

UCLA

UCLA Previously Published Works

Title

Sex scandals, reputational management, and masculinity under neoliberal conditions

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5dd366bq>

Journal

Sexualities, 20(7)

ISSN

1363-4607

Authors

Apostolidis, Paul
Williams, Juliet A

Publication Date

2017-10-01

DOI

10.1177/1363460716658405

Peer reviewed

Sex scandals, reputational management, and masculinity under neoliberal conditions

Sexualities

0(0) 1–22

© The Author(s) 2017

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1363460716658405

sex.sagepub.com



Paul Apostolidis

Whitman College, USA

Australian Catholic University, Sydney, Australia

Juliet A Williams

University of California Los Angeles, USA

Abstract

This article presents political sex scandals as a critical site for understanding contemporary formations of masculinity under conditions of neoliberalism. While media coverage of sex scandals typically revolves around a spectacularized failure of a particular man to live up to an idealized image of masculinity, we contend that sex scandals represent momentary ruptures that lay bare historically specific contradictions of neoliberal masculine subjectivities. These inconsistencies reiterate abiding contradictions in dominant constructions of modern masculinity even as they assume unprecedented forms in today's technoculture. To make this case, we examine several modern political sex scandals, including those involving Elliot Spitzer, Bob Filner, and Anthony Weiner.

Keywords

Masculinity, neoliberalism, sex scandals, sexuality, technoculture

In the years since President Bill Clinton's "inappropriate relationship" with White House intern Monica Lewinsky burst into the headlines, sex scandals have become a staple of mainstream news reporting.¹ While Republicans cast themselves as the keepers of moral virtue during the Clinton years, sex scandals have become a decidedly more bi-partisan affair in the ensuing years. Since that time, there has

Corresponding author:

Professor Paul Apostolidis, Department of Politics, 127 Maxey Hall, Whitman College, 345 Boyer Avenue, Walla Walla, WA 99362, USA.

Email: apostopc@whitman.edu

been an unrelenting stream of revelations compromising the reputations of an ever-growing list of elected officials. And if the standard sex scandal script once revolved around the extramarital dalliances of a womanizing married man, in recent years the variations on this theme have multiplied, from gay-bashing male politicians caught engaging in sexual activity with other men to an elected official with a penchant for “selfies” and a bad case of twitter-finger.²

The media’s investment in sex scandal coverage may be exasperating, but it is hardly surprising. More unexpected, perhaps, is the growing scholarly interest in the topic. In addition to providing illuminating historical and cross-cultural context, some of the most important prior research has drawn attention to the distinctive structural conditions that have enabled and shaped sex scandals in the recent period (see e.g. Adut, 2008; Fine, 1997; Gamson, 2001; Lull and Hinerman, 1997; Thompson, 2000; West, 2006).³ Other scholarly engagements have made the case that sex scandals provide an illuminating vantage point from which to consider social norms governing gender, sex, and sexuality (see e.g. Apostolidis and Williams, 2004; Berlant and Duggan, 2001; Mandell, 2015). In this article, we build on this growing research literature to consider what sex scandals might reveal about contemporary formations of masculinity under conditions of neoliberalism. Our analysis addresses both the relative neglect of masculinities within the constructivist literature on sex scandals, and the absence of engagement with neoliberalism within studies emphasizing structural factors. In what follows, we contend that sex scandals disclose the incoherence and instability of masculinity in the contemporary moment. Rather than understanding sex scandals as spectacles produced by the failure of particular men to live up to an ideal masculinity, then, we suggest that sex scandals represent a momentary rupture that reveals the inherent contradictions of masculinity itself. More specifically, sex scandals occasion efforts at reputational recovery that highlight the uneasy relationship between traditional standards of gender-coherence and neoliberal subjectivity. By identifying moments that expose both the destabilization and attempted reconsolidation of masculinity in the present, we reveal both the tenacity of masculine norms and their vulnerability to dis-articulation. In the neoliberal world, sex scandals register and reinforce the masculinizing processes that take shape as the boundaries between gendered forms of labor break down, as imperatives to expand one’s reputational capital become more insistent, and as gender-power flows increasingly both through and as technologized information. Nevertheless, sex scandals also underscore the indeterminacy of these processes and the inviting prospects of linking gender-radical politics to contestations of capitalism.

Normative masculinity and the sexually disciplined subject

Sex scandals throw into relief the profoundly gendered nature of sexuality. The norms governing desire and sexual expression for men are defined in stark opposition to those for women. “Good girls” are associated with virginity,

submissiveness, passivity, and desire for men. “Manliness” is defined by aggression, appetite, and physicality. As *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni (2013) recently opined regarding lessons to be learned from the most recent spate of sex scandals, we’re still living in a world in which “[m]en get passes, women get reputations, and real, lasting humiliation only travels one way.” For a woman, “getting a reputation” harkens to a time when a public association with sex in any way was considered a shameful taint for females. In contrast, for men, sexual boasting long has been normalized behavior.

Although gendered sexualities impose different rules, it would be a mistake to assume that masculinity confers the privilege of unconstrained sexuality. Indeed, sex scandals stand as a potent reminder of the harsh sexual discipline that even the most privileged men are subjected to if they transgress prevailing codes of sexual conduct. Feminists have posed powerful challenges to social norms that hold women’s sexual reputations hostage to puritanical conceptions of appropriate conduct. But the rallying cry of “sexual liberation” is still largely addressed to women, an orientation that reinforces the pretense of men as freely willing sexual agents. Sex scandals suggest otherwise, providing an all-too rare glimpse of the thick web of standards and ideals governing the performance of masculine sexuality.

For men, the issue of reputation seems pretty simple: when it comes to building credibility as a sexual player, the more sex, the better. This understanding of male sexuality is premised on what Susan Bordo has called the “hot man” thesis – the idea that men are naturally primed to want sex all the time. The “hot man” thesis lies at the very core of what in turn has been dubbed “hegemonic masculinity,” a concept commonly traced to the influential writings of masculinities scholar RW Connell (1987). As Connell and co-author James Messerschmidt (2005) explain, in its original formulation “hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.” While masculinities scholarship emphasizes “multiple masculinities,” there is nonetheless recognition of dominant modes of masculinity that serve as standards (inevitably impossible ones) against which all men are judged.

As sociologist CJ Pascoe (2007: 86) demonstrates in her revealing ethnography of masculinity in a high school setting, an essential feature of hegemonic masculinity is the imperative to perform “compulsive heterosexuality.” Demonstrating the mutual constitution of norms governing sexuality and gender, Pascoe (2007: 23) finds that students understand “masculinity as an identity expressed through sexual discourses and practices that indicate dominance and control,” while the abjected “fag” identity is ascribed to “a boy who is weak, penetrated, and lacking mastery over his and others’ bodies.” Other scholars, to be sure, highlight the advantages of giving sexuality and gender their due through distinct critical examinations. For instance, in the canonical essay “Thinking Sex,” cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1984) declares it “essential to separate gender and sexuality analytically

to reflect more accurately their separate social existence.” As Rubin incisively demonstrates, analytically distinguishing gender and sexuality enables deeper insight into the construction of each. But the critical imperative to recognize an analytic distinction does not imply that gender and sexuality are in any sense autonomous social phenomena. Additionally, to the extent that Rubin’s imperative has enabled an academic divide between studies of gender and studies of sexuality it is counterproductive. Some 25 years after the publication of “Thinking Sex,” sociologists Kristin Schilt and Laurel Westbrook (2009: 441) observe that “the relationship between heterosexuality and gender oppression remains under theorized in social science research.” We suggest that sex scandals present an opportunity to explore precisely this nexus. To be sure, the domain of electoral politics is a rarefied one, and no easy extrapolations should be made from the world of politicians to the rest of us. Rather than drawing simple parallels, our purpose is to illuminate the way contemporary reworkings of masculinity influence the course of sex scandals and their coverage.

As sex scandals reveal, hegemonic masculinity’s obligation to demonstrate sexual “mastery” poses a distinctive challenge for powerful men, for as much as male sexual expression is valorized, it is also tightly regulated. Bordo calls this “the double bind of masculinity.” In labeling this problem a “double bind,” Bordo draws attention to the nature of masculinity not merely as multiple, but as contradictory.⁴ In fact, sex scandals bring to the fore several constitutive contradictions, disclosing an unstable mix of unfettered agency and disciplined conduct demanded of the contemporary male, including but not limited to the imperative that a man fully respect the need for the partner’s consent. Even more fundamentally, one must ask: how can a man publicly project “mastery” over sexuality when the mere fact of being “caught” in a sex act registers as a scene of shame? When an extramarital affair or other transgression comes to light, the true scandal may lie not in the fact of a marital transgression or even evidence of the abuse or exploitation of a sexual partner, but rather the thought of a powerful man shown to be more desperate than dominant. The mass publicization of intimate details of Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky provides both a paradigmatic instance of this reaction and a vivid illustration of the subjection of sexualized masculinity to normatively regulating expectations. Some commentators have suggested that Clinton’s disgrace arose not from the simple fact of having a sexual affair, but rather from the nature of the sex he reportedly had. As cultural studies scholar Toby Miller (2001: 119) has written: “Perhaps Clinton’s very passivity and lack of dominance in the sexual side of the relationship sent the press into frenzies of critique, and not the fact of ‘fooling around.’ He didn’t go all the way, and she made the moves, so he’s not the complete president.” Similarly, Bordo (1999: 294) suggests that Clinton was judged so harshly not because of a show of what might be considered excessive sexuality, but rather because oral sex is regarded as “passive” and hence embarrassingly “unmanly.”⁵ Backlighting these disciplinary evaluations of Clinton’s deviances from normative masculine sexuality via his pursuit of improper pleasures, in turn, was the lurid glow of his public exposure *in flagrante delicto*, in itself a catalyst of disgrace.

But why, Miller provocatively asks, don't we read Clinton's behavior as "careful lust management," rather than as an indication of a masculine deficiency? On the one hand, Miller's question highlights the under-appreciated latent possibilities for reframing a scandal narrative given the dualities at the very core of the construction of masculine sexuality identified in the preceding discussion. Just as a show of unchecked sexual drive may register alternately as the very epitome of manliness or a shameful breach of (gentle)manly honor, so too, Miller suggests, might an apparent display of sexual passivity be (re)presented as the active assertion of (self)control instead of a failure to perform a sexualized gender norm. On the other hand, Miller's speculation also invites us to ponder the social and cultural conditions that nudge popular receptions of sex scandals in certain directions rather than others, limiting the prospects for aleatory refigurations of these scandals in any given era. In fact, by playing with the notion of a confluence of male sexuality, scandal, and "management," Miller may be gesturing slyly to a specific set of constraints and invigorations that apply to normative masculinity in these times when business-oriented, economically rational virtues have gained hegemony over wide swaths of society. What new possibilities – and new dilemmas – for the performance of masculinity are emerging from the reworking of sexuality in this neoliberal age, in which the subject aspires to be the CEO of the organization of his own desire? What can a further exploration of sex scandals in these terms reveal about these developments?

Reputational management in neoliberal times

In pursuing the foregoing questions, we seek to broaden the contextual parameters for considering the social meanings of sex scandals by considering how sex and gender function in relation not only to one another but also to capitalism. The deep theoretical antecedents to discussions like this one can be found among Marxist and feminist writers who have viewed capitalist dynamics as central to the formations and fluctuations of social systems, but who have pressed beyond Marx and Engels's limited considerations of gender and sexuality.⁶ Most recently, the contested notion of neoliberalism has come to the fore as an anchor-concept for culturally oriented analyses of contemporary capitalism. To be sure, neoliberalism is sometimes understood, relatively narrowly, as a coordinated set of government policies taken up since the 1980s that aim at enhancing the determination of social processes by private property and market relations. Well-known priorities along these lines include rolling back restrictions on capital's international mobility through free trade agreements, slashing welfare state programs, diminishing the collective-organizational rights of workers, and deregulating industries – the trajectory of state and corporate initiatives in the USA that begins with Reaganomics, gathers pace with the birth of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the death of federal welfare rights under Clinton, and extends through Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's assault on public-sector unions as well as the accord between President Obama and his congressional enemies on the Trans-Pacific

Partnership Free Trade Agreement and executive fast-track authority for trade negotiations. Less well appreciated but no less important aspects of state policy in neoliberal times, David Harvey (2005) reminds us, include the unprecedented levels of public debt-incursion and the vast expansions of military, border-control, and police capabilities that have underwritten capital's global ventures and the resulting explosions of private wealth. In the realm of business practices, neoliberalism has involved systematic efforts to enhance firms' competitiveness (and profit-yield for investors) by casualizing and out-sourcing labor, reducing wages and benefits, and taking newly intransigent or aggressively hostile postures toward unions, as well as shifting profit-making strategies from production activities toward financial investments.

Like other commentators, however, we find it provocative to think about neoliberalism not only in terms of these institutional developments but also as a fairly cohesive – yet never uncontested – assortment of cultural processes that have arisen in conjunction with neoliberal state and corporate policies. These processes constitute neoliberal subjects according to distinctive patterns of desire, emotion, cognition, morality, and physical conduct. As Foucault (2008) argues, neoliberalism is a matter of “governmentality,” combining political-economic analytics with practices of the self. Under neoliberalism, individuals learn how to regulate themselves in ways that cohere with the scientific-technical management of material contexts in which mass populations live and work, such as reproductive health systems, financial economies, and public health environments. Through our interest in the subject-creating side of neoliberalism, our work resonates with thinkers like Wendy Brown (2005), who writes that neoliberal subjects take the realization of economic gain as the exclusive criterion for determining both the moral worth and practical rationality of any action or person. Similarly, Maurizio Lazzarato analyzes how the massive eruption of debt, which neoliberal financial deregulations have helped spur, has generated a “subjective figure” who makes it his principal life-project to become an “entrepreneur of the self,” a model of “employability,” and hence a person worthy of the “trust” that financial credit expresses – “someone able to *stand guarantor for himself* in the creditor–debtor relationship” (Lazzarato, 2012: 94, 40). Various scholars have explored the emergence of other, culturally and geographically specific forms of subject-formation – again, oriented toward economic rationality and paid work as the sole path to self-realization and societal belonging, alike – that accompany processes of neoliberal capitalist penetration in far-flung regions of the world, including “special” industrial zones established in China (Ong, 2006) and post-apartheid South Africa (Barchiesi, 2011).

One common theme among writers who examine the subjectivating dynamics of neoliberalism is the all-consuming, relentless quality of these self-making rituals, and we argue that both the temporal pace and specific contents of these disciplines foster acute dilemmas of identity and self-management for men. For theorists in the field of autonomist Marxist studies, such as Maurizio Lazzarato (2012) and Kathi Weeks (2011), the engines of capital accumulation characteristic of the neoliberal era – principally information technology and the vast range of service

industries – erode the historical boundary between productive and reproductive work. For Weeks, this blurring of borders aligns with the emergence of a “new postindustrial work ethic – an element that characterizes work as a path to individual self-expression, self-development, and creativity” (2011: 46). In contrast with both the early-modern Protestant work ethic, with its emphasis on ascetic industriousness in a worldly “calling,” and the Fordist reconfiguration of this model, in which consumer indulgence after-hours compensated for the drudgery of high-pressure but generously paid working days, neoliberal times witness the ascendance of a new ideal of work and its relation to non-work experience. Today, Weeks writes:

... employers want more from their employees than was typically demanded in the factories of the industrial era: not just the labor of the hand, but the labors of the head and the heart. Post-Taylorist work processes therefore tend to require more from immaterial laborers than their sacrifice and submission, seeking to enlist their creativity and their relational and affective capacities. (2011: 69–70)

In this situation where, as Weeks (2011: 70) puts it, “attitudes themselves are productive,” there are tremendous consequences for the individual’s non-working time. Around-the-clock efforts to cultivate a form of “total behavior” that spontaneously expresses these value-enhancing affects become essential to maximizing one’s productivity when one is *on* the clock (Weeks, 2011: 71). On a more general social plane, the “professional” disposition that views one’s time as always available for work duties spreads through more and more occupations (Weeks, 2011: 72).

The ceaseless imperative of managing one’s professional reputation, which for practical purposes becomes indistinguishable from one’s personal reputation, fits snugly within this cultural schema – but awkwardly with inherited rubrics of masculinity. Formerly just a means to gainful employment, reputation-management today, like the immaterially productive activities that Weeks describes, directly generates value in many key sectors of the labor market, from the most degraded forms of domestic work to the tony offices where Wall Street denizens pick stocks. Furthermore, reputation not only creates economic value by shaping services that are bought and sold; it also generates value by acting as, itself, an item of exchange. Reputation becomes the fungible expression of the neoliberal self-identity that men and women compose in response to proliferating pressures to deploy affects, attitudes and interpersonal competencies with optimal strategic effect whenever and wherever the imperatives of capital exert themselves. Reputation comes to function as a commodity that one can trade for other economic values such as salary increases, financial investments by others in one’s enterprise, or positions of influence within a firm. Yet reputation is not *just* a commodity, pure and simple, because the reputational features that matter most today have gendered genealogies as well as gender-complicating trajectories. With the growing lack of distinction between productive and reproductive activities, forms of interpersonal

relating long marked as feminine, including affective self-manifestation, cooperative care, and at least the semblance of emotional vulnerability to others, have migrated into the fold of masculine competencies. Performances of masculinity in the neoliberal working world must change because the conventionally masculine strategy of ensuring positive future outcomes – rising profits, expanding markets, career advancement – simply through the instrumental control and manipulation of material resources and abstract analyses no longer suffices.

Sex scandals register these frictions between traditional and emergent norms of masculinity, without in the least resolving them. In this sense, sex scandals construct a stage upon which the constituent contradictions of masculinity in neoliberal times are reiteratively dramatized. In the opening act, if you will, our attention is riveted on the woeful protagonist's shameful deeds and the shocking loss of moral, sexual and political self-control they reflect. Except that this is really not so shocking – but not because, as tongue-clicking media commentators typically lament, “power corrupts” or “all men are pigs.” As we have argued earlier, the persistent expectation that men compulsively perform heterosexuality suggests that the public expressions of shock at scandalous revelations are more ritualistic than genuine. In addition, however, the sexual trysts themselves, and the forfeitures of self-control they reflect, become eminently predictable in light of the colonization of everyday time by the neoliberal work ethic. In the midst of this phenomenon in which, to adapt a phrase from Moishe Postone's (1993: 214) critique of time, labor and social domination, we feel so acutely the “tyranny of time” in our culture of work, symptomatic moments of breakdown are bound to multiply, both inside and outside the media spotlight.

The drama of masculine double binds intensifies when events progress to the “repentance, reform and recovery” narrative that inevitably follows close on the heels of the initial spectacle of tawdry revelation.⁷ Over and again, we watch powerful men confess their disappointment with themselves, their sorrow at the emotional hurt they have caused those closest to them, their rueful sympathy with constituents' feelings of betrayal. We witness, in other words, strenuous demonstrations of emotional competency and affective self-expression. The persistence of classically liberal principles in American political culture always calls forth bewilderment from pundits and persons-on-the-street at this muddling of the divide between public responsibility and private life. Yet the *neoliberal* intermingling of affective and material-instrumental forms of work makes such questioning utterly beside the point. In the current phase of capitalist society, the dramatizations of personal feeling and receptiveness to others' emotions by highly successful men assist the consolidation of neoliberal patterns of subject-formation. Originally established in early modern times to provide a durable political framework for the protection and expansion of private property, the public-private divide shows itself, in the midst of scandal, to be eminently pliable depending on the historically changing needs of capital for certain kinds of productive subjects.

Yet at the same time, in sex scandal narratives, such enactments of emotional competency uneasily co-exist with strident assertions of individual self-governance,

authority and power. The unfolding and aftermath of the scandal involving former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer vividly illustrate this strained confluence of affects. Spitzer resigned his governorship in 2008 after it was revealed that on multiple occasions he had engaged in sex with exorbitantly priced prostitutes. Compounding the damage to Spitzer's image from the revelations of marital infidelity, financial prodigality, and law-breaking (as well as, as we have discussed, the humiliations stemming from the sex-acts themselves) were accusations of hypocrisy, given that Spitzer had staked his political reputation on being a steadfastly ethical prosecutor who gave no quarter to violators of the law. At the time Spitzer resigned, these cumulative knocks seemed to have relegated the "hot man" to back stage and brought out the sensitive empath, as he stood penitently next to his wife and not only apologized but also underscored his appreciation for the hurt and disappointment he had caused others (Associated Press, 2008). Nevertheless, five years later, Spitzer was back on the campaign trail, running for New York City comptroller. And in a 2013 interview on CBS shortly after announcing his candidacy, Spitzer's posture was one of pugilistic, masculine self-reassertion. When asked a skeptical question about whether he had sufficiently rehabilitated his reputation with voters, Spitzer declared (quoted in Cochran, 2013): "I sinned, I owned up to it, I looked them in the eye, I resigned, I held myself accountable." Compared to 2008, the tone had shifted completely, from earnest emotional vulnerability to hard-edged, combative, standing-my-ground resolve. Firing off repeated volleys of the first-person singular pronoun like rounds from an automatic rifle, Spitzer reoccupied the territory of sovereign masculine selfhood. Not only had he resuscitated his reputation – more pointedly, *he had done it for himself*, on the basis of his own power and volition and according to a law of accountability that he claimed the authority to enforce upon himself.

While a variety of complex dynamics determined the results of the Democratic primary for city comptroller, Spitzer's ultimate failure in what the *New York Times* (Taylor, 2013) called his "bid for political redemption" symbolized the uncertain efficacy of this jarring juxtaposition of pugnaciously resurgent self-governance with affective sensitivity as the present constellation of masculine virtue. Yet Spitzer's shifting self-presentation represents more than mere tactics – more than an initial attempt to minimize the abrupt plunge in the public's regard for him, followed by a ploy to put the scandal behind him. His alternating modes of masculine self-expression also reflect profound inconsistencies within the specific, dominant modes of masculine subject-formation under neoliberalism. Even as the convergence of productive and reproductive labor compels men to voice empathy and remorse with virtuosic emotional intensity, the need for men to demonstrate aggressive, controlling individuality also remains a core component of masculinity in this era of relentless competition and ironclad, achievement-oriented self-discipline.

Former congressman Anthony Weiner's stubborn bid for mayor of New York similarly suggests the challenge a scandalized public figure faces in attempting to perform heartfelt contrition and manly self-assurance simultaneously, as well as the varying forms the latter attitude can take in the world of neoliberal sex scandals.

Having served as the US Representative for New York's ninth congressional district for over a decade, beginning in 1999, Weiner launched an early campaign for mayor of New York City which, as of mid-2010, had brought him abundant contributions and high poll numbers, well in advance of the 2013 election. But then, in 2011, following revelations from Twitter users, Weiner admitted publicly that he had "exchanged messages and photos of an explicit nature with about six women over the past three years" (CNN, 2011). Copping a page from Spitzer's first-quarter playbook, Weiner played up his remorse, his grasp of his actions' impact on others ("I'm deeply sorry for the pain this has caused my wife, and our family, my constituents, my friends, my supporters and my staff"), and his own emotional self-awareness ("I lied because I was ashamed at what I had done, and I didn't want to get caught") (CNN, 2011). Again, it is important to see that Weiner did not merely admit personal fault in violating a rule of conduct. Like Spitzer, he testified to his own skills in interpersonal relations, constructing a brief but clearly defined individual history that linked intensive self-examination to perceptive responses to others' emotional states.

Nonetheless, Weiner, too, sought to balance this affective repertoire with a different aspect of neoliberal subjectivity: the imperative to work without ceasing to augment one's capital, and to embrace with a smile (albeit a grimacing one) the inevitable risk that goes with exposure to the reputation market's gut-wrenching fluctuations. Incredible to many, in the wake of the 2011 scandal, Weiner announced in May 2013 that he was back in the mayoral race. Stupefying to all, except evidently Weiner, himself, he continued to insist that his candidacy was alive and well after still further sexting revelations surfaced that summer. On the one hand, Weiner departed from Spitzer's script in this instance, with its stropy assertions of self-judgment and self-control. As the *New York Times* reported:

Mr. Weiner has long relished his reputation as a gifted political combatant, skilled at putting opponents on the defensive. ("He hits so hard and so clean," his friend Ben Affleck, the actor, once gushed.) But with so many voters now viewing him negatively, there are perils to being seen as belligerent, and Mr. Weiner seemed to suggest that his appetite for such jousting had abated. "I'm not interested in attacking anybody," he said. (Barbaro, 2013)

On the other hand, by strangely persisting in seeking the Democratic mayoral nomination long after everyone knew his campaign was doomed, Weiner dramatized how neoliberal men are supposed to project, at all costs and even in the face of looming catastrophe, an affect of sunny and determined commitment to one's enterprises. The distinctly *neoliberal* quality of Weiner's enactment of devotion to the work ethic in the scandal-redux becomes clear when we consider the contrast between his words and actions in that context and the older model of work-values expressed in his May 2013 campaign re-entry video (Weiner, 2013). In the video, Weiner promises to make New York affordable again for hard-working middle-

class people, like his father, an attorney and self-made man who “hung out his shingle” at his Brooklyn office, or like the hassled and frustrated pizza shop owner we see in another segment. The familiar message, redolent with the yearning to recapture postwar-American optimism, is that as it has done in the past, upward mobility should follow from dedicated individual effort, which white “ethnic” men and their store-front businesses visually iconize. But these men have each built something tangible, the success of which is plain to see; the problem is that an exploding real estate market is thwarting their reasonable expectations for a stable future. By comparison, Weiner doggedly persisted in his campaign’s exercise of self-promotion in a way that was bizarrely removed from any concrete context (i.e. the actual transpiring of events in his repeatedly de-railed bid for office). It was as though he believed his eventual success or failure hinged merely on the spikes or troughs of a reputational market – a “stock exchange” of fictitious personal capital – that was inherently unpredictable and therefore always allowed the logical possibility of windfall gains, no matter how unpromising the practical context for that reputation seemed in any given moment. In this respect, Weiner’s behavior, far from being exceptional and incomprehensible, acts out the form of subjectivity appropriate for middle-class men in the financialized milieu of neoliberal capitalism. It is a subjective disposition that Lauren Berlant (2011) aptly terms “cruel optimism,” which has surrendered genuine (postwar, Fordist) hope for achieving the “good life” in material terms but keeps on going anyway, preserving the bleak fantasy that one just never knows when the market might pay unforeseen dividends.

The scandal involving former San Diego mayor Bob Filner serves as a final reminder for this section of our discussion, however, that in the tension-wrought spheres of neoliberal masculinity, what counts the most is a diverse portfolio of reputational assets. Mimicking the angrily besieged postures of some previous sex scandal villains such as Idaho Senator Larry Craig and Spokane Mayor James West, neither of whom ever rebounded from the scandal in which he became engulfed, Filner never set himself to the task of publicly balancing masculinity’s contrary gravities. In the bull-market year for sex scandals that was 2013, Filner resigned from office after 19 women accused him of physically and/or verbally sexually harassing them, including staff members and campaign personnel. Unlike either Spitzer or Weiner (or Clinton, or John Edwards), Filner steadfastly declined to engage in a compelling narrative of personal vulnerability. True, Filner gestured toward personal examination and, presumably, an effort to gain more emotional awareness when he announced that he would enter a “behavior counseling clinic to undergo two weeks of intensive therapy” (quoted in Lavender, 2013). But the announcement itself sounded hollow, as did his formulaic expression of regret.⁸ Ultimately, Filner tried in vain to resurrect his reputation by denouncing the “lynch mob” that he claimed had driven him from office, led by shadowy “well-organized interests who have run this city for fifty years who pointed the gun,” and aided by “the media and their political agents” who “pulled the trigger” (quoted in

Watson and Spagat, 2013). Filner's self-defense thus descended into a soup of disarticulated signifiers. Floating around in the bitter broth were a barely half-hearted attempt to display affective sensitivity, brittle-sounding insistence on standing by his own good intentions, and a bizarre allusion to racial victimization that fell with a thud.

Ultimately, the Filner sex scandal suggests that for men living in neoliberal times, the value of one's reputational holdings hinges on full participation, in diverse ways, in what Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou call the culture of "responsibilization." For these theorists, responsibilization is:

the appeal to personal responsibility as a flight from social responsibility in the discourses of neoliberal corporate privatization: there are no social forces, no common purposes, struggles, and responsibilities, only individual risks, private concerns, and self-interests – all individually calculable and imperviously self-mastered. (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013: 105)

Filner's protracted clutching to his office, unlike Weiner's, was truly out of sync with the times because at least Weiner rhetorically reinforced the fiction of authoring one's own fate, even as events slipped beyond his grasp. True, Filner's choice to strike the pose of the victim – of women, of "reverse racism," of government bureaucrats, of the "liberal media" – mimes another common attitude of neoliberal (white) masculinity, a disposition of *ressentiment* that seeks vengeance against "Others" for supposedly having caused the disappearance of family-wage jobs and the emasculation of male breadwinners (thereby redirecting popular political energies away from efforts to restore socioeconomic solidarity and toward the policing, incarceration, and deportation of nonwhites). But the claim of white-male persecution simply did not work in the absence of complementary demonstrations of regard for individual responsibility, which Filner declined to provide either through vocalizing capacities for relational competence or through narrating a self-directed journey of personal growth and reform. And investors in the reputational market quickly showed just how sensitive they were to these devaluating failures of masculine performance. To be sure, the local Democratic officials in San Diego who withdrew their support from Filner did so because they estimated that retaining Filner's mayoralty as a party asset simply was no longer worth the risk – we are not arguing that they were attuned to the gendered dynamics of Filner's self-presentation. Nor are we saying that Filner could have controlled his own fate by selecting a more varied assortment of rhetorical tools. (This pretense, itself, would reflect an uncritical adoption of the heroic individualism enshrined in the neoliberal mindset, as well as the liberal formations from which it derives.) Our claim, rather, is that just like the Spitzer and Weiner scandals, the Filner affair supplied one more politically intensified occasion, among a continuing series of such events, in which to play out an historically rooted but distinctly neoliberal drama of reconstituting norms of masculinity when they veer into crisis.

Sex scandals and neoliberal technoculture

Whether viewed with a focus on strategic individual action or on the contextual constraints of such action, the management of masculine reputations in contemporary sex scandals importantly occurs through electronic media that in no sense provide neutral territory for staging these affairs. Rather, the digital technosphere at once reflects, reinforces, and generates neoliberal cultural conditions. In one sense, the social-media technoculture materially augments the abilities of powerful men around whom sex scandals swirl to turn immaterial, affective performances into personal gain. In an argument that neatly complements Weeks's analysis of the fusion of productive and reproductive activities in the current culture of work, autonomist-Marxist critical theorist Christian Marazzi (2010: 51, 54) shows how consumer habits involving social media function as a form of "co-production" that valorizes capital in ways that typically go unnoticed – and always go uncompensated. Marazzi proposes that consumer activities such as participating in online product-related "communities," or using web 2.0 platforms that depend on consumers to test new beta versions and link sites, provide businesses with non-waged, productive labor. Companies increasingly rely on this "free" labor to design their products, and by doing so they can cut their outlays for wages and benefits (Marazzi, 2010: 51–3). Similarly, sex scandals give the alleged or actual wrongdoer the opportunity to launch a new round of crowd-sourced, free-of-charge market research about his reputation (albeit a reputation, the value of which has suddenly plummeted). Thanks to the unpaid labor performed by the mavens who follow these scandals on Twitter or other online information sources, the alleged perpetrator receives crucial feedback about his reputation's degree of over- or undervaluation and the attractiveness to the consuming public of competing redesign models. Spitzer v. 2.0 may have fallen short of expectations, but just as Apple rebounded after the underwhelming release of the iPhone 5, so likewise Spitzer's failed comptroller campaign may prove to be a disappointing but pragmatically useful moment in a larger product innovation cycle.⁹ Former South Carolina governor and newly elected congressman Mark Sanford's political second life gives renewed hope to disgraced politicians everywhere that name-brand loyalty, if suitably updated via the latest techniques when the chance presents itself, can still carry the day with voters.

The rise and protracted free-fall of Anthony Weiner, nevertheless, suggests that this technocultural context also mocks the conceits of those who think they can control how it circulates and recalibrates the values of their reputational capitals. In Weiner's case, the extramarital encounters, the public scandal, and the bid for reputational revival (in the form of a 2013 YouTube video) all occurred in the same form – as electronic transmissions of image and linguistic data which epitomized the un-governability of internet networks as they jumped the rails from "private" to "public" communications. One might have expected the virtuality of Weiner's transgressions to make them seem more mild and forgivable, simply because they involved no physical sex. This entirely virtual character of Weiner's offense was,

in fact, the central point of a *New Yorker* commentary on the scandal around the time the second round of revelations went public. Marveling at how this seemed to indicate that Americans had reached a new and absurd extreme in the kinds of sexual behavior they refused to tolerate, the author argued that the real issue with Weiner was not the sex but his appalling sense of judgment (Hertzberg, 2013).

Here was a missed opportunity for probing the interaction of internet culture with sex scandals in greater depth rather than treating the medium as neutral or trivial. For one thing, the technocultural context served only to accelerate the circulation of all-things Weiner, from copies of his bulging boxers to his almost pathologically resilient efforts to regain the public trust. For another, the virtual sex at the center of the scandal further exacerbated the candidate's predicament by directly reversing the machismo he had attempted to enact through the avatar of Carlos Danger (which once more introduced a mobile signifier of race into the gender dynamics of scandal, inasmuch as here Weiner pathetically tried to trade on the stereotype of the "hot Latin lover," with his aura of exotic foreignness and seduction).¹⁰ If Weiner's reputational stock crashed after news of his second-wave virtual encounters spread, this was not merely because the acts in question were illicit and not only because they reflected astonishingly poor judgment. More specifically, virtual sex itself registers as effeminate in a sociolegal culture that long has positioned the material presence of a penis as the very center of the sex act. Weiner's enthusiasm for self-objectification suggested a sexual actor who epitomized neoliberal femininity in its most exhibitionist register – precisely as he was attempting to act out a daring and virile masculinity.¹¹ Following the revelations of his Twitter activities, the public seemed not just disappointed, but viscerally disgusted, by the sight of a man so eagerly commodifying himself on the open sexual market. One wonders, then, whether Weiner's ultimate transgression was not a sexual one, but rather a social one, in this case committed by flaunting the dirty little secret of neoliberal subjectivity and its distinctly feminine valences: the feminine cast of the notion that one must always be trying to market oneself, compounded by the digital culture that has exponentially increased the venues for self-exhibition and self-marketing. As the return of neoliberalism's repressed, Weiner's defiant refusal to step outside the media glare raised the discomfiting possibility that none of us is truly outside this economy of self-commodification, which accompanies the neoliberal logics of immaterial labor and competitive individualism and which the online technoculture not only hosts but also promotes.

Further reflection on the political dynamics of today's technoculture yields additional, important implications not only for the men at the vortices of scandal but also for the rest of us, men and women included. Whether blithely cheerful or self-consciously ironic, our conscription into the labors of consumer co-production dramatically affects the temporality of our everyday lives. Increasingly, Marazzi (2010: 56) writes, "non-material organizational systems . . . suck surplus-value by pursuing citizens in every moment of their lives, with the result that the working day, the time of living labor, is excessively lengthened and intensified." Thus, if Weeks argues that the neoliberal individual consciously feels more pressure than

ever to enlist her whole self in becoming the most effective worker she can be, then Marazzi suggests that unconsciously, yet avidly and compulsively, the individual also labors to valorize capital precisely when he thinks he is taking time away from work to have fun or take care of personal needs.

Political sex scandals generate isomorphic patterns of consumer-producer activity, while at the same time bolstering popular consent to the legal institutions by which the state generates key conditions for capital's profitability. Time spent following sex scandals is not just distraction from more beneficial activities, as the widespread attitude of disdain for these media events suggests. Quite to the contrary, this dedication of consumer-producer attention and expression amounts to the performance of valuable immaterial labor. In one sense, such work helps habituate the online public to the rituals of consumer co-production that increasingly determine the composition of capital under neoliberalism. In another, more direct sense, insofar as virtually all the significant barriers between private business and political candidates have evaporated in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, the reputational re-calibrations that sex scandals elicit extract value from consumer co-production that flows toward the capitalist interests represented by the central figure's political enterprise. Today, these should be properly construed not as an individual career trajectory but rather as a division of corporate operations.

Thinking about the consumerist dynamics of sex scandals in this way also helps us make sense of what often seems bewilderingly supportive behavior by the wives of men against whom accusations are brought.¹² Quite often, the culprits' professionally accomplished wives are thoroughly invested agents in the interconnected business and political operations that campaigns simultaneously pursue, as Silda Spitzer, Huma Abedin, and Hillary Clinton illustrate. This makes their humiliating collaboration in their spouses' recovery efforts, albeit at times noticeably thinned and terse, far less surprising than standard media frames suggest it should be. At the same time, even as the neoliberal state continues to withdraw its regulatory capacities from the world of campaign finance (just as it has done in banking, telecommunications, and innumerable other economic domains), the marital dynamics of sex scandals subtly signal how one particular state function inherited from classical liberalism remains very much in force: the public enforcement of private contracts. The very same expostulations of disbelief at women who stand by their scoundrel husbands serve neoliberal purposes by reaffirming popular emotional investments in the sanctity of the contract, here represented by the marital bond in a way that offers insight into remarkable resilience of the institution of marriage in the contemporary moment. In taking umbrage against Weiner on behalf of his aggrieved wife, Huma Abedin, for instance, the viewing public in effect assumed the role of functionaries of the neoliberal state, volunteering services to insist that a contract (in this case marital) be enforced, and hence that the rule of law upon which capitalist competition depends be maintained. In neoliberal sex scandals, in other words, consumers supply their free labor not only as co-producers but also as co-enforcers of the law.

Meanwhile, our suggestion that consumers act *compulsively* when they participate in sex scandals via online social media makes us wonder how these co-productive activities relate to the compulsive performances of heterosexuality demanded of men that we discussed earlier in this article as well as in the case of Weiner. These sexual excitations are largely detached from physical reproduction, in that they are mainly about sex itself rather than sex connected with fatherhood. Yet they are ambiguously and simultaneously both productive *and* reproductive in the sense of cultivating value-enhanced reputations according to the logics discussed earlier. They also remind us that the issue of how one's sexual-reputational capital should be managed really involves three dimensions (as opposed to simply a contradictory dyad), each of which is in tension with the other two. Along with the challenges of proving oneself emotionally sensitive and affectively permeable while also appearing as the paragon of assertive self-governance, there is the more emphatically corporeal aspect of performing as a proper heterosexual male.¹³ This latter endeavor is not only in a double bind with self-control, as Bordo contends, but also in conflict with emotional vulnerability, insofar as it is structurally, resolutely egocentric. Following classical psychoanalytic logic, these twin inhibitions of desire can obviously be expected to incite sexual desire in precisely (or perhaps doubly) the measure that they block it. The compulsivity of the culture of consumer co-production in which sex scandal watching is immersed, in turn, invites the displacement of such routinely hyper-stimulated desire – first, onto the ravenous desire for *information*, for the revelation of secret truths that, as Jodi Dean (2002) has argued, constitutes a major trope of technoculture; second, onto the project of rating the value-fluctuations of the latest scandal-figure's reputational updates through online commentary of the sort that Marazzi analyzes; third, onto the desire for augmenting one's *own* sexual reputational capital through the dynamic by which this Monday morning quarterbacking turns back upon the individual and becomes a rubric for *self*-discipline.

Conclusion

Sex scandals allow us to glimpse the workings of an emergent neoliberal masculinity, one in which reputational management in the technosphere of the perpetually wired plays a central role. The point of highlighting the multiple contradictions involved in neoliberal masculinity is not to deny the persistence of gendered inequalities in the realm of sexuality and beyond. Instead, it is our hope that in examining the (re)construction of masculinity under neoliberalism, we might destabilize the edifice upon which new regimes of gender and sexual regulation are being erected.

In practical terms, our analysis suggests how important it is that those striving to change the cultural disciplines that govern sex, sexuality and gender do not underestimate the force these norms gain from the political-economic hegemony of neoliberalism. Challenging the contemporary reconstitution of capitalism and its attendant discourses of diligent work, personal responsibility, strategic

individualism, and digitopian fantasy, in other words, must at some point be part of the struggle against heteronormative masculinity and its constitutive contradictions. By the same logic, this investigation of the prevalent masculinities that sex scandals bring to the fore also underscores that no viable contestation of neoliberal power can afford to do without a sustained effort to thematize and subvert the formations of gender and sexuality with which neoliberalism is so densely entwined. In the neoliberal moment, the fortitude of anti-capitalist mobilization depends more than ever on simultaneous engagements in gender-radical and sex-radical politics, just as these latter endeavors need critical confrontations with capital in order to thrive.

Notes

1. Following more than five hours of testimony before a grand jury on August 17, 1998, President Clinton gave a nationally televised address in which he acknowledged having had “a relationship with Ms. Lewinsky that was not appropriate.” For full transcript see (AllPolitics CNN, 1998).
2. In 2005, Jim West, the mayor of Spokane, Washington was recalled from office following allegations that he had sexually abused a young man who was a member of his Boy Scout troop some 20 years before. In 2006, Rep. Mark Foley (R-FL) resigned from office following allegations that he had engaged in sexually suggestive instant messaging exchanges with teenaged males who were, or recently had been, working as pages on the Congressional floor. In 2007, Idaho Senator Larry Craig was arrested at the Minneapolis/St. Paul international airport on allegations that he solicited sex from a public restroom stall. Also in 2007, Rep. Bob Allen (R-FL) resigned from office following a conviction for offering to perform oral sex on an undercover male police officer for \$20 (Allen claimed he made the offer in self-defense, but he was convicted nonetheless). In 2011, Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY) resigned from office after accidentally posting a sexually suggestive photo of himself on twitter; it was later discovered that he had engaged in sexually explicit messaging with several women both before and after his marriage.
3. As Gary Fine (1997: 298) explains, “the structural conditions of a social order contribute to how social agents perceive and respond to social problems.” Several key structural factors have been identified in the scholarly literature on scandals, including institutional setting (Adut, 2008; Fine, 1997; Gamson, 2001; West, 2006) and the media (Adut, 2008; Fine, 1997; Gamson, 2001; Lull and Hinerman, 1997; Thompson, 2000).
4. See also Brenda Weber’s (2006: 304) insightful analysis of male makeover shows, highlighting the “basic contradictory tensions at the heart of masculinity” revealed in the effort to produce the “natural” man through an elaborate makeover.
5. These comments reveal the complex gendering of sex acts themselves. A male subject may register as feminized if he is portrayed as “receiving” oral sex, whereas characterizations of performance of this act that code it as inherently submissive implicitly attribute agency to the receiver.
6. Antonio Gramsci (1971: 294–306), for example, investigated how sexual neo-Puritanism facilitated the establishment of early 20th-century “Fordist” norms of factory production.

By inducing men to stay out of brothels and bars, and to confine their sexual activities to marital monogamy in the tranquil family home, Gramsci argued, this pattern of sexual regulation encouraged male workers to avoid psycho-physical exhaustion so they could tolerate the stresses of newly automated, fast-paced, intensively engineered industrial production methods. Marxist critical theory later explored the libidinal excitations and prohibitions that infused mid-century capitalist consumerism: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno exposed the propensity of the “culture industry” both to provoke and defer desires for sexual gratification, feeding audiences’ voracious drives to spend more and more money through sensory techniques that were at once, paradoxically – but functionally, for the big companies – both “pornographic and prudish” (1988: 140). Substantially more nuanced accounts of gender’s role in these transactions between sexuality and capitalism have followed from scholars in diverse areas ranging from feminist theory (e.g. Nancy Hartsock’s (1985) classic formulation of a feminist historical materialism attuned to linkages between sexuality and power) to cultural studies (e.g. Lauren Berlant’s (1997: 145–173) critique of Queer Nation’s strategic redeployments of consumerist and nationalist emblems) and postcolonial studies (e.g. Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s (2003) investigations of interwoven disciplines of sexuality and gender under conditions of capitalist globalization; Jyoti Puri’s (1999) account of middle-class Indian femininity and sexual desire).

7. See Jackson (2012) for a close reading of the emergent form of the US political apology.
8. In wooden, canned terms, Filner recited: “The behavior I have engaged in over many years is wrong ... I apologize to my staff, I apologize to the citizens and staff members who have supported me over the years, I apologize to the people of San Diego, and most of all, I apologize to the women I have offended” (quoted in Lavender, 2013).
9. Although as of the writing of this article, in his new role as a boutique property developer in Manhattan, Spitzer seems to have established such a secure place in the “one percent of the one percent” that he can henceforth underwrite his own activities without the need for outside investors (Bockman, 2015).
10. The implication of sex scandals in racial power-dynamics is, of course, a much larger question that deserves, and has received, more thorough examination than we can provide here. Comparing sex scandals that have engulfed powerful white leaders to the public shaming of black men accused of sexual trespasses (Tiger Woods and Georgia pastor “Bishop” Eddie Long), Paul Apostolidis (2011: 186) observes that “black culprits come across differently, not only in terms of having a more profoundly warped sexuality but also in the way that sexual deviance becomes part of a more general picture of social threat and psychological decrepitude, suggesting a black individual who not only cannot keep his body under control but also can neither manage money nor execute authority responsibly.” This means that as trying as it is for any man to manage his sexual reputation amid the contradictions of neoliberal masculinity, the task is especially daunting for those who do not enjoy white privilege. Consider the difficulties a black man would encounter, for instance, in attempting to occupy the position of sovereign, aggressively assertive manliness in the face of scandal that we have associated with Spitzer. Recognizing this racial dimension of sex scandal narratives also sheds further light on the power plays involved in Weiner’s far from trivial adoption of a Latino moniker to get cyber-sex, and on the specific way in which the internet reinforced racial domination in this case. Weiner blithely used the network to fantasize about

- enjoying the sexual heat and stamina that are stereotypically associated with Latino *machismo*, while also deploying his race-crossing avatar instrumentally (if not particularly effectively) to try to obtain sex. Yet when Weingate erupted, white privilege shielded this fortunate perpetrator from the viciously racialized accusations of innate deviance that a Latino man predictably would have had to endure. For critical accounts of popular representations of Latino masculinities, particularly the stereotypic trope of the “Latino lover,” see Berg (2002) and Rodriguez (2008).
11. See Levy (2005) for an illuminating discussion of the valorization of self-objectification in the constitution of contemporary femininity.
 12. For an engaging treatment of the role of the political wife in recent sex scandals, see Mandell (2015).
 13. Since the Clinton years, a number of sex scandals have emerged that center on disclosures of sexual encounters between male politicians and other men. While marital infidelity commonly is figured as the central moral transgression in sex scandals, in the case of scandals involving same-sex sexual encounters, evidence of a violation of the dictates of heteronormativity displaces concern with the (heterosexual) marital bond – a reminder of the enduringly compulsory nature of heterosexuality even in an era of increased legal and social recognition of non-heterosexually identified subjects.

References

- Adut A (2008) *On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- AllPolitics CNN (1998) Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/08/17/speech/transcript.html> (accessed 7 September 2016).
- Apostolidis P (2011) Sex scandals, racial domination and the systematic correlation of power-modalities in Foucault. *Journal of Political Power* 4(2): 179–198.
- Apostolidis P and Williams JA (2004) *Public Affairs: Politics in the Age of Sex Scandals*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Associated Press (2008) Text of Gov. Spitzer’s statement regarding allegations. 10 March. Available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2008/03/10/text-gov-spitzer-statement-regarding-allegations.html> (accessed 10 June 2015).
- Barbaro M (2013) Joining race for mayor, Weiner finds few allies. *The New York Times*, 22 May.
- Barchiesi F (2011) *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Berg CR (2002) *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Berlant L (1997) *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Berlant L (2011) *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Berlant L and Duggan L (eds) (2001) *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bockman R (2015) Eliot Spitzer plans boutique office building at Hudson Yards. *The Real Deal: New York Real Estate News*. Available at: <http://therealdeal.com/blog/2015/06/09/eliot-spitzer-plans-boutique-office-building-at-hudson-yards/> (accessed 10 June 2015).

- Bordo S (1999) *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
- Brown W (2005) *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bruni F (2013) Sexism and the single murderess. *The New York Times*, 5 May.
- Butler J and Athanasiou A (2013) *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. New York: Polity Press.
- CNN (2011) Weiner apologizes for lying, 'terrible mistakes,' refuses to resign. CNN, 7 June. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/06/06/new.york.weiner/> (accessed 10 June 2015).
- Cochran A (2013) Spitzer betting on public 'forgiveness' in new political bid. CBS News, 8 July. Available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/spitzer-betting-on-public-forgiveness-in-new-political-bid/> (accessed 9 July 2013).
- Connell RW (1987) *Gender and Power*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Connell RW and Messerschmidt JW (2005) Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829–859.
- Dean J (2002) *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Fine GA (1997) Scandal, social conditions, and the creation of public attention: Fatty Arbuckle and the 'Problem of Hollywood'. *Social Problems* 44(3): 297–323.
- Foucault M (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*. New York: Picador.
- Gamson J (2001) Normal sins: Sex scandal narratives as institutional morality tales. *Social Problems* 48(2): 185–205.
- Gramsci A (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith). New York: International Publishers.
- Hartsock N (1985) *Money, Sex, And Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Harvey D (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hertzberg H (2013) Too much infotech. *The New Yorker*, 12 August: 31–33.
- Horkheimer M and Adorno TW (1988) *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (trans. J Cumming). New York: Continuum.
- Jackson J (2012) 'God's law indeed is there to protect you from yourself': The Christian personal testimonial as narrative and moral schemata to the US political apology. *Language & Communication* 32(1): 48–61.
- Lavender P (2013) Filner won't resign, will go to rehab for 2 weeks. *The Huffington Post* 26 July. Available at: www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/26/bob-filner-rehab_n_3660317.html (accessed 3 October 2013).
- Lazzarato M (2012) *The Making of the Indebted Man*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Levy A (2005) *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. New York: Free Press.
- Lull J and Hinerman S (eds) (1997) *Media Scandals*. New York: Polity Press.
- Mandell H (2015) Political wives, scandal and the double bind: Press construction of Silda Spitzer and Jenny Sanford through a gendered lens. *Women's Studies in Communication* 38(1): 57–77.
- Marazzi C (2010) *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

- Miller T (2001) The first penis impeached. In: Berlant L and Duggan L (eds) *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 116–136.
- Mohanty CT (2003) *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ong A (2006) *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Pascoe CJ (2007) *Dude You're a Fag*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Postone M (1993) *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Puri J (1999) *Woman, Body, Desire in Post-Colonial India: Narratives of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Routledge.
- Rodriguez C (2008) *Heroes, Lovers, and Others: The Story of Latinos in Hollywood*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rozell MJ and Wilcox C (2000) *The Clinton Scandal and the Future of American Government*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Rubin G (1984) Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In: Vance C (ed.) *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. London: Pandora, pp. 143–179.
- Schilt K and Westbrook L (2009) Doing gender, doing heteronormativity: 'Gender normals,' transgender people, and the social maintenance of heterosexuality. *Gender & Society* 23(4): 440–464.
- Taylor K (2013) Stringer defeats Spitzer in comptroller primary. *The New York Times* 10 September. Available at: www.nytimes.com/2013/09/11/nyregion/stringer-defeats-spitzer-in-comptroller-primary.html?_r=0 (accessed 3 October 2013).
- Thompson JB (2000) *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*. New York: Polity Press.
- Watson J and Spagat E (2013) Bob Filner resigns: San Diego mayor agrees to step down amid sexual harassment scandal. *The Huffington Post* 23 August. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/23/san-diego-mayor-bob-filner-resigns-sexual-harass_n_3807073.html (accessed 3 October 2013).
- Weber B (2006) What makes the man? Television makeovers, made-over masculinity, and male body image. *International Journal of Men's Health* 5(3): 287–307.
- Weeks K (2011) *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Weiner A (2013) Anthony Weiner for NYC Mayor. Promo video. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndrgtz_CHw0 (accessed 10 June 2015).
- West MD (2006) *Secrets, Sex, and Spectacle: The Rules of Scandal in Japan and the United States*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Paul Apostolidis is Professor and T Paul Endowed Chair of Political Science at Whitman College (Walla Walla, WA) and Professorial Fellow with the Institute for Social Justice at the Australian Catholic University (Sydney, NSW). He has authored *Breaks in the Chain: What Immigrant Workers Can Teach America about Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010) and *Stations of the*

Cross: Adorno and Christian Right Radio (Duke University Press, 2000); he co-edited *Public Affairs: Politics in the Age of Sex Scandals* (Duke University Press, 2004). Professor Apostolidis is currently writing a book on Latin American migrant day laborers, precarious work, and neoliberal time (forthcoming, Oxford University Press). He serves on the executive editorial board of the journal *Political Theory* and his articles have appeared in journals of political theory, critical theory, feminist studies, and race & ethnic studies. His contact email appears in the Corresponding author section. <http://www.whitman.edu/academics/courses-of-study/politics/faculty/paul-apostolidis>

Juliet A Williams is Professor of Gender Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of *Liberalism and the Limits of Power* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and co-editor of *Public Affairs: Politics in the Age of Sex Scandals* (Duke University Press, 2004). Her most recent book, *The Separation Solution? Single-Sex Education and the New Politics of Gender Equality* (University of California Press, 2016), examines debates over the nature and significance of gender difference in school settings. As a socio-legal scholar, Williams has published widely on the legal and cultural regulation of gender and sexuality, with articles appearing in journals including *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *Policy Studies Review*, *Political Research Quarterly*, and *Signs*. Currently, she is working on a book project (with co-author Abigail Saguy) that traces the concept of gender neutrality in feminist, gay and lesbian, and transgender activism from the 1970s to the present. She can be reached at jawilliams@gender.ucla.edu. <http://www.genderstudies.ucla.edu/faculty/juliet-williams>