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Decolonizing Interventions for Workplace Gender Equity: An Intersectional and Latin American Lens

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Abstract

Academic Abstract

Although gender equity is acknowledged as a global objective, existing progress parameters and interventions predominantly align with Western contexts and academic traditions, which often overlook the complex realities of the Majority World. This paper provides a critique of the dominance of such approaches and highlights the challenges of applying them universally. We examine the limitations of prevailing gender equity scholarship, including how a lack of diversity in general and intersectionality in particular, methodological biases, and individual-level solutions may inadvertently perpetuate inequities. We propose alternatives based on Latin American theory and practice to design decolonial and intersectional interventions for gender equity. Finally, we call for a systemic change by introducing the 5S framework, which advocates for interventions that (a) challenge the status quo, (b) focus on systemic changes, (c) are sensitive to social context, (d) are sustainable, and (e) are supported by evidence.

Public Abstract

Gender equity is a global priority, but many strategies and solutions often ignore the unique challenges faced by people in different cultural and social contexts around the world. This paper explores why these one-size-fits-all approaches do not work and highlights the need for more inclusive, collaborative solutions. We examine core limitations such as the lack of focus on how gender intersects with race, class, and other factors, and the tendency to place the responsibility for change on individuals rather than addressing larger social and systemic problems. To tackle these challenges, we propose the 5S framework, which emphasizes interventions that: challenge the status quo, focus on systemic changes, are sensitive to social context, are sustainable, and are supported by evidence. Instead of offering fixed answers, we encourage collaborative and culturally sensitive efforts to create fairer and more effective ways to promote gender equity worldwide.

Keywords

decolonization, gender, intersectionality, interventions

> *"I thought I didn't know how to do research, I feared the problem was on me as a researcher. I've mapped and scrutinized all the interventions for addressing gender inequity that are published in international journals and I tried to reproduce them, but it was too hard to arrange the same conditions or to find the same results. Now I realize they probably just don't fit my context, they don't make sense for my culture."*

We are five authors from five different countries in the world—Brasil,[1] Chile, Canada, Australia, and Venezuela. The above statement was made during a conversation between two of the authors of this paper—the Brasilian (quoted) talking to the Australian. Despite the diversity of our nationalities and passports, our commonality is that we are all psychology scholars, working on gender equity, coming from (and residing in) colonized lands. We chose to begin our article with this quote because it tells a story of invisible hierarchies and theoretical and practical mismatches. A story that dictates who teaches and who learns, who produces knowledge and who reproduces knowledge, who decrees the rules,

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and who follows them. A story created and sustained by colonialism. Considering that "knowledge and the power to define what counts as real knowledge lie at the epistemic core of colonialism" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p. xii), in this paper, we aim to provide insights on how to decolonize gender equity in workplaces, emphasizing the importance of intersectionality and local realities when designing and testing interventions across cultures.

Where We Stand

Some of us are from Majority World countries while conducting research in Western academia, which has meant experiencing the various tensions and constraints described in this paper.[2] Due to the openness and horizontality of the relationships among us, we were able to gather our experiences and amplify one another. We acknowledge that our previous research has been prone to using Western theories and methodologies to secure our space as researchers in "international" academia. Progressively, we are including more Majority World theories, and now we strongly advocate that they must permeate all gender equity research. As we understand the importance of bringing our personal lived experiences and social positions (e.g., race, gender, and cultural background) to this debate, we also wrote individual positionality statements (see the Appendix).

Citation Statement

While our work is informed by a critical perspective on Western viewpoints, we include citations from both Western and Majority World authors, drawing from publications in Spanish, Portuguese, and English. We intentionally aimed for diversity in our citations to capture the richness of Latin American scholarship. However, due to space constraints, we were only able to address the general premises of their work.

Constraints on Generality

We acknowledge the social, historical, and political parallels shared across Majority World regions. However, we also recognize the context-specific and unique local realities, avoiding generalizations. Additionally, our primary focus on gender limits deeper analyses regarding women's multiple sexualities, races, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, and social class, which we mainly address when discussing the importance of intersectionality.

The Case for Intersectional and Decolonial Gender Equity Interventions in the Workplace for the Majority World

Recent scholarship on gender-based discrimination in workplaces has led to the creation of various strategies aimed at promoting gender equality (e.g., Fernández-Rodríguez & Medina-Vincent, 2023; Ryan & Morgenroth, 2024). There is an abundance of workplace interventions to help achieve gender equity outcomes, such as diversity training (Metinyurt et al., 2021), leadership workshops (Shields, 2011), awareness-raising workshops (Guthridge et al., 2022), career flexibility interventions (Paek, 2022), peer mentoring (Woolnough, 2007), collective decisions on work-life balance (Bailyn & Harrington, 2004), career advising (Bulte et al., 2017), targets and quotas (Sojo et al., 2016), and more recently, personality-based algorithms (Kubiak et al., 2023).

Although some progress has been reported (i.e., over the past 10 years, women have advanced their representation in leadership and several industries—McKinsey & Company & LeanIn.Org, 2023) unsurprisingly, inequalities persist, with different contours across the world (World Economic Forum, 2024). We emphasize that one of the main reasons for this persistence is that gender discrimination, like all discrimination, is a contextual and locally situated phenomenon, interlocked with culture, system beliefs, and sociopolitical conditions. Therefore, we need tailored action to translate gender equity intervention scholarship to Majority World contexts.

The intersectional perspective on gender equity proposes that social identities are multiple at a microlevel (i.e., gender, race, social class) and intersect with macrostructural factors (i.e., sexism, racism, classism) to drive specific outcomes for individuals and communities (Collins, 2015). Such an approach has been used to challenge the view of gender experiences as "universal," by addressing intertwined processes of racialization and colonization (Magliano, 2015). It has also been used to critique the essentialist "neutral" perspectives of psychology as an "objective" science, highlighting that such frameworks are rooted in White, androcentric, and U.S.-Eurocentric biases (Nogueira, 2017).

In this sense, well-known concepts like the patriarchy, although widely used, can also be troubling when they bypass how aspects such as colonialism and culture shape gender inequity (Patil, 2013). Coloniality, specifically, refers not only to colonization of people, but to the systems of thought and power that position the U.S.- and/or European-generated knowledge as universal (Cummings et al., 2021; Mignolo, 2011). Decolonial feminism, for instance, critiques both colonialism and patriarchy by challenging Western feminist thought for its universalizing tendencies and its failure to account for the experiences of women in the Majority World (Dias, 2020; Lugones, 2003).

Considering the need to expand the gender equity scholarship to encompass a more decolonial and intersectional perspective, in this paper we will: (a) address the challenges and limitations of simply transposing Western-originated evidence and interventions into Majority World settings; (b) draw upon Latin American theory and practice to discuss why these aspects are problematic, offering practical solutions; and (c) call for gender equity interventions that consider the diverse needs of the Majority World, proposing the 5S framework.

What are the Challenges and Limitations of Prevailing Gender Equity Evidence and Interventions?

Challenge 1. The Need for Intersectional Research That Goes Beyond Demographic Differences

When research analyzes demographic factors beyond gender—such as race and social class—it provides deeper, more meaningful insights. Evidence shows, for example, that interventions to increase self-advocacy are more effective for White men and White women than for minority women (O'Meara et al., 2018); and Asian and Black women are less likely than White women to be appointed to masculine leadership roles by predominantly White samples (Galinsky et al., 2013). However, it is crucial to go beyond the demographic differences; we must also acknowledge and understand the role of power dynamics (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016; Bowleg et al., 2023; Del Río-González et al., 2021). Simply identifying group differences without analyzing the power structures that create and maintain those differences may reinforce categorical thinking, besides treating minoritized individuals as homogenous groups (Billups et al., 2022). As indicated by intersectionality scholars, the experience of a Black woman is not simply the sum of being Black and being a woman; it is a distinct experience shaped by the intersection of race and gender and how these attributes are understood in a specific context of power imbalances (Crenshaw, 1989).

Despite the increased interest in intersectionality as both a framework and an approach (Rosenthal, 2016), intersectional experiences have largely been overlooked in the mainstream gender equity intervention scholarship (see Mousa et al., 2021, and Tricco et al., 2024, for reviews). This is troublesome because when we account for Majority World contexts, intersectionality reveals nuanced outcomes that challenge broad generalizations regarding workplace gender equity. For example, efforts to enhance visibility for Black women can, inadvertently, result in harmful hypervisibility, exposing them to intensified scrutiny in leadership roles (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019). Similar patterns occur when training programs address agency or assertiveness for White women and Black women in the same way (Wong et al., 2022), ignoring—for example—the existence of the "angry Black woman" stereotype. This means that when Black women assert themselves in the workplace, they may be perceived as aggressive or unprofessional in ways that White women are not. As a result, while White women may benefit from being more assertive, Black women could face negative consequences, such as poor performance evaluations and exclusion from leadership opportunities (Motro et al., 2022).

In sum, when gender research ignores intersectionality or treats it as a simple checklist of identities to be captured in demographics, it risks not capturing the complexity of lived experiences and the role of socio-structural factors (i.e., racism, poverty, sexism, government policies) to understand inequities and different groups' outcomes (Bauer et al., 2021; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2019). When intersectional experiences are routinely omitted from research, the needs of marginalized populations become invisible—not only within academia but also to governments, international organizations, policymakers, and practitioners—thereby reinforcing unequal power dynamics (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Couto et al., 2019).

Challenge 2. Methodological Biases

Sampling. Much of the gender equity scholarship uses U.S. and/or European samples that might not be generalizable to Majority World populations (Henrich et al., 2010; Sojo & Wheeler, 2024). This is a problem because it neglects the sampling bias that disproportionately considers White, cisgender, Western, able-bodied, and upper-class women (Pogrebna et al., 2024). Additionally, it creates an "othering" dynamic, which frames anything else as deviant or requiring special justification. As examples, some of the authors of this paper have personally experienced the following situations: (a) being asked to justify the importance of their "exotic" samples; (b) being pressured to justify their local samples by explaining why these cultures or countries are worthy of study; (c) being forced to mention or align with "widely accepted" (i.e., Western) theories. Unfortunately, such situations often take place behind the scenes in academia; for instance, requests to justify sample selections and topic choices usually emerge during the blind review process and are not available for public scrutiny.

Another common situation often escapes scrutiny: "world-traveling" research, where researchers from dominant groups study marginalized communities (Yap, 2021). Also called "helicopter research" or "parachute research" (Haelewaters et al., 2021), they include Majority World samples to showcase diversity or inclusivity but fail to engage with the community and its culture, with the benefits of the research accruing mainly to the researchers. Such "research extraction" (Bothello & Bonfim, 2023) is more problematic when it results in tokenistic representation, treating marginalized groups as symbolic rather than essential to the research (Grimaldi et al., 2015).

The Quantitative Bias. Although methodological tensions within gender research have been widely discussed in academia (e.g., Masue et al., 2013; Spierings, 2016; Westmarland, 2001), quantitative approaches remain more valued in Western scholarship. While extremely useful, quantitative methods are not always well-suited or sufficient to capture the complexity of Majority World contexts (e.g., Bauer et al., 2021). The use of quantitative approaches alone may perpetuate biases and lack cultural sensitivity, besides failing to capture the nuanced experiences of diverse populations (Cokley & Awad, 2013). These are some of the reasons why

in Latin America qualitative or mixed methods approaches are so popular (Jamieson et al., 2023; Montero, 2007).

The predominance of quantitative methods presents an additional challenge for Majority World researchers: the necessity of developing culturally appropriate measures (Wagner et al., 2014). For example, the lack of widely validated measures in languages other than English limits both the scope of research questions and the selection of variables. Even when available, standardized scales might lead to misinterpretations of cultural contexts due to translation issues and lack of semantic equivalence, which happens when the same concept has different meanings across cultures (Wagner et al., 2014). Unfortunately, editors and reviewers of top-tier journals often insist on the use of established scales, sometimes without acknowledging their limitations.

The dominance of quantitative methods also has implications regarding the limits of statistical significance, such as: (a) prioritizing statistically detectable differences over lived experience and participant's own narratives; (b) treating people with intersectional experiences as mere study numbers that do not meet statistical effect and large sample size standards; (c) reinforcing the invisibility of minority groups, often excluded from statistical comparisons altogether; and (d) contributing to epistemological violence and continued colonization of knowledge via oppressive interpretations of results (Yakushko et al., 2016). To address these limitations, researchers advocate for more participatory approaches (Egid et al., 2021) and the use of mixed methods (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016), which would allow a deeper understanding of complex cultural phenomena.

Challenge 3. Scholarship is Predominantly in English and Western Oriented

While gender scholarship advocates for diversity, inclusion, and equity, it lacks both linguistic and cultural diversity (Díaz, 2018). Many interventions for gender equity focus on principles and concepts that are more salient in some cultures, such as career aspirations, self-efficacy, and agency to overcome barriers (Wong et al., 2022). While some Anglophone frameworks enjoy largely unchallenged acceptance as neutral and universal, they are in fact culturally influenced—as is any other framework.

Likewise, the scholarship on how to design, implement, and evaluate interventions for gender equity relies largely on a Western perspective, proposing solutions for problems that are not universal and may not apply to Majority World realities. Many gender equity policies and initiatives that have been successful in "developed" countries have proven less effective in other regions, often due to a failure to consider local context and history. An example is a study that examined the impact of conditional cash transfer programs for women in Chile, Costa Rica, and El Salvador; while beneficial for addressing poverty, such programs have not significantly transformed gender relations (Martínez Franzoni & Voorend, 2012). The Brasilian program "Bolsa Família," on the other hand, has been a key policy in challenging traditional gender dynamics and promoting women's financial autonomy, as the program predominantly targets female heads of households, especially in rural and marginalized urban areas (De Brauw et al., 2014).

Additionally, most people in Majority World countries do not speak English as their first language, which limits the acknowledgment of their own theoretical and applied perspectives and hinders potential collaborations (Annamalai & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2020). Although the critique of having English as the mandatory language for academic dissemination is not new (see Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020), considering the Anglophone literature as the main reference is ironic for gender studies as they often purport to speak on behalf of the "marginalized."

This focus on English has a number of consequences. For Majority World researchers, achieving academic-level proficiency in English often reflects privileged access, such as opportunities to study abroad or access to bilingual education from an early age. This reality not only underscores socioeconomic inequalities but also highlights the prevalence of classism within academia. In Latin American countries, for example, English proficiency correlates positively with researchers' higher socioeconomic origins and social class (Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020).

Finally, privileging English over other languages is problematic because it entails adopting Western academic conventions as the default (Flowerdew, 2007), given that languages inherently carry cultural and communicative norms. Because English-language publications are often seen as more prestigious and have a broader reach (Cabrera & Saraiva, 2022; Trahar et al., 2019), Majority World researchers incur extra translation expenses, face higher rejection rates, and are more frequently excluded from conferences (Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020). Consequently, they bear the constant burden of adapting established frameworks to their cultural context and overexplaining their circumstances. When obstacles arise, they may internalize the blame and begin to second-guess their skills, as illustrated in our opening quotation.

Challenge 4. The Absence of Multilevel Analysis and the Overemphasis on "Fixing" Women

Another issue in gender equity scholarship is its focus on the micro/individual level rather than the structural/systemic level (Morrissey & Schmidt, 2008; Ramos, 2016; Ryan, 2023). Interventions, for instance, have mainly focused on promoting women's career progress and leadership in professional settings by prioritizing meritocracy (Choi et al., 2016), risking justifying precarious working conditions under the guise of "empowerment" (Fernández & Santillana, 2019). This approach fails to address the root causes of gender inequalities (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Martínez-Labrín & Castelao-Huerta, 2023), demanding a

shift to focus on the organizational contexts and structures that perpetuate inequalities (De Vries & van den Brink, 2016; Schiebinger & Schraudner, 2011).

In the Majority World, this is especially important as the concept of the workplace often extends beyond traditional corporate, government, and industry roles. The concept of the workplace should, for example, encompass informal and domestic labor—forms of work that are frequently undervalued and rendered invisible (Hondagneu-sotelo, 2001). In Latin America and the Caribbean, between 11 and 18 million people are domestic workers, 93% of whom are women (Suaya et al., 2023). Similarly, many women in the Majority World work in the informal economy, with a great variability of sectors depending on the country (World Economic Forum, 2024). Their needs can differ significantly from those of a female CEO in a European country, for example. Therefore, gender scholarship must not overemphasize strategies that focus only on "fixing" women (Morrissey & Schmidt, 2008; Ryan & Morgenroth, 2024), such as "improving negotiation skills" or "becoming more assertive". Instead of fostering genuine empowerment, this approach can reinforce oppression by privileging individualism, depoliticizing systemic issues, and upholding a narrow, homogeneous vision of womanhood (Medina-Vicent, 2020).

What Can We Learn from Latin American Theory and Practice to Propose Decolonial and Intersectional Interventions for Gender Equity?

To better understand how gender dynamics play out in regions from the Majority World, such as Latin America, it is mandatory to consider how the legacies of colonialism and ongoing neocolonial practices continue to shape gender relations. Latin American gender scholars, among other scholars from multiple parts of the world, have widely discussed the importance of comprehensive, intersectional, and critical analyses that consider local realities when addressing gender issues (e.g., Busquier, 2018; González, 2020). Accordingly, to address the challenges outlined in the previous section, we present four propositions for decolonizing gender equity interventions.

Proposition 1. Adopting a Critical Approach to Intersectionality

A decolonial approach to gender equity interventions necessitates not only further consideration of intersectionality, but also a critical approach to the concept. Latin American scholars (e.g., Mendoza & Paredes Grijalva, 2022; Roth, 2019) often critique the focus of Western intersectionality frameworks on women's experiences in "developed" countries, without addressing how the legacies of colonialism, slavery, racism, displacement/forced migration, and class inequalities shape gender inequalities (González, 2020; Viveros Vigoya, 2015).

An example is the Brasilian Lélia González, who since the 1980s has critiqued mainstream feminist movements for neglecting the unique struggles of Black women and other marginalized groups worldwide. This critique also reflects the peculiarities of her local context and people, as Afro-Brasilian women are disproportionately represented in low-paying, precarious jobs and frequently face discrimination and harassment (Oliveira-Silva & Barbosa-Silva, 2023). Therefore, decolonizing intersectionality is challenging because it requires attending to the historical, social, and economic contexts—including local dynamics of domination—while simultaneously contributing to a coherent, global theory of intersecting identities (Peretz, 2021; Roth, 2019).

Research on gender still falls short in integrating intersectionality as it prioritizes finding evidence for generalizable, correlational models. Further information about participants' demographics—such as ethnicity, race, nationality, age, sexuality, education level, marital status, parental situation, religion, presence of disability—is frequently scarce, with participants being described simply as "men" and "women" (Sojo & Wheeler, 2024). This is problematic because treating "women" as a universal category ignores how neoliberal economic policies create structural constraints on women's rights and access that differ across geopolitical contexts (Moghadam, 2005). For example, in many Latin American countries, neoliberal reforms have eroded education, healthcare, and employment protections—leaving women especially vulnerable in the absence of robust social security and welfare systems (Armada et al., 2001).

Hence, we propose that gender equity scholarship should invest in *intersectionality by design*, which means that the entire research process must actively engage with and address intersectionality (e.g., Boveda & Annamma, 2023). Expanding from Windsong's (2018) work, practical examples on how to achieve this include:

(a) *Shifting the focus to data collection rather than only the analysis*—minorities are not homogeneous groups. Thus, researchers must ensure intragroup diversity—sampling women across varied ethnicities, ages, parental statuses, religions, social classes, and education levels—or deliberately target subgroups whose intersectional experiences are central to the research question.
(b) *Incorporating intersectionality into research design*—expanding from Brown and Strega's (2015) work, when formulating a research question, we could ask: Whose voices are we missing? What taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions shape our thinking? What are the inherent power dynamics? Whose perspectives are excluded or marginalized?

Instead of asking, for example, "How does gender impact access to healthcare?" a critically intersectional research question could be, "How do sexism, racism, and classism intersect to shape experiences of healthcare access, and how do these intersections vary across different geographic locations?."

(c) *Translating complex theoretical concepts into accessible and relatable language*—for example, researchers could develop instruments tailored to participants' educational backgrounds and codesign interview protocols with them to ensure cultural relevance and avoid questions that do not resonate with their lived experiences.

Proposition 2. Challenging Widely Accepted Methodological Assumptions

Reviewing the methodologies used to investigate gender is crucial to better understand how colonialism shapes research decisions, applicability, and repercussions. Through mixed-methods approaches, researchers can capture the diversity of experiences within groups and illuminate intersectional dynamics—eschewing oversimplified binaries like "men versus women" or "White versus non-White," which too often assume a uniformity that does not exist and impose one-size-fits-all conclusions (DeJonckheere et al., 2019; Settles et al., 2020).

Prioritizing intersectionality and decoloniality also demands that researchers, reviewers, and journal editors realign expectations regarding strategies for obtaining data and sample sizes. Paying for participants through online platforms might not be an option when we consider some Latin American countries' legislation. In Brasil, for instance, compensating research participants is prohibited—payments are viewed as potentially coercive in a context of pronounced socioeconomic inequality (National Health Council, 2012). At the same time, recruiting sufficient participants to achieve the necessary statistical power becomes challenging when no remuneration is offered. Monetary compensation also may not be the most effective incentive, depending on the sample (Brown & Strega, 2015). This can apply to native populations that do not primarily depend on money for survival, as well as to highly paid women CEOs, for whom financial compensation in research may hold little value.

Large sample requirements present an additional challenge, as data from minorities (e.g., indigenous communities severely impacted by historical and ongoing decimation/genocide) or underrepresented groups (e.g., women in leadership positions) can be difficult to access. In such cases, smaller samples allow for greater attention to informed consent, confidentiality, trust, reciprocity, and, most importantly, results that meet participants' needs. This approach is crucial for ensuring that research benefits, rather than exploits, marginalized communities. It also helps to avoid overburdening underrepresented groups, who are frequently the subject of research without adequate consideration for their well-being. Finally, smaller studies also foster a more collaborative approach, as demanded by community-based participatory research and codesigned interventions, as they often require longitudinal data and strong partnerships with groups and institutions (Bolados-García & Sánchez-Cuevas, 2017; Kossek et al., 2017; Oliveira-Silva & Barbosa-Silva, 2023).

Proposition 3. Integrating Local Context and History

Imposing "universal" assumptions of gender equity without accounting for local contexts, histories, and power dynamics enforces a one-size-fits-all model, perpetuating Western-centric colonial influences. To reverse this trend, we can draw insights from Latin American scholars, whose research emphasizes the value of community knowledge, reflecting the region's rich tradition of participatory and action-oriented research (Gutberlet et al., 2014). Such approaches emerged in the 1970s with roots in critical theory and popular education (Breda, 2015). Key figures like Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals-Borda pioneered participatory action research, combining research, education, and social action to empower marginalized communities, promote community development, and advocate for social justice (Asaba & Suárez-Balcázar, 2018; Gutberlet et al., 2014).

With such a tradition in mind, in the context of gender interventions, instead of simply replicating generic programs idealized overseas, we recommend: (a) partnering with local grassroots organizations; (b) enhancing codesign; (c) ensuring that locals are active decision-makers in the research process; and (d) moving away from a "savior" mindset, recognizing that colonialism is also embedded in paternalistic attitudes and benevolent superiority. To achieve this, we highlight the importance of analyzing how colonialism has shaped gender roles, gendered expectations, and power dynamics within communities. Interventions, therefore, should create spaces and opportunities where people from varied backgrounds can share their lived experiences.

Proposition 4. Shifting from Empowerment to Activism

We conceptualize "empowerment" approaches as those mainly focused on individual agency (i.e., "leaning-in," ambition, motivation, self-efficacy), differentiating them from activism and resistance approaches, focused on collective action and structural change. This distinction is important as Latin American gender scholarship attempts to move beyond simplistic victim/oppressor narratives (e.g., González, 2020; Lugones, 2003), acknowledging women's activism and resistance and highlighting that gender never exists in a social vacuum.

International policy and gender gap reports, conversely, often prioritize standardized solutions to gender issues, overlooking social movements and reinforcing neoliberal ideologies of individual empowerment and market-led development (Álvarez, 2010; Jenson & Nagels, 2018). Critics argue that these initiatives reproduce colonial frameworks of development, ignoring the complexity of gendered power relations (Dixit & Banday, 2022; Oyhantcabal, 2021).

The emphasis on standardization and universalism often excludes ways of knowing and being that are not recognized by Western scholars. To embrace activism in gender equity scholarship, it is essential to make concessions on expectations of what is known as objective, scientific, and rigorous. Latin American and decolonial feminists have long challenged such approaches, highlighting the need to consider colonial history and its patriarchal, capitalist, and racist logics (Oyhantcabal, 2021). By connecting theory and research with collective action and social movements, Latin American researchers contribute to dismantling gendered systems of oppression and highlight the importance of praxis in achieving social change (González, 2020; Lugones, 1987).

Workplace gender equity scholarship in Latin America actively embraces activism, particularly when it highlights the role of women in labor union organizations (Arriaga & Medina, 2020). In Chile, for instance, women have been instrumental in defending human rights in socio-environmental conflicts caused by extractivism—the exploitation of natural resources for export, which leads to environmental damage and social injustice. By taking leadership in social movements to challenge these practices, they have been pivotal in creating a political feminist ecology (Bolados-García & Sánchez-Cuevas, 2017). This demonstrates how women's activism directly contributes to both social and environmental justice. Therefore, we underscore the importance of scholarship on activist gender interventions, since women's movements have been central in advancing gender equity legislation, resisting neoliberal policies, and improving living conditions across Majority World regions (Cabezas-González & Revilla-Blanco, 2020; Lebon & Maier, 2010).

A Call for Action on Decolonizing Interventions for Gender Equity: The 5S Framework

Although the literature points to a wealth of interventions and programs for gender equity (for reviews, see Guthridge et al., 2022; Lau et al., 2023; Mousa et al., 2021), an approach that focuses on historical, political, economic, cultural, and intersectional considerations is still lacking. Drawing on the discussed challenges and potential solutions we presented in the previous sections, we propose a framework based on five overarching principles—what we term the 5S—to critically analyze existing interventions and, specially, to guide future ones.

The first "S" stands for Status-Quo Busting and recommends that interventions should focus on questioning and addressing the underlying processes that create and reinforce gender inequities. This "S" responds, for instance, to Challenge 1—the need for intersectional approaches that go beyond demographic differences. Gender equity interventions should not only be intersectional but also challenge the power structures embedded within intersectionality. This involves dismantling colonial and binary notions of gender while addressing the unequal, gendered distribution of both paid and unpaid labors. To approach such an ambitious goal, researchers and practitioners should consider the following questions: (a) What are the (generalizing) underlying assumptions involved in the design of an intervention? (b) What intersectional perspectives, if any, have been considered in the design of an intervention? (c) What efforts have been made to address power structures and imbalances?

The second "S" is for Systemic, whereby interventions should aim for multiple levels of action, but target mainly systemic changes in institutional structures and practices rather than trying to "fix" women individually. This responds to Challenge 4—the absence of multilevel analysis and the overemphasis on "fixing" women. Systemic interventions should, therefore, consider that individuals are embedded in collectives such as teams, families, and institutions that have large and dynamic impacts on their lives (Sojo & Wheeler, 2024). Furthermore, the intervention design process should integrate an intersectional gender equity lens at every stage—needs assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation—to ensure that it reduces, rather than exacerbates, structural disparities (Williamson et al., 2024). Systemic interventions should also embody Proposition 4's shift from empowerment to activism by partnering with existing organizing efforts at the individual, family, institutional, and societal levels—coordinating their work to ensure impact and avoid duplication. The following questions could be asked: (a) How to avoid interventions that attempt to "fix" women and other minoritized majority groups individually?; and (b) How to design multilevel interventions that prioritize institutional and societal change?

The third "S" is for Sensitive to Social Context and means interventions should avoid universal solutions by addressing intersectional, cultural, economic, political, and historical dimensions. As explored by Challenge 3—gender equity research is predominantly published in English and is Western oriented—socioeconomic and cultural aspects play an important role but are still unexplored in the intervention literature. It is essential to be aware of the assumptions embedded in different countries, regions, and languages for cross-cultural recommendations. In line with Proposition 3—integrating local context and history—gender equity interventions targeting marginalized women must account for community-specific beliefs about gender, discrimination, and work, thereby capturing each group's unique particularities rooted in their history, traditions, and geographic setting.

Western gender equity research often emphasizes access to education and employment, but this focus can eclipse other critical dimensions—reproductive rights, political participation, and freedom from violence—which are central to women's lives in the Majority World. Effective interventions must therefore broaden their scope to address these often-overlooked areas while also drawing on the unique strengths and resources of local communities. In practice, this means partnering with marginalized groups in ways that recognize and amplify the survival strategies they already employ, ensuring that programs both meet urgent needs and build on existing capacities. To further engage with social context, researchers and practitioners could ask the following questions: (a) How to address social and historical dimensions when codesigning interventions?; and (b) How can we acknowledge local struggles while simultaneously highlighting and leveraging the existing strategies, strengths, and resources within communities?

The fourth "S" is for Sustainable, whereby interventions should create long-term impacts that meet the present needs of participants (i.e., assurance of achieved basic rights) without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Even well-resourced, evidence-based workshops, training programs, and tutorials often have minimal long-term impact when delivered as isolated, short-term initiatives (Mousa et al., 2021). At worst, they can reinforce "savior" attitudes and breed skepticism or distrust. As Proposition 4 recommends—shifting from empowerment to activism—interventions must adopt a collaborative approach that values participants' lived experiences and expertise, and cocreate strategies with communities to foster sustainable change. To achieve such a goal, we should ask: (a) How to design interventions to generate long-term impacts? and (b) How to ensure interventions do not exacerbate existing disparities?

Finally, the fifth "S"—Supported by Evidence—stipulates that every stage of an intervention must be grounded in the best available, contemporary, and context-specific evidence, as well as in sound theoretical and methodological frameworks. In line with Challenge 2's focus on methodological biases, developing truly evidence-based gender equity interventions requires situated, multilevel theorizing supported by a multimethod, multidisciplinary research approach (Sojo et al., 2023).

Proposition 2 urges us to challenge widely accepted methodological norms and to rethink what qualifies as "good evidence." In practice, this means acknowledging that research on Majority World contexts is often carried out by outsiders rather than by scholars who belong to the communities under study—an imbalance that can introduce significant biases in both data collection and interpretation. We must ask: to what extent are our research designs and methods genuinely inclusive and contextually appropriate? To ensure they are, it is vital to establish and nurture locally led research programs in Majority World settings—programs rooted in the lived realities of communities. Such initiatives will generate systematic, context-specific knowledge to guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective gender equity interventions.

The 5S framework—while still in its early, largely propositional phase—was designed to guide the future of intervention research, policy, and practice through intersectional and decolonial lenses. In light of the urgent need for strategies that tackle deeply entrenched social and structural gender inequities (Cronin & George, 2020), it lays the groundwork for critical reflection and invites ongoing refinement of its core principles.

Final Remarks

This paper advances the future of social and personality psychology by demonstrating how to integrate decolonial and intersectional perspectives into gender research and interventions for Majority World contexts. Mainstream gender literature—predominantly Western in origin—can foster exclusionary mindsets by overlooking the structural drivers of inequity (cultural norms, economic disparities, and imbalanced power relations) and thus reinforce colonial power dynamics.

Rather than prescribing a "one-size-fits-all" methodology, our aim is to shed light on the current challenges within gender equity scholarship and to offer a set of guiding principles for interventions worldwide. Drawing on Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and bell hooks' (1984) reminder that "the oppressed are not obliged to educate the oppressor", we call on Western scholars to recognize their own role in perpetuating systems of domination and to take active responsibility for dismantling them. Translating these principles into practice demands time, effort, and a collective commitment—otherwise, the burden of change falls unfairly on minoritized groups and we risk perpetuating the very colonization we aim to dismantle.

Ultimately, we invite researchers, educators, practitioners, and policymakers to adopt a more reflexive, collaborative approach in designing gender equity interventions. By centering local knowledge and privileging context-specific insights, we can produce more inclusive, nuanced, and culturally resonant scholarship—both deepening our understanding of gender inequality and fostering power shifts that inspire solutions around the globe.

Appendix

Extended Positionality Statements

As the first author, I am a Brasilian bisexual mixed-race woman, locally called "parda," an ethnicity derived from Indigenous, African, and European ancestors. I am the first only person in my family to attend a foreign university, receive a PhD degree, and become a higher education professor. I was born and raised in the Northeast of Brasil, known for a history of colonization and slavery that has left a legacy of accentuated social inequalities and economic impoverishment that impacted my family. I currently live and work in the colonized indigenous lands of Minas Gerais, Brasil. My background in Work and Social Psychology, along with my experience in both Anglophone and Lusophone academic settings, has exposed me to many of the situations addressed in this paper. It also influenced me to advocate for the need to decolonize psychology as a whole, which includes gender in workplaces—my main focus of research.

As the second author, I acknowledge my standpoint as a Latina woman who, in the past 5 years, has been working in academia in a Western country. This has meant I have had to navigate different identities and theories at different political and cultural historical events. Hence, my research and reflections are informed by the tensions of being from a "minoritized group" and the demands of being "objective" while including methodologies learned in my training as a psychologist in Chile, particularly qualitative and mixed methods.

As the third Author, I come to this discussion as a Black gay man, of Black Venezuelan and Spanish descent, with 20+ years of training, academic and industry practice in psychology on colonized lands (Venezuela and Australia). My thinking on gender psychology and gender equity is heavily influenced by Latin American qualitative social psychology and liberation psychology, with a keen focus on the social construction of reality and the need to dismantle oppressive power structures.

As the fourth author, I join this discussion as a White, Canadian-born settler, cisgender woman who has primarily lived and worked on the colonized, unceded lands of the Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ people in Canada and of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people in Australia. Speaking of (in)visible hierarchies, my identities carry unearned privilege and are centered within Western gender equity research. They bias the questions I ask and the ways in which my research is received within the field (e.g., I have never been asked to justify why my sample was North American). I view these biases as limiting the progress and inclusivity of our field as a whole, and seek to do better by deepening my understanding and practices around decolonizing research, guided by critical, Indigenous, and intersectional feminist perspectives.

As the fifth author, I acknowledge my standpoint as a Chinese Australian woman who lives and works on colonized Ngunnawal and Ngambri land in Australia.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Considering the decolonial urge, Brasil is written as in Portuguese, and in accordance with the new Brasilian government campaign "We are Brasil, spelled with the letter S." For more information, visit *We are Brasil, spelled with the letter S. And this is our brand.*
2. Ribeiro, D. (2024). *Where we stand*. Yale University Press. We decided to name our positionality statement with the expression coined by Djamila Ribeiro, Brasilian philosopher, writer, and social activist, known for her work in Black feminism and her advocacy for racial and gender equality. "Where We Stand" is her foundational book, discussing how one's social position—shaped by race, gender, and class—affects both the ability to speak and to be heard. In Portuguese, the name of the book is "Lugar de Fala," also translatable to "Speaking Place."

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