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Incorporating the Feminist Perspective in Communication Scholarship: A Research Commentary*

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"'I am a woman'; on this truth must be based all further discussion." These words by Simone de Beauvoir, in the opening pages of *The Second Sex*, suggest the essence of the feminist perspective in research (1952).[1] The starting point of the feminist perspective is that there is no more fundamental issue to a culture than gender; the construction of gender on the basis of biological sex has implications for all of human experience.

Over the past several years, the potential of and need for the application of the feminist perspective in research has been acknowledged in the communication discipline. Convention programs have featured papers about the feminist perspective, conferences have been held to discuss its implications for research, and essays have called for its adoption.[2] Readers of

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[1] While we are referring to the feminist perspective in the singular, we see it as a broad framework that incorporates a variety of feminist approaches. We prefer the label, "the feminist perspective," however, because we believe essential features are shared by the diverse frameworks that fall within the feminist perspective.

[2] Among the programs presented on the feminist perspective in research at recent conventions have been: "Feminist Studies: Issues in Theory and Practice," program presented at the International Communication Association conference, Montreal, Canada, May, 1987; "Contemporary Radical Feminist Theory: The Challenge of Finding New Rhetorical Tools," program presented at the Speech Communication Association convention, Chicago, Illinois, November, 1986; and "Gender and Communication Research: Four Perspectives," program

these essays or participants at these conferences and conventions might well believe that the feminist perspective is firmly established and clearly visible in the discipline of communication and that numerous models for the use of this perspective in research are available for emulation. On the contrary, the feminist perspective appears to be "muted" in communication research, just as women's voices are muted in our culture in general (Kramarae, 1981; Spender, 1980). Despite a great deal of talk and writing about the potential for the feminist perspective in research, that potential remains largely unrealized in the journals of our field.[3]

Our intent in this essay is to suggest how the feminist perspective has been and can be incorporated into the research that is published in communication journals. We will define the feminist perspective and describe the dilemma of publishing feminist research. Then, we will report the results of a survey of published research in six communication journals to discover how widely and in what form the feminist perspective appears in communication studies. Our goal is to promote and facilitate the increased use and acceptance of the feminist perspective in research. Until feminist research is recognized as a unique and legitimate perspective by traditional scholars, it will not become part of the conversation about research and theory in communication, and women's perceptions and experiences will remain apart from the substance of our discipline.

DEFINITION: THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE IN RESEARCH

Research paradigms provide frameworks for constructing knowledge and certify the acceptability of particular constructions. They are distinguished from each other by several metatheoretical questions and their answers, including what is the basic category of analysis, what are appropriate data for analysis, what are the means for analysis, and what are the ends or goals of analysis. The feminist perspective differs from the current dominant research paradigm in each of these areas, offering a different framework for constructing knowledge and challenging the acceptability of current constructions of knowledge.

presented at the Western Speech Communication Association convention, Fresno, California, February, 1985. The first conference on Gender and Communication Research was held at the Pennsylvania State University in April, 1984. For a report on the conference and position papers from it, see *Women's Studies in Communication* 7 (Fall 1984). This conference also was held in 1985 and 1986. The Organization for the Study of Communication, Language and Gender also has held annual conferences since 1978. For one example of the many calls for research from the feminist perspective, see Karen A. Foss and Sonja K. Foss (1983).

[3] We have chosen journals as our focus here because we believe the scholarship published in journals generally represents the significant work in a discipline. In the academic community, what is published in journals determines the agenda and debates within a discipline and essentially constitutes "knowledge" in a discipline. While books clearly make substantial contributions to a discipline, they cannot be published as quickly or as frequently as journals. If the book is a textbook, there is the additional need to adapt to a student audience, a process that often demands simplification or at least generalization about ideas, a process unnecessary in journal essays.

Basic to the feminist perspective is the notion that gender is a critical component of all dimensions of culture. This assumption is translated into efforts to understand gender as a basic category of analysis (Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983). When gender is seen as a category of analysis, it is not simply one of many variables that a researcher studies; instead, it is the major element studied. Gender is the focus because it is understood to be basic to all aspects of human experience; it functions as a lens through which all other perceptions pass. Further, gender is seen not as a biological given but as a social construction. The construction of gender so that women's experiences are subordinated and the implications of this subordination for both women and men constitute the focus of feminist inquiry.

The feminist perspective calls into question the very nature of the existing gender system and the nonfeminist research paradigm, in which traditional gender roles are taken for granted and are seen as having little impact on experience or on the research process. Consequently, the primary goal of the feminist perspective is the development of theory that unsettles or challenges common assumptions of the culture, raises fundamental questions about social life, and fosters reconsideration of what has been taken for granted (Gergen, 1982). The feminist perspective, then, constitutes a deliberate break with past research frameworks that did not see gender as central and requires that the scholar deliberately "forget" the way things are in previous frameworks (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Feminist scholars seek to reconceptualize the construct of gender by building on assumptions different from those of research frameworks biased toward men.

One way in which the feminist perspective challenges the existing research framework is by considering women's perceptions, meanings, and experiences as appropriate and important data for analysis. Rather than generalizing from men to create an explanation for the experience of both men and women, feminist inquiry incorporates the values and qualities that characterize women's experiences. Interdependence, emotionality, a sense of self-questioning or vulnerability, fusion of the private and public, wholeness, egalitarian use of power, focus on process rather than product, multiplicity, and paradox are among the qualities that have been suggested as common to women's experiences (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Kimball, 1981; Lippard, 1976; Schaef, 1981). Whether such qualities are seen as deriving from women's experiences

of discrimination and isolation, the impact of women's bodies on their perceptions, the greater development of the right hemisphere in women, or some other source, feminist researchers acknowledge that women's experiences are different from men's (Ferguson, 1984; Kimball, 1981; Lippard, 1976; Shedletsky, 1982). In the development of constructs and theories within the feminist perspective, these qualities of women's experiences are taken into account, considered seriously, and valued.

Another way in which the feminist perspective constitutes a challenge to the existing research framework is in its formulation of new rules for how knowledge is constructed. Adoption of the feminist perspective does not mean simply grafting women's concerns onto the constructions and theories of men's knowledge that are already in place. Under such a plan, as Spender points out, women's "meanings, even if initially *positive*, would soon be pejorated and become negative" simply because they do not conform to the norm, which is defined as male (Spender, 1980, p. 65).

To integrate gender concerns into conceptions of knowledge, the way knowledge is constructed must be reconceptualized. Feminist scholars seek to change the rules for the construction of knowledge so they reflect women's experiences and incorporate women's values. When qualities of women's experience such as self-questioning and multiplicity are used to create rules for the construction of knowledge, very different kinds of knowledge result. Roberts (1976, p. 46) provides examples of such different knowledge: "But what if the masculist world view, which has depended on a logic of time lines, is also erroneous? What if the most fundamental error is the search for monocausation? What if the world is really a field of interconnecting events, arranged in patterns of multiple meaning? What if the search for simplistic 'orderliness' is, itself, the common problem . . .?"

Finally, the feminist perspective has a practical, activist dimension as well as an academic one. Adoption of a feminist perspective in research is inherently radical not only because it goes "to the root" of the basic constructs of masculinity and femininity but also because it asks that these fundamental concepts be changed (Campbell, 1973). Thus, the ultimate consequence of research informed by a feminist perspective is social change. In contrast to the current dominant research paradigm, which seeks to predict human behavior, the feminist perspective seeks to understand human behavior and through that understanding, to change social life. While scholars in many research traditions use their findings for pragmatic ends, feminist scholars focus on change related to gender. Feminist scholars see how gender has been constructed to denigrate women and seek to change such constructions. Feminist research, then, is done not just about women but for women.

THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE AND NEW-PARADIGM SCHOLARSHIP

The effort to put the feminist perspective into practice is governed by several methodological principles that the feminist perspective shares with "new-paradigm" scholarship. Taking this label from Kuhn's (1970) work on how paradigm shifts occur in the scientific community, scholars who identify with the new paradigm exhibit a collective sense of dissatisfaction with the dominant research paradigm; many of them incorporate into their approaches to inquiry assumptions and methods consistent with the qualities of women's experiences that are fundamental to the feminist perspective.[4]

Specifically, new-paradigm scholars challenge the application of the beliefs and practices of science to human beings and human behavior. Harré and Secord (1973) characterize the old paradigm as grounded in mechanistic, causal, and logical positivist assumptions, resulting in a conception of the human being as "a complicated mechanism whose behavior can be fully explained, in principle, by a combination of the effects of external stimuli and prevailing organismic states. People are viewed as objects which are passively affected by events in their environment" (p. 30). Bochner (1985), writing about the old paradigm in interpersonal communication, describes the paradigm as characterized by efforts to represent reality, to discover covering laws that explain stable relationships among observables, and to represent scientific progress as linear and cumulative.

The feminist perspective and the new paradigm share five fundamental assumptions that distinguish them from the old paradigm. They emphasize wholes rather than parts, process rather than structure, knowledge as a process of interconnection rather than hierarchy, approximate descriptions rather than absolute truth, and cooperation rather than competition

[4] The new paradigm is not an easily identifiable and cohesive group of scholars who share a singular purpose and methodology. In fact, the movement is multidisciplinary and manifest in a variety of formats and vocabularies. Clifford Geertz (1972) in anthropology, Rom Harré (1984) and Kenneth Gergen (1982) in psychology, Richard Rorty (1979) in philosophy, and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) in sociology are identified with various aspects of new-paradigm thinking in the social sciences. Within the discipline of communication, new-paradigm thought assumes equally diverse forms, ranging from Pearce and Cronen's (1980; also Pearce & Foss, 1987) coordinated management of meaning to Brockriede's (1985) perspectivism and Bochner's (1985) pragmatism. Critical theory is considered by some to be a branch of new-paradigm inquiry as well; critical theorists assume that reflection is a legitimate basis for knowledge and direct their efforts toward understanding and proposing alternatives to underlying value systems rather than uncovering objective knowledge. For an overview of critical theory, see David Held (1980). The link between feminist and new-paradigm scholarship is suggested by Charlene Spretnak (1986).

(Capra, 1986). In combination, these factors result in the use of certain methodological practices in research. In our elaboration of these characteristics below, we do not mean to suggest that a feminist perspective and the new paradigm are identical. While the two perspectives share the five methodological assumptions, the ends of research are different: feminism is distinguished by its focus on the deconstruction of gender.

Methodological Assumptions

Wholeness. Within the traditional research paradigm, researchers seek to understand the whole by breaking it into parts, analyzing those parts, and then reconstructing the whole. Researchers within a feminist perspective or within the new paradigm, however, assert that the properties of parts only can be understood in relation to the dynamics of the whole and that ultimately, there are no parts—only patterns in an inseparable web of relationships. Attention to wholeness, for example, would encourage a researcher seeking to understand an organization to study the communication not only of the managers and key employees but of all organizational members.

Process. A search for fundamental structures, which then give rise to certain processes, characterizes the conceptualization of knowledge in the old paradigm. But structure is considered inseparable from process by feminist and new-paradigm researchers; structure is not seen as preceding process but as intricately tied to it in a variety of ways. Thus, the process by which something comes to be is seen as more important than the static elements of its structure. A focus on process would suggest, then, that researchers not study a phenomenon such as women's role in organizations alone but also examine the process by which those roles are constructed.

Interconnectedness of knowledge. In the old paradigm, knowledge is hierarchical; once fundamental laws, principles, and structures are uncovered, scholars can construct the layers of information that arise from them, ultimately arriving at an accurate and complete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The feminist perspective and new-paradigm scholarship, in contrast, operate from a "network" metaphor to suggest that knowledge is a process of lateral interconnection that is not necessarily uncovered by a linear, systematic progression. Scholars who pursue a line of research such as communication apprehension, which is based on a particular instrument, generally build knowledge hierarchically. Each new study is based on and incorporates the findings of the previous studies in which the selected instrument for measuring apprehension was used. A scholar who approaches the same topic laterally, however, might deliberately generate alternative conceptions of communication apprehension and choose to enter the study of communication apprehension from a new starting point. For example, a scholar might ask a group of self-defined communication apprehensives to define communication apprehension themselves and use their definitions to construct a new approach to the study of communication anxiety.

Approximation. The certainty of scientific knowledge—Descartes' legacy to the West—is replaced in feminist thinking by the understanding that knowledge, like everything else, is a process of construction. Feminist scholars posit that scientific descriptions do not exist independently of the process of knowing. Thus, all knowledge is limited, approximate, and relative. Rather than asserting that they "know" the nature of a phenomenon such as the qualities that constitute leadership, feminist scholars would suggest they have provided one perspective on or a glimpse into one dimension of leadership.

Concomitant with a view of knowledge as approximate is acknowledgment of the role of the source in the process of knowledge construction. Rather than attempting to divorce knowledge from the source of knowing, the researcher is seen as central to and necessarily involved in the process. As feminist scholar Eisenstein (1983) explains: "But I do not subscribe to the belief that knowledge necessarily stems from detachment and measurement, carried out from some fictive Archimedean point 'outside' of the reality under consideration. Rather, I side with those who believe that understanding springs from empathy, involvement, and commitment" (p. xx).

Cooperation. An implicit characteristic of the old paradigm is its dominating approach to knowledge, subjects, and the world in general. In much social scientific research, the researcher stands apart from the subjects and data in order to control them. Feminist and new-paradigm thinkers believe, in contrast, that in order for the world to survive, we no longer have the prerogative to assert our superiority over the things and processes of the world. Thus, feminist scholarship is characterized by methods that rely on cooperation rather than competition—cooperation among researchers and cooperation between the researcher and the participants in a study.

To summarize, the feminist perspective is a research stance that begins with the assumption that the division of the world in terms of gender is significant. This assumption is the basis for challenging existing theoretical frameworks by incorporating as data women's experiences and developing rules for the construction of knowledge based on the qualities that characterize these experiences. While it is the only theoretical tradition that takes gender as a basic category of analysis, the feminist perspective shares with other new-paradigm forms of scholarship a number of principles that govern its methodology.

When applied to communication research, the feminist perspective involves the asking of questions about the construction of our gender system through communication and about how gender informs communication (Putnam, 1982; Rakow, 1986). In communication inquiry, a feminist scholar seeks to discover how to change the conception of gender that is constructed and maintained through communication. Changes are suggested in theories of communication that have been created through the lens of gender without an acknowledgment of the importance of that lens. In communication research, the key communication activities of women's experiences—their rituals, vocabularies, metaphors, and stories—are an important part of the data for study. How women use these activities to make sense of their experiences and how they contribute to the construction of particular notions of gender are central concerns in feminist scholarship in communication.

We hope that our explanation of how we understand the feminist perspective makes clear that it is not a perspective that can be adopted only by women. Male researchers do not have to have experienced womanhood in order to incorporate women's experiences, accord them positive value, and seek to construct knowledge by taking them into account. Anyone who attempts to integrate women's voices into research in order to question the construction of gender is adopting a feminist stance. Likewise, the feminist perspective is not a perspective held by all women engaged in processes of research. Simply because researchers are women does not mean they utilize this perspective. The rewards are great for working within the old paradigm, and women who are trained in the methods and standards of this male-biased framework may choose to create and understand knowledge within its confines. Nor are we suggesting that traditional scholarship be eliminated: it provides a useful perspective and can be used to answer particular kinds of research questions. We simply seek pluralism in research perspectives—a pluralism that would include a feminist perspective.

THE DILEMMA OF THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

To define the feminist perspective in research is much easier than to design and complete research projects that employ the perspective fully. Because the perspective looks to women's experience for data, research that is done from a feminist perspective often must move beyond the laboratory to gather those data. Because the perspective rejects many of the values and assumptions that frame the methods of the dominant research paradigm, researchers who use the feminist perspective must create new methods that are consonant with the values of feminism. Many of these

methods are time consuming and difficult, and some force the researchers to confront serious ethical and personal dilemmas—gathering oral histories from women who share their experiences as abused children or battered adults, for example.

Completing a research project from the feminist perspective, however, is easier than publishing the results of the research. We believe that the issue of publishing feminist research creates a dilemma for scholars. To gain visibility and ultimately acceptance for the feminist perspective, scholars must find a way to present this perspective in the accepted publishing outlets of the field. Yet, research done from a feminist perspective uses data and methods that are not only unacceptable within the dominant research paradigm but also are often inimical to that paradigm. Feminist scholars, then, often are pressured to conduct studies within the old-paradigm research mode—in which gender constructions are taken for granted—since these kinds of studies are more likely to be accepted for publication.

While feminist scholars recognize that a feminist theoretical perspective on research constitutes a true challenge to the dominant research mode, they also recognize that the challenge is dissipated when the research is presented in terms acceptable to that framework. Yet, they also know that if they do not present their research in acceptable terms, it will not be disseminated in outlets that will provide the opportunity and audience to mount a true challenge to the existing paradigm. Thus, the dilemma is how to challenge and simultaneously to gain visibility and legitimation for such a perspective in the publications of the discipline that may be unsupportive or unaware of it.

Given the dilemma of challenge versus legitimation, we would expect to find that the feminist research that has been published makes accommodations to the traditional framework. To be published in a mainstream journal, the reputation of which is based on publication of research derived from a nonfeminist framework, a scholar likely will have had to alter the presentation of feminist notions to secure publication of the essay. Of course, accommodations to journal reviewers and editors are not unique to the feminist perspective. Indeed, at the most basic level, the process of publishing is one of accommodation to reviewers' and editors' varying expectations and demands. Furthermore, the introduction of any new perspective to a discipline—whether something relatively minor such as the use of a new critical method or something as major as a paradigm shift—involves accommodation to the status quo in order to gain an initial hearing for that new viewpoint.

We believe, however, that the feminist perspective constitutes a major challenge to the existing research tradition of the communication discipline because it challenges both the content and form of that tradition. It

demands not only that the experiences of women be given a voice in the substance of the discipline but also that this substance be presented via methodologies that are consistent with women's experiences—deliberate involvement of the scholar with the participants of the study, for example. The challenge of the feminist perspective is total and all-encompassing and has the potential to alter the discipline in fundamental ways; thus, presenting this perspective in essays designed for publication is particularly difficult (Nielsen, 1982; Raymond, 1982; Spender, 1982).

USE OF THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

To determine the nature and extent of use of the feminist perspective in published research in communication, we surveyed the essays concerning gender and women published in five mainstream communication journals for the past 10 years (1977–1987): the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Communication Monographs*, *Human Communication Research*, the *Journal of Communication*, and *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*. These journals were chosen because they are the research journals associated with the two major national associations in speech communication. The *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Communication Monographs*, and *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* are published by the Speech Communication Association; *Human Communication Research* and the *Journal of Communication* are associated with the International Communication Association. We also surveyed the essays in *Women's Studies in Communication*, a journal published by the Organization for Research on Women and Communication that is devoted exclusively to issues of gender and communication. We chose 1977 as the starting date for our survey because that was the year *Women's Studies in Communication* began publication. The creation of a journal devoted to issues of women and gender suggests that these topics had become significant enough to warrant a special forum for their presentation. The exception to the 1977 starting date was *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, which began publication in 1984.

We selected from these six publications the essays in which issues of gender or women were central; the essays are listed in the appendix. Centrality of gender to a study was determined by noting whether terms such as "sex," "gender," or "women" appeared in the title of the article; we were not interested in those essays in which sex was one among many variables studied but was not a focus of the study. In all of the studies published in *Women's Studies in Communication*, gender was judged to be central. Thus, all of the essays published during the 10-year period were included except for one issue, which was devoted to proceedings of a conference and was not subjected to the usual blind-review process.

Our interest in these essays was to identify the kinds of accommodations made to the dominant research paradigm in order for feminist research to be published. Our survey revealed seven basic ways a feminist perspective has been incorporated in these studies, each of which involves some kind of accommodation to the traditional research framework: (a) using old-paradigm, nonfeminist methods to conduct a study in which gender is an important topic of investigation; (b) highlighting features of women's experience in the study; (c) using women's experiences as data but employing traditional methods for their analysis; (d) Citing nongender-related literature as a theoretical base for a study; (e) using the conclusion section of an otherwise traditional essay to challenge old-paradigm notions; (f) criticizing gender research; and (g) suggesting standards of evaluation for the feminist perspective.

We see each of these categories as suggesting strategies feminist researchers can use to increase the chances for publication of their essays. We use the term "strategy" guardedly. While we maintain that these features can be used consciously, we are not arguing that these authors did so. We are applying the term a posteriori, looking back at the essays for patterns that—whether apparent or not to the authors—may be useful in the future to those writing from a feminist perspective. We are using these published essays, then, as starting points for us to speculate about strategies that seem to be available to help secure publication of research from a feminist perspective. In the next section, we will describe essays from the journals surveyed that exemplify each of these seven categories of accommodation.

Using Old-Paradigm Methods

One kind of accommodation made to facilitate publication of feminist research is to take the construct of gender as a starting point but then to use old-paradigm approaches to conduct and report a study. The scholar acknowledges that gender functions as a filter for experience and believes that gender provides a valuable perspective from which to approach knowledge. The study itself, however, is conducted using traditional methods consistent with the old paradigm. Patricia Hayes Bradley's study of folk linguistics is one example of this strategy (1981). She describes the sometimes-contradictory literature that posits a connection between the devaluation of women's speech and the lack of status accorded women in society, thus acknowledging that gender is both a function and reflection of status in our culture. She then conducts a traditional laboratory study

of the qualifying devices used by women and men when presenting arguments in small group discussions in order to test the relationship between women's speech and status.

Another example is Robert Johnson's (1980) study of the use of the phrase, "blacks and women," to refer to the hostages released early during the Iran hostage crisis. He notes that the phrase was "comfortably applied by American journalists to a specific group of black men and white women" and that it "may be symptomatic of a deeply rooted cultural notion that for males race is the crucial factor while for females it is their sex" (p. 62). This direct acknowledgment of the way both gender and race unconsciously permeate society is very much in line with the feminist perspective. Johnson then proceeds to show the high percentage of use of the phrase, "blacks and women," in several newspapers, using traditional techniques of content analysis. Both Bradley's and Johnson's studies deal with gender as the critical issue but then explore it using old-paradigm methods.

Highlighting Features of Women's Experience

Another category of essays brings to attention one or two features of women's experiences not typically acknowledged, valued, or even studied by the dominant research framework. Such studies make readers aware of aspects of women's experience that are not featured in traditional communication studies. Sandra Ragan and Victoria Aarons' (Ragan & Aarons, 1986) essay suggests that by examining how silence functions in works of fiction, we can uncover some functions served by silence that have not yet been explored in studies of actual relationships. They describe two stories in which the female protagonists' " 'silent' marriages paradoxically allow them to 'speak' forcefully" (p. 69). Thus, they suggest a reconceptualization of the notion that women are manipulated more through men's noncommunicativeness or silence than the inverse—that men more often than women use silence to control conversation. They also raise the issue of paradox, a quality often attributed to women's experiences, in their discussion of how women may use silence in order to "speak."

A second essay that brings to the foreground a feature of women's experience is an essay by Robert Scott and James Klumpp (Scott & Klumpp, 1984) on Ellen Goodman's newspaper columns. They begin by admitting that their interest in Goodman's writing is her focus on the point "where public meets private" (p. 68); the fusion of the public and private has been seen as a feature of women's experience. Ferguson (1984), for example, suggests that the public and private realms are more alike than we previously have recognized:

> They are alike in that the relation of self to others sustained in personal, face-to-face encounters provides the grounds for the experience of community in the larger arena, for the recognition of connections and commonality with those who are strangers but who are still human, like oneself, and thus not easily discarded as enemies. Similarly, the experience of risk and loss that the nurturance of freedom entails can prepare us for the encounter with the unfamiliar, the unknown, and the dangerous that public life requires. (p. 201)

Scott and Klumpp show how the public and private realms are brought together in Goodman's columns. Unlike Ragan and Aarons, Scott and Klumpp do not acknowledge the connection with women's experience that their essay suggests nor do they acknowledge the feminist perspective in their essay; nonetheless, their article incorporates and illuminates a dimension of women's experience—a fusion of the private with the public—and thus serves as a partial model for feminist research.

Using Women's Experiences as Data

Other essays use as data women's communication experiences that are different from men's—data that generally have not been considered worthy of investigation because of the devaluation of women in our culture and research tradition. Fern Johnson and Marlene Fine (1985), studying sex differences in obscenity use, acknowledge that obscenity has been considered outside the linguistic domain of women. They explore differences in the obscenities that occur in the linguistic environments of women and men and sex differences in standards of appropriateness for obscenity. By studying the actual use of obscenity among women—a double taboo in that obscenity generally is not studied, but especially not its use by women—they provide information about women's experiences and forms of communication. They also illuminate the paradox women face in terms of language use and power—obscenity may be used in an effort to counter male verbal violence, but it may generate male violence instead.

Lana Rakow concludes her essay, "Rethinking Gender Research in Communication," with a reference to another neglected form of data associated with women's experience—telephone use (1986). Not only is women's use of the telephone unusual as data, but Rakow suggests that we need to ask different questions about these data than we normally would:

> For example, if we are interested in understanding the relationships between gender and communication technologies, we would be wise not to start by looking for differences in women's and men's behavior with a technology, as if gender itself, as some individually possessed essence, causes behavior.

> Instead, we might look for the ways in which a technology is used to construct us as women and men through the social practices that put it to use. (pp. 23–24)

The use of data connected to women's lives but regarded as unimportant in the traditional research framework is a way to introduce a feminist perspective and to begin to ask different research questions as well.

Citing Nongender Research

Another way the studies in our survey seem to have accommodated the prevailing research tradition is evident in the theoretical literature cited as backdrop for the studies. The authors often cite literature already accepted within the discipline of communication. In her study of the debate on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), Sonja Foss (1979) makes use of fantasy-theme analysis and the theory of symbolic convergence. Martha Solomon (1979) uses Northrup Frye's notions of the *mythoi* of romance to study the ERA, and traditional literature on persuasion provides the background for Charles Montgomery and Michael Burgoon's study of androgyny and resistance to persuasion (1980). While linking a study with an already established tradition is expected in research of any kind, what is distinctive about the practice in these essays is that the theories cited typically are not connected with gender research. In other words, gender issues are presented via connection to theories in which gender is not central, a strategy that clearly grants more credibility to an essay, as far as the mainstream is concerned, than one in which only feminist or gender-related literature is cited.

Using Conclusions to Challenge

The use of the conclusion section of an essay to raise issues germane to the feminist perspective and thus to highlight that perspective was another strategy that emerged from our survey of communication journals. Usually, the conclusion section of a research report provides a summary of the study and its limitations. In feminist research, the conclusion can be used to perform a much more important function: to acknowledge the role of the feminist perspective in research, despite the traditional features of the study.

An example of how the conclusion can be used to challenge is Myra Isenhart's study (1980) of sex and the decoding of nonverbal cues, in which she found that women were better decoders than men of nonverbal cues. She also found that femininity, as measured by the BSRI, and ability

to decode nonverbal cues are negatively related. As a result of her findings, she suggests that previous research about gender roles and communication be questioned: "Interpretation of the surprising negative correlation between femininity and decoding ability is better grounded in a hard look at previous assumptions and arguments than in regret for the problems posed by these tests and this sample" (p. 316). Thus, her study suggests another possibility for the conclusion of an essay: to address how the traditional research framework limits the findings of the study. Such a discussion could be followed by a description of the feminist perspective and how its use might have altered the conduct of the study and the insights gained. For example, a scholar might explain that she chose to use feminist interviewing techniques, in which she revealed personal information to the interviewees and came to know them well. She then could discuss the benefits and drawbacks of using feminist interviewing techniques.

Katherine Warfel's study (1984) of the relationship between Bem's gender-schema theory and perceptions of power in speech also revealed results at odds with traditional expectations about powerless speech. She, too, raises questions about our definition of power in her conclusion, questions in line with the feminist perspective. For instance, she recognizes that power is assumed to be a positive quality but, in fact, this may be a questionable assumption: "The results of this study reveal that there is some kind of tradeoff involved with the use of power. . . . Although a generic style does seem to lead to perceptions of dominance, objectiveness, and professionalism, it may also produce perceptions of incompetence" (p. 265). The use of the conclusion to question traditional assumptions and to offer the feminist perspective as an alternative way to frame research, then, increases the visibility of the feminist perspective in research.

Criticizing Gender/Feminist Research

Other essays in our survey reveal the use of self-critique as a means of both accommodating the traditional research framework and presenting the feminist perspective. To criticize the perspective from which one's research is conducted allows readers to see that the perspective is just that—a perspective—with particular constraints and limitations.

Putnam's critique of gender research suggests that gender researchers may have fallen into some of the same pitfalls as mainstream researchers, such as looking for and considering differences as more significant than similarities (1982). She also questions the assumption of many researchers that gender is socially and collectively defined and asks how such research would differ if it were individually defined. In addition, she sug-

gests that we not confine our research to how gender influences communication but also that we look at how communication affects gender.

Phyllis Randall, in "Re-Examining the Smiles of Women," summarizes the literature on women's smiles and criticizes the fact that "all smiles have been treated alike, although in everyday life, people are very well aware of such variations as the nervous smile (noted by Henley), the pasted-on smile, the wry smile, the tentative smile, the self-satisfied smile, and the smile of pleasure" (Randall, 1985, p. 6). She then suggests the range of meanings that can be attributed to smiling and calls for a rethinking of our basic premises in regard to smiling:

> Is it not possible for a woman's smile to mask inward emotion just as much as man's non-expressive face can—a different response to the same technique of not divulging private information? If so, then the smile, too, can be related to power. Is not a major part of the allure of the Mona Lisa her enigmatic smile? And is not that kind of allure related to power in a personal relationship? Further, is it not possible that some of the "appeasement" smiles are really equivalent to the "rolling eyes" behavior of young black girls . . . [described] as "a gesture of insubordination"? True, both are expressions used by the powerless, but insubordination is very different from appeasement. (Randall, 1985, p. 8)

One dimension of the feminist perspective is its grounding in vulnerability and self-questioning; feminist scholars do not conceive of themselves as "right." The strategy of self-critique may be one way to deal explicitly with objections of mainstream reviewers to feminist scholarship.

Generating Standards of Evaluation

A final way to highlight the feminist perspective in research while making accommodations to the traditional research framework is to spell out the standards by which it is to be assessed. Until studies centered in the feminist perspective become common, feminist scholars should suggest criteria by which the data or procedures used can be judged. A common criticism of and reason for discounting feminist research is the failure of feminist scholars to distinguish good from bad feminist research. By suggesting criteria for judging their research, feminist scholars can begin to develop, discuss, and refine a body of standards that can be used to judge their scholarship.

Suppose, for example, that a scholar conducts a study using as data women's quilts. At the conclusion of the study, the author undoubtedly can say much about the difficulties of working with such forms of communication, the temptations to be avoided, the limitations of the data, and

the kinds of insights they are likely to reveal. She then can utilize the experience with those data to propose standards of adequacy for dealing with such forms of communication from a feminist perspective. Or, suppose a researcher consciously conducts a study not as a disinterested, objective, and detached scholar but as a passionately involved participant who acknowledges personal and social change as goals of the study (Treichler, Kramarae, & Stafford, 1985). He might collect data through personal involvement with and caring for the individuals who are the subject of the study and with the aim of discovering insights useful to women as they live their lives. Once such procedures have been used to conduct the research, the author undoubtedly can suggest standards to guide feminist research.

While none of the studies we examined in our survey directly posit standards of evaluation, one moves in this direction. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's essay (1980) on Elizabeth Cady Stanton's farewell address to the National American Woman Suffrage Association offers an example of an essay in which standards of evaluation are implicit. Campbell suggests that inherent in the speech are principles of humanism that lie behind feminism. These features of Stanton's speech could serve as categories by which to understand and evaluate other feminist discourse: "Philosophically, it [Stanton's speech] reminds us of the conditions of every human life: that each of us is unique, responsible, and alone. These conditions entail the republican principle of natural rights and the religious principle of individual conscience. If women are persons, they merit access to every opportunity that will assist them in the human struggle" (pp. 311–312). While Campbell's essay does not specifically suggest standards for evaluating the feminist perspective per se, it is a step in that direction in its presentation of fundamental principles underlying the women's movement—principles that could become criteria for evaluating essays about women.

CONCLUSION

This survey of the current visibility of the feminist perspective in published research in communication confirms that a process of accommodation occurs when a new perspective of any kind is introduced into an existing research tradition. In order to gain initial visibility and begin to be acknowledged as an alternative research frame, the challenging perspective must find its way into publication, a process that requires adjustments to the expectations of the status quo. We uncovered seven such accommodations of the feminist perspective to the traditional research framework in the published essays in communication over the past 10

ears. Even in *Women's Studies in Communication*, where one might expect to see the feminist perspective fully realized in research, this was not the case. The same kinds of accommodations were evident in this journal as in the mainstream journals. The first step toward full implementation of the feminist perspective in research has been taken, and the strategies suggested can be used deliberately by other scholars writing from a feminist perspective to facilitate publication of their research. But the process must not stop here.

While we understand the need for adaptation in order to succeed in making the feminist perspective an accepted and valued research framework, there is little evidence in the journals of movement beyond accommodation to a phase where the *challenge* of the perspective takes precedence over *accommodation*. A plateau seems to have been reached with the feminist perspective; it is visible only when it accommodates in major ways. In fact, one could argue that, after 10 years at this particular stage, the accommodations have become institutionalized patterns for publishing feminist research. Whether or not such institutionalization has occurred, feminist scholars will continue to have difficulty remaining "sufficiently radical" (Pearce & Freeman, 1984, p. 65) to challenge the old-paradigm research framework; yet, this challenge is the essence and purpose of the feminist perspective.

We hope this essay will serve as a catalyst for the discipline in moving the feminist perspective to the next stage of development. By offering a definition of the feminist perspective, making explicit the dilemma it entails, and pointing out the accommodations that have been made to the status quo in the publication of essays that incorporate it, we hope the perspective becomes a topic of discussion among more than just a minority of scholars in the discipline. Only then can it become a fully realized—rather than just a partially expressed—voice in the discipline of communication.

APPENDIX

Quarterly Journal of Speech

Sarah Trenholm and William R. Todd de Mancillas, "Student Perceptions of Sexism," 64 (October 1978).

Pattie P. Gillespie, "Feminist Theatre: A Rhetorical Phenomenon," 64 (October 1978).

Martha Solomon, "The 'Positive Woman's' Journey: A Mythic Analysis of the Rhetoric of STOP ERA," 65 (October 1979).

Sonja K. Foss, "The Equal Rights Amendment Controversy: Two Worlds in Conflict," 65 (October 1979).

Alexis Tan, Jack Raudy, Cary Huff, and Janet Miles, "Children's Reactions to Male and Female Newscasters: Effectiveness and Believability," 66 (April 1980).

Julia T. Wood and W. Barnett Pearce, "Sexists, Racists, and Other Classes of Classifiers: Form and Function of '. . . ist' Accusations," 66 (October 1980).

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Stanton's 'The Solitude of Self': A Rationale for Feminism," 66 (October 1980).

Charles Conrad, "The Transformation of the 'Old Feminist' Movement," 67 (August 1981).

Robert L. Scott and James F. Klumpp, " 'A Dear Searcher into Comparison': The Rhetoric of Ellen Goodman," 70 (February 1984).

Celeste Condit Railsback, "The Contemporary American Abortion Controversy: Stages in the Argument," 70 (November 1984).

Randall A. Lake, "Order and Disorder in Anti-Abortion Rhetoric: A Logological View," 70 (November 1984).

Phyllis M. Japp, "Esther or Isaiah?" The Abolitionist-Feminist Rhetoric of Angelina Grimke," 71 (August 1985).

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Style and Content in the Rhetoric of Early Afro-American Feminists," 72 (November 1986).

Communication Monographs

Charles L. Montgomery and Michael Burgoon, "An Experimental Study of the Interactive Effects of Sex and Androgyny on Attitude Change," 44 (June 1977).

Ernest G. Bormann, Jerie Pratt, and Linda Putnam, "Power, Authority, and Sex: Male Response to Female Leadership," 45 (June 1978).

John E. Baird, Jr. and Patricia Hayes Bradley, "Styles of Management and Communication: A Comparative Study of Men and Women," 46 (June 1979).

Michael Calvin McGee, "The Origins of 'Liberty': A Femininization of Power," 47 (March 1980).

Charles L. Montgomery and Michael Burgoon, "The Effects of Androgyny and Message Expectations on Resistance to Persuasive Communication," 47 (March 1980).

Patricia Hayes Bradley, "Sex, Competence and Opinion Deviation: An Expectation States Approach," 47 (June 1980).

Anthony Mulac and Torborg Louisa Lundell, "Differences in Perceptions Created by Syntactic-Semantic Productions of Male and Female Speakers," 47 (June 1980).

Patricia Hayes Bradley, "The Folk-Linguistics of Women's Speech: An Empirical Examination," 48 (March 1981).

Barbara M. Montgomery and Robert W. Norton, "Sex Differences and Similarities in Communicator Style," 48 (June 1981).

Michael J. Cody and H. Dan O'Hair, "Nonverbal Communication and Deception: Differences in Deception Cues Due to Gender and Communicator Dominance," 50 (September 1983).

Katherine A. Warfel, "Gender Schemas and Perceptions of Speech Style," 51 (September 1984).
Sandra Petronio, Judith Martin, and Robert Littlefield, "Prerequisite Conditions for Self-Disclosing: A Gender Issue," 51 (September 1984).
Anthony Mulac, Torborg Louisa Lundell, and James J. Bradac, "Male/Female Language Differences and Attributional Consequences in a Public Speaking Situation: Toward an Explanation of the Gender-Linked Language Effect," 53 (June 1986).
B. Christine Shea and Judy C. Pearson, "The Effects of Relationship Type, Partner Intent, and Gender on the Selection of Relationship Maintenance Strategies," 53 (December 1986).
Michael D. Miller, Rodney A. Reynolds, and Ronald E. Cambra, "The Influence of Gender and Culture on Language Intensity," 54 (March 1987).

Critical Studies in Mass Communication

Karen K. List, "Two Party Papers' Political Coverage of Women in the New Republic," 2 (June 1985).
David L. Eason, "On Journalistic Authority: The Janet Cooke Scandal," 3 (December 1986).
H. Leslie Steeves, "Feminist Theories and Media Studies," 4 (June 1987).

Human Communication Research

Lynda Greenblatt, James E. Hasenauer, and Vicki S. Freimuth, "Psychological Sex Type and Androgyny in the Study of Communication Variables: Self-Disclosure and Communication Apprehension," 6 (Winter 1980).
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Margaret L. McLaughlin, Michael J. Cody, Marjorie L. Kane, and Carl S. Robey, "Sex Differences in Story Receipt and Story Sequencing Behaviors in Dyadic Conversations," 7 (Winter 1981).
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Mark A. deTurck, "A Transactional Analysis of Compliance-Gaining Behavior: Effects of Noncompliance, Relational Contexts, and Actors' Gender," 12 (Fall 1985).
Patricia Hayes Andrews, "Gender Differences in Persuasive Communication and Attribution of Success and Failure," 13 (Spring 1987).

Kathryn Dindia, "The Effects of Sex of Subject and Sex of Partner on Interruptions," 13 (Spring 1987).
Anthony Mulac, Lisa B. Studley, John W. Wiemann, and James J. Bradac, "Male/Female Gaze in Same-Sex and Mixed-Sex Dyads: Gender-Linked Differences and Mutual Influence," 13 (Spring 1987).

Journal of Communication

Muriel G. Cantor, "Women and Public Broadcasting," 27 (Winter 1977).
Virginia P. Richmond and D. Lynn Robertson, "Women's Liberation in Interpersonal Relations," 27 (Winter 1977).
Alexander Rysman, "How the 'Gossip' Became a Woman," 27 (Winter 1977).
Jeannette M. Haviland, "Sex-Related Pragmatics in Infants' Nonverbal Communication," 27 (Spring 1977).
Susan Franzblau, Joyce N. Sprafkin, and Eli A. Rubinstein, "Sex on TV: A Content Analysis," 27 (Spring 1977).
Richard A. Dienstbier, "Sex and Violence: Can Research Have It Both Ways?," 27 (Summer 1977).
Judith Lemon, "Women and Blacks on Prime-Time Television," 27 (Autumn 1977).
Wendy Martyna, "What Does 'He' Mean—Use of the Generic Masculine," 28 (Winter 1978).
Barbara Bate, "Nonsexist Language Use in Transition," 28 (Winter 1978).
Sandra E. Purnell, "Politically Speaking, Do Women Exist?," 28 (Winter 1978).
William J. O'Donnell and Karen J. O'Donnell, "Update: Sex-Role Messages in TV Commercials," 28 (Winter 1978).
Jeanne Marecek, Jane Allyn Piliavin, Ellen Fitzsimmons, Elizabeth C. Krogh, Elizabeth Leader, and Bonnie Trudell, "Women as TV Experts: The Voice of Authority?," 28 (Winter 1978).
Denise Warren, "Commercial Liberation," 28 (Winter 1978).
Charles Lazer and S. Dier, "The Labor Force in Fiction," 28 (Winter 1978).
Matilda Butler and William Paisley, "Magazine Coverage of Women's Rights," 28 (Winter 1978).
Jennie Farley, "Women's Magazines and the ERA: Friend or Foe?," 28 (Winter 1978).
Janet S. Sanders, "Talking and Not Talking About Sex: Male and Female Vocabularies," 29 (Spring 1979).
Renate L. Welch, Aletha Huston-Stein, John C. Wright, and Robert Plehal, "Subtle Sex-Role Cues in Children's Commercials," 29 (Summer 1979).
Katherine Meyer, John Seidler, Timothy Curry, Adrian Aveni, "Women in July Fourth Cartoons: A 100-Year Look," 30 (Winter 1980).
Robert C. Johnson, " 'Blacks and Women': Naming American Hostages Released in Iran," 30 (Summer 1980).
Bradley S. Greenberg, Robert Abelman, and Kimberly Neuendorf, "Sex on the Soap Operas: Afternoon Delight," 31 (Summer 1981).
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Barry L. Sherman and Joseph R. Dominick, "Violence and Sex in Music Videos: TV and Rock 'n' Roll," 36 (Winter 1986).
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Ellen Seiter, "Stereotypes and the Media: A Re-Evaluation," 36 (Spring 1986).
Lana F. Rakow, "Rethinking Gender Research in Communication," 36 (Autumn 1986).

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(*Women's Studies in Communication* was published intermittently between 1978 and 1981; all issues published were included in our survey. We have not included vol. 7, Fall 1984 here because that issue was devoted to conference proceedings and was not a refereed issue.)

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Celeste Condit Railsback, "Pro-Life, Pro-Choice: Different Conceptions of Value," 5 (Spring 1982).
Thomas Baglan and Doris J. Nelson, "A Comparison of the Effects of Sex and Status on the Perceived Appropriateness of Nonverbal Behaviors," 5 (Spring 1982).
Janice Schuetz, "Secular and Sectarian Conflict: A Case Study of Mormons for ERA," 5 (Fall 1982).
Myra Isenhart, "A Review of Critical Issues in the Measurement of Psychological Gender Role," 5 (Fall 1982).
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Katherine Kurs and Robert S. Cathcart, "The Feminist Movement: Lesbian-Feminism as Confrontation," 6 (Spring 1983).
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Mary Anne Fitzpatrick and Julie Indvik, "Me and My Shadow: Projections of Psychological Gender Self-Appraisals in Marital Implicit Theories," 6 (Fall 1983).
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Laree S. Kiely and Dan Crary, "The Solution That Has No Name: Application of the Social Value Model to Friedan's *The Second Stage*," 9 (Spring 1986).

Lynne Webb, "Eliminating Sexist Language in the Classroom," 9 (Spring 1986).

Barbara Luebke, " 'First Woman' Stories: A Sign of Progress or More Special Treatment?," 9 (Spring 1986).

Melanie Booth-Butterfield, "Recognizing and Communicating in Harassment-Prone Organizational Climates," 9 (Fall 1986).

Michael R. Hemphill and Angela Laird Pfeiffer, "Sexual Spillover in the Workplace: Testing the Appropriateness of Male-Female Interaction," 9 (Fall 1986).

Sandra L. Ragan and Victoria Aarons, "Women's Response to Men's Silence: A Fictional Analysis," 9 (Fall 1986).

Jacqueline Taylor, "Encoding and Decoding Nonverbal Gender Display in Cross-Gender Performances," 9 (Fall 1986).

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