Toward the unimagined: Feminism and epistemology in psychology

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In spite of a sustained interest in questions of gender and a proliferation of empirical studies, there have been no fundamental changes in our conceptualization of gender. Psychological knowledge about gender continues to depend on core axioms of socialization, role acquisition, stereotypes, femininity, and masculinity. During the past fifteen years feminist perspectives have brought some methodological correctives (Lykes & Stewart, 1986); other than these, there have been no notable reformulations of our models of gendered behavior. In the face of the tremendous personal and intellectual challenges of feminism, the psychological perspective on and analysis of gender have remained unchanged, as have the foundational metatheory and epistemology. Does this stability mean that the scientific tenets underlying gender research are without the kinds of androcentric bias found in other areas of science and social science? Can a feminist psychology of gender thus proceed on the preexisting epistemological edifice?

These questions frame one objective of this chapter: to assess the extent to which conventional psychological research on gen-

nder has been influenced by advances in feminist theory. Because modern feminism has challenged the philosophic foundations of thought, particular attention is given here to epistemological issues. The other objective, apparent in the chapter's title, is to contemplate how the psychology of gender might be reimagined in light of feminist inquiry in other disciplines that has yet to be extended to conventional psychology.

Both of these objectives assume the need to change the superstructure of the psychology of gender. Feminist research throughout academia has indicated the central importance of the very work practices implied when we say that we are "doing psychology" (or any disciplinary work) or that we are "developing psychological theory"—that is, to speak about feminism and epistemology is to do more than to assess values and intellectual assumptions. To imagine feminist knowledge seeking therefore means reconsidering the social relations of our work: a reconstruction of the game, along with its rules and activities, especially as they implicitly align our actions as researchers with existing valences of social power. Given this turn from epistemology to practice, an aim underlying this chapter is to consider how the social relations constituting psychological work might change.

Studies of gender now constitute a massive research program in psychology; even state-of-the-art meta-analyses (see Eagly, 1987) cannot yield a complete sense of the production. Nevertheless, most of research coheres, primarily because it adheres to a certain theoretical orientation that, in turn, follows shared epistemological and methodological premises. An example of this research program and its premises is found in studies of androgyny, an area of investigation that both incorporates the premises of conventional research and yet has been fueled significantly by feminist thinking.

As an entrance into these multiple objectives, androgyny research is reviewed to exemplify how feminism has merged with the mainstream rudiments of psychological work. The subse-
quent section explores several of the less acknowledged aspects of research practice and assesses the constraints these practices impose on the generation of new theory. The final section considers the nature of scientific work practices and invites the reader to imagine other possibilities.

The Impasse of Androgyyny

Sandra Harding (1986b) has suggested that there are three fundamental ways in which feminists have addressed the question of science: the creation of feminist empiricism, standpoint [women-centered] feminism, and feminist postmodernism. Within psychology the predominant mode of redress has been feminist empiricism. Like the other modes, feminist empiricism begins with recognition that sexism exists as a social problem and, in science in particular, as a social bias in research. Given that the methodological norms of science function to eliminate personal or social bias, feminist empiricism is unique in suggesting that sexism is correctable by stricter adherence to these norms. There is a general sense that women researchers are more likely to recognize sexist bias and, therefore, to become committed to the proper functioning of the scientific method. Although not discussed by Harding, concomitant with this recognition is a related belief that sound empirical research will also reveal sexist biases in psychological processes and social practices. A further aspect of this feminist research is the related belief that if the observer is cleansed of biased perceptions, then a more accurate account of the observable, empirical world would be made and, ultimately, a more just social policy would be implemented. As with the scientific method, the structural norms of the social order are taken to be unproblematic once they are rid of such imposed biases as sexism.

Androgyyny research illustrates how feminist empiricism typically has been implemented in psychology. The development of the concept of androgyyny began with efforts to remove the biases of sexist methods and constructs. In the early 1970s researchers conducted systematic critiques of the gender traits, masculinity and femininity. They questioned whether these gender attributes really are bipolar and mutually exclusive, whether assigned biological sex is somehow the determinant of appropriate gender traits, and whether identity between biological sex and gender characteristics is necessary for psychological adjustment. Encompassing both methodological and theoretical dimensions, these criticisms indicated that research on masculinity and femininity, along with the measurement scales employed in that research, was value laden. The values embedded in this research were those that assumed gender difference, some essential qualities of what it meant to be male or female. The research privileged the idea of two distinct psychological genders that were [and ought to be] consistent with one's biological sex and stable across the life span. Consistent with these values was the implicit assumption that deviation from the norms of gender-role identity was not normal.

The concept of androgyyny was posited as a corrective to these value biases. Androgyyny, a combination of feminine and masculine attributes, eliminated assumptions of gender dualism that had served as markers for some underlying yet real gender differences. The concept does not assume any appropriate linkages between biological sex and psychological gender, nor does it entail claims about sexual orientation. This idea of gender further supplies a model for social policy: While the original concept of gender attributes contains norms of male and female behavior, the androgyyny model offers a vision of flexible, successful human agents operating in a complex, nongender-structured social world. Regarding these social norms, it is important to note that although investigators generally perceived that these conceptual developments eliminate certain value biases, at least one researcher [Bem, 1974] explicitly proposed androgyyny as a concept consistent with feminist values. Undoubtedly many
other researchers have adopted the concept for its emancipatory qualities: Androgyne afforded more emancipatory notions of appropriate behavior and mental well-being.

Judging by the wide usage of masculinity-femininity scales revised to incorporate androgyne, the androgyne concept appealed to psychologists seeking to remedy bias in gender studies. This emerging research avenue generated serious problems, however, and the literature on androgyne soon indicated that the new measurement devices produced numerous theoretical and psychometric complications. First, there was little understanding of precisely how femininity and masculinity combined to form this newly recognized type of social agency: Is androgyne the result of additive processes, that is, so much femininity plus so much masculinity, is it the interaction of some particular aspects of the two gender attributes, or is it the result of reaching some threshold of these attributes? Related to these conceptual issues was the fact that the androgyne model continues to acknowledge and even depend on the conventional concepts of femininity and masculinity. Thus, in spite of its emancipatory promise, the model retains the classic dualism and, hence, the assumption of some real gender difference. The revised psychometric tests thus objectify this dualism and claim to assay some real inner psychological entities.

Another problematic feature of androgyne emerged from both empirical studies and critical analyses [reviewed in Morawski, 1987]. What was introduced as the possibility of a flexible, enabling, even gender-free personhood revealed an uncomfortable resemblance to masculine qualities: Just as quantitative analysis suggested that masculinity scores were a fair predictor of androgynous behavior, so qualitative analyses illuminated individualist, male-centered ideals underlying the concept. Androgyne at once appeared to maintain gender dualism and perpetuate a set of cultural ideals favoring a particular type of social agency, that of a cognitively flexible, independent, and self-contained individual. Seen in terms of the feminist em- piricist goals of removing sexist bias, androgyne research is particularly revealing: Correcting biases resulted in a model that apparently is weighted toward masculine attributes and is consistent with social roles of an independent and instrumental social agent. These asymmetrical standards seem to address the dilemma of the professional woman, for they enable an agent to assume instrumental tasks while retaining feminine, expressive qualities [Morawski, 1985]. Viewed from this perspective, the case of androgyne research reflects some ironic features of feminist empiricism. First, the removal of biased ideas was realized through replacement by other values, and, second, the complicated process of eliminating male biases resulted in a model that apparently privileges masculinity. This is not the first time in recent history that feminists' use of androgynous imagery backfired [Gubar, 1981; Smith-Rosenberg, 1985].

In psychology, the feminist empiricist program principally has entailed the removal of unscientific bias, but we must recognize what scientific practices are left unexamined. Above all, feminist empiricism does not challenge fundamental assumptions about the subjects of investigations or about the observers. It does not question the rudiments of the scientific method in psychology, for instance, those of observation, analysis, prediction, and generalization. Owing to the peculiar history of psychology, subjects can be seen as naive, unknowing, and often even incapable of accurate reporting. In contrast, the observers came to be taken as knowing, informed, and capable of accurate self-monitoring [Morawski, 1986, 1988a]. The history of masculinity and femininity research illustrates how these assumptions are translated into the procedures of scientific work: Methodological controls were developed to blind subjects to the intent of the study; they rest on a basic doubt about the subjects' ability to knowingly assess their gender attributes and its consequences for behavior. These same controls simultaneously enabled researchers (notably through quantification and complex psychometrics) to have special access to the subjects' inner experiences
of gender [Morawski, 1985]. Other assumptions about subjects and the knowledge-generating process also remain unquestioned. For instance, androgyne research, like so much other research on gender, adopts the belief in the transhistorical stability of psychological processes and the relative unimportance of the specific context in which behavior and its psychological interpretation transpire. Some empiricist researchers have questioned specific aspects of these research axioms, for instance, Eagly (1978) demonstrated the historical nature of gender differences in conformity and Deaux and Major (1987) have suggested ways in which situational features are determinant of gender-appropriate behavior. A closer look at the history and practices associated with empiricism, however, suggests that such corrective measures will not resolve the problem of gender.

Where Is the Gender Problem?

Androgyne research has met with success and popularity; these must be recognized as feminist gains. In fact, it is worth momentarily bracketing the structural problems of the feminist empiricist program to acknowledge its gains. The progress has been of two sorts. Above all, work from a feminist empiricist stance represents some of the most astute critiques of contemporary experimental psychology. The critical analyses of research on hormones and behavior [Parlee, 1973; 1982], conformity [Eagly, 1978], field dependence [Haaken, 1988], and sex differences in the brain [Bleier, 1984; Fausto-Sterling, 1985; McClone, 1980], among other research areas, have provided thorough indictments regarding faulty theory, methods, and interpretation. These critical studies employ technical skill and sophisticated empiricist logic; their relative obscurity among psychologists outside the subcommunity of feminist psychology is regrettable but telling. The second area of accomplishment has been contributions to the understanding of women's lives. Examples of the many innovative projects include studies of individual development [Stewart, 1980], moral judgment [Gilligan, 1982], eating disorders [Striegel-Moore, Silberstein & Rodin, 1986], and communication [Thorne & Henley, 1975; Lakoff, 1975]. In spite of their contributions to conventional theorizing, these new inquiries seem to have limited currency and are known primarily within the domain of the psychology of women/gender. There seem to be boundaries on the achievements of feminist empiricist research.

Like other proposed correctives to conventional empirical research, the androgyne model has drawn attention to serious voids and misrepresentations in conventional theorizing. Such correctives constitute narratives of restoration for they challenge and remove detected bias and restore the natural story of scientific ethos and progress. Yet contained in this revisionist research, in the narratives of restoration, is evidence of the inherent failure of empiricism for feminism. It is understandable that androgyne research, like other similar programs, has come to an impasse. The various research impasses of these empiricist studies indicate that feminist thinking must confront other problems that are located at the core of scientific practice.

The problems requiring confrontation have a history with discernible patterns. Over the last two centuries women have turned to science because it was thought to offer a community in which they could participate [Rosenberg, 1982; Rossiter, 1982]. Science promised a workplace and a form of knowledge seeking where personal attributes—race, sex, ethnicity—were irrelevant to one's participation. Modern knowledge, in Ruby Riemer's [1986] words, offered a "philosophical seduction" of the daughter. This seduction entailed the women's adoption of male rules that somehow contained "a promise of selfhood and inclusion in some philosophical community which, as women alone, they fully fail to achieve" [58]. Riemer has argued for the necessity of knowing the full implications of this seduction: the adoption of and alliance to make ideals that are often alien to women's own
experience. The history of women in psychology illustrates this seduction. The history also reveals some of the unanticipated consequences of women's entrance into the discipline. In order to avoid continuing the seductive trap and to organize alternative ways of working as scientists, we need to become familiar with the consequences of our status and relationship within empiricist communities.

Examination of some of the experiences of women in psychology provides vantage points for exploring how these experiences both epitomize and contribute to the limits of feminist thinking in psychology. Before highlighting these consequences, it should be noted that women (including feminists) who entered into the practice of psychology have tried to work largely within [or to rescue] the tenets of empiricism. From psychology's first generation of women advocates of women onward, few deviated notably from the core scientific beliefs in objective observation and the possibility of accurate, verifiable (or falsifiable) theories. The preeminent experience of feminist psychologists, then, is marked by adherence to the conventions of a larger philosophical project. Those few feminists who did challenge this project or its rules of scientific practice received no audience within the discipline and most of their work went unnoticed and certainly unappreciated (Agronick, 1988; Trigg, 1987; Wittenstein, 1987).

Among the experiences of women entering psychology has been social marginality. Women of the early twentieth century who often were inspired by feminist visions, and who successfully acquired the skills and credentials of the new psychology, nevertheless were marginalized. Articulation of these crippling social relations was hindered by the avowed democratic ethos of science coupled with these workers' enthusiasm, especially during the formative period of female participation in science. Recent historical work recounts how the women's lives were marked by conflicts and exclusions. By tracing the lives of a number of these women, Scarborough and Furumoto (1987) have identified two basic issues, the conflict between personal attach-ments and career autonomy, and the denial of opportunity. Scarborough and Furumoto's study brings outstanding detail to the ways in which these women confronted professional barriers, from the case of Margaret Floy Washburn's reluctant recognition that meritocracy in science was a myth to the difficult and unsuccessful efforts of Ethel Puffer and Milicent Shinn to reconcile the demands of family and career. Women's exclusion was often overt as well as indirect; for example, Furumoto (1988) has traced the official exclusion of women from one prestigious society, Experimental Psychologists, between 1904 and 1929.

Historical studies of women in psychology and related professions indicate that women participants had to practice special strategies to compensate for marginality and possible exclusion. Rosser (1982) has documented some of the common patterns of women's careers within the laboratory structure of academic science: While the early generation of women often ended up in areas designated as women's work, later generations found employment as associates to well-known researchers within large research endeavors or as researchers engaged in their spouses' projects. From their historical investigations, Glazer and Slater (1987) identified specific strategies that enabled women to acquire and retain professional positions. Women succeeded in attaining careers by undertaking innovative ventures that had no existing expertise, taking subservient posts or research activities, or choosing isolated, separate occupations, that is, working in women's colleges or in distinctly women's fields such as nursing. The result of these strategies of marginality, however, was double-edged; Glazer and Slater found that the researchers survived successfully, but they did so at the cost of limiting or excluding the generation of intellectual progeny to carry on the research ventures.

Women's marginal position in scientific professions has had other consequences. One of the most valued remedial measures, especially recently, has been the mentoring process whereby a senior, established woman scholar serves to advise a younger one.
in the sociopolitical nuances of career making as well as in her intellectual development. As noted above, in an organizational structure where women have often had limited access to the training of progeny, mentoring cannot always function as desired. Thus, for mentors and their younger colleagues, the process can be frustrating, although the frustrations can be quite different. Further, as a special form of role model, mentoring can foster the illusion of an employment system that is unconditionally open to women if they receive appropriate preparations. Fisher (1988) has provided a lucid exploration of these and related consequences and contradictions in women's search for role models.

Another, quite different consequence of women's marginality in professional science is competition, not just competition with men and its inherent strains on the female self-image, but especially competition among women. The contours and implications of this special problem of competing have yet to be fully understood [Keller & Moglen, 1987], but they nonetheless affect the experiences of many researchers.

Marginalization has been examined here as it has entailed the positioning of individual researchers and those workers' strategies to ensure survival and relative success, even when success did not include the training of a future generation of workers. Marginalization needs to be understood also in terms of the consequential fate of new ideas, for just as it has limited individual careers so it has influenced the intellectual work resulting from those careers. Potential curtailment of intellectual ideas extends beyond the neglect of the more radical feminist work mentioned earlier, our assessment of lost work must begin to include those risky ideas women dared not advance given their precarious professional standing, as well as those ideas set aside in order to become recognized as a stable and reliable researcher in a world where there is differential assessment of the work of men and women. Assessing these uncompleted projects, such as Leta Hollingworth's unfinished feminist magnum opus, Miss Pilgrim's

Progress, is not always possible, as the records of most of these ideas are lost forever [Agronick, 1988].

The philosophical seduction into the male rules of psychology has had another consequence for women's participation generally and feminist thinking in particular: the denial of self-reflection. The empiricist tradition assumes that the observer is a sensing conduit of observations; it makes no assumptions about the observer as a historical subject or rational agent [indeed, such conceptions usually have been taken to be anti-theoretical to empiricism]. Hence, self-reflection is thought to be inappropriate, unnecessary, or even impossible. Consistent with this epistemological rejection of self-reflection is the refusal to acknowledge reflexivity, the process and the results of our being both the subjects and objects in human research. To many nonempiricist social scientists, reflexive acts are seen as a rudiment of human functioning [Giddens, 1979, 39–40].

To comprehend the effects of the denial of self-reflection in psychology, it is necessary to examine the concept of reflexivity further. Historians of psychology have adopted the term reflexivity to refer to a process that is both inevitable—that is, we cannot engage in the production of psychological knowledge without it—and inadvertently consequential—that is, this basic reflecting influences the form and structure of knowledge. Buss (1978), for instance, has suggested that our unawareness of the reflexive process has resulted in a flip-flopping of theoretical models, an oscillation between theories based on the idea that the person constructs reality, that is, cognitive psychology, and those based on the idea that reality constructs the person, that is, behaviorism. The development of social psychology as a subdiscipline is tied to similar reflexive processes [Morawski, 1987]. In brief, researchers' recognition of the complexities and irrationalities of social life (which had become apparent to them by the end of the nineteenth century) guided their construing of "social" in such a way that their own scientific practices were
differentiated from the irrational and potentially explosive social forces of ordinary beings [Morawski, 1986].

The concept of reflexivity is also used in the sociology of science to refer to an intentional and metatheoretical process. In this context reflexivity is not taken to be inadvertent or unrecognized but an explicit operation in research. Oehlcr and Mullins (1986) suggest that reflexivity consists of two processes: “[1] an awareness on the part of research communities of the social bases of their theories and [2] some kind of institutional arrangement to encourage the development of that awareness and its public display” [2]. Reflexivity of this sort is a self-critical operation and is aimed at improving research through critical analyses and corrective measures.

Probably because of its prescriptive adherence to natural science methods, psychology has not acknowledged reflexivity either as an inherent aspect of observing human action or as a self-conscious strategy of research. Thus it is not a simple matter to discuss how the denial of reflexivity has restricted the cognitive framework of women in psychology. When women psychologists have turned to the investigation of gender at least partly in order to understand their own place in modern society, their work has been restricted by the cognitive system that they entered—that is, empiricist psychology, like any epistemological worldview, is constituted by rules and axiomatic conditions that delimit experience in certain ways. Imbedded in the rules of empiricist psychology are categorical distinctions between reality and illusion, subjectivity and objectivity, rational and irrational, mind and body. Not only are these distinctions constitutive of empiricist psychology, but they are tied in basic ways to the governing arrangements of our social world; they are inextricably part of a system of patriarchal values.

There are at least two distinct ways in which the denial of reflexivity—and by virtue of that, the cognitive contours of the dominant canon—have restricted women's work experiences, especially feminist research. First, the barriers against self-re-

reflective thinking as an explicit and legitimate process has limited the incorporation of experiences and cognitive structurings that were more or less unique to women. It is difficult to specify exactly what has been lost as a consequence of these barriers precisely because of the unlikeliness that those experiences and cognitives ever have been given voice. There are occasions, however, where we can detect curtailment of such thinking; the following are two brief examples. One instance pertains to the efforts of some early twentieth-century women psychologists to unambiguously settle the question of the existence of psychological differences between the sexes. Many of these researchers utilized the scientific methods of the new psychology to design experiments on sex differences, but there was recognition among some of them, including the most enthusiastic experimenters, that these laboratory studies could not capture the real conditions of difference—that is, as feminists, they recognized sex differences as dependent on the entire social structure; no experiment could possibly control for the multitudinous effects of a discriminatory culture. Many researchers concurred on the ubiquitousness of differential treatment of males and females, yet they differed in their accommodation to this limitation in their empirical methods. Helen Thompson Wooley (1903) took a moderate stance: The introduction of her dissertation on the experimental study of sex differences contained a simple yet revealing caveat about the limits of her research. Wooley confessed that locating male and female subjects who had similar social experience and training “even in the most democratic community, is impossible” [2]. She had to settle on using subjects from a coeducational college, the closest approximation to democratic conditions. Other psychologists were less resigned to the simple conceptualization of sex differences demanded by the experimental paradigm. Tanner (1896) claimed that “the real tendencies of women cannot be known until they are free to choose, any more than those of a tied up dog can be.” To Tanner, the nature of sex differences “cannot be demonstrated until men and women
are not only nominally free but actually free to enter any profession” [9-10]. Not unlike the feminist utopists of the period, some researchers contemplated the perfect experiment: a social world in which men and women are treated equally [Peters, 1916]. This is an instance where reflexive thinking could not be extended to the conventional paradigm. There are parallels in contemporary research: The various suggestions that laboratory procedures not only include sex bias but actually curtail the incorporation of women’s experiences or cognitive frameworks has resulted in very few methodological changes [Lykes, 1986].

Another example of barriers to reflexive thinking is necessarily more speculative for it concerns the abandonment of certain cognitive opportunities before they were developed. The substitution of empiricist techniques for feminist (and perhaps feminine) ones cannot simply entail a translation of interests but rather involves substantial shifts of interests. Professional training promised new but nevertheless different perspectives on reality than did feminist thinking. Phyllis Blanchard [1927] was one of the few who wrote about her acceptance of science over the radical feminism she had cultivated earlier:

I had originally intended to write, but the drive to understand human motives and conduct, which arose out of the necessity of solving my own problems, developed into a desire to understand all behavior, and I turned to the social sciences. Probably this was a happy decision. Had I been only a writer, I might have prolonged indefinitely my separation from reality. Through a more scientific approach, I began to see things as they actually were rather than as I wished them to be. I even came to understand that in spite of the intensity of my feeling about marriage I might be able to accept the outward form so long as the inner spirit of the relationship embodied freedom. [473]

Blanchard celebrated the substitution of worldviews, but it remains that some beliefs, even if they were represented as a “separ-

tation from reality,” were abandoned. The actual content of these lost ideas must remain largely a speculative question.

The denial of reflexivity has influenced women’s participation in psychological research, then, through the exclusivity of the empiricist framework. Even when a researcher actively endorses empiricism, her work is restricted by certain categorical distinctions of that worldview. Thus, for instance, feminist psychologists who attempt to revise the conceptual distinction between sex and gender nevertheless actually reaffirm the existence of meaningful natural difference between males and females. It is not possible to discuss difference outside of an oppositional system that designates attributes as either natural or cultural. The attempts to reject the dichotomy of masculine and feminine have led to a similar impasse. Rejecting masculine and feminine categories in favor of an interactional one, androgyny, has in the process established a privileged signifier, the new he-woman/she-man that not only retains gender categories but in practice seems to give priority to the masculine underpinnings. The androgyny concept illustrates all too well that empiricist psychology cannot consider an unsteady state but is based on refit demarcations of reality. Although the concept of androgyny was constructed as a means to go beyond sex and gender categories, it is restrained by metatheoretical demarcations; therefore, for instance, androgyny is readily available to reabsorption as a sexual concept [Brown, 1986].

Researchers who attempt to expand the categorical structures of reality or transform the underlying dualisms encounter difficulties; empiricist reality is deeply structured by such dichotomies. Gilligan’s [1982] development of a different moral thinking is interpreted as embracing traditional stereotypes about women [Colby, 1983]. Even those researchers who are seemingly most faithful to empiricism in their efforts to appeal directly to the real world in order to analyze women’s experiences cannot escape the categories; they end up creating psychological explanations that are tied inextricably to dualist
categories and that recapitulate generic narratives of human causation, those revised yet classic tales of victims and heroines (Marks, 1985). Such studies thereby recreate scientifically sanctioned defenses of existing social arrangements and encourage the personal assimilation of these accounts.

Conventional psychology thus curtails self-reflective and critical opportunities. That science, however, is reflexive, and a number of feminist scholars have shown that what is reflected in the structure of science are social relations that are fitted to the experiences of men and a hierarchical social world. At the most visible level, images of science and of masculinity are mutually edifying: Both are signified through language as tough, rigorous, unemotional, rational, independent, competitive. This gender symbolism is now entrenched in contemporary psychology. Earlier in the century, however, the connections apparently required rehearsal. In the preface to the 1892 outline of a psychology course, Edmund Sanford reminded instructors that “the student of psychology must have its facts and principles brought home to him in a way not inferior to the best of other sciences, if psychology is to have the infusion of new vigor that they have had, and afford the healthy and virile training that they afford” (141). Writing on his advocacy of serious experimental training, E. W. Scripture (1938) claimed that it would heighten cognitive and physical abilities, he encouraged the “education of men, instead of bookworms and mummies.” Research “gets the mind into independent action, so that men become authorities and not echoes” (263). Manly images seem to have secured psychology its place as a real science.

Historians and philosophers of science have examined multiple forms of this gender symbolism. During the scientific revolution metaphors of gender were used to establish boundaries of truth and myth, the good and bad in knowledge seeking (Harding, 1986b; Keller, 1985; Merchant, 1980). Two aspects of this symbolism reveal how gender is reflected in contemporary science. First, the ideals and instrumental actions of science correspond to classic masculine psychology. Keller (1985) has elaborated how the social relations of scientific work—mastery, control, objectivity (observer separateness and distancing, individual-centered rationality)—are rooted in masculine attributes. Second, the development of gender symbolism in science resulted in epistemological categories that both mirrored and maintained gender arrangements in social life generally. The antinomies of rational-irrational, mind-body, cognitive-emotional, individual-social, active-passive reaffirmed stereotypic images of gender; they also served to protect the institution of science and its domination by men (Bleier, 1984; Fee, 1983; Keller, 1985). By privileging certain attributes and representing certain experiences, these dichotomies confirmed and reproduced a larger landscape of social relations.

Gender symbolism and male-centered presuppositions do not just inform how we code and describe observations in science, they also structure the entire process of knowledge seeking. Moulton (1983), for instance, has shown how the primary mode of communicating our ideas is adversarial: Our intellectual writings are offense maneuvers that aggressively pit a selected idea against that found in others’ work. Through isolated and piece-meal attacks, the adversary method allows no means to question larger axioms of research, introduce novel systems, or engage in cooperative enterprises. Falsification, though not simply in Popper’s sense of the term, is what we do to each others’ work. Similarly, Flax (1983) has analyzed how dualistic categories of mind and body, subject and object, are more than surface symbols. Using object-relations theory, Flax suggested that these dichotomies represent the problematizing of “others” that is part of normal male development. Linguistic analyses, conducted primarily by literary theorists, demonstrate how our discourse also mirrors, structures, and reproduces social relations. Jardine (1985) has analyzed the writings of modern French philosophers to ascertain the process through which they bring woman into their texts. Sedgwick (1985) has examined homosociality in
nineteenth-century literature, elucidating the multiple ways in which relations between men structure power relations between men and women. Using a text more familiar to psychologists, Steele (1987) has analyzed a paper by a foremost personality theorist, showing how cognition and reason are placed above critical scrutiny, as well as how the writing suggests latent fears associated with childhood, castration, and women.

These historical, philosophical, and literary studies indicate how gender and gender relations are reflected in knowledge structures. They intimate the third consequence of the seduction of empiricism in psychology: the reproduction of social relations of power. Knowledge structures are comprised of normative social relations and generally sustain these relations. Therefore, working as empiricists necessarily entails an affirmation of particular relations. The human relations constitutive of empiricist science are now being analyzed: They include not simply those relations between workers within a discipline or across disciplines, but also the relations established through the very demarcation between science and society and between what is taken as the observers and the subjects of observation. Not only are researchers members of communities governed by rules of membership and exclusion, but work arrangements and hierarchies influence their products. From a more macrosocial perspective, advances in science can be seen as displacing existing social arrangements and introducing new relations—including the relations between scientists, the organisms under study, government, consumers (Foucault, 1970; Latour, 1983). Social transformations in scientific work thus affect the apparent borders between science and society, as well as the structures and production of scientific communities.

The case of androgyny research illustrates the reproduction of social relations in empiricist work. The introduction of the concept of androgyny was not entirely revolutionary, for it actually represents the continuation of a shift in authorial control over the supposed realm of masculinity and femininity. In the early decades of this century, psychologists had worked to demonstrate the existence of gender attributes and then to establish their special relation to them—that is, conceptual definitions were developed along with psychometric devices that indicated that masculinity and femininity could be detected only by the specially trained psychologist; even the subjects themselves could not identify their femininity or masculinity (Morawski, 1985). The creation of the androgyny concept shifted these relations further: The critiques of masculinity-femininity research indicated that conventional developmental and personality psychologists evaluated gender traits inaccurately and that feminist-informed researchers were better prepared to make evaluations. Just as the construction of androgyny research credited a new group of researchers and created a new source of work, so it also posited a promising identity for professional women scientists (who were becoming the majority of researchers on gender). The androgyny concept offered new social roles that supplanted older, certainly derogatory, images of the female scientist, the woman who thinks like a man, with a more becoming form of gendered personality, the independent woman worker who is also gentle and receptive. Androgyny research altered more than the social relations among certain scientific workers: It afforded a new expert perspective on society. It reconfirmed that psychological science commands a penetrating gaze on popular life in that androgyny research presumably could locate, identify, and dissect such [potent and confusing] cultural phenomena as acceptable cross dressing, businesswomen, Boy George, gentle men, and Annie Lennox of the Eurythmics.

Although androgyny research illustrates the multiple social relations that are maintained through research, the example should not be taken as indicating that gender research has been particularly powerful in altering social relations. As discussed earlier, we must remain mindful of the fact that gender research in psychology has had limited audiences and participants.
Psychology and Feminist Epistemology

The seduction and entrance into a logical empiricist household has not eliminated the marginality of women participants, a primary goal of feminist empiricism. Nor has that environment been conducive to self-critical reflexive thought, a process feminists have relied on both to understand the intricacies of sexism and to generate visions of new systems. Rather, empiricist science takes the male gaze as the natural perspective and continues to place women as the problematized Other. The antimonies of empiricism lend validity to certain descriptions of reality and disadvantage other accounts. Likewise, particular social relations in science are sustained and nurtured.

The concept of gender remains entangled in this social system. As a subject of analysis, gender is understood through categorical dualisms. Like an unhappy household, social relations that are undesirable for the women who are participating are somehow reproduced. Scientific knowledge, then, needs to be understood as social power, not as a universal commodity or parcel of truth statements. Once science is understood in social and relational terms, the practical opportunities for feminist research can be explored. Before entertaining these possibilities, however, we need to gain some analytic purchase on the cognitive and epistemological choices available to feminist researchers—choices that include options of transforming empiricism.

As we have seen, feminists' engagement with empiricist psychology has created opportunities of two sorts: a foundation for the critique of bias, and a legitimate system for investigating women's lives. Yet the costs of these engagements have been substantial in that feminist empiricist studies (and women workers) typically have been designated as marginal. The potential of empiricism is limited by the gendered nature of its precepts, a worldview sustained by dualities related to gender. Returning to Riemer's (1986) notion of the philosophical seduction of the daughter, the conflicts within feminist empiricism reflect an inevitable tension between the allegiance to a discourse of the father and a feminist discourse of discontent.

The tension in a feminist psychology that adheres to empiricism has repeatedly led to impasses in research programs, but such paralysis is not necessary. In fact, it can be seen as the first of several steps leading to a feminist transformation of discourse [Riemer, 1986]. The next step requires further separation from the master discourse and the need to both identify desired values and engage in more explicit deconstruction of that discourse. In the past two decades, in the psychology of gender there have been gestures to make these moves. Weissstein's (1971) prescient unpacking of the sexist values underlying scientific psychology afforded a framework for further critical analysis. Parlee's (1979) review of the psychology of women provided an enlightened account of the need to generate theories that recognized social power as central to understanding women's actions. Kessler and McKenna (1978) developed a promising theoretical model that suggested that gender is not so much an intrinsic object or traits but rather a phenomenological process. A handful of other similar works could be mentioned, but it remains that little has become of the efforts to establish new values and precepts or to present comprehensive critiques of the master discourse.

One means to confront this apparent impasse in psychology is to consider areas where feminists have generated new values for scientific knowledge seeking. Harding's (1986b) taxonomy, although somewhat general, suggests two other existing frameworks for feminist science. The feminist standpoint is represented by several different theories including socialist and cultural feminism, which all share the claim that women's material experiences privilege their understanding of the world. Although its universalizing of women is problematic, work within the feminist standpoint has made valuable contributions to imagining alternative epistemologies. This scholarship has articulated the ways in which the life experiences of women afford a different view of the world and has indicated how these experi-
ences are constructed and constrained by the predominant social structure. From these accounts, the feminist standpoint has enabled a clarification of alternative values and visions of the world, that is, relational thinking, connectedness with others and nature, the function and meaning of reproductive processes. By attending to the relation between experiences and social structure, work within the feminist standpoint has delineated the processes whereby social relations of power are maintained and reproduced at a psychological level.

The other framework described by Harding (1986b) actually developed through other, largely nonfeminist movements: Feminist postmodernism assembles many of the features of postmodernism. Perhaps the chief feature is a general disclaiming of the search for enduring, absolute, or universal truths; these dubitable truths include the existence of a stable, autonomous knower, the possibility of objective, disinterested knowledge, the existence of logic, rationality, or reason that is independent of a social system endorsing those mental processes, and the feasibility of referential language to describe reality. In addition to the deconstructive or critical features, feminist postmodernism has fostered various proposals for alternative conceptions of truth, progress, and knowledge making. Among these generative possibilities for new metatheory are the recognition of identity (and, hence, the knower) as fragmented, plural, and conflicted, and the recognition that models of knowledge and truth are contingent on social relations, historical context, and the knower's interests. In these works, language and social relations become central to the production of knowledge, to the representation of experience. Knowledge is recognized as necessarily pragmatic and partial and the role of the knower as inherently social and political (Flax, 1987).

A brief overview does not properly elucidate the complexities and variations within these two frameworks. It likewise fails to indicate the problems and contradictions contained in these epistemologies (for a detailed analysis, see Harding, 1986b).

What should be recognized is that the models are formative and plural; they are not even necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, some of the most promising feminist analyses of science have drawn from both perspectives. Affirming the unique experiences of women, Fee (1983), for instance, argues that this affirmative feminist position enables a critique of male-created illusions about science, myths such as the antinomies of objectivity and subjectivity, thinking and feeling, and science and society. Fee (1986) suggests that just as we comprehend science as constituted through particular social relations and hierarchies, so we must understand that critiques of science result from different social relations (of race, class, gender); therefore, an alternative science is dependent on a variety of critiques of domination. In a somewhat different amalgamation of socialist feminism and postmodernism, Haraway (1985) proposes that the feminist struggles with science and technology be reconstructed by embracing the partiality and contradictions of knowledge along with our fractured and unclosed identities. Even Harding (1986a) has utilized more than one of these epistemological frameworks in her recommendations for feminist theorizing.

These epistemologies are not presented here as ready-made alternatives for empiricism, they also contain male-biased axioms. What they illustrate, however, is the existence of other feasible responses to the three core inquiries of epistemology: how we can know anything, the process whereby a subject can acquire knowledge; what it is that can be known, usually framed as the question of the nature of reality; and how knowledge is validated, the procedures and proof structures for certifying knowledge. Translated into everyday terms of “doing psychology,” the responses to these questions inform our working assumptions about the observer’s capacities as well as the subject’s actions. They determine what is to count as sound methods, reputable results, or an adequate theory. These are precisely the questions that cannot be examined seriously from the position of feminist empiricism. Yet once science is understood as social
relations (both in the sense of being constituted by particular social relations and maintaining particular social relations), the importance of exploring these questions become obvious. Writings of the feminist standpoint and postmodernism indicate how knowledge is produced within, through, and for certain social relations.

Feminist empiricist research in psychology has illustrated the tenacity of these social relations, especially through the gendered nature of knowledge production and the binds of reflexivity. But that research tradition also can teach us strategies for altering social relations and ultimately its associated epistemological foundations—that is, the unfortunate experiences of using empiricist practices can inform us about alternative strategies; they signal when and where working within conventional practices will not work. They demonstrate that feminists cannot rely on abstract, universal proof structures and presumptions about some incorrigible audience of reasonable and unbiased empiricists. Likewise, the experiences of feminist psychologists highlight the limits of some of our social relations of work: marginality, isolation, and limited prospects for generating new researchers. These experiences, coupled with a social-relational understanding of science, can guide the construction of new epistemologies through the imagination and testing of different work practices.

Feminist Psychology and Practice

How might feminism in psychology influence the normative constituents of knowledge making? This question is best approached by considering in turn each of the three core features of epistemology: who is the knower, what can be known, and how knowledge is established. Replacement of the traditional positivist account of these features can be guided by the experiences of women in science. The search need not, in fact should not, be expected to result in another abstract epistemological code of conduct; the consequences of women’s seduction and adherence to such codes stand as a lesson well learned. By addressing each of the core features and attending to the tensions produced by various recipes for their preparation, we might instead contemplate practices that recognize and constructively utilize tensions and contradictions. We can benefit by the often painful awareness of how social relations of power are reproduced in professional practices as well as personal life. Such awareness makes it possible to find new meanings in scientific activities, say, in a colleague’s allegiance to professional or institutional rules. With this recognition we can develop strategies that challenge and eventually transform those rules of appropriate scientific activity. The strategic practices implied here are really the core of my thinking about where feminist efforts might be most needed and, hopefully, most effective. A personal understanding of how social relations structure who and what counts as valid and authentic, not to mention worthy and laudable, is an essential prerequisite to altering those relations of power.

Feminist scholarship has repeatedly demonstrated that how and what we come to know depends on who we are. The conception of an adequate knower bequeathed to us from the Enlightenment philosophies is rational, reasonable, removed from the physical context of body, time, and place; that knower is gendered male. These gendered conceptions of the ideal knower attest to what women social scientists have learned by virtue of their professional marginality: We are situated knowers, located within a dynamic social structure. It has become apparent that knowing is relational, that it is dependent on the person’s participation and position within a community of would-be knowers. Knowing also is historical: it is a transitory process dependent on one’s location within a temporally bound context. Finally, reflexivity, both phenomenal and critical, is instrumental to how we know. These observations on knowing break with
the traditional axiom that the knower is separate from what is known. They nicely imply that inconsistencies and instabilities in knowing are not necessarily error but are no more or less than the consequence of the fact that knowing bodies exist in specific places, times, and social circumstances. Knowing is no less valid in this conception, and the tentativeness as well as partiality of the knower and knowing become a potential in the generation of new knowledge.

The exploration of women’s particular positions as knowers within the Western philosophic tradition stands as a case in point. Women’s knowing has often been referred to as a double viewing: a bifurcated consciousness where we see in two different ways, as participating agents in intellectual work and as marginalized observers [as scientists and as women]. Double viewing marks our situation as fractured historical identities, as actors and subjects in the social relations of science. It disrupts the conception of scientists as autonomous individuals.

Feminist studies have revealed with equal clarity the gendered nature of what is known. Just within the program of feminist empiricism exists a strong indictment of the subject of modern psychology. Historical analysis of educational philosophy reveals that the entire Western tradition of learning presupposes not only masculine forms of learning but of what is to be learned: education concerns the productive world of knowing but not the reproductive (Martin, 1985). The reality we have sought to know is gendered in fundamental ways. Critical studies of the social sciences, which include not only feminist analyses, have located a latent Other behind all objects of inquiry, typically that other is the feminine (or nonwhite, non-European). The identification of this presupposed other forces a more candid admission that the final object of knowing is the self or selves. Thus, even when inquiry focuses on some object distinct from oneself, that object is made real by virtue of its relation to self; it is a matter of difference.

At least two strategies emerge from these reformulations of the knowing subject and the object of knowledge. First, an under-
and strategies we have discussed do indicate some core features of such guidelines. First, standards of research will necessarily be pluralist, enabling different researchers or research communities to produce knowledge that is sensitive to the context and history of the specific subject as well as the identities of the researchers themselves. Just as we have recognized that gender cannot have the same meaning or consequences for women of all races and classes at all times, so observational statements might be assessed from a compatible pluralist perspective. Perhaps, for instance, we might experiment with assessing the affinity of observational statements rather than the older criterion of correspondence or identity. Related to pluralist standards is the necessity of flexible and revisable rules of research; indeed, the strategies proposed begin with a challenge of the validity of conventional rules. Even aside from feminist scholarship, it has been shown that psychology has demonstrated an unbecoming rigidity in its adherence to abstract, unquestioned rules for validating knowledge [Leahy, 1980]. Thus, for instance, feminist recognition of contradictions and inconsistencies in knowledge claims offers a basis for proposing intelligibility as a more adequate guide to work standards than the conventional expectations of comprehensiveness or generality [Shortland, 1986]. Finally, language is a serious concern, not only in terms of the function of narratives in making and confirming scientific claims, but also in disclosing multiple identities in science. In science, conversations of persuasion traditionally have advantaged masculine performances [Moulton, 1983] and have privileged certain voices in the hierarchy of research communities [Addleson, 1983]. The actual and possible uses of language, then, must be a primary consideration in restructuring the evaluation of research.

Toward Practice

Thinking about transformed proof structures moves us toward the speculative. Although speculation and fantasy are crucial to feminist movements [Caplan, 1987; Morawski, 1988b], the argument underlying my analysis of strategies is that it all depends on practice, on what we do. In order to overcome the impasses of empiricism it is necessary that we alter our work practices and construct new social relations along with the new scientific narratives [Fee, 1986; Haraway, 1986; Mies, 1983]. Given that scientific practices are comprised simply of ordinary and everyday actions, a feminist psychology depends on a reflexive vigilance over what we do in our day-to-day lives as feminist scientists. We need to monitor our ordinary actions as scientists, noting where these actions align themselves with science, which has been gendered male. And we need to guide our actions to disrupt and reconstruct these gender-coded alignments. If we can change how we evaluate a colleague’s work or our own, initiate cooperative activities, consider the significance of solidarity, and give voice to our subjectivities and unspoken experiences, then we can continue work on a feminist science.

REFERENCES


