Dear Student

Welcome to the course, Research Methods in Gender Studies (4645) 3 credit course comprising of 9 units. This is the allied material of the course which is to be studied in accordance with the Study Guide and text book "Exploring Research".

Introduction of the Course

The course, Research Methods in Gender Studies 4645 is one of the 3 credit courses for M.Sc. and Diploma in Gender & Women Studies Program. The department also offers this course as a certificate course.

Objectives of the course

Hopefully, after completion of the course you will be able to:

1. Discuss basic concepts of research.
2. Explain research and research process.
3. Compare feminist research methods with traditional social research methods.
4. Discuss the guidelines for feminist research.
5. Explain the use and types of quantitative and qualitative methodology research.
6. Specify the significance for review of literature and sources of information for research study.
7. Explain major guide lines for writing research report.

How to study

The study material for this course comprises of a Study Guide, a text book "Exploring Research" and (this) Allied Material. The course outline spreads over 9 units. And for each unit selected articles related to the related to the topics have been included in the allied / study material. Each unit requires one week's study. If you spend two units daily to study your course you can complete the course in eighteen weeks. In mid of the study period a workshop will also be held which is an effort to help you to prepare for examinations and meet peer group and listen to the subject experts and exchange knowledge.
Please do not confine yourself to the materials, which are being supplied by the university. To enhance knowledge at postgraduate level the students are expected to extensively use library and internet.

**Tutors Guidance**

In distance learning system basically the students have to study on their own. However, if there is a viable group of 10-15 students the university does appoint a part time or a correspondence tutor. Part them tutors hold tutorial meeting in study centers established by the university. The students are required to regularly attend these fortnightly meetings. Other wise you are assigned a correspondence tutor who not only checks your assignment but you are encouraged to be in contact with the tutors for guidance regarding the course as is convenient for both of you. The regional office as well as your tutor will inform you about the appointment of the tutor.

**Assessment and evaluation**

According to university system your performance in the course will be evaluated through tow modes that are:

- Home Assignment
- Final Examination

You will be required to do two assignments for this course. The assignments are spread over course units and according to the schedule provided in your student kit, each assignment is to be submitted to the tutor for evaluation.

The main objective of the assignment is to encourage you to study and appraise your performance. The Tutor’s assessment will guide you for the preparation of your next assignment.

The marks obtained in assignments add up to the final examination. The papers for final examinations are prepared based on the complete course. The final examination are held in specified examination centers. For passing a course one has to pass both the components of assessment that are take home assignments and final examination.

Best of Luck

Mrs. Atifa Nasir
Course Coordinator
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Back into the personal or: Our attempt to construct feminist research, by Liz Stanley &amp; Sue Wise in Theories of Women Studies (eds) Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein 1989 published by Rutledge. New York</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Methodological considerations in field research: by Patricia Green-Powell in Oral Narrative Research with Black Women. Sage Publications London.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Introduction: Is there a feminist method? By Sandra Harding, in Feminism and Methodology, Open University Press Milton Keynes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Feminism and Research Practice: by Mary Maynard and June Purvis In Researching women Lives from feminist perspectives. Taylor &amp; Frances press. London 1994.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Methodologies: Re-visualizing the World: Rubina Saigol, 1993 paper presented in workshop on women Studies in Pakistan</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Epistemological Questions: by Sandra Harding, in Feminism and Methodology, open University Press Milton Keynes</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 Is Feminism a Threat to Scientific objectivity by Rubina Saigol, 1993 Methodologies: re-visualizing the World paper presented in workshop on women Studies in Pakistan?</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Towards a methodology for feminist research by Maria Mies , in Theories of Women Studies (eds) Gloria Bowles</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Qualitative Research Methods Overview: retrieved on 14/4/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Researching on Women and Work: Reflections on the interview process and interview skills Rosario Undurraga, Department of Sociology, Unviersity of Warwick (retrieved on 14-4-10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>The Quantitative / Qualitative Debate and Feminist Research: A Subjective view of objectivity: By Nicole Westmarland, Vol 2, No. 1(2001): Qualitative and Quantitative Research Conjunctions and Divergences (retrieved on 14-4-10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BACK INTO THE PERSONAL OUR ATTEMPT TO CONSTRUCT 'FEMINIST RESEARCH'

Liz Stanley and Sue Wise

Our feminist research

Like most academic feminists, we are involved in a search for a way of doing research, and of writing about this, that will encapsulate feminism. W attempt to relate feminist principles and beliefs to living feminism within everyday life, to living as feminists doing research, and we have written about this in our book, Breaking Out (1983). The purpose of this paper is to draw together more succinctly some of our ideas about why and how such links between beliefs life and research might be made. Although this sounds somewhat grandiose, we see it as one of the prime tasks of academic feminism in the social sciences.

For us, feminism is a way of living our lives rather than a set of beliefs a style of revolutionary rhetoric or a means of analysis. Indeed, we believe that it is only within the doing of feminism that any feminist revolution lies. By this we mean that 'the feminist revolution' isn't anything that'll occur some Thursday (or Saturday or ...) in March (or September or ...). It is occurring — now. It occurs as and when women, individually and together, hesitantly and rampanth joyously and with deep sorrow, come to see our lives differently and to reject externally imposed frames of reference for understanding these lives, instead beginning the slow process of constructing our own ways of seeing then understanding them, and living them. For us, the insistence on the deeply politic; nature of everyday life and on seeing political change as personal change is, quite simply, 'feminism' Women are oppressed' is a truism which we believe needs critical explication because, while self-evident to feminists on one level, on another it hides a multitude of complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions. This, and similar truisms, need examining through a close scrutiny of the fabric of our everyday lives. It doesn't need yet more generalised statements and assumptions made about it but instead examination of it. We believe that the present style of feminist theory, with its vast generalizations about 'the family' 'patriarchy'
and other structural abstractions based on yet more vast assumptions about 'women's' experiences (always, other women's) has landed us with theory, research, and a style of doing both, that is traditional, structural, and fundamentally anti-feminist. Feminism is no unitary phenomenon and within the feminist body politic there are, to put it mildly, disagreements. Feminists can treat those women who don't agree with us as falsely conscious, stupid, malicious, as not 'real,' 'right-on' feminists. Or we can start off from the assumption that they're probably just as sensible and well-meaning as we are, and try to examine how such disagreements arise. And as we say this about disagreements between feminists, so we say it about those between women who define themselves as feminists and those who don't. We believe that these arise from material differences in women's lives. By 'material differences' we mean real events and experiences in women's lives. Our materialist analysis isn't one which separates off the 'subjective' social world from the 'objective' one, idealism from materialism, nor involvement and emotion from reason and analysis. Therefore, we find preferable a definition of 'material which accepts as axiomatic that if something is real in its consequences then it is real to the person experiencing those consequences. Closely connected to these ideas is our understanding that the notion of 'false consciousness', with its underlying assumption of lower and higher states of consciousness, is basically positivist in nature. In brief, positivism is an ontological approach, a way of seeing and constructing the world, which insists that 'physical' and 'social worlds are in all essentials the same. Positivism claims that in any occurrence there is one true set of events ('the facts') which is discoverable by reference to witnesses of various kinds, including people as 'eye witnesses' and material evidence of other kinds. It describes social reality as 'objectivity constituted' and so insists that there is one true 'real reality. And it suggests that researchers can objectively find out this real reality because they remove themselves from involvement in what they study. Basic to these assumptions is the 'subject/object' dichotomy. Positivism sees what is studied as an 'object'. The subject' is the researcher, and she can stand back from the object/s of study (people), can look at it/them objectively and dispassionately. And sometimes implicit, but frequently explicit, within the positivist canon of belief is also a sanctification of the power relationship between researcher and researched. Positivism sees the researcher/theoretician as more compeiem, because more oojieHive, m uiiueisiauung ULUCl other people's) than are the people who live them. The ability to do this is seen a the prerogative of only 'the scientific mind', trained and operating within; scientific ethic which insists on scrupulous removal of commitment and value. Closely associated with this is positivism's negative orientation to 'this particular', the specific, and to lived experience of all kinds. It eschews the particular, seeing it as over particular and thus as incapable of generating generalisations from the few to the many. It sees individual experience an essentially subjective and therefore not properly 'scientific' unless collected together to produce generalizations.
Both as feminists and as social scientists we find these aspects of positivism objectionable. Few of our objections, if any, are unique to us and derive from a flourishing critique of positivism within the social sciences. We reject the idea that scientists, or feminists, can become experts in other people's lives. And we reject the belief that there is one true real reality to become expert about. We feel that feminism's present renaissance has come about precisely because many women have rejected other people's (men's) interpretations of on lives. Feminism insists that women should define and interpret our own experiences, and that we need to redefine and re-name what other people (men experts) have previously defined and named for us. And so feminism argues the 'the personal', lived experience, is intensely political and immensely important politically. Each of these aspects of feminism stands in opposition to the basic tenets of positivism. Feminism either directly states or implies that the personal is the political; that the personal and the everyday are important and interesting and must be the subject of feminist inquiry; that other people's realities mustn't be downgraded, sneered at or otherwise patronised; that feminists must attempt to reject the scientist/person dichotomy and, in doing so, must endeavour to dismantle the power relationship which exists between researchers and researched.

And as we see feminism so we see, and try to construct, feminist research. We not only want to do research, we also want to 'be researchers' in the same way that we try to 'be feminists'. We don't see our feminism as something which we simply add into an established way of doing anything, including research. We believe that feminist research should be the doing of feminism in another context. We don't believe that 'doing feminist research' requires activities or procedure other than those which we ordinarily use in ordinarily understanding ourselves and people and as feminists in the social world.

Other feminist researchers are attempting to grapple with the same problem of how to do feminist research. Interestingly and insightfully though these attempts are, they leave out any detailed account of the process by which research
uui. we uoni mean what 'technique' was used when, in order to find out what, but rather the interaction that takes place between the researcher and the researched (whether other people, or books, or statistical tables or ...), including the ways in which researchers come to know and understand what we do. The position of the researcher, as the source of 'what we, the readers, know about this research', is left inviolate.

Feminist research must confront these issues. The personal must be included as much more than data fodder, for understanding our experience of our everyday lives is crucial in understanding our oppression. And 'everyday life' is after all what we spend our lives doing. What people spend their lives doing must obviously be the subject of research; what all women (including feminists) spend our lives doing must obviously be the subject of feminist research.

Closely connected to this is our belief that the process of research must be central to any account of 'feminist research'. This is because without including an account of this process the sources of the researcher's knowledge are hidden from scrutiny. We don't know how or why she claims to know what she does; and she remains hidden although central. A consequence of prime importance for feminism is that here the power relationship between researchers and researched remains fundamentally unchanged and unchallenged.

We feel very strongly that these issues are crucially important. Firstly, our belief that 'the personal is the political' demands that we take a principled stand on them. Secondly, we believe that without confronting them the most important, and certainly the most interesting, aspects of research are omitted from 'the research' as it is reported and made public. For us an explication of how/why (we see these as indivisible) researchers come to know what we do is the most intellectually demanding feature of any research. It is also within such an explication of the bases of knowledge that alternative means of using 'the personal' are to be found.

But of course in order to examine 'the personal' in this way it's necessary to locate not only the researched but also the researcher, thus making her extremely vulnerable in ways usually avoided by researchers like the plague. We now try to explain this Vulnerability in more detail as it is central to later sections of this paper.

Feminist research as we envisage it wouldn't be concerned with replicating existing social science through the inclusion of women. It would instead explore the bases of our everyday knowledge as women, as feminists and as social scientists. It would do this by starting from the experiences of the researcher as a person in a situation. Researchers, like all new members of situations, have to find out what's going on in them. How we find out, how we come to know what members of it know is what feminist research should be concerned with. And in doing this we must make available to others the reasoning procedures which
underlie the knowledge produced out of 'research'. We must say how we find out what we do, and not just what we find out. Traditionally, social science identifies people's understandings of their experiences as deficient or incompetent. The only certain way to avoid doing this is to move away from presenting 'them' as the focus of the research and instead present ourselves in the form of our understandings about what's going on, by examining these in any given context. We must make ourselves vulnerable and not hide behind what they are supposed to think and do.

'Vulnerability' thus makes absolutely, explicit the centrality of researchers in all research processes. All research necessarily comes to us through the active and central involvement of researchers, who necessarily interpret and construct what's going on. There is no other way to 'do' either research or life.

We find such an approach to research preferable to any other, but not because we claim for it any greater facility in getting at 'truth' at real reality. We find it preferable because it openly eschews any allegiance to ideas about truth, instead being concerned to present 'this, how I understand it': This is what is frequently written off as subjectivity, although we don't see it as in any way inferior to or even very different from what's presented to us as 'objectivity'.

We aren't suggesting research concerned only with the researcher as an atomised individual, nor with recording her innermost sensations and feelings. We believe that people are social beings and that 'the individual' is rather to be seen as a member of society. It has been suggested to us that what we're proposing is mere self-indulgence. While rejecting the 'mere', we also believe that it is self-indulgent to do anything other than what we suggest. Most social science research, and most feminist research, has been riddled with the self-indulgences of people who have refused to face up squarely to their own active involvement within the central processes of constructing research. Vulnerability, as we see it, is no easy, sloppy or self-involved exercise in relating inner thoughts, feelings and fantasies, it involves us in a disciplined, scholarly and rigorous explication of the bases of our knowledge by tying in such an explication to a detailed analysis of the contexts in which such knowledge is generated.

The personal is the political' rules, OK?

We've argued that to omit 'the personal' is to omit the central intellectual and practical experiences of research. This is particularly regrettable in feminist research, for research which involves women necessarily involves the feminist researcher in issues concerning her relationship with them, and research which involves men necessarily involves the feminist researcher in experiences of sexism. Our particular research involved men and experiences of sexism of the grossest kind, being concerned with obscene phone calls. However, even in less aituauuna suuiciu,
t mutexii inui suuue, experiences or sexism occur. That we discuss a particularly gross example of sexism in no way invalidates the point we make: rather it makes the point particularly clearly because it uses such an extreme example. We believe that wherever research involves people, whether in the flesh or in books, issues about sexism arise and similar possibilities for exploring these exist.  

Our experiences of obscene phone calls weren't produced as part of any academic exercise. Their occurrence was linked to our involvement in the gay movement in Britain. Between 1971 and about 1976 our home telephone number was a contact number for several local gay groups, and for most of this time it was a contact number for the local lesbian group we were involved in. The obscene calls originate from the time it became exclusively associated with the lesbian group. For a period of time in 1975 and 1976 our number was very widely advertised and during this time we received up to forty obscene calls a day.  

The obscene phone calls dominated our lives. They could, and did, occur at any time of the day and night and thus, in a purely physical sense, intruded on our lives to a very marked degree. The calls dominated our lives in another sense too, because to be subjected to a constant barrage of obscenity and sexually-objectifying threats and remarks is to experience 'sexism' and 'women's oppression' in a very direct way indeed. Few women who have not experienced them can appreciate exactly how threatening and disturbing is the sexual assault that an obscene call constitutes. We spent a great deal of our lives thinking about the obscene calls and in particular what they told us about the nature of the oppression of lesbians, what they told us about the oppression of women generally and what they told us about the links between the two.  

A lot of people appear to see obscene phone callers as sexually frustrated and pathetic little men, as men who are in some sense not responsible for their actions. Some indeed see their activities as victim-precipitated. However, we came to see that the men who rang us were in no way pathetic or to be pitied. We insist that what such men say must be treated absolutely seriously at its face-value, as presented to us by them. Obscene phone callers deliberately and consciously choose to verbally assault particular women in the most violent ways. In doing so, they mouth absolutely clearly their utmost contempt for all women. They insist that all women are nothing but objects, holes between legs, cunts, to be used. The publication of our telephone number gave them the opportunity to articulate this contempt in anonymity and so with no repercussion in the rest of their lives. Initially we saw the calls simply as an expression of the threat that many heterosexual men feel about lesbians. Later we were astonished to find that many gay men too experienced them as sexually arousing. In confidence, and usually in
less immediately objectionable terms, many men of all sexual orientations told us how they too found the calls sexually exciting, how they too were turned on by them. Soon it began to appear as though just about every man who heard about them shared the callers' feelings, not about lesbianism but about the relationship between sex and violence and the total desirability of a. the. any. erect penis.

From women the reaction was different but often no less disturbing to us. Most lesbians, whether homosexual or bisexual, feminist or not, saw elements of their own experiences with men reflected in the calls. But many heterosexual women we talked to have said that, while they can see that the calls may have been annoying or intrusive, they believe our feelings about the calls, and our analysis of them, are 'extreme' — over-reaction, paranoia from (man-hating?) lesbians. Such reactions from other feminists were very upsetting to us: they seem so very similar to the responses that people make to the feminist insistence that women are oppressed. Our feeling is that these women see our interpretations of the calls as not only invalid for them but also invalid for us. Our decision to end the research was partly due to our feelings about heterosexual "sisters" reactions as well as our weariness at being used as total sexual objects by callers.

Because of these research experiences our analysis of the basis of women's oppression changed. Our original understanding of women's oppression was a thorough-going idealism. It involved the belief that 'patriarchy' is an ideology reflected in institutions and negotiated through interactions. We came to adopt a 'materialist' theory of women's oppression as promulgated and presented to us by the callers themselves. We now think that women's oppression is derived from phallocentrism. The obscene phone callers identify power and the penis as in some sense synonymous. They also express very clearly indeed their belief that those without penes, those who are or who can be penetrated by penes, are without power and therefore are the legitimate objects of their contempt, there merely for use by those who have the penis and thus power. In a very real sense indeed the callers see penis-possessors as 'people' and those without them as less than fully human.

We 'adopted' this theory because we came to understand that people's stated motives and interpretations are, because they're stated, important to them. Because of this, they are to be taken seriously and studied. Our feeling is that sexist men are a perfectly valid, and very useful, source of information about sexism. In other words, we came to take other people and their understandings as seriously as we take our own.

We see this shortened account of our research on obscene phone calls as an appropriate means of conveying, as immediately and convincingly as we know how, that the researcher's 'personal' is absolutely central to the research process. We believe that discussions of experience grounded in a context do this more
successiuly man any aotact account eanl. An abstract account would have Deen very different. For a start it would have excluded us as lesbians, which would have fundamentally altered many aspects of what we said and how we said it. It would also have excluded any account of the many ways in which we changed our opinions, actions and theoretical understandings, including our understanding of women's oppression, for without including 'us' as 'subjective' persons there would have been nothing to center this around.

What we've described here is a very crude and superficial way of examining 'the personal'. All we've outlined have been some of the more obvious things that occurred in our work on obscene phone calls. However, it is absent from most research, most feminist research too, although it constitutes only a minimal way of accounting for 'the personal' and is a first step only.

We now go on to briefly examine how and why feminist research can go further in recovering the personal. In essence, we see this as going back into the everyday in order to explicate all the many features of it, rather than the call to 'go beyond' the personal (as though this were possible) demanded by some.11

Back into the personal

We've stated, as clearly and unequivocally "as we can, our conviction that the essence of feminism lies in its re-evaluation of the personal' and its insistence on the location of 'politics' and 'revolution' within the minutiae of the everyday. If we take this insistence on the importance of the everyday seriously, and we believe that feminists ought, then we need the means to research it. Part of this 'means' lies within what is already immediately available to us — our consciousness of ourselves as women and feminists within sexist society12 the other lies within more technical aspects of explicating the personal. However, both the ambivalent relationship between academic feminism and the WLM in Britain13 and the assumption that consciousness-raising and exploring 'the personal' are synonymous, has occasioned a general reluctance (to put it no stronger) to look for, examine, try out, other means of explicating the everyday. We believe there's been a general flight of academic feminists into 'theoretical' and eminently traditional forms of analysis.

In case there's any misunderstanding about this, we should say we're in no way opposed to theorizing as such. We've already said that all people (even academics) theories out of the stuff of our everyday lives. What we are opposed to is what we call 'de-corticated' theory. This kind of theory is based on general principles arrived at independently of any detailed examination of the facts or phenomenon to be explained. It is essentially speculative and concerned with abstractions, not knowledge grounded in living experience. For us, such an approach yields over-generalised mush. It sounds clever and academically
Respectfully determinedly mystifies and is applicable to no one and nothing in particular. As an alternative to this we're looking for an approach which combines the analysis of substantive work with theory which arises out of this, rather than seemingly separating theory and experience. We say 'seemingly' because of course all theory is experientially based, although this uncomfortable fact is normal. bracketed away. And so we're particularly interested in looking to those approaches which share with feminism its interest in the personal and in focusing on the everyday as a topic in its own right.

There are a number of existing social science approaches which start from people's experiences of and within everyday life and which treat these absolutely seriously. By 'seriously' we mean that they accept that experiences and understandings are absolutely valid for the person providing them. Of course these approaches contain their own share of sexism. However, we feel that their basic assumptions about the validity and importance of the everyday have much more in common with our kind of feminism than structural and other positivis approaches do.

We feel that academic feminism has gratuitously dismissed the possibilities of those perspectives which focus on the personal, accept the validity of experience, and see the need to concentrate academic work on the everyday as a topic in its own right. Of course we recognise that any 'alliance' between feminism and any other perspective is fraught with danger, particularly the danger of (attempted or successful) takeover, of the colonisation of feminism. And so are we proposing any such alliance. We're first, foremost, and last, feminists: no feminist-phenomenologists, feminist-Marxists or feminist hyphen anything else our interest and concern is with feminism and feminist revolution. And because of this we believe that feminism should borrow, steal, change, modify and use for its own purposes any and everything from anywhere that looks of interest and use to it, but that we must do this critically.

Both of us arrived at our ideas about 'recovering the personal' through explicating our everyday experiences by using various ideas and insights for ethnomethodology, drawn out of our initial interest in symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is concerned with everyday life and with face-to-face relationships of all kinds, whether these are interactions on the street, within institutions, between lovers or those which lead to changes in interest rates an the mobilisation of armies. It adopts a non-deterministic attitude towards social life and interaction. Because of this it rejects the idea that people's actions are the result of imprinting, 'instinct' or 'socialisation'. Instead it sees social action as the result of interaction, in which people make decisions — decisions about what to do, how to do it, what to say, how to react, taking into account as they do so their impressions they make on other people. Another key feature of interactionism that it insists that structures are to be found witin these processes,
uuesu 'structure' as any mechano like thing hovering around, above and within us. Instead it sees social structures as social constructions produced within and by everyday interactions. It rejects the idea that 'structure' is somehow more than 'social life'.

Symbolic interactionism was the means of sensitizing us to a view of reality we'd never come across before. And this is one in which 'oppression' isn't seen as any once and for all event, explained by events 'back there', in childhood, in infancy, or any other 'stage'. Within interactionism people are seen as actively constructing, negotiating, interacting — not just passively 'enacting'. However, while learning a great deal from interactionism, we later came to feel that many versions of it retain a positivist adherence to 'science' and 'objectivity' and insist that a clear distinction can and must be made between the objective researcher and the people she studies. An approach which seemed, and seems, to avoid these, grosser aspects of interactionism, which was both 'there' and available to us when we were searching for an alternative, was ethnomethodology.¹⁶

Frequently, ethnomethodology is seen as over-jargonised or else simplistic, irrelevant and concerned with bourgeois trivia. Sometimes it is downgraded as 'fag sociology' — 'sociology without balls' seems to be the message here. For this reason alone it is attractive to us. Something which so arouses the scorn and disgust of social scientists because of its 'effeminacy' is an obvious candidate for feminism's interest and support. Why other social scientists feel so threatened we can only guess at. Our guess is that ethnomethodology's concentration on the everyday brings social science a bit too close to home. And particularly so because it also insists that 'social science methods' are the methods all of us use in making sense of the everyday (what ethnomethodology calls 'the documentary method of interpretation'). As long as social science remains about 'structure', 'theory' and 'other people' like car workers, middle management and so forth, then it remains a profession like any other, a job based on specialized knowledge and specialized techniques. But when it focuses on more personal concerns, then it also promises to turn some attention on social scientists ourselves. And when it also suggests that mere people, untrained, unspecialized people, use essentially scientific methods in going about their everyday business, then it 'goes too far'.¹⁷

Ethnomethodology takes the everyday as both the topic of its research and also the resource with which it works. It uses the everyday, through the documentary method of interpretation, in order to find out about and understand the everyday. It doesn't lay claim to special expertise over other people's lives, nor does it attempt to falsify people's experiences by downgrading them as 'false consciousness'. In doing this it argues that most social science has confused 'tonic' with 'resource'. Conventional social science, it suggests, uses 'data' iiisicau ttigues nun uaiia snoui u oe usea as a
topic i its own right. This idea suggests that we shouldn't fuse people and their lives with unexplained data; we should instead explicate these. We should examine in close detail how people provide themselves and others with the accounts that they do the emphasis in ethnomethodology is on understanding how people construe (not interpret) reality. That is, it is on understanding how we 'do' everyday life.

In explaining how ethnomethodology sees the researcher going about this 'explication', the term 'members' is crucially important. This is because 'membership' involves the idea of a shared body of knowledge about the sock world, shared in common between the people who are party to it. And so 'membership' stems from one of its most basic propositions. This is that the social world is seen and experienced by us all as a factual reality, as an objective reality existing outside ourselves which constrains our behaviors. It isn't saying this there are sets of concepts inside of us, 'internalised', which we simply release into interaction; nor does it say that we all share exactly the same 'objective reality'. It goes beyond this to argue that such concepts and beliefs are used by us and other in appropriate ways in appropriate settings, and that by 'doing' these we both give accounts of them and at the same time, we so construct the reality these are accounts of.

How researchers go about understanding the data that is life is ethnomethodology insists, precisely the same way that all other members of society go about knowing what they know and doing what they do. We use the documentary method. This is a method, one used by all of us all the time, although it may be (perhaps) used more consciously and deliberately, by us as social scientists than by us-as-members. The idea of the documentary method suggests that we look for 'evidence' of what's going on, of what the events in hand are and what we should be doing within them as competent members. We use events-, conversation, ways of looking, and a whole variety of other material evidence as precisely evidence, and we use this as 'evidence which stands 01 behalf of... a whole body of knowledge which we deduce from this small part.

To suggest that social science methods are 'merely' members' methods is of course, totally unacceptable for many, perhaps most, social scientists. Most of us have an enormous amount invested in our professional expertise and use our technical procedures seen as far superior to anything which 'people' can muster. This expertise is seen by many social scientists as setting us apart from the people we do research on. People 'do life' but social scientists understand, interpret am use it. However, ethnomethodology rejects the notion that there is any sharj distinction between members' and social science approaches; there are no dichotomies, only gradations. And this we view very sympathetically because we feel it accords well with the egalitarian ethos of feminism.
We believe that feminist social science must begin with the recognition that 'the personal', lived experience, underlies all behaviours and actions. We need to find out what it is that, as women and feminists, we know. We need to reclaim, name and re-name our experience and thus our knowledge of this social world that we live in and daily help to construct, because only by doing so will it become truly ours, ours to use and do with as we will. The social world we presently inhabit is one we conceptualise through a worldview provided by a sexist society and a thoroughly androcentric social science. We need to construct our own; and we see this process beginning from an explication of women's experiences of women's social realities. Without starting here we believe we can have no truly feminist social science: we can have only a social science in which women's lives are researched and analyzed using the same old conceptual frameworks, methods of research and analytic models.

Women are social beings. We live in a social world with other social beings and merely living requires that we behave in social ways. We interact with other people at all times, both physically and in our minds. It is all of these social actions which should properly be the concern of a feminist social science. The self is a social self and feminist research should be concerned with the social processes we're immersed within and help construct. As we go about our lives we do the things we do for good reasons, reasons which are ordinarily accessible to ourselves and to other people for critical examination and analysis. This is what we ordinarily do as ordinary members of society. We see the present process of becoming a professional social scientist as training in how to disguise or dismiss this.

Feminist social scientists must relearn how to do this, but to do it deliberately and without shame. Instead of bracketing such processes away, pretending that they don't happen, we need to explore what it is that we know about the social world and how we behave and relate within it. These things become accessible to us as we go into situations and try to find out what's happening in them. We can write this accessibility out of our research but we believe that in doing so we lose a great deal, and a great deal that is of paramount importance in the achievement of feminist revolution.

We need to know how, in minute detail, all facets of the oppressions of all women occur, because if we are to resist oppression then we need to understand how it occurs. We believe that liberation has to start somewhere. We can't, and we won't, leap into a liberated world overnight, after the revolution. We must necessarily affect many small liberations in many small, seemingly insignificant, aspects of our lives or we shall never start 'the revolution' nor even recognize it happening around us.
METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN FIELD RESEARCH

Six Case Studies

PATRICIA GREEN-POWELL

In this chapter, I discuss technique and methodological orientations to field research and the implications of these for decisions affecting setting, recording modes, participant observation, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The principal field research method discussed is naturalistic observation.

To fully comprehend the research setting, a plethora of questions must be addressed, including the following: (a) what environmental factors contribute to the career advancement of black women in educational administration? (b) What are the perceived barriers to black women's progress toward the principalship? (c) What are the perceived facilitators to black women's progress toward the principalship? And (d) What role, if any, do mentors play in helping black women obtain.

Positions in educational administration? An understanding of the setting is dependent on the way research questions are defined and on the precision and relevance of the language used to frame them. Recording observations, impressions, and interactions may be accomplished through multiple modes.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: The pseudonyms chosen for the six case study profiles in this chapter are Ida B. Wells, Billie Holiday, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Madam C. J. Walker, and Mary McLeod-Bethune. The nationally recognized work of these six historically prominent women was not intended, however, to parallel the work and accomplishments of the women included in this study.
Among these are tape recordings, field notes, and daily journaling. The tape recorder seems most appropriate when the purpose of the study is to explore complex issues in considerable depth with a limited number of respondents. It is important, however, for the researcher to support tape recordings of conversations and events with mental and written notations of impressions conveyed through nonverbal cues, passive behaviors, and nonevents.

The daily journal is recommended as a means of recording personal experiences and the researcher's reflections on those experiences. Journaling helps the researcher in developing a capacity for introspection and reflectivity and an enhanced cognizance of personal attitudes and emotions felt during the course of the research.

As a participant-observer, the researcher interacts with participants, both observing and partaking of their activities. He or she conducts informal interviews with them and others who are involved in the social environment under study and, through these involvements, reconstructs their reality.

The interview is the best method for capturing the feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of the participants under study. The advantage of the interview as a research tool is that it is possible for the researcher to talk directly with his or her subjects and to investigate their thinking firsthand. The format of the interview may vary. In standardized open-ended interviews, the interviewer must ask participants the same questions in the same sequence to reduce interviewer effect and bias. Standardizing questions, however, can constrain and limit the natural flow and relevancy of the response. In contrast, in the informal conversational interview, the questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of events.

Data analysis requires the researcher to capture the complexity of reality and to make convincing sense of it. One method of data analysis, grounded theory, entails the systematic and intensive analysis of data, often sentence by sentence or phrase by phrase, from the field notes, interviews, and other documents. In the technique of constant comparison, the hallmark of grounded theory analysis, data are extensively collected and coded by means of induction, deduction, and verification to produce a well-constructed theory.

Ethical procedures involve obtaining permission from the agency or organization, securing informed consent, preserving the anonymity of the participants, and securing the field notes and tape recordings. Ethical considerations also figure prominently in practices pertaining to trust building, maintaining confidentiality, and reporting results.

The methodological considerations introduced here are discussed in the context of six case studies conducted with black female principals in Florida. The facilitators and barriers affecting their progress toward the principalship provide
Research method simply by chance while developing the research topic for my doctoral dissertation. In the course of my graduate study, I enrolled in several research method classes in which qualitative research design and the oral narrative method were discussed at great length by various professors. Once began to read through several published dissertations that used the qualitative oral narrative research designs and gained experience through a research class practicum, I knew without a doubt that I wanted to conduct qualitative research.

While working as coordinator of academic programs in the College of Education at Florida State University, I interacted with many elementary-secondary-level school principals in the southern counties of the state. In seven of those districts, I noticed the absence of black female principals. I have, for number of years, been particularly interested in issues related to women in education. For days and months, I asked myself several questions concerning the lack of black female representation in principalship positions, including, Why barriers exist? and How salient is each barrier for preventing women, particularly black women, from entering school administration? By the same token, a few schools did have black principals, so I wanted to know how they got then Historical record has shown that women have always been second choice in the selection of school leaders. This record was accurately reflected in the various counties I visited. I wanted to determine the reasons for this situation and to explore further. Hence, the doctoral research project had a framework.

METHODOLOGY

Obtaining Permissions
As stated earlier, ethical considerations are vital to conducting research. Informed consent, which implies that the subjects have a choice about whether to participate, was secured prior to data collection.

Permission from the participating school districts was obtained without difficulty. I encountered no difficulty, primarily because I had developed professional working relationship with the superintendents over the years while coordinating student-teacher placements for teacher-education students. Each school superintendent agreed to allow me to conduct the study in his district.

When I approached the research participants, each wanted to be assured of anonymity. To preserve their privacy, I assigned a pseudonym to each subject an informant and omitted the names of individual schools. Information collected about the participants was kept confidential. "Field notes and tape recordings were securely protected. I maintained the data, and no one else was allowed access to it.
One of the most intriguing experiences for me involved the assignment of pseudonyms to the six female subjects. These women, each of whom was employed in a visible role in the public school system, agreed to participate in the study only if anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Once I described my plan for using pseudonyms, they were convinced that they wanted to participate.

Because the research suggested that women and minorities are dramatically underrepresented in education administration, I suspected that these six women had revealing stories to tell about how they had acquired their respective positions and that they had succeeded only with some difficulty. After much deliberation, I decided to use the names of six black women whose names were familiar and who had made significant contributions to history. These women were also heroines in their own time.

Handling Personal Bias

I recognized the biases that I held in terms of affirmative action and equal opportunity practices, mentoring, and the career mobility of black women. Because my earlier employment had focused heavily on hiring practices and procedures and on career mobility, I took this background into account when making my observations and interpretations. It was my goal to represent the realities of what was observed as descriptively and accurately as possible while constantly monitoring for biases brought to the study.

I kept a daily journal in which I recorded "personal" experiences during the course of the study. This journal fostered introspection and generally helped me become more cognizant of my own attitudes and feelings so that I could remain alert to any personal biases that might have tainted the process.

Selecting the Site and Sampling Processes

Two public school districts in Florida were the targeted geographic locations for the study. These districts were selected because of their high percentage of black female principals. In one county, 25% of principals, or 4 out of 16 total, were black females (according to a Florida Department of Education representative interviewed in 1992). In the other county, 13.5% of principals, or 5 out of 37 total, were black females (according to information obtained in a 1992 interview at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission):

In addition, having grown up in one of the counties, I knew many of the administrators, principals, and teachers who participated in the study. I had also worked with administrators and principals in one of the counties in various educational endeavors, such as coordinating student teaching, planning inservice training, and promoting staff-development activities. This familiarity proved to be an advantage in gaining access to participants. I was careful, however, to guard against
the biases toward which such familiarity might predispose me as I collected and analyzed data and formed bonds of trust with the participants.

**Using Purposeful Sampling**

Merriam (1988) states that two types of sampling are used in research: probability *and* nonprobability. Because generalization from a statistical perspective is not the goal of qualitative case study research, nonprobability sampling is the method I used in this study. Non-probabilistic sampling is termed "purposeful sampling," according to Patton (1980, p. 100).

The population of interest for this study was a group of principals who fit the selected criteria of race (black), gender (female), and employment (public school principals). The participant selection process involved the following steps:

1. Identify black female principals of the district.
2. Contact all black female principals and introduce them to the study for the purpose of determining their interest in participation.
3. Schedule an interview with each.

During the interview, I discussed the parameters of the study with each principal to determine the willingness and ability of each to participate. Participation required that the principal be willing to interact with me in interview settings. The final sample consisted of six black females.

**Choosing the Research Design**

Qualitative research design was the method I chose for gathering data. This type of design is ideal when the researcher is interested in seeking insight, discovery, and interpretation, rather than testing hypotheses. In my research, the phenomena of facilitators and barriers to the progress of the six black women toward the principalship were investigated for the purpose of gaining insight and making discoveries about the means by which these six women gained entry into the principalship.

Qualitative designs are naturalistic in that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting. The research setting is a naturally occurring event, program, community relationship, or interaction that has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher.

The point of using qualitative methods is that an understanding of naturally occurring phenomena requires that they be observed in their naturally occurring states (Patton, 1980). The qualitative design in this study sought to "capture" what the female principals had to say in their own words in their "natural setting." Bogdan and Biklen (1982) identified five features of qualitative
research: (a) It is concerned with the context of the data gathering (the natural setting is the direct source of the data collected), (b) it serves primarily as descriptive research, (c) it is concerned with the research process, not merely with the outcomes or products, (d) theory emerges as the data are being gathered and grouped, and (e) it is concerned with participant meanings and perceptions. These features were the foundation of this research study.

**Adopting a Research Instrument**
The primary research instrument adopted for this study was the researcher acting as participant-observer. The role of the researcher as data collection instrument was guided by the following suggestions for collecting case study data:

1. The researcher should be able to ask appropriate questions and to interpret the answers.
2. The researcher should be a good "listener" and not be trapped by his or her own ideologies or preconceptions.
3. The researcher should be adaptive and flexible, so that newly encountered situations can be viewed as opportunities, not threats.
4. The researcher must have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, whether within a theoretical or policy orientation and even if in an exploratory mode. Such a grasp reduces to manageable proportions the relevant events and information to be sought.
5. The researcher should be unbiased by preconceived notions, including those derived from theory. The researcher should also be sensitive and responsive to contradictory evidence. (Yin, 1989, p. 63)

As participant-observer, I had the option of using several research methods simultaneously. In this study, data collection methods included document analysis, the interview, and direct observation.

**Using Multiple Sources of Evidence**
Case studies using multiple sources of evidence are rated more highly in terms of overall quality than those relying on a single source of information (Yin, Bateman, & Moore, 1983). Evidence for this case study was obtained from four sources: the researcher as participant-observer, document analysis, interviews, and direct observation.
Researcher as Participant-Observer
Using the participant-observer strategy, the researcher seeks to interact with the participants, observing and engaging in their activities with them and others who are involved in the social environment under study and, through these involvements, to reconstruct their reality.

Document Analysis
Document analysis in qualitative inquiry makes use of excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys (Patton, 1980). Documents provide valuable information because of what, the researcher learns directly by reading them. They can also provide the stimulus for questions that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing.

The documents analyzed included district affirmative action policies, practices, procedures, and plans, as well as human resource management development (HRMD) plans.

The Interview
The interview was the method most effective in capturing the feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of the black female principals under study. It may be noted that only in the study of human beings is it possible for the scientist (researcher) to talk with his or her subjects and investigate directly their thinking processes.

There are, according to Patton (1980), three basic types of interviews: (a) the informal, conversational interview, characterized by no set format of questions; (b) the general interview, in which the researcher has a predetermined set of questions to be explored with each participant; and (c) the standardized, open-ended interview that is "a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each participant the same questions with essentially the same words" (Patton, 1980, p. 198).

This study employed both the informal, conversational interview and the standardized, open-ended interview in gathering data. (See Appendix A at the end of this chapter for the orienting questions used during open-ended interviews with participants.)

' Through the interview process, I gained from the research participants their significant memories of the past and plans for the future. And because I was
interested in capturing deep and sensitive feelings, as well as the reasons for their feelings and perceptions, opinions, and attitudes, the informal, conversational interview and the open-ended interview provided the most effective methods of inquiry.

During the informal, conversational interview, the questions emerged from the immediate context and were asked in the natural course of a conversational exchange. During the open-ended interview, participants were asked the same questions in the same order. This technique served to reduce interviewer effects and bias; however, the use of standardized questions also, to some extent, constrained the process and limited the naturalness and relevancy of the response.

**Direct Observation**

Direct observation (with the researcher acting as an outside, non-participating observer) occurred at the school sites. Observations ranged from formal to casual data collection activities. I observed faculty meetings conducted by the six principals at the school sites, as well as the regular daily routine of each principal during workdays. Further, I observed and gathered data about the physical environment, which is often an important factor in what happens within the environment.

**Maintaining Rigor**

Cuba and Lincoln (1981) offer alternative terms in describing the criteria for maintaining rigor in qualitative research. Instead of the terms *internal validity*, *external validity*, and *reliability*, as traditionally used in educational research, Cuba's study posited the terms *credibility* for internal validity, *fittingness* for external validity, and *auditability* for reliability. These sets of terms hold essentially the same meaning in discussions of whether a study is true, applicable, and consistent.

**Internal Validity/Credibility**

The *credibility* (Cuba, 1981), or internal validity, of an explanatory case study is based on establishing a causal relationship whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to the conditions, as distinguished from a spurious relationship (Yin, 1989). The criterion of credibility involves the question of how well the findings of the study match reality. One assumption in a qualitative case study is that humans make or perceive multiple realities.

In this study, the role of the researcher in ensuring credibility was to match
(a) the participants’ perceptions of reality in regard to the facilitators and barriers of progress toward the principalship with (b) perceptions indicated in the review of literature. Using triangulation, reviewing with participants the data and the researcher’s interpretation of the data, observing over an extended time, and involving the participants in some aspects of the study—all these practices helped ensure credibility.

**External Validity/Fittingness**

The criterion **fittingness** involves the question of whether the findings of the study can be applied to another situation (Merriam, 1988)—that is, how generalizable are the results of the study? The primary aim of a qualitative, case study like this one, however, is to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon or specific phenomena, rather than to generalize or state what is generally true across populations.

For the purposes of a qualitative case study, Cronbach (1975) and Patton (1980) proposed that "working hypotheses" replace the objective of generalizability in social science research. These working hypotheses, according to Patton (1980), "provide perspective rather than truth, empirical assessment of a local decision-maker's theories and context-bound information rather than generalizations" (p. 283).

Nevertheless, in an effort to meet the criterion of fittingness, or external validity, the following were included in the research design:

- Extensive descriptions of the time, place, context, county, community, and culture of each school and principal were presented.
- Lengthy and intrusive data collection occurred for 6 months.
- Participant language was used whenever possible in the final report to validate conclusions.
- A multiple case study approach with ethnographic data-gathering techniques and a grounded theory analysis was used.

**Reliability/Audibility**

The criterion of **audibility** involves the question. How consistent or dependable are the results of the study, given the data obtained? "Rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, one wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable" (Merriam, 1988, p. 173). To aid the researcher in achieving results that are auditable or dependable, the following guidelines have been suggested:

The investigator should explain the assumptions and theory behind
the study, his or her position vis-a-vis the group being studied, the group being studied, the basis for selecting informants and a description of them, and the social context in which data were collected (Goetz & Le-Compte, 1984).
Especially when multiple methods of data collection and analysis are used, triangulation strengthens reliability, as well as internal validity (Merriam, 1988).
The researcher should describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry. These methods should be presented in such detail "that other researchers could use the original report as an operating manual by which to replicate the study" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 216).

**Using Recording Modes**
Data were collected primarily through tape-recorded interviews. Tape recordings were needed to ensure the accurate and complete transcription of responses to the open-ended interview questions. The study depended on the accuracy and completeness of the record of what each principal said and how she said it. The tape recorder allowed for the fullest and most in-depth exploration of complex issues without loss or misrepresentation.
I actually looked forward to listening to the interviews after each session. I was particularly amused when one of the principals said to me, "Now turn the recorder off. I don't want this ever repeated or ever entered into your research. This statement may come back to haunt me." Another said, "Now what I am about to say does not need to ever be repeated, so turn off the machine. You and I may both go jail or get arrested."
Prior to each taped interview session, I checked all recording equipment. I did not want to risk tape recorder failure. I also traveled with a second recorder in my car, just in case I encountered problems with the first one.
The tape-recorded data were later transcribed, along with observer comments. Field notes were also taken so that nonverbal cues could be recorded and observer reflections made. In addition, I maintained a daily journal (see Appendix B at the end of this chapter for a journal sample). All transcripts, field notes, and observer comments were dated and kept on file for verification and audit purposes.

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**Performing Data Analysis**
Data analysis requires the/researcher to capture the complexity of reality
(phenomena) and to make convincing sense of it (Strauss, 1989). According to Strauss (1989), this process requires that, first, the researcher be guided by the participants' interpretations, the researcher's own interpretations of the participants' response, and the analysis of the data collected during the study. Second, the grounded theories generated by this type of study, which are the final products of data analysis, must involve combinations of many concepts and linkages among those concepts. Third-, the researcher must closely attend to and examine data in detail to discover the complexity of what is contained in and what is suggested beyond the data collected. This study used what Strauss describes as a grounded theory of analysis. Grounded theory is "a detailed grounding ... by systematically and intensively analyzing data, often sentence by sentence or phrase by phrase, of the field notes, interviews, or other documents; and ... by constant comparison, data are extensively collected and coded, using the operations of induction, deduction and verification, thus, producing a well constructed theory" (p. 22).

I used induction, deduction, and verification to explore and analyze the data. Induction (reaching a general conclusion by observing particular instances) refers to the process that leads to the discovery of a hypothesis. According to Strauss (1989), the insights, hunches, or generative questions that constitute the inquiry come from the researcher's experience with the phenomenon studied. Deduction (reaching a conclusion about particulars by reasoning from general/universal premises) requires not only the ability to think logically but also experience in thinking about the particular kinds of data under investigation. My research experience enabled me to think effectively and propositionally, to make comparisons that furthered the line of deduction. Verification (the process of establishing accuracy) involves the researcher's knowledge of the sites, events, actions, actors, procedures, and techniques. My knowledge was the result of personal and professional experience.

The concept-indicator model was used to direct the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators (the actual data), the data being such things as behavioral actions and events, observed or described in documents and in the words of the participants (Strauss, 1989). This model is based on the constant comparison of indicator to indicator, which requires that the researcher examine comparatively behavioral actions/ events and then "code" them by naming them as a class of events/ behavioral actions; each class named then becomes a coded category. The process of constantly comparing indicator with indicator enables the researcher to find similarities, differences, and consistencies among the indicators. Themes were generated from the data and an ongoing analysis as this
study discovered the perceptions that black women principals have regarding the facilitators and barriers to their attainment of principalships. The goal of this study was to gain insight into the experiences and environmental factors that contributed to career mobility, rather than to confirm or refute a particular theory of how these women gained their positions.

**Writing the Case Study Report**

**Focusing the Report**

This case study report focuses on analytic abstractions for the purpose of presenting a theory on the perceptions that black female principals have regarding the facilitators and barriers to their attainment of principalships. The presentation represents a commingling of theory and data.

In this study, the three major types of focus—the thesis, theme, and topic—as outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) were blended together; that is, the descriptions offered by the principals regarding facilitators and barriers to principalships give insights into present theories on methods for obtaining access to principalships and into the experiences that contribute to career advancement.

The use of a *thesis focus* assisted me in using the data to communicate how these principals gained access to principalships. Central to this study was the presentation of the major themes or "overarching concepts or theoretical formulations that emerged from the data analysis" (Merriam, 1988, p. 190).

In the *themes focus*, the themes of the study were used as frames, or "basic structural units," to illustrate the insights that these principals offered about the procedures and processes by which they entered the profession. These themes were "brought to a level of abstraction that made [the study] generally more applicable rather than an isolated concern" (Merriam, 1988 p. 191).

Further, this study had a *topic focus*. By describing the principals' perceptions of facilitators and barriers, the study provides insights about how access to positions of school principals may be gained. In addition, the role of social context was clearly depicted. This depiction provides critical information that contributes to the linking of theory and practice, with the knowledge of the "consumer" as a participant in the learning process.

**Planning for Trustworthiness**

To achieve valid and reliable results in this type of research study, I used a process of continuous, informal testing of information, called *member checks*. Lincoln and Cuba (1985) assert that the use of this process ensures truth, value, or
credibility. The investigator conducts member checks by (a) soliciting reactions and responses to his or her reconstruction of what has been said or otherwise found out and to the constructions offered by other respondents or sources and (2) employing a terminal, formal test of the final case report with a representatively sample of stakeholders.

A pilot study was conducted to test my proficiency in interviewing techniques. This exercise led to improvements in several areas of the interview process and thus to more productive interviews.

The pilot participant, who was not a study participant, was asked the same questions as the study participants. The purpose of the pilot study was to clarify the questions that were to be asked of the study's participants and to ascertain the feasibility of the questions and the length of time required for the interview. General comments and critiques were also requested from the pilot participant. Feedback from the pilot respondent was incorporated into the final interview guide.

The Six Case Studies

Case Study of "Billie Holiday"

Billie has been a secondary school principal for 12 years. Before he appointment to the secondary principalship, Billie was an assistant principal for years at a secondary school in the county where she is currently a principal. Billie was a classroom teacher for 5 years, 3 of which were in another county school district in Florida. She holds a bachelor of science degree, a master of education degree, and a doctor of philosophy degree in administration and supervision. She is married and has one child.

Billie is a member of several professional organizations, including the Florida Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. She is a member of a national black female sorority.

Case Study of "Ida B. Wells"

Ida has been an elementary school principal for 5 years. Before he appointment to the elementary principalship, Ida was an assistant principal for years at an elementary school in the county where she is currently a principal. Ida worked as a classroom teacher for 6 years. She holds a bachelor of arts degree, master of science degree, and an educational specialist degree. She is divorced and has two children. Ida is a member of the Phi Delta Kappa honor society.
Case Study of "Harriet Tubman"
Harriet has been a secondary school principal for 4 years. Before her appointment to the secondary principalship, Harriet was a curriculum assistant for 12 years at the high school where she is currently principal. Harriet was an English and Spanish teacher at this same school for 15 years. She holds a bachelor's degree and a master of education degree. She is married and has no children.
Harriet has held many civic and political positions in the school district and community, as well as in her church, including commissioner of county public libraries and volunteer coordinator of the county school system. She is a member of several professional organizations, including the Florida Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. She is also a member of a national black female sorority.

Case Study of "Sojourner Truth"
Sojourner has been an elementary school principal for 3 years. Before her appointment to the elementary principalship, Sojourner was a curriculum assistant for 9 years at three different schools in the country. Sojourner was a classroom teacher for 10 years. She holds a bachelor of science degree and a master of education degree in administration and supervision, as well as a master of education degree in elementary education. She is married and has one child.
Sojourner is a member of several professional organizations, including the Florida Association of School Administrators and the Florida Association of Elementary School Principals. She is a member of a national black female sorority.

Case Study of "Madame C J Walker"
C. J. has been an elementary school principal for 5 years. Before her appointment to the elementary principalship, C. J. was an assistant principal at an elementary school for 3 years. C. J. was also a classroom teacher for 12 years. She holds a bachelor of science degree and a master of education degree. She is married and has two children.
C. J. is a member of several civic and community organizations, including the Capital Area Progressive Women. She is a member of the Florida Association of School Administrators and the Florida Association of Elementary School Principals. In addition, she is a member of a national black female sorority.
Case Study of "Mary McLeod-Bethune"
Mary has been an elementary principal for 4 years. Before her appointment to the elementary principalship, Mary worked as an assistant principal for 2 years. Mary was also a classroom teacher for 23 years (17 of which were in another county). She holds a bachelor of science degree and a master of education degree. She is married and has one child.
Mary is a member of the Florida Association of Elementary School Principals." She is a member of Phi Delta Kappa honor society and of Delta Kappa Gamma and is also a member of a national black female sorority.

Performing Data Analysis
By the end of the field research and data collection process, I could literally fill my home office with paper, notebooks, documents from the district offices, memos written by the principals, and a variety of other printed information that I knew would be important to me as I attempted to "make meaning" of this roomful of information. I was somewhat nervous and overwhelmed by the task ahead of me. I had learned early in research classes that data analysis was both time-consuming and tedious, so I approached the process with mixed emotions. On the one hand, I was eager to get the information in some workable order and to find out exactly what the interview and field notes would reveal about the six principals; on the other hand, I also knew that I had a monumental task of analyzing the data in a meaningful way.
"Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the structured interview transcripts, field notes, and other material... to increase... understanding of them" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 145). Actually, data analysis is an ongoing process that begins early in the data collection.
A grounded theory approach (Strauss, 1989) was used for data analysis. My task was to generate theory from holistic data. The coding paradigm developed by Strauss was used to code the data. Strauss explains the paradigm as a "reminder to code data for relevance to whatever phenomena are referenced by a given category, for the following: conditions, interactions among actors, strategies and tactics, and consequences" (pp. 27-28).
Initially, I generated categories, themes, and patterns in accordance with recurring phrases or key statements. I tested the emergent themes against the data and searched for alternative explanations of the data.
During the analysis of the data, I also used the "cut-up-and-put-in-folders" approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 166). Multiple copies of the raw data were made. The first copy was used for coding. The second copy was cut according to the codes and marked to identify where it came from in the original set. Manila
folders were labeled with the categories. The units of data were then cut and put into the appropriate folders and were examined further for possible assertion. The data are arranged in a format that presents the themes that emerged from conversations with the principals. Below, I present one example of these emergent themes in the form of a gerund phrase. I also discuss one example of an assertion constituting grounded theory within the framework of the emergent themes.

**Theme 1: Recognizing Leadership Qualities**

The principals cited the hard work, commitment, competence, and confidence they displayed in their previous positions (as teachers and assistant principals) as facilitators to obtaining their principalships. Each woman was articulate in pointing out the accomplishments and achievements that she believed played significant roles in her appointment to a principalship.

During the interviews, these principals often mentioned that their leadership qualities had been recognized—and encouraged by others. They also reported that they would either volunteer for or be assigned to special projects or tasks at the schools where they were employed. They perceived working with special projects or tasks as ways of becoming involved in decision-making and administrative-level duties and as opportunities to work closely with the principal and to gain experience.

**Assertion 1.** These principals see themselves as having moved ahead because of their own hard work and where they were in their own lives and because their abilities were recognized and encouraged by others.

*Mary:* Upon coming to this county, I had a wealthy background in leadership skills. This was mainly because my principal in another county school system afforded me many opportunities to take over leadership positions! In this particular county, there were no assistant principals at the elementary school level, and therefore someone had to be in charge when the principal was away. I guess the principal at the school recognized the qualities in me and bestowed the responsibilities on me.

*Billie:* It was just coincidence that I got the job of principal. I was in the right place at the right time. The principal at the school discovered that I had a master's degree in education. I began to work closely with the assistant principal, and she trained me to be the curriculum assistant. At midterm, I took over as assistant principal. I was assistant principal for 9 years, and when a principalship position became available, I had the administrative experience and I was encouraged.

*Ida:* When I was teaching, I thoroughly enjoyed it and really wanted to be a
teacher for a lifelong career. But I was divorced in 1983, so that necessitated me improving my financial status at home because I did have two children to raise. So the financial responsibility of raising two children alone was a great impetus for me rising into the principalship.

**Sojourner:** About 10 years ago, I was fortunate enough to be selected as curriculum assistant at a middle school, leaving the elementary school and going to a middle school. I got an opportunity to get lots of administrative experiences. So, I think, after having worked as a curriculum assistant and being given all of the responsibilities and duties of a principal, I was really ready to advance to become a principal.

**Harriet:** Basically, I feel that, through my effort in being very conscientious about seeking the principalship, I had people to always listen to my ideas, and they sort of bought into the sharing of accomplishments and goals that I had in mind. Then, in 1979, I realized that, well, this is the chance for me. I served as curriculum assistant, and my husband saw great potential also in me, and he kept encouraging me to venture into the principalship.

**CJ:** Basically, I started as a teacher in this county. I taught for 11 years and moved into an assistant principal job. There were others around me who had confidence in me and pushed me to apply for a principalship.

**Forming Conclusions**

The findings of this type of study are derived from the qualitative data and cannot be generalized beyond the bounded group of six black female principals. Conclusions apply, therefore, solely to the group investigated in this particular study.

Because the purpose of the qualitative research design and oral narrative method used in this study was to render a true picture of each participant's "story" and her accomplishments through "thick description," it was easy to make recommendations and draw conclusions from the large amount of material and documentation that was gathered and analyzed. In addition, case study research is valuable for increasing insight and an understanding of how experiences become meaningful to those involved.

The verbatim translation of the interviews and the member checks that I conducted with each of the participants allowed me to ensure the accuracy of the final information selected for inclusion in the study.
STRENGTHS OF ORAL NARRATIVE RESEARCH FOR EXPANDING AND TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BLACK WOMEN

As a result of having completed the oral narrative research design, I feel a special bond with each of the six black women who agreed to participate in the study. I spent approximately 6 to 7 months interacting with and observing them. The content and context in which the information was shared, the interviews, field notes, and documentation reviews captured so much about them—their personalities, moods, families, environments, and professionalism.

As a researcher, I will always treasure the research time that was spent with each, the knowledge and insight gained about black women in public school administration, and their stories of how they got there. In view of the page limitation for this chapter, I cite only a few of the important ideals that I learned from the black women through the qualitative research design that I conducted.

The principalship is probably the single most powerful force for improving school effectiveness and for achieving excellence in education. It is critical, therefore, to select principals who are qualified and competent to guide staff, students, and the community. If given the opportunity, women and members of minority groups can make positive contributions to public school administration.

Despite the bleak picture for women and minorities in educational administration, some have made it. The six black women in this study viewed themselves as having successful experiences' in their positions. These women were strong advocates of "moving through the ranks," beginning as teachers and then serving as assistant principals before moving to the positions of principals. These women were ambivalent in addressing the roles that mentors had played in helping them obtain their positions. They saw themselves basically as "self-made" and hardworking. They believed that mentoring was important but not essential. They discussed the support of mentors in ways that did not detract from their own accomplishments.

The impact of racism and sexism was not discussed in detail during the taped interview sessions. These women did, however, report that racism and sexism were barriers to their progress toward the principalship. On several occasions during the taped interview sessions, when the conversations began to center on discrimination and racism, several of the principals requested that I turn off the recorder because they did not want the information included in the research study.

The relationship between family and career has been seen as a difficult
one for women. Women, who work and are family members must face conflicting expectations and needs. The expectations are based on traditional values regarding a woman's place. In addition, the logistics involved in coordinating family and professional life are sometimes difficult or awkward to manage. The women in this study appeared to have achieved a good balance between family life and career life. They appeared confident that although they were engaged in activities at school, things were running smoothly at home because spouses or other family members were assisting.

The black female principals in this study viewed themselves as having experienced success and satisfaction in their positions. They appeared confident in their ability to lead and in their administrative 'competence and commitment.

Many educators have held the belief that black principals are capable of supervising only schools with a large concentration of black and other minority students. Five of the six women principals in this study were principals of schools that had large concentrations of minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR APPROACHES TO TEACHING METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research and the oral narrative research method as used in this study would be useful to university faculty, students, state and local policymakers and school administrators, and teachers. The results of the findings in this study give clear discussion of how black female appointments to the principalship were made through the use of objective principal selection procedures (used in Florida public school districts).

In addition, this research could serve as a guide to develop techniques and methodological, orientations to conducting field research, as well as foster an understanding of how field research can be used to understand a particular problem or unique situation in great depth—specifically, how qualitative research methods can be used in understanding naturally occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring state. Evidence for this research was from four sources—participant-observation, document analysis, interviews, and direct observation. All of these research sources of evidence could be used as valuable teaching methodologies to fully understand the usefulness of qualitative research design.
INTRODUCTION

IS THERE A FEMINIST METHOD?

Sandra Harding

Over the last two decades feminist inquirers have raised fundamental challenges to the ways social science has analyzed women, men, and social life. From the beginning, issues about method, methodology, and epistemology have been intertwined with discussions of how best to correct the partial and distorted accounts in the traditional analyses. Is there a distinctive feminist method of inquiry? How does feminist methodology challenge—or complement—traditional methodologies? On what grounds would one defend the assumptions and procedures of feminist researchers? Questions such as these have generated important controversies within feminist theory and politics, as well as curiosity and anticipation in the traditional discourses.

The most frequently asked question has been the first one: is there a distinctive feminist method of inquiry? However, it has been hard to get a clear focus on the kind of answer to this question that we should seek. My point here is to argue against the idea of a distinctive feminist method of research. I do so on the grounds that preoccupation with method mystifies what have been the most interesting aspects of feminist research process. Moreover, I think that it is really a different concern that motivates and is expressed through most formulations of the method question: what is it that makes some of the most influential feminist-inspired biological and social science research of recent years so powerful? I shall first try to disentangle some of the issues about method, methodology, and epistemology. Then I turn to review briefly (or to introduce, depending on the reader) the problems with thinking that attempting to "add women" to existing social science analyses does all that should be done in response to feminist criticisms. Finally, I shall draw attention to three distinctive characteristics of those feminist analyses that go beyond the additive approaches. I shall try to show why we should not choose to think of these as methods of research, though they clearly have significant implications for our evaluations of research methods.
Method, Methodology, Epistemology

One reason it is difficult to find a satisfactory answer to questions about a distinctive feminist method is that discussions of method (techniques for gathering evidence) and methodology (a theory and analysis of how research should proceed) have been intertwined with each other and with epistemological issues (issues about an adequate theory of knowledge or justificatory strategy) in both the traditional and feminist discourses. This claim is a complex one and we shall sort out its components. But the point here is simply that "method" is often used to refer to all three aspects of research. Consequently, it is not at all clear what one is supposed to be looking for when trying to identify a distinctive "feminist method of research." This lack of clarity permits critics to avoid facing up to what is distinctive about the best feminist social inquiry. It also makes it difficult to recognize what one must do to advance feminist inquiry.

A research method is a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence. One could reasonably argue that all evidence-gathering techniques fall into one of the following three categories: listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behavior, or examining historical traces and records. In this sense, there are only three methods of social inquiry. As the essays in this collection show, feminist researchers use just about any and all of the methods, in this concrete sense of the term, that traditional androcentric researchers have used. Of course, precisely how they carry out these methods of evidence gathering is often strikingly different. For example, they listen carefully to how women informants think about their lives and men's lives, and critically to how traditional social scientists conceptualize women's and men's lives. They observe behaviors of women and men that traditional social scientists have not thought significant. They seek examples of newly recognized patterns in historical data.

There is both less and more going on in these cases than new methods of research. The "less" is that it seems to introduce a false sense of unity to all the different "little things" feminist researchers do with familiar methods to conceptualize these as "new feminist research methods." However, the "more" is that it is new methodologies and new epistemologies that are requiring these new uses of familiar research techniques. If what is meant by a "method of research" is just this most concrete sense of the term, it would undervalue the transformations feminist analyses require to characterize these in terms only of the discovery of distinctive methods of research. That social scientists tend to think about methodological issues primarily in terms of methods of inquiry (for example, in "methods courses" in psychology, sociology, etc.) is a problem. That is, it is primarily when they are talking about concrete techniques of evidence gathering that they raise methodological issues.
No doubt it is this habit that tempts social scientists to seek a unique method of inquiry as the explanation for what is unusual about feminist analyses. On the other hand, it is also a problem that philosophers use such terms as "scientific method" and "the method of science" when they are really referring to issues of methodology and epistemology. They, too, are tempted to seek whatever is unique about feminist research in a new "method of inquiry."

A methodology is a theory and analysis of how research docs or should proceed; it includes accounts of how "the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines." For example, discussions of how functionalism (or Marxist political economy, or phenomenology) should be or is applied in particular research areas are methodological analyses. Feminist researchers have argued that traditional theories have been applied in ways that make it difficult to understand women's participation in social life, or to understand men's activities as gendered (vs. as representing "the human"). They have produced feminist versions of traditional theories. Thus we can find examples of feminist methodologies in discussions of how phenomenological approaches can be used to begin to understand women's worlds, or of how Marxist political economy can be used to explain the causes of women's continuing exploitation in the household or in wage labor. But these sometimes heroic efforts raise questions about whether even feminist applications of these theories can succeed in producing complete and undistorted accounts of gender and of women's activities. And they also raise epistemological issues.

An epistemology is a theory of knowledge. It answers questions about who can be a "knower" (can women?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men's experiences and observations?); what kinds of things can be known cart "subjective truths" count as knowledge?], and so forth. Sociologists of knowledge characterize epistemologies as strategies for justifying beliefs: appeals to the authority of God, of custom and tradition, of "common sense," of observation, of reason, and of masculine authority are examples of familiar justificatory strategies. Feminists have argued that traditional epistemologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, systematically exclude the possibility that women could be "knowers" or gents of knowledge; they claim that the voice of science is a masculine one; that history is written from only the point of view of men (of the dominant class and race); that the subject of a traditional sociological sentence is always assumed to be a man. They have proposed alternative theories of knowledge that legitimate women as knowers. Examples of these feminist epistemological claims and discussions can be found in the essays that follow. These issues, too, are often referred to as issues about method. Epistemological issues certainly have crucial implications for how general theoretical structures can and should be applied in particular disciplines and for the choice of methods.
of research. But I think that it is misleading and confusing to refer to these, too, as issues about method.

In summary, there are important connections between epistemologies, methodologies, and research methods. But I am arguing that it is not by looking at research methods that one will be able to identify the distinctive features of the best of feminist research. We shall next see that this distinctiveness is also not to be found in attempts to "add women" to traditional analyses.

**Problems with "Adding Women"**

In order to grasp the depth and extent of the transformation of the social sciences required in order to understand gender and women's activities, one needs to recognize the limitations of the most obvious ways one could try to rectify the androcentrism of traditional analyses. Feminist researchers first tried to "add women" to these analyses. There were three kinds of women who appeared as obvious candidates for this process: women social scientists, women who contributed to the public life social scientists already were studying, and women who had been victims of the most egregious forms of male dominance.

In the first of these projects, scholars have begun to recover and to re appreciate the work of women researchers and theorists. Women's research and scholarship often has been ignored, trivialized, or appropriated without the credit which would have been given to a man's work. One of the notorious examples of this kind of sexist devaluation in the natural sciences is the treatment of Rosalind Franklin's work on DNA by her Nobel prize-winning colleagues. How many other outstanding women social and natural scientists will we never have the chance to appreciate because they, unlike Franklin, had no close friend capable of setting the record straight?

However, there are severe problems with imagining that this is the only or most important way to eliminate sexism and androcentrism from social science. Obviously, one should not expect to understand gender and women's roles in social life merely through learning about the work of women social scientists in the past. Insightful as these "lost women" were, their work could not benefit from the many feminist theoretical breakthroughs of the last two decades. Moreover, these women succeeded in entering a world which largely excluded women from the education and credentialling necessary to become social scientists. Thus their work was constrained by the immense pressures on them to make their research conform to what the men of their times thought about social life. Such pressures are still very great, as we will see all of the essayists in this volume argue. Fortunately they often succeeded in resisting these pressures. Nevertheless, we should not expect their research projects to produce the kinds of powerful analyses that can emerge when women's and men's thinking is part of a broad social revolution such as the women's movement has created. What remains amazing is the intellectual courage and frequent flashes of brilliance exhibited in the thinking of these social scientists in spite of the social, professional, and political constraints they faced.
A different concern of feminist social research has been to examine women's contributions to activities in the public world which were already the focus of social science analysis. We now can see that women, too, have been the originators of distinctively human culture, deviants, voters, revolutionaries, social reformers, high achievers, wage workers, and so forth. Important studies have expanded our understanding of women's roles in public life both historically and in other cultures today.

This focus still leaves some powerfully androcentric standards firmly in place, thereby insuring only partial and distorted analyses of gender and women's social activities. It falsely suggests that only those activities that men have found it important to study are the ones which constitute and shape social life. This leads us to ignore such crucial issues as how changes in the social practices of reproduction, sexuality, and mothering have shaped the state, the economy, and the other public institutions. Furthermore, this research focus does not encourage us to ask what have been the meanings of women's contributions to public life for women for instance Margaret Sanger's birth control movement played an important and unfortunate role in eugenics policy. But it also signified to women that they could plan their reproductive lives and in that sense systematically and effectively control the consequences of their sexual activities. This second meaning is not likely to be noticed when the focus is on only women's contributions to "men's world." To take another example, both white and black women worked courageously in the antislavery, black suffrage, and antilynching movements. But what did it mean for their lives as women to work in these movements? (They learned public speaking, political organizing, and the virulence of white men's hostility to women learning how to speak and organize, among other things.)

A third kind of new focus of research on women can be found in the study of women as victims of male dominance. Male dominance takes many forms. Researchers have provided path-breaking studies of the "crimes against women" especially rape, incest, pornography, and wife beating. They have examined the broader patterns of institutionalized economic exploitation and political discrimination against women. And they have looked at the forms of white male domination which have particularly victimized women of color-in slavery, in state reproductive and welfare policies, in "protective" legislation, in union practices, and in other circumstances. The emergence to public consciousness of this ugly underside of women's condition has made it impossible for serious thinkers to continue to believe in the reality of unmitigated social progress in this culture or most others: 'One might reasonably find contemporary cultures to be among the most barbaric from the perspective of the statistics on the victimization of women.'
Victimologies have their limitations too. They tend to create the false impression that women have only been victims, that they have never successfully fought back, that women cannot be effective social agents on behalf of themselves or others. But the work of other feminist scholars and researchers tells us otherwise. Women have always resisted male domination.

I have pointed out problems with three basic approaches to the study of women and gender which initially looked promising. While each is valuable in its own right, the most widely acclaimed examples of the new feminist scholarship include analyses of these "kinds of women," but also move far beyond these projects. Let us turn to look at just what it is that characterizes the best of this research, for these characteristics should offer more promising criteria than research methods for what is distinctive in feminist analyses.

What's New in Feminist Analyses?

Let us ask about the history of feminist inquiry the kind of question Thomas Kuhn posed about the history of science. He asked what the point would be of a philosophy of science for which the history of science failed to provide supporting evidence. We can ask what the point would be of elaborating a theory of the distinctive nature of feminist inquiry that excluded the best feminist social science research from satisfying its criteria. Some of the proposals for a feminist method have this unfortunate consequence. Formulating this question directs one to attempt to identify the characteristics that distinguish the most illuminating examples of feminist research.

I shall suggest three such features. By no means do I intend for this list to be exhaustive. We are able to recognize these features only after examples of them have been produced and found fruitful. As research continues, we will surely identify additional characteristics that expand our understandings of what makes feminist accounts explanatorily so powerful. No doubt we will also revise our understandings of the significance of the three to which I draw attention. My point is not to provide a definitive answer to the title question of this section, but to show that this historical approach is the best strategy if we wish to account for the distinctive power of feminist research. While these features have consequences for the selection of research methods, there is no good reason to call them methods.
Theories of Women's Studies
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HOW TO DO WHAT WE WANT TO DO: THOUGHTS ABOUT FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

Renate Duelli Klein and Gloria Bowles

1 The case for feminist methodology

This paper is concerned with the fact that until very recently feminist methodology as a topic of its own had not been given much consideration. Books and articles on the development of feminist scholarship focus on its new content rather than on its methodology and although the need for feminist theory has been widely recognized feminist methodology does not as yet get nearly as much attention. No one doing research from a feminist perspective would deny that indeed the choice of the research topic — the 'what' to investigate — must come prior to the decision of 'how' to go about doing one's research. In fact, as Mary Daly has said, the male 'God Method' has contributed to women's oppression and we need to break his tyranny: 'Under patriarchy: Method has wiped out women's questions so totally that even women have not been able to hear and formulate our own questions to meet our own experiences' (1973, pp. 11-12). However, while I certainly would not want to invent an equally tyrannical 'Goddess Method' I think feminists need to be very clear about how we want our research to differ from patriarchal scholarship and to that end we have to think about how we are going to do what we want to do. In other words, after the initial excitement of how absolutely marvellous and ingenious our ideas for a research project are, whether we like it or not, the moment of the down-to-earth task of the conception of our research — including the choice of a feminist methodology — will inevitably come. 'Feminist' for me implies assuming a perspective in which women's experiences, ideas and needs (different and differing as they may be) are valid in their own right, and andro-centricity — man-as-the-norm — stops being the only recognized frame of reference for human beings. And by 'methodology' I mean both the overall conception of the research project — the doing of feminist research — as well as the choice of appropriate techniques for this process, including forms of presenting the research results. I use the word
'methodology' (as well as 'theory') in the singular, but by no means do I wish to suggest we work towards the one and only 'correct' feminist methodology: clearly feminist methods can and must differ according to the specific circumstances of our research projects.

It is my contention that to think about what a feminist methodology is, or could be, is imperative for the doing of feminist research if we want to put our feminist theories into practice. For me, theory and methodology are closely interrelated in a dialectical relationship: a feminist methodology can help us to validate emerging feminist theory and indicate the need for modifications. The new theories then in turn are likely to pose demands that stimulate the generation of new methods. In this way both the theory and methodology of feminist scholarship might avoid the fate of becoming static, rigid and dogmatic — and might help preventing Women's Studies from becoming 'just another academic discipline'. If indeed feminist scholars want to be "agents for change" (Westkott, 1979a) rather than simply investigating women as a new topic, if we indeed want to work towards a future that, as Marcia Westkott (1979b) says, is not merely an extension of the present but more significantly a qualitative transformation of the present, then I think we need to consider which methods are best suited to our quest for feminist knowledge which women's concerns are central and inspire our questions.

The wish to delve into an exploration of feminist methodology came during my research in 1979 on the attitudes of young women towards feminism, the women's movement and Women's Studies (Duell Klein, 1980, 1982) in which I struggled with the problem of finding an appropriate methodology to investigate my topic. This paper is the beginning of a theoretical discussion of what feminist methodology might be, rather than a detailed analysis of existing methods in the social and natural sciences and the humanities, and the reader should not expect detailed 'how-to-recipes' for feminist methodology. On principle I do not separate disciplines because for me, the implementation of feminist methodology is by definition a pursuit 'beyond the disciplines' and will, at its best, produce research that is 'transdisciplinary'.

2 Research 'on' women and the role of methodology

I want to start with the provocative statement that I think a considerable amount of the so-called feminist scholarship of previous years has not contributed to women's visibility in a feminist frame of reference but instead continued to perpetuate the dominant androcentric one. Thus it is research 'on' women rather than research 'for' women. I define research for women as research that tries to take women's needs, interests and experiences into account and aims at being
instrumental in improving women's lives in one way or another. Research 'on' women, in my view, often is conducted without careful examination of the suitability of the methods used for feminist scholarship and the researchers do not state why they chose a particular method and what problems occurred during the research project. In other cases, even if the theoretical section of a research project reflects feminist views, the practical part may use methods ranging from uncritical to blatantly sexist. To say this is not necessarily to blame the researcher, as I will discuss later in this paper.

Thus, although in the last decade women scholars have produced an enormous body of knowledge on women in sociology, psychology, history, etc., much of this research consists of duplicating traditional research: knowledge about women was added to the knowledge about men. However, we should be aware that by choosing the 'adding-on' approach we assume that our environment emits the same signals for women and men, has the same bearing on women's and men's lives and that the answers it elicits in women are comparable to the answers it elicits in men. Such thinking represents an 'equal-rights-philosophy' which completely ignores the fact that not only was our past man-made, but that our present still is. Answers from and about women are evaluated against male standards. Such research perpetuates a view of women from an androcentric perspective. It also ignores the historical perspective, the fact that over millenia women and men have internalized 'feminine' and 'masculine' molds (changing through periods and cultures) in which he is the norm and she is 'the other'. Such research does not investigate women as people in our own right: it perpetuates 'Men's Studies' (Spender, 1988. If we substitute male research objects with female research objects we have changed the object' of the research, but not necessarily the philosophy of the researcher who might still believe in her position as the distant 'expert' who investigates a certain trait/disposition/variable out of 'objective' interest. Often this kind of research uses what has been called 'context-stripping' methods. As Mary Brown Parlee describes them: 'Concepts, environments social interactions are all simplified by methods which lift them out of their context, stripping them of the very complexity that characterizes them in the real world'(1979, p. 131).

This kind of knowledge is produced for the sake of knowledge rather than with the desire to put the knowledge into practice to induce changes. But, if what we want is research that will contribute to women's liberation, we have to scrutinize our methods more carefully to see if they are in fact congruent with our feminist principles. Thus, the claim that research on women is conducted with a feminist perspective can be made only when the methods applied take women's experiences into account. These experiences, of course, vary depending on cultural identification, ethnicity, social status, age, sexual preference, period of the research, etc.
For example, an important factor that has been ignored so far in most research on women (and men) is the phenomenon of 'faking.' As Carole Beere describes it, faking is 'to give socially desirable responses rather than honest attributes,' and does happen consciously and unconsciously (1979, p. 385). It may well be that faking is necessary for the psychological survival of many women because, without faking, reality would seem unbearable. And indeed, who among us has never faked anything, either to ourselves or to others? Thus, whereas traditional research tries to eliminate faking by using 'tricks' when asking questions, feminists should consider acknowledging and incorporating faking into our research methods. The significance of faking may become very important for the concept of feminist research: by accepting and taking it seriously, we accept and take ourselves seriously.

Another problem that so far has not been given sufficient attention by feminist scholars is the need to become conscious about the inherent sexist (and of course racist, heterosexist, classist, ageist...) biases in the methods we use. It is interesting and encouraging to see that the myth of value-free objective science has started to crumble away, even in non-feminist circles. That is, among 'progressive' thinkers it has become almost fashionable to state one's biases in the introduction to one's research, to acknowledge the truisms that the questions we ask determine the answers we get. However, equal consideration has not yet been given to inherent biases in the research methodology scholars use. For example, when measuring the attitudes of women in a selected research population with one of the various scales available, we must ask how valuable the results can be. Margrit Eichler (1980) argues against the use of these masculinity/femininity scales because they 'scientifically reinforce man-made sex role stereotypes about what appropriate "feminine" and "masculine" behavior is.' In my view, Eichler speaks precisely to the point when she says: The stereotype takes on a life of its own, becomes normative, and empirical reality is measured and evaluated against this norm. Reality has been stood on its head' (Ibid., p. 64).

This idea that 'reality has been stood on its head' applies to much of the research that has been done on women adhering to the use of androcentric methods. The conceptualization of research along the lines of differences is the 'normal' way for us to look at a problem: Western culture has socialized us to perceive the world in terms of incompatible differences. However, formulating research along the lines of differences, thinking in dichotomies — either/or, black/white, male/female — and 'proving' in what ways the average man differs from the average woman by emphasizing differences makes us overlook important similarities and does not account for the constant interactions that go on in reality. Such research again takes as the norm the androcentric view of the world in which the circumstances of women's (and other oppressed groups') lives are seen as aberrations from this norm: 'deviant,' 'other,' the exception.
Furthermore, such research cannot tell us anything about the problems of individual persons investigated in the research project. However, to recognize an individual woman's 'personal' problem as similar to many women's 'personal' problems — which renders the personal political — is one of the fundamental feminist principles. To repeat that I believe an important goal of all feminist scholarship should be to contribute to ending the oppression of women. I think that methods which are 'context-stripping', unconscious of inherent masculinist biases, and which rely on sexist 'feminine/masculine' gender stereotypes are not suited for research on how women (and men!) in today's society come into being, come into holding the views they hold. Clearly, such a process cannot be recognized, understood and worded by 'simply compiling data and analyzing them. New methods have to be developed that go beyond the traditional 'scientific' methods where hypotheses are tested by isolating variables and investigating them separately in an additive, linear fashion. We should recognize that to keep variables artificially constant, or to choose which one is the dependent and which the independent variable, reflects our needs to categorize rather than trying to convey a holistic picture of the problem researched. Not surprisingly, the research results may not be satisfactory because as they (often unconsciously) perpetuate androcentric norms, they may not reflect women's realities and thus will not be applicable to strategies for social change. They remain research 'on' women.

In the following I will briefly discuss a research project from Germany which I think is research 'for' women. As both its theory and methodology are feminist it offers strategies for change through the research process itself as well as through the 'results' and I would like to point to some criteria which in my opinion we should consider when embarking on doing feminist research.

3 An example of research 'for' women

Maria Mies, a German social scientist, reports a research project of what she calls 'action research as it was originally designed' (1978). The newly emerging Frauenforschung' in Germany — not 'yet organized as separate Women's Studies programs and research institutes at universities but rather existing within traditional departments or outside academia — has rediscovered action research and adapted it to women's needs. In Cologne in 1976 women active in the women's movement, among them a group of sociologists, fought for a shelter for battered women and, together with the women who came for help, started a research project. Its aim was not only to document the women's life-histories as individuals, but also to record a collective experience of women in our society which would lead to theories and strategies for change. By sharing their life-histories with each other, it was hoped that the women would be relieved from guilt and a sense of personal failure (a classic example of a consciousness-raising process) and be motivated to work for change. The project seems to have been successful: not only did the women start finding the
courage to change their own situation, but they also began to recognize connections between their life and the lives of the researchers. These researchers may not have been battered in the same way, but, by living as women in this society, they had experienced comparable forms of humiliation.

Research methods included tape interviews, conversations and discussions between the participants, listening to them in groups of various sizes, having all of the participants (researchers and researched) describe their impressions of the ongoing process; translating life experiences into role-playing; and developing strategies for the months to come. These strategies ranged from projects for their personal lives, to the history of the whole research project and political actions including the publications of their life-histories to help other battered women and to alert the public. Thus the outcome of this investigation of a group of battered women went beyond a mere 'academic' report on the 'conditions of battered women' to be shelved and put aside but came up with suggestions for changes in the lives of these and other battered women.

The methods demanded conscious subjectivity (not to be confused with uncritical acceptance of a person's statements), which replaced the Value-free objectivity' of traditional research. The subjective experience of each of the participating women was validated and acknowledged. Thus, the battered women were not looked upon as research 'objects' but as sisters, as mirrors of selves, as 'subjects'. They in turn, as Mies states, lost their initial skepticism and fear that the 'scientists' might exploit diem and their histories. This growing feeling of confidence established a fruitful sense of interrelatedness among all participants and was a learning experience for all of them. It was this method of the collective perception of their situation that lead to the formulation of theories and to action.

Marcia Westkott (1979a) defines such a dialectical relationship between the subject and object of research as inter subjectivity. Whenever possible, feminist methodology should allow for such intersubjectivity; this will permit the researcher constantly to compare her work with her own experiences as a woman and a scientist and to share it with the researched, who then will add their opinions to the research, which in turn might again change it. 10

A methodology that allows for women studying women in an interactive process without the artificial object/subject split between researcher and researched (which is by definition inherent in any approach to knowledge that praises its 'neutrality' and 'objectivity') will end the exploitation of women as research objects. It thus transforms a psychology/sociology/biology OP women to a psychology/sociology/biology FOR women. Women are at the center of the
study and they are neither compared to nor measured against normative (male) standards. What counts are our own experiences. The theory and practice of a woman's experience is not split. Another important aspect of feminist research is the obligation to try to maintain honesty between researcher and researched. In the German project, it was precisely this commitment to honesty which led at first to problems, but then resulted in a new understanding of methodology. In some instances, the battered women obviously were not telling the truth about their past; such 'errors' were discovered when children made statements differing from those of their mothers. After the initial confusion and frustration over this discovery, the researchers realized that they should not dismiss their method of openness and honesty, but, on the contrary, that they should acknowledge the obvious need of these women to 'fake' as an important part of their strategy to survive. As Mies comments 'we then realized that the truth of a person cannot be asked for, is not static, but grows and develops during the course of a lifetime' (1978, p. 61).

It seems to me that this 'complication' — having to deal with 'relative' truths rather than with Truths with a capital T — illustrates perfectly how exciting and far-reaching a new methodology is that dares to open up questions where the answers might have to be recorded in an interactive rather than a linear way. What we have to do, then, in order to perceive what is happening, is to open ourselves up to using such resources as intuition, emotions and feelings both in ourselves and in those we want to investigate. In combination with our intellectual capacities for analyzing and interpreting our observations, this open admission of the interaction of facts and feelings might produce a kind of scholarship that encompasses the complexity of reality better than the usual fragmented approach to knowledge. Hopefully such an approach will help us free ourselves from paralyzing stereotypes, which freedom is imperative if the move towards a liberated future is to be successful.

However, although I consider feminist action research to be a very useful method, it is evident that in many instances it clearly will not be applicable. Not every research topic is suited to action research methods. And even if we opt for it in theory, circumstances in the lives of those involved in a research project can make it impossible to work closely with each other. Thus, feminists must be flexible enough to adapt their methods to the needs of each individual research situation. I think that this ability to be flexible should be seen as one of our powers to bring about change: feminist research is not (and hopefully never will be) trapped in a set of rigidly fixed rules the way much of traditional research is. We should be free to combine whatever parts of whatever methods we think are promising for our research goals.

But unfortunately, as we know, research which admits to working for change (and
thus to being 'political'), which demands conscious subjectivity and which acknowledges (women's) feelings, emotions and intuition is not taken seriously in academic circles and many a feminist scholar has her tale to tell about her research being labelled 'journalistic' and 'popular' rather than 'scholarly.' Not being taken seriously may range from being ridiculed to being denied funds and tenure. In all cases, however, it does not provide us with the support necessary to do our work. The pressures to produce academically 'sound' work lead committed feminists into a schizoid situation: on the one hand, we develop our 'revolutionary' theories, but when it comes to doing our research, we have to use traditional 'scientific' methods to make our work acceptable. Our discontent with the final 'product' (which might then even be accused by die feminist community of being non-feminist) may be responsible for our decision to leave academia — or to conform to the existing demands and 'do' our feminism in our spare time. Put differently, I believe that the pressure to use recognized methods is one of the reasons a lot of feminist research remains research 'on' women and also accounts for die fact that up to now little work has been done on the topic of feminist methodology per se.

To be realistic, we must admit that today's feminist scholarship, other than within the circles of the convinced, has no considerable impact on academia at large. Mary Brown Parlee, a feminist psychologist, says in a review essay on psychology and women:

Nowhere is it possible to find evidence suggesting that the scientific importance of a feminist perspective is recognized by those in the mainstream .... Women psychologists work creatively to adapt existing developmental theories to accommodate reality, while male psychologists continue to study in the usual way ... evidence is fairly compelling that the feminist perspective Actively excluded from the mainstream: feminist research continue to be seen as failing between the cracks of topic areas covered by major journals, departments do not perceive the need to include the psychology of women in their graduate programs, research on women and publications in journals that will publish it do not 'count' in tenure evaluations (1979, p. 129).

And Gloria Bowles (this volume) confirms this bleak picture of the ongoing exclusion of feminist scholarship for the domain of 'mainstream' — which is of course'malestream' — Literary Criticism.

The refusal to acknowledge feminist research is not surprising for it confirms precisely what feminists are up against: androcentrism in its purest form. However, if feminists want to have our say in the generation and distribution of knowledge, what strategies should we use to be able to do what we want to do? Put differently: how do we get in power inside academia?
Towards paradigms for feminist research in theory and practice

In search of strategies that will bring feminists into positions of power inside academia, Thomas Kuhn comes to mind. Kuhn (1962) has become world famous with his model for change and his theory might shed some light on why feminist scholars have not yet become powerful and strong in academia so far. He disputes the notion of gradual change and posits that established paradigms will be overthrown only with the triumph of new paradigms, which profoundly alter the nature of the scientific process. If we find Kuhn's theory convincing we might argue that in order to gain power and be taken seriously, Women's Studies needs to claim that we have paradigms and make them visible! But what is a paradigm? Margaret Masterman (1970) has pointed out that Kuhn himself used paradigm in at least twenty-one different ways if which 'a source of tools', 'a new way of seeing' and 'something which defines a broad sweep of reality' might conic closest to our own definitions of feminist scholarship because they affirm one of the principles of feminism: to remain flexible and open for change.

Possibly, then, in describing how we are doing what we are doing, we might discover that in many instances we are already in a paradigm state — or at least close to entering it. After all, is not feminism in itself a crucial paradigm shift? Naming our paradigms could be empowering: both for ourselves and in order to gain legitimacy. Looking 'forward' and inventing, creating, changing, adapting and improving existing research methodologies will make us far more visible than working 'backwards': justifying our work to those who do not want to hear what we are doing, why we are doing it and how it differs from their approaches. Since our time and energy are limited why not use our feminist intellect to work towards our own paradigms instead of changing theirs? Which elements of patriarchal scholarship can we use to build feminist paradigms — and thus Women's Studies as an academic discipline — in our endeavour to practice feminism within the doing of our research? How can we change and enlarge them in order to suit our need not only to collect 'facts and figures' but also to research what Mary Brown Parlee calls the 'unmeasurable': 'phenomena which cannot readily be abstracted, even conceptually, from the complex rich, and varied world of human experience — phenomena which clearly cannot be simulated in laboratory, exjyleriments' (1979, p. 128)? How do we go about researching the process: the interaction, the mutual and inseparable dependency of facts and feelings, figures and intuition, the obvious and the hidden, doing and talking, feehaviors and attitudes? What approaches satisfy our need for 'intersubjectivity' and are flexible enough to be adapted to varying research circumstances? Which are not 'context-stripping'? Which allow for the disclosure of the self-perpetuating influences of an androcentric world, and can be translated into the range of women's varying perceptions of people's experiences?
Thinking about how to put the further development of feminist methodology into practice I see various groups of women working together. One includes feminist scholars who have been trained in traditional disciplines but are working towards the new discipline Women's Studies. They get acquainted with each other's methods, discover similarities, understand differences; in short they further a critical dialogue which might narrow the gap between them that was artificially created by our 'disciplinary' education. Certainly, our individual preferences will still vary, but the feminist working with battered women and the one working on poetry might move closer to each other. Jointly, they start developing concepts for 'transdisciplinary' research that suit their particular needs and interest. And in line with feminist thinking, the development of feminist paradigms should not be undertaken by individuals isolated within the ivory-tower system. Rather, new concepts should be created by closely interacting groups of women both inside and outside academia and — whenever possible — they should be tested in action-oriented research projects in order to translate our theories into practice.

Another group working on methodology development could consist of faculty and students who explore the topic in courses on feminist methodology in Women's Studies. As today (in the U.S. at least) it is possible, though difficult, to become a 'genuine' Women's Studies person by entering college in this field and leaving the university with a PhD in Women's Studies, these students need access to a methodological training which in line with the very nature of feminist research goes beyond the limits of one traditional discipline. The critical inspection of methods from the traditional disciplines and the translation of their useful parts into feminist methodology — including their application in a practical research project — would not only provide the students with highly useful skills but would help them to develop their identity as 'Women's Studies Persons.'

I believe that working for the advancement of our paradigms instead of trying to adjust our visions for doing research in order to make them acceptable to those whose paradigms still triumph today, will ultimately be more successful both in the outside world and within our own circles. Striving towards our own aims will make it possible for us to take ourselves and each other seriously: in developing 'tools' to do our work, we simultaneously provide ourselves with and create 'woman-powered' energy — we empower and (maybe) will get in power!

However, while pursuing such methodology development, we have to be particularly careful about the following aspects of our work. First, we have to avoid what Gloria Bowles has called the danger of creating a 'supermethodology.' I think her point is well taken when she warns feminists to be wary of methods that will become even more 'impenetrable' than the methodologies they are built upon (p. 41, this volume). Feminist methodology should not consist of piling the methodology of five or six disciplines upon one another. Not only would we make
our task harder than any one else is, we might even risk paralyzing our work because our methodology could become too complex to be applicable in practice. Also, we have to write and speak in plain and comprehensible language and avoid excesses of feminist esoteric jargon which would certainly be counter-productive to our aim of making our research accessible (and useful) to as many women as possible.

Second, I think we have to be patient and not expect too much too soon. We should allow ourselves time to experiment with our new approaches and we must accept failure as a constructive learning experience. Only by working with our new paradigms will we see their strengths and weaknesses. We should not be discouraged and frustrated if our emerging methodology does not work as well as we imagined it would. And because, ideally, our work is undertaken in groups, we should not underestimate the barriers that keep women from working with each other. It seems to me that we sometimes ask too much of each other, and our disappointment is enormous if our high expectations are not met. Most importantly we should be very clear about the fact that most of us who have gone through all those years of traditional education have a hard time shedding the layers of indoctrination of what is declared 'good' research and 'up to standards'. Experimenting with creative thinking and innovative methods is risky. And yet it seems to me we have to try. The way we build our future will influence its outcome.

As Maria Mies points out (1978, p. 45), as feminist researchers we face the challenge that as women all of us have experienced male supremacy to some degree. But as members of a privileged group with access to education, we are in a position to work for change within academia, I agree with her that we should perceive this 'double-consciousness' of female academics as a methodological and political opportunity which gives us an edge over male scholars. In a time of financial cuts and threats to feminists inside and outside academia we must make ourselves visible and known to each other which in the context of this paper includes publishing 'how' we did our research and what problems we faced while doing it.

All of us who work in Women's Studies are excited about the new 'what's' and the new 'why's' of our field. I suggest we get equally excited about the new 'how's'. Since without appropriate methodologies we cannot do what we want to do, we should acknowledge their importance and concentrate on their development. They are here, partly distorted by past method-makers, partly hidden from us because we don't know our own heritage, and partly suppressed within ourselves. But they are starting to emerge — not as easily as Athene emerged from Zeus' head, because it is we who have to do the work and it is not only our heads that are involved but our whole beings.
Notes

Many people read the earlier draft of this paper and gave valuable suggestions and comments. I would particularly like to thank Gloria Bowles, Sandy Coyner, Maresi Nerad, Nina Nordgren, Sharon Garnica, Dorothy Brown, and Kristen Wenzel. And my special thanks go to Susan Chisholm who tried hard to translate my Swiss English into American English.

Some exceptions are Marcia Westkott (1979a), Margrit Eichler (1980) and Shulamit Reinharz (1979), and of course the contributions by Du Bois, Mies, Epstein Jayaratne, Reinharz and Stanley and Wise in this volume.

For a definition of 'academic' from a feminist perspective, see Gloria Bowles's and Sandy Coyner's articles in this volume.

Feminists are not the only group that proposes to work for change. Male thinkers, e.g., the members of the Frankfurt Schule and philosopher Paul Feyerabend, have been claiming to do this too. However, theirs is a wish to transform the society of 'man' without changing the paradigm that 'man-is-the-norm. A feminist approach to knowledge, however, defines as an indispensable prerequisite women's right to a place among those who create and transmit knowledge on our terms and meeting our needs. Such an approach, I think, makes feminist research distinctly different from research undertaken by so-called progressive male thinkers who continue to operate from within an androcentric frame of reference.

I agree with Gloria Bowls who has criticized the term 'faking,' noting that it clearly blames the victim and that we should exchange it for a less accusing word.

Margrit Eichler extends her critique to the concept of androgeny because 'the androgeny score is derived from the masculinity and femininity scores' (1980, p. 69) and continues, 'In other words, the concept of androgeny itself reinforces the notion that sex-linked traits do, in fact, exist' (Ibid., p. 70).

Action research (Aktionsforschung) as defined by one of its founders (Kurt Lewin, 1978) consists of comparatively investigating the conditions and the effects of various forms of social action and is research that will lead to action. At least for a certain period of time die researcher has to give up the distance to his or her research object and must assume a consciously interactive position with the research object [translation mine].

According to Maria Mies, during recent years male-dominated German scholarship has redirected action research and shifted its focus from social
outreach in the community back to the university. She states that: 'Action research thus has become acceptable to traditional scholarship but in its self-confinement to "value-free" dialogue without working for change, and its renunciation of supporting dialectical processes of change, it has almost totally lost its liberating impulse' (1978, p. 43; translation mine).

8 The English version of Maria Mies's paper is included in this volume; in the original publication of Theories of Women's Studies, it appeared in volume II (1981), Women's Studies Program, University of California, Berkeley.

9 Sandy Coyner has pointed out to me that kings (and psychologists!), too, talk about 'subjects.' It should be clear from the rest of this paper that I use 'subject' in the grammatical sense of the term, i.e., putting researcher and researched on the same level as actors (whereas an 'object' would constitute something one acts upon). However, as 'subject' has a dominant/ domineering connotation, we should look for a more egalitarian term and possibly might want to borrow the term 'member' from ethnomethodology.

10 Again, others — men — have already worked with a perspective that credits the researched with their own experience. Paulo Freire's (1970) approach, for instance, is based on people's experiences and interactions with their environment. However, vis-a-vis women, the same critique holds as it does against other nonconformist male thinkers: Freire does not depart from taking androcentricity as the norm and consequently, feminists need to do the work for women that he did for men.

11 This avowal to be frank and honest with each other contradicts the practice of traditional social science where, under the pretext of eliciting 'objective, unbiased' answers, it is still acceptable to name false reasons to the participants of a survey.

12 Since I mention 'power' so frequently, I should make it clear that I do not wish feminists to have power to dominate others, but to use it collectively for ending the oppression of women. This is Florence Howe's definition of power (1975). Whether to have power within academia is at all desirable would be the topic of another paper. Feminist academics, it is argued, cannot but become co-opted and/or lose our energy for social change and/or be for sure kicked out in those rare cases where we do stay radical: we simply cannot, it is said, remain revolutionaries within the confines of present academia (see, for example, Freeman, 1979). I obviously haven't given up hope (yet) that some of us can... moreover, I think that academia's impact on society is far too important (and too dangerous) to be left to those perpetuating Men's Studies from their androcentric perspective.
For an in-depth discussion of Kuhn and the implications of his theory for Women's Studies, see Sandy Coyner's article, this volume, whose demand for autonomous Women's Studies reflects my own ideas.

I am indebted to Karen Davis for this term which I heard for the first time from her in our class, Theories of Women's Studies, UC Berkeley, Fall 1979. I think it is a very special and promising one for feminist scholars.

The Women's Studies Program at UC Berkeley offers a course on feminist methodology in the humanities and a course on feminist social science methods. Together with a class on Theories of Women's Studies, such methodology courses should form the core of 'discipline-structuring' courses in Women's Studies. I think they should be mandatory for anyone who aspires to be a feminist scholar.

Many thanks to Dale Spender and Jane Cholmeley for stimulating and challenging discussions on this subject.

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FEMINISM AND RESEARCH PRACTICE

By Maynard and Purvis

If the arguments for the existence of a distinctive feminist method can be dismissed what other grounds might there he for defining research as feminist? Another way in which feminists have answered this question is to turn to issues of methodology which involves the theory and analysis of how research should proceed how research questions might best be addressed and the criteria against which research findings might be evaluated. In doing so feminists have tended to concentrate attention on two main areas of concern. The position from which distinctively feminist research questions might be asked and the political and ethical issues involved in the research process. Kelly has suggested the term feminist research practice as helpful in this context since it signals more clearly the wide-ranging nature of the points which feminists customarily address. Kelly argues that what distinguishes feminist research from other forms of research is 'the questions we have asked, the way we locate ourselves within our questions, and the purpose of our work'. She thus draws attention to a range of issues which go beyond those relating specifically to method.

Many of those who have written about feminist research practice have indicated that a theoretical perspective, acknowledging the pervasive influence of gender divisions on social life, is one of its most important defining characteristics. There are however, differences over what this might mean. To begin with there are different theoretical emphases. Perceiving the significance of gender in terms of division and inequality for instance, implies a different theoretical perspective to that which emphasizes the importance of patriarchal power and control. Each approach is likely to lead to the posing of different sorts of questions and to the production of different kinds of knowledge and analysis. Further, it is not entirely clear what focusing on gender means in terms of the subjects of research. Some have argued that it entails a preeminent concern with women alone, and given their previous neglect this was especially important early on in feminist work. Others have suggested that gender implies women's relationship to men and that this also needs to be included, although examined from a woman's perspective, in any enquiry involved in understanding how women's experiences in a male world are structured. Stanley and Wise have always maintained that a concern with gender necessarily means being prepared to focus on men and masculinity, with the intention of researching the powerful as well as the powerless. Although this is still a relatively underdeveloped aspect
of feminist research, it raises important questions about whether such work is solely about women's experiences as has so often been claimed. A further issue here, and one which is currently a particularly important aspect of feminist debate, is the relationship of gender to other forms of oppression, for instance those of race, class and "disability, and the need to include an awareness of this within the parameters of our research.

A second way in which an understanding of the feminist research process has developed and a consequence of gender-conscious theory and politics is in the modifications which have been made to existing techniques. It has already been pointed out that feminists have largely used interviewing in their work. But they have not as is now well-known, adopted this strategy blindly. Feminists have been critical of the ways in which sociological research involves hierarchical power relationships." Even non-scheduled interviewing and ethnographic methods can entail a deliberate separation of the researcher from the subject of the researched. The researcher using, qualitative methods may not be constrained by pre-coded questions, but is nevertheless, exhorted by textbook guidelines to be emotionally detached, calculating and in control of the collection of data. Those researched are regarded in this view of research as the passive givers of information with the researcher acting as a sponge soaking up the details provided. Feminists have rejected the inevitability of such a power hierarchy between researcher and researched instead they have argued for the significance of a genuine rather than an instrumental rapport: between them. This, it has been claimed encourages a non-exploitative relationship, where the person being studied is not treated simply: is a source of data. Research becomes a means of sharing information and, rather than being seen as a source of bias the personal involvement of the interviewer is an important element in establishing trust and thus obtaining good quality information.

The problem is that it is not entirely clear what the term; 'good quality' might mean in this context. Does it refer to the authenticity of women's accounts, to reliable and valid information, or to material which has not been violated by researcher (re)interpretation? Who is to judge on these issues and using what kind of criteria? Further, it is not always so easy to reduce the power dynamics that are likely to be present in research and it is unlikely that they can ever be eradicated completely. As Janet Finch has indicated, if the researcher is educated and articulate- it is very easy to encourage women to talk about aspects of their lives concerning which, on reflection, they, might have preferred to remain silent.23 It is easy too for feminists to deny that they have knowledge and skills in order to minimize differences between women as Gelsthorp has noted.24 The problem of power dynamics may become particularly acute when men are the subjects of research. But here the difficulty is likely to be reversed, with the male respondent rather than the female researcher engaged in manipulation, as both Scott and Smart have described.
A number of ways of dealing with these kinds of dilemma have been suggested. For example, feminist research is characterized by a concern to record the subjective experiences of doing research. This concern with reflexivity, also to be found in some forms of ethnography, may be expressed in two rather differing ways. It can mean reflecting upon, critically examining and exploring analytically the nature of the research process in an attempt to demonstrate the assumptions about gender (and, increasingly, race, disability and other oppressive) relations which are built into a specific project. It may also refer to understanding the "intellectual autobiography" of researchers. This is important for Stanley and Wise who have been critical of the way in which social research dichotomizes objectivity-versus-subjectivity. They argue that the researcher is also a subject in her research and that her personal history is part of the process through which 'understanding' and 'conclusions' are reached. In both cases gender is seen, not just as something to be studied, but as an integral dimension of the research process and therefore also to be examined. Such work on reflexivity means that feminists have been at the forefront of discussions about the need to be open and honest about the research process, although, clearly, there are no easy solutions to the issues which have been raised by them.

A final way in which feminist research practice might be said to be distinctive has been in its insistence on its political nature and potential to bring about change in women's lives. At one time this was summed up in the slogan that feminist research was 'on', 'by' and 'for' women and that it should be designed with the aim of producing knowledge which would transform patriarchy. Such a claim is not However, uncontroversial as Glacksmann's chapter in this volume indicates. It implies for instance that studies which cannot be directly linked to transformational politics are not feminist. It raises the question as to how far the researcher is in control of the extent and direction of any change which her research might bring about. In fact, different kinds of change are potentially involved: One is that associated with empowerment literally helping to give people knowledge, energy and authority in order that they might act. Anne Opie has argued that there are at least three ways in which an individual may be personally empowered through participation in a research project. These are through their contribution to making visible a social issue, the therapeutic effect of being able to reflection and re-evaluate their experience as part of the process of being interviewed, and the generally subversive outcome that these first two consequences may generate. It is also possible. Of course, that the researcher may be empowered in these ways as well.

Yet these are rather limited notions of the effects that research may have. To start with, it is by no means the case that all outcomes will be positive. It may be possible for participants in a study to have their consciousnesses raised without
the corresponding channels for action being available. Feminists have raised questions about the ethics of research which, having generated all sorts of issues in respondents' minds, then abandons them to come to terms with these on their own. Kelly, for instance, has described the kind of support which she felt it necessary to provide for the women who talked to her about surviving sexual violence." Writing about her research on women who have left violent partners, Kirkwood reveals that one of them declined to return for a second interview because she had found the first so traumatic. Of course, it may be that a particular study has little or even no effect on participants. Still, it is important to be aware of the possible negative, as well as positive, outcomes that might arise.

Feminists have also written about the personal consequences on the researcher of undertaking particular kinds of research. Stanley and Wise, for example, argue that their consciousnesses as feminists were raised in such a profound way, as a result of their work on obscene telephone calls, that it affected their views of men, patriarchy and feminism. Kirkwood found her research so emotionally stressful that she eventually sought counselling, although she argues that, retrospectively, she can see that these emotions played an important role in the quality of her analysis.

Finally, it should be noted that even if research has little impact on the lives of those included in it, it may be important for the category of persons they are taken to represent. Thus, work on rape or women's housing problems may be too late to alleviate the suffering of those directly involved in it but can contribute to legislation, policy or the behaviour of agencies in ways which later enhance the experiences of others.

This discussion of feminist research practice has drawn attention to a number of issues and debates in the field. Whilst it is clear that there is no one methodological approach or research practice specific to feminism, as some critics have erroneously claimed, this should come as no surprise since feminism embraces a number of theoretical positions and perspectives. What is obvious, however, is the challenging and wide-ranging nature of the discussion which has developed; a discussion which has implications for the whole of social research and not just for the feminist variant of it.
ETHICS AND FEMINIST RESEARCH: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Rosalind Edwards and Melanie Mauthner

Introduction

Ethics concerns the morality of human conduct. In relation to social research, it refers to the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process. General concern about ethics in social research has grown apace. In the UK, for example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of professional associations developed and/or revised ethical declarations for their members. The guidelines available from these bodies include: the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth's Ethical Guidelines for Good Practice, the British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines, the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice, the British Psychological Society's Revised Ethical Principles for Conducting Research on Human Participants, and the Social Research Association's Ethical Guidelines. Indeed, it would be interesting to trace the genealogy of these statements as they all seem to acknowledge drawing on each other's declarations. Research funders may also produce ethical statements, such as the Economic and Social Research Council (see which is the UK's leading research and training agency. The Association of Research Centres in the Social Sciences is, at the time of writing, reviewing ethical guidelines from an institutional perspective. Moreover, it also seems that academic institutions themselves, individually, are setting up ethics committees to which researchers (and in some cases students) should submit their projects for approval, and research ethics committees have been a feature for social (not just medical) researchers working with and through statutory health organisations for some time now (see www.corec.org.uk). In addition, ethical guidelines have been published addressing particular social groups on whom researchers may focus, such as Priscilla Alderson's (1995) for social research on and with children.
Researchers themselves have written extensively on ethics in social research. While feminist researchers certainly have not been the only authors to undertake reflexive accounts of the politics of empirical research practice, it is fair to say that such reflections have done and do form a substantial feature of feminist publications on the research process. Indeed, some have characterized feminist ethics as a %boom-ing industry' (Jaggar, 1991). These pieces, however, are not usually explicit investigations of ethics per se. In discursive terms, they are posed in terms of politics rather than ethics. Nonetheless, they represent an empirical engagement with the practice of ethics. As such, they pose the researcher as a central active ingredient of the research process rather than the technical operator that can be inferred by professional ethical codes.

Mary Maynard (1994) has characterized feminist work in this area, in the early stages of second wave scholarship, as concerned with a critique of dominant 'value-free' modes of doing social research, the rejection of exploitative power hierarchies between researcher and researched, and the espousal of intimate research relationships, especially woman-to-woman, as a distinctly feminist mode of enquiry (see also Jean Buncombe and Julie Jessop, this volume). In particular, detailed attention was given to the empirical process of collecting data for analysis.

In this chapter we are concerned with ethical perspectives on qualitative social research, from a feminist perspective in particular. We start from a position that an explicit theoretical grounding in a feminist ethics of care would enhance many feminist and other discussions of the research process where this is concerned with ethical dilemmas. Such work, however, rarely draws on these theories, although authors may often implicitly work within or towards just such an ethics. In turn, though, few feminist analyses and elaborations of an ethics of care at the epistemological level (a vibrant feature of feminist political philosophy) pay attention to the empirical process of conducting social research. We feel, however, that feminist discussions of the research process and of the ethics of care have a lot of concerns in common.

Our focus is on philosophical theories of ethics and the difficulties we face as researchers in applying these models in our practice when we conduct research projects. There are clear tensions between the range of models of ethics that we can draw on to negotiate our way through the competing demands of research, both practical and theoretical. We are often left in isolation to ponder and plot our decisions about how best to draw on these perspectives. This chapter connects theoretical ethical models with the complex dilemmas we encounter in the 'doing' of research. We begin our exploration of such issues by laying out explanations for the rise of concern about the practice of
ethics in social research. We then pinpoint ethical concerns in social research, which subsequent chapters explore in more depth. We review specific ethical models including deontology, consequentialism, virtue ethics of skills, rights/justice ethics and the ethics of care. After considering some of the care-based ethical debates we suggest some practical guidelines for researchers to consider rooted in a feminist ethics of care.

Why the rise in concern with ethics in social research?

Martyn Hammersley has argued that what he calls 'ethicism' is one of the four main tendencies operating in contemporary qualitative social research. The others are empiricism, instrumentalism and postmodernism. Although not explicitly referring to feminist researchers, he perhaps has them, amongst others, in mind when he points to:

... a tendency to see research almost entirely in ethical terms, as if its aim were to achieve ethical goals or to exemplify ethical ideals ... Whereas previously ethical considerations were believed to set boundaries to what researchers could do in pursuit of knowledge, now ethical considerations are treated by some as constituting the very rationale of research. For example, its task becomes the promotion of social justice. (Hammersley, 1999: 18)

Hammersley sees this posing of research as ethics as leading to the neglect of research technique - the better or worse ways of carrying out the processes of research in terms of the quality of research knowledge that they generate. He also sees the dominance of ethicism as attributable to the effects of the tendencies of instrumentalism -the idea that the task of research is to relate to policymaking and practice (on which see also Homan, 1991; Simons, 1995)- and of postmodernism, especially the 'turn' to 'irony' and scepticism. For Hammersley, they both lead to the down-playing or questioning of the possibility and desirability of knowledge, and he argues that a concern with ethics has expanded to fill this space. We feel, however, that there may well be other factors at work in the rise in concern with research ethics. In its institutionalized form we see this as, at least in part, related to a concern with litigation.

An overt and similar preoccupation in professional ethical statements or guidelines, given the way they draw on each other, is with the contract between research funder or sponsor and the researcher (see also CVCP, 1992). There are two main linked issues here. First, there is a concern that researchers should retain their academic freedom. They should not accept contractual conditions that conflict with
to codes being adopted at other universities that we know, thus requires researchers to obtain written ethical approval from any collaborating organisations involved in the research. It also requires researchers to ask research participants to sign a consent form basically stating that they have had the nature and purpose of the research explained to them and that they fully and freely consent to participate in the study. Such an approach implies an either/or position: either consent is informed, participants are protected, and so on, or they are not, as Tina Miller and Linda Bell, and Maxine Birch and Tina Miller write about in this volume. It also implies that all the ethical issues involved in a research project can be determined at the start of the project being carried out, that any potential harm may be offset by research participants' stated willingness, and that an ethics committee sanctioned project is by definition an ethical one. The aim appears to be to avoid ethical dilemmas through asserting formalistic principles, rather than providing guidance on how to deal with them. Indeed, while some pose codes of ethical practice as alerting social researchers to ethical issues (for example, Punch, 1986), others argue that they may have the effect of forestalling rather than initiating researchers' reflexive and continuing engagement with ethical research practice (for example, Mason, 1996).

We are not suggesting, however, that such institutionalized concerns with litigation are necessarily what motivates social researchers in their considerations about, and reflections on, ethics, both here in this book and elsewhere. Nor would we agree with Hammersley that their/our focus on ethics is driven by instrumentalism or by post-modernism in the terms in which he poses the latter, as ironic scepticism. Rather, we would see it as rooted in a genuine and legitimate concern with issues of power. We acknowledge that research is a political, rather than neutral, process - as Val Gillies and Pam Allred describe in Chapter 2 - in a world that is characterized by awareness of difference and a questioning of the motives and rights of 'experts' to define the social world and to proscribe templates for what constitutes the 'correct' course of action (see Edwards and Glover, 2001).

**Ethical Concerns In Social Research**

As we noted earlier, there is an extensive literature on ethics in social research. The Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines, for example, contains over 90 key references (www.the-sra.org.uk/). These cover a range of aspects of ethical practice. There are numerous other examples of publications concerned with ethics in social
research as well, including a strand of feminist pieces. Few of the SRA-cited publications seem to be written from a feminist perspective, even though a number of influential feminist pieces concerned with aspects of ethical research have been published (early examples include Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981). Indeed, discussions of the research process related to ethical issues have become a feature of feminist research, especially qualitative empirical work.

Ethical decisions arise throughout the entire research process, from conceptualization and design, data gathering and analysis, and report, and literature on the topic reflects this. Regarding access, the issue of informed consent has been subject to fierce debate among qualitative social researchers generally: in particular the ethics of carrying out covert research (see reviews in Homsby-Smith, 1993; Lee, 1993; May, 1993; Wise, 1987) and the nature and time frame of consent (David et al., 2001; Denzin, 1997; Morrow and Richards, 1996). The time frame involved in assessing the benefits or harm of social research has also been an issue in discussion (for example, Wise, 1987).

There have also been debates amongst feminists concerning the ethical merits and consequences of qualitative versus quantitative methods (see review in Maynard, 1994), and the ethical problems involved in secondary qualitative data analysis have been raised (Mauthner et al., 1998).

The epistemologies of the theoretical perspective informing research have also been discussed as generating ethical questions, allied to debates around research as involved empowerment or distanced knowledge production (see Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mauthner, Chapter 7). Mary Maynard (1994) poses the issue of the ethics of epistemology as the current focus of much debate within feminism, and feminists have also engaged in debate with other perspectives on this topic (see, for example, contributions to Sociology, 1992, 26: 2). Other examples of feminist work in this vein include Sue Wise's (1987) argument that ethical issues are inherent in the researcher's definition of social reality; that is the epistemologies of the theoretical perspective framing research questions, analysis of data, and writing up of findings. She argues that the 'cognitive authority' of the researcher's view in producing knowledge, and assessments as to whether or not that knowledge is empowering, are knotty ethical issues. She poses a series of questions, including: who decides, and how, what counts as knowledge? What if one research group's empowerment is another's disempowerment? Hilary Rose (1994) has unpacked the way the scientific knowledge system is entwined with other power systems, and shaped by a masculinist instrumental rationality that denies emotion. In contrast, Rose (1994: 33) puts forward a feminist epistemology that 'thinks from caring' and that is 'centred on the domains of interconnectedness and caring rationality'.

Underlying these sorts of discussions and debates over ethical concerns in the research literature are various models of how to understand and resolve ethical issues.
Ethical Models

Professional association ethical guidelines and textbook discussions of social research ethics usually pose the sorts of ethical issues outlined above as being formed around conflicting sets of rights claims and competing responsibilities. Steiner Kvale (1996) outlines three ethical models that provide the broader frameworks within which researchers reflect on these issues (see also Kent, 2000 for a similar categorization). These are derived from mainstream political philosophy and draw out their implications for conducting social research.

In the 'duty ethics of principles' or deontological model, research is driven by universal principles such as honesty, justice and respect. Actions are governed by principles that should not be broken, and judged by intent rather than consequences. As Kvale (1996:121) points out, however, 'carried to its extreme, the intentional position, can become a moral absolutism with intentions of living up to absolute principles of right action, regardless of the human consequences of an act'.

The 'utilitarian ethics of consequences' model prioritizes the 'goodness' of outcomes of research such as increased knowledge. Thus the Tightness or wrongness of actions are judged by their consequences rather than their intent. This model is underlain by a universalist cost-benefit result pragmatism. In extremis, though, as Kvale notes, such a position can mean that 'the ends come to justify the means' (1996: 122).

In contrast to the two universalist models above, a 'virtue ethics of skills' model questions the possibility of laying down abstract principles. Rather, it stresses a contextual or situational ethical position, with an emphasis on the researchers' moral values and ethical skills in reflexively negotiating ethical dilemmas: 'Ethical behaviour is seen less as the application of general principles and rules, than as the researcher internalising moral values' (ibid: 122). Researchers' ethical intuitions, feelings and reflective skills are emphasized, including their sensibilities in undertaking dialogue and negotiation with the various parties involved in the research.

Feminist writers on ethics, however, have put forward another basis for reflecting on ethical issues (although not specifically in relation to research), with an emphasis on care and responsibility rather than outcomes, justice or rights. In other words, this is a model that is focused on particular feminist-informed social values. Elisabeth Porter (1999) argues that there are three inter-related features of feminist thinking on ethics: personal experience, context and nurturant relationships. Daily life dilemmas are shaped by social divisions of gender, class and ethnicity: experiences of these dilemmas generate different ethical perspectives. These perspectives are not only obtained in particular contexts, but those contexts also alter and inform the ethical dilemmas that we face as researchers and the range and appropriate choices in resolving them. These dilemmas are not abstract but rooted in specific relationships that involve emotions, and which require nurturance and care for their ethical conduct.
While some, such as Elisabeth Porter, see a clear distinction between the virtue ethics of skills and the value-based feminist model, our own stance is that there are some overlaps as well as distinctions between the two. Both stress context and situation rather than abstract principles, and dialogue and negotiation rather than rules and autonomy. A virtue skills model, however, can imply that the skills that researchers acquire through practice in making ethical decisions are impartial and neutral 'good' (virtue) research standards, even with awareness of particular context. In contrast, a value-based model explicitly advocates a 'partial' stance based on analysis of power relations between those involved in the research and society more broadly, and admits emotion into the ethical process. Here, partiality refers to the importance of acknowledging power relations and taking up a position:

Ethics encourages partiality, the specific response to distinctiveness . . . partiality does not preclude impartiality . . . partiality varies according to the [relationships] involved . . . responding to this particularity is fundamental to ethics. (Porter, 1999: 30)

A contingent virtue and/or value, rather than universalist approach has become predominantly advocated in texts discussing ethics in social research (examples include Davidson and Layder, 1994; Fielding, 1993; Hornsby-Smith, 1993; Punch, 1986). Professional association guidelines, however, often weave a difficult balance between various models. So, for example, the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice both 'points to a set of obligations to which members should normally adhere as principles for guiding their conduct' and 'recognises that often it will be necessary to make . . . choices on the basis of principles and values, and the (often conflicting) interests of those involved'. While difficult balancing acts will always remain, it may be that the awkward tensions in the aims of professional association ethical statements would be eased if they were explicitly informed and guided by a theoretical and feminist approach to ethical dilemmas, as we elaborate later.

Tensions between different ethical models or situational shades of grey, however, do not often seem to be apparent on the part of ethics committees who vet research proposals. Moreover, some researchers seem to want them to apply abstract universalistic principles. Ann Oakley (1992), for example, in discussing her experiences with hospital and health authority ethics committees, points to evidence concerning inconsistencies in their judgements. Such criticism may well be fairly made, but it also implies that there are universal principles and abstract criteria that can be applied regardless of situational context. This is a puzzling stance for researchers like Oakley, whose research practice has been informed by feminism. Indeed, much feminist work addressing aspects of ethical research practice that we discuss below draws on complex situationally informed debates.
There are, nonetheless, contrasts and tensions between positions within any virtue or value based ethical approach - although what they have in common is an ethical approach that calls for attention to specificity and context. These range from complete postmodern relativism through to post-traditional positions (such as feminist, communitarian, new critical theory) that have a particular set of ethical values underlying their situated approach. Even with feminist or feminist-inspired value approaches to ethics there are significant debates around issues of care and power, focused around relationships with 'the Other', as we address below.

There are also debates about the extent to which justice-based ethical models and an ethics of care are in conflict, inter-related or can be reframed (see Porter, 1999; Ruddick, 1996; Sevenhuijsen, 1998). Eva Feder Kittay (2001) summarizes the main elements of an ethics of care in contrast with an ethics of justice, which we have adapted from a medical/health environment to a research context (see table below).

Kittay's discussion, however, poses the two ethics as if they were in opposition to one another. Sarah Ruddick (1996) has taken a similar position, arguing that ethics of care and justice cannot be subsumed under each other and that they cannot be integrated, because in her view justice depends on a notion of the individual as a detached rather than relational being. Nevertheless, Ruddick also argues that justice as well as care applies to the moral domain. Others regard justice and care as complementary, and argue that they need to be integrated in thinking about moral issues (see review in Porter, 1999). This proposition retains the integrity of each ethical framework, as laid out in the table below, but sees them each as providing enabling conditions of moral adequacy for the other ethic.

In contrast, Selma Sevenhuijsen (1998) has gone further to argue for a reformulation of the concept of justice so that it is no longer
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Care</th>
<th>Justice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self as self-in-relation Characteristic of informal contexts</td>
<td>Autonomous self Characteristic of formal contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphasis on contextual reasoning</td>
<td>Emphasis on principles</td>
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<td>• Situations as defining moral problems and resolutions</td>
<td>• Hierarchy of values</td>
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<td>• Use of narrative</td>
<td>&quot; Calculation of moral rights and wrongs</td>
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<td>Emphasis on responsibilities to others and ourselves</td>
<td>Emphasis on rights and equality</td>
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<td>Acceptance of inevitable dependencies Moral importance of personal</td>
<td>Emphasis and valuing of independence Impartiality valued</td>
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<td>connections</td>
<td>Protects against or adjudicates conflict between individuals</td>
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<td>Values and attempts to maintain connections among individuals</td>
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<td>Temptations:</td>
<td>• Failure to be merciful</td>
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<td>• Sacrifice or loss of self</td>
<td>• Over-reliance on impersonal institutions</td>
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<td>• Failure to recognize autonomy of other</td>
<td>• Overly rule-bound</td>
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<td>• Over-identification with other</td>
<td>Harm when there is a clash between individuals</td>
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<td>Harm when connections are broken</td>
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opposed to or separate from, and thus does not require reconciling with, an ethic of care. Feminist criticisms of justice from care perspectives, she says, have been directed towards a specific variety: that of liberal, rational, distributive models of justice. In her view, discussion about the compatibility of care and justice can usefully be freed from these parameters. There is a need to have concepts of justice that are not framed exclusively in distributive, sameness or universal tennis, but which take into account situations and consequences. Thus Sevenhuijsen fundamentally reframes justice to see it as a process rather than rules: a process involving an ethics of care in a situated way based on values of reconciliation, reciprocity, diversity and responsibility, and with an awareness of power. Justice thus does not stand alone but is simultaneously incorporated into, and informed by, care. It is within this understanding of justice as part of care that we proceed to examine care-based ethical debates and then generate our own guidelines for ethical research practice.

**Care-based ethical debates**

Kittay (2001) refers to care and caring as a labour, an attitude and a Virtue' (or value in our terms). The central catalyst to writings on a feminist ethics of care was the work of Carol Gilligan (Porter, 1999). She first used the concept in her work on
gender differences in moral reasoning between boys and girls (Gilligan, 1983), in which she argued that girls and women deliberate in a 'different[ethical] voice' to boys/men because they find themselves dealing with dilemmas over their own desires and the needs of others, and the responsibilities that they feel for those within their web of connections in ways that are gendered. Other feminist work addressing a feminist ethics of care includes Nel Noddings' (1984) discussion of the central places of responsibility and relationships as an empathetic way of responding to others in an ethical manner; and Joan Tronto's (1993) analysis of the way that the practical, relational, caring work primarily undertaken by women is excluded from mainstream moral and political philosophy and theorizing because it is regarded as instinctual practice rather than willed action based on rules.

The work of these and other feminist theorizers in the field, however, has rarely been applied to a consideration of ethics in social research. Norman Denzin (1997) provides a notable exception here. He has put forward a strong argument for feminist theorizing to inform ethical research, expressly in relation to ethnography and specifically addressing the writing of it. As part of his critique of traditional voyeuristic and utilitarian knowledge-making protocol, Denzin takes issue with those who, like Martyn Hammersley, want a focus on 'better' techniques, and who pose the 'turn' to postmodernism as if it is a choice or an option. Rather, for Denzin, we inhabit and live in just such a cultural moment, and one in which morality and ethics are central issues:

The ethnographic culture has changed because the world that ethnography confronts has changed. Disjuncture and difference define this global, postmodern cultural economy we all live in . . . Global and local legal processes have problematized and erased the personal and institutional distance between the ethnographer and those he or she writes about . . . We do not own the field notes we make about those we study. We do not have an undisputed warrant to study anyone or anything . . . The writer can no longer presume to be able to present an objective, noncontested account of the other's experiences . . . ethnography is a moral, allegorical, and therapeutic project. Ethnography is more than the record of human experience. The ethnographer writes tiny moral tales. (Denzin, 1997:xii-xiv)

Denzin castigates modernist ethical models as resting on a cognitive model that privileges rational solutions to ethical dilemmas (the rationalist fallacy), and it presumes that humanity is a single subject (the distributive fallacy) . . . This rights-, justice-, and acts-based system ignores the relational dialogical nature of human interaction' (Denzin, 1997:271,273). The universalist ethical models of duty and of utilitarianism are rejected and replaced by a personally involved care-based ethical
system, based on a body of work Denzin refers to as the 'feminist, communitarian ethical model'. He sees this work as defined by its contention that:

... community is ontologically and morally prior to persons, and that dialogical communication is the basis of the moral community ... A personally involved, politically committed ethnographer is presumed and not the morally neutral observer of positivism ... In this framework every moral act is a contingent accomplishment measured against the ideals of a feminist, interactive, and moral universalism. (Denzin, 1997: 274)

Denzin explicitly draws on the work of feminist political theorists and philosophers such as Patricia Hill Collins (1991) and Syela Benhabib (1992). From a Black feminist position, Hill Collins critiques the traditional, positivist, masculinist and Euro-centric knowledge-making enterprise. She offers four criteria for interpreting truth and knowledge claims of social science: the first focuses on the primacy of concrete lived experience; the second on the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims; the third on the ethic of caring; and the fourth on the ethic of personal accountability. Hill Collins' ethical system for knowledge validation is concerned with ethics of care and accountability that are rooted in values of personal expressiveness, emotions and empathy. These are made accountable through an interactive 'call-and-response' dialogue. In such a mode, there is no need to 'decentre' others in order to centre our own 'expert' voice and arguments adversarially. Rather, the centre of discussion is constantly and appropriately pivoted, so that participants can all exchange wisdoms, and acknowledge that experience and knowledge are partial at the same time as they are valid. Benhabib reworks Habermas' ideas around discourse ethics (including through her notion of 'open-ended moral conversations' which Maxine Birch and Tina Miller refer to in Chapter 5), to reject traditional liberal, abstract, autonomous and rights-based justice reasoning as the basis for moral deliberation. She argues that ethics is about concrete rather than generalized situations, in which relations of care belong at the centre rather than the margins. What is moral and ethical is arrived at through an active and situationally contingent exchange of experiences, perspectives and ideas across differences (particularly around gender, but also in terms of other social divisions). She puts forward 'moral respect' as 'symmetrical reciprocity', comprising a relation of symmetry between self and other that involves looking at issues from the point of view of others or putting ourselves in the place of others.

As Denzin (1997) conceives it, the personally involved care-based ethical system for social research that he derives from feminist communitarianism, privileges emotionality in the ethical decision-making process. It presumes a dialogic rather than autonomous view of self, and asks the researcher 'to step into the shoes of the persons being studied' (Denzin, 1997 273) and build connected and transformative, participatory and empowering relationships with those studied. Researchers need to
be what is often termed 'with and for the Other'. Ethnographic writing should be 'a vehicle for readers to discover moral truths about themselves' (Denzin, 1997: 284) and should be judged for its ability to 'provoke transformations and changes in the public and private spheres of everyday life' (Denzin, 1997 275).

This view necessarily is a simplification of the complex and valuable arguments that Denzin makes, as well as those of the 'feminist communitarian' thinkers upon whom he draws. Parts of them, however, may be subject to the sorts of questions Sue Wise (1987) directed at previous feminist work (see earlier). What if one research group's empowerment is another's disempowerment, especially where both are considered oppressed groups? What happens if, as Donna Luff (1999) experienced in her study of women in the moral lobby, we find ourselves researching individuals or groups whom we dislike and/or consider socially damaging even if oppressed? And what if what is beneficial at one moment turns out to be the opposite in the long-run? Indeed, Denzin seems to imply that research following the feminist communitarian ethical model will not face these sorts of ethical questions:

This framework presumes a researcher who builds collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, and friendly relations with those studied. This individual would not work in a situation in which the need for compensation from injury could be created. (Denzin, 1997:275)

Other feminist theorists have criticised the approaches on which Denzin's work is based. Iris Young (1997), for example, challenges feminist and other ethical frameworks that imply a relation of symmetry between self and other, which involve looking at issues from the point of view of others or putting ourselves in the place of others (including Benhabib's notion of symmetrical reciprocity). The 'stepping into each other's shoes' that Denzin recommends assumes an easy reversibility of positions that is neither possible nor desirable according to Young. This is because individuals have particular histories and occupy social positions that make their relations asymmetrical. Young points out the difficulties of imagining another's point of view or seeing the world from their standpoint when we lack their personal and group history. Instead, Young argues for 'asymmetrical reciprocity' which means accepting that there are aspects of another person's position that we do not understand, yet are open to asking about and listening to. Asymmetrical reciprocity involves dialogue that enables each subject to understand each other across differences without reversing perspectives or identifying with each other. In other words, rather than ignoring or blurring power positions, ethical practice needs to pay attention to them. (See also Maxine Birch and Tina Miller, Chapter 5, for a further critique of attempting open-ended moral conversations.)
Selma Sevenhuijsen's (1998) work on an ethics of care also raises shortcomings in Denzin's particular feminist-derived position on ethics in social research. Like him, she also regards postmodernism as a social condition based on diversity, ambiguity and ambivalence, which brings moral and ethical issues to the fore. Like Young, however, she does not accept 'being with and for the Other' as a sufficient basis for formulating ethics. For her, though, this is because this stance does not capture the concrete relations of dependency and connection that are central to an ethics of care.

First of all, the ethics of care involves different moral concepts: responsibilities and relationships rather than rules and rights. Secondly, it is bound to concrete situations rather than being formal and abstract. And thirdly, the ethics of care can be described as a moral activity, the 'activity of caring', rather than as a set of principles which can simply be followed. The central question in the ethics of care, how to deal with dependency and responsibility, differs radically from that of rights ethics: what are the highest normative principles and rights in situations of moral conflict? (Sevenhuijsen, 1998: 107)

So, while Denzin calls for a care-based ethical system to shape the research process, he slips away from fully recognizing its implications back towards the autonomous separateness he rejects.

Furthermore, while Denzin seems similar to Sevenhuijsenin seeing emotionality and empathy as central to ethical judgement, unlike her he does not also stress the need for caring and 'care'ful judgement to be based on practical knowledge and attention to detail in the context of time and place. Within Sevenhuijsen's version of an ethics of care, ethics thus needs to be interpreted and judged in specific contexts of action - it is fundamentally contingent practice-based.

**Feminist ethics of care and practical guidelines**

Feminist political theorists who advocate an ethic of care perspective on issues argue that a feminist approach to ethics should not seek to formulate moral principles that stand above power and context. Ethics is about how to deal with conflict, disagreement and ambivalence rather than attempting to eliminate it. A feminist ethics of care can help researchers think about how they do this by illuminating more
fully the sources of moral dilemmas and formulating meaningful epistemological strategies in order to deal with these dilemmas, even if only on a temporary basis' (Sevenhuijsen, 1998: 16). The importance and centrality of attention to specificity and context means that ethics cannot be expected to be a source of absolute norms. It has to connect to concrete practices and dilemmas, as the chapters in the rest of this book illustrate. It is attention to these issues that can provide the guidelines for ethical action.

Thus we conclude with a - contingent - attempt to generate some guidelines for ethical research practice arising out of a feminist ethics of care, indicating where they are elaborated empirically in following chapters by our co-contributors. Importantly, it should be noted that when we refer to 'the people involved' below, we include the researcher as well as participants, funders, gate-keepers and others. We suggest that these guidelines framed as questions can be useful for researchers to consider in deliberating dilemmas, choosing from alternative courses of action, and being accountable for the course of action that they ultimately decide to pursue.

- **Who are the people involved in and affected by the ethical dilemma raised in the research?**

Maxine Birch and Tina Miller address these issues in their chapter on participation in the research process (Chapter 5).

- **What is the context for the dilemma in terms of the specific topic of the research and the issues it raises personally and socially for those involved?**

Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mauthner consider this in their chapter on how we come to produce ethical knowledge (Chapter 7).

- **What are the specific social and personal locations of the people involved in relation to each other?**

Linda Bell and Linda Nutt explore these elements in their discussion of professional and research loyalties (Chapter 4), as do Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mauthner in the context of analysing data (Chapter 7).

- **What are the needs of those involved and how are they inter-related?**

Jean Buncombe and Julie Jessop delve into this issue in their examination of emotions and 'rapport' in interviews (Chapter 6).
• **Who am I identifying with, who am I posing as other, and why?**

Linda Bell and Linda Nutt tackle this question in their chapter on divided loyalties to professional considerations and research etiquette (Chapter 4). Pam Alldred and Val Gillies' chapter on the implicit notion of the modernist subject that researchers work with in interview-based research also touches on some of these issues (Chapter 8).

• **What is the balance of personal and social power between those involved?**

Val Gillies and Pam Alldred address this question explicitly in their chapter about research as a political tool (Chapter 2), as do Linda Bell and Linda Nutt in their focus on conflicting expectations when researchers are also working professionals in other spheres - health, welfare and social work in particular (Chapter 4).

• **How will those involved understand our actions and are these in balance with our judgement about our own practice?**

Both Val Gillies and Pam Alldred (Chapter 2), and Jean Duncombe and Julie Jessop (Chapter 6) write about these issues in their chapters in relation to the intentions researchers espouse for their research on the one hand, and regarding the intimacy between researcher and respondent that can resemble friendship on the other.

• **How can we best communicate the ethical dilemmas to those involved, give them room to raise their views, and negotiate with and between them?**

Both Tina Miller and Linda Bell (Chapter 3), and Maxine Birch and Tina Miller (Chapter 5) consider these issues in the context of seeking access to participants and gaining their consent to taking part in research projects.

• **How will our actions affect relationships between the people involved?**

Both Linda Bell and Linda Nutt (Chapter 4), and Jean Duncombe and Julie Jessop (Chapter 6) address this question in their respective chapters: in relation to professional and research motivations, and to forms of friendship that are created in the research process.

We hope that other researchers will find these guidelines useful for consideration in deliberating ethical dilemmas in their research practice. We are not claiming that this list of guidelines for working with a feminist ethics of care in social research constitutes a definitive model. Rather, we see it as work in progress. We offer it here in the spirit of working towards a means
of implementing a feminist ethics of care as a guide for how ethical dilemmas in empirical research may be practically resolved.

Note

- It is something of an irony (although not in the Hammersleyite postmodern sense) that his late colleague, Peter Foster, who shared many of his views, could be regarded as feeding into Hammersley's charge of ethicism. Foster (1999) argued that the pursuit of subjective objective knowledge through the application of systematic research triangulation should in fact be a key guiding principle elaborated in professional association ethical guidelines, and which pursuit Foster also saw as a casualty of postmodern relativism.

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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST CRITIQUE OF KNOWLEDGE

Rubina Saigol

This view of the detached researcher and objective, neutral knowledge came under fire from the social constructionist school of thought whose adherents argued that 'reality' is socially constructed and is not independent of the means and methods used in its construction. We do not simply perceive the world as it exists because we bring into our perception all our prejudices, beliefs, values, norms, ways of seeing and ways of knowing. We do not see without seeing in a particular way. In other words we do not see without at the same time interpreting and decoding what we see. Our inner subjective self is actively involved in enabling us to experience outer reality in determined ways. The very questions asked and the means used to answer them are determined by a host of factors involved in our construction as individual and social selves. Our identities are constructed by our social class, geographical region, gender, race and a host of other factors which serve to position us in the social structure. We speak from situated in our bodies and our positioning. Furthermore, our identities as well as our positioning are not fixed and permanent. They are constantly negotiated, renegotiated, shifting, contradictory and complex. Similarly, the reality that we study is also not a static and fixed one but one that perpetually changes; in other words it is historically contingent. Reality is fluid and in a state of flux and so are our own positioning. The complex interplay between the contradictory and complex 'external world' and the equally contradictory and complex 'inner self' produces knowledge. This knowledge is, therefore, contingent, fluid, tentative, partial, subjective, biased and forever contestable. Knowledge is, therefore, located within very real human struggles for power, legitimacy domination, contestation, resistance and conflict. Knowledge cannot be neutral, objective and unbiased since there is no one single knowledge but multiple knowledges located in a multiple reality. These knowledges intersect at various levels sometimes in agreement with others and at other times in opposition. 'Truth' does not exist outside of discourse. Truth is therefore, forever negotiable. Knowledge is situated, located, embodied and partial as it always has human producers whose perspective must of necessity be partial. The claim to universal, transcendent and absolute truth is an imperialist and appropriationist act. In
short, science is located in society. It has a social basis and responds to human needs and human problems. The social constructionist view went a long way toward dismantling the intimidating, overpowering, hegemonic structure of science which, with its esoteric, abstract generalizations and jargon, did more to mystify and confuse those whom it intended to liberate than provide them with emancipatory tools.

**The Sociology of Knowledge Critique**

The dominant mode of the production of knowledge also came under scathing criticism from the field of the sociology of knowledge. As this field came to have an impact on the field of curriculum theorising, a new field called The New Sociology of Education emerged. This field busied itself in studying how the dominant forms of knowledge were systematized and legitimated in the official curriculum and how this curriculum affected those who were subjected to it. In the 1970s an entire volume on this subject entitled Knowledge and Control was brought out by Michael Young and it contained articles by famous sociologists of education such as Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu. The main questions dealt with in this volume were: what counts as legitimate knowledge? Whose knowledge is it? Whom does this knowledge empower? Whom does it disempower? Whose interests does it include? Whose interests are denied and excluded? The whole volume dealt with relationships between power and knowledge with the general consensus among its contributors being that what counts as legitimate knowledge is not neutral, but knowledge that suits the powerful classes and groups in society. Dominant knowledge excludes the less powerful classes, women and blacks and gives less importance to everyday understandings, common sense practices and knowledge, and lived experience. Cultural understandings and beliefs, which were regarded by some theorists as capable of providing resistance to established, recognized, dominant knowledge, were denigrated as lower forms of knowledge.

This volume also dealt with the hierarchization of knowledge into abstract vs concrete, high status technical and subjective knowledge (the so-called hard sciences), vs low status experimental and everyday cultural knowledge and the relatively low status social and human sciences. Apart from hierarchization of knowledge and the distribution of high and low status knowledge by social class, gender and race, the writers in this volume dealt with the structure of knowledge and its relationship to social class. In particular Basil Bernstein, in this as well as other works, dealt with elaborated and restricted codes in language and how these codes reproduced the language of the powerful classes as the legitimate and acceptable language of academic discourse, thereby-silencing and denigrating the restricted code used by the less privileged. Similarly, Bourdieau wrote extensively of the cultural capital of the dominant classed by which he meant the language, styles, manners, behaviour, social activities and pastimes which signify the class
status of a person. He emphasized how schools reproduce and legitimate the cultural capital of the dominant classes."

As far as the structure knowledge is concerned Bernstein described the classification and framing of knowledge and their effects on one's understanding of reality. Classification refers to the strict division of knowledge areas into water-tight compartments comprising different subjects while framing relates to what is included and what is excluded, in the teaching of a particular subject. Strict classification fragments the world into mutually exclusive areas with seemingly little relationship among the various aspects of reality and framing becomes a matter of social power as those in authority decide what is taught and what is left out. A fragmented view of the world produces a fragmented self which is a weak and diminished self. Authoritarian framing is capable of controlling and manipulating this weakened self more easily. Thus, this school of thought also rejected the notion of objective knowledge which is value-free, neutral and -for the good of all. The power dimension of knowledge as process and product had become obvious.

**Knowledge and Power Over the Other**

The power dimension and its relationship to the reproduction of inequality on a global basis, was picked up by theorists such as Edward Said and Johannes Fabian who used the Foucauldian critique to argue that the ways in which orientalist knowledge constructs and produces the primitive or native Other have effects on the objects of this knowledge. Said related the production of a particular form of essentialized knowledge of the colonized Other to the capitalist-corporate-military combine which was enabled in its imperialist enterprise by the production of this form of knowledge. Fabian described how Anthropology, a discipline known for its colonial origins, makes its object. He concentrated on the construction of time as a form of power in the sense that Anthropology traditionally regarded its objects as existing in another time in history rather than being co-eval with the West. Words such as primitive, backward, advanced, barbaric and ancient served to create a time dimension in which Western society (another essentialism!) was seen as existing in a time ahead of the primitives. The subject object relationship in this discourse was overlooked even though it constituted the context in which the studies were done. Those doing the studying belonged to the colonizing powers; while those being studied were the subjected. This inequality of power, through and essential ingredient of the situation being studied, was denied and repressed. The fact that the researcher could possibly have a purpose other than pure knowledge was overlooked. The presentation of this knowledge as neutral and objective knowledge was an enabling practice in the struggle for power and domination. In
this form of knowledge the colonized others were passive, inert being who were not regarded as having activity created knowledge. Knowledge was a one-way product of the colonizer. The knowledge was itself a colonizing practice.

The Question of Language
Closely related to the problem of objectivity is the question of language. Since all meaning is created in language and research is a process of meaning-making, language becomes the vehicle as well as the power dimension of knowledge. Language can convey, distort, change, project, conceal, reveal or mutilate meaning. In short it can perform as many of the functions of power as the creators of meaning may require. Language was traditionally regarded as the vehicle of thought until Freud declared it to be the cloak of thought. Its varied and multiple effects have been seriously examined only recently. As language is the mode in which the world is represented, produced and articulated, it creates objects of study in discursive practices. The ability to deploy language strategically is the ability to exercise power, to rule. Tremendous advances in Literary theory and deconstruction and the analysis of linguistic structures, have enabled feminists and critical social theorists in several fields to unpack the ideologies of power residing - in the structure of languages. There is a general recognition that language does not merely reflect thought or intention, it actively constructs it. It makes it possible to think certain things and also to suppress the articulation of others.

Although post-modernists, post-structuralists, deconstructionists and others have looked at the power potentialities of language relatively recently. George Orwell, the great literary critic of totalitarianism showed a deep insight into the dynamics of language in his nightmarish Nineteen Eighty-four published in 1949. In this fictional, yet hyper-real account of totalitarian domination, a new language Newspeak replaces Oldspeak. In one sense Synie a committed Party worker, tells Winston, the dissident: "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect." Oldspeak, the traditional language is looked down upon because of its vagueness and 'useless shades of meaning'. A little later Syme again tells Winston, "How could you have a slogan like "freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy
means not thinking - not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.
The purpose of Newspeak is described by Orwell in the following words: "The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for trie world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc [the systenvof beliefs of the fictional world called Oceania]. But to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical though - that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc - should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. Its vocabulary so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods. This was done by the invention of new words, but by chiefly eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings."[11] Thus, "...while their meanings were far more rigidly defined...All ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them."[17] Only simple staccato sounds were left expressing one clearly understood concept. It would be quite impossible to use the vocabulary for literary, political or philosophical discussion. Newspeak could only express impel thought usually involving concrete objects or physical actions. It did not express meanings as much as it destroyed them. Words such as honour, justice, morality and internationalism were covered by a few blanket words which abolished them.

Liberty and equality were contained in Crimethink and objectivity and rationalism were covered by Oldthink. The Party member knew what constituted the right conduct. As Overwell states, "Newspeak was designed not to extend but to diminish the renegi of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum."[18]

One thought process which Orwell describes as the cornerstone of the ideology of Ingsoc is doublethink. As the instrument of power, doublethink is described as, "To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself...Even to understand the word 'doublethink' involved the use of doublethink."[19] Thus by reducing vocabulary the area of choice is reduced. In Newspeak the words grew fewer and fewer and their meanings narrower and narrower ad more and more rigid. As connection with Oldspeak grew dim, the ties with the past were severed
so that there was no possibility to think that things may once have been different, that alternatives to the present were possible. No negative thoughts could be expressed as there were no words for them, for example, the word bad did not exists; only ungood or doubleplusungood. With ideological narrowness and rigidity and all heresies reduced to one vague word, it was hoped that "There would be many crimes and errors which it would be beyond his power to commit, simply because they were nameless and therefore unimaginable." 20

The reason that I have dwelt at length on Orwell's fictional masterpiece is that it is supremely relevant today in terms of the relationship between authoritarian forms of thought and language in virtually all forms of societies. The danger is greater in post-industrial, informational and postmodern societies where overt, tangible and recognizable forms of domination have given way to more insidious, covert and subtle forms "mediated and engineered by language, representation and imagery; the danger is also serious in highly authoritarian, undemocratic and overtly repressive societies. Since the media, education and propaganda tools are the modern form of control and domination, the importance of language has become all the more evident. Some of the observations by Orwell which are highly relevant for my discussion of language-as-power and which link up with Herzfeld's critique of language-as-state-domination are the following: the reduction of shades of meaning, fixed, rigid and single meanings of words, reduction in what it is possible to imagine and think by eliminating words for it, the removal of ambiguities, the absence of metaphor in use of language, the permanent attachment of one, single meaning to a word. I will now turn to Herzfeld's critique in order to show how such meaning-making practices by social scientists and Government bureaucracies enable the state to control its citizenry and suppress dissent.

Herzfeld's study was based on the Greek bureaucracy and he argued that modern, rationalized, Western bureaucracies are forms of 'secular theodicy' which is not very different from religious and other* so-called pre-modern world views expressed by other societies. According to him the state is a rhetorical construct in which the state functionaries and the clients equally participate to create a cosmos. This cosmos enables the clients and the functionaries to invoke 'the system' to explain helplessness and one's failure to deal with the bureaucracy. Herzfeld uses compels and interesting arguments to show that the so-called fatalism of Eastern societies and the sense of personal agency of Western ones are both essentialism since basically very similar kinds of rhetorical strategies are used to reproduce 'the system' which enables and is enabled by client-bureaucrat interaction. However, the part of Herzfeld's arguments which concern us here are his observations on language and its use in reproducing power.

Herzfeld attacks the use of literalism, formalism and fixity of meaning in the interpretation of official rules by the state functionaries. He explains how the
use of language in a particular way erodes the historical contingency of any phenomenon. While discussing nationalism and nation-statism he writes:

A nation is what it is because it was fated to become what it was fated to become. Possibly the most dangerous word in all the vocabulary of racism, nationalism, and nation-statism is "is". We hardly notice its corrosion of historical contingency.

The use of the present tense, particularly the present continuous form, erodes the passage of time and the fact that things emerge historically and did not always exist, nor will always necessarily exist. This realization warns against the reification of phenomena of research and against the tendency to see what is historical as natural.

For Herzfeld the semantic fluidity of words is extremely important. He explains why fixity of meaning is so important for the exercise of power.22 Bureaucratization of language thus opposes any recognition of semantic fluidity. As a model of the policy, a labile notion of language can only suggest that ultimate category violation: "instability". And yet everyday experience would seem to suggest that written laws are not as fixed as they appear to be.

Shifting meanings are dangerous because they cross boundaries and violate fixed and impervious boundaries created by the discourse of power. When meanings are re-made or expanded or contracted they overlap with other meanings, pull in other objects previously existing outside and exclude still others previously included. Hence the process of meaning-making is a process of the application of power. A literal interpretation of any text prevents the meaning from slipping away from the interpreter. Hence most religious authorities as well as scientific once try to be exact, precise and literalist in their interpretation. A metaphorical, labile and shifting world of meaning would make their safe and ordered world into a chaotic and disordered one. Here order is a key word as it is the fundamental weapon of the one who exercises power; he must ordered things, maintain order, give orders - in short maintain stability, continuum, predictability as absolute power can only be exercised when the world is ordered, stable, fixed and predictable. A fluid changing and shifting reality is hard to appropriate and control. According to Heerzfeld the bureaucratic forms are overliteralized while the content remains perpetually open to interpretation by the clients as well as the bureaucrats. People invest bureaucratic forms with meanings of their own.

Herzfeld also decries the lessening of ambiguity in the 'elaborated code used by modern nation-states. While human reality is ambiguous, multiple, contradictory, ambivalent and defies exact description, the language of science and the state is steeped in exactness, precision and rigid boundaries. To quote Herzfeld again:23
By refusing to acknowledge the power of rhetoric social science has too often turned its back on this capacity for universalizing the particular, for substituting the timeless forms of national language for the special needs of the individual actors. The labelling of objects brings them under the conceptual control of the state or the scientist and renders their identity seemingly unproblematic. The fetishization of language deflects critical inspection as with sacred texts. Total clarity is a literalist dream, impossible of realization, but bureaucrats act as though the law were clear, and accept the fetishistic quality of its language. What Herzfeld writes about the bureaucratic discourse is equally true of religious and scientific discourse. Language itself become an object in its own right, to be contested as a proxy for the actualities of power.

Herzfeld also examines the formalism of official and scientific language as another rhetorical strategy for the exercise of power. Formal language lays claim to transcendent freedom. Formality claims to possess absolute meaning: "Maintenance of power lies in the reification of meaning through its conflation with form." Therefore he argues that political critique must attack this form. In the case of the nation-state the boundaries of classification between insiders and outsiders - are negotiable and so are all fixed distinctions of self and other. This then is Herzfeld's main argument. Meaning is contextual but context itself must not be reified as particular and universal meanings are themselves also rhetorical strategies. Language is ultimately metaphorical, labile, shifting, dynamic and not inert. Meanings emerge in social interactions and are not dead objects. The use of literalism, exactitude, precision, formalism and rigidity are rhetorical strategies in the exercise of power.

The Feminist Critique of Knowledge

It is time to return now to the questions asked in the beginning regarding the possibility of separate feminist methodology. The long detour was not mere academic exercise. The observations on the concept of objectivity and the notion of language-as-power are central to the feminist critique of research methodology and practice. The liberal science notion of objectivity, and the phallocentrism of language are the two main problems dealt with by feminists in an effort to evolve alternative ways of knowing and acting upon the world. The critique of the prevailing research practices from a Liberal feminist perspective has usually centered on an access argument which is aimed at enabling women's entry the hitherto male world of science. According to this argument there should be more
women scientists and scientific research should not be an' exclusively male preserve. While this argument has some merits it is limited in that it fails to challenge the structure of knowledge and fundamental assumptions involved in its production. I will therefore focus on the more radical critique of science by feminists belonging mostly to the socialist feminist school. I ill discuss the work of Elizabeth Fee, Evelyn Keller, Maria Mies and Donna Haraway as they have all questioned the basic assumptions underlying the whole edifice of science as well as the structure of the processes which produce knowledge. The French Feminist School (Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva) have made tremendous contributions in understanding the phallocentric (male-centered) structure of language, the symbolic order. They have gone a long way in deconstructing the patriarchal bias in language and have effectively used Lacanian psychoanalysis in their work. However, I will not go into the details of their complex arguments except to say that they make a case for non-liner forms of thinking and have argued successfully against strict categorization and classification, chronological and linear analysis and have valorized the instinctive, the imaginary, the fantastic. They have emphasized the importance of women's writing, women's experiences and the central place of irony, contradiction, tensions and open and fluid boundaries. They have also attacked the subject/object divide, the whole notion of objective knowledge and the ideology of absolute clarity. Their contributions are, therefore, invaluable but it would take a whole volume to fully explicate their ideas. Suffice it to say that their thinking has certainly had an enormous impact upon the thinking of the feminists whose work I have chosen to discuss.

Traditionally, religion had ordered the world into its own hierarchies in which men were superior to women. As science gained ascendancy with the rise of the bomb, sexism, women began to challenge male/female differences. Since Science never really broke from its roots in religious discourse (as will be obvious when I discuss Haraway) the earliest liberal scientists legitimated sex differences by declaring them to be natural phenomena, scientific facts. What religion had preached as the result of divine will, science tried to prove by means of its studies in sex biology. The earliest form of assertion against this onslaught took the form of arguing that there were no differences between men and women. The earliest feminists argued that whatever observable differences there were had resulted from socialization and training and could be changed simply by changing the childrearing and socialization practices. Their belief in manipulating environmental variables to change human behaviors and attitudes locates them very much within the tradition of liberal social science and its tenets. In their view equality with men was equated with identity. In order to be equal women had to be identical to men in every way and they went to great lengths to show this. The entered traditionally male disciplines, performed extremely well in male pursuits and downplayed any differences that might still rear their heads. They did not question male pursuits themselves, neither did they worry about the damage involved in being like men.
It was not long before feminists had to contend with the fact that there are differences between men and women in several ways and that denying them simply becomes their implicit avowal and produces more stress. Moreover, trying to be like men meant accepting the male as the norm, seeing the self as a deviation from that norm, and attempting to emulate men rather unsuccessfully. The newer variety of attack on sexual inequality took the form of polar opposition. Radically inclined feminists argued that men and women were absolute, polar opposites and women's norms, values, beliefs and sentiments were higher and could create a better world. So this time the difference was overasserted to the detriment of men, and women's values and norms were declared to be not only different but better. Patriarchy was made to stand on its head. The old patriarchal argument that men and women are basically different and therefore have different and complementary roles was reproduced except that it was reproduced upside down. The basic patriarchal structure was kept intact. A number of works which fall within this polar opposite tradition appeared, for example, Carol Gilligan's 'In a Different Voice' is based on the idea that women's concepts of justice and morality are more personal, concrete, contextual and relation while male concepts are universalistic, impersonal, abstract and decontextualized. Similarly, Nancy Cott's 'The Bonds of Womanhood' makes a case for women's value and beliefs as being softer, kinder, gentler and therefore capable of creating a more humane world. Men's values were regarded as being destructive, impersonal, exploitative, aggressive and hard. Thus the process of gendering value systems polarized values into binary oppositions. Women and men appeared to exist in two separate worlds each with its own norms and values. Such arguments reproduced the patriarchal boundaries and distinctions which had produced men and women as men and women in the first place. It took the French Feminist school to subject to deconstructive scrutiny the concepts of difference, differentiating, boundary-making, dividing and classifying the world into binary oppositions. The problematized the whole issue of difference; the separation of subject and object. Psychoanalysis played a crucial role here and I will return to it when I take up the issue of difference later. I will turn now to the feminist quarrel with the whole issue of objectivity and the tentative resolution of this quarrel in the re-conceptualization of objectivity.
EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

Sandra Harding

How should the analyses produced by feminist research in the social sciences be justified? In one sense, we do not need to ask this question since every researcher provides evidence that is intended to justify the results of her or his research. However, the kind of evidence presented often would not be acceptable to people who assess men's experiences, values, and judgments as the paradigm of human experience and women's as only an immature, partial, or deviant form of men's. In some respects, the epistemologies assumed in the new analyses of women and gender directly conflict with traditional ones, and they do so in ways that are not always recognized. Therefore, questions about how to justify the analyses do frequently arise. Moreover, in certain respects the feminist epistemologies also directly conflict with each other. These conflicts between the feminist justificatory strategies also have been overlooked.

Once we undertake to use women's experience as a resource to generate scientific problems, hypotheses, and evidence, to design research for women, and to place the researcher in the same critical plane as the research subject, traditional epistemological assumptions can no longer be made. These agendas have led feminist social scientists to ask questions about who can be a knower (only men?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men's experiences and observations?); what kinds of things can be known (can "subjective truths," ones that only women—or only some women—tend to arrive at, count as knowledge?); the nature of objectivity (does it require "point-of-viewlessness"); the appropriate relationship between the researcher and her/his research subjects (must the researcher be disinterested, dispassionate, and socially invisible to the subject?); what should be the purposes of the pursuit of knowledge (to produce information for men?).

Each of the above issues could be the topic of a lengthy discussion. Instead, I want to provide an overview of some important tensions between the feminist analyses of such issues and the traditional theories of knowledge from which these feminists borrow, and between the feminist epistemologies themselves. I shall look at these tensions as they have emerged in response to two problems. First, I outline*
contrasting attempts to account for the fact that it is politically value-laden research processes that are producing the more complete and less distorted social analyses. We can see here the tension between "feminist empiricist" and "the feminist standpoint" epistemologies, and between each of these and the traditional theory of knowledge from which it borrows. Then, I turn to examine briefly the tension between both of these epistemologies, on the one hand, and postmodernist skepticisms about just such attempts to tell "true stories" — or at least less false ones — about ourselves and the world around us, on the other hand.'

Can Politicized Inquiry Produce More Complete and Less Distorted Research Results?

A major source of feminist challenge to traditional epistemologies arises from the following problem. Feminism is a political movement for social change. Looked at from the perspective of science's self-understanding, "feminist knowledge," "feminist science," "feminist sociology," or psychology or economics — should be a contradiction in terms. Scientific knowledge-seeking is supposed to be value-neutral, objective, dispassionate, disinterested, and so forth. It is supposed to be protected from political interests, goals, and desires (such as feminist ones) by the norms of science. In particular, science's "method" is supposed to protect the results of research from the social values of the researchers. And yet it is obvious to all that many claims which clearly have been generated through research guided by feminist concerns, nevertheless appear more plausible (better supported, more reliable, less false, more likely to be confirmed by evidence, etc.) than the beliefs they replace. How can politicized inquiry be increasing the objectivity of inquiry?

Feminist Empiricism

The main response to this problem by social researchers has been feminist empiricism. In research reports one frequently finds the argument that the sexist and androcentric claims to which the researcher objects are caused by social biases. Social biases are conceptualized as prejudices that are based on false beliefs (due to superstition, custom, ignorance, or miseducation) and hostile attitudes. These prejudices enter research particularly at the stage when scientific problems are being identified and defined, but they also appear in the design of research and in the collection and interpretation of data. Feminist empiricists argue that sexist and androcentric biases are eliminable by stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of scientific inquiry; it is "bad science" or "bad sociology," etc., which is responsible for these biases in the results of research.

But how can the scientific community (the sociological one, psychological one, etc.) come to see that more than individual biases are the problem here—that its work has been shaped by culture-wide androcentric prejudices? Here is where we can see the importance of movements for social liberation, such as the women's movement. As Marcia Millman and Rosabeth Moss Kanter have pointed out, movements for social liberation "make it possible for people to see the world in an enlarged perspective because they remove the covers and blinders that obscure knowledge and
observation." The women's movement has generated just such possibilities. Furthermore, feminist empiricists often point out that the women's movement creates the opportunity for more women researchers, and for more feminist researchers (male and female), who are more likely than sexist men to notice androcentric biases.

This justificatory strategy is by no means uncontentious. Nevertheless, it is often thought to be the least threatening of the feminist epistemologies for two reasons. Most importantly, it appears to leave intact much of science's self-understanding of the principles of adequate scientific research as they are taught to students, quoted to Congress, and viewed on television (regardless of whether scientists actually believe them). This justificatory strategy appears to challenge mainly the incomplete way empiricism has been practiced, not the norms of empiricism themselves: mainstream inquiry has not rigorously enough adhered to its own norms. To say this in other words, it is thought that social values and political agendas can raise new issues that enlarge the scope of inquiry and reveal cause for greater care in the conduct of inquiry, but that the logic of explanation and research still conforms to standard empiricist rules.

Moreover, one can appeal to the forces responsible for the origins of modern science itself, as well as to later widely recognized moments of scientific growth, to increase the plausibility of this kind of claim. After all, wasn't it the bourgeois revolution of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries which made it possible for early modern thinkers to see the world in an enlarged perspective? Wasn't it this great social revolution from feudalism to modernism which removed the covers and blinders that obscured earlier knowledge-seeking and observation? Furthermore, wasn't the proletarian revolution of the late nineteenth century responsible for yet one more leap in the objectivity of knowledge claims as it permitted an understanding of the effects of class struggles on social relations? Finally, doesn't the twentieth-century deconstruction of European and American colonialism have obvious positive effects on the growth of scientific knowledge? From these historical perspectives, the contemporary women's revolution is just the most recent of these-revolutions, each of which moves us yet closer to the goals of the creators of modern science.
Though feminist empiricism appears in these ways to be consistent with empiricist tendencies, further consideration reveals that the feminist component deeply undercuts the assumptions of traditional empiricism in three ways: feminist empiricism has a radical future. In the first place, feminist empiricism argues that the "context of discovery" is just as important as the "context of justification" for eliminating social biases that contribute to partial and distorted explanations and understandings. Traditional empiricism insists that the social identity of the observer is irrelevant to the "goodness" of the results of research. It is not supposed to make a difference to the explanatory power, objectivity, and so on of the research's results if the researcher or the community of scientists are white or black, Chinese or British, rich or poor in social origin. But feminist empiricism argues that women (or feminists, male and female) as a group are more likely than men (nonfeminists) as a group to produce claims unbiased by androcentrism, and in that sense objective results of inquiry. It argues that the authors of the favored social theories are not anonymous at all: they are clearly men, and usually men of the dominant classes, races, and cultures. The people who identify and define scientific problems leave their social fingerprints on the problems and their favored solutions to them.

Second, feminist empiricism makes the related claim that scientific method is not effective at eliminating social biases that are as wide-spread as androcentrism. This is especially the case when androcentrism arrives in the inquiry process through the identification and definition of research problems. Traditional empiricism holds that scientific method will eliminate any social biases as a hypothesis goes through its rigorous tests. But feminist empiricism argues that an androcentric picture of nature and social life emerges from the testing by men only of hypotheses generated by what men find problematic in the world around them. The problem here is not only that the hypotheses which would most deeply challenge androcentric beliefs are missing from those alternatives sexists consider when testing their favored hypotheses. It is also that traditional empiricism does not direct researchers to locate themselves in the same critical plane as their subject matters. Consequently, when nonfeminist researchers gather evidence for or against hypotheses, "scientific method"—bereft of such a directive—is impotent to locate and eradicate the androcentrism that shapes the research process.

Finally, feminist empiricists often exhort social scientists to follow the existing research norms more rigorously. On the other hand, they also can be understood to be arguing that it is precisely following these norms that contributes to androcentric research results. The norms themselves have been constructed primarily to produce answers to the kinds of questions men ask about nature and social life and to prevent scrutiny of the way beliefs which are nearly or completely culture-wide in fact cannot be eliminated from the results of research by these norms. A reliable picture of women's worlds and of social relations between the sexes often requires alternative approaches to inquiry that challenge traditional research habits and raise profound questions which are no longer marginalized as deviant.
Thus feminist empiricism intensifies recent tendencies in the philosophy and social studies of science to problematize empiricist epistemological assumptions. There is a tension between the feminist uses of empiricist justificatory strategies and the parental empiricist epistemology. However, empiricism is not the only resource that has been used to justify the intimate relationship between the politics of the women's movement and the new research "on women and gender."

**The Feminist Standpoint**

A second response to the question about how to justify the results of feminist research is provided by the feminist standpoint theorists. Knowledge is supposed to be based on experience, and the reason the feminist claims can turn out to be scientifically preferable is that they originate in, and are tested against, a more complete and less distorting kind of social experience. Women's experiences, informed by feminist theory, provide a potential grounding for more complete and less distorted knowledge claims than do men's. Thus the standpoint theorists offer a different explanation than do feminist empiricisms of how research that is directed by social values and political agendas can nevertheless produce empirically preferable results of research.

This justificatory approach originates in Hegel's insight into the relationship between the master and the slave, and the development of Hegel's perceptions into the "proletarian standpoint" by Marx, Engels, and Lukacs. The argument here is that human activity, or "material life," not only structures but also sets limits on human understanding: what we do shapes and constrains what we can know. As Nancy Hartsock argues, if human activity is structured in fundamentally opposing ways for two different groups (such as men and women), "one can expect that the vision of each will represent an inversion of the other, and in systems of domination the vision available to the rulers will be both partial and perverse." Men in the ruling classes and races reserve for themselves the right to perform only certain kinds of human activity, assigning the balance to women and men in other subjugated groups. What they assign to others they rationalize as merely "natural activity"—whether this be manual labor, emotional labor, or reproduction and child care—in contrast to what they regard as the distinctively cultural activity that they reserve for themselves. Of course, their "ruling" activities (in our society, management and administration) could not occur unless others were assigned to perform the social labors they disdain.
For these theorists, knowledge emerges for the oppressed only through the struggles they wage against their oppressors. It is through feminist struggles against male domination that women's experience can be made to yield up a truer (or less false) image of social reality than that available only from the perspective of the social experience of men of the ruling classes and races. Thus a feminist standpoint is not something anyone can have by claiming it, but an achievement. (A standpoint differs in this respect from a perspective.) To achieve a feminist standpoint one must engage in the intellectual and political struggle necessary to see nature and social life from the point of view of that disdained activity which produces women's social experiences instead of from the partial and perverse perspective available from the "ruling gender" experience of men. Like feminist empiricism, the feminist standpoint reveals key problems in its paternal discourse. Where Marxism suggests that sexism is entirely a consequence of class relations, a problem within only the super structural social institutions and bourgeois ideology, the feminist version sees sexual relations as at least as causal as economic relations in creating forms of social life and belief. Like feminist empiricism, the standpoint approach takes women and men to he fundamentally sex classes. In contrast to Marxist assumptions, they are not merely or perhaps even primarily members of economic classes, though class, like race and culture, also mediates women's opportunities to gain empirically adequate understandings of nature and social life. Just as feminist empiricism's radical future pointed toward epistemological assumptions that empiricism could not accommodate, so, too, the feminist standpoint's radicalism points toward epistemological assumptions that Marxism cannot contain.

The reader needs to remember at this point that standpoint theorists are not defending any form of relativism. I argued in the introductory essay that feminist researchers are never proposing that women's and men's characteristic social experiences provide equal grounds for reliable knowledge claims. This kind of relativist claim is not being advanced at the level of these epistemologies or justificatory strategies, as I noted earlier. For instance, it is not equally true that men's experiences provide the only legitimate origin of scientific problems, as traditional social science has assumed, and also that women's experiences provide a legitimate origin of scientific problems, let alone the best origin, as the standpoint theorists argue. For the standpoint theorists, this inequality is due to the fact that the activities of men shape the horizons of their knowledge and support interests in ignorance of the misery generated by the domination of women.

Should one have to choose between feminist empiricism and the feminist standpoint as justificatory strategies? I think not. A justificatory strategy is intended to convince, and it is important to notice that these two are likely to appeal to quite different audiences. Feminist empiricism is useful precisely because it stresses the continuities between traditional justifications of scientific research and feminist ones, as these would be understood by social scientists. In contrast, the feminist standpoint stresses the continuities between the radical upheavals in social understanding created by
nineteenth-century class struggles and those created by feminist inquiry. These can be appreciated by political economists and those familiar with the post-Kuhnian histories and sociologies of science. The two epistemologies also appear locked into dialogue with each other. The relationship they have to each other reflects the struggles in mainstream discourses between liberal and Marxist theories of human nature and politics. Perhaps choosing one over the other insures choosing more than feminism should want of those paternal discourses; we are shaped by what we reject as well as by what we accept.

The tensions between the two feminist epistemologies and the tensions within each one suggest their transitional natures. They are transitional epistemologies, and there are good reasons to see that as a virtue. Let us see what these are before turning to the second question that has elicited contradictory feminist epistemological responses.

**Transitional Epistemologies**

Transitional epistemologies are appropriate for transitional cultures. In one sense or another every modern culture (as opposed to a traditional one) is undergoing changes and thus is transitional. Perhaps every legitimate modern epistemology is transitional. But some moments in history are more transitional than others, and we live in one of those moments.

In transitional cultures, epistemologies and sciences are frequently in tension with each other. We can look back in history and see that scientists have often used justificatory strategies which their own substantive scientific claims have undermined (sometimes inadvertently). For example, the early modern scientists routinely appealed to religious beliefs as a justification for their scientific claims; One important reason their claims should be accepted, they said, was because science "increased piety and learning" as it revealed in detail the goodness of God's designs. Some may have thought the appeal to religious authority merely an expedient move in light of the history of church censorship of scientific claims. But many scientists apparently believed what they said. Evidently, they didn't notice that their scientific claims were in the process of creating a world in which appeals to God would no longer provide satisfactory explanations of natural phenomena for many people.

We can see the tension between epistemologies and the sciences in the feminist epistemological discussions. We, too, live in a transitional culture: feminism is both a product and a cause of the changes underway. Perhaps sciences and epistemologies should always be in tension with each other; if the grounds for accepting knowledge claims are in perfect fit with the claims advanced, we should worry about what kinds of knowledge are being suppressed, subjugated, sent underground. After all, it is just such a hegemenous science/epistemology to which feminist scholars object. Androcentric biology and social sciences "proved" that women were biologically and socially inferior to men in myriad ways, and androcentric epistemology insisted that only men could be "knowers" and, therefore, legitimately question biological and social science claims. No wonder it had been so difficult to gather support for feminist social analyses.
There are, thus, good reasons to regard the tensions within and between feminist empiricism and the feminist standpoint as valuable ones. Each paternal epistemology implicitly appeals to kinds of authority (of the individual, asocial observer; of the male wage-worker) that inquiry based on women's distinctive experiences is in the process of challenging. But in our transitional world, it is liberal and Marxist understandings that are still regarded as the legitimate ones in the social sciences. If women's authority in matters of knowledge were already recognized, that would be because we no longer needed a distinctively feminist social science. The tensions within the feminist epistemologies show that we are in no different a situation than were the early modern astronomers who appealed in one breath to the "increase in piety and learning" which the use of the telescope could advance. Perhaps the tensions between them point to, but do not themselves provide, directions toward a world in which piety toward traditional androcentric authorities will not be the most plausible way to justify new learning.

Can There Be Feminist Science?
A second set of epistemological issues has arisen between the feminist empiricists and standpoint theorists, on the one hand, and the feminist critics of Enlightenment assumptions—the feminist postmodernists—on the other hand. The empiricists and standpoint theorists are both attempting to ground accounts of the social world which are less partial and distorted than the prevailing ones. In this sense, they are attempting to produce a feminist science—one that better reflects the world around us than the incomplete and distorting accounts provided by traditional social science. This science would not substitute one gender-loyalty for the others, but, instead, advance the objectivity of science. The feminist postmodernists raise questions about this epistemological project. Can there be a feminist science, or is any science doomed to relicate undesirable—and perhaps even androcentric—ways of being in the world?

There appear to be two at least somewhat distinct origins of skepticism about the kind of epistemological project in which both the feminist empiricists and the standpoint theorists are engaged. One emerges from feminists who participate in the agendas of such otherwise disparate discourses as those of semiotics, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis. The other has appeared in the writings of women of color. The discourses mentioned are all deeply skeptical of universalizing claims for reason, science, language, progress, and the subject/self. Thus both of the feminist epistemological strategies we examined are legitimate targets of such skepticism, since they assume that through reason, observation, and progressive politics, the more authentic "self" produced by feminist struggles can tell "one true story" about "the world": there can be a kind of feminist author of a new "master story," a narrative about social life which feminist inquiry will produce. The critics respond, but "perhaps 'reality' can have 'a' structure only from the falsely universalizing perspective of the master. That is, only to the extent that one person or group can
dominate the whole, can 'reality' appear to be governed by one set of rules or be constituted by one privileged set of social relations."9

This kind of criticism points to the way science constructs the fiction of the human mind as a glassy mirror which can reflect a world that is out there and ready-made for reflecting. In contrast, we can detect ("in reality"?) that at any moment in history there are many "subjugated knowledges" that conflict with, and are never reflected in, the dominant stories a culture tells about social life. Moreover, some argue that women are a primary location of these subjugated knowledges—in fact, that the female subject is a "site of differences."" From this perspective, there can never be a feminist science, sociology, anthropology, or epistemology, but only many stories that different women tell about the different knowledge they have.

A second source of criticism of a unitary feminist perspective implied by the two epistemological strategies emerges from women of color. For instance, Bell Hooks insists that what makes feminism possible is not that women share certain kinds of experiences, for women's experiences of patriarchal oppression differ by race, class, and culture. Instead, feminism names the fact that women can federate around their common resistance to all the different forms of male domination.12 Thus there could not be "a" feminist standpoint as the generator of true stories about social life. There could, presumably, only be feminist oppositions, and criticisms of false stories. Therefore could not be feminist science, because feminism's opposition to domination stories locates feminism in an antagonistic position toward any attempts to do science—androcentric or not. These strains of postmodernism are richer and more complex than these few paragraphs can reveal. But one can already sense the troubles they create for other feminist epistemologies.

Should feminists be willing to give up the political benefits which can accrue from believing that we are producing a new, less biased, more accurate, social science? Social scientists might well want to respond to the postmodernist critics that we do need to federate our feminisms in opposition to all of the ways in which domination is enacted and institutionalized. But it is premature for women to be willing to give up what they have never had. Should women—no matter what their race, class, or culture—find it reasonable to give up the desire to know and understand the world from the standpoint of their experiences for the first time? As several feminist literary critics have suggested, perhaps only those who have had access to the benefits of the Enlightenment can "give up" those benefits.13

There are good reasons to find valuable the tension between these two epistemological positions. We need to think critically about the fundamental impulses of knowledge-seeking, and especially of science, even as we transform them to feminists' (plural!) ends.

One can easily see that the new feminist analyses unsettle traditional assumptions about knowledge as they challenge familiar beliefs about women, men, and social life. How could it have been otherwise when our ways of knowing are such an important part of our ways of participating in the social world?
IS FEMINISM A TREAT TO SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIVITY?

Rubina Saigol

Elizabeth Fee asked the question: is there a conflict between women's values and the values of science?" She asked whether women's entry into science would change scientific dogma. In her view liberal social science regards feelings, political beliefs, attitudes, commitments, aesthetic sensibility and preferences as belonging to a biased, subjective, inner world. These must be eliminated from the scientific method to reduce error and in this model the self needs to be removed from the object of study. The personal and the subjective are distanced from the final product, scientific knowledge. In this view Man is posited as rational, capable of creating rational knowledge through deduction, hypothesis and experimentation. Individual eccentricities are ruled out by means of scrutiny by a professional community, replication, quantification, verification, statistical techniques and other measures which ostensibly cancel out feelings and commitments. 'Human nature' (basically a common essentialism) in this view is premised on dichotomous categories such as rational man emotional woman and subjectivity is opposed to objectivity, culture to nature, private to public, thought to feeling, idea to action and theory to practice. Rationality, objectivity, action, the public sphere, thought and culture are presumed to be male characteristics and areas of operation, while emotionality, subjectivity, the private sphere, intuition and nature are associated with feminine qualities. 'Man' is assumed to be the maker of history, woman the representative of nature. Woman is etemalize'd, essentialized and locked in the everlasting reproductive sphere, man is historicized and declared to be a producer, an active agent of change and development. Woman represents the body, regression, death, merging, sexuality, passion, connectedness while the male comes to symbolise life, action, separation, autonomy, 'independence and individuality. Fee takes a critical look at those who consider male ways of knowing as distinct from female and argue that men think in terms of abstract ideas and symbols and women in terms of the body and organic functioning. Science, she argues, came to be perceived as a male activity, a part of his rationality, a male attribute. Science was looked at as cold, hard, impersonal and objective and women were regarded as being too warm, personal, soft and subjective for this pursuit.

In response feminists have viewed masculine ways of thinking as
mechanistic, analytic, controlling, exploitative, destructive, abstract and representing man's alienation from nature and from woman. The idea that woman must protect mother/nature from male destructive exploitation was espoused by feminists countering the traditional view. Female culture came to be seen as cooperative rather than competitive, nurturing rather than exploitative, oriented toward communal survival rather than individual self-interest. Men came to be seen by many feminists as devoid of spiritual appreciation. Thus feminists reproduced virtually all the gender dichotomies which had led to gender oppression to begin with.

Women came to regard technological development as the rape of nature and men were accused of having no sense of otherness and caring. Women were seen as primarily responsible for affiliative, cooperative and affective aspects of life. The fact that technology is oriented toward the production of weapons and destruction rather than the alleviation of suffering, seemed to be proof of men's alienation from others. Since science did not seem to be oriented to human needs, there appeared to be something unfeminine about it. Many feminists saw this abuse of science as being associated with male characteristics rather than with a patriarchal capitalist system which dominates science and technology.

However, Fee is not in favour of totally abandoning rationality. She would like to see it redefined. As we shall see, Evelyn Keller is also reluctant to give up the idea of objective rationality and prefers to see an alternative conception. Haraway and Mies provide this alternative view in their concepts of partial perspective and conscious partiality. But before I go on to these others I would like to sum up Fee's arguments against objectivity as defined by mainstream social science.

According to Fee objectivity creates a hierarchy of distances and silences between 1) the production of knowledge and its use, 2) between pure and applied science, 3) between thought and feeling, and 4) between subject and object. To this list I would like to add one more: the distance between values and facts. In Fee's view the distance between the production of knowledge and its use absolves the scientist from ethical responsibility. The effects that a scientific product, say a weapon, has on its victim are ethically the responsibility of those involved in its production. The producers of missiles, atomic bombs and ballistics cannot divorce themselves from the use for which their products are employed. Similarly, the idea of pure science enables the scientist to evade social, moral and ethical responsibility by hiding behind a screen of scientific endeavour unrelated to social consequences. Since the modern scientist is not dependent and is usually located in an institutional context where the research agenda is not set by him but by the is in power, he finds it easier to abdicate responsibility for the consequences of his product. He becomes morally passive. However, Fee believes that a responsible, moral, ethical and sensitive science must respond to human needs.
from which it arises. In traditional social science the relationship between thinking and feeling is served with feeling being relegated to a lower status as a possible source of error in science. This relationship needs to be reestablished. Most scientists feel passionately about their projects and feeling empowers one's work. The denigration of feeling and valorization of thought is another false dichotomy. Thought and feeling are closely interwoven and cannot be separated in reality. Emotional detachment is regarded as a virtue but it serves to insulate the scientist and makes a distinction between the scientist and the private citizen. Emotional detachment is also perceived as a masculine characteristic. What is ignored is that most serious scientists are emotionally and libidinally committed to their work. However, the established style of discourse in scientific presentations is the use of the third person pronoun and impersonal, irresponsible and passive voice. The human subject, the producer of knowledge, is eliminated from the product. Positions described with commitment and emotional involvement are devalued. Feelings are suspect and thought is considered higher and better. Feeling is related to the animal and bodily self and thought to the human and mental self thereby further re-asserting the mind/body dualism. A relationship of domination and subordination is established—between thought and feeling expression of gender relationships in which women are assumed to exist in the realm of feeling. Intellectual work is detached and impersonal and performed by rational men in an isolated situation. Scientific authority is like male authority, not open to question.

The relationship between subject and object is also served with the subject assuming the dominant posture vis a vis the object of study. The knowing subject is active and the object of knowledge is passive and inert with no participation in the knowledge-making process. Finally, values are separated from facts. Facts are assumed to exist 'out there' by themselves rather than being seen as having emerged in the process of perception and interpretation. Facts are regarded as self-evident truths in this formulation whereas, in fact, 'facts' are created by what a researcher chooses to see (and by implication chooses not to see) in 2 situation. Facts are objects created in discourse, the results of interpretation. They exist only in a framework which gives them meaning and perception. Which Tacts' a researcher selects from a vast mass of perceptual and conceptual data is determined by her/his ideological leanings. One's value system is completely involved in the selection and interpretation of facts and they are far from value-free.

In sum, then, Elizabeth Fee considers science as a part of society; a part determined by human aims and values. It is not depersonalized or the voice of abstract authority. Those who make science have an agenda which is not neutral. Knowledge has a social context and is based upon values, beliefs, feelings and
prejudices even in the questions asked and these feelings and beliefs need to be articulated rather than denied. As mentioned earlier Fee does not wish to abandon the idea of objectivity or rationality altogether. To her it means the constant practical interaction with nature. She believes in a communal and collective process of knowledge. She warns against the fact that the critique of objectivity may degenerate into complete cultural or moral relativism which is equally unacceptable. According to her a total free market of ideas is not necessarily more human. If relativism became predominant all interpretation would end up being a matter of cultural power. As we shall see Harroway also rejects relativism as an alternative to objectivity.

For Fee knowledge construction is a social activity and science is a socially structured product of human history. The questions that can be legitimately asked are determined by the socioeconomic formation. Gender underlies the capitalist construction of science. Science follows priorities laid down by the power relations in society. Knowledge is class knowledge and excludes the powerless. Scientists, however, do have oppositional space to work for liberation, and for feminists the collective movement can be a rich source of questions and research. Since a exist society can only produce a sexist science, a feminist society can produce a feminist science. This science must re-connect subject and object, thought and feeling, production and use and pure and applied knowledge. In short, a feminist science must break down the barriers and boundaries imagined, legitimated and mapped artificially between one aspect of reality and another.

**Evelyn Keller: Science and Object Relations**

Evelyn Keller also criticises what she calls the masculinist distortions of the scientific discourse. She also ponder the question whether there is a conflict between commitment to feminism and the commitment to science. In her view the substructure, the sub-text of science needs to be examined as it has, as she puts it, a strong and rocëentric bias in its, underlying assumptions. Like other critics, of liberal social science she also questions its neutrality. In her view bias exists in the very design of experimentation and interpretation, the language in which it is made available to the public. She contends that scientific conclusions are strongly related to personal judgements. She advocates making women the agents and subjects of scientific knowledge and argues that patriarchal bias at the deep levels of social structure, in language and thought needs to be questioned. She has a quarrel with the very foundations on which science is built. Privileging the base over superstructure she argues that the social and political context shapes scientific knowledge which is a process, not merely a product.

Keller also decries relativism as in her view relativism would destroy the
emancipatory potential of any alternative science. Like Fee she demands and even tries to evolve an alternative definition of objectivity. She contends that we need to rediscover and bring to light those aspects of science which have been denied on account of being female or feminine. She attacks the opposition created by scientific ideology between male (objective) and female (subjective) thought. She believes that objectivity should be reconceptualized as a dialectical process between subjective and objective, reflection and action, practice and theory without valorizing one or the other. Keller refers to Piaget, the great theorist of cognitive psychology, to find an alternative Way of conceptualizing objectivity. According to Piaget objectivity consists in fully realizing the countless intrusions of self in everyday thought arid the countless illusions that result from that. Realism means ignoring the existence of self and them immediately regarding one's own view as objective and absolute. In Piaget's view so long as- thought has not become conscious of self, is a prey to perpetual confusions between objective and subjective, between the real and the ostensible. The prevailing ideology, according to Keller, is that objectivity is linked to autonomy and masculinity. The goals of science, therefore, are power and domination. The linking of objectivity with autonomy serves political functions because objectivity, a cognitive trait, is linked to autonomy, an affective trait which, in turn, is linked to masculinity, a gender trait. Thus science, as traditionally practised, becomes a masculine preserve. Keller uses the psychoanalytic Object Relations theory as propounded by Nancy Chodorow and Jessica Benjamin to further her. According to Chodorow a male child grows up in difference since he has to differentiate himself and individuate from a female other, his mother. He, therefore, emphasizes and valorizes autonomy, difference, manliness, disconnection and separation and denigrates all feminine characteristics such as connectedness, merger, union, otherness as feminine traits to be despised. This process is necessitated by the fact that the first most powerful other in his life is female and in order to develop as an autonomous adult he must emphasize and valorize so-called masculine traits while devaluing what he must deny within himself his feminine traits. On the contrary the girl child develops in sameness and continuity as she does not have to deny her feminine traits of merger, connection, love, concern, feeling and union. She has to grow up to be female, like the mother and must, on the contrary, deny her masculine self. As both children are initially mother-identified and unable to distinguish the self from her, the rupture is much greater for the boy than for the girls because the girl can develop an autonomous self without having to deny everything represented by the mother, especially connection. The boy must necessarily develop in difference, and in the prevailing ideology of the culture, in opposition; he must become not simply an other self, but an opposite other. The boy, therefore, must overdo the difference, must exaggerate it, totally repress
the feminine with which he was born and not allow the repressed to return and break through the layers of consciousness. In Jessica Benjamin's view the must over differentiate, lest the repressed impulses return and throw his precarious masculinity into a crisis. 34 However, the extreme need to deny merger, connection, softness and feeling leads to inevitable loneliness, alienation and a vacuum. He must somehow relate, as the need to relate is not destroyed but remains active in the unconscious. He does so, in Benjamin's view, by relating back in an aggressive, appropriative, exploitative and violent way. He tries to control, to possess mother/nature rather than relate in a two-way interactive way which would threaten his already weak masculinity in a hostile world in which he feels powerless in hundreds of ways. He tries to regain the power denied him by social hierarchies and inequalities, by means of violence, use of nature, exploitation and aggression. These destructive forms of relating, while negating satisfaction and fulfillment, allow him the illusion of relating. He is now connected to the once lost object (the mother) albeit in a destructive way. In Benjamin's view this is the basis of the male way of relating to the world of objects (which in this discourse means people, ideas, thoughts, things, others). Male science and technology embody this rupture, this distance, this division between subject (male) and object (female). Thus socially structured relationships in which women mother produce the kinds of characteristics in men and women which reproduce the sexual division of labour. They ensure that women will always be more likely to mother and nature and men will always indulge in worldly pursuits. Their views of the world will reflect this division and the knowledge produced will embody these differences.

"In Keller's view cultural definitions are dichotomous as the masculine is that which can never appear feminine and autonomy cannot knowledge dependency. It is denied that these oppositions necessarily presuppose one another and exist only because of each other. There is no autonomy without dependency and no masculinity without femininity. The dialectic cannot be denied. The male's biggest feat seems to be merging, death, oneness with the mother, regression, lack of separateness. This fear is so strongly connected to the fear of annihilation that worldly pursuits and accomplishments are unconsciously perceived as triumphs against death. The whole patriarchal enterprise of producing heirs and private property seems to be a denial of death, an infantile fantasy of immortality. Scientific projects and creation also serve this function of achieving imagined immortality. Keller warns against the separation of the cognitive, emotional and gender traits as she believes that they arise simultaneously. Like Fee she also attacks the false separation of thought and feeling and the connection of the two with gender traits. The very act of separating subject from object comes to be falsely associated with masculinity. The objectivist ideology leads to exaggeration and
rigidification of boundaries, exclusions and distances. Autonomy becomes synonymous with competence and mastery which confirm the self, the ever changing, precarious and threatened self.

However, as Keller points out, competence and autonomy need not necessarily lead to alienated selfhood, defensive separateness and denial of connectedness. Autonomy can have a range of meanings. In Herzfeld's term it is a labile notion. Competence can be mastery over the self rather than only over the other. Control and domination need not be essential ingredients of competence. Using Benjamin's thesis again Keller asserts that the assertion of the self in scientific enterprise is possible only when there is another to recognize that self. 'The self is relational in that it cannot exist without the other. As the male child identifies with the father and the patriarchal norms, he destroys the connection with the mother and feels isolated and frightened. His whole way of viewing and understanding the world becomes disconnected and distorted.

The aggression that results from frustration due to lack of ties, finds expression in scientific objectification. Instead of seeking knowledge for the pleasure involved in creative pursuit, it is sought in order to subordinate and dominate nature. Knowledge becomes the instrument of this domination as the impulse to dominate is a projection of the desire to control. Control and domination need not be intrinsic to selfhood or to scientific enterprise. Science can be oriented toward Eros (life and its maintenance and nature) rather than Thanatos (death and destruction, weapons and war).

The equation of nature with woman and the need to dominate and subordinate both is an old one and is borne out by a remark made by Francis Bacon who describes science in the following way:

leading you to nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your salve...[by means that do not] merely exert a gentle guidance over nature's course; they have the power to conquer and subdue her, to shake her to her foundations.36

Bruno Bettelheim agrees with the critique of the male way of doing science:

Only with phallic psychology did aggressive manipulation of nature become possible."

Thus in Keller's view science is an oedipal project.38 It has been turned into a monolith instead of the multiple and complex play of signs, signifiers and signifieds that it could have been. However, it is an endeavour which has not relinquished its bisexual yearnings. Science must be eroticized and the dialectic between the erotic and aggressive impulses must be its mainstay. She advocates a conversation with nature rather than a one-way monologue; letting nature speak to you; becoming a part of the system; feeling the organism. Her form appears to be poetic as opposed to strictly didactic. She opposes hierarchy in science and in
society. She argues that science has been thematically plural and the task of a radical feminist critique of science should be a historical and transformative one. She pleads the case for a new range of sensitivities and the e-consciousness of suppressed potentialities.

Fee and Keller critiqued the fragmented patriarchal structure of science and attempted a tentative re-definition of the problematic concept of objectivity. The next two theorists to be discussed, Maria Mies and Donna Haraway, while retaining most of this critique as well as furthering it, tried to provide a clearer alternative view of objectivity conceptualizing it in partial terms and as embodied and situated knowledge.
| Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klien, 1989 | Theories of Women's studies Towards a methodology for feminist research by Maria Mies, Published by Routledge New York pp. 117-128 | 4.1 |

TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH

Maria Mies

New wine must not be poured into old bottles.

Introduction

After more than a decade centered on mobilization, consciousness-raising and struggles on issues such as equal rights, abortion laws, rape and violence against women, the women's movement is still gaining momentum, drawing more and more women into its vortex. This quantitative expansion, particularly in the rich capitalist countries, however, has also given rise to specific problems. There seems to be an ever-rising wave of rebellion against patriarchy and sexism, accompanied by expectations of women's solidarity and emancipation. But this rebellion, these expectations, have not yet led to a clear understanding of the relationship between women's exploitation and oppression (sexism), on the one hand, and the overall class exploitation and oppression of workers and peasants. Many women who have been in the movement since its beginnings feel increasingly worried about this lack of analysis and direction. One of the outcomes of this uneasiness is the recent emphasis on feminist research and theoretical work. In many universities in Europe and the USA feminist women have been able to set up centers for Women's Studies. In a number of disciplines women have formed feminist groups or associations. In West Germany, for example, feminist social scientists formed an association for 'Feminist Theory and Practice in Social Sciences'. Similar associations were started on other disciplines as well as on an inter-disciplinary base. During the summer vacations, so-called Women's Summer Universities in Berlin are being organized which attract thousands of women. This keen interest in the study of sexism and in women's history, women's anthropology, etc., and the endeavors to establish a
feminist theory of society, has led to a spate of literature, books, journals, pamphlets on women's issues. Not only are there many feminist publishing houses and bookshops exclusively run by women, but the general bookshops have discovered women as a new market and invariably reserve some shelves for women's literature. This new theoretical interest, in itself an encouraging sign of the deepening of the movement, has thrown up a number of theoretical questions for which no ready-made answer is available in the existing system of academic work. The main problem that Women's Studies face on all fronts is the male bias or androcentrism that prevails in practically all disciplines, in most theoretical work done through centuries of scientific quest. This androcentrism is manifested not only in the fact that universities and research institutions are still largely male domains, but more subtly in the choice of areas of research, in research policies, theoretical concepts and particularly in research methodology. The inadequacy of predominant research methods was first painfully felt by feminist historians, who tried to reconstruct women's history. Women's contribution to history is hardly recorded in the history books. Within a framework of science that is based on written records only, this means that their contribution does not exist for as far as historical science goes. It is this experience which has given rise to the expression: 'the hidden women'. The virtual exclusion of women, of their lives, work and struggles from the bulk of research can be adequately epitomized in Bertolt Brecht's phrase: 'One does not see those who are in the dark.' When women now try to bring light into this darkness, they encounter specific methodological problems, because the prominent social science research methodology, i.e., mainly the quantitative survey method, is itself not free from androcentric bias. The present paper, therefore, tries to address itself to the methodological problems of feminist social scientists who want to study women's issues. Its aim is to lay down some methodological guidelines, which may be further discussed and developed into a new methodological approach consistent with the political aims of the women's movement. It is the outcome of my experience as a social scientist and a participant in the women's movement.

Criticism of the dominant quantitative social science research methodology started earlier than the women's movement. My first doubts about the scientific relevance and ethical justification of this methodology were raised when I was working as a teacher and researcher in a Third World country. Here I realized that the research situation as such, due to colonialism and neocolonialism, was a situation of clear dominance between research subject and research object, which tended to lead to distorted data.2 In the USA, however, criticism of the established social science research methodology came up in connection with the protest movement against American involvement in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Scholars like Horowitz (1976), Wolf and Jorgenson (1970), and Huizer (1973) raised their voices against this kind of research as a tactical tool in the 'Counter-insurgency-and-containment-of-
Communism' strategy of the USA. The emphasis of their criticism was on political and ethical questions.
In West Germany, at about the same time (1967-72), the positivist and functionalist theory of society, propagated throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, and the quantitative analytical research methodology were being attacked by the theoreticians of the Frankfurt school: Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, Habermas, et al. who evolved the critical theory of society from a dialectical and historical point of view. The focus of their criticism was the claim of value neutrality and the structural separation between theory and practice of positivism. They attacked the scientific irrelevance, the elitism and inherent class bias of this approach and tried to revive the emancipatory potential which social theory had had in the eighteenth century, the beginning of the bourgeois epoch. The criticism of 'Critical Theory,' however, remained confined to the magic circle of academic institutions. It did not reach the working masses and thus reproduced the structural separation between theory and practice, characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. In the mid-1970s an effort was made to bridge this gap by the proponents of action research, first evolved by Lewin (1948).

The thoughts which follow on a methodology for feminist research grew out of the debates on these three waves of criticism against positivism as the dominant social science theory and its accompanying methodology. Therefore, they will repeat many points which are already known. However, they are the outcome of my involvement in the women's movement and of my experience in action research projects. They are not to be understood as prescriptions to be followed dogmatically, but as an invitation for methodological experiment and innovation. The assumption underlying these guidelines is the following: there is a contradiction between the prevalent theories of social science and methodology and the political aims of the women's movement. If Women's Studies is to be made into an instrument of women's liberation, we cannot uncritically use the positivist, quantitative research methodology. If Women's Studies uses these old methodologies, they will again be turned into an instrument of repression. New wine should not be poured into old bottles.

THESIS: When women begin to change their situation of exploitation and oppression, then this change will have consequences for the research areas, theories, concepts and methodology of studies that focus on women's issues. 'Women's Studies' means more than the fact that women have now been discovered as a 'target group' for research, or that an increasing number of women scholars and students are taking up women's issues. If Women's Studies is to contribute to the cause of women's emancipation, then women in the academic
field have to use their scholarship and knowledge towards this end. If they consciously do so they will realize that their own existence as women and scholars is a contradictory one. As women, they are affected by sexist oppression together with other women, and as scholars they share the privileges of the (male) academic elite. Out of this split existence grows a double consciousness which must be taken into account when we think about a new methodology. Women scholars have been told to look at their contradictory existence, i.e., at their subjective being as women as an obstacle and a handicap to 'pure' and 'objective' research. Even while studying women's questions they were advised to suppress their emotions, their subjective feelings of involvement and identification with other women in order to produce 'objective' data.

The methodological principle of a value-free, neutral, uninvolved approach, of an hierarchical, non-reciprocal relationship between research subject and research object — certainly the decisive methodological postulate of positivist social science research — drives women scholars into a schizophrenic situation. If they try to follow this postulate, they have constantly to repress, negate or ignore their own experience of sexist oppression and have to strive to live up to the so-called 'rational', standards of a highly competitive, male-dominated academic world.

Moreover, this methodological principle does not help us to explore those areas which, due to this androcentric bias, have so far remained 'invisible'. These include: women's social history, women's perception of their own situation, their own subordination and their own resistance. Women in the universities have also shown a tendency to ignore these areas out of motives of self-preservation.

The contradictory existential and ideological condition of women scholars must become the starting point for a new methodological approach. The postulate of truth itself makes it necessary that those areas of the female existence which so far we're repressed and socially 'invisible' be brought into the full daylight of scientific analysis. In order to make this possible, feminist women must deliberately and courageously integrate their repressed, unconscious female subjectivity, i.e., their own experience of oppression and discrimination into the research process. This means, that committed women social scientists must learn to understand their own 'double consciousness' as a methodological and political opportunity and not as an obstacle. Leavitt et al. wrote about this double consciousness which women have in common with other groups who have suffered from oppression: 'Members of subordinated groups must, if they are to survive, develop to those who control them, at the same time as they are fully aware of the everyday reality of their oppression, a quality the superordinate groups lack' (Leavitt, Sykes and Weatherford, 1975, p. 112).
This extra quality consists mainly in the fact that women and other oppressed groups, out of their subjective experience, are better sensitized toward psychological mechanisms of dominance. As objects of oppression they are forced out of self-preservation to know the motives of their oppressors. At the same time they have experienced in their own psyche and bodies how oppression and exploitation feel to the victims, who must constantly respond to demands made on them. Due to this 'inner view of the oppressed' (Nash, 1974), women social scientists are better equipped than their male counterparts to make a comprehensive study of the exploited groups. Men often do not have this experiential knowledge, and therefore lack empathy, the ability for identification and because of this they also lack social and sociological imagination. If women social scientists take their own subjective experience of sexist discrimination and their rebellion against it as a starting point and guiding principle for their research, they first become critically aware of a number of weaknesses of established research which, according to Gerrit Huizer, is characterized by a lot of ego-tripping, slander, power intrigues and lack of equal participation (1973). Moreover, they discover the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of androcentric concepts of science. Thus Leavitt, Sykes and Weatherford criticize the Aristotelian dichotomization that is characteristic of structuralist and functionalist theories. Another instance of a pervasive and androcentric scientific manipulation is the 'Man the Hunter' paradigm, propagated by behaviorists and neo-evolutionists. According to this paradigm all human social development began with the (male)" hunter and his invention of arms. Although a mass of evidence shows that the human race could not have survived had it not been fed by 'Woman the Gatherer', this paradigm has been accepted by most social scientists, including most Marxists, as an established truth (cf. Martin and Voorhies, 1975).

Women scholars who are committed to women's liberation, however, cannot stop at criticizing and exposing these androcentric manipulations. It is necessary to develop a new methodological approach and new research tools to prevent such manipulations. In the following I shall try to lay down some methodological guidelines for feminist research. These will be followed by an account of an attempt to put these guidelines into practice in an action research project.

II  **Methodological guidelines for feminist research**

(1) The postulate of *value free research*, of neutrality and indifference towards the research objects, has to be replaced by *conscious partiality*, which is achieved through partial identification with the research objects. For women who deliberately and actively integrate their double-
consciousness into the research process, this partial identification will not be difficult. It is the opposite of the so-called 'Spectator-Knowledge' (Maslow, 1966:50) which is achieved by showing an indifferent, disinterested, alienated attitude towards the 'research objects'. Conscious partiality, however, not only conceives of the research objects as parts of a bigger social whole but also of the research subjects, i.e., the researchers themselves. Conscious partiality is different from mere subjectivism or simple empathy. On the basis of a limited identification it creates a critical and dialectical distance between the researcher and his 'objects'. It enables the correction of distortions of perception on both sides and widens the consciousness of both, the researcher and the 'researched'.

(2) The vertical relationship between researcher and 'research objects', the view from above, must be replaced by the view from below. This is the necessary consequence of the demands of conscious partiality and reciprocity. Research, which so far has been largely an instrument of dominance and legitimation of power elites, must be brought to serve the interests of dominated, exploited and oppressed groups, particularly women. Women scholars, committed to the cause of women's liberation, cannot have an objective interest in a View from above. This would mean that they would consent to their own oppression as women, because the man-woman relationship represents one of the oldest examples of the view from above and may be the paradigm of all vertical hierarchical relationships.

The demand for a systematic View from below has both a scientific and an ethical-political dimension. The scientific significance is related to the fact that despite the sophistication of the quantitative research tools, many data gathered by these methods are irrelevant or even invalid because the hierarchical research situation as such defeats the very purpose of research: it creates an acute distrust in the 'research objects' who feel that they are being interrogated. This distrust can be found when women and other under-privileged groups are being interviewed by members of a socially higher stratum. It has been observed that the data thus gathered often reflect 'expected behavior' rather than real behavior (Berger, 1974).

Women, who are committed to the cause of women's liberation, cannot stop at this result. They cannot be satisfied with giving the social sciences better, more authentic and more relevant data. The ethical-political significance of the view from below cannot be separated from the scientific one: this separation would again transform all methodological innovations in Women's Studies into instruments of dominance. Only if Women's Studies is deliberately made part of the struggle against women's oppression and exploitation, can women prevent the misuse of their theoretical and methodological innovations for the stabilization of the status quo and for crisis management. This implies that committed women scholars must fight, not only for the integration of women's issues into the academic establishment and research policies but also for a new orientation regarding areas and objectives of research. The needs and interests of the majority of women must become the yardstick for the research policy of Women's Studies. This presupposes that women in the academic

112
world know these needs and interests. The View from below', therefore, leads to another postulate.
(3) The contemplative, uninvolved 'spectator knowledge' must be replaced by active participation in actions, movements and struggles for women's emancipation. Research must become an integral part of such struggles. Because Women's Studies grew out of the women's movement, it would be a betrayal of the aims of the movement if academic women, who were never involved in any struggle or were never concerned about women's oppression and exploitation, should try to reduce Women's Studies to a purely academic concern, restricted to the ivory tower of research institutes and universities, thus blunting the edge of all this discontent. To avert this danger, Women's Studies must remain closely linked to the struggles and actions of the movement.

The concept of integrating praxis and research was concretely formulated by Mao Tse-Tung in his essays on contradiction and praxis. It must be emphasized that this concept goes beyond the prevalent understanding of action research. Action research has not been able so far to solve the dilemma of trying to establish a materialist praxis and theory which integrate the understanding of science and knowledge within a paradigm in which the separation from praxis is one of the most important structural prerequisites. But the demand to link praxis and research consistently follows an historical, dialectical and materialist theory of knowledge. According to this concept, the 'truth' of a theory is not dependent on the application of certain methodological principles and rules, but on its potential to orient the processes of praxis towards progressive emancipation and humanization. This potential, however, is not acquired in the sheltered world of academic institutions but in participation in social processes and in reflection about them.

Max Weber's famous principle of separating science and politics (praxis) is not in the interests of women's liberation. Women scholars who want to do more than a mere paternalistic 'something for their poorer sisters' (because they feel that, as a privileged group, they are already liberated) but who struggle against patriarchy as a system, must take their studies into the streets and take part in the social actions and struggles of the movement.

If they do so, their contribution will not be to give abstract analyses and prescriptions but to help those involved in these struggles to discover and develop their own theoretical and methodological potentials. The elitist attitude of women
social scientists will be overcome if they are able to look at all those who participate in a social action, or struggle as 'sister-or-brother-sociologists' (adapted by Gouldner). The integration of research into social and political action for the emancipation of women, the dialectics of doing and knowing, will lead not only to better and more realistic theories. According to this approach, the object of research is not something static and homogeneous but an historical, dynamic and contradictory entity. Research, therefore, will have to follow closely the dynamics of this process.

(4) Participation in social actions and struggles and the integration of research into these processes, further implies that the change of the status quo becomes the starting point for a scientific quest. The motto for this approach could be: 'If you want to know a thing, you must change it.' (If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change it, i.e., you must chew it in your mouth', Mao Tse-Tung, 1968). If we apply this principle to the study of women, it means that we have to start fighting against women's exploitation and oppression in order to be able to understand the extent, the dimensions, the forms and causes of this patriarchal system. Most empirical research on women has concentrated so far on the study of superficial or surface phenomena such as women's attitudes towards housework, career, part-time work, etc. Such attitudes or opinion surveys give very little information about women's true consciousness. Only when there is a rupture in the 'normal' life of a woman, i.e., a crisis such as divorce, the end of a relationship, etc., is there a chance for her to become conscious of her true condition, in the 'experience of crises' (Kramert, 1977) and rupture with normalcy, women are confronted with the real social relationships in which they had unconsciously been submerged as objects without being able to distance themselves from them. As long as normalcy is not disrupted they are not able to admit even to themselves that these relationships are oppressive or exploitative.

This is the reason why in attitude surveys women so often are found to subscribe to the dominant sexist ideology of the submissive, self-sacrificing woman. When a rupture with this normalcy occurs, however, the mystification surrounding the natural and harmonious character of these patriarchal relations cannot be maintained.

The motto of changing a situation in order to be able to understand it applies not only to the individual woman and her life crises, but also to collective processes. The very fact that today we are talking about a methodology for doing research in Women's Studies is the result of a change in the status quo that was brought about by the women's movement and not by intellectual endeavors in universities.
If women scholars begin to understand their studies as an integral part of an emancipatory struggle and if they focus their research on the processes of individual and social change, then they cannot but change themselves also in this process, both as human beings and as scholars. They will have to give up the elitist narrow-mindedness, abstract thinking, political and ethical impotence and arrogance of the established academician. They must learn that scientific work and a scientific outlook is not the privilege of professional scientists, but that the creativity of science depends on its being rooted in living social processes. Methodologically, this implies the search for techniques with which to document and analyze historical processes of change.

(5) *The research process must become a process of conscientization*, both for the so-called 'research subjects' (social scientists) and for the 'research objects' (women as target groups). The methodology of 'conscientizacao' was first developed and applied by Paulo Freire in his problem-formulating method. The decisive characteristic of the approach is that the study of an oppressive reality is not carried out by experts but by the objects of the oppression. People who before were objects of research become subjects of their own research and action. This implies that scientists who participate in this study of the conditions of oppression must give their research tools to the people. They must inspire them to formulate the problems with which they struggle in order that they may plan their action. The women's movement so far has understood the process of conscientization largely as that of becoming conscious of one's individual suffering as a woman. The emphasis in consciousness-raising groups was on group dynamics, role-specific behavior and relationship problems rather than on the social relations that govern the capitalist patriarchal societies.

The problem-formulating method, however, sees individual problems as an expression and manifestation of oppressive social relations. Whereas consciousness-raising groups often tend to psychologize all relations of dominance, the problem-formulating method considers conscientization as the subjective precondition for liberating action. If processes of conscientization do not lead subsequently to processes of change and action, they may lead to dangerous illusions and even to regression.

(6) I would like to go a step further than Paulo Freire, however. The collective conscientization of women through a problem-formulating methodology must be accompanied by the study of women's individual and social

Editors' note: By 'conscientizacao,' Freire means 'learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.' In the following we will use the English version, 'conscientization' (Freire, 1970).
history. Women have so far not been able to appropriate, i.e., make their own, the social changes to which they have been subjected passively in the course of history. Women do make history, but in the past they have not appropriated (made it their own) their history as subjects. Such a subjective appropriation of their history, their past struggles, sufferings and dreams would lead to something like a collective women's consciousness (in analogy to class consciousness) without which no struggle for emancipation can be successful.

The appropriation of women's history can be promoted by feminist scholars who can inspire and help other women to document their campaigns and struggles. They can help them to analyze these struggles, so that they can learn from past mistakes and successes and, in the long run, may become able to move from mere spontaneous activism to long-term strategies. This presupposes, however, that women engaged in Women's Studies remain in close contact with the movement and maintain a continuous dialogue with other women. This in aim implies that they can no longer treat their research results as their private property, but that they must learn to collectivize and share them. This leads to the next postulate.

(7) Women cannot appropriate their own history unless they begin to collectivize their own experiences. Women's Studies, therefore, must strive to overcome the individualism, the competitiveness, the careerism, prevalent among male scholars. This has relevance both for the individual woman scholar engaged in research and for her methodology. If she is committed to the cause of women's liberation, she cannot choose her area of research purely from a career point of view but must try to use her relative power to take up issues that are central to the movement. Therefore, she needs dialogues on methodology with other feminists. The emphasis on interviews of individuals at a given time must be shifted towards group discussions, if possible at repeated intervals. This collectivization of women's experiences is not only a means of getting more and more diversified information, but it also helps women to overcome their structural isolation in their families and to understand that their individual sufferings have social causes.
III AN ATTEMPT TO APPLY THESE POSTULATES BY THE ACTION GROUP: 'WOMEN HELP WOMEN', COLOGNE 1976-77

Maria Mies

These methodological guidelines were not evolved merely through the study of social science literature but also through my participation in several field projects and the discussion of these experiences with women students and other colleagues. I had a first chance to try out some of these guidelines in an action research project which grew out of an initiative responding to violence against women in the family. This initiative was started by the women students of Social Pedagogy in Cologne in Spring 1976. They founded an association called 'Women Help Women' and started a campaign to get a house where women who had been beaten by their husbands or friends could find shelter. Although this initiative did not start with an explicit interest in research, the need for documentation and analysis became urgently felt in the course of its development. The following description of our attempt to link social research to the requirements of this field project will give an idea of how some of the guidelines mentioned above can be put into practice. It should be kept in mind that it was not a systematic attempt to apply a certain methodology of social research, but that the main motive was to further the objectives of the action group. The following should, therefore, be understood as a sharing of our experience rather than as a systematic study. The aim is to invite others to experiment along similar lines.

* A problem must be 'created' (Postulate 4: in order to understand a thing, one has to change it.)

After an action group of fifteen women had been constituted, a position paper was drafted on its objectives, methods and organizational principles. The group then approached the Social Welfare Department of the Municipal Administration and asked for a house for battered women. There had been reports in the press about increasing wife-beating in German families and about houses for battered women in England and Holland. The reply of the Social Welfare authorities, however, was that there was no need for such a house in Cologne, there were various homes for destitute and poor women to which battered women could go. The fact that there were hardly
any battered women in these homes was sufficient proof for the authorities that the problem did not exist on any large scale. The group was advised first to make a survey and to give the authorities exact figures about the extent of wife-beating in Cologne in order to prove the *, need for a special house for this target group.

Such surveys are usually made by commercial research institutes with the help of professional social scientists, using the techniques of questionnaires and interviews. They not only cost a lot of money (which the group did not have) but they also have the political effect that no action is taken before the results of the studies are available. In this way, a problem is often swept under the rug.

The action group therefore chose another method of proving the need for a house for battered women. It organized a street action with posters, photos of battered wives, newspaper-clippings and signatures collected from passers-by, about the need for a Women's House for battered women. At the same time, people who came to their stand were interviewed about their experiences with and their views on wife beating. These interviews were recorded and provided firsthand data about the existence of this problem in Cologne.

These interviews also gave the group initial feedback about people's reactions to private violence in the family, about the class position of men who beat women, about people's opinion as to the causes of this private violence and about police indifference towards the problem.

This information helped the group to plan their next steps, but it was also a bit of social research which could immediately be used to further the action. The whole action was reported in the press, including some of the statements made by the people. This publication of a problem which so far had been considered a purely private affair mobilized many people to discuss the question of a Women's House.

The municipal authorities found it difficult to maintain their indifference and finally had to mobilize their own research cell to investigate the problem of wife beating. This was the first time that any attempt had been made to obtain statistics about cases of wife beating in the city. Neither the police nor the various social welfare homes had kept statistics about women who approached them for help. The Social Welfare Department carried out this inquiry only in the homes under their control, not in private homes. The results of the study showed that an average 100 women per month approached these homes because they had been beaten by their husbands. The homes have no means by which to help such women quickly and unbureaucratically, however, and therefore sent them back to their husbands.

With the aid of systematic publicity work in the press, on the radio and TV, the organization grew and became known in the city. Many women who had been mistreated by their husbands rang the number given in the press. Three months after the start of the project, women began to ask the group for help. At that time
the group did not yet have a house and its members thus began to give shelter in their own homes to the women who asked for help. This made the need for a Women's House all the more urgent. When the Social Welfare Department published the results of its own investigation, the action group stated that they had given shelter to about 30 women between June and September 1976. It could no longer be said that the problem of private violence against women did not exist in Cologne. Eventually the members raised enough money to pay the rent of a suitable house, and later the municipality provided a subsidy.

2) Partiality and egalitarian involvement in a social action (Postulates 1 and
Members of the action group clearly stated in their position paper that they did not want to allow new hierarchies to grow or experts to dominate the organization. Therefore, they made it a precondition for membership that women who wanted to join 'Women Help Women' had to do any type of work that came up. In the long run this proved to be a correct decision. The women social scientists who joined the organization had to give up their status of uninvolved, neutral, scientific observers or experts; they not only had to take sides with and for the mistreated women, but also to participate actively and on an equal footing with non-academic women in all the work. Some pressure was exercised by the public to elect some eminent women as members of the Board of the Association. Officers of the Social Welfare Department would have felt more at ease negotiating with academics than with unknown and inexperienced young women. The action group did not yield to such pressure, however, and stuck to its egalitarian principle of organization. This had the effect that all members had to feel actively responsible for the progress of the movement. There was no bureaucratic center of authority to which responsibility could be delegated.

The result for the academic women was that their horizon in day-today struggles was immensely broadened. In their discussions with women who sought shelter in the Women's House they learned more about the true social conditions of German families than from any number of quantitative surveys. For the women who had started the action group, the decision that there should be no hierarchy or bureaucracy meant that they had to learn many things that women usually do not know: from dealing with officials, lawyers, policemen, to speaking at press conferences, studying Social Welfare Laws, to whitewashing and painting, driving alone at night to unknown places to meet women who sought their help, etc. The principle of action and egalitarian participation was also applied to the women who sought the help of 'Women Help Women'. After a time of rest and recovery in the Women's House, they were encouraged to participate in all the activities of the organization. This was not always easy because the women who sought shelter had run away from an acute crisis situation. They expected help and looked upon the organization as an ordinary social welfare institution. It was difficult to get them to understand gradually that women's liberation rather than social welfare and charity was the aim of the action group. This understanding was furthered by the principle of active and egalitarian participation of all, including the academic women.
The difficulties that arose from this struggle towards inner democracy and integration of praxis and theory were caused by the contacts with the outer world, i.e., mainly the municipal authorities, with their highly hierarchized and bureaucratized organizations. Constant friction was caused by the fact that these bureaucracies have no latitude for egalitarian initiative.

3 Discussion and 'socialization' of life-histories as therapy: as a basis for collective women's consciousness and as a starting point for emancipatory action (Postulates 5, 6, and 7)

In the first phase of the action, intensive individual and group discussions took place with women who had run away from their homes because their husbands or fiancés had beaten them black and blue. These intensive talks were institutionalized after the group had rented a house in November 1976 and many more women rang up. (Only the telephone number was known, not the address, in case the men should follow their wives and harass them and the children.)

At first these informal yet intensive talks were mainly about the forms, duration, extent and repercussions of male violence in the family. They, necessarily emphasized the psychological dimension of a woman's individual history. Since no amount of psychological counseling could solve the practical and material problems that these women faced after leaving their husbands (no job, no flat, insecurity of income, no training), it became evident that psychological introspection alone could not lead to a deeper understanding of the social forces which had put women into such a state of dependency.

It became necessary to help women understand that their own experience of male violence was not just their individual bad luck or even their fault, but that there is an objective social basis for this private violence by men against women and children. This meant that they had to understand the sociological and historical dimensions of male violence if they were to get out of the masochistic tendency to attribute the failure of their marriage to their own failure as women.

The best method by which to make women in this crisis situation aware of the sociological and historical roots of their suffering appears to be the documentation and analysis of their life histories; by making their stories public, women acknowledge that their experiences have social origins. This method, evolved as a technique of action research (Osterland, 1973), is not only an effective way by which to integrate the time dimension into social research; it is
also an excellent method of conscientization. The methodology of a small-action research project which grew out of these informal talks in the Women's House is described below.

It was our objective to document, analyze and discuss the life histories of a number of women who came to the Women's House. We wanted to publish these life histories because it was our aim to conscientize and mobilize the public at large about the problem. To achieve this, much more information was needed on this hidden side of our society, which professes to be democratic and peaceful. It is the task of social researchers to provide this information.

Methodologically, the small group of women who started this project (myself and six students) tried to follow the postulates laid down above.

3.1 The starting point for the documentation of a life history is the break in the woman's so-called normal life. The facade of normalcy which these women have desperately maintained for perhaps 10-30 years of married life — in the face of brutal violence and humiliation — breaks down as soon as they come to the Women's House. The structural violence, which is the basis of the bourgeois, patriarchal family, has become manifested in open violence, and the women are able to admit it. This rupture with oppressive continuity usually does not occur until women see a realistic alternative. Before they see such an alternative, no amount of persuasion will convince them that they are oppressed. In fact, they cannot allow their own oppression and humiliation to come to the surface of their consciousness if they want to preserve a minimum of self-respect. Therefore, they try to find any conceivable rationalization for the fact that they have tolerated masculine brutality for so long. As soon as the rupture has taken place, however, their whole life of repression and humiliation gushes forth like a stream whose sluices have been opened. As soon as they realize that there are other women who will listen to them with sympathy and understanding, they begin to talk about their life, their husbands, their marriage; spontaneously they try to understand why this has all happened to them. We realized that the need of these women to talk and to communicate their experiences to us and to their fellow sufferers was boundless. For most of them it was the first time that there had been anyone who was willing to listen to them.

3.2 This first stage of sharing experiences and of spontaneous solidarity, however, does not lead automatically to an analysis of the social causes of private violence or to a new consciousness. We interviewed individual women and asked them to tell us their whole life history from their childhood up to the time when they had come to the Women's House. Most of them were very eager to do so. We first taped their stories individually, then we wrote them down. After a number of such biographies were written down, we organized a group meeting. We gave those written life-stories to the women, asked them to read them and to see
whether they wanted to alter or to add anything. After a cursory analysis of the biographies, we wanted to have a group discussion with all the women on some of the salient points that came up in many of the cases. As we wanted to avoid a discussion in which only a few people would participate, we suggested that we should make a role play based on problems and incidents that were most common to their histories. The women themselves suggested what should be included in the play and some also volunteered to stage it. We invited all women to see the play and then to discuss it, and made a video-film while it was being staged. After it was all over, the women talked about the play and this discussion was also filmed.

When we planned this small action research project, we had the following objectives in mind, which cover not only our research interests but are closely linked to the individual interests of the women concerned, as well as to the broader aims and perspectives of the women's movement.

(a) For the women concerned, the systematic documentation of their life histories has the effect that their own subjective biography assumes an objective character. It becomes something at which they can look from a certain distance. They are not only prisoners of their own past and present sufferings and mistakes, but they can, if they want to, draw lessons for the future from their own past history.

(b) Writing down their biographies also serves a very practical purpose. These women need documentation and hard data in order to re-organize their lives. They need such documents for their lawyers, for example, if they want to have a divorce. On the other hand, the action group also needs documentation of women's histories if it is to avoid endless Sisyphean charity work.

(c) From the point of view of research, these biographies contain data not only on the individual destinies of the women but also on objective social relations such as class, and the women's reactions towards these. The biographical method also links the individual history to the overall social history of an epoch. The individual's life manifests the contradictions and stresses of an epoch. Many of the women have experienced the war and post-war years; some are refugees from East Germany. Many of the men are workers; many are unemployed and have started drinking. The question of when the man started to beat his wife often gives insight into the interplay between crises: increased phenomena of alienation (work stress, alcoholism, job insecurity, competition) and private violence and aggression. Reflection and appropriation of individual women's histories, therefore, cannot be separated from the reflection and appropriation for feminist use of the overall social history of an epoch.
(d) Apart from the individual, "practical and theoretical dimensions, the writing-
down and discussion of life histories also has political and action-oriented
dimensions, aiming at creating a new collective consciousness among women and
mobilizing them for further social action. For this it was necessary to generalize the
individual life histories, which we tried by staging the play and by the ensuing
discussion of the video film.
In the collectivization and discussion of their individual experiences, the women
transcend their narrow isolated horizon and begin to understand that women in
general have a common social destiny. In fact, most of the women, when they
listened to the stories of others, were struck by the similarity of their experiences, i.e.,
the commonness and monotony of the everyday violence. There was hardly anything
individual or extraordinary in their narrations.
(e) Mere scientific documentation and analysis, and even a group discussion on the
common destiny of women, does not lead by itself to an active collective
consciousness 'for themselves'.
Only when women can use their own documented, analyzed, understood and
published history as a weapon in the struggle for themselves and for all women will
they become subjects of their own history. This implies that the documentation of
their life histories — the video film, the book, the discussions — have to be
integrated into the overall strategy of the women's movement. This mobilization of all
women who so far had been passive victims of patriarchal structural and direct
violence may transcend the scope of a small action-research project. But the fact that
the women who took part in the research showed keen interest in starting a public
campaign against private violence is an indicator that they are moving away from
their status as mere objects of charity and social welfare and are on the way to
becoming subjects of their own history.  

Postscript
I have often been asked whether the guidelines or postulates spelled out above could
also be applied to research on women in Third World countries. In 1978-9, I carried
out an ILO-sponsored research project on rural women in India, where I tried to
implement some of these methodological principles. A full account of my experience
is given in my reports on this subject. Here I wish only to highlight a few necessary
points in order to counter certain illusions which may arise regarding the scope of this
approach to further social change.
We (the Indian women who assisted me and I) applied this approach in three rural
areas, where we carried out fieldwork among women in the subsistence sector. In one
area a social movement for the organization of landless laborers and their social
betterment had been in progress for several years. The landless female
laborers had already formed their own autonomous organizations, which had carried out a number of successful actions for better wages, work contracts and nightschools for women. It was not difficult to use the methodological principles spelled out above and the women participated enthusiastically in our research. They first started doing research on us; however, asking all sorts of personal questions regarding our husbands, children, our bodies, clothes, what we did during menstruation, whether we used cotton or cloth; and above all, why we were interested in them. In other words, they did not uncritically accept the hierarchical research situation but turned it into a dialogue. This was facilitated because we lived among them and needed to be helped in many ways. In their songs, dances, dramas, role plays, group discussions, the recording of their life histories, in mass meetings, it became evident that not only were they quite capable of analyzing and understanding their own situation, but also of drawing practical conclusions from this analysis. The project provided a forum for discussions and meetings and, as such, not only helped to conscientize these women, but created a wider network of communications for women from different villages, thus giving them anew sense of power.

It would have been impossible for us, however, to mobilize and organize the scattered women through the research project alone. Even if it is action*- oriented, Women's Studies cannot on its own do such work. Perhaps this should not even be attempted: the researchers usually will leave the area after a certain period of time and the women who are left behind will have to face the political consequences of their mobilization. If a research project is carefully linked to an ongoing movement, however, the separation between research and action, theory and practice can be overcome — at least we can move in that direction. The degree to which the resources and services of a research project can be used to further the aims of the movement will depend on the movement itself.

Similar autonomous organizations did not exist in the other two areas, and we thus found ourselves in the typical research situation of outsiders who had come to snoop around. In one area the situation was complicated further by the fact that for approximately the last hundred years the local women had become accustomed to being the objects of charity for the Christian church and Western business interests. It was difficult to explain to them that we had no such charity to offer, and at first they did not see any point in talking to us. They were completely atomized as workers and housewives, and although we were able to organize group discussions in which they talked about their problems, the initiative was clearly in our hands. These women belonged to a better class and caste than the women in the first area, but their consciousness and self-confidence were much lower.

We realized that a research project that does not link up with some local group which will constitute a permanent base for conscientization, mobilization
and action, will remain at best a "pleasant episode in the lives of the women, and will be unable to develop its emancipatory potential. In any case, women's research projects as such should not be expected to start a conscientization movement. This would presuppose greater commitment and involvement of the research team in a particular area than is possible for most urban-based women in Third World countries.

Even in areas where no movement was yet in progress, however, we realized that it was impossible not to become involved. Given the

Towards a methodology for feminist research general sex-segregation and oppression of women in India, the women very soon came to tell us about their private problems with their husbands, their mothers-in-law, and the quarrels in the village, etc. This 'women's gossip' was obviously encouraged by the fact that we were women, belonging to the same social category, and were also outsiders and researchers who were ready to listen to their stories. This general feeling of 'being on the same side' helped to overcome the usual barrier between people from different classes and cultures. The establishment of an open and friendly rapport between us and the women was mainly due to the commitment and enthusiasm of the Indian women on the research team, who were not only capable of partial identification with the problems of the rural women, but who also enjoyed being with them and temporarily sharing their lives.

Notes
1 This paper was first read at an interdisciplinary feminist seminar in Holland and it is published in German in Heksenkollege de feeks viool (Nijmegen, Holland, 1978, out of print) and in Beiträge zur Feministischen Theorie und Praxis, 1978.
2 Mahmood Mamdani (1973) describes the functioning of this kind of research.
3 The present world-wide interest in Women's Studies may also be attributed to certain efforts to neutralize the protest potential of the movement, in many countries there is already a gap between Women's Studies and the Women's Movement.
4 The results of this project were published under the title: Nachrichten aus dem Ghetto Liebe (1980).
5 The research report on my work in India is entitled 'Housewives Produce for the Worldmarket: The Lace Makers of Narsapur' (1982).
6 An account of this experience is given in my paper 'Peasant Women get Organised' (1981).
References

Berger, Hartwig (1974), Untersuchungsmethode und soziale Wirklichkeit (Research Methods and Social Reality), Frankfurt.


Qualitative Research Methods: A data
collections made: module # 1

5.1

Qualitative Research Methods Overview

This module introduces the fundamental elements of a qualitative approach to research, to help you understand and become proficient in the qualitative methods discussed in subsequent modules. We recommend that you consult the suggested readings at the end of the module for more in-depth treatment of the foundations of qualitative research.

This module covers the following topics:
• Introduction to Qualitative Research
• Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative Research
• Sampling in Qualitative Research
• Recruitment in Qualitative Research
• Ethical Guidelines in Qualitative Research
• Suggested Readings

Introduction to Qualitative Research

What is qualitative research?

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research. In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation that:
• seeks answers to a question
• systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question
• collects evidence
• produces findings that were not determined in advance
• produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study

Qualitative research shares these characteristics. Additionally, it seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations.

What can we learn from qualitative research?

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information
about the "human" side of an issue - that is, the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent. When used along with quantitative methods, qualitative research can help us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation and the implications of quantitative data. Although findings from qualitative data can often be extended to people with characteristics similar to those in the study population, gaining a rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon typically takes precedence over eliciting data that can be generalized to other geographical areas or populations. In this sense, qualitative research differs slightly from scientific research in general.

What are some qualitative research methods?

The three most common qualitative methods, explained in detail in their respective modules, are participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Each method is particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data.

- Participant observation is appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual contexts.
- In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored.
- Focus groups are effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented.

What forms do qualitative data take?

The types of data these three methods generate are field notes, audio (and sometimes video) recordings, and transcripts.

Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Research

What are the basic differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods?

Quantitative and qualitative research methods differ primarily in:

- their analytical objectives
- the types of questions they pose
- the types of data collection instruments they use
- the forms of data they produce
- the degree of flexibility built into study design

Table 1, page 3, briefly outlines these major differences. For a more in-depth theoretical treatment of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, we refer the reader to the suggested readings listed at the end of this chapter, especially Bernard 1995.

Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide

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129
What is the most important difference between quantitative and qualitative methods?

The key difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is their flexibility. Generally, quantitative methods are fairly inflexible. With quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires, for example, researchers ask all participants identical questions in the same order. The response categories from which participants may choose are "closed-ended" or fixed. The advantage of this inflexibility is that it allows for meaningful comparison of responses across participants and study sites. However, it requires a thorough understanding of the important questions to ask, the best way to ask them, and the range of possible responses.

Qualitative methods are typically more flexible - that is, they allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant. For example, qualitative methods ask mostly "open-ended" questions that are not necessarily worded in exactly the same way with each participant. With open-ended questions, participants are free to respond in their own words, and these responses tend to be more complex than simply "yes" or "no."

In addition, with qualitative methods, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is often less formal than in quantitative research. Participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods. In turn, researchers have the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants say by tailoring subsequent questions to information the participant has provided.

It is important to note, however, that there is a range of flexibility among methods used in both quantitative and qualitative research and that flexibility is not an indication of how scientifically rigorous a method is. Rather, the degree of flexibility reflects the kind of understanding of the problem that is being pursued using the method.

What are the advantages of qualitative methods for exploratory research?

One advantage of qualitative methods in exploratory research is that use of open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, as quantitative methods do. Open-ended questions have the ability to evoke responses that are:

- meaningful and culturally salient to the participant
- unanticipated by the researcher
- rich and explanatory in nature

130
Another advantage of qualitative methods is that they allow the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses - that is, to ask why or how. The researcher must listen carefully to what participants say, engage with them according to their individual personalities and styles, and use "probes" to encourage them to elaborate on their answers. (See the modules on In-Depth Interviews and Focus Groups, pages 42-43 and 64-65 respectively, for discussions of probes.)

**Is my quantitative experience applicable to qualitative research?**

Although the objectives of quantitative and qualitative research are not mutually exclusive, their approaches to deciphering the world involve distinct research techniques and thus separate skill sets. This guide is intended to train researchers in the skill set required for qualitative research. Experience in quantitative methods is not required, but neither is it a disadvantage. Essential for our purposes, rather, is that all qualitative data collectors have a clear understanding of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, in order to avoid confusing qualitative and quantitative techniques. Whatever a researcher's experience in either approach, a general grasp of the premises and objectives motivating each helps develop and improve competence in the qualitative data collection techniques detailed in this guide.

**Sampling in Qualitative Research**

Even if it were possible, it is not necessary to collect data from everyone in a community in order to get valid findings. In qualitative research, only a sample (that is, a subset) of a population is selected for any given study. The study's research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determine which and how many people to select. In this section, we briefly describe three of the most common sampling methods used in qualitative research: purposive sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling. As data collectors, you will not be responsible for selecting the sampling method. The explanations below are meant to help you understand the reasons for using each method.

**What is purposive sampling?**

Purposive sampling, one of the most common sampling strategies, groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question (for example, HIV-positive women in Capital City). Sample sizes, which may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depend on the resources and time available, as
well as the study's objectives. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions). Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection.

What is quota sampling?

Quota sampling, sometimes considered a type of purposive sampling, is also common. In quota sampling, we decide while designing the study how many people with which characteristics to include as participants. Characteristics might include age, place of residence, gender, class, profession, marital status, use of a particular contraceptive method, HIV status, etc. The criteria we choose allow us to focus on people we think would be most likely to experience, know about, or have insights into the research topic. Then we go into the community and - using recruitment strategies appropriate to the location, culture, and study population - find people who fit these criteria, until we meet the prescribed quotas. (See the section in this module on Recruitment in Qualitative Research, page 6.)

How do purposive and quota sampling differ?

Purposive and quota sampling are similar in that they both seek to identify participants based on selected criteria. However, quota sampling is more specific with respect to sizes and proportions of subsamples, with subgroups chosen to reflect corresponding proportions in the population. If, for example, gender is a variable of interest in how people experience HIV infection, a quota sample would seek an equal balance of HIV-positive men and HIV-positive women in a given city, assuming a 1:1 gender ratio in the population. Studies employ purposive rather than quota sampling when the number of participants is more of a target than a steadfast requirement - that is, an approximate rather than a strict quota.

What is snowball sampling?

A third type of sampling, snowballing - also known as chain referral sampling - is considered a type of purposive sampling. In this method, participants or informants with whom contact has already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in or contribute to the study. Snowball sampling is often used to find and recruit "hidden populations," that is, groups not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies.
Recruitment in Qualitative Research

A recruitment strategy is a project-specific plan for identifying and enrolling people to participate in a research study. The plan should specify criteria for screening potential participants, the number of people to be recruited, the location, and the approach to be used. In this section, we address some of the questions that may come up during the recruitment of participants.

How are recruitment strategies decided?
Ideally, the local principal investigator and qualitative research team members work together, in close consultation with community leaders and gatekeepers (that is, community members in positions of official or unofficial authority), to develop a plan to identify and recruit potential participants for each site. Recruitment strategies are determined by the type and number of data collection activities in the study and by the characteristics of the study population. They are typically flexible and can be modified if new topics, research questions, or subpopulations emerge as important to the study, or if initial strategies do not result in the desired number of recruits. The criteria for selection can also be changed if certain data collection activities or subpopulations of people prove not to be useful in answering the research questions, as discussed in greater detail below.

What if we disagree with recommendations from local leaders?

It is important for the research team to be respectful of and responsive to the guidance and advice of local experts and community leaders. Remember that they have had more opportunity to establish rapport with the local community and they will also have to maintain that rapport after the study is complete. Remember also that community members may hold community leaders and local organizations accountable for any misunderstandings or other problems resulting from the behavior of the field staff.

What should we say to people when we try to recruit them?

Each research team develops guidelines for the introductory comments staff make to potential participants at each site. These guidelines need to be sensitive to the social
and cultural contexts from which participants will be recruited. They should also reflect the researchers' awareness that willingness to participate in an interview or focus group will depend on how well the participants understand what the study is about, what will be expected of them if they participate, and how their privacy will be respected.

In developing recruitment guidelines, it is important to take special care to avoid saying anything that could be interpreted as coercive. The voluntary nature of participation in research studies should always be emphasized.

**Can we recruit people who are legally under the care of a parent or guardian?**

Yes, you may recruit minors, but in most cases you must obtain informed consent (discussed in detail in this module's section on Ethical Guidelines in Qualitative Research, page 9) from the parent or guardian, as well as from the potential participant. Exceptions to the parental consent requirement include pregnant adolescents and homeless minors, but you should always consult the guidelines of the relevant ethics review boards before proceeding with recruitment. Moreover, recruitment of minors must be specifically approved by all relevant ethics review boards. Because they are considered a vulnerable population, recruiting minors for research studies is a highly sensitive issue, and extra measures are required to ensure their protection.

**Do we always need to obtain informed consent? If so, oral or written?**

The ethics committee that reviews and approves the study protocol determines whether informed consent needs to be obtained for each data collection activity. Typically, formal informed consent is necessary for all qualitative research methods except participant observation, regardless of the sampling method used to identify potential participants and the strategies used to recruit them. Whether this informed consent is oral or written depends on a number of project-specific factors and ultimately upon approval by the ethics committee. During recruitment, obtaining informed consent for qualitative research involves clearly explaining the project to potential study participants. (See the section in this module on Ethical Guidelines in Qualitative Research, page 9, for more on informed consent.)

**What if the recruitment strategy is not working?**

After data collection is under way, the local principal investigator and field staff may find that the recruitment strategy is not working as well as anticipated. Because
Qualitative research is an iterative process; it is permissible to change the recruitment strategy, as long as the proper approvals are obtained.

For example, it may be necessary to develop a new recruitment strategy because following the original plan has resulted in inadequate enrollment or because researchers determine that they need participants who meet a different set of criteria. After meeting to discuss alternatives, the research team should write down reasons why the strategy was not working or needs to be changed and outline how they would like to change it.

Proposed changes in the recruitment strategy must be submitted to the sponsoring organization, and some will require submission of a protocol amendment for approval by the ethics committees that initially approved the research. If new criteria for participation are proposed, for instance, they must be approved by relevant ethics committees before the new phase of recruitment can begin. Similarly, increasing the number of recruits would also require ethics committee approval.

Because of the limited time frame for data collection, it is important that the field staff work closely with the site principal investigator and community gatekeepers to identify and recruit the new set of research participants.

**Ethical Guidelines in Qualitative Research**

This section briefly summarizes ethical issues relevant to qualitative research. It is intended to provide a context for discussion in subsequent modules of procedures for safeguarding research participants' interests. Qualitative researchers, like anyone conducting research with people, should undergo formal research ethics training. The material presented here is not a substitute for training on research ethics. A list of ethics training resources is included on page 12.

_Research ethics_ deals primarily with the interaction between researchers and the people they study. _Professional ethics_ deals with additional issues such as collaborative relationships among researchers, mentoring relationships, intellectual property, fabrication of data, and plagiarism, among others. While we do not explicitly discuss professional ethics here, they are obviously as important for qualitative research as for any other endeavor. Most professional organizations, such as the American Anthropological Association, the Society for Applied Anthropology, the American Sociological Association, and the American Public Health Association, have developed broad statements of professional ethics that are easily accessible via the Internet.
Why is research ethics important in qualitative research?

The history and development of international research ethics guidance is strongly reflective of abuses and mistakes made in the course of biomedical research. This has led some qualitative researchers to conclude that their research is unlikely to benefit from such guidance or even that they are not at risk of perpetrating abuses or making mistakes of real consequence for the people they study. Conversely, biomedical and public health researchers who use qualitative approaches without having the benefit of formal training in the social sciences may attempt to rigidly enforce bioethics practices without considering whether they are appropriate for qualitative research.

Between these two extremes lies a balanced approach founded on established principles for ethical research that are appropriately interpreted for and applied to the qualitative research context. Agreed-upon standards for research ethics help ensure that as researchers we explicitly consider the needs and concerns of the people we study, that appropriate oversight for the conduct of research takes place, and that a basis for trust is established between researchers and study participants.

Whenever we conduct research on people, the well-being of research participants must be our top priority. The research question is always of secondary importance. This means that if a choice must be made between doing harm to a participant and doing harm to the research, it is the research that is sacrificed. Fortunately, choices of that magnitude rarely need to be made in qualitative research! But the principle must not be dismissed as irrelevant, or we can find ourselves making decisions that eventually bring us to the point where our work threatens to disrupt the lives of the people we are researching.

What are the fundamental research ethics principles?

Three core principles, originally articulated in The Belmont Report,\(^1\) form the universally accepted basis for research ethics.

*Respect for persons* requires a commitment to ensuring the autonomy of research participants, and, where autonomy may be diminished, to protect people from exploitation of their vulnerability. The dignity of all research participants must be respected. Adherence to this principle ensures that people will not be used simply as a means to achieve research objectives.

*Beneficence* requires a commitment to minimizing the risks associated with research, including psychological and social risks, and maximizing the benefits that accrue to research participants. Researchers must articulate specific ways this will be achieved.
Justice requires a commitment to ensuring a fair distribution of the risks and benefits resulting from research. Those who take on the burdens of research participation should share in the benefits of the knowledge gained. Or, to put it another way, the people who are expected to benefit from the knowledge should be the ones who are asked to participate.

In addition to these established principles, some bioethicists have suggested that a fourth principle, respect for communities, should be added. Respect for communities "confers on the researcher an obligation to respect the values and interests of the community in research and, wherever possible, to protect the community from harm." We believe that this principle is, in fact, fundamental for research when community-wide knowledge, values, and relationships are critical to research success and may in turn be affected by the research process or its outcomes.

What is informed consent?

Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate. Informed consent is one of the most important tools for ensuring respect for persons during research.

Many people think of informed consent primarily as a form, that is, a piece of paper that describes in detail what the research is about, including the risks and benefits. This form generally goes through ethics committee approval procedures, includes legalistic language, and is signed by the participant, the researcher, and possibly a witness. Such informed consent forms are appropriate for biomedical and other research - including qualitative - when the risks faced by participants may be substantial. They may also be necessary for minimal risk research when the foundation for trust between researchers and participants is weak.


But forms are really only one part of an informed consent process. In some cases, forms may not be the best way to ensure informed consent. There are also situations where obtaining informed consent from individual participants may not be feasible or necessary. For example, a researcher using participant observation to learn about how transactions occur in a public market would find it very hard to get everyone observed in that setting to sign a consent form and would probably create
unwarranted suspicion about her motives in the process of seeking such consent. Yet if people see a stranger hanging around, watching, asking questions, and perhaps taking discreet notes, they may be even more suspicious about why she is there. In these situations, qualitative researchers must use other mechanisms to achieve the goal of informed consent.

**How do we achieve informed consent for qualitative research?**

In general, informed consent procedures are based on national and international research ethics guidelines: a review of such guidance is an important part of ethics training. Research organizations and ethics committees often have their own specific guidelines as well.

The first task in achieving informed consent is to inform people about the research in a way they can understand. This can be a multistep process. For example, you may begin by approaching community leaders and explaining the research to them. The leaders may then facilitate a community forum where interested people can learn about the research and ask questions. You might distribute information sheets, advertisements, or brochures, or try to get local newspapers or radio stations to do a report on the research. A community advisory board might be set up. Or the researchers might spend a week or two just talking with people one-on-one. If the researchers will be spending a lot of time in the community setting, or if the research is potentially controversial or sensitive, such efforts can go a long way toward gaining trust as well as understanding. In some situations, it may be necessary to obtain formal permission from community leaders or gatekeepers before research can begin.

In general, data collection activities that require more than casual interaction with a person require individual informed consent from that person, regardless of whether community-level permissions exist. Examples of such activities include in-depth interviews and focus groups. The person should be told:

- the purpose of the research
- what is expected of a research participant, including the amount of time likely to be required for participation
- expected risks and benefits, including psychological and social
- the fact that participation is voluntary and that one can withdraw at any time with no negative repercussions
• how confidentiality will be protected

• the name and contact information of the local lead investigator to be contacted for questions or problems related to the research

• the name and contact information of an appropriate person to contact with questions about one's rights as a research participant (usually the chair of the local ethics committee overseeing the research)

All this information must be provided in a language and at an educational level that the participant can understand. Potential participants must be competent to make a decision about being in the research, and free from coercion or undue inducement to participate by researchers or others.

Individual informed consent may be written or oral.

• Written consent means that a person receives a written form that describes the research and then signs that form to document his or her consent to participate. For illiterate participants, the form is read to them, they make some kind of mark in place of a signature, and then a witness usually signs as testimony that the consent is authentic. Written informed consent may also be described as documented informed consent.

• Oral consent means that a person receives all of the information needed for consent either verbally or in writing and then verbally consents to participate. The participant does not sign a consent form; therefore, this is often described as waiving the requirement for documentation of informed consent. This does not mean that the requirement for informed consent is waived.

Most ethics committees require the researchers to maintain accurate records of how and when consent was obtained for each participant. Oral consent is generally acceptable for research with minimal risk, or where a loss of confidentiality is the primary risk and a signed consent form would be the only piece of identifying information for study participation.
How do we protect confidentiality?

Because qualitative research is conversational, it is important for data collectors to maintain clear boundaries between what they are told by participants and what they tell to participants. Conversation is a social act that requires give and take. As qualitative researchers we "take" a lot of information from participants and therefore can feel a strong need to "give" similar information in return. People also enjoy talking about what they hear and learn - and researchers are no different. It may be tempting to pass along seemingly inconsequential information from one participant to another - for example, a funny statement or some news that appears to be common knowledge. Don't do it! People can become upset and untrusting about even seemingly trivial comments being shared, especially if they have divulged very personal information and grow concerned that you will divulge more.

Strategies for protecting confidentiality are described throughout in each of the method modules. But some situations will require unique strategies. The ways in which confidentiality might be breached should be carefully considered before data collection begins and explicit strategies be put in place for protection.

How do I get research ethics training and certification?

We strongly recommend that all staff associated with qualitative research undergo ethics training and obtain ethics certification before field work and data collection begin. In addition to data collectors, this includes anyone who will have direct contact with participants - such as drivers and receptionists - or with the data - such as typists, transcribers, translators, and data managers. Research ethics training courses are available on-line from a number of organizations, including Family Health International (http://www.flri.org/training/en/RETC), the U.S. National Institutes of Health (http://cme.nei.nih.gov), and the University of California, Los Angeles (http://training.arc.uda.edu). These courses do not focus specifically on qualitative research issues, but they provide a valuable foundation for understanding ethical issues important for all research.

Many ethics courses include mechanisms for obtaining a certificate of completion. A copy of this certificate may be required by the organization sponsoring the research.

Suggested Readings


For additional information on this topic, refer to Chapter 1: Invitation to Explore, Chapter 3: Designing the Study, Chapter 4: Collecting Qualitative Data: The Science and the Art, Chapter 5: Logistics in the Field, and Appendix 2: Examples of Oral Consent Forms in these companion guides:

*Qualitative Methods in Public Health: A Field Guide for Applied Research*

*Qualitative Methods: A Field Guide for Applied Research in Sexual and Reproductive Health*
FEMINIST INTERVIEW RESEARCH

The use of semi-structured interviews has become the principal means by which feminists have sought to achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives.²

Why Is Interviewing Appealing to Feminist Researchers?

Semi-structured or unstructured interviewing,³ the method given prominence in the opening quote, is a qualitative data-gathering technique. It differs from ethnography in not including long periods of researcher participation in the life of the interviewee⁴ and differs from survey research or structured interviewing by including free interaction between the researcher and interviewee. Survey research typically excludes, and interview research typically includes, opportunities for clarification and discussion. Open-ended⁵ interview research explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory. In this way it complements quantitatively oriented, close-ended interview research that tries to test hypotheses. Patricia Sexton, a feminist researcher, stressed this difference in her study of female hospital workers:

Unfortunately, the abundance of statistics and generalizations about "work and its discontents" gives us little real understanding of how women lead their daily work lives, experience their jobs, or perceive work-related issues. Personal documents are needed, individual and group portraits of workers, slices of real working life, statements by the women themselves—the handwoven fabric of their daily work lives. To this end, I have tried to make the mountainous statistics and theories about work life more intimate and familial by asking hospital workers: Who are you? What do you do? What issues trouble you? What do you want from your union or from the women's movement?⁶

Similarly, feminist ethicist Janice Raymond favors "the 'unstructured research interview' employing open-ended questions," because it "maximizes discovery and description."⁷ Open-ended interview studies frequently rely on the grounded theory perspective to data analysis⁸ developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm
The discovery of grounded theory uses an inductive approach to analyzing data.

Open-ended interview research produces nonstandardized information that allows researchers to make full use of differences among people. For example, psychologist Rae Andre reports that in her study of the attitudes of 29 female and 1 male homemakers, the number of responses for specific questions varies from 12 to 30 because of variations in respondents' knowledge and because of the reluctance of her paid interviewers to probe questions that seemed painful to the respondents:

On one occasion an interviewer reported getting so involved with the homemaker's story that she forgot to ask the questions. On other occasions, interviewers decided that one or another question would be intrusive. Yet another problem was that of constant unavoidable interruptions and time pressures: one interview had to be carried out with interviewer and homemaker propped up on the bed in the homemaker's bedroom (and they were still interrupted).

Rae Andre did not interpret this variation as poor-quality data but rather as a valuable reflection of reality:

If the purpose of this project had been to make inferences about a whole population based on our sample, or to compare ideas from one interviewee to another, these interview irregularities would have presented more of a methodological problem. As it is, our goal in this project is simply to record a range of possible ideas—to tap as many homemaker values as possible—and in designing our project we felt that diversity of interviewees, of interview styles, and of settings would be facilitative.10

Fortunately, her assistants reported on the process of the interviews rather than hiding their variability."

Feminist researchers have also used open-ended interviewing to study people whose behavior is abhorrent to them. An example is Diana Scully's examination of the attitudes toward sexual behavior and women, among 114 convicted rapists of female adults and teenagers. These men were incarcerated in seven maximum-or medium-security prisons in the Commonwealth of Virginia and all had volunteered to participate in the study. "Respondents were given an 89-page interview that included ... 30 pages of open-ended questions intended to explore their perceptions of their crime, their victim, and themselves."12

"Feminist researchers find interviewing appealing for reasons over and above the assets noted by social scientists who defend qualitative methods against positivist criticism. For one thing, interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas,
thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women. Some feminist researchers have gone to great lengths in this regard by carefully recording and analyzing women's speech. For example, Mary Belenky and her colleagues studied women's ways of knowing with an "intensive interview/case study approach." Although they included certain questions so as to test previous research, the rest of the questions were open-ended because we wanted to hear what the women had to say in their own terms rather than test our own preconceived hypotheses, particularly since we included a number of disadvantaged and forgotten women whose ways of knowing and learning, identity transformations, and moral outlook have seldom been examined by academic researchers. We proceeded inductively, opening our ears to the voices and perspectives of women so that we might begin to hear the unheard and unimagined.

Given this goal, the researchers used the following format:

Each interview began with the question, "Looking back, what stands out for you over the past few years?" and proceeded gradually at the woman's own pace to questions concerning self-image, relationships of importance, education and learning, real-life decision-making and moral dilemmas, accounts of personal changes and growth, perceived catalysts for change and impediments to growth, and visions of the future. We tried to pose questions that were broad but understandable on many levels, hoping that all—even the less articulate and reflective women—would respond in their own terms without feeling inadequate to the task.

New Zealand sociologist Bev James, on the other hand, suggested that interviewing for language is not enough. Instead, we should supplement "verbal communication in interviews, with attention to nonverbal communication, since often members of a subordinate group cannot clearly articulate their frustrations and discontents [which] may be expressed in inchoate ways such as laughter."

Other feminist thinkers focus on the importance of interviewing to the interviewer, arguing that open-ended interviewing is particularly suited to female researchers. Asking people what they think and feel is an activity females are socialized to perform, at least in contemporary Western society. According to U.S. gerontologist Kathy Charmaz, interviewing draws on skills in the traditional "feminine role"—"a passive, receptive, open, understanding approach . . . recognizing and responding to the other's feelings and being able to talk about sensitive issues without threatening the participant." But sociologist Rosanna Hertz expressed concern about the impact
of this cultural pattern on the research process. At the end of her interview project on dual-career marriages, she wrote:

When I asked them how they felt about something, women were more likely to launch into lengthy discussions of their feelings, whereas men were more likely to keep their answers short or to tell me, they never thought about how they felt. ... I wonder if my own concern as a woman with people's feelings about what they do may have made me somewhat more sensitive to the greater ability of women to express those feelings.

Interviewing is also consistent with many women's interest in avoiding control over others and developing a sense of connectedness with people. This idea of abdicating control comes through in Hilary Graham's opening quotation about respondents being "actively involved" and "constructing data about their lives," and in Robin Gregg's decision to allow her interviewees to choose their own pseudonyms. Bev James, mentioned above, applied feminist ideas to in-depth interviews, group discussions, and participant observation. She tried to interview in a way that built connections and avoided "alienation of the researcher from the researched." Similarly, group discussions afforded participants a greater role in formulating the research project, consistent with her feminist aim of "developing more egalitarian research methods."

Some feminists who engage in intensive interviewing label their method 'phenomenological interviewing,' an interviewee-guided investigation of a lived experience that asks almost no prepared questions. Margarete Sandelowski and Christine Pollock carried out a phenomenological study of the experience of infertility "in an attempt to understand what being infertile is like to women who perceived themselves as being or having been unable to conceive or carry a child to term." In their study "nothing about the initial interviews was planned in advance beyond asking the participants to 'tell me about what it's like not to be able to have a baby when you want to.' " In a second stage of the project, they discussed their interpretation of the first interview with the interviewee. The purpose of the second interviews was to clarify and validate data from the initial interviews... based on the themes found in the initial analysis of data. The investigators summarized these themes for the women and asked them to comment on how well they fit their own infertility experiences. Their comments were then analyzed and incorporated into the final study report.

Christine Webb's interview study of women recovering from hysterectomies was also inspired by the feminist and phenomenological goals of "starting with women's experiences," to which she added an action component. She hoped "to describe women's experiences and perceptions on having the operation and focus[ed], among other aspects, on the information they would have liked to have received to help them
cope with the process.” Feminist phenomenological interviewing requires interviewer skills of restraint and listening as well as interviewees who are verbal and reflective.

Sociologists Pauline Bart and Patricia O'Brien explain that careful listening allows the interviewer to introduce new questions as the interview proceeds. Thus, the interviewer, the interview, and the study become interviewee oriented. They studied 94 women 18 years or older who in the previous two years either had been attacked and avoided rape (N = 51) or had been raped (N = 43), using an interview that combined demographic variables and unstructured and semistructured questions. Most important to these researchers was the decision to incorporate questions as new topics arose:

Because of the exploratory nature of the research, questions were added when unanticipated patterns emerged; e.g. on incest and child sexual assault and other violence in the woman's life, and on whether the women were primarily concerned with being killed or mutilated or primarily concerned with not being raped.

The more carefully they listened to the women, the more their project honed in on the reality of rape or its avoidance.

**Versatility and Variations in Feminist Interviewing**

The versatility of feminist interviewing is evident in the vast array of topics studied including housework, mothering, and religious experience; experiences of violence, sexual abuse, and harassment; feelings about being incarcerated; and decisions about abortion and childcare. The particulars of interviewing vary widely as well. In each study, the researcher must consider the duration of and desirability of repeat interviews, the number and sequencing of questions, if questions will be closed-ended, open-ended, or both, if interviewees will have an opportunity to question the interviewer, if interviews will be standardized, and the ethical dimensions of interviewing about particular topics.

Other practical details also vary widely—where will the interview take place, and who will decide? How will information be recorded (notes, check-marks, audiotape, videotape)? Should the principal investigator or hired individuals do the interviews? Should hired interviewers or interviewees analyze the data? Should the interview be face-to-face or conducted over the telephone? Who should be present during the interview? Should individuals or groups be interviewed? Is it appropriate for the interviewer and interviewee to know each other in advance? Can the interviewees read the research results and modify the interpretation of the study?
Feminists' answers to these questions vary. Agreement does not even exist about how to refer to an interview and an interviewee. Is an interview a conversation? Is the interviewee a participant? A subject? An informant? This variety reflects the fact that feminist research methods are both rooted in the mainstream disciplines and represent a protest against them. Using unconventional terms such as "participant" instead of "subject" is a signal that the researcher is operating in a feminist framework that includes the power to name or rename. Eschewing standardization in format allows the research question, not the method, to drive the project forward. It has also encouraged creativity.

**Historical Roots**

Historically, feminist researchers used interviews for social reform purposes. For example, Helen Stuart Campbell (1839-1918) observed female sweatshop workers and their male employers, conducted interviews, and incorporated statistical data in *Prisoner of Poverty,* *Prisoners of Poverty Abroad,* and *Women Wage-earners.* Directing her books to a wide public, she sometimes wrote her findings as a story or tale. Contemporary historian Alice Kessler-Harris claims that these tales "captured the public conscience." The following excerpt based on an interview with a male factory owner illustrates Helen Campbell's style of combining general principles with specific quotations:

"It's pretty bad, yes, I know it's pretty bad," said one large employer of women, and his word was the word of many others. "But we're not to blame. I don't want to grind 'em down. It's the system that's wrong, and we are its victims." Competition gets worse and worse. Machinery is too much for humanity. I've been certain of that for a good while, and so, of course, these hands have to take the consequences."

Helen Campbell's studies revealed that managers valued women's "docility," which she reinterpreted as their "vulnerability."
U S. sociologist Mirra Komarovsky has been a long-time champion of interview research for feminist purposes, from her early studies of unemployment's effect on family life during the Depression to her recent studies of the social-psychological development of women in college. Margaret Hagood was also a pioneer in interviewing women. Her study, *Mothers of the South*, focused on women tenant farmers in the U.S. southeast in the 1930s and includes a methodology chapter. Calling herself "the visitor," she explained how she selected tenant women for study and how she conducted exploratory interviews. She stressed the importance of rapport and found that it "was more easily established if the visitor knew the woman's name in advance." For 16 months "the visitor" repeatedly visited tenant farm mothers:

the visitor . . . introduced herself as Mrs. Hagood from Chapel Hill, stated that she was interested in women who live in the country and their problems of bringing up children, and asked if she might visit for a little while. The pattern of cordial hospitality . . . usually brought an invitation to come in and have a seat before even this much explanation was given.

Conversation began most frequently on some aspect of the immediate situation—children or work. During the visits certain questions were asked directly, such as "How many children do you have?" or "How is your health?" but, in general, questioning was avoided. Topics on which an expression of attitudes was desired were approached obliquely and the interview was kept as much as possible to a friendly, conversational, "just visiting" tone.

No notes were taken during the first visits to the North Carolina group, but the visit was written up as quickly as possible after the interview and much of the conversation was recorded practically verbatim. . . . The visits varied in length from a half hour to four hours with a modal length of about an hour and a half. . . . There was an opportunity to talk privately with over half of the mothers; with the rest, children, husbands, relatives, or neighbors were never absent.

Contemporary feminist interviewers are apt to report, just as Margaret Hagood did, whether others were present, if material was recorded as it was obtained, how long the interview lasted, and how the researcher strove to establish rapport.

**Women Interviewing Women**

For a woman to be understood in a social research project, it may be necessary for her to be interviewed by a woman. Such a situation represents woman-to-woman talk, which Dale Spender and others have shown is different from talk in mixed-sex groups. U.S. sociologist Marjorie DeVault bases her interviewing style on this self-
revealing and consciousness-raising potential of woman-to-woman talk.\textsuperscript{43} She explains the importance of using categories that represent what women do (e.g., feed their families) rather than categories that reflect men's activities or terms derived from social science. Feminist researchers who interview women frequently discuss topics that are not part of typical public or academic discourse and therefore "have no name." This makes it all the more important to avoid naming the interviewee's experience. A woman listening with care and caution enables another woman to develop ideas, construct meaning, and use words that say what she means. U.S. psychologist Stephanie Riger has argued this perspective:

Traditional research methods, as indeed American culture, emphasize objectivity, efficiency, separateness and distance. . . . Let us consider as well connection and empathy as modes of knowing, and embrace them in our criteria and in our work.\textsuperscript{44}

Rosemary Harrington and Alison Gray used this approach in their interviews of 100 New Zealand women for the purpose of investigating the impact of social class, cohort, and life cycle stage on their lives. Because they used "intensive, semi-structured interviews [and] listened carefully to attitudes and feelings, those non-quantifiable things that are not usually covered in social surveys,"\textsuperscript{45} their interviews got at "subtleties" imbedded in women's speech itself, such as hesitancies. In their view, nonfeminist researchers consider such "subtleties" to be marginal.

One of the ways to get at these subtleties is to be interviewee-guided, which means focusing less on getting one's questions answered and more on understanding the interviewee. Mona Harrington and Nadya Aisenberg explain their approach to interviewing 37 "off-track" academic women in these terms:

Because we did not know at the outset what the particularities of each woman's relevant experience would be, we did not conduct the interviews through preset questions. Rather, we identified general areas we wanted to cover, but let the interviewees' responses determine the order of subjects, the time spent on each, and the introduction of additional issues.\textsuperscript{46}

Interviewee-guided research requires great attentiveness on the part of the interviewer during an interview and a kind of trust that the interviewee will lead the interviewer in fruitful directions.

Feminists who interview women, such as British social scientist Susan Yeandel, get a sense of people as "rounded individuals rather than as numbers in boxes." Susan Yeandel also reported that her 64 interviewees needed to tell stories in order to communicate meaning. Feeling that interviews enabled her to recognize the women's humanity, she tried to write in a way that would create the same impression in
readers. Her technique was to include a "coda" of stories that conveyed the reality of "workers' wives," illustrated points made in the chapter, and served "as a reminder that each of the women in the study had her individual characteristics."

In her reflexive methodological discussion—a component of much feminist research—Susan Yeandle explained how a feminist approach affected her choice of questions and ways of relating to the interviewee. Designing "a specifically feminist sociological contribution to the existing literature on women's labour," meant that she looked for differences among the women, which in turn led her "not to use highly structured interviews or (except in a few specific cases) fixed-response questions." She also thought of ways to put each woman at ease while being interviewed, just as Margaret Hagood did. She began each interview with a standard form that asked for demographic information such as the woman's age, marital status, and the composition of her household. Following this, the interviewer began to tape-record their conversation, beginning with questions about the woman's current jobs. This section of the interview also contained a few fixed response questions concerning attitudes toward pay and working conditions. Susan Yeandle considered this first phase of the interview important both for the data collected and for its function as an "ice-breaker," enabling women to relax and talk about themselves. All the questions asked invited respondents to disclose information which was very well known to them, thus putting them at their ease, and convincing them that the interview had relevance to them as individuals.

Having created an atmosphere in which the women felt knowledgeable, she urged them to tell her their life stories "in their own way (rather than to restrict them with close and rigid questioning which might have been inhibiting or confusing.)."

Women were always . . . encouraged to "digress" into details of their personal histories and to recount anecdotes about their working lives. Much important information was gathered in this way; the opportunity was given for women to discuss the progress and decisions of their employment careers in all their complexity, and this helped to eliminate the danger that the framework of my questions might impose external meanings and interpretations on the events which constituted a respondent's individual history. . . . When the employment history was complete (in the respondent's eyes), I asked any supplementary questions, and checked any points which were unclear. . .

Clearly, Susan Yeandle valued the "digression" as much as the core information and allowed interviewees to define the end of the story. After asking the women for opinions about legislation, she included what she called a "reliability check" that consisted of asking women to review the chronology of key events in their
employment history. Confirming (or disconfirming) the women’s stories was as important to her as hearing them.47

Because of the interviewee-guided nature of much feminist interview research, there frequently are large variations in the duration of interviews within a single project. Margaret Gordon and Stephanie Riger, for example, reported that in their project, "most in-person interviews lasted approximately 90 to 100 minutes, but some ran as long as three hours."48 Similarly, Naomi Gerstel reported a study with Catherine Riessman of relationships following divorce. This project had three interviewers (the two women mentioned above and Larry O’Brien, a graduate student at the time) and studied "52 women and 52 men . . . using a schedule composed of both open- and closed-ended items. The interviews [lasted] from two to seven hours (an average of three hours)."49

Notwithstanding this concern for mutual understanding, feminist interview-based research is unable to guarantee that the interviewee will not be misunderstood or rejected in the research process. For example, Catherine Riessman argued that women have to share cultural patterns in order to understand each other.

Putting it succinctly, she claims that "gender is not enough."50 In a related vein, 'i British social psychologist Susan Condor discovered to her dismay that despite her use of an open-ended questionnaire, she could not sympathize with "traditional women who support the existing roles of men and women." Although she tried to reach "an understanding of women in their own terms," she found that "re-, garding individuals and social events from the perspective of feminism . . . may . . . encourage the very tendency to objectify our 'subjects' which feminism opposes so forcefully."51 Her project thus raises the question—Are we able to empathize with some women and not with others? I think the answer reflects the more general principle that every aspect of a researcher's identity can impede or . enhance empathy. In ethnographic and interview research that requires interaction, this issue may be more significant than in survey or experimentation that does not rely on empathy. Fortunately, some feminist researchers such as Susan Yeandle and Kristin Luker, cited above, wrote candidly about this matter and explained how the research process changed their views about women with whom they previously had little identification.

Friend, Stranger, Neither, Both?

A related controversy in both mainstream and feminist interviewing is the comparative benefit of being a stranger or a friend to the people one is studying.52 On the basis of her intensive interview study in a Chicano community, Denise Segura wrote about the necessity of having close relations before the interview takes place. In the
five years prior to her study, she became familiar with the local Chicano and
Mexicano communities as a junior high school teacher and as a parent with children
at the child care center used by many of my future informants' families. In addition,
she gave numerous employment workshops. ... All of these activities helped
establish [her] credibility in the community. Such credibility is important inasmuch
as Chicana and Mexicana women can be reluctant to be interviewed, given their
vulnerability to the hostile inquiries of immigration officials and other public
agencies. ... Moreover, Chicanas and Mexicans are likely to feel more comfortable
talking to someone who is known within their social network than to an unknown
researcher. Finally, the quality of the interview data and their reliability is enhanced
when the researcher is knowledgeable and integrated into the community under study.

In addition to giving her access to the women she wanted to study, familiarity enable
her to "have shorter, more focused interviews than researchers in unfamiliar
terrain."53

By contrast, the methodological appendix to U.S. sociologist Mary K. Zimmerman's
interview-based study of abortion takes up the question of why a woman would
volunteer to be interviewed for her study. Her answer is the lack of a relationship!

[T]he interviewer was a stranger—not a part of the woman's world and someone she
would be likely not to see again. The interviewer was also a professional who would
not discuss the interview with anyone else. For these reasons, the women may have
felt they could talk about their most private lives and feelings relatively freely.54

In the opening section of her study of the origins of the contemporary women's
movement, Sara Evans describes the "knowledgeable stranger" position that falls
between Denise Segura's "interviewer as friend" and Mary Zimmerman's "interviewer
as stranger." She knew that her background as a southern, white, activist, feminist
was valuable for its intimate knowledge. On the other hand, Sara Evans tried to avoid
substituting her experience for that of others (i.e., autobiography for history) or
failing to ask questions that would challenge her assumptions.

Fortunately, I had neither met nor heard of most of the people I interviewed before I
began this research, nor was I present at the main events described here. Yet the
rapport that developed in many interviews resulted in part from my own and my
informants' confidence that my prior research and my personal experience together
allowed me to comprehend what they had to say in a way that no "outsider" could.55

In a sense she was both stranger and friend.
Adding another twist, Michelle Fine raises the ethical question of whether it is appropriate to study people opportunistically. Drawing on her experience as a rape counselor in a hospital emergency room, she asks what we should do with material we "happen to collect." She is neither friend nor stranger, but counselor, and in the act of writing, she becomes retrospective researcher. Michelle Fine resolves her ethical quandry by going ahead with an analysis of the transcript of a conversation while also ensuring the confidentiality of the interviewee. Ethical questions are heightened in feminist interview research because feminists try hard to avoid perpetuating the exploitation of women.

Believing and Being Trusted by the Interviewee

In 1981 British sociologist Ann Oakley posited a contradiction between "scientific" interviewing requiring objectivity, and feminist research requiring openness, engagement, and the development of a potentially long-lasting relationship. She advocated a new model of feminist interviewing that strove for intimacy and included self-disclosure and "believing the interviewee." Guiding this new model was a proposed feminist ethic of commitment and egalitarianism in contrast with the scientific ethic of detachment and role differentiation between researcher and subject. Although some of these ideas already guided the work of interviewers and ethnographers who are not feminist, Ann Oakley argued that a new model of interviewing must be developed as an alternative to the dominant mode.

Using these ideas, Ann Oakley reissued her 1974 study of the sociology of housework in 1985 with a new preface in which she criticized her former methodology. The original "study . . . was done within a specific academic context [that] emphasized the role of social scientists as collectors and analysts of object lively verifiable data." In retrospect, the meant "treating women who are interviewed merely as data-providers." Although this objectification was required by science, she felt it should be "disclaimed by feminists . . . [for it] undermines the very importance of subjectivity in the mapping of social experience." She suggests that feminist interviewing involves commitment on the part of the researcher to form a relationship, and on the part of the interviewees to participate with sincerity. In another of her studies, more than a third of her interviewees continued their ties with her after four years: "four have become close friends, several I visit occasionally, and the rest write or telephone when they have something salient to report such as the birth of another child." Presumably these women became friends of the researcher because they felt valued as individuals rather than "data providers." Perhaps being listened to and respected led to a kind of "bonding."

"Believing the interviewee" is a controversial idea because social interaction typically involves a certain amount of deception and because science relies on skepticism.
Some feminist researchers reinterpret the notion of believing the interviewee as a utilitarian and decidedly feminist approach. Specifically, a believed interviewee is likely to trust the interviewer and thus likely to disclose "the truth." Emily Abel notes the importance of this stance in her study of 20 faculty women who filed charges of sex discrimination against colleges and universities. ... I have accepted at face value the accounts of what the women experienced and have not tried to assess whether or not they were "deserving" of the jobs and promotions they were seeking. It would have been impossible to assess the qualifications of the women, compared with those of their male colleagues. Moreover, statistics about the position of women in academia suggest that, although individual women may well be unqualified, discrimination is pervasive.\textsuperscript{63}

In this case, the interviewer's ability to take the women's words at face value stemmed, in part, from her familiarity with feminist scholarship. Her acceptance of their statements encouraged them to share their ideas extensively with her. This is not to say that all feminists believe the women they interview all the time.

In a contrasting example sociologist Margaret Andersen did not believe the women she interviewed: 20 "corporate wives and members of a newcomers' club in a small southern city . . . generally . . . between [the ages of] 25 and 40 . . . well-educated and politically liberal, most [of whom] do not work" [outside the home], who say they are happy with their lives as women and who support feminism only as it addresses the issue of employment discrimination. Instead, she wrote that they suffered from "false consciousness." In response to her article, the women organized a collective rebuttal. ... In their letter, they adamantly defend their place and they strongly argue that women like themselves can, in spite of what sociologists say, find fulfillment in the roles of wife, mother and volunteer . . . they write of the contribution they make to their community and to their family. ... In another part of the letter they claim the author is jealous of their economic resources, thus underscoring the material basis of their situations.

After reading their rebuttal, Margaret Andersen studied the same women from a new accepting perspective that enabled her to explain their ideas in a way more satisfying both to her and the women:

[If] researchers assume that the women's claims are insincere, they are put in the untenable position of being unable to believe what their subjects report. A more appropriate research strategy is to look not for the falsehoods of their claims, but to the actual conditions of the women's lives and the way those conditions might generate the contentment the women express.\textsuperscript{64}
It seems to me that a feminist researcher should begin a research project intending to believe the interviewee and should question the interviewee if she begins not to believe her. A task for data analysis then becomes a discussion of this conflict between belief and disconfirmation. In a sense, that is what Margaret Andersen produced.

A related issue for feminist interview researchers is trust. Sociologist Jessie Bernard described how participating in a consciousness-raising group forced her to recognize that she had to be trusted if she hoped to obtain information about people's lives:

Early in 1968 I became exposed to the Women's Liberation Movement in the underground press. . . . When, after considerable effort on my part, I received an invitation to a consciousness-raising session, one of the young women there said that I "threatened" her. Sitting quietly on the floor in their midst, showing, so far as I knew, no disapproval at all, my academic objectivity, my lack of involvement, my impersonality, was giving off bad vibrations. This incident gave me something to think about, including my stance vis-a-vis research and also my discipline.²⁵

Pauline Bart explains that she, too, had to disassociate herself from the research role to enable the 32 women who worked in Jane, an illegal abortion service run by feminists, to trust her:

Originally the women I approached did not wish to be interviewed because they were antiprofessional and antiacademic. However, when it became clear that I had been a feminist activist in Chicago and did not have a "professional demeanor" (a negative word in the Women's Health Movement), they agreed. Since I did not have a grant, they decided I had not been co-opted and could be trusted.²⁶

Downplaying one's professional status is an option for feminist researchers who study people distrustful of professionals. Other societal sources of distrust (e.g., racism) are not so easily manipulated or overcome. To encourage the development of trust, some feminist researchers define themselves as learners and listeners rather than "researchers." For example, Audrey Bronstein downplayed the academic aspect of her research in her own eyes in order to have a more egalitarian orientation to the women she was studying:

I wanted to learn from the Latin American peasant women about how they felt their "development" experiences had affected them. . . . I didn't want to "study" them or development in Latin America. I hoped to speak with women, who, within a peasant, "macho" society, rarely speak, or give their opinions publicly on anything, much less on their own living conditions and the changes introduced by both foreign and indigenous development agencies.²⁷
When feminist interviewing is planned as a component of ethnography, the researcher may defer the interviewing of people until they trust her. Australian sociologist Judy Wajcman had this intention in her study of a group of formerly employed women running a recently closed factory. For five months she "kept a comprehensive diary of events and conversations, which [she] diligently wrote up every evening" after working full-time in the factory, but she also "needed to collect more systematic information about the women and their husbands through interviews." When she felt confident of her ability to ask useful questions and had created a trusting relation, she used a semistructured questionnaire. At that point the factory closed for the summer vacation, and Judy Wajcman visited each woman in her home. Reflecting back on those interviews, she believes that trusting relations led the women to raise additional topics over and above those she had prepared.

For Hilary Graham this feminist ethic of interviewing leads to "informant-structured interviews" (which she also calls narratives and self-surveys) in which the researcher communicates to the interviewee that she cares about her as a human being. Under these circumstances, it is improper for "interpretation and analysis to remain the prerogative of the investigator." To avoid this, she encourages her "informants" to tell stories.

In stories, data and interpretation are fused, the story-line providing the interpretive framework through which the data are constructed. The story, moreover, marks the boundaries of what the individual is prepared to tell. ... It is a method, too, consistent with a feminist research programme which seeks to involve women in the faithful recording of their experiences.

Several feminist interviewers have attempted to foster trust by downplaying status differences between themselves and people of lower social status. For these feminist researchers interviewing requires personal commitment between themselves and the research participant. When "interviewing up," on the other hand, feminists must find ways to increase their status and credibility. In the concluding chapter, I will reevaluate the ethic of commitment focusing on several conflicts it can create in the researcher.

Helping the Interviewee

One conflict frequently arises when feminist researchers study relatively powerless groups in a hierarchy. In her study of hysterectomy described earlier, for example, Christine Webb explains that if the feminist researcher formulates a study of use and interest to women, she is likely to be asked politically charged questions during the interviews. At the same time, access to women is frequently monitored by people
who do not want the researcher to upset the status quo. If relatively powerless, the feminist researcher may feel constrained not to become fully engaged with the women so as to "protect" her project. Christine Webb found that from the start, the women in her study "took the opportunity to ask... direct questions and to seek information and advice." Despite Webb's feminist consciousness, when the interviewee requested information or solicited support in her criticism of others, Webb felt unable to violate the definition of interviewer as "neutral." Her article gives interview excerpts to show the contradictions between being beholden to the doctors as a nurse and researcher on the one hand, and her "feminist consciousness" on the other:

INT: Did he explain the operation to you?

SUB: To tell the truth, this man was very arrogant and off-hand. I was petrified and the next time I went I was really petrified because I hadn't lost all the weight he told me to. When I sat on the bed I was trembling and having a cold sweat while I was waiting. Then it was a different doctor. He told me there was only one way to go after you are 40 and that's downhill. The second doctor was very nice. He just said he would leave the ovaries because I would need them for the menopause. And I did not really know anything about that. Then he just buzzed off. So nobody has said anything.

To respond to these women with "uh huh" or "that's interesting"... would have been somewhat awkward to say the least and would not have contributed to encouraging them to speak openly about their experiences... But neither did I feel it appropriate to collude in criticizing the hospital or doctors in the context of a research interview.

As a nurse and experienced researcher I had knowledge which could be useful to the women, but I felt highly constrained in my research role because a nurse formally works under the control of doctors and may not initiate treatments of her own accord. ... [I]f I diverged from the approved research protocol by giving information to women, permission to continue the study might be withdrawn. ... I had received permission only to collect data and not to give information or advice, and women might thereby not have access to a potentially useful resource for coping with their hysterectomy and recovery.

Christine Webb decided to confront the dilemma directly by adopting the role of patient advocate:

I decided to tell women at the beginning that I saw the interview as an exchange of information. I had some questions to put to them but they should ask me anything they wanted at any stage and I would answer as fully as I could, based on my
experience as a nurse and what I had learned from my previous study. But although this would mean that I was not exploiting or "ripping off" the women, it did not go far enough. I as an "expert" had access to wider information than they did, and I could not justify keeping this to myself. Therefore I would give information and advice wherever I detected a need or opportunity during the interview. The effect of this has been that at times I talked more than the women, but this seems an inevitable consequence of my decision.

Christine Webb's resolution of the "what side am I on?" dilemma meant self-disclosing about her own life. In response, the interviewees took on the role of the researcher's advocate!

nee these decisions were made, it was clear that I should share my own ex-Pences as a gynaecology patient with the women when this would help to show that I understood their feelings or when it would validate what I and they were saying. . . . Great sympathy was shown to me, I was given advice about how to cope with my condition, and when I met women again they asked me how I was feeling.

As I continued to do more interviews after making these decisions I was convinced even more strongly that in fact there had been no choice. Either I could have adopted this kind of methodology, developed intimacy with the women, and invested my subjectivity in the research and in return learned in great depth and richness about their feelings and experiences. Or the project would not have been feasible and would have ground rapidly to a halt. My consciousness had been raised in relation both to feminist research and to the women's sense of isolation and lack of knowledge and resources when facing a hysterectomy, and this had an immediate effect on my research practice and a more long-term influence on my nursing practice. I felt that my responsibilities to the women justified the risk that the doctors might disapprove of what I was doing.

Resolving the dilemma enabled Christine Webb to see the great potential of feminist interviewing research for nursing:

By adopting a sharing, non-hierarchical approach with patients, nurses could give better care because they would have greater understanding of patients' feelings, problems and needs. By working together with patients, nurses' own consciousness would be raised in relation to medical dominance over all patients, but especially women patients, and all nurses.71

Another perspective on the "whose side are you on?" question is available when one studies the group of people who comprise a social system rather than a set of individuals who share a characteristic. Janice Raymond did such a study of the sex-
transformation social system by talking to 15 transsexuals, 13 of whom were male-to-constructed females, and to professionals involved in the study and treatment of transsexualism. She also "interviewed many of the active figures in the field of transsexual research and therapy... persons involved in gender identity clinics... [studied a particular organization] which has funded much transsexual research and activity. [and]... interviewed several doctors and counselors who are active in the area of transsexual treatment and counseling on a private basis." Interviewing people in interconnected roles allowed her to uncover the "transsexual empire" as a whole and to take a more complex stance on advocacy.

**Researcher Self-Disclosure**

Several studies, including those I have discussed earlier such as Christine Webb's work with gynecology patients, argue that researcher self-disclosure during interviews is good feminist practice. For example, Elissa Melamed writes that when she studied aging, women denied they were fearful until she told them she was afraid. Researchers Ann Bristow and Jody Esper told potential interviewees that one of them had been raped. They found that this disclosure put the women at ease:

She the volunteer interviewee] prefaced a description of her fears by saying that "you're going to think I'm crazy, but..." She is answered by a woman [the researcher] who shares her own fears as a rape survivor and reveals that many of the women interviewed have expressed similar fears. She seems relieved.

In this project the researchers modeled interviews on what they call "a true dialogue" rather than "an interrogation." Self-disclosure initiates "true dialogue" by allowing participants to become "co-researchers."

A paper co-authored by social work researchers Marti Bombyk, Mary Bricker-Jenkins, and Marilyn Wedenoja, however, challenges this idea. Their project consisted of "exploratory, semi-structured interviews conducted by telephone with a group of 29 social and human service workers" who were feminist practitioners. Marilyn Wedenoja, an interviewee, writes that she felt constricted by the interviewer's self-disclosure:

personal sharing on her part (where she was from, what she has done, some of her own views) was triggering off in me a self-censoring process. I began to notice myself stereotyping her and second guessing what she would want to hear and not want to hear based on my perception of the information about herself. ... She was giving me... personal information as a way of equalizing the relationship and revealing herself as I had been revealing myself, yet it seemed more out of her need to self-disclose rather than my need. at that point to know about her. At that early
stage of the interview, I felt like I first needed time to establish myself within the role of participant before moving towards more of an interactive sharing.

Fortunately, the interviewee notified the interviewer:

Once I voiced my concerns ... I was able to influence the process and it contributed to my sense of safety and trust. The fact that [she] was responsive to my concerns and took time within the interview process for ongoing feedback made a big difference in creating an atmosphere that facilitated self-exploration and self-disclosure. As the interview progressed, I was delighted to learn more about Mary and to have a dialogue about some of the topics. ... I began to see how it was unrealistic to think that such a relationship within a brand new situation like this would be able to be "instantly" created—as some of the guidelines of feminist research seem to suggest—without some form of a developmental process and adaptation to the unique needs and concerns of the individuals involved.

Mary Bricker-Jenkins, one of the interviewers, wrote, "Thanks to feedback from respondents ... I have learned to pace my interactions and look for cues from the participant as to readiness to know more about me."75 She concurs with Marilyn Wedenoja's view that the timing of researcher self-disclosure is the key to its value.

U.S. sociologist James Ptecek used transcripts of batterers' talk about their violence, along with researcher self-disclosure and reflexivity to report his interview-based study of 18 abusive men, "one of only a few successful attempts to gather evidence systematically of batterers' perspectives on wife beating." Publishing in a feminist anthology, he stressed the value of a feminist perspective, including self-disclosure to interviewees. I interpret his writing in the first-person singular, in contrast to the conventional third-person or passive voice as continuing his practice of informing interviewees of his values:

I came to study wife beating as a way of contributing to social action against men's domination of women. Prior to entering graduate school, I became involved with Emerge in Boston. I have continued my affiliation with Emerge while in school, working as a group counselor, public speaker, trainer and researcher for the organization. As Emerge defines wife beating in political terms and draws its analysis from the women's movement, I am both an activist and a researcher on the issue of violence against wives.76

Researchers who self-disclose are reformulating the researcher's role in a way that maximizes engagement of the self but also increases the researcher's vulnerability to criticism, both for what is revealed and for the very act of self-disclosure. Receiving feedback from the interviewees, on the other hand, enables the self-disclosing
researcher to continuously correct the interview procedure. For example, U.S. sociologist Terry Arendell studied mothers during the aftermath of divorce while a divorced mother herself. Referring to her interviews as "partially structured personal conversations," she saw herself as similar to the women she studied, and this, in turn, promoted meaningful conversations between them. Hearing other people's stories also provides the researcher with an alternative case that prevents her from generalizing exclusively from her own experience. Ann Bristow and Jody Esper encountered this situation in their study of rape:

we began the process by contacting a group of rape survivors to meet and discuss, informally, our mutual rape experiences. As we sat and listened to one another we became aware of ways of experiencing rape that were both like and unlike our own experiences. The information which accrued from these and subsequent dialogues was germane in the construction of the first draft and further revisions of our interview schedule. If we had been unwilling or unable to listen to the voices of these women telling their stories, the final form of the interview schedule and the associated data would have been incomplete, at best, and an extremely biased piece of academic rhetoric, at worst.

Clearly, there is no single feminist perspective on researcher-interviewee relations and self-disclosure. Rather there is openness to numerous possible meanings of these phenomena.

**Stress from Interviewing**

The ethic of commitment exposes feminist interviewers to stress, particularly in studies of traumatized women. In her study of women with "eating problems," sociologist Becky Thompson writes that stress can occur in numerous phases of the research process including the interview process itself:

I sometimes found myself trying to escape from the pain of their stories as they spoke. Many of the women have been multiply victimized including enduring poverty, sexual abuse, exposure to high levels of violence, and emotional and physical torture. One way I tried to escape the pain of their stories was by interrupting them with comments such as: "I know what you mean" or "I went through a similar thing." . . . Recognizing psychological consequences of interviewing on the researcher elucidates dilemmas involved in using feminist interviewing techniques . . . [I had to sort out] when making a comment during an interview is actual support and when it is dysfunctional rescuing. . . . sitting with the pain may be the only response that doesn't cheapen the power of its recounting. But sitting with the intimacy of such silence is intense and often left me completely drained after the interviews. I also noticed that my immediate desire to comfort them was my wanting to escape the pain.
myself and wanting someone to comfort me. . . . I sometimes had to remind myself that the woman's ability to retell a traumatic story meant she had already survived the worst of the pain.

Stress also occurred in later phases of this research project:

While I was transcribing each woman's words, I felt as if I were doing the interview again: I could see the woman's face and hear her exclamations and pain. . . . While analyzing the interviews, I experienced some of the same types of protective responses that survivors experience following trauma. For example, while immediately following the interviews, I could retell the woman's story almost verbatim, within two or three days I had a hard time remembering basic aspects of the women's experience .... sometimes I found myself changing their stories in my memory and in doing so, was minimizing the abuse they had suffered. . . . while I was transcribing interviews, I would typically fall asleep soon after beginning to transcribe each interview. This had nothing to do with whether I needed sleep or not. Rather, [it] was another way of coping with the extreme stress and pain of painstakingly chronicling [what] many of the women experienced.79

Sociologist Margaret Gordon and psychologist Stephanie Riger described similar problems in coping with painful rape interviews. They "found it difficult at times to separate ourselves from the topic. Constantly reading about and discussing rape and other forms of violence against women often left us anxious and depressed. Staff working with us also found themselves disturbed."80 Similarly, sociologist Barbara Katz Rothman's study of amniocentesis for prenatal diagnosis led her to write:

It was like lifting the proverbial rock and having it all crawl out — ugliness, pain, grief, horror, anger, anguish, fear, sadness. Women in their fifth month of pregnancy afraid to feel their babies move — because they may not be babies at all, but genetic mistakes, eventual abortuses. . . . It was a nightmare.81

Sociologists Janet Kahn and Patricia Gozembba studied working-class lesbian bar culture focusing on women who had frequented a bar in Lynn, Massachusetts, in the 1950s and 1960s.

. . . have had our own experiences of marginality stemming from our sexual identities. . . . We . . . found that our conversations with these older lesbians caused us to reflect upon our own lives. . . . For instance there was a period of about 14 months during which we did almost no work on the paper.

When we finally found the courage to discuss this with each other, we realized that we were shaken and depressed by the number of stories we had heard of alcoholism,
suicide, and other forms of violence. Our avoidance of the project became data that we used to help us look at these women's lives from another angle.\textsuperscript{82}

Renate Klein reports that she was in tears during about $\frac{1}{2}$ of her interviews on infertility, tears mostly of anger.\textsuperscript{83} All of these stressful reactions occur, I believe, because feminist researchers discover there is more pain in the interviewees' lives than they suspected. The interview process gives the researcher an intimate view of this pain and the shock of discovery may eventually force her to confront her own vulnerability. Sometimes stress can be mitigated by the social support made available by co-researchers. For example, sociologist Lenore Weitzman concludes her book on "no-fault" divorce with a detailed explanation of how hired interviewers developed an esprit de corps with positive implications for their relations with interviewees.\textsuperscript{84} Thus feminism frequently adds coping with stress to the other challenges of interview research.

**Multiple In-Depth Interviewing**

Multiple interviews characterize much feminist research perhaps because multiple-interview research helps form the strong interviewer-interviewee bonds some people define as characteristic of feminist research. Whereas I think feminist research should not be bound to a format requiring such ties with interviewees, feminist interest in them is apparent. In addition to the potential for developing trust, the asset of this method is the opportunity to share interview transcripts or notes with the interviewee and then invite the interviewee's analysis.

Feminist researchers who do multiple interviews of each individual may engage their interviewees in designing the interview format as they proceed. Sociologist Denise Connors used this approach "in a series of informal, unstructured, conversational interviews with women" over the age of 90. Her description reveals sensitivity to how relationships develop and how relationships, in turn, affect the quality of the information exchanged. She described learning that her first interviews had to be informal, and that only in the second interview could she introduce the tape recorder and "get down to business."

During later interviews we would sometimes listen to a previous tape and further discuss and elaborate on certain themes. As we became more comfortable with one another, we shared more of ourselves in the process. The desire to please and to give socially acceptable answers changed over time. For example, it was months before Norah expressed any anger or revealed how she felt about living in elderly housing. Later interviews allowed the women time to clarify earlier statements and to share more of the context of their experiences.
Since each relationship was unique, later interviews were far more diverse than initial ones. As Denise Connors' relationships with the women developed, the uniqueness of each woman's personality began to stand out.

Phone calls and cards were used to maintain contact between interviews. One of the women seemed able to be more at ease on the phone. During one of our calls the conversation was interspersed with the details of the Red Sox baseball game she was watching. Even though much of it was lost on me, she seemed to enjoy sharing it with someone. I later discovered that due to her transportation problems she maintained close connections with many of her friends over the telephone.

Tape recordings and notes from her series of interviews enabled Denise Connors to improve her skills: "What stands out from listening to the tapes over time are the increasing periods of unselfconscious silences. Initially I asked too many questions in an almost desperate attempt to mine some gems." Her comment suggests that there may be some truth in interviewers' unwitting use of the phrase "talking with" or "talking to" rather than "listening to" even when the goal is to "listen to women's voices."

Claire Reinelt had a more sympathetic view of talking in her study of activities in the battered women's shelter movement:

I was uncertain about how to establish the "anthropologist-informant" relationship. For lack of any well-developed plan, I followed my intuition. I began asking questions and listening, the cornerstones of all inquiry but I also found myself talking—talking about my ideas and thoughts about what I observed and heard. We engaged in conversation about strategy, politics, social change, and communication. It was these dialogues in which we were mutually engaged that gave meaning to my fieldwork. It was not meaning that I imposed, but meaning that we created. Meaning emerges through interaction. . . . The anthropologist interprets what the informant says, articulates that interpretation to the informant, to which the informant again responds. This process of interpretation and clarification creates meaning and understanding between those engaged that leaves neither of them unchanged.

Multiple interviews are likely to be more accurate than single interviews because of the opportunity to ask additional questions and to get corrective feedback on previously obtained information. As times passes, the researcher also can see how thoughts are situated in particular circumstances.

When explaining what exactly was feminist about her research practice on sexual violence, British sociologist Liz Kelly pointed to "the style of interviewing, the return of the transcripts, and the content of the follow-up interviews." She explained the last
two items as the opportunity for each woman to read her transcript, and correct, qualify, or add anything she wanted. During the follow-up interviews, Liz Kelly asked the women to talk about participation in the project, to give their reactions to reading the transcript, and to tell her about additional memories they might have had (75% had additional memories). By returning the transcripts, the women exerted control over the researcher’s interpretations. The interviewees usually asked her if their experiences were typical and requested an explanation of
e most important things emerging from the research. This enabled discussion the themes and analysis I was developing. I did not assume that women would want to take part in this process, but the interest in it suggests that there may be
ways of making this a more formal part of research methodology. One possibility I would now consider is a third meeting in which the researcher discusses with small groups of participants preliminary findings and analysis.  

Similarly in her study of pregnant women's decision making about prenatal diagnosis, Robin Gregg used two interviews to learn about the "women's thoughts, feelings, and decisions ... as the process(es) unfolded. ... [and to] hear women at different moments during the processes of their pregnancies and their lives." She then added a third interview for "coanalysis" or "participatory analysis." Multiple open-ended interviews are well suited to understanding how a woman develops her ideas. They can be done, however, only among interviewees who have time to invest in the process. Paying participants for their time is sometimes advisable as compensation.

**Instrument-Based Interviewing**

In a format I call "instrument-oriented interviews," as contrasted with "interviewee-oriented interviews," feminist researchers try to collect the same types of data from many different people. Sarah Fenstemaker Berk used this approach in her study of "the gender factory," i.e., the household. Her study required that various household members understand and faithfully complete a number of care-

"fully designed instruments. Her careful attention to the development of instru-
ments and close monitoring of people's participation allowed her to fulfill her M goals of producing "non-polemical feminist research of service to women." In her instrument-oriented study of "judicial paternalism," Kathleen Daly "interviewed [23] judges to determine if their sentencing differs for men and J" women defendants, and if so, why." She combined carefully designed instru-

m ents with some open-ended components but did not self-disclose. The open- ended component

"J elicited information on the judges' professional backgrounds, their perceptions of changes, if any, in men's and women's criminality, and their reliance on other ^ court
officials in deciding sentences. Most of the 1- to 2-hour interview time was devoted ... to determining what factors judges took into account in sentencing and whether these varied for women defendants. The judges were first asked, "What specifically do you want to know about the defendant in sentencing?" Almost all replied by assuming that the defendant was a man. This question was followed up by asking them what their considerations were for women defendants.

The instrument-based component of the study was as follows:

The judges were asked to react to a hypothetical case to see whether a defendant's gender, familial situation, or both were salient in sentencing. [the case is as follows:] A defendant is appearing before the court with a [grand larceny], and the defendant is found guilty. This latest larceny represents a violation of probation. How would you sentence if the defendant was ... a woman with two young children? a woman who was single and living Feminist Interview Research alone? a man with a job who was supporting his wife and child? a man who was single and living alone?

After obtaining their responses, I asked the judges if the following statement in the research literature applied to them: Judges treat female defendants more kindly or protectively than they do male defendants because the female defendants remind them of their daughters, or their wives, or sisters—women close to them. Or ... judges find it hard to be as tough on a woman as a man.

My research assistant and I independently evaluated the interview transcripts by coding the judges' replies to the questions; then we compared our interpretations of what the judges said.

In Kathleen Daly's view, this combination of methods enhanced her credibility, produced comparable data, and avoided influencing her respondents.

Instrument-based research does not require the intimacy of open-ended interviewing, and yet is used for feminist purposes. Feminist interview research includes the entire gamut of interview approaches ranging from the phenomenological to positivist. For each approach, a particular feminist rationale has been developed. Just as every type of research method is used for feminist goals, so too is every variation of that method.

**Displaying the Interview.**

Interviewing allows interviewers to envision the person's experience and hear the multiple voices in a person's speech. In many studies, feminist researchers attempt to convey some of these phenomena in the report itself. Transcripts of the interviews,
for example, familiarize readers with the people who were studied and enable the reader to "hear" what the researcher heard. Some feminist researchers take great pains to reproduce interviews as speech spoken by the interviewee rather than as answers to questions designed exclusively by the researcher. In sociologist Marianne Pagel's transcripts, the speaker's meaning and multiple voices come through. The following excerpt from an interview with a female artist displays the inner turmoil of the self in solitary discordant discourse with its own voices:

I decided it was time that I got into the real world or the fake one," or Us not productive n it n n I'm hh ah parasite to: society becuz I'm not contributing anything that can be utilized." Of course, these are not just her own voices. They are the voices of her family and friends, the voices of her peers, other women's voices, the voices of her countrymen and her man. She didn't just do this to herself. Though she says, "/ put myself thru that," she was trained.91

Psychologist Michelle Fine reproduced both her own speech and that of Al-se Thomas, the woman with whom she was talking, revealing great differ- them. These differences help us understand her growing awareness that she understood little about Altamese Thomas's ways of coping successfully stress. Her answers were written as spoken, rather than rephrased as "cor-

English.

At 2:00 a.m. one October morning, Altamese Thomas was led out of a police car, entered the hospital in pain, smelling of alcohol. Altamese had been drinking with some women friends in a poor, high crime, largely Black neighborhood in Philadelphia. ... I was awakened, in the small office for volunteer rape counselors. ... I spent the remainder of the evening and some of the morning with Altamese. ... we held hands as she smarted through two painful injections to ward off infection; traveled through the hospital in search of X-rays for a leg that felt (but wasn't) broken; waited for the Sex Offender Officers to arrive; watched Altamese refuse to speak with them; and returned to the X-ray room for a repeat performance—and we talked. I introduced myself and explained my role. ... Altamese did not want to ... talk with ... counselors.92

MICHIELE FINE: 3:00 Altamese, the police will be here to speak with you. Are you interested in prosecuting? Do you want to take these guys to court?

ALTAMESE THOMAS: No, I don't want to do nothin' but get over this. ... When I'm pickin' the guy out of some line, who knows who's messin' around with my momma, or my baby. Anyway nobody would believe me.

According to Michelle Fine, this interview taught her "how persons of relatively low social power do assert control, and how easily a psychologist can misread these as
efforts to give up." Altamease asserts control by trying to return to her family as quickly as possible. The reader can better understand both the inter- viewee and the interviewee because of the way the interview is reproduced. In addition, Michelle Fine's inclusion of her own speech presents her as a human being, not a disembodied data-gatherer.

Marjorie DeVault has a similar attitude toward communicating honestly with interviewees and then reproducing their speech. She suggests we respect the intention behind women's words and learn to listen to phrases such as "you know" as a request for understanding. If we do not understand, we must say so; if we do understand, we must say what we understand. She also suggests that we allow phenomena to have many different labels. Rather than giving phenomena conventional pigeonholes, we should pay attention to the particular descriptions women use. We should hear the richness of speech, and allow our writing to be similarly complex.

British psychologist Liz Kelly made it possible for the reader to "hear" the speech of the women she interviewed by using the following method:

Whilst transcribing the taped interviews on which this book is based I became aware of problems involved in transposing the spoken to the written word. Meaning in the spoken word is often conveyed through gesture, tone of voice and emotional expression. ... In order to retain some of the meaning that is lost in transcription, I developed a method for coding tone of voice and emotional expression. ... A dash (-) indicates a jump; the spoken word is seldom as coherent as the written. Three dots (...) indicate a passage of speech has been deleted. Six dots (......) indicate a long pause. Italics indicate that the word or words were stressed. Emotional expression is recorded in brackets after the passage of speech it refers to: for example (angry), (ironic), (upset). Catherine Riessman believes it is important to identify interviewers in studies with multiple interviewers.

In the identification codes, the letters N, C, and L indicate which interviewer conducted the interview. I decided not to ignore the context of production of each quotation . . . (N and C are women; L is a man); in a study of gender and divorce, it seemed inappropriate to act as if the gender of the interviewer were not important. This form of representation is not typical (it may even make some social scientist readers uncomfortable by implying that interviewers are not interchangeable). But ... I [believe] it is more "objective" to take into account the dialectic between speaker and listener in analyzing speech.

Clearly, feminist researchers interested in women's voices and the way people express themselves are experimenting with formats for putting those voices on paper, including their own.
Interviewing Husbands

Feminist researchers have also given methodological attention to marital couples. For example, sociologist Lillian Rubin wrote that involvement in the women's movement showed her the need to interview husbands and wives separately and privately because "women tend to discuss their feelings about their lives, their roles, and their marriages more freely when men are not present."7 Vin Judy Wajcman (discussed above) stressed the significance of interviewing husbands because of their importance to the women and to elucidate aspects of working-class experience common to both sexes. In exploring the dynamics of family life it is essential to hear "both sides of the story." It is customary for the woman's version to be neglected, but in redressing <

She concurs with Lillian Rubin that separate interviews are preferable, although fruitful discussions can occur if both spouses are present. Interviewing husbands and wives separately has the disadvantage of obscuring how interaction occurs in the couple. The views the researcher hears expressed separately may rarely be expressed when the couple is together.

Sarah Fenstermaker Berk also conducted interviews separately for wives and husbands. Not expecting extensive cooperation from husbands, she gave them a single interview rather than two as in the case of wives:

Because a larger proportion of husbands than wives were employed during the day, we sought an instrument that would accurately reflect the household activities of husbands without incurring the costs of administering a diary to a large sample of (perhaps uncooperative) husbands. The result was a card-sorting operation unique to the husbands' interview, requiring a retrospective accounting of domestic activities for two time periods in the previous 24 hours. ... For each of the two time periods, husbands sorted a list of 81 household activities and indicated those activities that they had undertaken... [Respondents were [then]]

... asked to sort ... cards in their order of accomplishment. ... As a final task, husbands answered a set of questions on the back of each of the sorted cards: (1) how long each activity took; (2) whether TV, radio, or the like was "on" during the activity; and (3) what adjectives husbands would use to describe the activity (e.g., boring, pleasant, satisfying, or frustrating)—the same adjectives offered to wives for their diary activities."

In my view, the reticence of Sarah Berk to make demands on husbands reflects a general reluctance to study people of greater social status or power than the inter-
viewer, a phenomenon known as "studying up."

When feminists engage in research on men, upper-class people, and institutions with considerable power, they are likely to demand less and self-disclose less because self-disclosure diminishes one's power.

**Linking Feminist and Mainstream Interview Research**

Mary Belenky's study mentioned earlier, had the double purpose of putting women on existing maps of intellectual and ethical development (e.g., as developed by William Perry and Lawrence Kohlberg) while also assessing "the adequacy of the maps themselves." Linking feminist and mainstream ends in this way requires complex interviewing. An example is psychologist Carol Gilligan's studies of women's approaches to moral dilemmas reported in her book *In a Different Voice* and widely applied to many fields. I am aware of the fact that this study has been criticized by other feminists for its small sample size and for its inconsistent interpretation of the relation between gender and moral orientation. My focus here, however, is on how the interviews were conducted:

The women were interviewed twice, first at the time they were making the decision [about abortion], in the first trimester of a confirmed pregnancy, and then at the end of the following year. ... In the initial part of the interview, the women were asked to discuss the decision they faced, how they were dealing with it, the alternatives they were considering, their reasons both for and against each option, the people involved, the conflicts entailed, and the ways in which making this decision affected their views of themselves and their relationships with others. In the second part of the interview, the women were asked to resolve three hypothetical moral dilemmas, including the Heinz dilemma from Kohlberg's research.

Despite her inclusion of *both* types of questions, Carol Gilligan emphasized the questions that tapped women's experiences. She "asked how people defined moral problems and what experiences they construed as moral conflicts in their lives, rather than . . . focusing on their thinking about problems presented to them for resolution." She saw no contradiction between asking preset questions and having the interviewee take the lead: "The method of interviewing was to follow the language and the logic of the person's thought, with the interviewer asking further questions in order to clarify the meaning of a particular response." Her interview snippets illustrate how she (or other interviewers) asked preset questions (how would you describe yourself to yourself?), how she followed the language of the interviewee, and how the interviewee, in turn, followed the questions of the interviewer. In her text, she set off the interviewer's question with italics and brackets, as in the following example:

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[Is there really some correct solution to moral problems, or is everybody's opinion equally right?] No, I don't think . . . it is possible to choose in certain cases among
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different courses of action that obviously promote or harm that goal. [Is there a time in the past when you would have thought about these things differently?] Oh, yeah, I think that I went through a time when. . . . [When was that?] When I was in high school. . . . [What led you to change, do you think?] In a lot of ways this pregnancy has helped me because I have stopped getting high and stopped drinking, and this is the first time in three years that I stopped. And now that I have, I know that I can do it, and I am just going to completely stop. [How did your pregnancy help you to do that?] 104

In the second part of the interview, she asked the women to respond to the standard hypothetical scenarios that had been used to study the moral development of males. 105 Thus, unlike some feminist researchers who initiate the interviews with standardized questions, Carol Gilligan concluded hers with such questions. Ultimately, these feminist researchers support the idea of combining both approaches in their work.

Large-Scale Feminist Interview Studies

When it is extremely important to the feminist researcher that her results be accepted as generalizable to a larger population, she is likely to construct a large-scale study with a carefully chosen sample 106 and to hire and train carefully chosen interviewers. Diana Russell’s study of marital rape includes a highly informative methodology chapter that makes a strong case for using the most conventionally rigorous procedures possible when studying topics of concern to women, in order to maximize opportunities for creating change on women’s behalf.

I began my study with the hypothesis that the percentage of women in the population at large who have been raped is much higher than the percentages obtained in previous [unrepresentative] studies . . . and higher also than is commonly believed . . . . Assuming that my research would confirm this hypothesis, my primary objective was to establish the magnitude of the problem, both in terms of the number of occurrences of rape as well as the effects, in order to stimulate concern and provide a basis for demanding that the problem receive greater attention and that more efforts to resolve it be made. I also wanted to find out the relative frequencies of rape by strangers, acquaintances, friends, lovers, husbands, other relatives, and authority figures.

To obtain this sensitive information, she matched the demographic characteristics of interviewees and interviewers:

After careful screening, thirty-three female interviewers were hired: seventeen white, six Asian, five Black and five Latina. They were carefully selected not only for their interviewing skills, but also for their empathetic attitudes to rape victims. A serious
attempt was made to hire interviewers from all class backgrounds, as well as all age groups. All were given approximately sixty-five hours of intensive, paid training, an amount extremely rare in survey research. Since a key hypothesis of our study was that with high quality interviewing by women who had been sensitized to the issue of sexual assault, we would find that rape and other kinds of sexual assault are prevalent, developing the best possible training therefore became a primary commitment. This training included at least ten hours of "consciousness raising" about rape and incestuous abuse, as well as a half day of defining and desensitizing sexual words so that interviewers would be as relaxed as possible with whatever vocabulary respondents might choose to use . . . . An interviewer followed up the [initial] letter with a visit to the address.

In addition, Diana Russell carried out extensive verifications of the interview data and interviewer performance:

Twenty-two percent of the interviews were verified, which is an unusually high verification rate (about 10 percent is average). This means that the interviewer supervisors checked that the interviews had indeed happened in 22 percent of the 930 cases, and that they also checked the accuracy of two sample questions. All 22 percent of the respondents recalled the interview and said the interviewer had been polite. And there were very high correlations between the answers to both questions reported by the interviewer and then reported to the interviewer supervisor (these correlations were 0.91 and 0.99). All but twenty-two of these verifications were done by telephone, the remainder being done by postcard. At least half of the verified interviews were drawn at random. . . . Interviewers were . . . paid by the hour, not by the number of completed interviews. It was be- lieved that the latter policy might motivate some interviewers to keep interviews as short as possible by discouraging disclosure, or worse, to fabricate interviews -entirely.107

Similarly, Margaret Gordon and Stephanie Riger's study of the fear of rape inter- viewed 299 women and 68 men in Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco "in respondents' homes by interviewers matched with them by race and language." , The interest among feminist researchers in studying diversified populations em: pathically has produced a methodological principle of training interviewers from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. The matching of interviewers and interviewees is thought to maximize trust and candor. In the concluding chapter, I will discuss at greater length this emerging feminist "ethic of diversity."
Revising Concepts and Practices

Feminists researchers who have done interview studies have modified social science concepts and created important new ways of seeing the world. By listening to women speak, understanding women's membership in particular social systems, and establishing the distribution of phenomena accessible only through sensitive interviewing, feminist interview researchers have uncovered previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience. Rae Andre's interview study of the quality of homemakers' working lives, for example, uncovered the fact that previous surveys about "worker satisfaction" were extremely limited. Pauline Bart and Patricia O'Brien's interview study of women who avoided being raped challenged the view that rape is a clear-cut phenomenon.\textsuperscript{109}

Given the versatility of interviewing and its compatibility with feminist concerns, we are likely to continue refining and elaborating this multiform method. As we proceed, we undoubtedly will discover further distinctions in feminist interview research disguised by the use of the generic word "interview." If feminist interview researchers carefully describe exactly what occurs during interviews and during the analysis process we are likely to discover additional methodological and ethical dilemmas that can be clarified and perhaps resolved. In my view, the emerging norm of self-reflexive reporting of the interview process and the experiments in exact reproduction of people's speech are steps in this direction.
Researching on women and work: Reflections on the interview process and interview skills

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the process of interviewing women with and without paid work, from the working and middle/upper classes in Santiago de Chile. It reflects on the interview as a technique, and it considers both the interview and researcher as tools. The paper describes interview skills and strategies displayed in the fieldwork. Feminist dilemmas are discussed particularly regarding power issues between the researcher and researched, the validation of experiences, the role of the researcher, and whether to say the word feminism to participants.

First, a brief description of the study is presented. Secondly, some questions when choosing my methodology are described. Thirdly, the interview as a research method and the stages gone through such as getting interviewees and carrying out interviews are discussed. Fourthly, feminist dilemmas encountered in the research process are also explored.

1. The study

This paper draws on my PhD research 'Women and Work in Chile' which explores the factors accounting for the low Chilean female participation rates in the workforce using a feminist conceptual framework. The study is qualitative, consisting of in-depth interviews and analysis of existing data sources. The fieldwork was carried out in Santiago de Chile in December 2007 and March-April 2008.

The sample includes 60 women aged between 20 and 60 years, with and without paid employment from the middle/upper and working classes in Santiago de Chile.
There are four groups: a) 15 professional upper/middle class women with paid work; b) 15 professional upper/middle class without paid work; c) 15 working class women with paid work; d) 15 working class women without paid work. Interviews took place wherever was more convenient for the interviewee. I conducted all of the interviews lasting on average about an hour. Additionally, I interviewed five experts and a couple of interviewees' partners.

Despite women have more years of education than men and the fertility rate (1.9% in 2004) is lower than in other Latin American countries, Chile has the lowest female labour force participation rates of the region (38.5% in 2006, and currently 40.9%) (INE, 2007, 2008; ILO, 2008).

Data from CEPAL (ECLAC), Laborsta (ILO), INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de Chile), the National Characterization Socio-economic Survey (CASEN), and other official sources provide the context for understanding working patterns and female participation rates.

The entry age is 24 years old illustrating the family formation period since the first child is born at mothers' average age of 24 years old, and women get married at 267 years old on average (INE, 2006). The final age of the group is 60 years old since the retiring age for women in Chile is 60. By professional I mean highly-qualified women with a university degree. In Chile, university courses usually last five or more years.

2. Why qualitative research? Why a feminist approach?

I am interested in women's experience of un/paid labour; to know their views, and to understand the problem from women's place. My thesis is grounded in women's voices and their variety of experiences. Women's experience is taken as a source of knowledge.

Interviews are useful to get the story behind the participants' experience. It enables to pursue in-depth information about the topic. The interview is a flexible research instrument; it permits a consideration of the context and setting of the interviewee; and allows understanding experience in a unified way (Carter, 2005). My interview data provides information about women's experiences of un/paid work; their ideas, meanings, how they make sense of their own experience and their social reality. Keeping them (women/interviewees) in the centre is a key point in this research.

Feminist critique of objectivity/rationality claims that all knowledge is subjective and partial, insofar as it is socially constructed (Charles, 1996). Experience can be a useful epistemological starting point of inquiry as well as problematic evidence. There is no such thing as raw experience - accounts of experience are always produced in a social context and through and against cultural narratives. Thus,
experience is mediated by systems of representation - language, discourse (Kramer, 2008) - and dispositions. Experiences are partial and subject to critical revision, and they differ between individuals and are also interrelated (Tanesini, 1999). My research acknowledges these women's differences as key factors, particularly according to social class and labour experience.

Feminism is the standpoint from which I undertake the research problem (as a conceptual framework and during the research process in the field). It attempts to understand gender relations and their impact on people's lives (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002), exploring the everyday life from the standpoint of women (Smith, 1987), being class and work embodied and gendered. As Chile has the lowest female participation rates in the labour force in Latin American, high gender pay gap, low representation of women in high positions, as well as being a patriarchal society, a feminist approach makes sense to challenge the traditional approaches and discourses on women and work.

3. Reflecting on the interview as a technique

Getting interviewees

I accessed the sample starting from a variety of entry points in different networks. I widened the sample based on a snow-ball technique. Among the aspects that facilitated women's agreement to accept to participate in the research and to open their homes and hearts to me were:

1) That I gave them my details and mentioned to them who gave me theirs - someone that they knew already so they felt safer and more secure about agreeing to participate.

2) Many times the person that gave me their phone number explained to them in advance that I was going to call them for an interview about their experience and work. Thus, many were prepared to be contacted by me.

3) The fact that I am student and that I wanted to interview them for my studies impacted in different ways: several women showed huge interest in the topic itself and wanted to know the results and share their experiences; some felt very important to be asked for an interview; others felt sorry that I was a student and enjoyed doing a favour to a student that needed participants; others took it as a chance to talk about themselves or to do something different.

4) I usually interviewed participants at their home so they felt safe and in their territory. This also helped me to get a better understanding of their personal
circumstances, living conditions - house and neighbourhood in relation to social
class, and their relationship with children, partner or domestic staff if they were
around.

5) I emphasised some aspects of myself rather than others depending on whom I was
interviewing. I also told my experience at the end of the interview if they asked me
about my life, as a reciprocity process.

These strategies attempted to overcome our different backgrounds and to reduce the
potential distance between researched and researcher. I tried to avoid an expert
position and subject-object roles. Power issues will be discussed later in the paper.

Carrying out interviews - and some tips

I arrived to the agreed place and time, followed by greetings and simple
conversations to create rapport. I explained what the research was about, the
confidentiality of the data, and gave them a consent form which they all signed. I
anticipated how long it might take, how the interview was organised, and I asked
permission to tape-record the interview. Here I share some reflections on carrying out
interviews and interviewing skills:

Despite the obviousness, I have not mentioned that a key tool when interviewing is
the interviewer, in this case myself. I am the research tool to: a) get interviewees, b)
reach their views, and c) produce reflections and knowledge.

From the initial contact with interviewees, I tried to use my social and persuasion
skills to explain the research, to sound interesting but not threatening, and to
complete an interview within time constrains. So underpinning and beyond
interviews, it is myself. The researcher is the main tool to obtain information, to liaise
with people, to be able to read what is and not said, and to process, analyse and
interpret all of these. Feminism places an emphasis on experience and the researcher's
involvement in interpretation (Maynard, 1994). I would say that the interpretation and
data analysis are done by the researcher, but the interview process is an interaction
between research and researched. Thus, the information gathered is the construction
and result of this interaction.

My body language, what and how I say something in an interview, influence in some
things an interviewees' response. The intonation of my voice, words and sayings
used, were relevant when interviewing. I identified some behaviours that were
beneficial to the interview process. Most were not planned in advance; I became
aware of this after the event. I will now turn to the strategies I used to made
interviewees feel comfortable and willing to participate.
While listening to the interviews, I realised that many times I behaved and spoke differently accordingly to interviewees' experiences and social class. Even though I asked them the same questions using more or less the same words and roughly in the same order, I was impressed of how many words I adopted during the conversation: many were interviewees' words. As a mirror,

Interviews were carried out wherever it was most convenient for each participant: in their home (67%), at the workplace (23%), at the university (5%) or other places (5%).

I repeated what they had said and incorporated some of their way of explaining things. Changing my voice tone and the type of words according to my interviewees' social class, helped to have a better rapport and gathered information more openly. This could also bring the impression of becoming closer and more similar between researcher and researched. All of these had the effect of fitting better with my interviewee, to promote a peer situation, and that she could feel validated.

I tried to find out connections between her and me; shared experiences or views. If not, I thought what I would do if I was her. Soon after, I believed in what they were saying. I was there not to criticise or give an opinion about their lives, even if I would not have taken that option. This helped me to understand better their points of view and to communicate that their experiences as women are valid.

Some interviewees asked me about other women's responses. Keeping confidentiality, I tried to make them feel confident and validated. I replied that even if each story is unique, there are other interviewees that share similar dilemmas, experiences and viewpoints; that some had resolved issues, in that way or another, and some think similarly than her. In this way, they didn't feel they were the only one in that position, and that their story had common features with other women. I think this helped them to feel validated and confident about sharing their viewpoints.

Non-verbal communication plays a key role in the interview. Being aware of my body language and theirs was important to be able to read between the lines, especially when interviewees did not finish their sentences, or say / mean different things by their voice inflection. Sometimes, I repeated the last words of their sentences. This helped the interviewee to say more about the topic.

I was careful with the word 'work' - particularly due to the research topic; I tried to use it in relation to interviewees' definition of work. I also summed up ideas in their words to continue and link the conversation to the next question.
I tried my best to create rapport, and make my interviewees feel confident and validated. For example, I said the interviewee's name in each question to have a more personalised conversation. In fact, most times I felt I understood their point, believing that if I would be her in the same conditions and history, maybe I would probably be doing the same. On the other hand, why do people coming from similar backgrounds opt for such different life styles?

4. Feminist dilemmas in the field

This section is focused on dilemmas I faced during the fieldwork regarding power issues, validation of experiences, researcher's role, and difficulties saying the word feminist.

Feminism is concerned with asymmetrical power relationships (Charles, 1996), and the hierarchal power relationships involved in the research process. It encourages a non-exploitative relationship, having a genuine rapport where research is a means of sharing information (Maynard, 1994). Glucksmann (1994) suggests that it is impossible to overcome the inequalities of knowledge between researcher and researched within the research context. She argues that there is a contradiction for academic feminists. They attempt reciprocity and equal involvement in the research process, but the roles of the researcher and researched differ. The task of the researcher is to produce knowledge, which is not the case for the researched.

In my view it is an illusion to believe that interviewee and interviewer are in the same power position. Being aware of power issues could help, but will not remove the power differences between participants and researcher. In the interview situation it is the researcher who asks questions; participants choose what they tell or hide about their story. Yet, it is the researcher who selects data for their own purposes, and interprets their interviewees' testimony. This is not the case for the researched.

Even though the many women I interviewed seemed eager to tell their stories, and gaining access was not a problem at all, I believe that we could not deny our differences. From the very first moment I made contact with each of my interviewees, I was aware of power issues in my role as researcher and my circumstances - coming from a privileged background and studying in Europe. I did my best to disregard these differences but focus on similarities, understanding their views, validating their stories and reflections. I created rapport, listened with great interest and empathized. Despite my skills and strategies to promote a fluent and open conversation, and my feminist framework towards an equal relationship with interviewees, I feel that the underlying power differences could not be completely avoided. I think that some participants realised the differences between us and might have felt there was a power
gap, whether as researcher/researched who ask/answer questions, differences of social class, work experience, occupation, or country of residence.

Another dilemma emerged regarding the validation of women's experiences: this was my consenting to their discourse and actions even if I didn't agree with what they were saying and felt that how they were tackling their difficulties was problematic. I didn't want to play an expert role. This meant that the options in their lives were valid. It was not me who was going to define whether it was right or wrong. If I was challenged after the interview about what were I thought and how I did this or that, I replied that their life and experiences were unique and valid, and tried to accept their case while indicating that I have different circumstances than them and I would probably do this or that. I went beyond my researcher's role in a couple of situations explained as follows:

a) An upper class woman was suffering due to an abusive controlling husband on whom she depended financially. Despite my intention of not playing an expert role, I decided that reality comes before the research, so I suggested how she might deal with the situation. While listening to that interview, I confirmed that she was not happy. I remembered her expressions and wanted to call her. I had a new dilemma then: Shall I keep the researcher's role or shift to peers/friends/sisters and call her from abroad?

b) I was carrying out an interview in a working class woman's house when her drunken husband arrived home. I admit that I felt terribly scared both because of the drunken husband and his shouts, and the barking dogs. However, my interviewee and I pretended that things were somehow under control and I could quickly go out of the house. In a few tense minutes, I met my contact person in that area and other people in the street. Then, my interviewee approached me saying sorry about her drunken partner and that she was embarrassed. Even though the situation was abnormal for me, I was firm drawing the boundaries between her and her husband, so I replied, 'Don't worry. You shouldn't be embarrassed; it is your husband who is drunk, not you'.

Now I turn to the dilemma of whether overtly to say to participants that the research is feminist. To participants, I said in simple words that I am a student doing research about women and work, and that I would like to interview her to find out her perspective on this topic. I never told my interviewees that this was feminist research. I believe that if I had mentioned feminism, I would not have had the same trouble-free welcome and responses. I confess that I did not mention feminism on purpose to facilitate gaining access, and to create a more 'neutral' response from interviewees. I wanted to avoid interviewees trying to guess which should be the 'right' answer. Despite being aware of my omission and academia guilty about it, I justified this
by reflecting on the worth of the study. It is a shame though how often feminist researchers hide the word feminism when doing feminist research (Smyth, 1999).

Final remarks

The paper has discussed the strategies and problems I faced interviewing women from different social classes in Chile. For this research women are both subject and object of knowledge. Myself as a woman researcher is a subject of knowledge, and women participants are considered as objects of knowledge as well as knowers, subjects of knowledge too.

The fact that I changed my body language, words and behaviour depending on my interviewee, suggests that identity is transitory and socially constructed; in this case, constructed in the interaction process between researcher and researched. I realised in retrospective my interview strategies and skills used in the fieldwork. Interviewing skills are implicit. It is assumed that researchers hold these skills. Researching women has led me to reflect whether interviewing skills are gendered. In addition, to what extent these research skills follow a feminist approach?

No doubt, listening skills are indeed related to female qualities, but not exclusively. I would say that listening and interviewing skills are common to all good researchers. Still, the validation of women’s experience is distinctive of a feminist research. From the initial contact with interviewees, I stressed that their view is important; their experience is worth and valuable.
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FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS: A NEW FEMINIST METHOD

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This paper shows how feminist qualitative research can be strengthened and broadened through the development of feminist focus group interviews. The interaction among participants in group interviews provides a valuable resource for studying issues of gender and sexuality. In addition, focus groups can be both consciousness-raising and empowering for the research subjects and for the researcher herself, and allow for a more egalitarian and less exploitative dynamic than other methods. Drawing on the author’s study of the influence of popular culture on the construction and maintenance of “normative sexuality” for women, this paper addresses some of the practical and ethical issues that a researcher must confront when using group interviews. The author addresses different concerns in recruiting participants and making the most of the unique dynamics of a group interview and the kinds of data they produce for analysis. More than most other methods, group interviews provide feminists with the opportunity to conduct research that is consciousness-raising and empowering, research that does not merely describe what is, but that participates in shaping what could be.

Introduction

Focus groups have been a standard tool in marketing research for several decades. While social scientists long ignored them, there has been a recent surge of interest in their social scientific application (Krueger 1988; Lunt and Livingstone 1996; Morgan and Spanish 1984; Morgan 1988, 1993, 1996). Feminist researchers have occasionally used group interviews (Callahan 1983; Malhotra 1984; Mies 1983; Nichols-Casebolt and Spakes 1995), yet few provide detailed discussions of group interviews from a feminist perspective. In this article I describe how I came to use
focus group interviews and why they are particularly useful for studying issues of gender and sexuality.

Feminist qualitative research can be strengthened and broadened through the development of feminist focus group interviews. Group interviews allow for a more egalitarian and less exploitative dynamic than other methods, and the interaction among participants produces a new and valuable kind of data. In addition, focus groups can be both consciousness-raising and empowering for the research subjects, as well as the researcher. In an effort to provide practical assistance to researchers attempting to use this method, I also describe issues involved in recruiting participants and in maximizing the unique dynamics of and the data from a group interview.

The Available Literature on Focus Groups

Although use of focus groups has mushroomed among social scientists in the past decade, relatively few scholars specifically address the use of this method in social science research. Many academic researchers who have used group interviews have done so simply because they found it more convenient to interview several people at once (Morgan 1988, 12). There is a widespread misconception that group interviews are an easy "shortcut" to data collection (Agar and MacDonal 1995, 85; and Lunt and Livingstone 1996, 80), a way to get more data faster than conducting several individual interviews. In such cases, the researcher is generally not interested in the unique characteristics of focus group interviews; consequently this method has not been given systematic attention (Morgan 1988, 12). Researchers who approach focus groups as simply several ethnographic interviews in one may be disappointed and overlook the unique and useful data that focus groups can produce (Agar and Mac-Donal 1995, 85).

The majority of the literature on the use of focus groups comes from the field of marketing research; however, the wide acceptance of the method in applied marketing has not carried over to academic marketing research (Morgan 1996, 132). Despite increased interest in focus groups among social scientists, researchers still see the need for "considerable borrowing and considerable innovation" (Morgan 1988, 10) and "careful adaptation" to make this marketing tool "appropriate for academic research" (Holbrook and Jackson 1996, 136).

Academic use of focus groups challenges the model that has developed in marketing research, including assumptions about the best ways to select participants, compose the groups, deal with potential problems of conformity or "groupthink," and use the data (Holbrook and Jackson 1996, 136-7). Unlike the applied marketing researchers, the academic researcher who uses focus groups is interested in the kinds of data pro-
duced by in-depth interviews, as well as the process of negotiation among participants. The academic researcher must elicit and analyze group interaction using discourse analysis, the way language structures common sense beliefs (a level of analysis not found in applied marketing research).

Although the marketing literature on focus groups is in many cases very detailed, it contains little information on academic or feminist methodological issues. Few feminist researchers who have used group interviews (e.g., Callahan 1983; Malhotra 1984; Mies 1983) have provided in-depth accounts of this method. Shulamit Reinhartz's *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (1992), the most comprehensive volume on feminist methods, devotes only two paragraphs to feminist group interviews (222-3). These paragraphs contain only a very basic description of what a focus group is and why one feminist researcher (Callahan 1983) decided to use them. Reinhartz asserts that while feminist group interviews are not derived from the methodology of marketing research, there is only one difference between the two: feminist researchers are more likely to grant the interviewees the status of "expert" on the topic of discussion, in keeping with the feminist principle that women are experts on their own experience.

Surprisingly, there has been little development of group interviews as a feminist method, even though such interviews have much in common with the consciousness-raising (CR) groups that were a staple of the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. Marjorie DeVault asserts that consciousness raising is a method that is at the heart of the women's movement, the source of feminist methodology (DeVault 1996, 30). Perhaps the prominence of focus groups as a tool of marketing research has alienated feminist researchers and prevented them from seeing the connections between this method and the concerns of feminist methodology. In any case, in order to conduct a feminist focus group interview, researchers will need more information than is currently available on such topics as recruiting subjects, constructing questions, arranging and running groups, and dealing with the data in ways that fit with feminist research principles.

**Focus Groups and Feminist Research Principles**

Feminist methodology is a field of inquiry united by membership in the overlapping research communities of feminism and social science, and feminist social scientists use the tools of both in a critique aimed at improving the ways we know society (DeVault 1996, 30). Feminist researchers use a variety of methods, and it is debatable whether there is such a thing as a "feminist method." Nevertheless, there is consensus that feminist research is characterized by researchers' striving to adhere to and achieve certain principles in their research. Many feminist researchers have found
that some methods are more conducive to these principles than others. Cook and Fonow (1986) identify five basic episte-mological principles that concern feminist researchers: 1) attention to the significance of gender; 2) the need to challenge the norm of objectivity and the rigid separation between the researcher and the researched; 3) the centrality of consciousness-raising as a methodological tool and "way of seeing"; 4) an emphasis on the transformation of patriarchal institutions and the empowerment of women; and 5) concern for the ethical implications of the research. In the following sections I describe how group interviews conform to and even advance these principles of feminist research.

Studying Sex and Gender

Attitudes and beliefs about gender and sexuality can be very difficult to study because they are commonly assumed to be simply "natural" attributes of an individual that are unconscious or taken for granted. However, a constructivist understanding recognizes that gender is not simply a natural attribute of individuals nor a social role that we play in certain circumstances. Rather, gender is primarily a social category that organizes our perceptions of the world. As Fenstermaker, West, and Zimmerman (1991) point out, gender is produced interactionally: it is an ongoing accomplishment available for production in every interaction (Dull and West 1991; Fenstermaker, West, and Zimmerman 1991; West and Zimmerman 1987). It is important to study the taken-for-granted attitudes and beliefs about gender not as secondary phenomena, but as integral to the production of the sex/gender system itself.

Because discussion and representation of sex surrounds us, studying ideas about sexuality might seem easy. However, few people discuss sex often or intimately. My project on the influence of popular culture on the construction and maintenance of "normative sexuality" required that research subjects discuss sex in an unusually explicit way. I did not necessarily want my subjects to describe sexual acts explicitly (although some did), but I wanted them to state ideas explicitly that usually "go without saying." to articulate the beliefs and categories that underlie their conscious attitudes. It is very difficult for people to talk about these kinds of attitudes and assumptions in an individual interview. In a group interview, however, the ways participants respond to and interact with each other can provide richer and more complex data that can reveal taken-for-granted categories and beliefs.

Focus group interviews can be useful in providing qualitative information because they combine many of the advantages of participant observation with those of in-depth individual interviewing, while avoiding some of the drawbacks of these other methods (Morgan and Spanish 1984; Morgan 1988, 15-23). Participant observation allows the researcher to examine ordinary behavior and group interaction. However it can be a very inefficient method because of the difficulty of finding and observing
informal interactions around specific topics as they naturally occur. For example, in my study it would have been difficult to simply observe "naturally occurring" conversation about sex and about how the media influence ideas about sexuality. Focus group interviews provide the opportunity to observe people's interactions, and they also let the researcher direct the interactions to the attitudes and experiences of interest (Morgan and Spanish 1984, 259). Although focus groups do not provide access to interactions as they would ordinarily occur in daily life (Agar and MacDonald 1995, 81), they do provide a valuable kind of data.

Individual interviews provide researchers with the ability to direct the interactions; however, this method has other drawbacks for my project. In order to construct a structured interview protocol on women's ideas about sex and the influence of the media, I would have needed to conduct many preliminary interviews to ascertain the categories and issues that are important to various groups of women. Especially in early interviews, my questions would necessarily impose my own categories on people's accounts.- general and open-ended questions on this topic would be unlikely to produce useful responses. Such questions require people to consciously articulate what they usually assume that "everybody knows." A group interview can also be a better forum for getting at these issues because in individual interviews each question requires "an answer," while in group interviews the goal is instead to initiate a conversation. Vague or difficult questions elicit greater response because a group conversation allows people to feel more comfortable bringing up different ideas without the pressure to provide a definitive answer to each question. In a group interview, participants can build on the responses of others so that a short or obvious comment does not have to be a dead end as it might be in an individual interview, but can serve as a spark for another participant's contribution.

In each group interview that I conducted, for example, I asked such open-ended questions as "What is sexuality?" and "What is good sex?" and participants consistently expressed initial confusion over what I meant. In individual interviews I would have had difficulty getting in-depth and useful responses to these questions without imposing my own definitions or subtly directing the answers based on my own expectations. In each of the groups, however, one or more participants asked questions and offered tentative answers, and other participants were able to build on these responses to come to their own understandings of and answers to these open-ended questions. A group interview also allows certain topics to be explored in more depth than they might be in individual interviews, as contradictory ideas prompt women to elaborate on their original statements.

For example, in one group when I asked, "What is good sex?" Janet answered that sex can be good because "you're really present with the person and you're enjoying being with that person, or (else) you're like in fantasy land, way in fantasy land." I tried to prompt Janet to describe the differences between "being present" and "being in fantasy land," but she did not articulate her ideas in a way that clarified her meaning. Had this been an individual interview I might have simply accepted Janet's
categories and concluded that the primary issue for her was emotional connection that she seemed to prefer to the disconnection of "fantasy land." However, in the group interview, another woman, Rebecca, responded to Janet's statement:

Rebecca: What makes sex good? Well I guess you'd have to think about what makes sex not good, and I don't think I've ever had not good sex.

Eve: Go girl! (all laugh) She's my kind of girl!


Rebecca: But I guess more narrowly defining sex and sexuality, I think physical pleasure is probably the major defining factor when I think about what makes good sex. Whether it's alone or with somebody else. Being present with the other person would not be number one on my list; physical pleasure would be the number one thing. (Interview #7)

This led the group to clarify the role of physical pleasure in defining "good sex," a brief exchange that culminated with Janet saying, "I was kind of assuming physical pleasure when I was talking about it, but yeah." Thus the group interaction allowed me to clarify different women's ideas and assumptions. In an individual interview, when the interviewee says something that fits with the interviewer's expectations, for example, about what is and is not important to women regarding sexual experiences, the interviewer does not always probe for other ideas or issues, and the interviewee is not always able to provide additional information and clarification. In a group interview, however, there is a greater likelihood that contradictory ideas will be expressed, and these can serve as prompts for discussions that address the issues in greater depth.

In a group, if even one person expresses an idea it can prompt a response from the others, and the information that is produced is more likely to be framed by the categories and understandings of the interviewees rather than those of the interviewer. Participants can help each other figure out what the questions mean to them, and the researcher can examine how different participants hear possibly vague or ambiguous questions. This is important in studying sex and gender because these issues are "naturalized" to such an extent that it is very difficult to recognize one's own preconceived notions, much less challenge others' taken-for-granted assumptions. The expansion of the roles available to women in a group interview, beyond the strict separation between "interviewer" and "interviewee," allows for interactions that are more likely to reveal and even challenge these taken-for-granted assumptions.
The Researcher/Subject Relationship

Feminists have long advocated the use of in-depth interviews because they promote a more egalitarian and less objectifying relationship between the researcher and subject than quantitative methods. Qualitative methods potentially allow women to be the "experts" about their own experiences. However, some feminists question exaggerating the value of women's experience as the standard of knowledge (Cancian 1992, 632; Millen 1997). One problem with treating each woman as an "expert" in this way is that this assumes that each woman is conscious of the forces that have acted upon her and can articulate her reaction to those forces.

In traditional interviews the interviewer and interviewee bring different kinds of authority to the interaction and they may also have very different goals for the interview and understandings of the topic. The interviewee may have expertise on the subject at hand but the interviewer has authority over the research process itself. Ironically, group interviews may allow the research subjects to be experts to a greater extent than one-on-one interviews. In a typical one-on-one interview, the interviewer is actually the expert, the one who frames the issue of study and composes the questions, while the interviewee is simply an "informant" who provides information about her particular experience. This different and unequal status influences the kind of information that is produced. This does not imply that all interviews are hierarchical and exploitative. Indeed feminists have often noted that qualitative interviews are far more egalitarian and collaborative than traditional quantitative research. But regardless of how open-ended the questions are, an interview is an interaction between two people who have different and unequal roles in the exchange.

"When women interview women, both researcher and subject act on the basis of understandings about interviewing, and both follow the rules (or negotiate a shared version of the rules) associated with their respective roles" (DeVault 1990, 101). One way to change these roles is to incorporate rather than deny the researcher's personal involvements. Although other feminists have noted the value of the researcher's personal involvement in interviewing, Marjorie DeVault argues that we need to "move toward a more disciplined use of the personal". (1990, 104). She calls for more visibility of the researcher as a resource rather than contaminant in the product of the research, although precisely how to do this most effectively remains unresolved (1996, 42). It is very difficult to negotiate the most productive balance between the researcher's personal experiences and professional role in individual interviews; group interviews are far more conducive to such a balance.5

A shift in focus from individual knowers to the perspectives of groups or communities is a theme of feminist epistemology that begins to move us out of the impasse around personal experience (DeVault 1996, 42). This idea is really not new
because "the 'experience' so valued in early feminist consciousness raising was in fact a collective construction" (DeVault 1996, 42). Because knowledge and meaning are collective rather than individual productions, focus groups can be an effective method for acquiring this socially produced knowledge. "Focus groups give participants an opportunity to narrate their personal experiences and to test their interpretations of events and processes with others, and whether confirmed or disputed, the result is a polyvocal production, a multiplicity of voices speaking from a variety of subject positions" (Goss and Leinbach 1996, 116).

Group interviews disrupt the rigid dichotomy between interviewer and subject, providing the possibility of an equal exchange. Although group interviews still contain a relationship of "researcher" and "researched," and the researcher still asks the questions and frames the issues of the study, this dynamic is mitigated by the fact that in a successful group interview the main interaction will be among the participants rather than between each interviewee and the researcher. Each woman can not only tell her own story, but she can also question and challenge the other participants in an effort to gain understanding.

Group interaction can also lead to richer and more complex information on certain topics than is possible in individual interviews. Because of the researcher's authority, and because she requires accurate and "untainted" information, an interviewer is unlikely to directly challenge or contradict the interviewee. She may point out apparent discrepancies and ask the interviewee for further elaboration, but she is unlikely to volunteer her own opinions or beliefs because such opinions may bias the interview. In a group interview, however, people can and do challenge and contradict each other. They ask each other questions, provide examples from their personal experience, and collectively produce accounts that would be difficult if not impossible to elicit in individual interviews.

For example, in the second group interview I conducted, Connie stated that while she had no problem with the idea of masturbation, she had no personal need for it. Audrey responded skeptically to this, prodding Connie to elaborate. Connie then described an experience while talking with an ex-boyfriend on the phone, after which Audrey laughingly exclaimed "Oh, honey, that's masturbation!" Connie's further description of her experiences provided a more nuanced explanation of her ideas about masturbation. As an interviewer, I would have been unable to challenge Connie as skeptically as did Audrey, and I would probably not have elicited as much information. I also would be unlikely to state my own interpretation of a respondent's experience as definitively as did Audrey. As Jon Goss and Thomas Leinbach (1996, 122) caution, however, "focus groups do not eliminate the unequal power relationship between researcher and research subjects, because it is still the researcher who initiates the exercise and who determines the selection of participants, the identity of
the moderator and the agenda for discussion." Focus groups "may give greater control over the research process to its subjects, but the fact that the social dramas of focus groups are collaborative productions should not deny the responsibility of the researcher for the analysis and interpretation of data produced..." (Goss and Leinbach 1996,122; Millen 1997).

Consciousness-Raising

In describing the difference between traditional and feminist one-on-one interviews, Bristow and Esper (1984) argue that while a traditional social science interview is a one-sided "interrogation," a feminist interview is more of a "true dialogue" that "better serves[es] the interest of both researchers and participants by maximizing the exchange of information and subsequently, the construction of knowledge" in a way that makes a feminist interview a consciousness-raising experience (Bristow and Esper 1984, 490). Yet the possibility for the give and take of self-revelation and questioning among several equal participants makes feminist group interviews potentially more consciousness-raising than individual interviews.

Other researchers have noted the consciousness-raising potential of group interviews. Mies (1983) suggested that feminists shift from individual interviews to group discussions not only in order to obtain more diverse data, but also to help women overcome their structural isolation and understand the social causes and shared nature of their individual sufferings. Malhotra (1984) came to a similar conclusion when she involved participants in small group discussions that allowed participants to influence the methods of the study. These groups also functioned as support groups for the participants. Callahan (1983) used group interviews because she believed that women's interactions with each other not only enhance the flow of ideas and information, but that these interactions are consciousness-raising in that they encourage women to recognize the patterns in their shared experience.

The discussions that participants have with each other in a group interview can be far more consciousness-raising than anything the interviewer could say. For example, the first interview I conducted was with members of an eating disorder group in which one of the participants was a young woman, Emily, whose primary experience of sex was that of being molested. (In a questionnaire I distributed, under "How would you describe your sexual orientation?" she answered "Bad.") Throughout the interview Emily talked about sex as a dangerous realm in which women are very vulnerable, asserting that the only "safe" and therefore good sexual relationships are those that are based on love and trust. Other women in the interview, however, expressed a far more casual approach to sex, arguing that it can be "just an action" and that "it could be just for fun or something; it doesn't necessarily have to have an emotional tie"
(Keri, Interview #1). Emily later wrote in her journal about how the group discussion affected her. She wrote:

It was interesting for me to hear how other people's ideas about sex differed from mine. It made me question my own thoughts and views. This for me is good, as far as I am concerned . . . sex is pretty awful. I have only experienced it in a bad light; thus my stand is bitter and extremely fearful. It was good for me to hear that others have vastly different ideas from mine. (Emily, Interview)

Emily also wrote that she no longer feels that a deeply loving and committed relationship is necessary for sex to be good, and that satisfying the "human need to feel good through physical contact" can also be a good reason to have sex and provide a good sexual experience. I want to emphasize here that I did not consciously intend to convince participants of these ideas, and even if I had wanted to it is doubtful that I would have been effective. The reason that the interview had such a great effect on Emily's beliefs is that the challenge to her ideas came from several other ordinary women who spoke from their personal experience, rather than from the authority of the researcher.

This example also illustrates another aspect of the consciousness-raising potential of feminist group interviews, and that is the effect on the researcher herself. Goss and Leinbach's work suggests that "the main advantage of focus group discussions is that both the researcher and the research subjects may simultaneously obtain insights and understanding of particular social situation[s] during the process of research" (Goss and Leinbach 1996, 117). Bristow and Esper (1984) describe how they conducted informal group discussions with rape survivors in the process of constructing their structured interview schedule. Through listening to women whose experiences were both like and unlike their own, the researchers not only created a better and more comprehensive interview schedule, they also expanded their own awareness of rape as a social rather than individual experience (1984, 490-491). The research was thus consciousness-raising for the researchers, as well as the research subjects.6

Because they are similar in some ways to actual consciousness-raising (CR) groups, feminist group interviews can have the effect of raising the consciousness of all the participants, including the researcher. However, significant differences between actual CR groups and feminist focus groups in many ways reduce the consciousness-raising potential of the focus groups. CR groups are leaderless groups that meet over an extended period of time for the purpose of discussing personal experiences (Reinhart 1992, 220-221). "In these meetings, women attempt to articulate a political analysis that will facilitate change . . . [The product of consciousness-raising is] a new way of thinking, relating, naming, or acting" (Reinhart 1992, 221). Focus groups, in contrast, have a leader, the researcher, and typically meet only once.
Participants may or may not ever see each other again. While the primary purpose of CR groups is to affect the consciousness of the immediate participants, the purpose of feminist focus groups is to produce data for analysis and publication in a research report. Any conscious-raising is a side effect rather than the primary goal. In both CR groups and feminist focus groups, however, the effects of the process are impossible to measure immediately. The question for both kinds of groups is to what extent they can influence and even transform the conditions in which they take place. What are the effects of raising women's consciousness or of producing a feminist research project? Both can be empowering and can participate in transforming patriarchal relations, although the immediate effect is likely to feel quite small and local.

Transformation and Empowerment

Tania Modleski (1991) argues that politically engaged feminist criticism should be performative. Rather than being content to uncover already existing meanings produced by already constituted subjectivities, feminist research should be aimed at "bringing into being new meanings and new subjectivities" (46). Bringing a group of women together to talk about issues that are important to them creates, even if only temporarily, connections and solidarity among women that contribute to feminist consciousness and social action. Group interviews, then, provide one of the best methods for a feminist cultural critic because they facilitate active transformations of consciousness. Alan Johnson makes a similar point when he argues that researchers can "overturn the marketer-consumer model for focus groups" and locate the research process instead in the "new politics of knowledge," in democratic social relations associated with the consciousness raising group, the strike committee, or the town meeting. Such an approach views the research process "as itself a 'transformational' intervention, at once scientific and political" (Johnson 1996, 525). Citing Raymond Padilla (1993), he argues that:

[Group discussions raise consciousness and empower the participants precisely because they "reveal to the investigator and to the subjects themselves the overt and hidden aspects of problematic experiences in everyday life." Group discussions can foster a collective identity among the participants because they can transcend individualism and connect up individual narratives, first to each other, and then to wider social, economic, cultural and political influences. (1996, 534)

In defining "empowerment," Bhavnani (1989), following Flacks (1983), defines "power" as "the capacity to influence the condition and terms of the everyday life of a community or society/ and "empowerment" as "the realization of this capacity... to create history" (Bhavnani 1989, 145, 149). Drawing on Grossberg (1987), I regard a practice as "empowering" to the extent that it enhances the conditions that enable people to engage in progressive practices and to live their lives in different and better
ways. Like CR groups, research projects can be empowering to the extent that they give women access to new information and new ways of thinking that enable them to question oppressive practices and try out alternatives. For example, Jon Goss and Thomas Leinbach (1996) note:

For many participants in our research the focus group was the first occasion on which they had spoken in public or had their opinion about an issue solicited. This was initially unnerving for some, but also empowering since their expertise and right to speak could be publicly established, and they began to develop new communication skills. (121)

In addition, research can potentially be empowering when research subjects have the opportunity to direct the research project itself. Reinharz (1992, 181-6) and Cancian (1992, 628) both describe participatory research projects in which the research subjects were involved in various stages of the study, including formulating the research questions and hypotheses, selecting participants, and analyzing the data. Although participants can become very involved in influencing the research process, I agree with those who question the idea that feminist research should be a truly collaborative process. "Fundamentally, the idea that the research relationship should be or ever can be equal in any sense is an illusion" (Millen 1997, 3.3).

It is we who have the time, resources and skills to conduct methodical work, to make sense of experience and locate individuals in historic and social contexts.... It is an illusion to think that, in anything short of a participatory research project, participants can have anything approaching "equal" knowledge to the researcher. (Kelly et al. 1994, 37).

Although involving the research subjects in all phases of the project is a laudable goal, it can slow down the process considerably. Additionally, few research participants can afford the time necessary, or even have the inclination, to participate in an academic research project to such an extent. Marjorie DeVault (1996, 38-9) questions feminist overemphasis on problems of power, that place "excessive demands" on feminist researchers. But, as Cancian (1992) argues, we will not be able to conduct truly feminist research and feminist methods will not become widely accepted until we change the hierarchical, elitist structure of academia.

Although I do not want to overemphasize the idea of "empowerment" as the reason for involving subjects in research, it is true that by participating in research people can contribute significantly to the description and analysis of a social issue that is of great importance to them (Opie 1990), and this can be empowering. For example, in response to my statement that the goal of my project is to explore the ways that women define sex, one participant in a group interview agreed that this kind of
research is needed because women have not had much opportunity to define sex for themselves.

Ingrid: Yes, because men are the ones that create those... out there in the advertising world, they create those images that are supposed to mean sex to us. I don't think women have really been able to put their input out there. We're not supposed to have an opinion on sex. We're supposed to just go along with it.

Angela: We're supposed to be ready.

Ingrid: But be ready, at any moment! (laughter)... No really, no wonder it's so hard for us to even say what it is to us, because we're not supposed to have an opinion. (Interview #6)

Along with validating the importance of participation in this research, Ingrid attributes the source of the interview group's inarticulateness about sex to some of the cultural forces that have silenced women's own perspectives.

In addition, research can empower those who have been seeking help for their own personal problems by enabling them to help others, such as the researcher, other group members, and people who may read the research report. The desire to help others in a similar situation is frequently the main reason people give for volunteering to participate in research (Bristow and Esper 1984, 494; Opie 1990, 64). If interviewers are responsive to individual concerns, then interviews can be therapeutic in a way that is empowering. This effect is heightened in group interviews because of the support such groups can provide. For some participants, reflecting on and re-evaluating their experience as part of the interview process can have important personal and political consequences (Opie 1990, 64).

Central to many discussions of feminist methodology is the notion that the purpose of knowledge is to change or transform patriarchy... Knowledge must be elicited and analyzed in a way that can be used by women to alter oppressive and exploitative conditions in their society. This means that research must be designed to provide a vision of the future as well as a structural picture of the present. (Cook and Fonow 1986, 12-13)

While it is difficult to assess, a project will be empowering to the extent that a researcher is attentive to the ways her project can provide not only a critique of conditions as they exist, but also a vision of alternatives for the future. In my project I not only asked the women in my groups to critique the images and messages that surround them, I also asked them to describe alternative images and messages they would like to see and promote. Also, the women not only provided support for each
other in dealing with particular personal issues. but the ways women described very different experiences and attitudes sparked the imagination about possible alternatives.

**Ethical Considerations**

Discussions of the ethics of a research project frequently focus on the project's results and the uses to which they are put. But feminist method-ologists are also concerned about the ethical issues involved in the research process itself, particularly in the relationship between the researcher and the research subjects.

It is important that research about oppressed groups attempts to alleviate repressive and exploitative aspects of the research process itself. Oppressed and vulnerable persons . . . are frequently the objects of social research. Typically, such research is structured so as to reinforce an alienated relationship between "researcher" and "subject. That is, oppressed groups are involved in relationships with others, which benefit those in power to a greater extent than the oppressed group benefits. (Malhotra 1984, 469)

Feminist researchers rigorously try to avoid perpetuating the exploitation of women through their research, and ethical issues are heightened in feminist methodology (Reinharz 1992,27). Anticipating the various needs of participants and reflecting on how people might benefit from participating in the research is one way to lessen exploitation. In my own project I was unable to offer participants financial remuneration, so I was very interested in the reasons women participated and the rewards they said they received. Their reasons included the expectation that the interviews would be fun or interesting, the desire to have a safe forum to talk about sex, interest in hearing what other women had to say, particular ideas that they wanted the research to include, and even their wish to help me out. It was important to consider the women's needs in order to effectively recruit research subjects, and to justify the commitment of time and self-revelation that I was asking of participants. Such considerations are especially important when conducting interviews with existing groups, where the researcher is usurping time people have set aside for their own needs.

In her one-on-one interviews with women with breast cancer, Kasper f 1994) attempted to meet the needs of the interviewees, as well as her own needs as a researcher by making the interview less hierarchical. She did not ask direct questions about "sensitive and difficult topics" but only pursued such topics as "fears, body image, sexuality, and the like" if the interviewee herself raised the issue (Kasper 1994, 270). Rasper's sensitive approach assumes that discussing difficult topics is exploitative, benefiting the researcher at the expense of the research subject.
However, many women do not have a safe environment for discussing certain personal concerns and might be relieved at the opportunity that the researcher provides. Open discussions of feelings might serve to demystify such issues as sexuality in relation to cancer and help other women resist the pressure to conform to standard medical practice, such as breast reconstruction surgery. Yet women might also need encouragement to talk about these issues. It is difficult to negotiate these issues sensitively in a one-on-one interview. However, having another woman raise the topic or hearing another woman's response to questions on this issue could be a very beneficial experience and encourage an interviewee to share her experiences more than an interviewer alone could do. I am not implying that Rasper's research does not provide the opportunity for this kind of experience, only that a group interview is more likely to promote discussion of sensitive issues and provide more support and validation than a single interviewer is able to provide.

The potential to give something back to the interview participants lessens the likelihood that group interviews will be a one-way exchange and makes the relationship between researcher and researched less exploitative. However, group interviews may inhibit trust and confidentiality, so the researcher must explicitly address these issues and establish common ground rules.

**Conducting Feminist Group Interviews**

**Recruiting Participants for Group Interviews**

Finding and recruiting participants is a vital part of a research project. Many practical and ethical issues arise before the subject sits down with the researcher and is ready to provide data. Because sampling issues for focus groups are similar to those for other kinds of qualitative studies, I will focus on the purpose of the sample in feminist group interviews. In quantitative studies, the primary concern in recruiting subjects is obtaining a random sample from which the researcher can generalize to the population. The primary goal of focus group interviews, however, is to learn about subjects' experiences and perspectives rather than to test hypotheses. In selecting participants for focus groups, sample bias rather than generalizability is of concern (Morgan 1988, 44-5). While a quantitative study requires a random sample to best represent the population, a focus group study requires participants who can provide the best data.

Dorothy Smith (1987), in proposing a sociology oriented "from the standpoint of women" and based on "the everyday world as problematic," argues that the validity of findings should not refer to how well the research subjects represent some larger population, but rather to how well the data describe particular instances of larger social processes. Rather than a random sample, the participants in focus groups can
be thought of as a collection of individuals whose experiences highlight the social relations of interest. Recruitment for focus groups does not try to represent the population in general but instead emphasizes theoretically chosen subgroups who can be expected to provide the best data (Morgan 1988, 44-5). Participants are chosen for their relevant experiences, as well as their level of self-awareness and comfort in discussing sensitive issues in front of others. When recruiting subjects for focus group interviews, concern with sample validity in the quantitative sense might actually reduce the quality of the data if it produces groups that cannot generate good discussions. The researcher will also attempt to bring together participants who are as diverse as possible in terms of categories relevant to the topic of the study.

In my own study, for example, I wanted participants who represented a wide age range and varied sexual orientations, who had given some thought to sexual issues and would feel comfortable discussing these with each other. For this reason I began recruiting participants through therapists and facilitators of a wide variety of support groups to whom I gave information to pass on to interested members of their groups. I assumed that through such groups I would have a greater chance of finding women who had given some thought to sexual issues and who would feel comfortable talking about them in a group setting.

In general, one has several options in recruiting for focus groups. The first option, which is not very different from recruiting volunteers for individual interviews, is to recruit individuals and arrange them into groups. Alternatively, a researcher can ask a potential participant to recruit friends who might be interested in participating (similar to "snowball" sampling). Another option is for a researcher to interview members of already existing groups. A researcher need not necessarily choose one of these strategies over the others. I used all three of these strategies and each kind of group has its benefits and drawbacks (which I will discuss below in relation to group dynamics). I focus here on the third option, recruiting participants from different kinds of support groups.

To recruit participants from already existing groups, the process of gaining access will vary depending on whether the group is facilitated or leaderless. Leaderless groups are usually open and easy to attend, but gaining access to group members for research purposes is more difficult than with professionally facilitated groups because no one can authorize participation in the research for the whole group.- approval has to be negotiated by consensus. The researcher seeking to recruit from existing groups should openly identify herself and her interests before attending group meetings to avoid the ethical issue of misrepresentation (Gordon 1987). Even though such honesty may prevent the researcher from attending a group, it is still possible to get a group member or facilitator to assist in recruiting people in such groups.
In groups that have a leader or facilitator, that person can act as a gatekeeper and unilaterally allow the research, or can be the researcher's advocate to group members. Group facilitators are very protective of group members, but also can be supportive of research that they perceive as important, especially studies of issues in which they have a personal stake. Again, the most effective approach with group facilitators is for the researcher to be honest about her identity, the goals of the study, and the role of the group facilitator in gaining access to group members.

A word of caution is also in order. Group interviews are not a shortcut to conducting many individual interviews. Unless one already has a group or groups available for study, recruiting for group interviews can be much more difficult and time consuming than for individual interviews because of the difficulty of finding people who will discuss private issues in a more public setting (rather than just with the interviewer), as well as the need to coordinate several people's schedules. However, the researcher who can surmount the difficulties of gaining access to relevant groups, and can portray the research in ways that will appeal to potential volunteers, will likely be rewarded with a group of extremely helpful, enthusiastic, self-aware, and articulate participants in the research process.

**Group Interview Dynamics**

The dynamics of already existing groups and ad hoc groups can vary widely, and there are benefits and drawbacks to each. In already existing groups, participants are familiar and comfortable with each other, and they can provide the researcher with information about each other's experiences that each participant may not think to explain. A drawback to such groups is that participants can be too familiar with each other. A woman in such a group may not provide much description and explanation of experiences that the others have already heard about. In such cases the researcher needs to pursue information and explanations that may seem obvious to the others, and avoid getting swept along into an "Oh yes, I know what you mean" kind of response. For example, in one interview I conducted with an alcohol recovery support group, Leonore talked about how traditional messages about sex led her to feel so guilty that the only way she could enjoy sex was under the influence of alcohol. During the ensuing exchange, the participants got so caught up in a particular point that I was not able to pursue explanations of things that were of interest to me, but that they all already knew about each other. I asked Leonore if using alcohol to get over the guilt led to problems.

Leonore: Oh yeah, definitely. I hadn't had sex without alcohol for ten years.
Beverly: Yeah, that's what led to problems for me was not having sex without alcohol.

Jill: Me too.
Leonore: And I really think, in order to give myself permission to be—infidelity, was the alcohol. Without the alcohol I wouldn't have been capable ...

FM: Of being with somebody besides your husband?

Leonore: Besides my husband, right. And I think that's what has happened more to the generation .... I know my daughters all lost their virginity because they had been drinking.... But I really feel that—

Jill: I definitely agree.

Leonore: It's a theory of my own, but I really feel, that—

Jill: No, I agree honey, I agree, totally.

Leonore: That's been a big part. Alcohol and drugs have really changed people's outlook on sex.

Jill: And as far as being careful, as far as AIDS, everything else. Under the influence it's the pleasure of the time. (Interview #3)

The conversation continued on the topic of the effect of alcohol on sexual behavior and I was not successful in bringing it back to discussing the circumstances of Leonore's infidelity (and I forgot to bring the issue up at a later point in the interview). In this case the participants' enthusiasm for a particular topic overrode my interest in an event with which they were probably already familiar. On the other hand, sometimes participants' familiarity with each other's stories can be an asset to a researcher. This was the case in another interview with a group of close friends (two of the participants, Terry and Abby were also lovers). Before each interview I had the participants fill out a questionnaire in which one of the questions was "What is the most interesting, fun, or outrageous sexual experience you have heard of?" During this interview, the topic of this survey question came up, and Jacquelyn and Abby prompted Terry to tell certain sexual stories:

Jacquelyn: Oh, Terry, tell your stories! The fun thing—Can I just tell why I like your stories so much? Because they're all just by yourself. I mean, all the fun ones, (laughter)

Terry: No no no!

Abby: The Rain Gutter one is not by herself!
Jacquelyn: Maybe I need to hear The Rain Gutter over again.

Abby: Oh, you haven't heard The Rain Gutter? Oh yeah.

FM: (to Jacquelyn) Well tell the story that you like.

Jacquelyn: Oh, it's just "One Hammock and One Unicycle." But they're not fair, because they're her stories, so (to Terry) you have to tell them. I mean you don't have to tell them, obviously, but—

Terry: About sex with myself?!

Abby: Your knee caps are starting to sweat. This is gonna be a good one. Terry has this wonderful barometer when she's starting to feel a little uncomfortable. She perspires.

Jacquelyn: Anyway, no, I don't think you should have to tell it. I'm sorry.

Terry: No, it's not really—

Abby: Tell the Rain Gutter story, that's a fun one. that's a good one.

Terry: That's actually just the most unusual place. It's obviously not the best sex I've had.

Abby: Well she asked about unusual, wild or outrageous. Not the best sex. . . . I don't think I want you to tell about the best sex you've ever had. [But] I would say that that was ... it was certainly interesting, and hopefully it was fun, and I would say your mother would probably say it was outrageous.

Terry: Uh huh. She probably heard it. Sliding down the roof.... (Interview #8)

Terry then proceeded to tell both stories, and she was prompted and assisted by Abby and Jacquelyn who encouraged her with their reactions and provided additional details. This example shows that it is possible to use participants' familiarity with each other as an asset, but the interviewer will have to be diligent in following up on topics that the participants do not discuss fully enough.

Conversely, groups in which participants know each other may feel uncomfortable revealing certain information, particularly about sexual issues, in front of people they know they will see again unless a high level of trust has been established. Thus support groups or friendship groups where there is already a high level of self-
revelation and trust are preferable to more casual groups of people who already know each other. In addition, if a support group's usual facilitator is present, her comments may carry more weight and greatly influence the discussion. In this instance, the researcher should speak with the group facilitator about these concerns ahead of time or include her in a different group interview. The group facilitator may even prefer to participate in a group where she can be anonymous and can play the same role as other participants. In my study I interviewed all the members, including the "leaders/7 of two groups, because these were peer support groups in which the leader was not seen as having a different status from the other group members. But in the case of another support group in which only the professional facilitator and one group member volunteered to participate in my study, I made sure to put them in different group interviews.

The dynamics of ad hoc groups composed of individual volunteers are somewhat different than groups in which the participants already know each other. In composing such ad hoc groups I have found that the best strategy is to maximize the connections among people by making the groups as homogeneous as possible in terms of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and relevant experiences. Not only do such groups facilitate discussion (Morgan 1996, 143), but homogenous groups also take the pressure off participants to "represent" their category, if, for example, one person in the group is the only person more than 40 years old, or the only lesbian, or the only member of any particular population. Other things being equal, anonymous groups that are more homogeneous will be more likely to foster a feeling of comfort and mutual understanding than anonymous groups in which participants are very different from each other. Participants in ad hoc groups need to introduce themselves more thoroughly and explain everything more carefully than they would with people they already know well. This obviously benefits a researcher who will get clearer descriptions and explanations of events and experiences. Nevertheless, the anonymity of such groups entails a trade-off: the participants may feel more comfortable revealing information to people who they do not expect to see again, but they will also require more time to develop trust in the group.

The dynamics of focus group interviews are very different from individual interviews. "The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan 1988, 12, emphasis in original). The questions in a group interview should be designed to promote group discussion. A few open-ended questions (and a short list of topics that I wanted to make sure the group addressed) worked far better in fostering lively two-hour discussions than a detailed list of questions about each individual's experiences and beliefs. I organized the interviews like "brainstorming" sessions, oriented toward getting as many ideas expressed as possible while also developing some kind of a consensus. For example, in eliciting
information about sexual norms I found it productive to ask group oriented questions such as "Let's talk about the definition of 'good sex'. What makes a sexual experience good?" This kind of question does prompt individuals to talk about their experiences, and it also facilitates group discussion of the topic.

The researcher may also need to explicitly encourage participants to respond to and interact with each other. This is especially important if participants have experience in self-help or support groups, particularly 12-step groups, in which "cross-talk" is not allowed. It can be helpful to tell the participants that you are interested in how they interact with each other and in hearing as full a range of opinions and experiences as possible, that they should feel free to question and respond to, and even to disagree with, each other. Once participants feel comfortable interacting, however, they will probably attempt to resolve any points of disagreement on their own. If one participant says something that contradicts others' experiences or beliefs, the others are very likely to challenge that statement, or at the very least ask for further explanation until the source of the disagreement can at least be understood if not eliminated. In feminist focus groups it is also quite likely that the interviewees have some interest in the research topic, and more often they have a great interest. Therefore it can be as important to the participants as it is to the researcher that they express themselves openly and challenge statements with which they disagree. The kind of exchange and negotiation that occurs when participants disagree or do not understand each other can be the most informative for the researcher and should be encouraged. The most I needed to do in this regard was to ask, "Does anyone have a different experience or opinion on that issue?" and most of the time I did not have to prompt them even this much.

Analyzing Focus Group Data Using Discourse Analysis

Interviews are used differently in discourse analysis than they are in traditional social science. Traditionally, social scientists use interviews as a source of information about people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. What people say in interviews is taken as evidence, with various degrees of reliability, of a reality outside of the interview itself. Similarly the researcher who uses focus groups in marketing research does want to know what each individual really thinks, what products they are likely to buy, what they really think about a particular advertising campaign. If the group dynamics prevent an individual from saying what she really thinks, then the researcher has failed to get accurate and useful data from that person.

These very issues that make the group interview difficult for getting consistent individual data make it ideal for exploring public discourse and taken-for-granted cultural assumptions. The research questions of discourse analysis are not about how accurately descriptions fit reality, but rather about discourse itself; not the individual
beliefs and experiences, but the talk itself is the subject of interest (Potter and Wetherell 1987, 160). Discourse analysis assumes that talk is not neutral but is both evaluative and performative. Talk performs actions and has consequences. Discourse analysts examine "how description and explanation are meshed together and how different kinds of explanations assume different kinds of objects or supply the social world with varying objects" (Potter and Wetherell 1987, 52). The interview data are not examined solely for what they reveal about the speakers' actual beliefs and activities. Instead the analysis concentrates on what people's talk reveals about the larger cultural discourse, the ways it is possible to talk in that culture, and the ways particular assumptions and ideas are connected. For example, Robyn Longhurst notes about her use of focus groups to study pregnant women's experiences, "When analysing the transcripts of the conversations I focused primarily on discourse—on meanings, narratives, explanations, accounts and anecdotes. That does not mean that I think that the material corporeal state of pregnancy is a simple matter of linguistic practice or of representation . . . but ideologies and social structures are intertwined with discourse" (1996, 145).

Group interviews create opportunities for a very productive level of analysis not available with individual interviews. The researcher can analyze not only what each participant reveals about herself, she can observe how people negotiate issues with each other, noting which ideas the group accepts and which statements spark disagreement. Instead of simply aggregating individual data, the researcher can directly observe the extent and nature of agreement and disagreement among participants (Morgan 1996, 139). Goss and Leinbach (1996, 115) argue that the group discussion that occurs in a focus group interview "provides valuable insight into social relations and that the 'stories' produced in the collaborative performance of a focus group better reflect the social nature of knowledge than a summation of individual narratives extracted in interviews" (see also Agar and Macdonald 1995, 80, 82, 84). Further, group interviews allow the participants themselves to observe and comment on their differences (Morgan 1996, 139). These points of agreement and dispute illuminate participants' underlying assumptions and the extent to which they share a culture of common sense understandings. How did different people interpret different questions? What statements did they all agree with? What ideas were difficult to express or seemed to need extensive justification? How did the women respond when they were challenged? The answers to these questions can tell us which ideas have legitimacy, in that group at least.

For example, in one interview a discussion of gender equity led to a discussion of gender differences in communication and biological differences in brain structure. On each point, all the women expressed general agreement with each other, building on each other’s comments rather than contradicting them. But when Connie asserted, "Women are the communicators," Beatriz immediately disagreed.
Beatriz: Well, I have a different hit on that right now that came out of doing this self-defense class because I got really angry at the woman who did the class, because she did what I call "male-bashing" and part of it had to do a little bit with what you're saying about men not communicating. [But] they just communicate non-verbally, and we define verbal as communication, and non-verbal is not. . . . And what I'm getting to about this self-defense class talking about, "Well women can wear what they want, they can go where they want, they can do what they want, they can wear high heels, dress up, and give all the non-verbal signals of 'Hi, I'm ready' and then say no." And I think that's true, but why are you doing that, and then mixing drugs and alcohol with this big mix of all those non-verbal signals to a non-verbal operating person?

Audrey: But you know, I'll tell you what. I was just mugged in August after years of doing street work all over this country (laughs) and I was with a guy, okay? I was with a guy and I got jumped by three teen-agers and beaten. We managed to get away and they caught the kids and they're in jail, but in terms of what I'm hearing you saying is like, I wasn't giving any message about anything— Beatriz: No no no I wasn't talking about that. Audrey: Well I just think you have to watch that whole thing about rape and attack, it's a crime of violence and anger, it's not a sexual crime, from my point of view. I don't think you give a come-hither—

Beatriz: No, I'm talking about frustration and, well, I'm working on this. I feel that there is some assaultiveness with non-verbal cues that girls should be told that it just is inappropriate. I agree with "violence is not sexual" but there's other things going on with—

Audrey: Well you know, one of the things that was a big learning experience for me in that whole deal was that I had been acculturated to feel more safe when I was with a man—

Beatriz: Ooooh.

Audrey: That you're protected when you're with a man. First of all you're more protected than when you're alone, but certainly somehow a guy will keep you safe. And that was not the case, at all. (Interview #2)

As Audrey goes on to describe her experience and make her argument, the topic moves to the issue of "safety"; all the women agree that they need to be aware of these issues but not let them determine how they live their lives. This movement in conversation topics, from gender differences in communication, to female responsibility for sexual assault, to an experience of a non-sexual attack that is taken as evidence that women do not in any way invite sexual assault, shows the ways that
the feminist idea that "rape is violence, not sex" has become widely accepted (although the precise connection between sex and violence is muddled). Interestingly, Beatriz was speaking specifically about rape, and maybe more generally about sexual misunderstandings, but Audrey associated Beatriz's remarks with a specific instance of non-sexual violence. When Audrey talks about it as a "learning experience," Beatriz's response indicates that she too assumed that women are safer when they are with men and that Audrey's experience has challenged this belief.

In this interview, the group accepted some statements about men and about sex differences, but challenged others. In almost all cases, however, the group eventually came to a consensus after a disagreement, indicating that they believed that any apparent contradiction between each other's ideas could be resolved. As this example illustrates, this does not mean that they resolved all issues of disagreement, only that in all cases they ended discussion of a topic on a note of consensus with the feeling that they had all come to an agreement.

I am not arguing that researchers who use feminist focus groups are unconcerned with whether women express themselves honestly or describe their experiences accurately, only that an accurate reflection of individual experience is not the focus of a discourse analysis. It is not individual perspectives but "the group point of view that is the goal of ethnographic research" (Agar and MacDonald 1995, 81). The point is not whether the data are likely to be more objective and accurate in either marketing or ethnographic group interviews, but rather that the goals and kinds of data obtained are very different for each.
Conclusion:
Group Interviews and Feminist Research Principles

My goal has been to further the development of focus group interviews as a valuable method for feminist social scientists. This method not only conforms to feminist principles but offers the possibility of expanding and utilizing them in new ways. The distinctiveness of feminist methodology is located in a shared commitment to three goals: 1) to "bring women in," that is to find what has been ignored, censored, and suppressed in the standard focus on men's concerns; 2) to minimize harm, control, and exploitation in the research process, using research strategies that are more inclusive and less hierarchical than the standard practice of social research; and 3) to conduct research that will be of value to women and will lead to social change or action beneficial to women (DeVault 1996, 32-3). Group interviews provide a new way for feminist researchers to meet these goals. Focus groups provide the opportunity for studying issues of gender and sexuality with a more egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the research subjects, and consciousness-raising and empowering interaction among participants. Rather than exploiting participants who may get very little in return, group interviews can provide support for participants and meet some of their needs.

Focus group interviews provide a way to study attitudes and beliefs, and more importantly can facilitate the kind of thinking that can lead people to question their previous assumptions. As Cook and Fonow (1986, 13) point out, "feminist research is ... not research about women but research for women to be used in transforming their sexist society." Group discussions can identify "local theories and popular knowledge" while group members may generate new knowledge as they attempt to understand their situation (Cancian 1992, 633). Group interviews can advance the transformation of patriarchal social institutions through research (Cook and Fonow 1986, 5) and through their potential for consciousness-raising and empowerment.

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Notes

1. Two recent volumes are Morgan 1993, and Vaughn et al. 1996.

2. This paper is concerned specifically with the application of feminist methodology to focus groups. For more general information on how to conduct focus groups, I recommend Morgan and Spanish 1984, Greenbaum 1988; Krueger 1988, and the articles in Morgan 1993, particularly those by Albrecht et al., Knodel, Krueger, and Zeller.

3. My comparison of focus groups to other methods is specifically in relation to the principles of feminist methodology. For a more general comparison of focus groups to other methods see Morgan 1996.

4. All of the names of participants that I use here are pseudonyms.

5. For example, most interviewers try to keep comments about their own experiences and ideas to a minimum, using them only to prompt the interviewee. In analyzing the interview transcripts, researchers usually ignore the parts of the interview in which they themselves speak because the interviewer is technically not a subject of the study and thus it is difficult to analyze this information in a systematic way. I do not have the answer to this problem here, I only point out that there is less need for such interviewer comments in a group interview because each participant can have this same prompting effect on the others.

6. When I began my research, like many feminists, I took it for granted that sex is a vitally important part of the human experience (Montell 1997). I had no particular critique about the importance we place on sex in our society, particularly for women, and how deeply conservative the connection between "love" and sex can be. Through listening to the women in my study discuss their ideas with each other, my own consciousness was raised about these issues. I also had my consciousness raised about my unthinking acceptance of ageist ideas about older women's sexuality and the idea that women who grew up before the sexual revolution are conservative and "repressed." Individual interviews would probably not have had as great an effect on my own consciousness because it would have been easier for me to isolate any surprising or challenging statements as coming from a few unusual individuals. When such ideas emerged as the product of consensus among a group of women, it was impossible for me to marginalize the ideas.

7. I also would have liked greater diversity in race and ethnicity, but I was unable to accomplish this.
8. I used the questionnaire as both a recruitment tool and as a way of getting certain consistent information about the participants. I included some questions that I thought would be "fun" to answer, as well as questions that provided standard demographic data such as age, occupation, sexual orientation, etc.

9. Discourse analysis is not the only, nor even the predominant, method of analysis for focus groups. An important factor in considering this kind of analysis is that it requires detailed transcripts from tape recordings of the interviews. I also found it impossible to distinguish speakers from each other without videotaping the interviews as well. If a videotape is used, it is imperative to inform participants beforehand. Although this may intimidate some potential participants, it is possible to reassure them that it is necessary to the project, that it will only be used for analyzing the data, and that their confidentiality will be absolutely respected. Some participants may still prefer to sit out of the frame or with their back to the camera, but I did not have any participants back out of the project because of the videotaping. See Bertrand et al. (1992) for a detailed description of alternative methods of recording the group interviews and analyzing the data. The methods they describe are based on, and are particularly useful for, international family planning and health research projects.

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FEMINIST CRITICISM OF THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Feminist criticism of research in the social sciences is directed toward both the general quantitative research process and quantitative data and data analysis in particular. The primary criticisms arise because so much of traditional quantitative research seems inconsistent with feminist values. First, much social research has been used to support sexist and elitist values. Little effort has been made to explore issues of importance to women. Second, the socially relevant research which has been generated often is not utilized 'appropriately,' that is, it has no real impact on social problems. Too many final reports or journal articles get dusty on the bookshelves of academicians or government bureaucrats. Third, there exist exploitive relationships among the research staff and between the staff and the respondents in the study. Too many needs or concerns of the research staff are secondary to the more immediate needs of meeting deadlines, seeking scarce funding or getting out a final report. And respondents are often seen as 'objects' of study, deceived and manipulated, for the benefit of the research product. Fourth, the high standards of methodological rigor are often simply overlooked when expedient. To learn and then employ all the quality controls of a research project is not a simple task and too often the standards for appropriate use of quantitative methodology are set aside when it is convenient. Fifth, quantitative data cannot convey an in-depth understanding of or feeling for the persons under study. This final criticism of the quantitative research process concerns the objective appearance of the quantitative research. There is an 'objective' aura about traditional research which makes it convincing and influential. Thus, findings which are often products of poor methodology and sexist bias are interpreted by the public as fact.

While most of these claims do have merit, the conclusion by some feminists that we must reject traditional research outright is debatable. A closer examination of each of the criticisms and a discussion of possible alternative procedures will clarify other options which are available to us.
Exploration of sexist and elitist issues

Anyone who glances through the indices of social science journals for the past thirty or forty years cannot deny that the great majority of research addresses issues of importance to white male academicians (Stasz Stoll, 1974; Cox, 1976; Frieze, et al. 1978). It has only been in the last ten years or so that some journals have consistently included research about women's issues. However slowly this change is taking place, it is now possible to find articles of relevance to women in most major social science journals. Although many established journalists in the US publish 'token' articles on women's research, some regularly include such research (see Child Development, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, and Journal of Educational Psychology). Furthermore, there are several journals which publish research exclusively about women and much of this research is carried out using quantitative methodology (see Psychology of Women Quarterly and Sex Roles). The issues addressed in much of this recent research are of prime interest to feminists, and include a broad range of topics such as sex discrimination, child care, pregnancy, sex role development, sexual harassment, educational equity, and spouse abuse. In addition, much of this research is carried out from a feminist perspective, and contributes to feminist theory.

Although funding for research on women's issues may be more difficult to secure in the near future, the past several years have seen an increase in research exploring issues of relevance to women. This change probably reflects not only the increased attention which women's issues have received in the popular media, but also the increased numbers of women entering graduate school and the academic job market in the social sciences. While traditional academic 'ethics' dictate the need to be relatively value-free in choosing a research area (Kerlinger, 1979), it is likely that many of these women are choosing research areas which are related to personal interests and values. According to Cox (1976), 'women seem to be more sensitive to the issues of values in social sciences, and without abandoning scientific goals, are more candid about having values that guide them in their work' (p. 13).

Under utilization of relevant social findings

From a political perspective, all quality social research ought to be used in policy decisions. Obviously, this is not what happens. Many social scientists feel that their obligation to research ends with a published document; whether results from their studies have any impact on policy seems to be of little concern. This attitude is reflected in the traditional research process: most educational programs in the social sciences do not include training in the utilization and dissemination of research. In fact, it is a controversial issue as to whether researchers ought to be involved in the decision-making process at all. While there is debate as to the
exact role of the researcher in policy-making, few would suggest that all researchers need to become experts in policy formulation.

Tangri and Strasburg (1979) note the importance of both traditional research conducted by researchers and the use of research in policy-making conducted by activists. They believe that while many investigators hope to see their findings utilized in policy decision-making, it is difficult for many already overburdened researchers to take on an additional role as activist. Tangri and Strasburg suggest that there can be an interaction between researchers and activists and that social researchers need not become activists in order to contribute to the political relevance of their work. While the role of the activist is to influence decision-makers, the equally important role of the researchers is to contribute knowledge of completed and ongoing studies relevant to the targeted problem; to help the activists frame their questions in research terms; and to develop research designs which incorporate mechanisms for ongoing evaluation (1979, p. 329).

As rare as actual utilization might be, Weiss and Bucuvalas (1977) point out that decision-makers are responsive to recommendations of social scientists when those recommendations support their own views of social issues. The fact that there are a minority of policy-makers who hold values which are consistent with a feminist perspective is not promising for the implementation of policy based on the utilization of social science research which supports feminist goals. Although we need to elect and support policy-makers who are sympathetic to our views and use relevant research data to support their recommendations, as researchers we need more direct strategies.

Tangri and Strasburg (1979) have analyzed the problems of utilization of women's research on policy formulation and offer some recommendations for generating politically useful research. The authors specifically mention that the researcher should be perceived by the policy-maker as 'objective,' and present findings which are statistically significant. This indicates that the use of quantitative research can be an effective tool in influencing policy-makers. These authors also point to the need to (1) make researchers more aware and employ those methods which make their data more useful to activists, and (2) change academic structures so that there is support for the use of these methods. Of course, the latter particularly will not be easy to achieve.

In another analysis of which factors affect the usefulness of research, Weiss and Bucuvalas (1977) identified one factor which consisted of items establishing 'trust' in the research. These items, which concern the methodological quality of the research, were 'statistical sophistication, objectivity, quantitative data, generalizability, validity and additions to descriptive, causal, or theoretical knowledge' (p. 218).
One important court decision which indicates the potential influence of quantitative data is *Griggs vs. Duke Power Company* (1971), which was argued under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Prior to this case, sex discrimination could be substantiated only if one could prove intent on the part of the defendant. The decision resulting from this case, however, was that discrimination could be indicated by presenting statistics which show a different and unfair impact on a racial, sex or other group covered by Title VII. This decision set a new course for discrimination suits.

Aside from the issue of the *direct* influence of social science research on policy decisions, it is important to consider the *indirect* effect, that is, the influence on public opinion. Some of the results from social research, particularly those concerning current or controversial issues, find their way into the popular media, such as *Psychology Today*, women's magazines or newspapers. Often these articles, depending on the extent of coverage, influence public opinion to such an extent that, ultimately, policy decisions are also affected. While this type of 'utilization' of social research has less of an apparent effect than a more direct approach, the political efficacy of the research may be more far-reaching, since it can directly affect people's lives. For example, research which indicated the pervasiveness of wife abuse may not have resulted in immediate policy change to combat the practice. However, popular media attention was so widespread that many victims who otherwise would have felt isolated and been self-blaming, instead sought support in centers and community support programs.

**Exploitive relationships between project staff and between staff and subjects of study**

Many of us who have been research assistants on research projects are aware of the problems of authoritative researchers who treat their staff and/or respondents as commodities. This problem is not unique to the social sciences and often occurs in other research settings where human (and animal) subjects are used. Reinharz (1979) describes the extreme case where research is conducted on a rape model: the researchers take, hit, and run. They intrude into their subjects' privacy, disrupt their perceptions, utilize false pretenses, manipulate the relationship, and give little or nothing in return. When the needs of the researchers are satisfied, they break off contact with the subject (P. 95).

In contrast, there are many researchers who are sensitive to these issues and relate well to their staff and respondents. One survey research project, whose director and staff were particularly respectful of the needs of respondents and interviewers, obtained a response rate of 98 per cent, indicating that these values were manifested in the attitudes of the research team. One interviewer,
commenting on the project's success, noted the following:
I do believe one of the reasons for the high response rate of the study is the fact that
interviewers do so enjoy working on the study. That is so important in getting people
to do a good job." During training the interviewers were so enthused about the
questionnaire and the interviewing situation that Heel this enthusiasm was transmitted
to the respondents, and they in turn were eager to do their parts (Freedman and

Both personality and personal value differences can account for some of this
difference in style. However, the authoritative structure of research projects and
institutions is contrary to feminist values and one might expect that feminist
researchers would be sensitive to these issues. According to Cox (1976), 'Academic
feminists question the value of the individualistic, striving, competitive, aggressive
style of achievement for either sex. The style of achievement in which feminists
would like to work is based on cooperation, mutual respect, interdependence' (p. 13).
The fact that many feminist researchers who do traditional research are not exploitive
of their staff and respondents suggests that the problem of exploitation is not inherent
in the traditional research process. The occurrence of exploitation can be reduced by
explicitly promoting more humanistic values in research training programs and by
setting examples for others through self-evaluation when doing our own research.
Furthermore, decisions which affect the funding of researchers should take into
account a researcher's treatment of staff and subjects.'

Abundance of 'quick and dirty research'

Much of the research in the social sciences is conducted to produce quickly some
publishable product. Often this research is not only poorly done but also not
comprehensive or thorough enough to test theory adequately. Standards of
appropriate research methodology are too often set aside due to high costs or time
constraints. In addition, poor quality research is often a result of the researcher not
having adequate research skills or training.

The structure of many academic and research institutions perpetuates this practice in
several ways. The most obvious are the 'publish or perish' policies of many
universities and colleges. The impact of this policy is enhanced by the policy of
journals to publish 'significant' findings from 'successful' research projects. These
policies often function to reward 'quick and dirty' research. For example, the
untenured assistant professor who needs a long list of publications (and these are
sometimes not evaluated for quality) may be more likely to use research methodology
which produces significant results instead of appropriate methodology and cut
corners in using other appropriate research methods since
they take more time. There are further pressures from funding agencies, superiors and colleagues. These pressures can act to make good quality research less rewarding than a more expedient, but 'adequate' product.

Another complicating factor is that, as students, we learn in the classroom to view the research process in idealistic terms. We assume that most research projects are carried out 'successfully.' According to the quality standards we have learned in texts or in the classroom, from these studies suggest some 'inherent' difference between the sexes (see Benbow and Stanley, 1980). For example, a study which looks at only sex differences in maths achievement might find correctly that boys do better than girls on certain maths achievement tests. By not exploring explanatory factors, researchers leave open possible reasons for the differences. While the numbers may be accurate, the simplistic nature of the design can be misleading to the public. Although it is impossible to examine all factors related to a behavior or attitude, it is important to collect enough "information so that conclusions drawn from the findings are meaningful and advance theory."

Simplistic research is not inherent to quantitative research but often results from sloppy methodology. In fact, quantitative methods make the analysis of complex research designs possible. Sophisticated quantitative methods and computer techniques have been developed in recent years and are being continually brought up to date in order to handle the analysis of complex data — for example, longitudinal designs.

Although qualitative data often seem more complex than quantitative data, it sometimes depends on which questions are asked by researchers. One could imagine qualitative data which, while thoroughly descriptive in regard to an attitude (e.g., boys are more active than girls), offers no insight as to the reasons for these beliefs. Good qualitative and quantitative researchers need to explore issues by asking appropriately complex questions.

While there is a practical limit to the complexity of quantitative data (and thus analysis), the limit for qualitative data seems higher since, at least theoretically, it can be as detailed as possible. For example, the quantification or "coding of an open-ended response puts certain limits on the number of different responses. Cost and time factors allow a practical limit on the number of codes used and the kind of dimensions coded. Qualitative data do not necessarily need such reinterpretation before analysis. On the one hand, the more complex qualitative data are the more difficult and less likely it is for there to be consensus in analysis. On the other hand, the more complex the qualitative data are, the less superficial and potentially more meaningful they are.

No matter how thorough the questions in quantitative research, quantitative data will yield findings which are superficial in nature, compared to
most qualitative data. Even the most complex and sophisticated quantitative research report cannot impart the same 'in-depth' understanding of respondents as, for example, a thorough case history. This is most likely due to detailed description which is lacking in quantitative research.

It seems apparent therefore that quantitative research could benefit from the addition of qualitative data. Certainly qualitative data can support and explicate the meaning of quantitative research. Every quantitative research project should include some qualitative data, not only for use by researchers to understand their respondents better, but also to include in presentations and publications so that others may gain a deeper understanding of the quantified results.

**Objective appearance of quantitative data**

Feminists have argued that 'quick and dirty' quantitative social science research often gets interpreted by the public as the 'truth'; the public does not distinguish between good and bad social science. Most researchers would agree that quantitative data appear to be more objective than qualitative data. However, no social researcher can claim that quantitative data are either truly objective or that they measure 'reality.' What they can claim is that 'good' quantitative data (meeting accepted standards of validity) can be used more objectively to evaluate theory than qualitative data. This claim is based on the fact that the principles and guidelines for quantitative data analysis have been specifically developed to produce an objective evaluation. This is true to a greater extent than in qualitative research.

To understand this dialogue more clearly it is important to distinguish between objectivity in the research process and objectivity as a part of the analysis of data. First, there can be no such thing as truly 'objective' research in the sense that the product of research is not subject to our own value judgments (Babbie, 1979). Personal biases impinge on the research process in many ways, particularly in theory formulation and interpretation, but also in development of design, data collection, and analysis. However, by using accepted standards of research, the final product can be less subject to those biases. Or at least one can more readily identify the biases that may have been operative. Thus while there is no absolute objectivity possible, the research product can be more or less objective and the nature of the bias can be more or less easily evaluated. For example, a research project in which interviewers openly make personal comments on a respondent's answers may produce less objective data than one in which interviewers comment little.

Second, quantitative analysis is, as much as possible, an objective evaluation of data because it is conducted according to generally accepted
procedural methods based on mathematical principles. These principles applied to the analysis of data result in a product which is relatively unaffected by personal bias. This is because mathematics is based on logical assumptions that are usually not open for debate. For example, suppose that a researcher is interested in why some women find it difficult to return to work after being full-time homemakers. A quantitative researcher might ask respondents to indicate the importance of various reasons. (A skilled researcher would include a comprehensive list of reasons and allow for unanticipated reasons.) Quantitative analyses could produce statistical evidence that most women feel that lack of good jobs is the most important reason. Further, the analysis could indicate either that no other reasons were important or that several other reasons were marginally or similarly important. The relative degree of importance of various factors could be specifically determined. This interpretation of the data could not reasonably be refuted because the analysis is a logical (mathematical) interpretation of data. Babbie (1979) terms this phenomenon 'intersubjectivity' and defines it as 'two scientists with different subjective orientations arriving at the same conclusion if each conducted the same experiment' (p. 52).

A qualitative researcher exploring the same issue might ask women why it was difficult to return to work. Many reasons might be given and analysis without quantification might indicate that poor job possibilities was a major one. However, this analysis would be more subject to debate and thus personal judgment because the evaluation was not based on standards as objective as mathematical principles.

Another researcher might say that job possibilities was not such an important reason and a third researcher might arrive at an altogether different opinion.

The appearance of objectivity is a powerful tool for changing public opinion. As feminists, we need to monitor closely and publicize the problems with research which appears objective — but in fact may be a product of poor methodology and/or subjective bias. (See Parsons (1981) and Parlee (1976) for examples of responses to such research.) Furthermore, we can use this power of quantitative research to our advantage to change public or political opinion in support of feminist goals. For example, we can document the enormous number of unwanted teenage pregnancies in support of free access to birth control. We can document the sex discrimination which occurs in school systems and use it to advocate change. This documentation is possible because of the use of quantitative research methods.

More important than using the appearance of objectivity for our benefit is the actual objectivity which quantitative methods allow in theory evaluation (i.e., data analysis). As noted earlier, it is imperative for feminist theory to be assessed accurately so it can be used to direct political and research work. For example, there may be differing opinions as to why sexual harassment occurs in the
began and carried our research.
As a feminist and a social science researcher, I have clear and strong political and personal goals for my research. The topics I choose to study and the theory I use to direct my research are strongly affected by these goals. To evaluate my theories as accurately as possible, I use some traditional research procedures and quantitative methods. Using these methods does not lessen in any way my strong commitment to feminism, or my appreciation of the value of qualitative research. And my commitment to feminism does not necessarily mean that my research is of poor quality due to bias.

**Generalizing with quantitative research**

One important part of the quantitative research process is generalizing. When researchers study a large group of people, they usually cannot gain information on all the persons in the group due to time and cost factors. They often select a smaller sample of persons from the larger group to furnish the needed information. If the sample is selected so that it is representative of the larger population, then the researcher can correctly (while accounting for small errors) infer that the information found in the sample applies to the larger population. The validity of this inference is obviously important if one wishes to make generalized statements. This issue is especially critical in reviewing certain methods of qualitative research since some methods (particularly case" history) do not permit generalization. Many aspects of Freudian psychology are good examples of generalization from a non-representative sample.

Generalized statements are important both for advising policymakers of public opinion and deciding on strategies for bringing about change in public opinion itself. This can be useful to feminists, who, for example, need to know the strength of public support for the right to life amendment or the ERA, in order to develop appropriate political strategies for action.

**Conclusions**

As indicated above, most of the feminist criticisms of the traditional quantitative research process have merit, although an exploration of the issues surrounding these criticisms indicates the need for caution in condemning quantitative research altogether. The discussion of the criticisms also suggests methods for resolving those problems which do arise. These suggested changes in the traditional research process, which increase consistency with feminist values, will obviously not be fully implemented for some time. In the meantime, as feminists we have two plausible options for dealing with existing inconsistencies. We can either reject quantitative research altogether or value it for its benefits and
work to change those elements which are antithetical to feminist ideas. (I do not consider ignoring the inconsistencies a plausible option.)

My preference is for the second option, since I believe it is the most effective method for changing the sexist structure of society to a more egalitarian one. There must be appropriate qualitative evidence to counter the pervasive and influential quantitative sexist research which has and continues to be generated in the social sciences. Feminist researchers can best accomplish this. If some of their traditional procedures used to produce that needed evidence are contrary to feminist values, then we must change those procedures accordingly. In the process of change we not only must remember to view our research in a political context as outlined above in this paper, but we must support one another against the academic and professional pressures to compromise our standards. The better quality research that we do, the more likely that that research will influence others and ultimately help in achieving their goals.
THE QUANTITATIVE/QUALITATIVE DEBATE AND FEMINIST RESEARCH: A SUBJECTIVE VIEW OF OBJECTIVITY

Nicole Westmarland

Abstract: Research methods are "technique(s) for... gathering data" (HARDING 1986) and are generally dichotomised into being either quantitative or qualitative. It has been argued that methodology has been gendered (OAKLEY 1997; 1998), with quantitative methods traditionally being associated with words such as positivism, scientific, objectivity, statistics and masculinity. In contrast, qualitative methods have generally been associated with interpretivism, non-scientific, subjectivity and femininity. These associations have led some feminist researchers to criticise (REINHARZ 1979; GRAHAM 1983; PUGH 1990) or even reject (GRAHAM & RAWLINGS 1980) the quantitative approach, arguing that it is in direct conflict with the aims of feminist research (GRAHAM 1983; MIES 1983). It has been argued that qualitative methods are more appropriate for feminist research by allowing subjective knowledge (DEPNER 1981; DEUILLI KLEIN 1983), and a more equal relationship between the researcher and the researched (OAKLEY 1974; JAYARATNE 1983; STANLEY & WISE 1990).

This paper considers the quantitative/qualitative divide and the epistemological reasoning behind the debate before investigating two research methods, the statistical survey and the semi-structured interview, in respect of their use to feminist researchers. It concludes by arguing that different feminist issues need different research methods, and that as long as they are applied from a feminist perspective there is no need for the dichotomous "us against them", "quantitative against qualitative" debates.

Table of Contents
1. Introduction
2. Epistemological Issues
3. The Statistical Survey
1. Introduction

This paper is designed primarily to summarise the quantitative/qualitative debate from a feminist perspective. However I must first note that there is no one feminist perspective, and hence no one feminist methodology. As Caroline RAMAZANOGLU (1992) highlights, "What one means by feminist methodology depends in part on which authors one takes as examples" (p.208) and hence it is important while reading this paper to recognise the divisions within and between feminisms, as well as the divisions between feminist and non-feminist researchers. [1]

In order to fully understand the debate between quantitative and qualitative research methods and its relevance to feminist research it is necessary to consider the underpinning epistemological issues. Feminist researchers have criticised quantitative positivistic methods for ignoring and excluding women (e.g. OAKLEY 1974) and "adding" women to male knowledge, whereby the findings from research on men are generalised to women (STANLEY & WISE 1993), or "malestream methods" are used to research the experiences of women (MIES 1983). Jessie BERNARD (1975) questioned why research is conducted in certain fields of study but not others and how objectives, methodological and ideological stances are determined, and concluded that they all mirror maleness. This was also highlighted by Dorothy SMITH (1974, p.7) who argued "sociology ... has been based on and built up within the male social universe". [2]

Second wave feminism developed in the 1960's and questioned not only how knowledge is produced, but also who produces it and how it is used. Barbara DUBOIS (1983) highlights that what has been named "universal" knowledge is actually male knowledge, derived from male scholarship and therefore fundamentally flawed. She emphasises the androcentric basis of the social sciences and explains that the "person" has been considered to be male, and the female, the woman, has been defined in terms, not of what she is, but of what she is not... The androcentric
perspective in social science has rendered women not only unknown, but virtually *unknowable*, (p.107, italics in original) [3]

Due to this androcentricity and the muting of women's voices within the social sciences, Shulamit REINHARZ (1992) suggests that rather than concentrating on the "sociology of knowledge" we should actually be investigating the "sociology of the lack of knowledge". She argues that this perspective "examines how and why knowledge is not produced, is obliterated, or is not incorporated into a canon" (p.248). It is this questioning of knowledge that forms the basis for feminist epistemological issues. [4]

2. Epistemological Issues

In the sixth century BC the Pythagorean school of thought developed a table of opposites based on the primary contrast between form (good) and formlessness, or matter (bad, inferior). In this relationship male (form) is set up as dichotomous to female (formlessness). These associations formed the arguments by Greek philosophers such as PLATO (427-347BC) who suggested that women originated from the souls of men who lacked reason (see LLOYD 1984, p.5). These ideas were still prevalent in the early seventeenth century when Francis BACON (1561-1626) related the concepts of form and matter to knowledge (male), and nature (female). BACON claimed that nature is an object of knowledge, with men being the "knowers" and women the "knowable". An analysis by Genevieve LLOYD (1984) led her to conclude that "the maleness of the Man of Reason ... is no superficial linguistic bias. It lies deep in our philosophical tradition" (p.ix). [5]

Knowledge has traditionally been measured by how objective it is deemed to be, in the belief that if the reliability, objectivity and validity "rules" are followed "the truth" will be discovered. If research does not follow the "rules" it is often criticised and dismissed as methodologically flawed and hence "untrue". An example of this can be found in an introductory research methods textbook for psychology in which the author writes; "a majority of psychologists would agree that research should be scientific, and at the very least that it should be objective, controlled and checkable" (COOLICAN 1994, p.4). This statement is problematic in that it is not only saying objective research is desirable, but also assumes total objectivity is possible. Angela MCROBBIE (1982) argues that "representations are interpretations ... they employ a whole set of selective devices such as highlighting, editing, cutting, transcribing and inflecting" (p.51). This highlights the idea that quantitative data, like qualitative data, is interpreted and often manipulated by the researcher and therefore incorporates subjective acts within a supposedly pure objective analysis. Additionally, the striving for objectivity may result in the downplaying of validity if participants feel uncomfortable with the researcher. [6]
Even if the research methods employed are "hard" quantitative ones, they can never be purely objective. Humans, be they female or male, are not computers, and are unable to process information without some degree of subjective interpretation. This starts with the first stage of research: identifying the topic to be studied invariably involves subjectivity. As the process continues this is highlighted further, indeed, the introduction, or literature review, at the beginning of a report is actually a review of the literature that the researcher has deemed to be relevant. This has lead Caroline RAMAZANOGLU (1992) to argue that "it is more logical to accept our subjectivity, our emotions and our socially grounded positions than to assume some of us can rise above them" (p.211). Feminists have broadly rejected the idea of methods premised on the idea of "objectivity" being used to measure social knowledge, and have described such approaches as "an excuse for a power relationship" (STANLEY & WISE 1993, p. 167). This rejection of pure objectivity is not limited to feminist researchers, and many other sociologists have questioned and rejected the notion, preferring to make knowledge claims based on findings being corroborated by other research. [7]

Feminist standpoint theorists such as Nancy HARTSTOCK and Dorothy SMITH argue within a Marxist framework that women can actually produce better knowledge rather than men due to their sex-class position. Research by feminist standpoint theorists is held to produce more complete, less distorted knowledge (HARDING 1986), and is based on MARX's concept of the "proletarian standpoint". Nancy HARTSTOCK (1983) argues that those in domination can only ever have or produce partial knowledge. Feminist standpoint theory has been rejected by Donna HARAWAY (1991), who argues that neither women nor men can ever have total knowledge, as all knowledge is partial. Post-modern feminists have made similar criticisms, claiming there is no one "truth" and although all standpoints are conflicting, none are privileged. These theories expand upon the work of earlier sociologists such as C.W. MILLS (1959), who argued that social laws are always historically specific. However feminists have added gender to the "hat" and shaken it up again. [8]

The problem with rejecting the notion of objectivity is that there remains a need for a measure by which to judge knowledge. HARAWAY (1991) suggests that the notion of complete objectivity should be redefined and replaced by situated knowledge, in which the researcher recognises that knowledge can never be regarded as universal. She writes "situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent" (p. 198) and many feminists have started to include an "intellectual biography" (STANLEY & WISE 1983; 1990) in their work, hence acknowledging both the situation the knowledge was produced in, and the located knowledge of the researcher. [9]
Others have argued that the measure by which to judge research should be the effect it has on improving women's lives (REINHARZ 1983) and the role it has in aiding the emancipation of women. Maria MIES (1983) suggests that "the "truth" of a theory is not dependent on the application of certain methodologies and rules but on its potential to orient the processes of praxis towards progressive emancipation and humanisation" (p. 124). Experience has also been suggested as a measure of knowledge, and an important contribution is made by DUBOIS (1983) in arguing that a rejection of absolute standards based on notions of objectivity in favour of relativist standards based on subjective experience in no way makes the research less critical, rigorous or accurate. The use of experience as an index of the adequacy of research is, however, still contested by some researchers (most strongly by HAMMERSLEY 1992). [10]

In order to demonstrate how these theoretical aspects of feminist methodology(s) are operationalised in empirical social research I will now discuss two methods, the semi/unstructured interview and the statistical survey, in view of their uses and their limitations in contributing to feminist knowledge. [11]

3. The Statistical Survey

Surveys are generally used to obtain responses from a sample that can be coded with variable labels and statistically analysed, with the results being generalised to a wider population. Due to the nature of the questions asked and the process of analysis (for example, frequency counts, calculation of the mean, between-group comparisons, in short, the kinds of operations associated with use of a statistical computer package, such as SPSS), the survey is generally defined as a quantitative method, and is utilised to examine widespread social issues whereby the results of a sample can be generalised upon to reflect society as a whole. The use of surveys to collect statistics has been criticised by many feminist researchers. Criticisms often focus on the crudeness of survey questions and data, which are arguably too simplistic to examine the complexity of the social issues being addressed. Denise FARRAN (1990) argues that rather than statistics being a representation of social reality, they are actually a construction of reality. She argues that statistics are "divorced from the context of their construction and thus lose the meanings they had for the people involved" (p. 101). This has also been highlighted by Anne PUHG (1990), who argues that statistics need "chaperoning" (p. 109), as they are often used out of context and generalised upon. [12]

Hilary GRAHAM (1983) criticises many aspects of the survey method, arguing that it "reflects the ideology of the nineteenth-century world in which it was developed" (p. 132). She concludes that "the survey may well frustrate, from its inception, a feminist
programme" (p. 133). She argues that the survey method treats all individuals as being equal units and therefore does not reflect the patriarchal society in which the data are gathered. GRAHAM names her article "Do her answers fit his questions?", highlighting the subjectivity involved in composing questions for a survey. This is emphasised by Liz KELLY et al., who argue that "asking 'have you ever been raped?' will produce different responses from asking 'have you ever been forced to have sex?'" (1992, p. 109), indicating that women do not always label forced sex as rape. Similarly, in a study investigating violence against female and male taxi drivers (WESTMARLAND & ANDERSON 2001) I wished to discover the prevalence of sexual abuse, but used the term "sexual harassment" rather than "abuse" in the questionnaire distributed. Although I believe that sexual harassment is a form of sexual abuse, the term "abuse" in contemporary society is generally used to describe abuse against children. I therefore feel a higher number of participants gave a response to the question "have you ever experienced sexual harassment at work?" than would have if I had asked "have you ever experienced sexual abuse at work?", despite my view that it is the same experience. Additionally, one male participant refused to answer any further questions when he came to this question, claiming "this questionnaire is designed for women". Interestingly the research showed that male taxi drivers are sexually harassed at work, albeit not to the same extent as women. [13]

The questions not asked can influence the research findings as much as the questions asked, which was also highlighted in my taxi driver research. The question about sexual abuse/harassment was a question not asked in previous research about violence towards taxi drivers. If a phenomenon is assumed not to affect a population there will generally be no relevant question included, hence suppressing and nullifying the experiences of the population studied. The "naming" of women's issues by feminist researchers has made (and is still making) an important contribution to the women's liberation movement as a whole. The significance of naming is described by Barbara DUBOIS (1983), who argues that naming defines the quality and value to that which is named—and it also denies reality and value to that which is named, never uttered. That which has no name, that for which we have no words or concepts, is rendered mute and invisible: powerless to inform or transform our consciousness of our experience, our understanding, our vision; powerless to claim its own existence (p. 108). [14]

She further argues that the social sciences have maintained and perpetuated the muteness of women's voices. [15]

In a further study of taxi-drivers, I found that the female drivers rarely named their experiences as "violent" in the survey, but follow-up unstructured interviews revealed that the women frequently invalidated and normalised their experiences of violence.
(WESTMARLAND 2001). This emphasises differing definitions of violence, with the women refusing to define an act as violent unless it included a physical attack, hence using a very different criterion to define violence than the one I was applying. It was acknowledged in advance that this was a potential flaw in the research design, however, possible solutions were thought not to be suitable. For example, one solution might be to define the phenomenon before asking each question. However, this would also raise questions of researcher objectivity and subjectivity. Whose definition would I be using? If I used my definition of violence am I implying that my definition of violence is more accurate (more "true") than the taxi drivers' own definitions? Would I then be labelling their experiences for them? A further alternative would have been to extend the questionnaire to ask about specific acts. For example instead of asking "have you ever experienced physical violence at work?" it would be possible to break this question into interrelated questions, such as "have you ever been hit at work?" and "have you ever been hit with an object while at work?" This, however, raises further issues: what exactly is the definition of the word "hit"? Does a "slap" count as a "hit"? What about a "head-butt"? Additionally, if a taxi driver in this area of the UK talked about being "hit" they would not be referring to a physical attack, but to a car crash in which they had been involved. To refer to a physical attack, phrases such as "got scragged", "took a beating", or "got done in" would be used by taxi drivers in the town in which the research was conducted. A further problem with this approach is that to extensively use definitions and add further interrelated questions would make the questionnaire substantially longer than the three pages of my survey. Length is an issue in obtaining a sound response rate. Past researchers have reported problems with response rates to their questionnaires by taxi drivers, for example a response rate of 7.4% was reported by Ian RADBONE (1997) whose survey contained 68 questions and was 14 pages long. This poor response rate is likely to have been related to the length of the questionnaire. It was therefore decided early in the research process that the definition of the various acts of violence should be determined by the respondent. Therefore, if the taxi driver had perceived an act as being physically abusive then it was recorded as such. This was the same for acts of verbal abuse and sexual harassment/abuse, hence the researchers own definitions were abandoned in favour of those of the participants. Although this is not ideal it was felt to be the best strategy, and it should be noted that, in reporting the research, no claims of objectivity, reliability or validity were made. [16]

Not all feminists have argued against the use of quantitative methods within feminist research, for example Toby JAYARATNE (1983) warns feminists against a total rejection of quantitative methods, and O'LEARY (1977) argues that to link feminist research with qualitative methods simply reinforces traditional dichotomies that may not be in the best interests of feminist research. These arguments in favour of quantitative methods are strengthened by the many examples of their effective use. For example, Betty FRIEDAN (1963) used survey data to develop her analysis of the
"problem that has no name": a book which greatly influenced second wave feminism, and Shulamit REINHARZ (1992) highlights that survey based data can be useful in looking at the prevalence and distribution of particular social problems. An example of this use of survey data can be found in the work of ANDERSON, BROWN and CAMPBELL (1993) who investigated sexual harassment within the police force. They found that nine out of ten women police officers had experienced sexual harassment at work, and that one in ten had considered resigning from the police force due to this harassment. Figures such as these would be extremely time-consuming, expensive and difficult to obtain on a national level using qualitative methods such as interviews. [17]

Helen ROBERTS (1981) suggests that the reason that relatively few women are involved in quantitative research may be explained by the "inadequacy of certain statistical procedures in looking at sex differences" (p.23) whereby crude and simplistic data-labelling does not reflect the complexity of women's experiences. Similarly Lorraine GELSTORPE (1990) suggests that "the problem is perhaps not quantification itself but insensitive quantification". (p.91). Needless to say, if quantification is crudely done it is invalid. GELSTORPE and MORRIS (1990), writing about domestic violence, argue that although positivist quantitative methods are generally abandoned by feminists in favour of qualitative approaches, the value of quantitative methods in this research field depends greatly on the questions being asked. They argue that quantitative methods can prove useful in producing background data, and concluded that "feminist researchers use a multiplicity of methods to explore wife-battering" (p.86). Survey data has also added to feminists' understanding of rape and has been used to identify attitudes about rape (e.g. READ & MILLER 1993), and to examine the prevalence of unreported rape against women by their husbands (e.g. PAINTER & FARRINGTON 1998). [18]

It is also important for researchers to "speak the same language" as those to whom the research will be presented. Audrey HUNT (1986) highlights the need for feminist research to produce statistics in order to formulate legislation, and Mary MAYNARD (1994) emphasises the role that quantitative methods have played in identifying the feminisation of poverty, arguing "the political potential of such work should not be underestimated" (p. 13, italics in original). Similarly, Shulamit REINHARZ (1992) points to the use of survey data in the formulation of laws and policy making, highlighting that "statistical information about sexual harassment... contributed to its reification in ways that encouraged the establishment of sexual harassment committees in universities and ... eventually provided legal redress for individuals." (p.80) [19]

In attempting to make a government take a feminist issue seriously, it is essential to present research in the (masculine?) language such a research audience expects.
Governments are less concerned with the concerns of individuals per se but rather with the wider picture and, it may be argued, they are more likely to take issues seriously if they are presented in this way, and in their language. [20]

4. The Semi-structured and Unstructured Interview

In contrast to the quantitative paradigm, qualitative researchers are generally more concerned with validity, rather than objectivity and reliability, and put less emphasis on finding "the truth". Semi and unstructured interviews are methods widely used in feminist research as they are claimed to "convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the persons studied" (JAYARATNE 1983, p. 145). Feminist researchers, greatly influenced by the work of Ann OAKLEY, make every effort to conduct interviews in a way that does not further oppress the participant. They attempt to actively involve the participant in the research process as much as possible. They reject the use of the word "subject" that implies the participant is an insensate object to be experimented on and observed like an animal in a zoo. Although a more equal relationship between the researcher and participant is often cited as increasing the validity of the research, this is not the primary reason feminist researchers insist upon this relationship. Feminist researchers are working within the wider women's liberation movement and are working towards the overall aim of all women being free from oppression. It is hence clearly not acceptable for researchers to further oppress women in the name of academic research. [21]

Historically malestream [sic] textbooks have documented the way an interview should be conducted, for example recommending distance between the interviewer and interviewee, not revealing the feelings or standpoint of the researcher, and not sharing knowledge. These guidelines were questioned by interactionist sociologists such as Howard BECKER (1971), who suggested that interviews should be more conversational in nature, and feminists such as Ann OAKLEY have argued that this is particularly salient when interviewing women. She argues that traditional guidelines contradict the aims of feminist research (OAKLEY 1981) and that for a feminist interviewing women, the "use of prescribed interviewing practice is morally indefensible (and) general and irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of the textbook are exposed" (p.41; see OAKLEY 1981 for examples of textbooks). [22]

Interview techniques have been adapted by interpretivist sociologists and feminist researchers to be more participant-friendly and these guidelines have been integrated into many mainstream contemporary textbooks (for example BURGESS 1984). [23]

Traditional research methods textbooks also advise against conducting research in which you are emotionally involved in some way, in the guise that this will minimise the supposed objectivity of the study. It has conversely been argued that a close and
equal relationship to the researched can actually lead to an acquisition of more fruitful and significant data (FINCH 1984; OAKLEY 1981). Clara GREEN (1990) writes of similar issues when she discusses her experience as a feminist surveyor while researching the position of women in surveying. She sees research as a two-way interaction, and writes:

So I am studying a world of which I myself am part, with all the emotional involvement and accusations of subjectivity that this creates. I do not attempt to keep my surveyors at arm's length and do research "on" them as my subjects whilst maintaining a dominant position, as is common in much traditional "objective" research (p.145). [24]

This was the perspective that I adopted when interviewing female taxi drivers utilising my personal experience as a night shift taxi driver (WESTMARLAND 2001). I found that rather than hindering the research process this downplayed the researcher's new academic status, resulting in a more relaxed environment for both the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewees were also encouraged to invent their own pseudonyms in an attempt to further balance power relations. [25]

The interview can therefore be complementary, rather than oppositional, to survey research. Rather than the "us against them" relationship, interviews can give a deeper, more complex knowledge of the issues named by survey research. For example if we are faced with a chocolate, we can see from the outside that it is a chocolate, however we must delve deeper to discover whether it is hard or soft, has a hazelnut or an orange centre, and so on. It is this inner knowledge that is gained by interviews. They also allow us to validate to some degree what we have found in related quantitative research. The chocolate that looked like a hazelnut from the outside may turn out to have a soft orange centre when more closely examined. As described in the previous section where survey research was used to inform governments of the prevalence of women's issues, interviews allow us to delve deeper and more fully explain these issues. It is therefore not enough to simply know, for example, that women are more likely to be raped by acquaintances (45% of rapes; HARRIS & GRACE 1999) or intimates (43% of rapes) than by strangers (12% of rapes), and that only 6% of rape cases reported to the police result in a conviction (HARRIS & GRACE 1999), we need to know how this affects the lives of women. Feminism is primarily a movement for social change and only by delving deeper than the surface can we find out not only what needs to be changed, but also how it can be changed. [26]

5. Conclusion

This paper has described not feminist research methods, but rather research methods adapted for feminist use. What has traditionally been seen as a strength of
quantitative research, namely objectivity, has been shown to reflect the subjective knowledge of the researcher and hence reveals the false dichotomization of objectivity and subjectivity, and of quantitative and qualitative methods. Without this unnecessary opposition the usefulness of mixed method research can be realised and feminist perspectives on research can be acknowledged simply as "good" research. I have demonstrated the usefulness of quantitative methods in the naming of women's oppression and also the usefulness of qualitative methods for delving further and using feminist research for change within the women's liberation movement. Although a survey may be the best way to discover the prevalence of problems, interviews are needed to fully understand women's experiences and theorise these experiences with a view towards social change. For example, a survey can tell us that women working outside the home generally get paid less than men, but does not explain how this makes women feel and how it affects their lives as a whole. [27]

To conclude, and in acknowledgement of discussion about other research methods, I support the stance taken by KELLY, REGAN and BURTON (1992) when they argue "what makes feminist research feminist is less the method used, and more how it is used and what it is used for" (p. 150). Different feminist issues need different research methods, and as long as they are applied from a feminist perspective there is no need for the dichotomous "us against them", "quantitative against qualitative" debates. Neither method is "hard" nor "soft"—they are methods, and their success depends solely upon the researcher employing them. Feminists need broad-based knowledge as much as they need individual women's experiences. [28]

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References


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**EXPERIENTIAL ANALYSIS: A CONTRIBUTION TO FEMINIST RESEARCH**

Shulamit Reinharz

**Introduction**

In 1979 I published a book written over several years, documenting existential-methodological problems encountered in the process of becoming a female social scientist (Reinharz, 1979). Using a combined autobiographical, literature review, and theoretical perspective, I described an intellectual journey starting with training in survey research, continuing through participant observation, and culminating in what I call 'experiential analysis'. The purpose of this essay is to delineate further the background of 'experiential analysis,' explain what the method consists of, describe problems which arise in carrying out "a project using this method, and suggest further implications such as the relation between 'experiential analysis' and feminist concerns.

**Background of 'experiential analysis': the sociology of knowledge perspective applied to the social sciences**

Methods and methodology are not simply techniques and rationales for the conduct of research. Rather they must be understood in relation to specific historical, cultural, ideological and other contexts. Methods and procedures for conducting research are in continuous flux, influenced by the kinds of relative proportion of people attracted to or permitted access to given disciplines, the values and philosophy of the social milieu, the conceptual underpinning of common sense at the time, the means of communication and level of technology available, and the discipline's previous history. Thus, when one ponders the questions - - what methods will I use in my study? or, why was a certain method used for a given study? — these are not simply technical issues but profound socio-historical-disciplinary concerns.
Within the discipline of sociology, there is a subdiscipline called the 'sociology of knowledge.' Its concern is to explain the relationship between the knowledge produced or accepted in a particular society at any time, and the other dimensions of that society. In the words of Karl Mannheim, a significant contributor, 'the sociology of knowledge seeks to comprehend thought in the concrete setting of an historical-social situation' (1936, p. 3). To do this we have to examine persons 'who have developed a particular style of thought in an endless series of responses to certain typical situations characterizing their common position' (Ibid.). For example, Freud's theory of the formation of female identity centers on their establishing an orientation to men as 'product of girls' oedipal transition. Nancy Chodorow shows us that feminine heterosexuality in< this model has Victorian characteristics that include women's passivity and the subordination of sex to procreation' (1978, p. 111). She and others writing today about the formation of femaleness are in turn influenced by the contemporary ideology of feminism.

Mills's (1943) study of the' theory of social pathology is another explication of a social theory rooted in the social conditions of its proponents. He studied social pathology as a 'point of entry for the examination of the style of reflection and the social-historical basis of American sociology' (p. 4). He shows that the social pathologists' perspective is linked to the fact that they were born in small towns, or on farms near small towns, three-fourths of which were in states not industrialized during the youth of the authors. The social circles and strata in which they have generally moved are quite homogeneous (p. 5), (i.e., reform groups, colleges, voluntary societies, their spouse's connections, etc.). Like the critics of Freudian theory, Mills demonstrates that American sociological theory was grounded in the social position of its theoreticians.

Thomas Kuhn was first exposed to the history of his own discipline, theoretical physics,"when he attempted to teach physical science to non-scientists. To my complete surprise, that exposure to out-of-date scientific theory and practice radically undermined some of my basic conceptions about the nature of science' (1962, p. v). In reaction, he switched fields from physics to the history of science and explored what it was like to think scientifically in different historical periods. As is well known, he then directed his energy to explaining how different theories and discoveries emerge in response to an accumulation of unexplained anomalies, and how a new paradigm crowds out those that preceded it. Murray Davis (1971) has extended Kuhn's argument in a social psychological way. He claims that ideas are accepted not because they are 'true' but because they have attracted attention and strike people as 'interesting.' The structure of 'the experience of something as interesting,' according to Davis, is the overturning of a
 Commonsensical or previously held idea. When this is dramatic and clear, the new idea takes hold, and eventually a search gets under way for refutations of the now new.

Method and theory preference vary also by national milieu and culture, a subject discussed by Mertin (1968) in his comparison of European and American variants of sociological studies. It is interesting to take note of, and then ponder the contexts of these norms. For example, Tesch informs us that today.

In Germany, interpretative (hermeneutic) studies are the conventional way of conducting research-and experimental research is the modern method of the computer age. In the 1950's, experimental research was hardly heard of (except in certain branches of psychology), and even in the 1960's it was considered quite daring to do anything other than what amounted to phenomenological inquiry. The first German statistics book for the behavioral sciences (other than American translations) did not appear until the 1970's. Today, experimentation is an accepted part of behavioral science research, but a methodology book will usually devote less space to it than to observation or 'Interaktionsanalyse,' the content analysis of human interaction (1980, p. 54).

Because of the value clashes and radicalizing events of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, Alvin Gouldner recognized that the practices and assumptions of the social sciences, particularly sociology, are inconsistent with emerging values and social conditions. He converted the sociology of knowledge perspective, which had hitherto been applied primarily to historic periods or other cultures, into a reflexive sociology which is self-consciously self-critical. He claimed that current circumstances demand 'heightened self-awareness among sociologists' (1970, p. 25), which means that we must ask ourselves questions about why we hold our professional and scientific beliefs. Why for instance, do we think that social science should be value-free? He urges us to recognize that 'scientific method,' for example, 'is not simply a logic but a morality'. (1970, p. 26). If this is so, then new methods become accessible if one is willing to risk being considered 'immoral' (i.e., not rigorous) by those colleagues who hold that morality is exclusively on their side.

Contemporary social science is part of the fabric of our social life and reinforces the current order and its values. When there have been changes in social values, the social sciences have been influenced by them, but rarely has the process been reversed. Sometimes the timing of social science research publication and public events are all so closely tied that it is difficult to determine which influenced which. For example, 'The Stanford Prison Experiment' was concluded just before the sensational shootouts at San Quentin and Attica. It was publicized in the popular media as well as in professional literature and
contributed to mounting demands for prison reform in the early 1970s (Stannard-Friel, 1981).

Jessie Bernard (1975) has applied a sociology of knowledge perspective to the branch of psychological research which directly evaluates women — sex differences research. She views that body of research as 'a sociological phenomenon, an institution' (p. 7) and asks why it has selected to investigate certain issues, what are its objectives, what is its methodological and ideological stance? Her by now familiar answer is that the objectives and stance mirror a male-controlled and male-defined environment (see also Weisstein; 1971). Interestingly, when the sociology of knowledge analytic framework has been applied to sociology. Dorothy Smith (1974) shows an identical pattern: 'how sociology is thought — its methods, conceptual schemes and theories — has been based on and built up within the male social universe (even when women have participated in its doing)' (p. 7). This corroboration from two disciplines can be viewed as adding credibility to the analysis, although it has also been dismissed on the grounds that the critics have a shared perspective (Levin, 1980).

My own development of 'experiential analysis' as a critical method rooted in this time and place, based on an alternative set of assumptions from the objectivist mainstream morality-methodology, and stemming from perceived contradictions or inadequacies in certain research methods, was possible only within the context of my own continued application of a sociology of knowledge perspective to the social sciences. I asked myself continuously, 'What should I do with all this criticism?' Should I accept, modify or create a methodology? Vaughter answers: The response called for is the restructuring of the methods, subjects, apparatus, materials, procedures, discussions, and references' (1976, p. 143). My insights made it difficult to simply 'add on' another method to the existing corpus. Instead, they made me rethink (or if very bold, revamp) the entire enterprise of social science (see also Gould, 1980). This revamping orientation is criticized by some as 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' (Wallston, 1979), but it is clear to many that sometimes a new baby needs to be born! (Westkott, 1979). It is within this alternative, dialectical rather than cumulative framework that 'experiential analysis' is being suggested.
TOWARD A NEW METHOD FOR A REVAMPED SOCIAL SCIENCE

Shulamit Reinharz

The first step in articulating a new method is to understand that one's personally experienced dissatisfaction with conventional methods is not an intrapsychic, private problem but derives from structural inconsistencies and skewed assumptions underpinning the methods themselves. Thus one begins to sense that there is a gap between the 'experience of the world . . . and the theoretical schemes available to think about it in' (Smith, 1974, p. 7). When one's critique is articulated and made public, others will find resonance in their own experiences and thus one's private concerns will be redefined as shared. Making one's concerns public requires some courage. Being stuck in the extreme dualism of micro- and macro-interpretations of one's thoughts is paralyzing. The challenge is to convert the private concern into a public issue.

Those who fail to have their private insights confirmed by others (in any area, not just social science methodology) receive the social label of mentally ill, incompetent or absurd. To abandon one's insights altogether rather than be so labelled is to become alienated from one's self, a conformist. The difficulty in accepting the validity of one's own experiences is part of our cultural heritage and rigorously perpetuated in our schools (Toby, 1955). Marx's 'false consciousness,' Freud's 'unconscious, Durkeim's 'social facts' in contrast with personal volition, sociology's 'latent and manifest functions' which undermine the notion that things are as they appear, the substitution of computer-based quantification for individual assessment — all of these dovetail to cast doubt on human interpretations and intentions.

Women's position in patriarchal society casts further doubt on the truth of our ideas. Feminism has partially corrected this imbalance. First, it has confirmed the experience of women which had hitherto been denied as real or important. The recovery of experience began in the 'consciousness raising' or 'rap groups' in which women talked 'to each other about their individual experiences and analyzed them communally .... From a sociological perspective the rap group is probably the most valuable contribution the women's liberation movement -has made so far to the tools for social change' (Freeman, 1973, p. 22). Second, feminism revalues experience as a part of social science methodology (Wallston, 1979). 'One hallmark of the feminist
research in any field seems to be the investigator's continual testing of the plausibility of the work against her own experience (Parlee, 1979, p. 130). The new definition of experience is that it is interesting (not arbitrary), effective (in the sense that our ideas shape our world and are not simply shaped by it), uniquely human, and contextual. Parlee connected the issues of the devaluation of experience and the context-stripping traditional scientific methods when she wrote: Th^ commitment to the experimental method . . . functions to . . . obscure the connection between individual experience and social roles and institytions(1979, p. 133).

The second step in articulating a new method is to specify the assumptions of the traditional framework which are being challenged (see Sherif, 1979; Mishler, 1979). Gouldner (1970) would call these assumptions the values of the traditional morality. Once these assumptions are clearly articulated, one can suggest an alternate set. The following is a product of my attempt:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream sociology claims to be</th>
<th>An alternative method would acknowledge that it is</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exclusively rational in the conduct of research and the analysis of data</td>
<td>A mix of rational, serendipitous and intuitive phenomena in research and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific</td>
<td>Accurate but artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriented to carefully defined structures</td>
<td>Oriented to processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely impersonal</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriented to the prediction and control of events and things</td>
<td>Oriented to understanding phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in the validity of research findings for scholars</td>
<td>Interested in the meaningfulness of research findings to the scholarly and user communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>A mix of objective and subjective orientations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable of producing generalized principles</td>
<td>Capable of producing specific explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in replicable events and procedures</td>
<td>Interested in unique although frequently occurring phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable of producing completed analyses of a research problem</td>
<td>Limited to producing partial discoveries of ongoing events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in addressing problems with</td>
<td>Interested in generating concepts in vivo,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 predefined concepts in the field itself

These two columns closely parallel what Bakan (1966) has referred to as the two basic tendencies of human existence: the agentic and communal. The contrasts he suggests are the following:

Table 11.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Communion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation (of subject and object)</td>
<td>Fusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repression (of feelings)</td>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest, control, mastery (of others, nature)</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracted (relationships)</td>
<td>Uncontracted cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering, quantifying</td>
<td>Nonlinear patterning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feminist scholars such as Carlson (1972) and Fox Keller (1978) have added elements to the agentic and communal ways of being/knowing:

Table 11.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Communion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard/dry</td>
<td>Soft/wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-stripped</td>
<td>Situation-embedded, contextualized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positivism</td>
<td>Grounded observations of action, words, sentiments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-freedom</td>
<td>Value-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androcentric</td>
<td>Humanistic, egalitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego-enhancement</td>
<td>Egoboundary diffusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>Subjectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science/mind</td>
<td>Nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graham and Rawlings (1980) suggest a tri-partite division among sexist, non-sexist, and feminist assumptions and methods in research. The suggested communal epistemology linked to the communal ontology is 'naturalistic observation' of behavior, 'sensitivity to intrinsic structure and qualitative patterning of phenomena studied and greater personal participation of the
investigator' (Carlson, 1972, p. 20): a recent example is Sharff, although she is publicly criticized by a member of the setting. *Psychology Today* (1981). Releasing oneself from thought structures which isolate Variables' in supposed unidirectional relation is a good way to begin (Blumer, 1956). Since research has been confined primarily to the agentic mode, Carlson suggested that 'research paradigms with more communal types of research await development and reception' (1972, p. 21; see also Vaughter, 1976). Wallston (1979) reports that a 'transactional methodology' is being developed at George Peabody Teachers College, Vanderbilt University, as an alternative to static, linear models. In the interim, it is important to recognize the 'machismo factor' (Bernard, 1975) in research, and as outlined in step one, to 'achieve liberation from the constraints of agentic modes of inquiry ... [B] y developing thoughtfully the communal aspects of content and method, [we] may succeed in bringing forth those new research paradigms needed for the scientific revolution (Kuhn, 1970) of our time' (Carlson, 1972, p. 29). The reason that some feminist scholars talk about liberation from the agentic is that the dichotomy is not one of equals but is asymmetric in terms of credibility and legitimacy (Parlee, 1979).

*The third step is to connect these conventional and alternative assumptions into specific components of research procedures. Here is one example:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11.4 Research models in contemporary sociology&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional or Patriarchal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predefined, operationalized concepts stated as hypotheses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural events encased in their ongoing contexts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Conventional or patriarchal                                  |
| Sharpness of focus                                          |
| Limited, specialized, specific, exclusive.                   |
| Data type                                                    |
| Reports of attitudes and actions as in questionnaires, interviews and archives. |
| Topic of study                                               |
| Manageable issue derived from scholarly literature, selected for potential |

<p>| Alternative or Feminist                                     |
| Sharpness of focus                                          |
| Broad, inclusive.                                            |
| Data type                                                    |
| Feelings, behavior, thoughts, insights, actions as witnessed or experienced. |
| Topic of study                                               |
| Socially significant - problem sometimes related to issues discussed in |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation format</th>
<th>Research report form; report of conclusions with regard to hypotheses stated in advance, or presentation of data obtained from instruments.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Statistically insignificant variance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Researchers' attitudes not revealed, recognized or analyzed, attempts to be value-free, objective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of reader</td>
<td>Scholarly community addressed, evaluation of research design, management, and findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pitfalls of process illustrate the subject. Researchers' attitudes described and discussed, values acknowledged, revealed, labelled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scholarly and user community addressed and engaged; evaluate usefulness and responsiveness to perceived needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can we create methods which are communal (rather than agentic), and that are grounded in people's experience of the world as well as in our own? Can we create methods without being 'methodolatrous' and without inventing new rigidities which will distort anew that which is being studied? I think the answer to these questions is that these methods already partially exist, but they have been so undervalued that they constantly need to be rediscovered.\(^5\) Also, because they have been increasingly undervalued in our society (Brown and Gilmartin, 1969; McCartney, 1970; Patel, 1972), they have not had the benefit of much refinement (Reason and Rowan, 1981). As each 'rediscovery' or contribution is made, it appears new and gets its own name. For example, Gould reports that 'feminist sociologists are trying oral histories, textual analysis and a more politically self-conscious ethnomethodology' (1980, p. 465). Dilorio is developing 'feminist phenomenology' (1980). She defines the procedure as follows:

Researchers will utilize first-hand, immediate and intimate contact with their subjects through direct observation and Teflective analysis, drawing upon her or his own experiential information (feelings, fantasies, thoughts) as well as her or his observations of what others say and do in order to relate the subjective and objective dimensions (p. 21).
There are calls for qualitative and descriptive studies, taxonomies of situations, systematic analysis of situations (Wallston, 1979) and just plain talking to people and observing them.

People who call themselves 'existential sociologists' also approximate what we have been discussing. 'Existential sociology is defined descriptively as the study of human experience-in-the-world in all its forms' (Douglas and Johnson, 1977, p. vii). They talk about recognizing feelings, not just ideas (see also Hochschild, 1975), about observing, describing and analyzing one's own inner experiences and reflections, as well as those of others. They choose the phrase 'existential' rather "than 'experiential' so as to avoid appearing like a distinctively defined method or obscuring the connection with existential philosophy.
ELE ME OF AN EXPERIENTIAL ANALYSIS

Shulamit Reinharz

In order to break away from the linear model which would describe a research method as a progression of steps, I would like to present 'experiential analysis' as a collection of interacting components: assumptions, personal preparation, problem formulation, data gathering and stopping, data digestion and presentation, policy questions. The following discussion is divided into sections elaborating on each of these components. As a guiding framework, I suggest that research within the experiential mode has three distinct purposes: it should represent growth and understanding in the arena of the problem investigated, the person(s) doing the investigation, and the method utilized. Such a triple achievement yields deep insight into the study's subject matter, new personal knowledge about the investigator him/herself, and further innovations with regard to method. This integrated approach to research (Vaughtner, 1976) guides problem selection so as to make personal growth likely. It begins to fashion a non-masculine or non-conventional reflexive model and vocabulary of research. All three yields should be communicated. Another criterion for evaluation of research is its social value — what impact does it have on the distribution of power and resources?

Assumptions underlying an experiential method overlap with those of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1962), social construction of reality theories (Berger and Luckman, 1967), and humanistic philosophy (Roche, 1973). In these theories, people are intentional beings who create and discover meaning; they are not simply actors carrying out meanings given in an objective reality. In addition, humans are defined as processes in continuous development over time, and in continuous interaction with environments in space. Morgan and Smircich (1980) have provided a very useful table of the range of assumptions which underlie different research methods in the social sciences. The assumptions I outlined cluster in what they call the 'subjectivist' in contrast with 'objectivist' approaches. Lest these assumptions appear strange, however, Roche reminds us at these assumptions 'are very much those of everyday common sense' (1973, p. 297). An additional assumption is that disciplinary boundaries in academia have no counterpart in social reality, so a researcher is better off drawing on multiple disciplines than confining her/himself to only one. The above
assumptions have been part of the interpretive tradition in social science (Westkott, 1979). *Personal preparation* for 'experiential analysis' * borrows from phenomenology in the sense that phenomenologists attempt to suspend preconceptions about the matter they are about to study. Among phenomenologists this is called 'epoché' (Husserl, 1931). Practically, this means that experiential researchers will not do a extensive literature search *before* an investigation but rather *after* it, so as not to create self-fulfilling prophecies in their research. The researcher attempts-to avoid bringing a priori categories to the project* and therefore eliminates 'front-end instrumentation' (Miles, 1979, p. 590). The rigor of the research is thus dependent on its ability to maintain the "strangeness" and purity of the presuppositionlessness of experience' (Kieffer, 1981).

At the same time, the researcher investigates his/her own previous experiences, intentions, hopes, prejudices to try to understand what <<s/he is bringing to the study (some researchers recommend-psychoanalysis as appropriate preparation: see Reinharz, 1979, p. 13). S/he also keeps a personal diary throughout the research process, keeping close touch with changing attitudes (e.g. Johnson, 1977). The record of the researcher's-feelings and ideas is also data, a clue to the nature of the social environment being studied (for examples, see Reinharz, 1979, pp. 336-53). This record also draws one's attention to the researcher as a human being, not a replaceable object, or in Phillips's term, 'a data-collecting machine . . . (so that) another machine would obtain the same results' (1971, p. 142). Many of one's predispositions, when known, can be questions put to the persons one is studying — they need not be discarded. They are only 'biases' if they are not acknowledged or explored, as is almost always the case in positivist research.

Finally, one tries to ground oneself in a rich array of experiences so that one has comparisons on which to draw in understanding the thing being studied, so that one is not naive. This requirement combined with the previous one yields the following question — are you, the researcher, willing and able to experience the thing being studied or its environment? Are you motivated to do the study because of the hoped-for beneficial impact of the findings on your own life and the lives of others?

*Problem formulation* has two necessary components: first that the research question be of sincere concern to the researcher and that it be of sincere concern to the subject(s) so that they will collaborate in uncovering the phenomenon? (For a discussion of the appropriateness of the terms 'researcher' and 'subject,' see p. 180). We should develop a 'participatory model' which 'engage(s) the constituents of science (the public) and the participants in research (the subjects) in the scientific enterprise, that is, in the establishment of research priorities, data collection and data interpretation' (Vaughtt, 1976, p. 145). Hessler and New have provided a model of how such collaboration can be accomplished. They created a 'research commune in Boston's Chinatown in which community residents were
partners in research' (1972, p. 13). Formulating a problem in a way that is unalienating to the researcher can be accomplished if the researcher carried out a serious process of value-clarification— in which s/he asks: what is a significant issue, why do I want to study this, what do I want to discover, what will I do if I discover something very different, who will help, what help do they really need; what experience of mine does this research question reflect?

To formulate a question of concern and interest to the 'subjects' makes it likely that they will collaborate. If this is the case, the subject is likely to be interested in investing the time necessary to work through what is being learned in the project. This is likely if the research process provides an opportunity for catharsis or self-discovery, or if the research product is likely to provide resources or answers to pressing problems in living. Such a reconceptualization of the 'subject role' places demands on the investigator to seek appropriate subjects, tapping into networks where subjects are recommended or referred only when one's own trustworthiness as a researcher has been examined by referring persons. A revised notion of sampling becomes apparent. Since the trustworthiness of the researcher must be established in the eyes of the subject (as every participant observer learns in the field since s/he does not control the environment), the experiential researcher can facilitate this process by providing clear opportunities to be interviewed, scrutinized and questioned by the subjects even after they have agreed to collaborate. One's trustworthiness is not confined to what one says, of course, but also to how one acts and who one is. Collaborative problem formulation obviously precludes subject deception and completely alters the issue of human subject research reviews. Collaborative problem defining sometimes demands several problem redefinitions until the problem is suitable for joint researcher-population investigation. In other words, meaningful research builds on finding out what is meaningful to oneself and one's research collaborators. Having subject input also minimizes researcher bias since it includes diverse points of view.

The second component of problem formulation is that the question posed should be suitable for experiential analysis. Some appropriate formats include:
what is the experience of------, what is it like to be a-------, what happens in such an environment, what are the kinds of reactions to--------, what does-----
mean to people, how do certain persons talk about--------, what does a certain
group think is significant about etc. "This type of question is open-ended and relatively unstructured. It allows the subject to demonstrate how s/he constructs his/her reality. It focuses on 'what's' rathe/Than 'why's' (Valle and King, 1978), although, why can be asked later. From the material one collects, other questions can then be superimposed retrospectively.

Data gathering is the foundation of the research enterprise in the sense that one's interpretations depend on how one's information was obtained in the
first place (Phillips, 1971). The exact conditions of data gathering are typically under-reported or frequently reported in a standardized manner obscuring a complete picture of what occurred. The more information is gathered by specific instruments designed to gather data, the more likely that we have created special 'miniature social situations' with their own characteristics (Hyman, 1949). The data collected in those situations tell us about behaviors, attitudes, etc., in those situations, not necessarily in others. This is a general epistemological dilemma in the sense that all knowledge is contingent on the situation under which it is formed.

Recognizing that there is no absolute way to overcome the Heisenberg principle, the Hawthorne effect, artifact effects, response effects, reactivity or artificiality, an experiential analysis strives to know others under multiple conditions that in combination approximate their lived reality. Thus experiential analysis strives to gather data in the natural setting(s) of the persons studied (Willems, 1969) and draws on participant observation research. Experiential analysis raises the question about whether we should study populations or networks rather than aggregated samples, recognizing that a 'complete group' has different merits from those of a 'large n.' Experiential research, as contrasted with positivistic research, relies on 'small n's' since statistical tests need not be applied when interpreting meaning. Involvement in natural settings forces or allows one to be aware of environmental, architectural, climatic, botanical, etc., factors which are significant parts of people's experience, but not frequently asked about in other methods.

Similarly, gathering data in natural settings allows the researcher to play a background rather than foreground role — one is not manipulating the environment but is part of it. One can observe how people speak and act with each other rather than rely entirely on how they respond to you (Brandt, 1972). Several researchers have found major 'discrepancies' between people's reports to researchers about their behavior and the behavior the researcher sees the same people engage in when primarily in their own company (see Cole, 1976, pp. 163-4). An experiential analysis does not define these differences as 'discrepancies' but uses them as leads into the complex process of the construction of reality and/or the influence of social situations on people's expression of beliefs or even perception (Asch, 1952). The data thus are of people's being, not in the world of phenomenologists, but in situations to which they give meaning and which shapes their making of themselves and of meaning.

The findings or interpretation of an experiential study requires a detailed ethnographic (Crowle, 1976) or ethological (Vaughter, 1976) description of the conditions under which the information was gathered. Experiential analysis does not utilize instruments such as psychological tests, checklists or coded questionnaires which do not use the subject's categories of thought and action, but
it can be aided by technologies that record audially or visually what is occurring. Many such researchers use tape recorders while conversing with people and then analyze the transcripts while listening to the recording (Cole, 1976). Such equipment frees the researcher from recording the conversation by hand while it is occurring or laboriously reconstructing it afterward. The tape recording allows reliving the experience afterward and helps the researcher to understand her/his own contribution to the conversation. The transcript allows the researcher to present interpretations drawing on the language of subjects.

Data gathering in natural settings can alert the researcher to the presence of information that is already available in the setting such as archives, reports, newspapers, posters, letters, diaries, photo albums, etc. — material that historians typically use. Data gathering in the experiential mode is not exclusively data creating, but can really be 'gathering up' what is already there.

Experiential data are not confined to talk but can/should include meaningful action that persons engage in, the processes and activities that compose people's lives. As we examine human living in ordinary settings we will uncover new kinds of data that can be collected— many of these unobtrusive measures have not been imagined yet. An analogy here is psychoanalysis which retrieved dreams, slips of the tongue, jokes, etc., from the domain of triviality and brought them center-stage as crucial data for understanding the self. Thus experiential analysis is self-consciously methodologically innovative, continuously seeking new types of data and varied types of natural settings (e.g. Whyte's use of bowling scores in Whyte, 1943).

To begin to appreciate the range of settings which constitute people's lives, one need only look to the work of Barker (1968) or follow a subject around his/her day. We certainly must be aware of the fact that one's own race, class, religion and gender predispose us to consider some settings more interesting and important than others, even though this half-conscious evaluation might be entirely discordant with the views of the subject. As various researchers have noted, researchers often do not understand the diversity of settings and niches in which people perform well (friendship networks, neighbors, church relationships, voluntary associations) and focus instead on settings designed and controlled by professionals.

The research process that includes researcher, exposure to the settings in which people live does not fit the hierarchical research model which consists of a team of numerous persons earning differential pay and charged with varying tasks. Roth (1966) has shown that the data gathered by subordinates tend to be distorted by their alienation. Reliance on such teams can result in situations where the principal researcher completes 2 study without ever having encountered the studied phenomenon it is this direct contact with the subjects-experienced reality
which is the occasion of the researcher's experiential knowledge about the phenomenon (e.g., Coles, 1974). To insist upon the direct involvement of the principal researcher with the research participants would change the research process: the sample would be smaller, the opportunities for apprenticeships would be fewer (since the principal investigator would take on more tasks), and perhaps, unfortunately, researchers, who are less physically mobile would be more restricted in their selection of research topics. But the decrease in project scale would make research less dependent on and therefore less influenced by major funding sources, an important consideration in the coming years. For those projects that nevertheless require a team, the drawbacks of multi-person research can be reduced if col-lectivist organizational principles are followed (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979) and if the persons doing the writing have been in the field and have engaged in joint reflective encounters with the subjects. The creation of noncompetitive, collaborative teams, particularly if they are interdisciplinary, is very difficult, indicating the extent to which the opposite features are endemic to our relationships (e.g., Bronfenbrenner and Devereux, 1952; Vidich and Bensman, 1971). To this end, feminist researchers have begun to set up research collectives.

The collaborative relation among researchers is mirrored in the collaborative relation between the researcher and subjects. The very use of the terms 'researcher' and 'subject' is awkward here in that they are part of the traditional model. Our language shapes our world, so it is important to consider other language. The conventional view of the subject is one on whom research operations are performed, rendering him/her passive, in essence 'an object,' or in Buber's words, an 'it,' or in other word's a 'not I.' Perceiving others as submissive objects complements mechanistic means of knowing about those objects. Because researchers have prestige and other kinds of power (e.g., they are more likely to be white, male, middle class, articulate, and are definitely more likely than their subjects to be in control of the research setting), the likelihood exists that the research subject will be manipulated and the data s/he gives will be colored by that state. The Milgram study of obedience to the authority of the researcher (1963) is a clear example of this phenomenon. Daniels's essay (1967) about her inability to gain control of the research situation because she was a woman studying the military (a role she calls the low-caste stranger) illustrates the limits of researcher power. 'Dehumanized knowing implies treating other men (sic) as objects' (Collins, 1977, p. 63). By contrast the researcher stance which perceives the 'subjeci' as collaborator produces 'communication through dialogue with others to determine how they experience reality' (Ibid.). Knowing which does not reflect the reality lived by others, which is anti-dialogical, is artificial and incomplete.

To translate these ideas into "the activity of experiential analysis is to adopt
a non-hierarchical non-authoritarian, non-manipulative, humble relation to the 'subject' — perhaps the attitude of student rather than expert is a useful analogy. Wolff (1971) uses the term 'surrender' to characterize the researcher's stance of receptivity to anything the subject offers. Vaught describes the relation as one of 'equality, sharing and trust' (1976, p. 146). Such a relation needs to be prepared, explained and developed, "* since the two parties begin as strangers. In the case of the 'research commune,' Hessler and New write, 'Our first task was to write a paper establishing the structure and function of the commune' (1972, p. 13). Beyond these formalities, relationships must be cultivated by sharing experiences. The relation is more likely to develop as an I thou dialogue if the 'subject' is as eager to explore his/her own way of constructing meaning as is the researcher, and if she feels as much in control of the situation as does the researcher. These are the elements of collaboration. Similarly, the reser'archer as student rather than expert must remember to convey this stance in personal, direct, colloquial speech, particularly in being open and 'owning' one's statements. In Freire's view (1970) both researcher and 'subject' are students.

The data gathering process, which is a recording of meaning as it is constructed in the dialogue, comes to an end when both or all parties (if there is a group) feel saturated, depleted, complete. The time required to achieve this cognitive-emotive state varies with the person. Frequently the orienting open-ended questions posed by the researcher have been addressed or redefined by the subject, additional topics are raised which are of significance to the subject; these then are explored further by both, until the subject matter (and the persons) is exhausted. A break of a few days, weeks or even longer can be used and then another meeting can take place in which the previous dialogue is reviewed to see if the researcher has adequately understood and if further explorations should take place (see Coles, 1974). Since the researcher uses the assumption that meaning is being constructed rather than information simply given, time and context have to be provided in a flexible way for the meaning to be clarified. A phrase to describe this process could be 'multiple depth conversations.' A phrase to describe the continuous clarification of the emergent meaning would be 'shared feedback loops' or 'joint interpretation of meaning' or 'unpredictable discovery bashed on intersubjectivity' (Westkott, 1979).

The role of the subject in conventional research is confined to 'giving data' or extends to receiving the report or feedback after the researcher has performed the analysis. In collaborative experiential research the subject's role expands to all phases of research. It begins with shared topic formulation — the participants acting as partners or consultants in shaping the research focus, selecting research procedures and their implementations; collaborating in data analysis and publication, or at least monitoring publications before their dissemination. Although Hessler and New (1972) describe an actual instance of this collaboration, in some sense complete partnership remains an ideal type like complete detachment, which is approximated but never entirely achieved. The presently constituted research ethics of privacy and confidentiality are
not what is needed alone. Rather there should be a new research ethic of participation. Data analysis is typically described by theorists of participant observation as proceeding concurrently with data collection. If it does not, then questions which arise in the data analysis phase will have to remain unanswered. If the two proceed together then the researcher will have a project-specific indication as to when to stop collecting data, i.e., when s/he and her/his collaborators better understand the phenomenon being studied.

Data analysis is an activity based on a cognitive mode different from data gathering: reflective rather than active, solitary rather than interactional. The recorded experiences, conversation transcripts, pieces of information are compiled, reduced and examined for their interactions (patterns) and basic themes. The more significant is extracted from the less significant within a system of meaning. Parts are strung together to make new wholes — simplicity is sought beneath the complexity. The somewhat imprecise preceding statements are intended to convey the reflective analytic stance taken toward the data, which is humanistic rather than mechanistic.

Perhaps it draws on a feminine cognitive style — not in the pejorative sense of sentimental, irrational or unscientific, but in the positive sense of artistic, sensitive, integrated, deep, intersubjective, empathic, associative, affective, open, personalized, aesthetic, receptive.

The feminine mode draws on the interplay of figure and ground rather than on the dominance of either; on the contextualized, not dissociated. As interpretations are made and recorded, the remaining data are examined to see if and how they corroborate or refute the ongoing analysis. There are no rules for data analysis except one — that the analysis draw heavily on the language of the persons studied, i.e., that it is grounded. The language of the researcher, which holds the analysis together, must be evocative and communicative, not jargon. It produces a document that is readable and usable. It addresses a second audience with the intention of fostering a dialogue — whereas the first audience was the subject, the second is the reader. If it succeeds it will create a 'felt response' (Gendlin, 1965-66), an encounter with the reader.

Although new questions arise during data collection, data analysis refers back to the original questions which propelled the study — what is it, why is it this way, what does it mean, how do its parts connect, etc.? Simultaneously, it integrates other research literature and points out similarities and differences.

The analysis also proceeds with participation from the research subjects. Here is yet another source of validity built into the orientation. Since throughout the project meaning is assumed to be a constructive, ongoing process, there is no
final interpretation valid 'for all times' but simply an adequate interpretation which is endorsed by participants, confirmed by readers and cognitively satisfying the researcher. An adequate interpretation, ironically, does not give definitive answers but keeps the dialogue going.

Finally, as the analytic phase draws to a close, the self-reflective phase assumes prominence. In addition to posing questions to oneself such as — how have I grown in this process; how have my values deepened or changed, etc. — one also asks 'sociology of knowledge' questions — what cultural values does my analysis reflect, what are the sociopolitical conditions illuminated by the interpretation, what is the impact of my age, race, sex or other attributes on what I believe I have found? These questions draw on reflections after writing the analysis but also on the research diary kept throughout the project.

**Experiential analysis: insights from another research project**

The parameters and ingredients of the 'experiential analysis' method have been described briefly as an ideal type of research process. In my own experience I have not yet been able to implement the procedures completely, but nevertheless in the process of trying, I have learned my limitations as well as those of the method and of a particular setting. In my last extensive research project (fieldwork 1979-80) it was very difficult to establish a collaborative relation with the community as a whole, although it, was possible to do so with the individuals who constituted the community. Many times I experienced community pressure to act like a conventional researcher and do the work myself rather than ask for extensive collaboration. Similarly some individuals expressed interest in serving as collaborators while others would not participate at all if others did. Thus researchers working in natural settings become part of the political web of those settings, and the procedures they have prepared in advance in the sanctity of academia can not be neatly operationalized. Similarly I learned that some people expect researchers to fulfill expectations of what a researcher does — ask a set of prepared questions, quantify results, etc. Whenever I encountered people who wished me to behave in ways that did not suit the purpose at hand, I wondered if I should 'educate' them as to the merit of the alternative method, or should I become flexible and respond to each 'subject' as s/he wished?

A second set of problems concerned data analysis — the problem is that since the materials have to be carefully digested, some time is required. To the extent that one's research is problem-oriented, the time lag may allow the problem to have changed before the interpretation has been fully articulated, let alone converted into an implemented solution. The experiential method appears thus more likely to produce an informed understanding of the nature of the phenomenon than a quick overview or remedy for a given problem. This limitation of
perspective. These are good omen for further methodological breakthroughs.

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