

Our Journey to Repowered Feminism: Expanding the Feminist Toolbox

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We explore our feminist journey using Bitzer's rhetorical situation. We started with an exigence of oppression, the audience as representatives of the dominant system, the constraints as unequal structural features, and strategies of petition and resistance. We then moved to conceptualizing the exigence as interpretation, the audience as ourselves, the constraints as the capacity to imagine, and the key strategy as deliberate choice. This conception led us to a temporary alliance with power feminism and ultimately to repowered feminism.

Feminism has never been a static phenomenon, which means that, for those of us who are feminists, "how we live out our feminism must inevitably evolve."¹ Feminism has changed as it has developed through the First, Second, and Third Waves, changes we ourselves have experienced in our personal enactments of feminism. We have been feminist scholars in the communication discipline for thirty-five years, and we recently ended up at a point in our own feminist evolution that surprised us. The call for papers for a special issue on power feminism in *Women's Studies in Communication* gave us the opportunity to reflect on our journey and to clarify our current conception of feminism. We acknowledge that our personal experiences have led us to a particular ontology that informs our feminism—an ontology with which many feminists would disagree. In offering our perspective, however, we do not insist on its acceptance but ask that it be allowed to join the "give and take" that "provides a further opportunity for feminism to develop."²

As we tried to characterize the different kinds of feminism through which we have moved on our journey, we recalled Bitzer's notion of the rhetorical situation, which seemed to provide a useful framework for charting the changes in our feminism. His starting point was the notion

that we "seek to alter those aspects of the environment and of ourselves that are thought to be other than they should be."³ Central to the rhetorical situation is the exigence, which Bitzer defines as an imperfection marked by urgency, "a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be."⁴ An exigence is often thought of as a material condition, but it can be "any set of things, events, relations, ideas, meanings."⁵

Three other elements comprise the rhetorical situation. One is an audience, or "those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change."⁶ The rhetorical situation also contains a set of constraints "made up of persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence."⁷ Such constraints are "opportunities and limitations 'within which and through which any rhetor must work to evoke change.'"⁸ A final element Bitzer identifies in the rhetorical situation is the fitting response. He notes that although "rhetorical situation invites response, it obviously does not invite just any response,"⁹ and he defines a message as excellent "to the extent that it functions as a fitting response to its situation."¹⁰

In this essay, we use two different conceptions of the rhetorical situation to explain our movement to a revised definition of *feminism*. Along the way, we make a temporary alliance with power feminism and move beyond it to what we are calling *repowered feminism*—a feminism we believe gives a new kind of power to feminist action and expands the toolbox available to feminist rhetors.

Rhetorical Situation of Oppression

We now turn to the rhetorical situation that explains the starting point for our feminism, characterized by what we have chosen to label a *rhetorical situation of oppression*. Although the details will vary, of course, our journey as feminists was not unlike that of many Second Wave feminists of the Baby Boom generation. We note some of our most important feminist milestones here to articulate how traditional our feminist credentials are and to provide background for our initial conception of the rhetorical situation.

Our feminist journey began in high school in the late 1960s, when we simply did not fit in. We thought if we could just get "it" right—and that "it" usually had to do with the right gender accessory or performance—we

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would be accepted. But we were nerdy, intellectual, and terribly shy, so we did not have much chance of fitting in regardless of what we wore or how we acted. When we were seniors in high school, we received an even more direct message about gender when our father died in a car accident. We saw our mother forced to assume the financial support of the family, for which she was ill prepared because she had not worked for almost twenty years, and we watched as she did her best to perform some conventional masculine activities she had never done before. Traditional gender roles, we learned, were not necessarily functional.

We spent our summers during college working at two jobs that enhanced our feminist sensibilities in very different ways. We worked in a cannery, sorting good vegetables from bad as they came by on a fast-moving conveyor belt. The women workers had to wear dresses and hair nets and stand throughout their shifts in a couple of inches of cold water that covered the floor. In contrast, at the end of the conveyor belt sat a man on a stool, dressed comfortably in jeans and boots and with no hair net (and this was the 1960s, so his hair was down to his shoulders). Every fifteen minutes or so, he emptied the box of bad vegetables that resulted from our sorting—a job that was far easier than ours and for which he was paid fifty cents more per hour than the women were. When we learned about this pay inequity, we had our first real feminist epiphany. In fact, we became radical feminists on the spot.

If the cannery turned us into feminists, our second job as college students showed us the possibilities of a feminist world. We worked as counselors at a Camp Fire Girls camp, an all-female environment in which girls and women were valued and allowed to express themselves as they chose, apart from male prescriptions. We immediately felt at home. The experience literally gave us a glimpse of women's world and helped us begin to articulate the components of a woman-centered reality. Our personalities changed dramatically as a result of this experience, and we became outgoing, self-confident women who knew we were going to be able to handle the world. We knew feminism was where we belonged.

As we pursued graduate degrees, we embraced feminism completely. Our definition of feminism at the time was typical of most definitions back then—the effort to gain equality for women with men. Reading Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*¹¹ changed our lives, and we engaged in all sorts of activism on behalf of feminism. We worked, for example, to get the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution passed, and we wore ERA bracelets (the feminist equivalent of POW bracelets) for

years, removing them only when the amendment failed. We also attended conventions of the National Organization for Women, took assertiveness training, and were charter subscribers to *Ms.* magazine. We brought our activism into our academic lives, introducing women and feminism into virtually every paper we wrote, developing and teaching courses on women even while in graduate school, and writing our dissertations on contemporary feminism.

As our thinking about feminism became more sophisticated and complex—in large part because of some gentle prodding from feminist sisters of color—our feminism shifted. We came to recognize that not all men are equal in our current structure, which raised the question, “Which men do we want women to be equal to?”¹² We also became aware of the parallel issue: not all women are equally unequal. Our new awareness led us to question the system itself—a system hooks labels the “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”¹³ and describes as characterized by oppression, elitism, domination, competition, hierarchy, and alienation.¹⁴ We decided that we did not want to gain access to or achieve equality within this system but instead wanted to transform the system itself.

As a result of our new goal, we adopted the definition of feminism that hooks articulates so eloquently: the effort to eliminate the ideology of domination that pervades our culture.¹⁵ Feminism became for us the effort to eliminate relationships of oppression and elitism and the creation instead of relationships of equality, self-determination, affirmation, mutuality, and respect.¹⁶ We became interested in working to enact in our culture a particular set of values—among them equality, immanent value, and self-determination—that would disrupt the ideology of domination and suggest alternative, nondominating ways to live.

Our early iterations of feminism had as the exigence of the rhetorical situation the oppression of women. Although we believed that the feminist movement could modify the exigence of oppression, we saw the task as a difficult one because of the strength of the dominant culture—the hegemony of patriarchy and its myriad manifestations throughout culture. We privileged the structural features of an unequal social reality and, in fact, we had a strong investment in identifying and highlighting all of those things around us that contributed to our oppression. We were very much in agreement with communication scholars who feature “material oppression”¹⁷ as the exigence in a rhetorical situation and who see reality as often “deadly”¹⁸ for subordinate groups.

We conceptualized our audience as representatives of the dominant system, positioned in all areas of social life, including government, law, religion, education, and business. To address the exigence of oppression, we directed our rhetoric at and sought to appeal to those who saw sexism as natural and appropriate and who eschewed the feminist agenda we sought to implement.

The constraints we saw as operative in the rhetorical situation included a long tradition of oppression of women; laws and norms that codified women's oppression; the self-interest of the hegemony in its own self-maintenance; women's dependence on the system (often for our very livelihoods); and our own identities characterized by subordinate status and lack of voice, agency, and credibility. We saw the constraints at our disposal as rhetors as the strength of our commitment to the cause, our capacity to work with other feminists in sisterhood, and our knowledge of rhetorical tools for challenging the system.

The rhetorical situation that we conceptualized for our feminism demanded that we engage in two primary rhetorical acts as appropriate or fitting—petition and resistance. We strategized emotional, physical, and moral appeals directed at the representatives of the dominant system, asking them to change. When they did not, we resisted the system and its representatives, trying to force them to change. Many of these efforts were directed at the Equal Rights Amendment. We marched in Washington, D. C., petitioning Congress to extend the deadline for ratification, and we were involved in the communication discipline's convention boycott of states that had not passed the ERA. Our conventional training in persuasion and our study of social movements reinforced these responses as fitting ones for the situation.

Catalysts of Discontent

About five years ago, we began experiencing symptoms of discomfort with the way in which we had conceptualized our feminist rhetorical situation. From a number of sources, we began to encounter messages that suggested we take another look at the kind of feminism that was the foundation of our academic careers, our pedagogy, and our personal lives. Three such catalysts were primary for us in encouraging us to question our definition of feminism and our conception of the rhetorical situation: a groupthink that had come to characterize feminism, feminism's lack of

acknowledgment of success, and our exposure to alternative conceptions of change.

Feminist Groupthink

As the decades of feminist activity passed, we became increasingly uncomfortable with the development of a "feminist groupthink ideology."¹⁹ Along with most feminists we know, we had adopted the role of feminist bullies. We asked our sister feminists to make decisions and to behave according to certain feminist criteria, trying to "create one ideal feminist."²⁰ This feminist worked outside the home; adhered to a rigid framework of political correctness that included objecting to sexist and racist remarks; used inclusive language and pointed out instances when others failed to do so; did not change her name if she married; employed consensual and collaborative methods of decision making in the organizations of which she was a part; never talked about gender without also mentioning race, ethnicity, class, ability, sexual orientation, and age; and so on (we suspect our readers can complete the list). Although we talked about self-determination and choice as critical tenets of feminism, we sought to insure adherence to a hegemonic feminist position: "One's hair length, choice of clothing or reading material, marital status and sexual preference came to determine whether one was considered sufficiently 'feminist.'"²¹ As a result, feminists could be suspect as to authenticity and labeled *faux feminists* or *anti-feminists* if they did not adhere to the hegemonic dictates.

A feminist hegemony also developed in the academy, and feminist scholarship became significantly different from how it had been at the start of the Second Wave. In its early stages, feminism in the academy was marked by the discovery, energy, and excitement that characterize a new social movement.²² Feminism utterly transformed the intellectual world as we knew it, and, as Summers puts it, "Everything was suddenly open to question . . . Why? Why? Why? We asked."²³ We still remember our feelings of excitement when we realized we could study great women speakers instead of the rhetoric of great men; we experienced an even greater sense of possibility when we realized that we did not have to limit ourselves to great speakers at all.

But then feminist analyses and critiques became standardized, and as authors and reviewers of academic essays, we expected such essays to reach particular, almost predetermined conclusions and to advance a limited set of claims about patriarchy and its negative impact on the

lives of women. The rigidity of our expectations was brought home to us recently when we heard a renowned feminist theorist booed at a feminist conference when she presented some ideas that deviated from feminist hegemonic thought. Because we ignored (and largely did not allow the publication of) ideas that did not support the dominant feminist paradigm, we witnessed a diminishing of creative ideas in the feminist movement. As we became as hegemonic as the hegemony of the dominant culture, the excitement that comes with new ideas and ways of thinking was gone.

Feminism's Lack of Acknowledgment of Success

We also became increasingly uncomfortable with the unwillingness by many feminists to acknowledge the movement's successes and to focus instead on feminism's unrealized goals or failures. Certainly, inequalities of all kinds still can be recognized in the world—domestic violence, discrimination, and sexual slavery, for example—but there have been major strides since the rebirth of feminism in the 1960s, as a few examples attest: Women can choose whether to marry, and their marriage partner can even be another woman in several states and countries; they can choose whether and when to have children; women can work in almost any occupation; women's history is included in core history courses; women's issues are included in the news pages of newspapers; people generally use inclusive language; and almost every traditional theory has been questioned and reconceptualized from feminist perspectives. As Walter suggests, the story of the feminist movement is "a great story, a happy, triumphant story. Feminism is a unique philosophical and political movement that has transformed women's lives, that has brought about the greatest and most peaceful social revolution that has ever been seen."²⁴ In short, "feminism, no matter what mistakes have been committed in its name, has succeeded."²⁵

But many feminists and feminist organizations seem reluctant to recognize the gains made and the positive changes accomplished by feminism. As a result, many feminist groups retain the same missions and objectives and employ the same strategies they used when Second Wave feminism was new—strategies focused on overturning egregious oppressive structures. We sense the inappropriateness of such strategies, for example, when we read *Ms.* magazine these days. Not long ago, *Ms.* published a piece similar to one it had published in its debut issue in 1972: a list of the names of readers who had had abortions. This was a

revolutionary act when abortion was not talked about and was illegal, but the purpose of this recent campaign was unclear to us. Signing the original petition was designed to "help eliminate the stigma" of abortion, while the 2006 petition was described in this way: "We recognize that, still, not every woman will be able to sign—thirty-three years after *Roe*—even though abortion is a very common, necessary, and important procedure for millions of women in the U.S. But if a multitude of women step forward publicly and more and more continue to join us, we will transform public debate."²⁶

We are not suggesting that abortion does not remain a feminist issue. However, the strategy of publishing the names of women who had had abortions is not one that can address the exigence of judicial opinions or legislation designed to curtail abortion. Most politicians and judges do not read *Ms.* magazine or visit the *Ms.* Web site, where the names of the women who have signed can be read. Likewise, there was no discussion of how the signatures would transform public debate. Lack of acknowledgment of feminism's successes, then, often means we select objectives and employ strategies that no longer seem to be appropriate responses to the current rhetorical situation.

Alternative Conceptions of Change

Another impetus for our evolution was a body of work on change that we encountered to which we had not previously been exposed. As we were preparing to write a book on feminist rhetorical theories,²⁷ we discovered the work of some feminist theorists who provided alternative ways of thinking about social change. We found in the work of Sally Miller Gearhart,²⁸ Sonia Johnson,²⁹ Gloria Anzaldúa,³⁰ and Starhawk³¹ theories about how change happens that challenged those we previously had accepted. We had been taught to engage in persuasion to make others change so that the world would be the way we wanted it to be. This assumption is the foundation, for example, of public speaking, where persuasion is one of the three major types of speeches we teach and practice; it is prominent in the notion of compliance gaining in interpersonal communication; and it virtually governs the study of diffusion of innovation.

We discovered in the feminist theories we were reading about, however, an alternative conception of change, based on different assumptions from those that have governed traditional conceptions of persuasion. Among them are that changing another person is difficult and that if individuals

are going to change, they must change themselves. This new conception of change also raised ethical issues around the attempt to change others, suggesting that it may violate their inherent value and integrity.³² Although we do not have the space to detail these assumptions here or to suggest how the various theorists who were influential on our thinking develop these ideas, suffice it to say that these assumptions suggest a role for communication that is substantially different from persuading others as the route to change. These ideas also resonated with how we had experienced change in our lives. We do not change our beliefs easily; they are developed from our experiences and make sense for where we are in our lives at present, and the same is true, we suspect, of the beliefs that others hold.

Our evolving views about change received support from quantum physics as well, which we began reading when we discovered that some feminist theorists were using quantum physics to develop their theories about the nature of reality and about how change happens.³³ The essential nature of reality, according to some schools of quantum physics, is that it "is not a fixed essence" but is "*an ongoing dynamic of intra-activity*."³⁴ The human observer is "not only necessary to observe the properties of an object, but is necessary even to define these properties They are only meaningful in the context of the object's interaction with the observer."³⁵ The discursive practices by which we seek to describe reality, then, describe "not nature itself but *our intra-activity as part of nature*."³⁶ That human practices are seen as "agentive participants in the world's intra-active becoming"³⁷ has led some physicists to describe the substance of reality as *consciousness* or *awareness*.

The notion of consciousness suggests that we have choices about how to observe, interact with, and interpret objects and situations and that, in fact, choice is the basic mechanism by which we manifest the world. In an effort to capture this notion, some physicists have described the world as "a ghost world that pops into solid existence each time one of us observes it."³⁸ What is important for our purposes is the idea that, in "every moment, we literally face infinite alternative possibilities"³⁹ or "pure potential."⁴⁰ As we choose, our world is created. What we experience, then, is created by a focus on it, whether through thoughts, observations, or language, and to change reality, we need to change our minds, focus on different things, and use different symbols.

A New Definition of *Feminism*

Our experiences with feminist groupthink, feminism's lack of acknowledgment of success, and our exposure to alternative theories of change came together in such a way to give us hope we could become excited about feminism again. These factors functioned as catalysts to encourage us to conceptualize feminism substantially differently from how we had earlier. We are now choosing to define *feminism* as *the deliberate application of the capacity for unlimited and resourceful interpretation to engage exigencies for the purpose of creating a desired world*.

We will explain our definition in more detail as we explain the rhetorical situation that derives from it. We do want to address here, however, why we see this definition as a feminist one and not a definition of social change in general. We believe it is feminist because it is marked by key hallmarks of feminism. Our definition has as its purpose to change the world—an objective feminism always has had. It is rooted in a deliberate and conscious decolonization of the mind,⁴¹ whereby individuals disconnect from hegemonic ways of thinking, believing, and acting and choose new ways that do not depend on dominant ideologies. Its central activity is interpretation, referencing the interrogation and questioning that have marked feminism since its inception. It not only allows for the "pursuit of what has not yet been thought"⁴² but also pushes us not to "rest content with any identity—even one we have helped produce."⁴³

Perhaps most important, our definition of feminism is at its core a feminist one because it is rooted in the self-determination that is a critical characteristic of feminism. Feminism has always involved a commitment to the idea that individuals should be allowed to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives. This commitment to self-determination is manifest in our definition of feminism in that each feminist has the opportunity to create a world of her choosing and does not require agreement by others on what that world should be like. The desired world will continue to evolve for each feminist, then, as she continues to make choice after choice.

Rhetorical Situation of Interpretation

Our new definition of feminism necessarily was accompanied by a new conception of the rhetorical situation. It required that we reconfigure our views of the exigence, the audience, the operative constraints, and what

would constitute a fitting response. We discuss these in more detail than we did the elements of the rhetorical situation for our earlier conception of feminism because they represent for most readers, we suspect, a less familiar perspective.

Exigence

Rather than seeing the condition of oppression as the exigence or thing which is other than it should be, our definition of feminism suggests interpretation or interpretive choice as our new exigence. How we interpret the elements around us is what is controlling and determining, and oppressive conditions are solid and powerful only in an interpretation that names them as oppressive. The oppressive conditions we previously had viewed as the exigence now became dependent variables that vary according to the nature of the interpretation we select. We can choose to see a condition as oppressive, liberating, irrelevant, benign, or any number of other interpretations. If our interpretive choices are aligned with our desired world, they are functional choices; if not, they cannot create the kind of world we desire.

Gender, which we previously had conceptualized as a lens or filter through which all of our experiences and interpretations must pass, became a lens through which we could see if we chose such an interpretation. To focus on gender is a choice, just as choosing not to is, and neither one is inherently better than the other: each simply creates a different kind of world. We also, of course, have a choice about how to define gender, and the various definitions create different worlds as well.

We acknowledge that a view of exigence as interpretive choice may be difficult to accept in extreme cases—imprisonment, torture, genocide, or child abuse, for example—but even in these situations, individuals “have choices about how to perceive their conditions.” More important, adopting a symbolic interpretation that sees conditions as resources “opens up opportunities for innovating even in these situations in ways unavailable to those who construct” those conditions as oppressive and constraining.⁴⁴ As Walker notes, “very many things human beings have to or want to do are made harder, even excruciatingly costly, by deprivation or oppression,” but the issue “is how well one responds” to “the distinctive mix of circumstances thrown our ways and commitments and attachments we make under those circumstances.”⁴⁵ Gilbert also articulates this idea: “I can choose how I’m going to regard unfortunate circumstances in my life—whether I see them as curses or opportunities (and on the occasions

when I can’t rise to the most optimistic viewpoint, because I’m feeling too damn sorry for myself, I can choose to keep trying to change my outlook) And most of all, I can choose my thoughts.”⁴⁶

Palestinian philosopher Sari Nusseibeh provides an example of how interpretation of a condition rather than the condition itself is what determines our experience and our reality. In this example, he is explicating the nature of freedom which, he says, is “something that you exercise, and you exercise it even in jail. you exercise it even under occupation.” He explains: “[Y]ou normally think that if you go to jail or if you’ll [sic] sitting inside a cell, or if you’re being interrogated by an interrogator, that you are the underdog, that you are in chains, that the chains are placed on you by the other party. But . . . people who had been through this experience, they very often felt free in many ways much more than, for example, the interrogator, simply because they believed in what they were doing.”⁴⁷

As we reflected on the implications of interpretive choice as exigence, we realized that our position was not really new at all. Exigence as interpretation was, in fact, the subject of a debate in the communication discipline in the 1970s in response to Bitzer’s essay on the rhetorical situation. When he proposed the notion of a rhetorical situation, Bitzer conceptualized the exigence as “located in reality” and as “objective and publicly observable historical facts in the world we experience.”⁴⁸ He saw the exigence as a determining situation that controlled the response of the rhetor and, we realized, that was exactly what we had done when we had seen the exigence of feminism as oppression.⁴⁹

In response to Bitzer, however, many argued that the exigence is perceived,⁵⁰ and no “situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which [s]he chooses to characterize it.”⁵¹ Hunsaker and Smith are typical of those who argued for a less deterministic position for the exigence: “While we recognize the generating power of a rhetorical exigence, we also recognize the ability of a communicator to manipulate perception of that exigence, as well as the variety of audience perceptions of exigence and communicator, and the capacity of an auditor to perceive selectively.”⁵² Vatz also agreed that the exigence is perceptual more than physical: “I would not say . . . ‘exigence strongly invites utterance,’ but utterance strongly invites exigence.”⁵³ We had come back around, then, to a position well articulated in the communication discipline in the debate on the rhetorical situation. In our feminist beginnings, we conceptualized the rhetorical situation as

many scholars did—as objective and deterministic—but now found ourselves agreeing with the position that any exigence becomes an exigence only when it is perceived or interpreted as such.

We also realized that, although we had chosen to adopt a fairly radical notion of interpretive autonomy as part of our revised definition of feminism, support for our definition and our interpretive stance was available from our own field. Not only had we returned to a previous debate in the communication field but to a truism often professed in our discipline—the idea that communication creates reality. Although we sometimes seem to forget about it, our field has a long tradition of support for this notion, including the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis—the idea that perceptions of the world are determined or at least affected by the language used.⁵⁴ Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* is another mainstay in this tradition; it explains in compelling ways how reality is constructed through symbol use and why reality comes to seem as solid as it does.⁵⁵ A social construction understanding of communication was even the theme for a summer institute sponsored by the National Communication Association (NCA), and one of the outcomes was the creation of a new NCA division on social construction. All of these developments support the idea that an exigence cannot be other than something we have created.⁵⁶

Audience

Our revised definition of feminism prompted not only our exigence to change but our audience as well. The audience for us is no longer composed of representatives of the dominant culture whom we perceive as responsible for oppression in the world. Now the audience is primarily ourselves, an audience that Bitzer himself recognized as a possibility: “As individuals we address ourselves pragmatically; thus the self is sometimes rhetor and audience.”⁵⁷ Our interpretive choices are primarily directed at us—feminist rhetors—as we make choices and watch to see the outcomes of those choices in terms of whether they contribute to or hinder creation of our desired world. As a result of our new view of audience, we stopped participating in Take Back the Night marches, no longer wishing to interpret the night as dangerous. A new interpretive choice has changed our orientation to the night: It is a safe—even friendly—place in which we now enjoy jogging and walking. The feedback we receive from choices such as this either reinforces particular interpretations by producing or at

least moving us closer to a desired world or suggesting that a different interpretation is in order.

A secondary audience exists as well—those around us who witness our interpretations and see them manifest in our lives. In Burke's terms, our choices and their outcomes constitute “equipment for living.”⁵⁸ As others witness our interpretive choices, as revealed in our conversations and actions, they are able to see the connection between our choices and our outcomes. If we declare all men to be pigs, for example, men become our adversaries, and we are unlikely to engage in collaborative and collegial relationships with them. The outcomes of our choices display, in full view for those around us, the alignment or correspondence that exists between our choices and the worlds we create and experience.

Constraints

What we saw as constraints shifted dramatically as well in our new conception of feminism. In our previous view of the feminist rhetorical situation, the constraints under our rhetorical control were characteristics such as commitment and perseverance; in addition, there were many powerful constraints such as laws and traditions external to feminist rhetors. The external constraints have now virtually disappeared for us, and only one constraint remains: our capacity to imagine different interpretive options. This constraint is completely under our control; thus, the ability to address the rhetorical situation successfully is circumscribed only by the limits of our ability to envision possibilities.

We acknowledge that many of our readers may want to include privilege and access to material resources as constraints that are operative for some feminist rhetors. The view we have just articulated of exigence and constraints, such readers might suggest, works for “a tiny section of women who have enough money and power,”⁵⁹ but it cannot work for the “masses of women and men who do not have access to the ‘mainstream’ of political and economic life.”⁶⁰ Such a view, however, contains an implicit assumption that we no longer believe: that privileged individuals have control over outcomes—have resources by which to create the kind of world in which they wish to live—in ways that those without access to economic or political resources do not. Those who make this argument are suggesting that world creating is an act enjoyed only by those who reside in favorable material conditions and who have access to abundant financial and other resources.

To the contrary, our revised definition of feminism opens up possibilities for creating new worlds for everyone, regardless of material resources, because interpretation is what creates possibilities. All individuals have the capacity to create new worlds because this creative act occurs through interpretation. The fact that individuals are able to create one interpretation of a particular material condition "is evidence that they can create another."⁶¹ We all have known people with access to great economic wealth who are miserable and unhappy; if they could create happy and desirable worlds for themselves simply through their purchasing power and other resources, they undoubtedly would have done so. Likewise, we can point to examples of people who appear to be lacking in economic resources or who even face conditions of great deprivation—such as confinement to prison—who create and live in worlds of their own choosing because of how they interpret conditions. Interpretation, then, is the key to possibilities in the world, not material resources *per se*.

Fitting Response

The rhetorical strategies available for our use also expanded as we revised our definition of feminism. We no longer choose to appeal to the system to provide for us or to be responsible for creating structures that are not oppressive. We are the ones in charge of interpretation, so the responsibility for creation is ours. We also chose to abandon the strategy of resistance because to resist is to give our attention and energy to an interpretation and thus a reality that does not serve us. When we oppose something and focus our attention on it, we continue to manifest it as reality, as Johnson notes: When "we identify ourselves in *opposition* to something we become its unwitting accomplices. By bestowing the energy of our belief upon it, by acquiescing to it, we reinforce it as reality. The very difficult truth is that **WHAT WE RESIST PERSISTS**."⁶²

A fitting response that replaces petition and resistance is to deliberately choose what we want for our world instead of resisting what we do not want, moving toward rather than away from something. We focus on or pay attention to those things we choose for our world, and we ignore what we do not like. An analogy that works for us to explain this focus is browsing in a bookstore. We choose to look at and perhaps buy the books that interest us, but we do not ask the manager of the bookstore to remove the books we do not like. We allow them to stay on the shelves so that those who want to read them can do so. The same holds true for our rhetorical strategies. We choose to communicate about and focus on what

we want instead of demanding that the things we do not want in our world be banished or removed. We do not see our abandonment of resistance and adoption of creation as a stance of passivity befitting the meek, then, but as a deliberate and powerful action that creates something different in the world.

The array of rhetorical options expands when a focus on changing the self becomes part of or even a primary tool in the feminist rhetorical toolbox. What such strategies do is expand the interpretive capacity of the rhetor, which, in turn, expands the opportunities for action available. To illustrate how these strategies might look, we provide three brief examples of strategies that expand interpretive options—reframing, resourcement, and brainstorming.

Reframing simply means choosing different labels for what we are seeing. We have a choice about how we label and view conditions in the world, which means that what we see in the world can be changed with a shift in our terministic choices.⁶³ What we once labeled a *problem* we can see as an *opportunity*, or what we once saw as a *violation* we can see simply as a circumstance that need not impact our lives in significant ways. In such cases, reframing suggests rhetorical responses that were not available to us before. We acknowledge that some critics will claim we are "denying reality" in our use of this rhetorical strategy. But whenever we label a situation, that label focuses our attention on some aspects of the world and not others; no term or label can encapsulate everything about the world. We are always, then, denying some potential realities through our communicative choices in the very act of choosing words to speak or write. When we focus on one subject, of course, we then have choices about what to focus on about that particular topic. When we focus on the sexual abuse a woman experienced as a child, for example, we are denying the reality of the achievements she has accomplished since then, the ways in which she has developed good relationships with others, her resilience, and her ability to manage her life effectively. There is nothing inherently superior about choosing labels that require that we focus on something negative about a phenomenon or person rather than on something positive.

A second interpretive strategy that we are enjoying experimenting with these days is resourcement. We have found this to be a particularly good strategy for interacting with others who are intent on creating a different kind of world from the one we have in mind. The term *resourcement* was coined by Gearhart and means making a choice to draw energy from a different source.⁶⁴ In a communication situation, this means that we can

choose not to interact within the frame in which an interaction is unfolding and can use a source other than the original frame to develop our response.

The first step of resourcement is disengagement, or stepping away from the original frame. In this step, we recognize that if the interaction continues within the presenting framework, nothing will be gained, the relationship and future interactions may be jeopardized, and we will be creating a world we do not want. Disengagement can be as simple as walking away from a conflict or deleting a provocative e-mail message. The second step is formulating a response within a new frame or the creative development of a response to the message being offered. Often, this involves engaging in communication that does not directly argue against or even address the message being offered. It presents a response addressed to a different exigence from the one implicit in the original message.⁶⁵

An example of resourcement can be seen in the film *The Long Walk Home*, a fictionalized account of the bus boycott by African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, during the civil rights movement. In one scene, a group of white women and their black maids are surrounded by the white women's husbands, who are angry because their wives have begun to drive the black women back and forth from their homes. They threaten the women with physical violence and, in response, the women join hands and begin to sing a gospel song. The potential violence simply dissipates as a result.

A third rhetorical strategy that is rooted in interpretation is brainstorming, by which we mean formal techniques designed to facilitate creative and original thinking.⁶⁶ Among the techniques that can prompt the discovery of more options is development of a quota, whereby we set a goal of a certain number of options before we let ourselves stop thinking about how to respond to an issue. Let us assume someone is working at Wal-Mart, and she does not work the number of hours required to receive health benefits. A conventional feminist response might be to work to convince the management of Wal-Mart to change its policy and to provide health insurance for all workers. By using a quota system, however, we could continue thinking until we came up with perhaps twenty possible ways to interpret the situation and to achieve the goal of health benefits, including options such as these: Our Wal-Mart employee could form a council of other employees to generate ideas for securing health care; she could use the hours she does not work to go to school (perhaps even taking online classes) to develop the credentials for a new job that does provide

health insurance; she could apply for other jobs that provide health benefits; she could get a second job to pay for her own health insurance; she could band together with employees of other big-box stores to secure health insurance for the group unconnected to their employers; and she could lower her living expenses by exchanging child care, children's clothing, and the like with others so she can pay for health insurance.

With a change in the rhetorical strategies that provide a fitting response to the rhetorical situation come different standards for judging the effectiveness of strategies. The standard is no longer whether we have persuaded or changed others through our communication so that they will work on our behalf. If effectiveness means getting others to change the structural conditions that we see as blocking or diminishing our influence in the world so they align with our own desires or preferences, we cannot ever hope to be effective. A strategy focused on changing the self and our interpretation, however, is under our control. No one can interfere with that choice or interrupt its effectiveness because its location is internal.

We propose two primary criteria for judging the effectiveness of interpretation-based rhetorical strategies. The first is to ask the question: "Am I creating the world in which I want to be living?" Another way to think about this criterion is: "Does the communication in which I am engaged move me closer to the kind of world in which I want to live?" If the answer to these questions is "no," we try to stop what we are doing and do something else—something that does have the capacity to create the world we desire.

A second criterion for judging our rhetorical strategies is creativity: "Have I been sufficiently creative in generating options for thought and action?" Here we ask ourselves whether we have been as innovative as we can be at producing possible options. We want to be sure the options we conceptualize allow us to maneuver around or transform our perceived obstacles so that we can achieve our desired world. This criterion encourages us to push beyond what we normally would focus on and to come up with options that are less obvious, more creative, and often more effective.

We acknowledge that rhetorical strategies directed at self-change, such as the ones we have just outlined, are often seen to be a kind of "therapeutic feminism"—"a self-improvement technique rather than a political movement." Changing the way women think and talk about the world, critics argue, is not sufficient for changing it.⁶⁷ Most criticisms of self-change suggest that "[t]herapy and recovery are inherently adjustment oriented; they aim to help people who feel alienated, unhappy, or sick . . .

to cope with life in contemporary society."⁶⁸ Cloud elaborates, suggesting that the "most important rhetorical feature of the therapeutic is its tendency to encourage citizens to perceive political issues, conflicts, and inequities as personal failures subject to personal amelioration. Therapy offers consolation rather than compensation, individual adaptation rather than social change, and an experience of politics that is impoverished in its isolation from structural critique and collective action."⁶⁹

The suggestion that individual, personal approaches are ineffective and that collective, political action is the only kind of change effort that can work represents an unnecessary restricting of rhetorical options. There is considerable room for and evidence of many ways to create change, one of which is to take seriously the idea that "the personal is political"—one of the defining slogans of Second Wave feminism. There is considerable literature that posits the personal as the starting point for change that is capable of affecting the broader world. Morgan, for example, notes that change "begins always with one woman, absolutely unique among living beings, with only her own one life to live—and an awareness of that."⁷⁰ Anzaldúa agrees, suggesting that "by changing ourselves, we change the world."⁷¹ For her, self-change is a process of "going deep into the self and expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society."⁷² Gearhart concurs: "I'm assuming that *cleaning up my own act is the best contribution I can make to any cause.*"⁷³ When we change ourselves, we change the places in which we live and work, and those changes impact larger social systems.

We also want to note that a focus on individually oriented strategies rather than on the effort to address external structures is where feminism started; this is not a new idea. One of the primary roots of feminism in the United States was individualism, defined as the "systematic theory of politics, society, economics, and epistemology that emerged following the Renaissance . . . according to which, rights, including political sovereignty, are grounded in the individual and can only be infringed upon by the state in extraordinary circumstances."⁷⁴ Individualism has been a defining characteristic of the mainstream feminist movement as it has evolved through the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Ayn Rand and the movements of abolitionism, the Quaker tradition, transcendentalism, and free love.⁷⁵

Elshtain argues on behalf of individualism rather than focusing on public structural change. She suggests that "holding up the public world as the only sphere within which individuals made real choices, exercised

authentic power or had efficacious control"⁷⁶ is limiting and even dangerous: "For feminists to discover in the state the new 'Mr. Right,' and to wed themselves thereby, for better or for worse, to a public identity inseparable from the exigencies of state power and policy would be a mistake."⁷⁷ She warns that "'feminists should approach the modern bureaucratic state from a standpoint of skepticism'"⁷⁸ because a focus on political structure means women's goals are sublimated to those of the state, and women become beholden to the state for the preservation of their rights in what Elshtain calls "a variety of dependency relationships."⁷⁹ The legislation of abortion rights in *Roe v. Wade* is perhaps the most obvious example. On the surface, this ruling was a major victory for women, but because it made abortion explicitly a matter of the state, women now must keep petitioning the state for the continuation of abortion rights. In this case, women did not consider how dependent they would become on the state as a result of *Roe v. Wade* or how dangerous it was to their ultimate goal of securing access to safe abortions. We are arguing that one of feminism's key sources is individualist activities and not the expectation that the law, government, and corporations have the responsibility to "*do something* for women."⁸⁰

Just as there is a feminist tradition of individualism, there is a considerable tradition within the communication discipline of rhetorical strategies directed at changing one's own interpretation of a situation. Once we had reconceptualized feminist rhetorical strategies in our new model of the rhetorical situation, we discovered that we had made our way home to another commonly accepted truism in the communication discipline—the centrality of the self in creating change. In our field, well-established theories such as role playing, modeling, desensitization, and behavior modification are seen as social learning theories of persuasion, all of which have at their core internal cognitive processes under the control of the individual.⁸¹ In each of these processes, individuals decide to make a change and deliberately use their thinking processes to achieve the desired results—results that impact the systems of which they are a part.

We also want to be clear that a focus on individual interpretation and self-change as a primary rhetorical strategy does not mean that feminists should not work together or engage in collective activity. Women's collective activities create spaces where women can experience women's world as supportive, collaborative, intimate, and powerful, and such activities put women's world into action. As Taylor suggests, once "individuals set goals, they often find that supporting each other and taking joint action is necessary to achieve their goals."⁸² She elaborates: "A group

formed by individual choices nourishes the individual—in fact, human nature is such that many life-serving goals can only be reached by people willing to act in concert. So the accusation that individualism means rampant and fragmented egoism is a misunderstanding of what individualism entails. Individuals need chosen groups of all sorts, and the existence of a multiplicity of such groups almost necessarily works to increase choices.”⁸³

Repowered Feminism

After developing our new definition of feminism and reconceptualizing the rhetorical situation in line with it, we searched through various feminist perspectives and definitions in an effort to see if a feminist tradition exists to which we belonged. Of the existing definitions of *feminism* we explored, power feminism resonated the most—it is also sometimes called *do-it-yourself feminism*, *girl power* or *grrrl power*, *ifeminism*, *new feminism*, *entitlement feminism*, *free market feminism*, *commodity feminism*, or *feminism for the few*.⁸⁴ We know that power feminism is often considered to be a form of anti- or faux feminism, but when we looked at it from the perspective of our revised definition of feminism and our new conception of the rhetorical situation, we discovered considerable alignment between it and our perspective.⁸⁵

The most complete discussion of power feminism is provided by Naomi Wolf in *Fire with Fire*.⁸⁶ According to Wolf, a power feminist

- chooses an identity rooted in responsible power rather than victimage;
- knows that a woman's choices affect many people around her and can change the world;
- seeks power and uses it responsibly;
- knows that poverty is not glamorous and wants women to acquire money, both for their own dreams, independence, and security and for social change;
- asks a woman to give to herself and seek what she needs, so she can give to others freely, without resentment;
- sees that neither women nor men have a monopoly on character flaws and does not attack men as a gender;
- sees disproportionate male power and the social valuation of maleness over femaleness as being wrong;
- has a psychology of abundance and wants all women to get more.⁸⁷

We agree with the ends of power feminism—the meeting of women's needs of all kinds—but find its means for attaining those ends to be too limited. Power feminism focuses on material conditions and how women can use money and other physical resources to create change—or, in the language of our revised definition, to create the kind of world desired. But we believe this approach neglects the most powerful resource of all—interpretation. From our perspective, the power of symbolic interpretation is feminism's most powerful tool because it means that any feminist, no matter what her current condition, has the capacity to achieve the world she desires.

Because of our disagreement with the means power feminism offers, we want to modify the label and to name our current brand of feminism *repowered feminism*. Feminism as we are currently conceptualizing it is offering feminists a revitalized power, a powered-up or revved-up feminism, providing a powerful means of acting to a movement that we believe had lost some of its vigor and vitality. Repowered feminism recognizes and applauds the principles of power feminism in its focus on choice, the eschewal of victimhood, and the celebration of successes. But the feminism we are proposing is given an extra boost because it no longer gives power to current conditions. Power resides in interpretation of current conditions, and this is the power that, because it cannot be limited, truly can transform the world.

Concluding Thoughts

A primary objective for us in this essay has been to expand what counts as feminism, “making room for individual variations and individual points of view.”⁸⁸ As we engage in discussions about the nature of feminism, our commitment is to develop “appreciative approaches to difference. Doing so will enable us to participate in the construction of a more inclusive feminism, a feminism capable of responding to the needs of a multiplicity of women.”⁸⁹ We hope, then, that our description of the journey that has brought us to what was for us an unexpected place will help to legitimate a broader range of feminist positions and reinforce the idea that no feminist position is more feminist than any other. We concur with the perspective of McCaskill and Phillips, who assert that “the lives of power feminists and victim feminists and nonfeminists—and those of women and womanists who define themselves altogether differently—are equally important.”⁹⁰ Morgan, using a metaphor from quantum physics, elo-

quently expresses the point we seek to make here: "You'll find your own strategies, invent your own solutions. Which is as it should be. Does one self-consistent fragment tell another what to do? Too wise for that, they only dance alongside each other in a vision emerging as they share it."⁹¹

Our sincere desire is that the feminist evolution we have outlined here will be taken for what we intend it to be: A journey we have made public in order to foster critical and creative discussions about feminism. We acknowledge that what we have written here may seem blasphemous to some of our colleagues in that we are questioning some well-established feminist tenets and practices. We want to make clear that our intent is not to diminish the role of these colleagues in our lives or to denigrate their beliefs about and practices of feminism. Our feminist friends and colleagues have been vital, challenging, and, most important, fun co-travelers with us on the journey. We hope that engagement with our ideas will help them understand where we are now in our journey and will serve as an invitation to think creatively with us about future feminist directions. Above all, we hope that our evolution will be appreciated for our questioning of the received wisdom—even feminist wisdom—and for offering another version of the rhetorical situation—precisely what feminism is about and always has encouraged us to do.

Notes

- ¹Rosamund Else-Mitchell and Naomi Flutter, "Introduction," in *Talking Up: Young Women's Take on Feminism*, ed. Rosamund Else-Mitchell and Naomi Flutter (North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex, 1998), xvii.
- ²Jodi Dean, "Coming Out as an Alien: Feminists, UFOs, and the 'Oprah Effect,'" in *"Bad Girls"/"Good Girls": Women, Sex, & Power in the Nineties*, ed. Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 103.
- ³Lloyd F. Bitzer, "Functional Communication: A Situational Perspective," in *Rhetoric in Transition: Studies in the Nature and Uses of Rhetoric*, ed. Eugene E. White (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 26.
- ⁴Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 6.
- ⁵Bitzer, "Functional Communication," 28.
- ⁶Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 8.
- ⁷Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 8.
- ⁸Carroll Arnold, *Criticism of Oral Rhetoric* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1974), 28-29.
- ⁹Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 10.
- ¹⁰Bitzer, "Functional Communication," 36.
- ¹¹Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963).
- ¹²bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End, 1984), 18.
- ¹³bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), xii.

¹⁴bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 200, 202; bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End, 1989), 19.

¹⁵hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 24.

¹⁶*Ibid.*; hooks, *Talking Back*, 25.

¹⁷Dana L. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 159.

¹⁸Omar Swartz, *In Defense of Partisan Criticism: Communication Studies, Law, & Social Analysis* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 108.

¹⁹Justus Causus, "Modern Feminism: A Guide to the Ideology and the Literature," <http://www.cyad.com/cgi-bin/pinc/apr97/Justus.html> (accessed February 5, 2007).

²⁰Natasha Walter, *The New Feminism* (London: Little, Brown/Virago, 1998), 75. Although we only detail here what we asked of our feminist sisters, in fact, we asked everyone around us to change in similar ways: our families, friends, colleagues, and students.

²¹Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, "Feminism for Sale," *This Magazine: Because Everthing [sic] is Political* (May-June 2005), <http://www.thismagazine.ca/issues/2005/05/feminism.php> (accessed February 5, 2007).

²²Joan W. Scott, "Feminism's History," *Journal of Women's History* 16 (2004): 16.

²³Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (New York: Penguin, 1975), 511-12.

²⁴Walter, *The New Feminism*, 50.

²⁵Barbara Strickland, "Sisterhood is Still Powerful: Flame Throwers," review of *Fire with Fire*, by Naomi Wolf, <http://www.austinchronicle.com> (accessed February 5, 2007).

²⁶"We Had Abortions," *Ms.*, Fall 2006, 38-41.

²⁷Karen A. Foss, Sonja K. Foss, and Cindy L. Griffin, *Feminist Rhetorical Theories* (1999; Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2006).

²⁸See, for example, Sally Miller Gearhart, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979): 195-201; and Sally Miller Gearhart, "Notes from a Recovering Activist," *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* 21 (1995): 8-11.

²⁹See, for example, Sonia Johnson, *Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation* (Freedom, CA: Crossing, 1987); and Sonia Johnson, *Wildfire: Igniting the She/Revolution* (Estancia, NM: Wildfire, 1989).

³⁰See, for example, Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987); and Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990).

³¹See, for example, Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* (1982; reprinted Boston: Beacon, 1988); and Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

³²Johnson, *Wildfire*, 179; Gearhart, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," 197.

³³Robin Morgan, for example, uses the metaphor of quantum physics to suggest how to realize feminist freedom. See Robin Morgan, *The Anatomy of Freedom: Feminism in Four Dimensions*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994).

³⁴Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 206.

³⁵Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975; rpt. Boston: Shambhala, 2000).

³⁶Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 207.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Fred Alan Wolf, *Taking the Quantum Leap: The New Physics for Non-Scientists* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 184.

³⁹Amit Goswami, with Richard E. Reed and Maggie Goswami, *The Self-Aware Universe: How Consciousness Creates the Material World* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1993), 108.

⁴⁰Deepak Chopra, *The Book of Secrets* (New York: Harmony, 2004), 232.

⁴¹bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* (Boston: South End, 1993), 1-2.

⁴²Scott, "Feminism's History," 26.

⁴³Ibid., 23; Michaela D. E. Meyer, "Women Speak(ing): Forty Years of Feminist Contributions to Rhetoric and an Agenda for Feminist Rhetorical Studies," *Communication Quarterly* 55 (2007): 1-17, also recognizes critique and analysis as crucial to feminism.

⁴⁴Sonja K. Foss, William J. C. Waters, and Bernard J. Armada, "Toward a Theory of Agentic Orientation: Rhetoric and Agency in *Run Lola Run*," *Communication Theory* 17 (2007): 223.

⁴⁵Margaret Urban Walker, "Picking Up Pieces: Lives, Stories, and Integrity," in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Tietjens Meyers (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 76.

⁴⁶Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 177.

⁴⁷Sari Nusseibeh, interview by Jacki Lyden, "Finding Peace in the Middle East, and Within," National Public Radio, June 6, 2007, <http://www.npr.org> (accessed June 6, 2007).

⁴⁸Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 11.

⁴⁹Bitzer later modified his view somewhat by saying that he did "not deny the influence of the individual's creativity in the apprehension of situations." See Bitzer, "Functional Communication," 25.

⁵⁰See, for example, Arthur B. Miller, "Rhetorical Exigence," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 5 (1972): 112.

⁵¹Richard E. Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6 (1973): 154.

⁵²David M. Hunsaker and Craig R. Smith, "The Nature of Issues: A Constructive Approach to Situational Rhetoric," *Western Speech Communication* 40 (1976): 145.

⁵³Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," 159.

⁵⁴See, for example, Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, & Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1956).

⁵⁵Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1966).

⁵⁶The Crooked Timbers Project is a key source of information and organizing around social construction; its Web site is: www.crookedtimbersproject.org. The Summer Institute, which is discussed on the site, was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, August 1-4, 2006. For a summary of the conference, see Shawn Spano, Karen A. Foss, and Kris Kirschbaum, "Creating Opportunities for Social Construction: The Albuquerque NCA Summer Institute," in *Socially Constructing Communication: Catching Ourselves in the Act. The 2006 NCA Summer Institute*, ed. Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz and Gloria J. Galanes (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, forthcoming).

⁵⁷Bitzer, "Functional Communication," 23.

⁵⁸Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 293-304.

⁵⁹Elizabeth Schulte, "Women's Liberation and the Fight for Socialism," review of *Women and Socialism: Essays on Women's Liberation*, by Sharon Smith, *Socialist Worker Online*, May 20, 2005, <http://www.socialistworker.org> (accessed February 5, 2007).

⁶⁰bell hooks, "Dissident Heat: *Fire with Fire*," in "*Bad Girls*"/"*Good Girls*": *Women, Sex, & Power in the Nineties*, ed. Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 63.

⁶¹Foss, Waters, and Armada, "Toward a Theory of Agentic Orientation," 225.

⁶²Johnson, *Going Out of Our Minds*, 26-27.

⁶³Reframing also is discussed in Paul Watzlawick, John H. Weakland, and Richard Fisch, *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 92-109.

⁶⁴Sally Miller Gearhart, "Womanpower: Energy Re-Sourcement," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power within the Feminist Movement*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 95.

⁶⁵Sonja K. Foss and Karen A. Foss, *Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2003), 44-48.

⁶⁶See, for example, Edward de Bono, *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1970).

⁶⁷See, for example, Heath and Potter, "Feminism for Sale."

⁶⁸Jillian Sandell, "Adjusting to Oppression: The Rise of the Therapeutic Feminism in the United States," in "*Bad Girls*"/"*Good Girls*": *Women, Sex, & Power in the Nineties*, ed. Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 23.

⁶⁹Dana L. Cloud, *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics: Rhetorics of Therapy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 3.

⁷⁰Morgan, *The Anatomy of Freedom*, 31.

⁷¹Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Prieta," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, 2nd ed. (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color, 1983), 208.

⁷²Anzaldúa, "La Prieta," 208.

⁷³Gearhart, "Notes from a Recovering Activist," 8.

⁷⁴Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 7.

⁷⁵Wendy McElroy, "Anarchism and Feminism: Scoring Feminist Totalitarianism," <http://www.ifeminists.com> (accessed February 5, 2007).

⁷⁶Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Antigone's Daughters," *Democracy* 2 (1982): 49.

⁷⁷Ibid., 46.

⁷⁸Ibid., 46.

⁷⁹Ibid., 46.

⁸⁰Joan Kennedy Taylor, *What to Do When You Don't Want to Call the Cops: A Non-Adversarial Approach to Sexual Harassment* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 199. See also Elshtain, "Antigone's Daughters."

⁸¹Mary John Smith, *Persuasion and Human Action: A Review and Critique of Social Influence Theories* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982), 199-207.

⁸²Joan Kennedy Taylor, *Reclaiming the Mainstream: Individualist Feminism Re-discovered* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1992), 15.

⁸³Ibid., 12.

⁸⁴Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 255.

⁸⁵Meyer also recognizes the contributions of power feminism to the development of feminist theory in "Women Speak(ing)," 1-17.

⁸⁶Naomi Wolf, *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* (London: Chatuo & Windus, 1993).

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 149-51.

⁸⁸Taylor, *Reclaiming the Mainstream*, 139.

⁸⁹Dean, "Coming Out as an Alien," 104.

⁹⁰Barbara McCaskill and Layli Phillips, "We Are All 'Good Woman!': A Womanist Critique of the Current Feminist Conflict," in "*Bad Girls*"/"*Good Girls*": *Women, Sex, & Power in the Nineties*, ed. Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 112.

⁹¹Morgan, *Anatomy of Freedom*, 329.