



FEMINIST THERAPY EXPLAINED

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One of the most common *misconceptions* about feminism is that it's *just for women*. **True feminism is inclusive of all genders** - including cis and trans gender men & women, and non-binary individuals. *Trans-exclusionary feminist therapists do exist*, however, so be careful to **assess your therapist's approach** to treatment before beginning. *Below are some tips* for assessing if a therapist is gender affirming:



How to Assess if a Therapist is Gender-Affirming:

- Does the therapist include *pronouns in their signature*?
 - This is a small but promising sign that they are at least LGBTQ+-inclusive, if not gender-affirming.
- Ask if they have had *specific training* in transgender mental health care
 - If they have, ask *how long ago* the training was.
- Ask *how many* transgender and nonbinary *clients* they have worked with
 - If they have worked with some, ask *how long they worked with them*
- Ask for *client testimonials* from those clients
- Ask if the therapist offers *letters for name changes* and other forms of gender-affirming care?

Historically, feminism has centered white voices. However, more progress has been made in **focusing on the experiences of marginalized voices**. Movements like **Black Feminism/Womanism** and **Postcolonial Feminism** have helped support nonwhite individuals.

However, there is **still exclusion** of marginalized groups and the **prioritizing of white voices**. White Supremacy culture is prevalent in society and in Feminist circles.



In a **clinical environment**, techniques such as **identity wheels** and **power analyses** help acknowledge racial identity and the struggles that may come with that. It also helps acknowledge and work through any **racial power dynamics** that may exist between the individual and the therapist.

On a larger scale, consciousness raising, providing space for marginalized individuals to express their thoughts and emotions, and pushing privileged voices to feel discomfort with their part in White Supremacy Culture are **important steps** we can take as both individuals and as counselors/couselees to help **rectify the colonialism and racism** that do exist in Feminist Therapy.

While there has been **monumental** progress in the rights of individuals who are not cisgender men, there are other issues that Feminism has turned its focus to. For example, **women make 80% of what a man makes**, despite performing the **same job** (The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap)

- o Women who are not white often make **even less!**

Transgender, nonbinary, and other gender-nonconforming individuals are **rarely** the center of research and intervention, therefore **most of the focus** is still adhering to the gender binary.



Gender-based violence is a large problem for gender minorities.

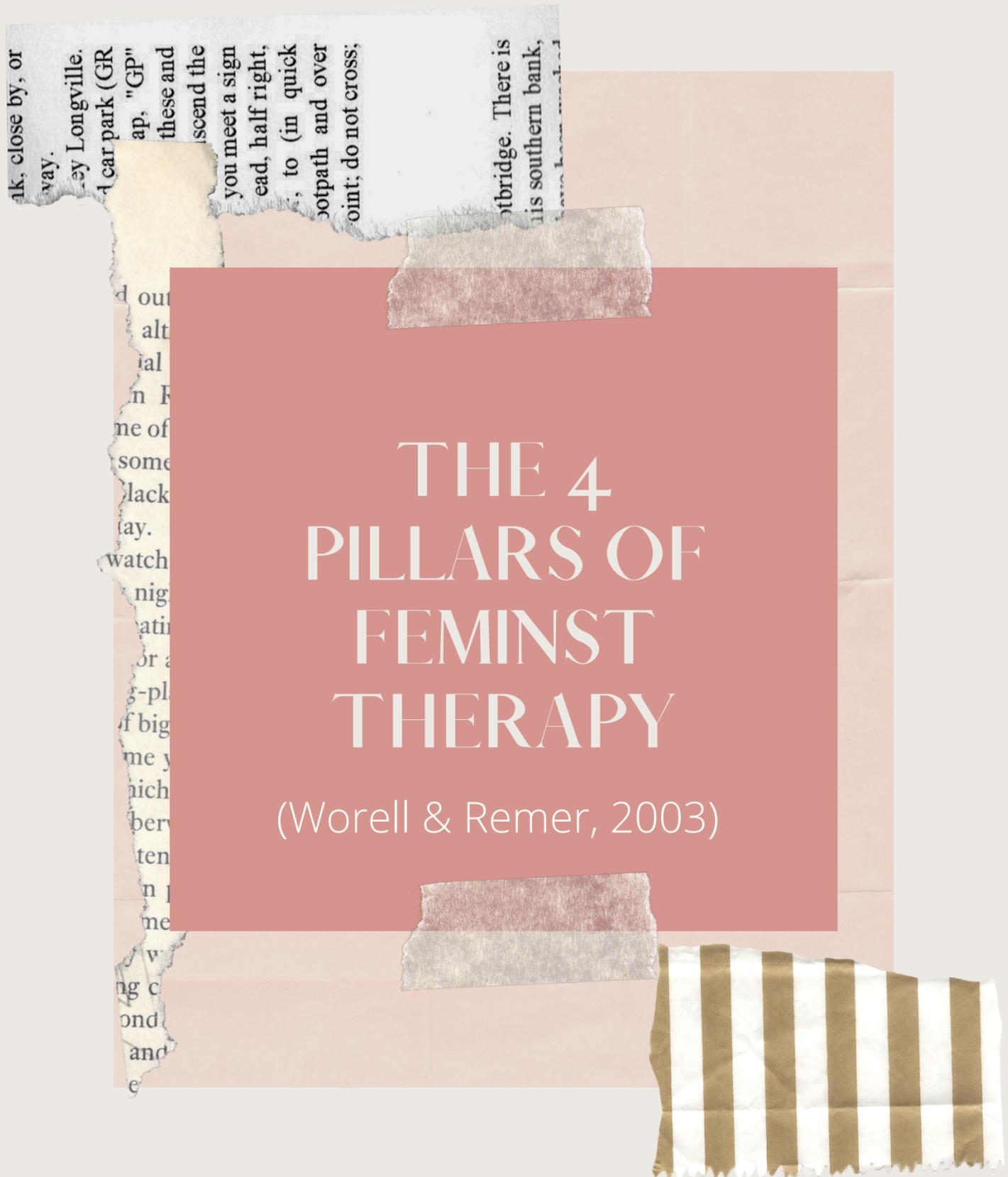
This has transformed to **even be present in online spaces** (Suzor et al., 2019). Gender-based violence, sexual trauma, and domestic violence are problems **all genders** face, but there is a much **larger portion** of gender minorities being the **victims** in these situations. (Fu, 2015)

Personal and Social Identities are Interdependent

Feminist therapists understand that every client holds a unique set of social locations (i.e. combination of gender, race, class, sexuality, etc...) and work to help their clients **understand** how their **social locations** have impacted their personal identity. Feminist therapists view **external experiences** as a **main source** of their client's **problems** rather than pathologizing their clients.

The Personal is Political

Feminist therapists view social and institutional oppression as limiting to the potential and well-being of everyone. Feminist therapist's ultimate goal is to create a world in which sexism and oppression of minority groups does not exist. Therefore, feminist therapy involves **consciousness raising** about inequities in our social structures and working to **change both** the **internalized messages** and the **external structures** that maintain these inequities.



Relationships are Egalitarian

Feminist therapists believe that it is crucial to develop an **egalitarian relationship** between **client and therapist**. Rather than the traditional view of the therapist as "expert" and the client as "sick" feminist therapists view client and counselor of equal worth. **Treatment is collaborative** and **clients are viewed as experts on themselves**. This approach empowers the client and honors their lived experiences.

Women's Perspectives are Valued

Feminist therapists believe that women (and men) need to **reject androcentric views** of women and value each person's individual characteristics. **Traditional feminine qualities** (such as nurturance, empathy, intuition, cooperation, and interdependence) **are valued**, given priority and viewed as legitimate rather than pathological. Peaceful negotiation is valued above competitive and aggressive solutions to conflict.

Fu, Mengzhu (2015). What will it take to end gender-based violence?
Women's Studies Journal, 29(2) 50-59.

Suzor, N., Dragiewicz, M., Harris, B., Gillett, R., Burgess, J. and Van Geelen, T. (2019), Human rights by design: The responsibilities of social media platforms to address gender-based violence online. Policy & Internet, 11(84-103). <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.185>

The simple truth about the gender pay gap. (2018). American Association of University Women (AAUW).

Worell, J., & Remer, P. (2003). Feminist perspectives in therapy: Empowering diverse women (Second ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

