D., PUR Initiative (fictional)

*Signs*

Status: Retired.

(Only submission: *Signs*, never peer reviewed)

Thesis: Hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, and male allyship form three braided strands of masculinity as the problem, following feminist scholar Lisa Wade's insistence as such. It is just an adaptation to feminism of the first draft of "White *Mein Kampf*."

Purpose: To see if we could find "theory" to make anything (in this case, sections of *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler criticizes Jews, replacing Jews with men or patriarchy) acceptable to journals if we mixed and matched fashionable arguments, in this case following popular pieces being written by feminist writers and scholars.

## Part VI: Discussion

What does this experiment show exactly? We will let you make up your own minds about that, but put across the case that it shows that there are excellent reasons to doubt the rigor of some of the scholarship within the fields of identity studies that we have called “grievance studies.”

We managed to get seven shoddy, absurd, unethical and politically-biased papers into respectable journals in the fields of grievance studies. Does this show that academia is corrupt? Absolutely not. Does it show that all scholars and reviewers in humanities fields which study gender, race, sexuality and weight are corrupt? No. To claim either of those things would be to both overstate the significance of this project and miss its point. Some people will do this, and we would ask them not to. The majority of scholarship is sound and peer review is rigorous and it produces knowledge which benefits society.

Nevertheless, this does show that there is something to be concerned about within certain fields within the humanities which are encouraging of this kind of “scholarship.” We shouldn’t have been able to get any papers this terrible published in reputable journals, let alone seven. And these seven are the tip of the iceberg. We would urge people who think this a fluke (or seven flukes) which shows very little to look at how we were able to do that. Look at the hundreds of papers we cited to enable us to make these claims and to use these methods and interpretations and have reviewers consider them quite standard. Look at the reviewer comments and what they are steering academics who need to be published to succeed in their careers towards. See how frequently they required us not to be less politically biased and shoddy in our work but more so.

Consider the fact that we were asked to review other papers no less than four times even though we had produced such evidence-free, absurd and morally objectionable papers. It would have been entirely possible for us to take part in this process of directing the production of knowledge within these fields further away from rigorous, reasonable and evidenced scholarship. We did not do that because it would have been unethical but scholars writing very similar papers completely sincerely will do so to the same effect.

Consider that this was a short-term project and was cut even shorter by discovery when we were becoming highly successful, and that we could have published one or two papers a month indefinitely and totaled hundreds in our lifetimes and reviewed and directed hundreds more. Understand that this would all have the legitimacy of knowledge that peer-reviewed papers should have when the process of knowledge production and peer-review works. Ask yourself if it is working. If you think not, join us in asking universities to fix this.

## Part VII: What Now?

What needs to happen as a result of this project? That will be decided by other people. Our project has been little more than an initial exploration into a problem that aims primarily to provide evidence for its existence, gather an insider’s look into the fields

producing it, and to outline its nature. Our data indicate that grievance studies is a serious academic problem that is in need of immediate attention.

It is easy to identify some popular but wrong answers to the question of what should happen next. One potential outcome of this project could be that journals begin to ask those submitting papers for identification and proof of qualifications in order to prevent people like us from doing this again. This is a poor solution that attempts to maintain the status quo rather than fixing it. Scholarship should stand on its merits regardless of the qualifications or identities of its authors. Taking this approach would only reduce journals' fear of embarrassment and their accountability for producing rigorous scholarship and do nothing to improve academic standards within those fields—it may even make the problem worse by amplifying echo-chambers. Our work was accepted on its merits, not because we wrote under aliases, and that problem, which is the one that matters, cannot be addressed merely by requiring proof of identity to submit papers.

Two other wrong answers are to attack the peer-review system or academia overall. Peer review may need reform to prevent it from being susceptible to political, ideological, and other biases, but it remains the best system we have for guaranteeing the quality of research—and in most fields it works extremely well. The same is true for the university, which is a center of knowledge production and a gem of modern culture. Fighting the university or the peer-review system would be like killing the patient to end the disease. We expect to see these attacks, especially from political conservatives, and they are wrongheaded.

Based on our data, there is a problem occurring with knowledge production within fields that have been corrupted by grievance studies arising from critical constructivism and radical skepticism. Among the problems are how topics like race, gender, sexuality, society, and culture are researched. Perhaps most concerning is how the current highly ideological disciplines undermine the value of more rigorous work being done on these topics and erodes confidence in the university system. Research into these areas is crucial, and it must be rigorously conducted and minimize ideological influences. The further results on these topics diverge from reality, the greater chance they will hurt those their scholarship is intended to help.

Worse, the problem of corrupt scholarship has already leaked heavily into other fields like education, social work, media, psychology, and sociology, among others—and it openly aims to continue spreading. This makes the problem a grave concern that's rapidly undermining the legitimacy and reputations of universities, skewing politics, drowning out needed conversations, and pushing the culture war to ever more toxic and existential polarization. Further, it is affecting activism on behalf of women and racial and sexual minorities in a way which is counterproductive to equality aims by feeding into right-wing reactionary opposition to those equality objectives.

What do we hope will happen? Our recommendation begins by calling upon all major universities to begin a thorough review of these areas of study (gender studies, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, and other “theory”-based fields in the humanities and

reaching into the social sciences, especially including sociology and anthropology), in order to separate knowledge-producing disciplines and scholars from those generating constructivist sophistry. We hope the latter can be redeemed, not destroyed, as the topics they study—gender, race, sexuality, culture—are of enormous importance to society and thus demand considerable attention and the highest levels of academic rigor. Further, many of their insights are worthy and deserve more careful consideration than they currently receive. This will require them to adhere more honestly and rigorously to the production of knowledge and to place scholarship ahead of any conflicting interest rather than following from it. This change is what we hope comes out of this project.

As for us, we intend to use the knowledge we've gained from grievance studies to continue to critique them and push for universities to fix this problem and reaffirm their commitment to rigorous, non-partisan knowledge production. We do this because we believe in the university, in rigorous scholarship, in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, and in the importance of social justice.

If you enjoy our articles, be a part of our growth and help us produce more writing for you: Helen Pluckrose is an exile from the humanities with research interests in late medieval/early modern religious writing by and about women. She is currently writing a book about postmodernism and critical theory and their impact on epistemology and ethics in the academy and more widely. She is editor-in-chief of *Areo*.

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