Rethinking Gender Research in Communication

by Lana F. Rakow

A review of the history of the concept of sexual differences and the types of communication research it has encouraged suggests that "gender is a verb," created by and creating communication.

The presumed biological and psychological differences between women and men have long been the subject of intellectual speculation and pronouncement. They have been the basis upon which customs, manners, and laws have been constructed and justified and research conceptualized and executed. The social sciences, from the time of their origins in the nineteenth century, have at historical moments shared this interest in explaining the differences between "the sexes." In the 1970s, against the backdrop of the contemporary women's movement, this interest manifested itself in studies of "gender" rather than "sex," reflecting the success of feminists' distinction between social and biological differences.

Communication research, like that of the other social sciences, incorporated the study of gender into the standard research approaches and methodologies of the fields of speech, interpersonal, and mass communication. Gender has been operationalized as a pregiven category that can account for measurable differences in women's and men's speech, interaction, and mass communication behavior, often leading to

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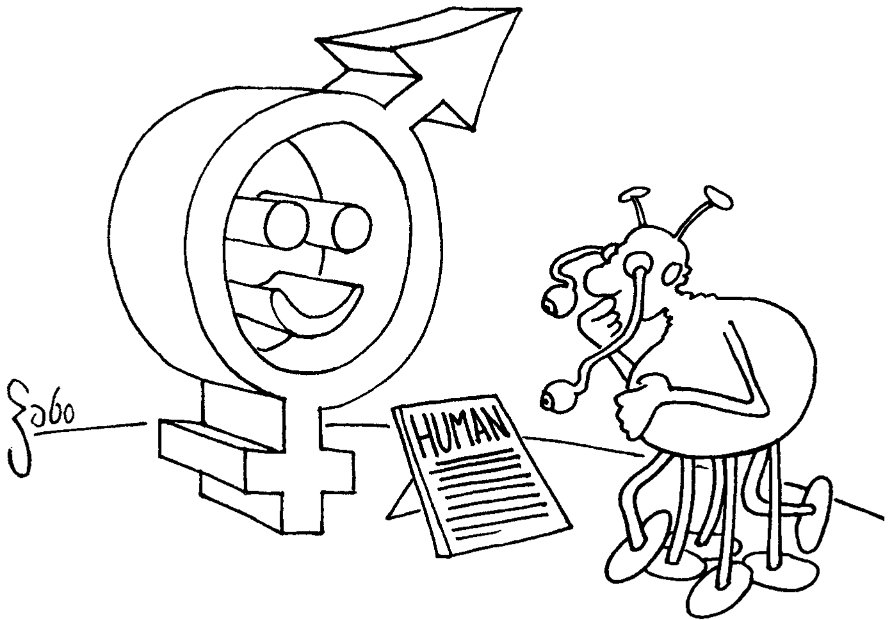

the popularization of research findings into advice for women to help them correct their speaking and interaction "deficiencies" and into criticisms of media content for its contribution to women's "deficient" socialization.

While this research approach continues to guide the study of gender in the fields of communication, feminist theory has gone on to question the terms "sex" and "gender," challenging the very foundations upon which this research has been built. The relationship between biology and culture can no longer be assumed to be a simple layering of one on top of the other, resulting in cultural differences added on to already existing biological differences between two pregiven sexes. Feminist theory teaches us that to be engaged in gender research should mean being engaged in questions about the very nature of our gender system and its origins. In communication, gender research should mean being engaged in questions about the role of communication in the construction and accomplishment of a gender system. In order to fully appreciate the challenges feminist theory poses to traditional gender research, we need to know something of our past and present as researchers. Toward that end, this article examines the origins of social science assumptions about gender and gender research and the major research approaches to gender in communication studies, along with alternative conceptions of gender provided by feminist theorists. The argument will be made that gender should be seen as a verb, that is, work that we do to construct and maintain a particular gender system, and as a meaning system, that is,

organizing categories used to make sense of the world and experience. These new conceptions of gender can provide us with a starting point for innovative approaches to the study of communication.

Research about gender in the social sciences has been carried out for the most part on the basis of nineteenth-century assumptions about sex and gender.

According to Coward (4), these assumptions have been carried forward from earlier debates about the universality of the patriarchal family and its relationship to other forms of social organization. The second half of the nineteenth century was a time period that coincided with a prominent women's movement and from which sociology and anthropology, Marxism and psychoanalysis would emerge, with assumptions about gender in place, Coward explains. The debates were between two opposing explanations of social life—"patriarchal" theory, and a theory that "mother-right" societies existed prior to and were overturned by the patriarchal family. At stake was not a redemption of women's social or biological position in society, however, but differing explanations of the role of instinct, culture, evolution, and forms of social life such as property rights and the power of the state, according to Coward.

With anthropological evidence that mother-right societies had indeed existed historically (and continued to in "primitive" states), the universality of the patriarchal family gave way to an explanation of its natural development based on a society's recognition of individual property rights. Paternal rights came to be seen as synonymous with individual property rights, presupposing, Coward points out, that individual interests can be conflated with genetic interests, that property is masculine because of the assumed natural division of labor between the sexes, and that an essential male psychology seeks power through genetic self-perpetuation (p. 67).

If we accept Coward's reconstruction, the social sciences consequently inherited from these debates a set of assumptions about gender that has remained essentially unchallenged until the past decade. The assumptions have been that sexual division is based on biological imperatives, that the sexes constitute two antagonistic interest groups, that the nuclear family based on procreative and material necessities is a natural human phenomenon, and that an essential, gendered individual exists.

In the second influential stage in the history of gender research in the social sciences, these assumptions were joined with the research needs of early twentieth-century feminist social scientists. Rosenberg (33) has described how feminists responded to these debates in the social

sciences by undertaking empirical research to prove that women are neither biologically inferior to nor significantly different from men. The women who trained at the new research universities, particularly the University of Chicago, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Marion Talbot, Leta Stetten Hollingworth, Jessie Taft, Helen Thompson, Elsie Clews Parsons, and Ruth Benedict, for example—undertook studies to demonstrate that higher education did not adversely affect the health of women, that sex and mental traits are not necessarily correlated, that women's sexuality was underestimated and misunderstood, and that sexual division of labor varied considerably from culture to culture. These research concerns, arising within the intellectual milieu of Darwinism, individualism, scientific skepticism, and the Progressive movement, were also shared by several prominent men in the the social sciences—John Dewey, W. I. Thomas, Patrick Geddes, and Thornsten Veblen.

This sex-role research became a standard approach to studying gender and communication in the decades that followed. Rosenberg points out that, unlike other feminists at the time, these women believed that women are mentally and physically equal to men and psychologically and emotionally similar, despite biological differences exacerbated by cultural conditioning. Other feminists argued in favor of female distinctiveness, justifying women's dominion over a separate but equally important sphere from men's. Both groups, however, accepted the premise of an essential biological division of two sexes, though the work of the feminist social scientists was important in challenging prevailing assumptions about the primacy of biology over culture, according to Rosenberg.

The pieces of history that Coward and Rosenberg provide suggest that we can draw a connection between the questions and assumptions about gender that have guided more recent social science research and communication research on gender. Feminist social scientists, sharing the concern of activists during the contemporary women's movement about the content and effects of the media and about women's disadvantages in language and speaking situations, undertook research from within this inherited positivistic tradition that framed how both communication and gender were conceptualized.

Two major areas of research developed within this tradition: sex differences research within sociolinguistics and speech communication, and media images and effects research in mass communications research.

Both areas have tended to rest on a functionalist view of society that sees individuals acting out roles functional to the integration of society.

Concern about sex roles has centered on the division of labor and appropriate behavior assigned to men and women. However, the usefulness of conceptualizing gender in terms of roles has been increasingly called into question by feminists. Elshtain (9, pp. 140–141) locates the concept in liberal discourse that views society as a collection of aggregates. "Role" flattens and homogenizes the meaning and evaluation of those experiences, as well as depoliticizes them. Lopata and Thorne (20) argue that role terminology is not applicable to gender in the way that occupation or kinship might be and that it masks questions of power. Gender is a pervasive identity and set of self-feelings that affect other social roles one might choose or be restricted from, they argue. Other feminists have used the terms class or caste in describing the social location of women, in order to call attention to power relations.

Until recently, the emphasis in sex differences research has been on discovering the isolatable variables that make women's speech different from men's, for two reasons. First, sex differences researchers, often feminists themselves, were responding to a history of claims and value judgments about women's speech. They inherited the accepted academic notion that men's speech was the norm, women's the deviant variety. In challenging the obvious sexism of the tradition, they sometimes "ended up addressing questions [they] had not posed" (40, p. 8). Second, by adding gender as a variable to field and laboratory studies, sex differences research could be carried out within the accepted research procedures of the empirical tradition of the field.

Sex differences research in language has been concerned with two major topics. One topic has been sexism in the vocabulary and structure of the language itself. Spender (38, p. 15) notes that some of the earliest research on sexism and language consisted of word counting and making word lists that demonstrated there were more words for men in general and more positive words for men than for women. Key's *Male/Female Language* (15) and Miller and Swift's *Words and Women* (23) are two of the more important treatments of vocabulary differences in labels, descriptors, taboos, and asymmetrical word pairs. Schulz (35) identified a process of semantic derogation that occurs over time once a word becomes associated with women. Pronouns, in particular the "generic masculine," have been an important concern of feminists about the structure of the language. Feminists such as Martyna (22) have demonstrated that the generic masculine is not as generic as language "authorities" claim it is.

A second focus of sex differences research has been language in use, in particular how women speak. In one of the important early examples of research on the topic, Lakoff (18) contrasts "women's language" with "neutral language." She characterizes women's language as using a different vocabulary, lacking forcefulness, using tag questions, demonstrating politeness and uncertainty, using intensives, and using

hypercorrect grammar. Because of the way women are taught to use language, she argues, women are kept in their place: "Women prejudice the case against themselves by their use of language" (p. 19).

Spender (38) has critiqued the kind of research exemplified by Lakoff's book, noting that Lakoff defined women's language in terms of a lack or a deficiency. Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley (40, p. 13) add that "very few expected sex differences have been firmly established by empirical studies of isolated variables." Differences, when found, have often been located in women rather than in the social structure and social relations, they point out. Kramarae (17) suggests that stereotypes of women's speech may be as important as actual differences.

Sex differences research has more recently been reconsidering its previous assumptions and methods, including its notion of gender, the methodological use of gender as a variable, and the social context of structures and relationships within which women and men make use of language strategies. Putnam (32, p. 7) suggests that gender should be treated as an effect rather than a cause of communication. She argues that sex differences research rests on the assumption that researchers know which traits and behaviors are masculine and which feminine, and that gender is mutually exclusive and linked to biological opposites. Thorne, Kramarae, and Henley (40, p. 16) recommend that research move away from a conceptualization of gender as an individual attribute toward "complex descriptions of relationships among speakers—sensitive to gender in the context of setting, roles, and other social identities such as age, class, or ethnicity." Both McConnell-Ginet (21) and Nichols (30) suggest that it is useful to think of women as members of speech communities who draw upon different strategies and use linguistic resources in particular ways because of their social situations and social relations.

This refocus within sex differences research has brought more attention to the structures of gender relations and power relations.

West and Zimmerman (44), for example, in light of men's more frequent interruptions of women, conclude that interruptions are a way of both "doing" power and "doing" gender. Sattel's (34) analysis of men's inexpressiveness concludes that

> *little boys become inexpressive . . . not simply because our culture expects little boys to be that way—but because our culture expects little boys to grow up to hold positions of power and prestige. . . . The structural link usually overlooked in discussions of male inex-*

pressiveness is between gender and power, rather than gender and inexpressiveness (p. 120).

Spender (38, 39) has analyzed how men are able to exercise power through their means of defining reality—language. As self-appointed proprietors of language and naming practices, men have been able to structure and name a world that is amenable to their experiences and outlooks. Women and women's experiences have been negated and devalued as a result. Making a related argument, Smith (37) states that women have been largely excluded from the work of producing the forms of thought and the images and symbols in which thought is expressed and ordered. Men have authority as members of a social category; their words count, women's do not.

A growing appreciation for women's lived experiences, values, and contributions has led to more research that recovers women's words and their alternate meanings and that values women's talk, interactional styles, and written heritage. Tiger and Luria, writing on "Inlaws/Outlaws" (41), have provided a mosaic of examples of two kinds of women's talk, that which supports and holds together the social fabric of relationships and that which threatens it. Jones (13) characterizes four kinds of gossip in all-female groups: house-talk, scandal, bitching, and chatting. In terms of women's interactional styles, Edelsky (8) has identified an alternate conception of "the floor," as shared, with which women seem more comfortable and which encourages their participation and collaboration. *A Feminist Dictionary* (16) is a collection of women's words and meanings that challenge the dominant construction of reality. Adburgham (1) uncovered a long history of women writers and publishers in Great Britain in pre-Victorian times, complementing other historical research on women as journalists and publishers. The novel has been retrieved by feminists as being one available and popular forum in which women, white women in particular, could speak to each other (see 7, 24). Black women, Smith (36) points out, have a literary tradition paralleling that of black men and white women, but its themes, styles, and aesthetics reflect their particular political, social, and economic experience.

The major approach to gender research in the field of mass communications has been on women's images in media content and the effect of those images on audience members, particularly children.

As with early sex differences research, images and audiences research fits well into the pre-existing empirical research paradigm that characterizes mainstream research in the field. Feminist researchers were also no doubt encouraged in that direction by the women's movement's attention to media content, beginning in the early 1960s.

Research on media portrayals of women and their effects on audiences began to appear in academic communications journals in the early 1970s, signaling that the topic was becoming a legitimate one within the existing frameworks of media research. The research tended to be undertaken by feminists who, operating within those mainstream social science frameworks, advocated changes in media content and the representation of women in media industries but left unchallenged the legal, economic, and social arrangements of the media. The *Journal of Communication* devoted its Spring 1974 issue to nine reports focusing on media content and women's roles. *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* (42) is a well-cited collection of empirical studies of the content and effects of television, magazines, and newspapers. In that volume, Tuchman characterized the mass media's treatment of women as "symbolic annihilation," in that women are underrepresented and trivialized by the media (p. 5).

Not surprisingly, public policy makers and media industries found this line of research the most palatable. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (43), for example, prepared a report that summarized social science research on the portrayal of women and minorities in television and on employment problems, making recommendations to the Federal Communications Commission. An advertising industry report recommended changes in the portrayal of women in advertising (29).

Two assumptions about communication and about gender underlying this research have been questioned by feminists. First, by citing media "bias" in the portrayal of women, the research has tended to assume that there could be some veridical account of social life in the media, that it is possible for the media to be a mirror of society rather than always a construction of some kind of reality. Second, the research has assumed that changing the images of women is unproblematic. The usual recommendation is to show "more realistic" portrayals of women in the work force and fewer portrayals of women as sex objects. Yet, as Myers (28) has argued, representations of women are multiple and shifting, capable of incorporating critique. Pollock (31) and Cowie (5) argue that representations of women are intertextual discourses that refer to each other, not to women per se. Janus (11) warns that this kind of research ultimately supports the very economic and media system that produced the images under critique. Other ways of conceptualizing gender representations in media content—as discourse, myth, and fantasy—have been proposed.

The other side of the media images coin has been sex-role socialization research.

It is not surprising that mass communication researchers, located within a field long concerned about the effects of the mass media in children's development, would turn their attention to the effects of the

mass media on sex-role socialization. This research has been informed by two theories of children's development. Social learning theory postulates that children learn by imitation; they model sex-role behavior from sources that include the media. Cognitive development theory postulates that children's learning follows a developmental progression; they learn a succession of ideas in stages about gender and sex-role behavior from media content and other sources.

As Kessler and McKenna (14) point out, both social learning theory and cognitive development theory assume the facticity of gender:

> *It is assumed that men and women are behaviorally and psychologically different, and the causes of these differences can be found in developmental processes. The incorrigible proposition that there* are *two genders, leads to the assumption that there must be some expression of this dichotomy, even if the differences are not as extensive as formerly believed, and that there is a set of psychological factors leading to an orderly, understandable development of gender differences, including gender identity* (p. 99).

Outside of mainstream positivistic gender research, feminist psychoanalytic theorists and Marxist feminist theorists have engaged in different discussions of gender, which have entered communication studies by way of theories of film, language, discourse, and power. Debates within psychoanalysis center around Jacques Lacan's rereading of Freud's work as a description of the phallic-centered symbolic order, with the feminine defined as lack or absence. Depending upon whether Freud is being read figuratively or literally, sexual difference is construed as occurring in relation to desire and pleasure at the biological level or as cultural inscription. The project for feminist psychoanalysts has been to introduce the theoretical possibility of disruption and change in the symbolic order and the possibility of a feminist politics (see 12, 25, 27). Marxist feminism has attempted to understand the relationship between gender and capitalism, generally insisting upon attention to the particularities of experiences of gender in specific historical periods, arguing against any universal explanation of gender or women's oppression. Attention is usually given to women's relationship to the means of production and reproduction and the family, as well as, more recently, to ideological representations of gender in public discourse (see 2).

Given this history of social science conceptualizations of gender and of communication research on gender, we cannot examine gender and communication without first examining what gender is and means.

As critics cited above have pointed out, unexamined assumptions about gender can produce research that is trivial, insupportable, politi-

cally naive, or damaging to women. Despite the theoretical problems that remain unsolved and despite their differing political and philosophical frameworks, the work being done in radical feminist, Marxist feminist, and feminist psychoanalytic theory is leading the way to reconceptualizing our understanding of gender. The following discussion draws on feminist theorists to suggest a useful reconstruction.

Contrary to both popular and scientific assumptions, where sex is seen to be a natural, biological distinction and gender an additional, cultural one, sex and gender are both usefully seen as cultural, mutable categories of social organization. The dividing of people into two biological sexes, male and female, is as much a cultural phenomenon as making them into men and women, masculine and feminine.[1]

While there are debates within feminism about the biological basis for gender divisions, the position taken here is supported by several theorists who have articulated how biology has become intertwined with culture.[2] Kessler and McKenna (14) explore the possibility that in other cultures and in other times, gender may not have been understood as we understand it. "We live in a world of two biological genders," they argue. "But that may not be the only world" (p. 40). Living in a world we believe to be inhabited by two biological genders leads us to see two biological genders, confirming what we already believe. This helps account for the sex differences research of social science. As Kessler and McKenna point out, "Biological, psychological, and social differences do not lead to our seeing two genders. Our seeing of two genders leads to the 'discovery' of biological, psychological, and social differences" (p. 168; see also 3, p. 393).

Using biology to create two universal categories of people is a result of Western Enlightenment thought that created the dualism of man/woman, culture/nature of the nineteenth century, Brown and Jordanova (3) argue. Conceptualizing gender as a universal, biological category has served to obscure class and other social differences among people, when, in fact, "on both political and intellectual grounds . . . social relations determine sex differences rather than biological sex producing social division between the sexes" (p. 393).

Further, Frye (10) explains how the biological and cultural are intertwined in the creation of two genders. She refutes the assumption

[1] Consequently, I use the term "gender" to emphasize that culture, not biology, constructs females and males. "Sex" is a term reserved for references to sexuality (see 14, 26).

[2] These debates are really better characterized as critiques by feminists of other feminist positions on biology. Radical feminists, for example, have on occasion been accused of being "essentialists," that is, assuming some basic, biological individualism that distinguishes men and women and creates a different moral outlook for each. This accusation, however, may stem from assuming that radical feminists believe this to be other than culturally created, which is not necessarily true. Frye (10), for example, whom I take to be a radical feminist, does not make an essentialist argument.

that there are and must be two distinct and sharply dimorphic sexes (her term) by calling attention to the ways in which two sexes are created out of a variety. Other combinations of chromosome patterns and secondary sex characteristics exist than what is considered male and female. Through surgery and chemical alteration, cosmetics, diets, exercise, clothing, and feminine and masculine marking and announcing behavior, two distinct sexes are created. Frye has also reworked the notion that socialization is layered on over a biological substratum. Physical and social development are entwined, she argues. Enculturation forms skeletons, muscles, and central nervous systems: "By the time we are gendered adults, masculinity and femininity are 'biological' " (p. 37).

The cultural creation of two distinct and asymmetrical genders serves as an organizing principle that operates at multiple levels.

Gender is both something we do and something we think with, both a set of social practices and a system of cultural meanings. The social practices—the "doing" of gender—and the cultural meanings—"thinking the world" using the categories and experiences of gender—constitute us as women and men, organized into a particular configuration of social relations.

Kessler and McKenna identify gender as an accomplishment, "work" that we do as members of this culture to convey to people information about which gender we should be assigned and "work" that we do to assess and assign gender to others. "Being" a gender involves "doing" a gender. But being and doing gender are not simple, and necessarily synonymous, activities. Kessler and McKenna make distinctions among the different aspects of gender that are conflated into the one term: gender assignment, classifying an individual's gender at birth; gender attribution, assigning an individual to a classification in interaction; gender role, behaving like a male or female; and gender identity, feeling like a male or female. Kessler and McKenna point out that these aspects of gender do not have to be in agreement with each other (as in the case of transsexuals and transvestites).

Frye describes present gender arrangements as a dominate-subordinate caste system that is maintained by requiring women to continuously announce and act out their subordinate caste membership. Gender and heterosexuality must both be announced emphatically and unambiguously. "Sex-identification intrudes into every moment of our lives and discourse. . . . Elaborate, systematic, ubiquitous and redundant marking of a distinction between two sexes of humans and most animals is customary and obligatory" (10, p. 19). Such emphasis on sex distinction creates the impression that it is crucial and fundamental to all aspects of human life, she argues.

At the level of a meaning system, gender operates in several ways. Gender is a classification system that has been useful for men to "think the world with." The categories male and female, masculine and feminine are used to describe, define, and categorize much of the rest of the world, animate and inanimate.[3] Through metaphor (e.g., justice = female) and metonymy (e.g., men = humans), gender has long been used as a "structuring structure," to give order not just to the world of humans but to the world of things as well. Lévi-Strauss was instrumental in pointing out this structuring capacity of humans as well as identifying the primacy of gender as the template for exchange, asserting that culture begins with the exchange of women by men. The problem with this assertion was recognized by Cowie (6) who observed that culture would have to precede the exchange of women in order for women to already have a value that makes them exchangeable. Yet the importance of Lévi-Strauss's analysis is that we can see how the culturally produced structure of gender relationships serves as a model for other structures in the symbolic order. The relationship between women and men can describe the relationship between money and men or nature and culture or sun and moon or vice and virtue (see 19, p. 9).

The nature/culture association that Brown and Jordanova (3) investigated demonstrates the symbolic structuring of relationships provided by the categorization of gender. Brown and Jordanova point out the often contradictory aspects of the symbolic world and its complex relationship to lived experience:

> *. . . the relationship between the metaphors people use and the aspects of lived experience they allegedly express are extremely complex. The metaphors contain contradictions, tensions or even what strike us as logical inconsistencies, but these in no way undermine the historical power of the images. For example, the eighteenth century use of women to symbolize truth in the sense of natural reason, virtue and clarity, coexisted with their simultaneous use to symbolize feelings and sentiment, also analogized to nature, but associated with irrationality and superstition. The nature/culture distinction has operated in Western tradition at many different levels. In addition to myths, pictures and symbols of all kinds, a coherent scientific self-consciousness played a crucial role in reinforcing and redefining the identification of female with nature and male with culture* (p. 394).

Importantly, men have been in the position to "structure the structures," to define the relationship between men and women, to make their use of metaphors and metonyms count, and to construct a symbolic

[3] The gendered symbolism of "Lady Liberty," the Statue of Liberty, is an excellent case in point, with the ironic contradiction it represents between the symbolic uses of femaleness and femininity and women's lived experiences in this culture.

system which fits and explains their experiences, creating the gendered world within which we take our gendered places. According to Spender (38), the effect of this has been to provide men the opportunity to construct the myth of male superiority. There is a circular effect at work. Men have the privilege to construct the symbolic order. The symbolic order accords them the privilege to construct the symbolic order (see also 37, 39).

Barrett (2) connects the symbolic system to ideology, which she calls "the processes by which meaning is produced, challenged, reproduced, transformed" (p. 97). It is in ideology that the meaning of gender is produced and reproduced and hence is the important site for political intervention:

> *. . . the struggle over the* meaning *of gender is crucial. It is vital for our purposes to establish its meaning in contemporary capitalism as* not *simply "difference," but as division, oppression, inequality, internalized inferiority for women. Cultural practice is an essential site of the struggle. It can play an incalculable role in the raising of consciousness and the transformation of our subjectivity* (p. 112).

In its relationship to cultural meaning, then, gender is a structuring system as well as a site of struggle over who will define what gender means and whose experiences of the world will be encoded into the symbolic system. Gender takes on different meanings and the experiences of gender change over time and from place to place as definitions of gender serve new purposes and as gender relations are shifted and negotiated.

Gender, in sum, is usefully conceptualized as a culturally constructed organization of biology and social life into particular ways of doing, thinking, and experiencing the world. Our particular gender system of two dimorphic and asymmetrical genders is one of only a variety of systems that could be structured. It is in communication that this gender system is accomplished. Gender has meaning, is organized and structured, and takes place as interaction and social practice, all of which are communication processes. That is, communication creates genders who create communication.

We can, then, no longer conduct research that assumes the very concepts—gender and communication—the research should set out to explain.

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

a technology is used to construct us as women and men through the social practices that put it to use.

My own research on women's relationship to the telephone, to use an illustration, suggests how this might function. In an ethnographic study in a small Midwest village, I sought to understand what women's use of the telephone can tell us about the meaning and experience of gender in that community. I discovered that women's telephone talk fits into the appropriate spheres of activity and interests designated for women. It is both "gendered work" and "gender work," in that it is work that women do to hold together the fabric of the community, build and maintain relationships, and accomplish important care-giving and -receiving functions, while at the same time their use of the telephone seems to confirm community definitions of women's natural affinity for care-giving roles in the family and community. The meaning of gender—in this case of being a woman—seems to be confirmed by the experience of it. Consequently, it is not gender that causes the women's behavior but our gender system, which locates some people as women in a particular organization of social life, making that location appear natural and the result of biology and psychology rather than culture and politics.

If we are to move beyond current research assumptions about gender and communication, we will need to make alliances with other disciplines and fields of thought—sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and medicine, for instance—and transcend the boundaries between areas of communication research—sociolinguistics, speech communication, interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and mass communication. Most importantly, we will need to look to feminist theory for the lessons we can learn.

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