

The State of the Art in Feminist Scholarship in Communication

By Bonnie J. Dow and Celeste M. Condit

The emergence of feminist scholarship in the field of communication follows, in many respects, a similar historical trajectory to that of feminist visibility in the culture at large. When the second wave of feminism emerged in public consciousness around 1970, communication scholars began to attend more closely to the role of gender in communication practices. That attention was inflected by the concerns of the women's movement—exposing sexism and sex-role socialization, interrogating the role of power in relations between men and women, understanding how awareness of the influence of gender requires rethinking claims of universality based on male experience and behaviors. In rhetorical studies, these emphases produced such germinal scholarship as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's 1973 essay, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," which argued that second-wave feminist rhetoric could not be adequately understood through traditional rhetorical models. In interpersonal communication, they led to a questioning of deficiency models that held that male speech was the standard against which all speech should be judged, often guaranteeing that conventionally female communication practices would be deemed inferior (e.g., Kramer, Thorne, & Henley, 1978; Shimanoff, 1977). In media studies, especially in research on television, they resulted in research that noted both the low level of female representation as well as the prevalence of sex-role stereotypes in that representation (e.g., Busby, 1975; Tedesco, 1974). These are just a few examples of a wave of research across the field that began to redefine our scholarly assumptions about communication over 3 decades ago.

Since this initial surge of research in the 1970s, communication scholarship on women, gender, and feminism has continued to grow and expand, and it has been subject to periodic review in publications that note its emphases, limitations, and possibilities (e.g., Allen, Rush, & Kaufman, 1996; Bowen & Wyatt, 1993; Foss & Foss, 1983; McLaughlin, 1993; Rakow, 1992; Spitzack & Carter, 1987; Stephen,

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2000). Our current charge—to survey the state of the art in feminist communication scholarship—extends these earlier reviews. Importantly, such a task has specific political dimensions, as feminism is widely recognized as a specifically political phenomenon. In our minds, the field of communication has come too far to categorize all research on women, or even gender, as feminist in its orientation. Rather, the moniker of “feminist” is reserved for research that studies communication theories and practices from a perspective that ultimately is oriented toward the achievement of “gender justice,” a goal that takes into account the ways that gender always already intersects with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. Gender justice may include but can also go beyond the seeking of equality between men and women, to include understanding of the concept of gender itself as politically constructed. Feminist research has demonstrated that all scholarship ultimately proceeds from evaluative, political assumptions, but feminist research does so explicitly. As a result, it is generally more self-reflective about operating from an orientation that links its specific data or theoretical or methodological concerns to a perspective that seeks to ameliorate the systems of domination that operate through the axis of gender (although never exclusively so).

Taking seriously the term “state of the art” for our moment in time, the feminist research we treat here is derived from the last 5 years (1998–2003) of scholarship published in the following journals: *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Theory*, *Human Communication Research*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Communication Monographs*, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *Women’s Studies in Communication*, *Southern Communication Journal*, *Western Journal of Communication*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Studies*, and *Women and Language*. These choices limit our purview in particular ways, but the breadth and variety of forms that characterize potential scholarship relevant to feminist communication studies make impossible any complete review, so we have chosen a tight and explicit focus.

We have organized the feminist research that we found into several categories, defined by how we see a piece of work functioning to further the feminist project in communication. The category scheme is rough and by no means exclusive, but the exercise in ordering enhances our ability to draw contingent conclusions about an area of scholarly inquiry that, happily, continues to develop. Our central concern is to categorize feminist research by its focus and function, rather than by its content area. Thus, the categories that follow attempt, although not completely successfully, to collapse conventional distinctions between research in such areas as rhetorical, mediated, interpersonal, organizational, intercultural, or health communication, collapsing as well the methodological distinctions generally assumed to attend to these content areas. Instead, we have conceived of our categories as ones that reflect the broad purpose of the research, as we understand it, within the feminist agenda. Within each category, we provide a general sense of the motivations and concerns of the research, exemplifying those foci with a discussion of one or two examples of recent essays that we find particularly noteworthy. Finally, as will become clear, these categories are not balanced; that is, some represent a much greater proportion of feminist work in communication than others, a situation we address in our conclusions. The categories are as follows:

(a) analysis of the public communication of women and feminists; (b) analysis of the role of sex/gender as a variable in communication practices; (c) analysis of the role of communication practices in the dissemination of gender ideology; (d) analysis of communication practices that function to combat gender injustice and provide models for progressive communication practices; and (e) construction of feminist theoretical frameworks. We conclude with an assessment of what this review of the research reveals, and we offer observations about the challenges facing future feminist scholarship in communication.

Analysis of the Public Communication of Women and Feminists

The study of women as public communicators is one of the most visible legacies of the emergence of feminism in the field of communication. Communication's rich history in the study of rhetoric and public address—a history that, importantly, grows from a pedagogical mission—made a focus on the erasure of women from that history and the assertion of the talents of women as public speakers a natural starting point for feminist revision. Although early studies in this vein did not necessarily announce themselves as feminist in orientation, they were clearly guided by a motivation to correct a gendered bias toward certain objects of study, primarily the political discourses of White, male, national leaders. As Condit (1993) put it, scholars who did such research “did not all explicitly label their work as feminist in terms of its approach and methodology, but in the process of thinking from a feminist perspective and women's experience, they generated a body of research that looks different from male-stream scholarship” (p. 219). Such work often focused on the discourse of both historical and contemporary women reformers and activists (most of whom would qualify as “feminist” using contemporary definitions, although the term was not in popular use until the 20th century) who were forced to resist social constraints against women's public speech and activities as well as to employ innovative rhetorical practices for achieving their desired ends with their often unsympathetic audiences. Because of this context, a focus on women's/feminist public discourse has often been understood as a *prima facie* feminist undertaking, and reasonably so, if only because the assertion that such discourse deserves scholarly attention was an act of resistance against norms that held that only male rhetoric was worthy of study and emulation.

Thus, despite the fact that such research tends to cluster in the realm of rhetorical studies, promoting a “content” focus we are striving to avoid, we give the study of feminist public discourse a category of its own both for historical reasons and for political ones, because it has proven to be one of the most visible and productive areas for disseminating feminist ideas in the field of communication. This is a situation traceable to both the framing of the research by scholars as a corrective to dominant foci and to the actual political content of the discourse analyzed. Moreover, in recent years, such work is distinguished not only by its focus on feminist public discourse, but also by its use of the critique of that discourse to understand the possibilities and limitations of historical and contemporary feminist projects. From an early focus on orator studies (still a considerable focus in current scholarship, see Anderson, 2002; Behling, 2002; Brookey, 1998; Gutgold, 2001; Hayden, 1999a, 1999b; Huxman, 2001; McGee, 2003; Miller, 1999;

Olson, 1998; Shepler & Mattina, 1999; Suzuki, 2000; Voss & Rowland, 2000), scholarship on feminist discourse has expanded to include nonrhetorical forms, such as books, newspapers, manifestos, letters, and petitions (Gring-Pemble, 1998; Gring-Pemble & Blair, 2000; Pearce, 1999; Pearson, 1999; Ray, 2003; Stormer, 2001; Zaeske, 2002) and nondiscursive forms such as cartoons, posters, parades, marches, and violent protest tactics (Borda, 2002; Demo, 2000; Foss & Domenici, 2001; Kowal, 2000; Ramsey, 2000).

This work generally highlights the form and function of feminist, and sometimes prefeminist (e.g., Gring-Pemble, 1998; Voss & Rowland, 2000; Zaeske 2002), discourse in the public sphere, focusing on issues as varied as the development of feminist consciousness (Gring-Pemble, 1998), intramovement conflict (Gring-Pemble & Blair, 2000; Pearson, 1999), rhetorical leadership styles (Huxman, 2001), the interaction of feminist discourse with broad historical and material conditions rather than narrowly drawn rhetorical situations (Kowal, 2000; Ramsey, 2000), and feminist rhetors' struggles with and responses to the constraints of patriarchal language or rhetorical norms (Hayden, 1999a; Morris, 2001; Pearce, 1999). In addition to the expansion in its range of texts and critical purposes, the maturation of the analysis of women's/feminist discourse over the past few decades is shown in at least two ways. First, it reflects the growth and dissemination of feminist work both in the field of communication and in the academy at large. Specifically, it consistently acknowledges and seeks to extend insights developed in previous feminist work in rhetorical studies, most evident in the consistent citation of Campbell's (1973, 1989) work, and is interdisciplinary in its use of supporting literature from feminist studies throughout the academy, most visibly women's history and feminist theory. Because the feminist project in the academy has always been an especially interdisciplinary one, we see this characteristic as appropriate and positive, although there is reason to lament the lack of movement in the other direction; that is, the incorporation of feminist rhetorical literature into feminist work in other fields has been slower than we believe it should be.

Second, feminist rhetorical studies are generally more theoretically informed in specifically feminist ways than they have been previously and are also generally more ambitious in their attempts to intervene in issues that preoccupy feminists across the academy, such as the development of political subjectivity (Gring-Pemble, 1998; Zaeske, 2002); the centrality of race, class, sexuality, and nationality to feminist analysis (Behling 2003; Brookey, 1998; Hayden, 1999b; Kowal, 2000; Morris, 2001; Olson, 1998; Ray, 2003; Suzuki, 2000; Triage, 2000); and the possibilities for using our scholarship to inform ongoing feminist conflicts and issues in the public sphere (Anderson, 2002; Demo, 2000; Gring-Pemble & Blair, 2000; Olson, 1998). Such foci indicate movement beyond the effects criterion often used in early studies of feminist discourse, a criterion that "focuses on successful adaptation to immediate audiences" and, given the powerful obstacles they faced, often resulted in finding women "deficient as orators" (Condit, 1993, p. 211). Thus, this work demonstrates that the import of feminist rhetorical study goes beyond the evaluation of the efficacy of rhetorical strategies in particular situations and provides insight into how gender and symbol use constitute, challenge, and constrain our identities and possibilities as political actors.

Susan Zaeske's award-winning 2002 *Quarterly Journal of Speech* essay, "Signatures of Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Women's Antislavery Petitions," is an exemplar of such analysis. Focusing on collective rather than individual rhetorical efforts, Zaeske avoided evaluation of the efficacy of petitions in the abolitionist struggle, choosing instead to "examine the effects of these petitions on the reformulation of the political subjectivity of the rhetors themselves" (p. 149). Treating both the linguistic choices within the discourse of the petitions and the varied meanings of White women's ability and willingness to affix their signatures to those petitions, Zaeske illuminated the complex material relationships of power linked to gender, class, race, and citizenship in the 1830s that these documents reveal. Crucially, her analysis made central the ways in which White women's claim to the right of political participation rested on a shared gender identity with the suffering female slave yet simultaneously reinscribed race and class differences as they "gained increased access to the wider public . . . by constructing a political subjectivity grounded on appropriation and exploitation of the subjectivity of the female slave" (p. 163). Utilizing feminist theories of the public sphere, her conclusions illuminated the implications of this case study for the development of counterpublics, and she argued that the racial dynamics in and around White women's petitioning suggest that "subordinate groups' retreat from and reengagement with the dominant public may well replicate dynamics of public exclusion," an insight central to contemporary conflicts over racial alliances within feminism (Zaeske, 2000, p. 163).

The study of feminist discourse, especially historical feminist discourse, has emerged as a scholarly arena with a distinct critical tradition, albeit one that continues to be challenged and expanded. The relative success of feminist work in this area can be attributed to the ways in which it tended, initially, to simply adapt conventional modes of analysis to feminist discourse. That is, with rare exceptions (e.g., Campbell, 1973), early examples of such work did not challenge methodological or theoretical traditions as much as they challenged assumptions regarding appropriate objects of analysis. That battle, as far as women rhetors are concerned, has been won, but a variant of it remains: Feminist critics continue to argue that the discourse of the marginalized takes innovative forms, requiring recognition of nontraditional modes of communication (e.g., Borda, 2002; Demo, 2000; Foss & Domenici, 2001). Moreover, although recent work has become more self-consciously feminist in its orientation and in its methodological and theoretical approaches, as Zaeske's essay demonstrated, those approaches more often than not originate elsewhere, as feminist rhetorical scholars in the field of communication have been relatively unsuccessful at producing specifically feminist rhetorical theories and methods that are widely utilized (despite considerable attention to the concept of "feminine style," developed by Campbell, 1989. For recent examples, see Hayden, 1999a; 2003; Suzuki, 2000).

Analysis of Sex/Gender as a Variable in Communication Practices

By volume, articles treating sex or gender as a variable in qualitative, content-analytic, and experimental studies would surely constitute the largest group of studies in the discipline broaching issues related to gender and sex. This has

occurred in spite of a long-standing tension between feminist epistemological concerns and the methodologies used in most such studies (Dallimore, 2000). As we have already mentioned, however, mere attention to gender or sex does not necessarily constitute feminist research. Indeed, gender and sex have been repeatedly attended to throughout history as a means of controlling and subordinating women. For this reason, the many studies that merely report findings about sex differences cannot be counted as feminist per se, though feminists may appropriate their findings on occasion. Moreover, as Stephen (2000) noted, within the communication literature there are different lineages that can be clearly mapped for feminism and for other studies considering gender.

The picture is complicated by disagreements among feminists of different theoretical orientations about the status of sex differences. Feminists operating from a culturalist base may accept findings of difference and herald them as manifestations of the superior qualities offered by "the feminine." Feminists operating from a sociobiological base view attention to difference as a matter of equity: as a refusal to allow males to be treated as a universal type, and simply a necessity for good science. In contrast, feminists operating from a liberal perspective tend to be highly suspicious of claims to difference, as these have historically been taken to imply female inferiority and have been used to justify social inequities. It is not surprising, therefore, that reviews of the large literature on sex differences in communication tend to conflict in their assessment of the degree to which this literature supports pervasive and strong differences between men and women (Canary, Emmers-Sommer, & Faulkner, 1997; Canary & Hause, 1993; Wood, 1993). In general, however, it seems fair to say that the literature shows unstable, context-specific, relatively small, and variable effects.

Recent research in this tradition that might be considered feminist because it is influenced by the feminist theoretical debates about the nature of gender include articles testing the relative influence of gender versus biological sex and exploring whether gender stereotypical characteristics arise from a different women's "culture" or from different skill specializations. The essay, "Measuring Routine and Strategic Relational Maintenance," by Stafford, Dainton, and Haas (2000), indicated that for some experimentalists at least, the feminist theoretical claim that gender constructions are not necessarily tied to biology has permeated the research literature. In this study of the relationship between relational maintenance and relational characteristics, the authors did not simply assume that biological sex would be related to relational characteristics. Taking note of meta-analyses that had shown that biological sex tended to account for a miniscule 1% of the variance in communication behaviors, and indirectly of the literature emphasizing the socially constructed nature of femininity and masculinity, the researchers explored whether biological sex or gender identity (self-perceived femininity and masculinity) were more powerfully associated with relational maintenance behaviors. Their results indicated that "biological sex was not the primary predictor of any of the maintenance activities" (p. 317). Moreover, sex featured in only two regression equations, which are designed to show what factors lead to which behaviors: Although these analyses indicated that being female played a role in the use of openness and the sharing of tasks, it added only a paltry .03 and .05 to

the variance. Their conclusion, that “biological sex does not appear to be as important as feminine gender role characteristics when considering the ways in which relationships are maintained” (pp. 317–318), provided grounds for serious revision in major assumptions and operational practices in the very large literature on relational maintenance. Researchers seeking best explanations obviously need to incorporate sex-role identity rather than the simple dummy variables of male and female biological sex in this research stream (see, e.g., Kirtley & Weaver, 1999).

Although Kunkel and Burleson’s 1999 study, “Assessing Explanations for Sex Differences in Emotional Support,” tended to conflate gender and biological sex (presumably because it was published earlier than the work by Stafford and colleagues), it illustrates another way in which experimental research dealing with sex and gender has engaged in a sophisticated fashion with issues in feminist literature. Kunkel and Burleson started from the assumption that perceived differences in the way men and women provide comfort to others is a product of socialization. They noted, however, that the nature of this socialization has been attributed to two different processes. The “different cultures” account presumes that men and women are socialized into different emotional cultures, so that they value and practice different kinds of emotional support. In contrast, the “skill specialization account” holds that women are trained to provide emotional support, whereas men are not. These two different accounts led to different predictions about the preferences that people will have for comforting behavior. For example, the “different cultures” account would predict that each sex would prefer to be comforted by persons from their own culture and would prefer the types of comforting behavior that are associated with their culture (males would prefer masculine approaches, whereas females would prefer the “person-centered” approaches that are identified with females). The results of Kunkel and Burleson’s study provided strong support for the skill specialization account.

These results have significant implications for research, education, and daily living. Whereas a different cultures account might prescribe separate and different training in caring behaviors for men and women, the skill specialization account prescribes the need for something like remedial training in support-giving for males (on average). Similarly, the different accounts prescribe different research practices with regard to scales to be used for measuring support and related variables. The study demonstrated clearly that the earlier era, in which sex or gender were taken to be simple, highly coherent variables based on invariant characteristics that were uniform within groups, has passed. Sex and gender are not simply variables deserving incorporation in equations, but are complex factors that require careful, sustained attention to their formation and to the nonsimple ways in which they play out in human communication.

Other research continues to broaden and deepen our understanding of gender as a complex variable that does not manifest itself in simple ways. In media studies, for example, Zhao and Gantz (2003) examined interruptions in prime-time television fiction, showing that interruptions were not simply related to gender, but rather that differences appeared “only when the interrupters were of higher status than the interrupted and when the topic of the conversation was

about work” (p. 347). Similarly, Weatherall (1998) found less sex bias than expected in prompted conversations about a popular television program and emphasized the need to “document how linguistic bias is routinized or legitimated in different conversational contexts” (p. 275). Perhaps remarkably, Stringer and Hopper (1998) identified one way in which lay conversation is “de-sexing” language in use. Rather than use the pseudo-generic he, or adopt the perhaps cumbersome “he or she,” they found lay people have shifted to the use of “they” as a singular generic form. Other research within this category has continued the feminist interest in pedagogy (Jasma & Koper, 2002; Nadler & Nadler, 2001).

Even outside this growing sophistication about how gender works in interpersonal communication, some studies that treat gender as a variable have continued to enrich the feminist tradition. For example, Robertson, Froemling, Wells, and McCraw (1999) identified significant differences in issues, negativity, appeals, and highlighted candidate characteristics in mixed-gendered political campaigns and contextualized these differences within the history of underrepresentation of women in U.S. politics. An important dimension that is highly underresearched and underoperationalized in this area, however, relates to cultural differences in what counts as femininity or masculinity and the ways in which various traits are assigned to different sexes in different cultures. The complex history of assignment of stereotyped traits to Black men and women in U.S. culture (Lerner, 1973) indicates why one cannot simply assume that there is a single bipolar set of “sex” or “gender” variables. Being male and being female have meant different things for persons of different ethnicities, and masculinity and femininity have been performed in different ways in different cultures. Although there is older research on this subject, and there is growing research with a global focus (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Halevi, 2003; Parameswaran, 1999; Rapoo, 2002; Rodriguez, 2001; Suzuki, 2000), in our sample there was little sustained attention to the implications of cultural variability in gender for experimental research using sex as a variable, and little in the way of new operationalizations of these concepts to take account of cultural variability (see, however, Bayard & Krishnayya, 2001; Bradford, Buck, & Meyers, 2001; Mulac, Bradac, & Gibbons, 2001; Whaley, Nicotera, & Samter, 1998). Researchers studying sex or gender as a variable in communication studies have made exciting advances and face additional challenges, not the least of which is communicating the new, more sophisticated results indicating the complexities involved in sex/gender studies to their nonfeminist colleagues.

*Analysis of the Role of Communication Practices
in the Dissemination of Gender Ideology*

The analysis of communication practices that disseminate gender ideology constitutes a large category of research; indeed, this area of feminist scholarship probably shows more growth over the past 3 decades than any other category. The dramatic expansion of this area of study in the journals in communication stems from several sources, including the development of cultural studies, a broadly interdisciplinary endeavor focused on the analysis of power in a variety of contexts. Moreover, the growth of critical media studies in the field of communication, facilitated by the founding of NCA's *Critical Studies in Media Communica-*

tion (*CSMC*) 20 years ago, has also been a factor, as has the general explosion of media forms since the 1970s, including the development of cable television and new media and the expansion of consumer culture in the U.S. and around the world.

Researchers in this area generally work from the assumption that the communication of gender ideology is a central function of cultural messages, and they employ diverse analytical techniques to examine the variety of forms in which this ideology is manifested and through which its effects are produced. Studies have examined television and video entertainment (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003; Andsager & Roe, 1999; Botta, 1999; Cohen & Ribak, 2003; Cuklanz, 1998; Hanke, 1998; Harrison & Frederickson, 2003; Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2003; Ott & Aoki, 2001; Powell & Abels, 2002; Rockler, 1999; Shugart, 2003; Striphas, 2003; Vavrus, 2000a, 2002); film (Anderson & Accomando, 1999; Dalton & Fatzinger, 2003; Frenz & Rushing, 2002; Harris, 2000; Ono & Buescher, 2001; Picart, 1998; Rockler, 2001; Swan, 1999); advertising (Artz, Munger, & Purdy, 1999; Cassidy, 2001; Hawkins & Hane, 2001; Johnson & Young, 2002; Sullivan, 1998; White & Kinnick, 2000); magazines (Corbett, 2001; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998; Mandziuk, 2001; Smith, 2000); news (Bing, 1999; Consalvo, 1998; Danner & Walsh, 1999; Dow, 1999; Halevi, 2003; Halkias, 1998; Kinnick, 1998; Lind & Salo, 2002; Luthra, 1999; Parry-Giles, 2000; Schriver, 2003; Shugart, 2003; Sloop, 2000; Stables, 2003; Vavrus, 1998); new media (Koerber, 2001; Scodari, 1998; Scodari & Felder, 2000; Stern, 2003; Warnick, 1999); visual images (Durham, 2001); health discourse (Charlesworth, 2001, 2003; Hayden, 2001; Lager & McGee, 2003; Myrick, 1999); organizational discourse (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Townsley & Geist, 2000); cartoons (Edwards & Chen, 2000); music (Padva, 2003; Sellnow, 1999); popular books (Garner, 1999; Parameswaran, 2002; Wood, 2002); and toys (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel, 2002). Generally, this research takes one of three forms: (a) quantitative analysis of mediated discourse and its effects, (b) audience reception analysis, often using a combination of critical, qualitative, and sometimes quantitative methods, and (c) critical textual analysis of mediated discourse.

The use of quantitative methods to measure levels of male and/or female representation and the prevalence of gender stereotypes is a line of research with a long history. Even so, our survey did not turn up a large number of such studies. We speculate that one reason for this situation is that *CSMC*, the NCA journal specifically earmarked for media studies (by far the major focus for the study of communication of gender ideology) appears to many to be primarily hospitable to criticism rather than quantitative analysis (although examples of the latter appear in *CSMC*, they are vastly outnumbered by critical studies). Second, there are a number of outlets not surveyed here that regularly feature such work and are likely perceived as reaching the audience specifically concerned with such issues: for example, *Sex Roles*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. Among the journals we surveyed, *Journal of Communication* has published the largest number of quantitative studies of the communication of gender ideology published in the last 5 years (e.g., Andsager & Roe, 1999; Botta, 1999; Harrison & Frederickson, 2003; Holbert et al., 2003; Lind & Salo, 2002), although such research also appears in *CSMC* (e.g., Johnson & Young, 2002) and in *Women's Studies and Communication* (e.g., White, 2000).

From an early focus on levels of representation, quantitative studies of the communication of gender ideology has broadened to focus on specific contexts and types of discourse, rather than undifferentiated masses of discourse such as a prime-time television season, and to ask more specific and complex questions as researchers seek to discover if there are context- or genre-related distinctions among media forms in terms of their communication of gender ideology as well as the effects of that ideology on specific audiences. For example, Andsager and Roe's (1999) study of country music videos takes as its charge the investigation of the claim that 1997 was "the year of the woman" in country music, based on the success of female country artists that year in terms of awards and sales. Coding 285 videos shown on Country Music Television in 1997, they found that female artists were outnumbered 3 to 1 and that the overall representation of women in these videos, in terms of roles portrayed and their physical appearance, was consistent with earlier research on other types of music video. However, they also found that the portrayal and physical appearance of women differed significantly between the videos of female artists and those of male artists (portrayal in the former was more progressive and appearance less sexualized), and that country music video was markedly different from rock and rap videos in terms of its lack of representation of sexual violence against women, its lack of representation of either men or women as sexual predators, and its lack of portrayal of women as strippers or prostitutes (p. 81).

Other specific foci explored by researchers include the relationship of television and video images to adolescents' body images (Botta, 1999; Harrison & Frederickson, 2003), the relationship between prime-time drama and situation comedy and viewers' attitudes toward women's rights (Holbert et al., 2003), the portrayal of women in computer ads (White & Kinnick, 2000), gendered language patterns in advertisements directed at young children (Johnson & Young, 2002), gender bias in newspaper profiles of Olympic athletes (Kinnick, 1998), and the representation of feminists and feminism television news and public affairs programming (Lind & Salo, 2002). These examples of quantitative work in the communication of gender ideology include both studies directed exclusively toward analyzing media content and those directed toward analyzing the effect of media content on viewers. The quantitative study of media effects is a long-standing research area in communication, yet feminist media scholars have begun to take this focus in new directions over the past 2 decades, developing a line of research commonly referred to as "reception studies." These studies are characterized by the use of multiple methodologies and by suspicion toward facile conclusions about audience's tendencies to either uncritically accept or easily resist media messages about gender. The growth of reception studies is traceable to the influence of cultural studies on feminist work in communication, as cultural studies is differentiated from traditional studies of mass communication by its call for analysis of the interaction among producers, texts, and audiences. Such research is particularly valuable for complicating the notion that women are "passive dupes" for mediated gender ideology and for revealing how women sometimes use media texts to serve their own interests in unpredictable ways. In contrast to traditional quantitative effects studies, however, such research is usually based on a

small sample of participants because of its labor-intensive use of ethnography and interviews, thus limiting its generalizability in conventional social scientific terms.

Our survey revealed several examples of this type of research, including Rockler's 1999 study of viewers' responses to the "patriarchal image of idealized white femininity" in *Beverly Hills, 90210* (p. 72), in which she combines critical analysis of the program with focus group interviews with female viewers. Other studies have focused on Indian women's "resistance to and collusion with the hegemony of global culture" through their reading of Western romance fiction (Parameswaran, 2002; see also Ram, 2002), on female viewers' evaluation of the television program *Ally McBeal* (Cohen & Ribak, 2003), on Black women's use of multiple standpoints to make sense of popular film (Harris & Donmoyer, 2000), on young girls' identity negotiation through their interactions with American Girl dolls (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel, 2000), on young women's interpretations of cigarette ads (Hawkins, 2001), on audience's readings of "gay window advertising" (Sender, 1999), and on online fan communities' interpretations of popular television (Scodari, 1998; Scodari & Felder, 2000).

Carolina Acosta-Alzuru's 2003 *CSMC* article, "I'm Not a Feminist . . . I Only Defend Women as Human Beings": The Production, Representation, and Consumption of Feminism in a *Telenovela*," is an especially rich example of this vein of scholarship. Acosta-Alzuru combined critical analysis of the text of a Venezuelan telenovela with interviews with its writers and actors and with individual and group interviews with audience members. These multiple methodological approaches make it possible to get at the profound contradictions embedded in the text, its creators' motives, and its audience's evaluation of it. For example, although the text performs social critique through its portrayal of women who resist the constraints of Venezuela's patriarchal norms, the program's writers disavow association with feminism. Moreover, the viewers who appreciate the program's empowering messages for women refuse to label either the telenovela or themselves as feminist. Acosta-Alzuru concluded that "in the production and consumption of this telenovela, feminism is divorced from messages that seek to empower women and improve their living conditions. In this way, feminist ideas—not acknowledged as feminist—are co-opted by the text," thus demonstrating what she terms "the paradox faced by feminism worldwide" (p. 288). Indeed, the negative impressions of feminism held by Acosta-Alzuru's Venezuelan interviewees were quite similar to those revealed by Lind and Salo's analysis of news and public affairs programming in the U.S. (2002).

We also include critical feminist organizational analysis in the category of reception analysis, although it is an awkward fit, as this work stems from a different tradition than the work on media discussed above. Certainly, feminist organizational research is concerned with the circulation of gender and feminist ideology, and it is similar to media reception analysis in its methodological emphasis on interview and ethnographic data. However, it is clearly different in that it does not emerge from a media studies paradigm. Ashcraft and Kedrowicz's (2002) ethnographic analysis of the uses and functions of empowerment strategies for staff and volunteers in an avowed feminist nonprofit organization is a model of work that uses, tests, and refines feminist theory, accomplishing their goal of "lending varia-

tion, incongruity, process, nuance, and texture” to understandings of organizational life (p. 95). Although the number of examples of it in our survey was small, such critical feminist organizational scholarship is inherently valuable for its often elegant integration of theoretical and methodological approaches to produce valuable insights about the possibilities for feminist practice in “real world” contexts.

In contrast, critical textual analyses of mediated discourse constitute the largest body of research analyzing the communication of gender ideology. This type of work is generally negative in its assessment, arguing that strategies for reinforcing regressive ideas about men, women, and their relationships dominate cultural messages. A small group of studies, however, argue for the progressive potential of individual texts, such as Cooper’s analyses of the popular films *Thelma and Louise* and *Boys Don’t Cry* (2000, 2002), Cooper and Pease’s analysis of the television program *Ally McBeal* (2002), and Rushing and Frenzt’s 2000 analysis of *Titanic* (see also Swan, 1999; Wyman & Dionisopoulos, 2000). The seemingly unrelenting “bad news” of analyses of gender ideology in media, however, does not necessarily reflect a lack of imagination in the scholarship (although, regrettably, sometimes it does). Rather, it can be seen as an indication that, as feminist ideas continue to circulate in contemporary culture, strategies for maintaining hegemonic notions of gender are constantly shifting and morphing, requiring critical vigilance. Mary Vavrus’s 1998 *CSMC* lead article, “Working the Senate From the Outside In: The Mediated Construction of a Feminist Political Campaign” is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Taking as her focus the media hype attendant to 1992’s so-called “Year of the Woman” in politics, in which unprecedented numbers of women ran for political office across the nation at every level, Vavrus examined the media discourse around five of those women who became emblematic of female ascendancy in the political sphere: senatorial candidates Dianne Feinstein, Barbara Boxer, Lynn Yeakel, Patty Murray, and Carol Moseley Braun.

Although these women’s campaigns were widely constructed by media as a response to the treatment of Anita Hill by the Senate Judiciary Committee in the fall of 1991, thus giving them a feminist veneer that the candidates did not repudiate, Vavrus argued that feminism functioned as an empty signifier that worked to veil the ways in which the women were stereotypically framed by news media. Examining local newspapers, *The New York Times*, and television coverage on ABC and CNN, Vavrus’s analysis revealed news frames that positioned the candidates as Washington outsiders despite their considerable combined political experience, as status quo challengers, and as agents of change simply by virtue of their gender. The frames thus relied on essentialist notions of women’s assumed “difference” from men and create a direct relationship between gender of candidate and a largely unexplained version of feminist ideology. Vavrus concluded that the ultimate message of this coverage was that “the placement of more women in political office is the panacea for women’s needs,” yet there was almost no debate or discussion of “how this increase in numbers would improve the lives of constituents or of what reforms, specifically, the new agendas would be composed” (p. 231). Indeed, she noted that all of the newly elected female senators, with the exception of Carol Moseley Braun, proceeded to vote for President Clinton’s welfare reform package, despite vigorous lobbying against the legislation from the

National Organization for Women and the Women's Economic Agenda Project based on its negative implications for women. For feminist media critics, such work is valuable, as it reminds us of the need to recognize the gap between mediated constructions of feminism's influence and the conditions of women's daily lives.

Although analysis of the construction of "women," "femininity," and "feminism" has dominated feminist critique of cultural messages and their effects, new directions in this research, particularly visible in the past 5 years, deserve mention. For example, 1998 was a banner year for the study of masculinity. In addition to a special section on masculinity theory in a 1998 issue of *Communication Theory*, our survey revealed four critical essays analyzing mediated depictions of masculinity that appeared that same year: Cuklanz's analysis of masculinity in 1970s television rape narratives (1998), Hanke's analysis of the "mock-macho" situation comedy (1998), Picart's critique of masculinity in *Frankenstein* (1998), and Orbe's analysis of the coding of Black masculinity in MTV's *The Real World* (1998). In 2000, *CSMC* published a review and criticism section on masculinity, and three critical essays treating masculinity in mediated contexts appeared in that journal in 2002 (Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002; Cooper, 2002; Vavrus, 2002a). Although Mumby's (1998) article in *Communication Theory* noted that there are difficult paradoxes involved for men doing masculinity studies from a feminist theoretical stance, the work on masculinity appearing in communication journals over the past 5 years is explicitly feminist almost without exception; that is, it is geared toward analyzing the ways in which masculinity is deployed against women's/feminist interests in cultural messages (although Orbe's 1998 essay is more specifically oriented toward deconstructing the problematic aspects of masculinity for race politics).

The explicit study of masculinity is a welcome development in many ways, as it challenges the notion that "gender" means "women," a long-standing tacit assumption in academic work. Indeed, as Roseanne Mandziuk (2000) has noted, in much previous feminist work, "masculinity is viewed as a homogenous and monolithic force, while attention is turned instead to the careful theorizing of women's experiences and perspectives" (p. 105). In order to fully understand the workings of gender ideology in cultural products, we must attend to the complexities of masculinity as well. A relentless focus on women leads us to the conclusion, however erroneous, that women are the problem and that the feminist project can be accomplished through change on only one side of the (constructed) gender divide. There are, of course, legitimate feminist complaints against a kind of work on masculinity that seems interested mostly in detailing men's oppression as patriarchs, but such work is not ascendant in communication, at least thus far.

The recent focus on masculinity also plays a role in the other noteworthy trend in media criticism: analysis of representations of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and the transgendered (GLBT). For example, Cooper's (2002) analysis of female masculinity in *Boys Don't Cry*, the film dramatization of the murder of transgendered teenager Brandon Teena, illustrates this overlap, as does Sloop's (2000) article on news coverage of the same case (see also Brookey & Westerfelhaus, 2001; Shugart, 2003). This area of research has seen impressive growth over the past 5 years, certainly related to the fact that the previous virtual invisibility of GLBT characters

in popular media has eroded rapidly in the past decade. The success of films such as *Philadelphia* and *Boys Don't Cry* and of television programs such as *Ellen* and *Will & Grace* has made such representations commercially viable for dominant media. However, the relationship of scholarship on GLBT representation to feminist politics is somewhat unstable. Although some feminists might argue that any deconstruction of dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality (issues that are always at stake in this kind of work) contributes to the feminist project, the history of gay men's alliance with feminism is a contentious one; that is, despite their oppression as a sexual minority, gay men still possess male privilege, a fact that goes unacknowledged in much work on gay representation. Moreover, gay men are more visible in popular media and in critical media scholarship than are lesbians, replicating traditional patterns of gender dominance.

Thus, there are examples of work on gay representation that are clearly feminist or that draw explicitly on feminist theory (see, e.g., Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002; Rockler, 2001). Helene Shugart (2003) critiqued the gay man/straight women couple in several film and television texts, arguing that this configuration functions to reinforce not only heteronormativity but also male privilege. Didi Herman (2003) offered an insightful analysis of the privileging of homonormativity in depictions of lesbians in the British prison drama *Bad Girls*. However, the majority of analyses of GLBT representation—despite the fact that some have been written from a feminist sensibility (e.g., Dow, 2001; Sloop, 2000)—are nonetheless not clear in their connection to feminist goals (see, e.g., Brookey & Westerfelhaus, 2001, 2002; Erni, 1998; Sender, 1999; Squires & Brouwer, 2002; Wilcox, 2003). This situation could possibly be linked to the fact that much of the queer theory upon which these analyses draw also has an ambiguous relationship to feminism (see Walters, 1996).

Analysis of Communication Practices That Function to Combat Gender Injustice and Provide Models for Progressive Communication Practices

Feminist scholarship sees itself as contributing to positive social change, creating a world in which there is greater gender justice. Consequently, attention to the means of overthrowing oppressive communication practices and institutions, as well as efforts to generate new models for better communication practices, has long been central to feminist studies. Scholars have elaborated a substantial catalogue of tools that can be used for resisting and dismantling patriarchal communication practices and structures. The most frequently referenced include personal narrative, consciousness raising, "feminine style," the comic frame, and perspective by incongruity or dissonant juxtaposition (e.g., Campbell, 1973, 1989; Hayden, 1999a, 2003; Powell, 1995; Suzuki, 2000). Articles in the past 5 years have reiterated the utility of juxtaposition (Campbell, 1998; Cooper & Pease, 2002), petitioning (Zaeske, 2002), letter writing (Gring-Pemble, 1998), and humor or the comedic (Cooper & Pease, 2002; Demo, 2000). Most feminist scholars no longer expect to find "pure" tactics that can never go awry or be co-opted (Papa, Singhal, Ghanekar, & Papa, 2000), but they have argued that often devices such as synecdoche (Foss & Domenici, 2001), satire (Campbell, 1998; Gring-Pemble & Watson, 2003), reversal (Campbell, 1998; Hayden, 1999b), and narrative (Cooper & Pease,

2002; Fabj, 1998; Ford & Crabtree, 2002; Gring-Pemble, 2001; Schely-Newman, 1998) have affinities with feminist goals of dismantling patriarchal structures. In addition, new work is identifying mediating strategies for helping children to resist the stereotyping all too prevalent in the mass media (Durham, 1999; Nathanson, Wilson, McGee, & Sebastian, 2002), while other essays have identified transformational strategies within mass media (Natharius & Dobkin, 2002).

One area of heartening growth across the past decade has been an increase in research that identifies positive communication practices and role models. These “reconstruction” strategies are being worked out for a variety of communication venues. A substantial amount of research has attended to positive identity formation (Arthos, 1998; Curtin, 1999) and to the building of relationships that are consonant with feminist values (Golombosky, 2001; Lee, 1998). Other research has continued the tradition of building feminist organizations (Hoffman, 2002), whereas new work is able to take advantage of the growing numbers of successful female politicians to begin to identify role models in these areas (Robson, 2000). As mentioned earlier, a number of essays are also beginning to identify positive enactments appearing on television and film, and work in new media has described control mechanisms for resisting toxic masculinity on the Internet (Vrooman, 2000). In addition, scholars have continued to suggest means for revising the practices of scholarship itself, that is, for making our research and publication practices more consonant with our feminist premises (Dallimore, 2000; Rushing, 1998; Schely-Newman, 1999).

One of the most important essays identifying positive models has been Olga Idriss Davis’s essay, “In the Kitchen: Transforming the Academy Through Safe Spaces of Resistance” (1999), which described the unique dynamics of the plantation kitchen during slavery. On the one hand, the kitchen, separated from the main house, was a site of oppression: White mistresses exerted their domination and repression upon their Black slaves here, and Black women were forced to work to provide the food for the masters. On the other hand, Davis noted, “Although it was work, the creation of food was a rhetorical act of nurturance and care, creative genius and survival” (p. 368), and Black women:

transformed the kitchen by maintaining a human community through their culinary talents. Their kitchen work provided sustenance for the *human* family, both black and white. . . . The kitchen of banishment, the space of separation and domination was transformed into a positive place. Black women resisted hatred and transformed the kitchen into a site of ethical care in spite of racial and gender hatred. (p. 369)

A crucial factor in this transformation process was the creation of a “space in which they could realize their inventional qualities and claim self-definition” (p. 370) in a world that urged upon them identities that were oppressive.

Davis urged Black women, and by implication the rest of the human family as well, to treat the academy as a plantation space that needs transformation and to recognize, create, and protect “safe spaces of resistance.” Davis drew upon and extended womanist theory to offer a vision of “the Academy as a space for com-

munity survival and human development” (p. 373) and a better vision of scholarship “unifying thought and action” (p. 370). Davis’s model reenvisioned the notion of strategy and tactics. Rather than redeploying the masculinist battle metaphor that is so endemic in social change literature, Davis envisioned the positive creation of a particular kind of space as a strategy for social change. By the act of creating “kitchen-like” spaces, in which inventional capacity, mutual nurturing, and self-identity formation can occur, we in fact transform the academy. Presumably the same can be true if we create kitchen-like spaces as the centers of activity outside the academy as well.

Sarah Hayden’s essay on the “Million Mom March” (2003) similarly drew on feminist models as resources for social change. In Hayden’s case, it was not a space but a set of experiences that provided the model. Hayden argued that the women’s march in favor of gun control offered a different model of a national family than the patriarchal model promoted by a gun-dominated society. Hayden’s analysis is particularly productive because it successfully draws on and extends beyond the debate about the dangers involved in drawing on maternal images. That debate recognizes the power of maternal metaphors, but notes that historical efforts to use maternal metaphors have tended to reencapsulate women within the domesticated sphere of the family. Hayden argued that instead of simply drawing on maternal metaphors, a successful rhetoric seeks to contest and transform the image of the family as a nuclear unit dominated by a powerful patriarch. In her vision, the maternal is important not because of its embodiment in a particular set of persons, but because it provides a model of care that can and should be adopted not only within families, but by all people, and that with appropriate modifications the maternally centered family provides a better model for a nation than does the patriarchal family.

Hayden’s essay illustrates a sophistication in the interrelationship of theory, history, and critical readings of discourse that characterizes the best of contemporary feminist scholarship. Yet, in spite of the power of theoretical debates to elevate the sophistication of our scholarship and the growing integration of theoretical developments into feminist criticism and other communication studies, there is a surprising paucity of studies in our sample that undertake sustained theoretical analysis outside of a critical or experimental case.

Construction of Feminist Theoretical Frameworks

Feminist activism and feminist theory have an appropriately tortured historical relationship. On the one hand, feminist activism can be understandably impatient with “high theory,” which tends to use vocabularies that are inaccessible to most women, to address a small group that is often heavily dominated by males, and to deal in something other than immediate and vital political challenges such as protecting reproductive rights, fighting for economic justice, or broadening the images of who gets to count as “normal.” On the other hand, feminist practice has also historically “moved forward” in part through various theoretical developments. Perhaps reflecting the dynamics of this relationship, we found relatively few “purely” theoretical pieces published about feminism in the past 5 years in the journals we surveyed. This is not to say that contemporary feminism is untouched

or uninfluenced by contemporary theory, especially contemporary feminist theories. There is a growing influx of postcolonialist and globalist theoretical orientations (Diaz, 2003; Durham, 2001; Hegde, 1999; McKinley & Jensen, 2003; Parameswaran, 1999; Ram, 2002), as well as influence from womanist theory and critical race theory (Behling, 2002; Carlson, 1999; Hamlet, 2000; Ono & Buescher, 2001). We found echoes of poststructuralist theory in several critical pieces (e.g., Dow, 2001; Lay, 2003; Rockler, 2001; Sloop, 2000; Townsley & Geist, 2000), and several essays also engaged the various understandings of “Third Wave” feminism (Diaz, 2003; Hogeland, 2001; Lotz, 2003; Shugart, 2001; Shugart, Egley, & Hallstein, 2001).

It is striking the extent to which “theory” in feminist studies occurs in modes that are different from much other communication theory. In the first place, perhaps because of greater epistemological commitments to personal experiences, feminist/womanist theory can come in forms that do not require arcane vocabularies and pedantic development. Davis’s essay on the “kitchen,” described above, is a theoretical essay, but it is relatively accessible to any high school graduate. Second, we noticed that many of the feminist theory essays in communication studies occur in dialogues and multilogues—special issues and forums that are designed to address a single issue from many perspectives. One example is the special issue on masculinity studies in the May 1998 issue of *Communication Theory*, mentioned above.

Another example comes from studies on feminist ethics, which derived in part from the reimagining of the nature of power and the basic relationships among members in a community. A key early figure in this work was Carol Gilligan (1982), but the theoretical quilt has since been enlarged substantially through political and legal theory (Kittay, 1997; Noddings, 1984). Essays by Darlington and Mulvaney (2002), Patterson and Hall, (1998), and Wood (1998) have recently contributed to the weaving of this fabric. Combined with womanist and critical race theory, this developing perspective is sometimes identified as “multiple standpoint theory” (Harris & Donmoyer, 2000). In 2000, a special issue of *Women’s Studies in Communication* was devoted to assessing “where standpoint stands now.” Most of the essays in that issue developed standpoint theory by applying it to various cases: organizational research, film, self-healing rhetoric, and Black women’s account of their own communicative experiences. Hallstein’s (2000) introductory essay, however, paired with her essay on the same topic in *Western* (1999; see also Durham, 1998) summarized and updated the debates about standpoint theory and its increasingly well-developed conceptualizations. Moreover, in light of the shared focus on a particular theoretical framework, the essays individually and taken together help to illustrate the challenges and utilities of (multiple) standpoint theory. The essay by Bell, Orbe, Drummond, and Camara (2000) for example, provided a particularly nuanced account of the challenges and productivities of Black feminism as a standpoint theory. The issue, taken as a whole, illustrates the value of sustained multilogue focusing on particular theoretical formulations, as well as the value of deep interaction between sustained theoretical articulations and textual analyses that employ and embroider upon a theoretical framework.

In contrast to this predominantly cooperative theoretical multilogue, a more tense dialogue on whiteness and feminism appeared in *Communication Theory* in 2000. There, Rowe (2000) argued that White women's feminism is compromised by their failure to examine their own racial privilege. She indicated that "White male structures remain a primary source of White female power, White female investments remain bound to these problematic ideological and institutional structures." Therefore, she suggested, "a productive step for White feminists, then, is to examine their loyalties, where their alliances reside, and where their energies are directed" (p. 76). A result of this would be the building of alliances with women of color, rather than expecting women of color to adapt to White female norms, or falsely speaking for all women in the name of a color-blinded feminism. Rowe's presumption that women of color have a strong dependence on identity politics and standpoint theory for experiential reasons, whereas White feminists move to deconstructive (universalizing) positions for reasons of privilege and power, emerged through a textual analysis of a popular women's studies book. Rowe emphasized that White women tend to deflect attention from their White privilege and to exercise "tricks" for maintaining their privileges, such as insisting that women of color do the work to educate them about racial issues.

Risking the claim that she is providing such a "deflection," Patrice Buzzanell (2000) responded to Rowe's essay, suggesting that the bivalent and essentialist presentation of "White women" vs. "women of color" that underwrote Rowe's analysis might be counterproductive. She argued, however, that alliances could be built through shared commitment to racial diversity and concrete goals.

This theoretical dialogue provided a piece of a conversation that needs to deepen, develop, and travel through much more feminist scholarship in the next decade. Although understandings of the complexities of the different axes of oppression constituted by race and gender have already begun to influence feminist scholarship (e.g. Behling, 2002; Bird, 1999; Bowers & Buzzanell, 2002; Carlson, 1999; Houston, 2000; Ono & Buescher, 2001; Ott & Aoki, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001), it has yet to pervade organizational and personal communicative structures in the academy.

Conclusions

We begin this conclusion by noting the limitations of our sample. There are areas of growth in feminist research that this survey of the past 5 years of certain journals does not reveal. There has been, for example, a significant growth in studies of gender and health communication. Although we include some examples here, primarily in the first two categories, such as the critique of abortion rhetoric (Lay, 2003; Stormer, 2001) and critical analysis of mediated discourse about AIDS, sex education, menstruation, or anorexia (Charlesworth, 2001, 2003; Hayden, 2001; Lager & McGee, 2003; Myrick, 1999), there is also qualitative work (Dorgan, Williams, Parrott, & Harris, 2003). We know also that quantitative and qualitative work on gender and health appears in such journals as *Health Communication* and the *Journal of Applied Communication*, which we did not survey. Moreover,

we have noted a small number of feminist organizational studies, despite the knowledge that this is a healthy area of feminist inquiry and that feminist organizational scholars have produced important work that not only critiques organizational practices but offers useful feminist alternatives (Ashcraft, 2001; Buzzanell, 2001). We suspect that the low visibility of feminist organizational work in this review results from our inability to include journals in which such research is more likely to appear, such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, or *Academy of Management Review*. Finally, this review does not indicate the importance of the increasing numbers of scholarly books being published by feminist researchers in communication. For example, two of the essays highlighted here (Vavrus, 1998; Zaeske, 2002) became portions of recent books, Zaeske's *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (2003) and Vavrus's *Postfeminist News: Political Women in Media Culture* (2002b).

Other recent books by feminist communication scholars who have published in the journals surveyed here include Lisa Cuklanz's *Rape on Prime Time: Television, Masculinity, and Sexual Violence* (2000), John Sloop's *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture* (2004), and Karen Ashcraft and Dennis Mumby's *Reworking Gender: A Feminist Communicology of Organizations* (2003). This is a trend more evident in those areas of the field in which critical methodologies dominate, but these areas are also more conducive to the publication of scholarly books. Book publication is to be celebrated, as it is one of the most effective ways to make feminist work in communication accessible to scholars outside the field, and it allows a combination of depth and breadth difficult to squeeze into an essay-length study.

In addition to the limitations of our sample, there are implications for our categorization scheme and its results. Despite our attempt to avoid it, we found that the feminist scholarship in communication tends to sort itself, to a certain degree, into content areas—most evident in the first three categories; less so in the last two categories. This situation has significant implications. For example, most studies of dominant public discourse tend to appear in the third category (analysis of the dissemination of gender ideology), which is heavily slanted toward mass media research, which, in turn, is heavily slanted toward critical analysis of entertainment media. This means, for example, that we have relatively few analyses of dominant political discourse and those that we do have tend to study the rhetoric of female candidates (examples found in the first category) or the discourse about female political figures (found in the third category).

This article was written in the spring of 2004, a time when the party in power in U.S. electoral politics was overtly hostile to women's and feminist interests—witness the attacks on reproductive rights and contraceptive funding, the continuing gap between women's and men's wages, the rollback of affirmative action, the assertion of the "immorality" of same-sex marriage, and the fact that the U.S. remains the only Western industrialized country without substantial federal support for childcare. Thus, we are concerned by a lack of feminist scholarship in communication on dominant discourses emerging from the corridors of power that make this situation possible, even reasonable, to many. Moreover, there are

virulently antifeminist organizations and campaigns at work in contemporary political culture, yet they receive little attention from feminist scholars in this field (the same can be said of historical antifeminist forces, such as those opposing the women's suffrage movement of the early 20th century). Certainly, work on mass media discourses, both fictional and nonfictional, contributes to our understanding of why feminism remains marginalized and why power imbalances between men and women remain intractable. We urge attention, as well, to the communicative dimensions of electoral, legislative, and judicial politics, and the challenges and possibilities that they offer for a feminist agenda (for an example, see Sullivan & Turner, 1999).

Other arenas for feminist scholarship are underrepresented in this review as well. There is little work on the Internet, for example, although it is certainly the single most influential technological development in media of the late 20th century, and it has dramatic implications for feminist (and antifeminist) organizing, for the study of gender as a communication variable, and for the dissemination of gender ideology. Yet this may not be a lack specific to feminist scholarship, as communication journals generally feature relatively few studies of new media.

The growth of feminist scholarship that pays specific attention to race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and globalism is a heartening sign, although there is a need for much more of it, as well as a need for it to spread across methodological and content categories. For example, research on globalism, race, and sexuality tends to cluster in rhetoric and media studies and to utilize a critical methodology, yet such foci need to spread to other research areas. As we noted in the discussion of research in the second category (gender/sex as a variable in communication practices), understandings of gender vary culturally, and we need more explicit recognition of this variability. Moreover, part of what additional attention to such issues should mean is that feminist communication scholars across the field recognize the unmarked race, class, sexuality, and geographical categories with which we work. That is, we noted a tendency for feminist scholars to use "women" when their operationalization of the term clearly meant "White women," or "heterosexual women," or "U.S. women" or some combination of these characteristics.

Generally, taking into account the limitations and lacunae we have noted, we believe that this review of the state of the art in feminist scholarship in communication demonstrates a record of substantial accomplishment for a vein of academic inquiry that is little more than 3 decades into its development. Feminist scholarship has been mainstreamed; it appears consistently in our most prestigious journals as well as in journals specifically targeted at feminist audiences. The progress of women in the field as a whole cannot be overestimated as one factor in this phenomenon. As more feminists reach the upper ranks in the academy and become gatekeepers for academic publication as both editors and reviewers, and as they increasingly function as mentors for graduate students and junior faculty, the climate for feminist scholarship becomes less chilly, and its evaluation becomes more informed. Yet, despite claims for the "feminization" of the field, communication still has more men than women in its upper ranks, as does the academy as a whole, so the continuing vitality of feminist scholarship depends upon continued attention to the success of women academics (although

the number of men performing feminist scholarship is increasing, this review indicates that feminist scholars are still largely female).

In addition to the increase in volume, recent feminist scholarship is distinguished by its surety and sophistication. Ritualistic justifications of the study of women or gender or feminism no longer appear in the introductions to feminist work, and feminist studies in communication have a history and a literature to draw upon both inside and outside the field. As we have noted, feminist studies are increasingly theoretically complex, and they are expanding previous boundaries around the study of gender by exploring issues of masculinity, sexuality, and transgenderism.

We suggest that this review demonstrates the viability and utility of a set of scholarly agendas that take as their goal research that helps to develop and move our society closer to gender justice. The large body of studies summarized here illustrates that self-consciousness about the political bases of one's interests, topic selection, research methods, and assumptions is not incompatible with the application of rigorous analysis and sophisticated theoretical development. Indeed, it suggests that, in the studies of human beings, such goals and such a reflective consciousness are indispensable to anything that might be designated as sound and thorough scholarship.

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