Toward a New Paradigm in Marketing Thought: the Contributions of Feminist Theory

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Toward a New Paradigm in Marketing Thought:  
The Contributions of Feminist Theory  
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Over the past fifteen years, feminist scholarship has had a secant impact on the disciplines of anthropology, literature, psychology, sociology and history (see Keller 1987; Roberts 1981; Tomm 1989; Langland and Gove 1981; DuBois et al. 1987). This scholarship maintains that hidden assumptions about men and women have shaped and informed standard academic subjects. These assumptions are embedded in the theoretical frameworks, the formulation of questions guiding research, the methodology and data collection, and the interpretation of results. These in turn influence conclusions drawn. These assumptions also inform the history of disciplines, as evidenced by the differential recognition of men and women for their contributions and roles.

The influence of feminist theory on marketing may be quite different from its effect on disciplines such as history and literature or even social sciences such as psychology and anthropology. In these fields, where feminist thought has already had an impact, feminist theory provided a totally new perspective. Because marketing theoreticians and practitioners have always focused on "women as consumers," the feminist perspective may not initially appear to offer something new and unique. We argue, however, that by incorporating the tenets of the feminist perspective, marked theory can be enriched and extended.

This paper first describes the foundations of the feminist perspective as they are applied to research. It then poses questions such an approach raises concerning the conceptualization of marketing thought and research. Finally, it develops implications for reshaping the marketing paradigm.

Areas of feminist theory to be addressed and considered with respect to the conceptualization of marketing thought include the following:

1) How does feminist theory affect research?
2) How does gender affect the formulation of research in marketing?
3) How do researchers in marketing view their subjects? How does the researcher/subject relationship affect research and its outcomes?
4) What is the effect of gender on our research methodologies?
5) How does a feminist approach impact on the objectivity-subjectivity debate associated with alternative methodologies?
6) What is the role of women in marketing history? Are there important females who influenced marketing theory and practice who need to be reclaimed? To what extent have women been excluded from this history, or confined to a narrow role within it?
7) What is the interdisciplinary dimension of research in marketing?  

These questions stem from a feminist approach to research, a perspective that extends beyond consideration of women's issues and into an investigation of gender differences and their impact on a discipline's body of knowledge. Several of these issues have received some attention in the marketing literature, without being seen in a specifically feminist context. Exploration of all these areas should lead to new insights which can ultimately operate to influence the paradigm.

A FEMINIST RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE  

A feminist perspective is one that challenges and questions underlying assumptions in the discipline that have to do with gender. This process allows scholars to see how these assumptions have affected research approaches and the development of thought in a field. Langland and Gove have articulated this usefully, writing that "A feminist
perspective...seeks to correct the bias present in our academic disciplines by uncovering and question the hidden assumptions about men and women that have shaped and informed standard academic subjects” (1981:3).

A feminist approach however, does not only focus on women and gender; it is more fundamental and comprehensive. It takes a holistic view of research, recognizing the interrelationships that exist between constructs within a domain. The perspective advocates a nonhierarchical methodology wherein subjects are treated as equal partners in the investigation. It maintains that research cannot be value-free, because both the values of the researcher and the traditions of the discipline guide inquiry. A feminist approach fundamentally questions the status quo, forcing researchers to explore the assumptions they hold. As applied to marketing this perspective would allow us to re-examine marketing theory, marketing research agendas, and the academic marketing discipline overall.

The marketing discipline is ripe for such re-examination; as Shelby Hunt has pointed out, according to the definitions set by Thomas Kuhn (1970), marketing is actually "pre-paradigmatic," still in that first stage of debate over what constitutes the scope and content of the discipline, what the important questions are. It is not yet firmly shaped and solidified (see Hunt 1991: 332). In this sense the feminist point of view can simply join all the other points of view competing for inclusion, as marketing sets an agenda in terms of its content, methodology and epistemology. It is crucial that the feminist perspective be considered now, and, where relevant, incorporated, since the discipline’s paradigm sets the rules for research formulation and administration. As one scholar has noted:

A paradigm (1) serves as guide to the professionals in a discipline for it indicates what are the important problems and issues confronting the discipline; (2) goes about developing an explanatory scheme (i.e. models and theories) which can place these issues and problems in a framework which will allow practitioners to try to solve them; (3) establishes the criteria for the appropriate ‘tools’ (i.e. methodologies, instruments, and types and forms of data collection) to use in solving these disciplinary puzzles; and (4) provides an epistemology in which the preceding tasks can be viewed as organizing principles for carrying out the ‘normal work’ of the discipline. Paradigms not only allow a discipline to ‘make sense’ of different kinds of phenomena but provide a framework in which these phenomena can be identified as existing in the first place (William J. Filstead, quoted in Deshpande 1986: 113).

However, despite its early stage of development, the marketing discipline already operates from some basic assumptions, values and methodologies which often go unchallenged. Marketers do not necessarily recognize that they are influenced by these beliefs in choosing what they consider to be salient research problems, appropriate research desk and methodology, and proper analysis. Using a feminist approach forces us to uncover and re-examine those beliefs, particularly as they relate to gender.3

APPLICATIONS OF FEMINIST THEORY TO MARKETING THOUGHT

Feminist Theory and Research

The feminist approach to research builds in part on the work of those women who have examined gender differences in personality, cognitive development and socialization, work which holds strong implications for and the marketing discipline (see, for example, Carlson 1971; Gilligan 1982; Miller 1976). This body of research has found differences between males and females in processing skills and cognitive structuring. These lead to different world views, which in turn result in the preference for alternative approaches to seeking knowledge and to conducting research. Such gendered cognitive and social differences between males and females affect both female scholars in the marketing profession, and perceptions and research about female consumers.

Women, feminist scholars conclude, interpret experiences in relatively interpersonal, subjective, and contextual ways. Men, on the other hand, interpret experiences of self, others, space, and time in individualistic, objective and distant ways. For example Carlson (1971), in studying personality and gender, used conceptions of agency and communion to differentiate the aggregate of males from the aggregate of females.4 As she defines it:
"Agency is seen in differentiating of self from the field, in intellectual functions involving separating and ordering and in interpersonal styles involving objectivity, competition exclusion and distance. Communion is seen in merging of self with the field, in intellectual functions involving communication, in interpersonal styles involving subjectivity, cooperation, acceptance and closeness" (Carlson 1971:271).

Carlson found that men were more selective in the information cues they use in interpreting and acting upon the world; women were found to be more comprehensive in cue perception and more likely to consider problems within a context or frame of reference.

Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986) arrived at similar conclusions about gender differences. Like Carlson, they reported that women exhibit greater complexity of constitutional-psychological processes, that they are more concerned with interpersonal relationships than men. Gilligan (1982) attributed differences in personality and cognitive structures to fundamental developmental differences that had not previously been recognized. She and Belenky et al. (1986) studied the developmental and socialization processes of females and found them to differ significantly from those of males. Through examining developmental differences these authors have identified men's knowledge as "separatist." Men (and women adopting this pattern) use impersonal procedures for arriving at the truth. This can be contrasted with women's "interconnectedness," in which truth emerges through empathy and understanding (Belenky et al. 1986: 102). Where men, as separate knowers, prefer to separate out or extrapolate a singular factual error or logical contribution as a basis for analysis, women have a tendency toward a more holistic view. Belenky et al. (1986) defines this interconnectedness as "constructed knowing." Women, according to these researchers, integrate knowledge of self (that which is personally important) with knowledge gained from others. Such "constructivist" thinkers understand that the answers to all questions vary depending on the context and the frame of reference.

Meyers-Levy (1989) has reviewed much of the research on gender differences and proposes a theory called the "selectivity hypothesis." She argues that men and women select different cues from the environment, and interpret them in dissimilar ways. This affects their modes of inquiry. For example, Meyers-Levy notes, females engage in comprehensive information processing and attempt to assimilate all available cues; males used heuristic devices to select singular cues and tend to be driven by reliance on those that are highly available and particularly salient in the focal context. Males' processing is characterized by efficiency-striving heuristic whereas females' is characterized by pronounced attempts toward maximizing the comprehensiveness of processing of available cues.

Belenky et al. (1986) concluded that "women tend not to rely as readily on hypothetico-deductive inquiry, which posits an answer (the hypothesis) prior to data collection as they do on examining basic assumptions and the conditions in which a problem is cast" (p.139). Hence, the positivist approach, the scientific method, seems more appropriate to male information processing and research than to that of females. In addition, recent studies have pointed to the differential nature of the graduate school learning experience for women and men (see e.g. Aisenberg and Harrington 1985; and Belenky, et al. 1986). This could result in female scholars perceiving and choosing research issues in new areas, and framing research questions differently than males.

The marketing profession is recognizing the growing number of females coming into the field, with special sessions at the last three AMA education conference, as well as at ACR and AMS meetings within the past year. Women now represent approximately 20% of the AMA educators, and since 1986, nearly 50% of the doctoral degrees in marketing have been granted to women (National Center for Educational Statistics 1988). Historically, however, students of the marketing profession have been trained in a male-dominated environment. This leads to questions such as: Are researchers free to develop research agendas addressing issues from a feminist perspective? Is this a perspective they are encouraged to use? Does this training affect their research once they have achieved faculty positions in academe? To what extent does male dominance of the editorial boards of the major journals affect the framing of questions and methodologies selected by female scholars? While few studies in marketing have attempted to
determine how gender affects the conceptualization and administration of research, a study has been conducted recently on female marketing academics (Carsky, Kennedy and Zuckerman 1989; Carsky, Kennedy and Zuckerman 1990b). The results show that research interests of female educators center on consumer behavior and Promotion, while those of male educators are divided evenly among subfields including management, strategy, channels, sales, pricing, promotion and consumer behavior (Kennedy, Carsky and Zuckerman 1990).

Gender and the Framing of Research Questions

In framing research questions, we are of necessity guided by the paradigm of the discipline. We frequently frame our questions in light of prior research. We critically review the literature, looking for important issues left unsolved by previous research. We formulate the problem and design the study based on this. But to what extent do we look beyond the scholarly body of literature to inquire about the validity of prior research? How often, for example, do we question the accuracy of prior research in reflecting the issues, concerns, attitudes, and behaviors of consumers interacting in the marketplace? Feminist theory would suggest that when conducting an inquiry on marketplace behaviors, the researchers begin by asking potential subjects about their conception of reality. It is essential to consider a broad frame of reference, to view situations and issues within a contest as opposed to using a "separatist" perspective (see Gilligan 1982; and Belenky et al. 1986). Often this calls for unstructured information gathering on a large scale preceding the use of structured questions, to increase the likelihood that the information to be quantified reflects the circumstances of the respondents' lives.

More specifically, we need to consider whether or not we are asking the right question, focusing on relevant gender differences in behavior. Have we, for example, acknowledged male and female differences in processing and conceptualization which can impact our research findings? To what extent have we, in marketing, relied primarily on men to provide us with information about women? Men forged the outlines of the marketing paradigm prior to the time when women entered the academy in any significant numbers. To what extent has the literature previously developed accurately recorded women's experiences, providing a reliable foundation and context for studying issues salient to women?

For example, the supermarket has provided researchers with a rich environment in which to study consumer purchase decisions, particularly with respect to information processing and the selection of informational cues. In recent years a number of studies have examined the use of nutritional information in the store. For the most part, these investigations relied on sales data as the dependent measure. In five separate studies, no change in the sales of the "most nutritious brand" was found (Carsky 1988). In none of these studies were food shoppers asked about 1) their perception of nutritional differences between brands, 2) the importance of nutrition for selected products, 3) whether nutrition decisions were made at the brand level, and/or 4) whether the format of the information display was comprehensible or important enough to warrant notice. No consideration was given to these issues, or to the context in which food shoppers made decisions. The design of each of these studies relied upon the previous literature.

McGrath et al. (1982) has suggested that the worst method to choose for taking a step forward on a research problem is any method that has been heavily used in the past. Yet, because of traditions in the discipline, that is often precisely what is done.

We might also ask whether the experiences of men are represented as the norm, those of females as different, as other. An historical example illustrates how such a construction can occur over time. When the Curtis Publishing Company put out a promotional brochure called Selling Forces in 1913, it contained a section called "Selling to Men," and another called "Selling to Women" (Curtis publishing Company 1913). In 1952, Curtis issued a new book by the same title. This updated and revised version again contained a section called "Selling to Women," but none on selling to men; it was assumed that men, the norm, formed the target of all other advice in the book (Hobart and Wood 1952). Similarly, some marketing and consumer behavior texts have discussed women, a numerical majority in this country, as a sub group (see also Shiffman and Kanuk 1987: 520-535).
The association of women with the private and men with the public sphere, documented by feminist scholars (Rothman 1978; Evans 1989), may also affect research formulation. Research in the social sciences has often operated under assumptions and techniques developed to examine the public sphere. These techniques frequently fail to provide sufficient information about the private sphere. For example, Graham offers a critique of survey methodology. She notes four assumptions made about units of analysis: 1) units are single and complete; 2) units are equivalent; 3) units and their products have an object-form external to the individual; and 4) units and their outputs are measurable (Graham, cited in Driscoll and McFarland 1989). These assumptions remove the individual from his/her social context. This masks the structure of social relationships and treats patterns of action and attitude as personal characteristics rather than dimensions of social structure. Graham points out that the assumptions behind survey measurement presumes a precise definition of social phenomena, which in and of itself is inherently ambiguous. Finally, she argues that measurement is "closely tied to the marketplace, where activities are quantified and regulated through the medium of money," thus tied to the public sphere (Graham, cited in Driscoll and McFarland 1989: 189). This analysis is particularly salient to the marketing discipline which initially developed to solve the problems of the distribution of goods, and hence, was concerned primarily with the public sphere. Marketing only came to recognize the importance of measuring consumer behavior (played out at least in part in the private sphere) in the 1960's. Marketing's long tradition of focusing on the public sphere has undoubtedly spilled over into the way it assesses the private. The effect of this spillover needs to be examined.

Researcher-Subject Relationship

A feminist approach calls for a non-hierarchical methodology. Feminist scholars believe that researchers, subjects and the knowledge that emerges from the research process are interconnected, rather than independent (Gergen 1988: 94). This means recognizing what the scholars Childers and Grunnig describe as "the interconnectedness between scientists' gender and their relationship to subjects and facts" (Childers and Grunnig 1989).

Interconnectedness between researcher and subject is not the norm in marketing, even when the research seems on the surface to deal with feminist or woman-oriented issues. For example, when the women's liberation movement reached a peak in the late 1970's, a number of marketers focused their research on women and gender effects, most notably in the field of advertising. A flurry of studies were conducted (Sexton and Haberman 1974; Poe 1975; Venkatesan and Losco 1975; Venkatesh and Tankersley 1979; Venkatesh 1980; and Skelley and Lundstrom 1981), which looked at stereotyping of women in advertisements, effectiveness of various portrayals of women, comparison of portrayal of men and women, and media readership and viewing by sex. Yet none of these studies fundamentally questioned the nature of the researcher-subject relationship in doing this work; none of the researchers (male and female) questioned their own formulations or views (and stereotypes) about their subjects.

No studies in marketing have been uncovered which examine the effect of gender on research. In psychology, however, a meta-analysis performed on a series of research topics revealed significant effects for sex of researcher on the outcome (Eagly and Carli 1981; and Eagly and Crowley 1986). The investigators found that authors are more likely to report behaviors that are socially desirable for members of their own sex. Other studies have found interactions between sex and the task characteristics in experimental designs. Results have indicated that some tasks are not gender-neutral, and that either males or females are more likely to excel (see Deaux 1971; Lead and Taylor 1973; Major and Deaux 1982; Deaux 1984). In testing marketing theories, does sex of the subjects make any difference in the results? Do we look for this difference? When using student subjects, to what extent do we consider whether the products used in the experiment or the product dimensions under consideration are equally salient to males and females?

The feminist analysis of the researcher-subject relationship is clearly in line with the interpretivist stance which Hudson and Ozanne describe, writing that:

"Interpretivism holds that researcher and people under investigation interact with each other creating cooperative inquiry. If the social reality is
based on individuals' or groups' perceptions, then in order to be able to understand those perceptions, these individuals must be involved in creating research process. Thus, the individual who is studied becomes a participant in the experiment, guiding the research as well as supplying information. Interpretivists believe that in the social sciences the scientist is a member of social reality; no privileged Archimedian vantage point exists. This view results in emerging research designs that require ongoing adaptability on the part of the researcher. From the interpretivist's point of view, the merging designs are better able to take into account the subject's knowledge" (Hudson and Ozanne 1988:512).

Similar statements on the importance of mutual interaction between the researcher and the subject (informant) can be found in Hirschman 1986; Levy 1981; Thompson et al. 1989, and others who have contributed to a growing body of "crisis literature" (Hunt 1990).

Whether or not one cares to conduct inquiry using the interpretivist or phenomenological path to knowledge, one should at least attempt to understand the "reality" of the individuals under study. Where we have sound evidence, through the accumulation of studies on gender, that males and females conceptualize differently, we should, at a minimum, keep this in mind when investigating phenomena where such distinctions are important.

Objectivity-Subjectivity

Over the past decade the debate between those who believe inquiry can be objective and value-free and those who see it as inherently subjective and value-laden has heightened (see e.g. Hirschman 1986). As Gergen points out, feminist scholars believe that "values are embedded in a supposedly value-free theoretical exposition" (Gergen 1988: 91). Feminists believe not only that scholars should not produce value-free research but that in fact total objectivity cannot be achieved. Personal ideology and background can and do influence the researcher. For example, Messing lists eleven ways in which bias is interjected into the research process. These include the choice of topic, wording of hypotheses, choice of experimental subjects, choice of appropriate controls, method of observation, data analysis, interpretation of data, publication, and popularization of the results (Messing, cited in Eichler 1988:12). Thus, the creation of knowledge is inherently value-laden.

This debate about objectivity has already taken place in many other disciplines. As intellectual historian Peter Novick writes:

"From the 1960's onward the objectivist assumptions and foundation of many academic disciplines came to be undermined... in one field after another distinctions between fact and value and between theory and observation were called into question. For many, postures of disinterestedness and neutrality increasingly appeared outmoded and illusory. It ceased to be axiomatic that the scholar's or scientist's task was to represent accurately what was "out there." Most crucially, and across the board, the notion of a determinate and unitary truth about the physical or social world, approachable if not ultimately reachable, came to be seen by a growing number of scholars as a chimera...The objectivity question, in one form or another, moved to the top of disciplinary agendas" (Novick 1988: 523).

Our methodology in marketing seeks to conduct objective inquiry in which we distance ourselves from our subjects and their context. But we often miss important information in the process. For example, a recent study on consumer awareness of supermarket prices found that only 56% of food shoppers knew the prices of items they had just selected while only 58.9% acknowledged that they had checked the price (Dickson and Sawyer, 1989, 1990). The study concluded that more managerial effort and investment should be directed toward promotion, with less emphasis on price reduction. It also stated that future research should "test ways of increase consumer price awareness" (1990:80). These conclusions flow logically from the results of the study, but due to the nature of the inquiry, no information was gathered on why consumers do or do not check prices in the supermarket. The work of Thompson et al. (1989) sheds some light. In advocating the use of existential-phenomenology, an example is given where an informant was asked to describe a situation in which she did not compare prices. She responded that she did not compare when the item was something that she had to buy---there was no point to comparing. However, when the purchase was discretionary, prices were compared (Thompson et al. 1989: 138). This could help to
explain the finding of the above study. It also illustrates the necessity of involving the subject in the research.\textsuperscript{8}

The call for more humanistic or naturalistic forms of inquiry does not diminish the importance of efforts toward objectivity in research. However, the feminist perspective rejects the notion that objectivity requires detachment of the researcher from the topic of inquiry and from the informants, as well as distancing the production of knowledge from its uses. The perspective posits that while research cannot be value-free, it must make every effort to avoid subjectivity. Objectivity is recognized as an important goal for research, requiring 1) a commitment to look at contrary evidence; 2) determination to aim at maximum replicability of any study; 3) commitment to truth finding; and 4) clarification and classification of values underlying research (Eichler 1988:13).

Research Methodology

Empirical knowledge is always contingent on the methods, populations, situations, and underlying assumptions involved in the process by which that knowledge was captured. As Driscoll and McFarland note, "Feminist research methodology is oriented toward contextualizing the research process, the researcher, and the subject of the research based on a nondualistic world view" (1989). While calling for a holistic approach, a feminist perspective does not negate the validity or usefulness of the scientific method, with its attendant experimental desk and statistical analyses. It does, however, posit that knowledge requires a convergence of substantive findings derived from a diversity of methods of inquiry. It advocates the multi-method approach advanced by Campbell and Fiske (1959), which suggests knowledge acquisition through a convergence of findings, involving observations, humanistic inquiry, and experimental studies. For statistical analyses, the feminist approach would imply greater use of causal modeling techniques and multivariate statistics, as it maintains that multiple influences exist for any behavior.

In marketing, the experimental desk is perceived to be the "purest" form of research. The true experiment allows us to isolate a construct, to measure it with precision and accuracy, thus forwarding the advancement of knowledge and building of theory. For example, we often examine the "behavior" of college students when given an artificial task, in a contrived setting, and then generalize this into consumer behavior in the marketplace. The experiment is seen to be value-free, as it seeks to eliminate the threats to internal and external validity. The feminist perspective would question how well an isolated task performed in a contrived setting actually represents consumer interaction in the marketplace. It also would argue that this is not value-free research. The conceptualization and framing of the experimental questions, along with their method, are steeped in the traditions of the discipline, with current research often mirroring past research.

Women in Marketing History

One of the earliest manifestations of sensitivity to feminist issues in the academy generally has been the attention given to "missing women." In expanding the paradigms of their disciplines, scholars in psychology, anthropology, history, English and other fields began in this manner, reclaiming notable women and studying their work. Researchers then moved to considerations of why the contributions of these women had not been included.\textsuperscript{9}

Women's activities in and contributions to the evolution of marketing have received attention by marketing scholars. However, this marks a relatively new development. In 1962, when Bartels' wrote his history of marketing thought, he included no women in his discussion. The extensive "Bibliography of Marketing Literature" at the end of his volume lists the names of fewer than twenty women (Bartels 1962). As important figures in the world of marketing, women were practically invisible.

In the past several years, this has changed. The contributions to marketing thought of women such as Christine Frederick and Hazel Kyrk (Waller 1987; Stern 1989; Zuckerman and Carsky 1990), as well as those of female home economists (Carsky 1989; Zuckerman and Carsky 1990) have been documented. Women working in advertising agencies, marketing research firms and retailing held have been identified and recognized for their contributions (Zuckerman 1989).

However, reclaiming these women must go beyond simple recognition. Their work and
Contributions should be examined to determine the significance and validity of their perspective. Beyond knowing what their contribution was, we need to explore the following: Was this contribution unique? Did these women influence marketing thought or practice during formative years of the discipline? Was their influence recognized, either formally or informally? Did their perspective differ from that of the male marketers? If so, could their approach lend a new dimension to the framing of marketing questions? How does their perspective fit into current marketing thought? Completely absent from the marketing discipline has been work on understanding why so few women have been seen as leaders in the marketing profession, and why the roles of women as marketing practitioners and as consumers have not been given greater prominence.

Women have been excluded from histories of marketing thought in part because these histories have often focused on advances made in academic institutions. For example, Bartels wrote:

"As might be expected in the development of a body of scientific knowledge, universities and men engaged in academic pursuits have played a major role in the evolving of marketing thought" (1962:21).

Women tended to be a rarity in the halls of the academy where much mainstream marketing thought developed. Few firm figures exist for women in academic marketing during the twentieth century, but several studies indicate the paucity of female academic marketers. A 1924 study of 104 coeducational institutions employing a total of 253 faculty members in their Commerce schools showed only 30 female faculty members, of which 26 stood at the instructor level, 3 had achieved Assistant rank, with a lone woman holding the position of Full Professor (Goodsell 1929). A 1929 study of 834 women teaching at colleges and universities revealed 6 females in departments of Business Administration; this number is bound to be lower for a business subfield such as marketing (Hawthorne 1929). Even by 1979, only 4% of all American Marketing Association educator members were women (Hilger and Wafful 1980).

These figures explain to some extent women's lack of visibility in the history of marketing thought. Clearly, we must broaden our view when looking for the contributions of women to marketing. Within the academy we must seek out the contributions made to the development of marketing by women in related disciplines (see e.g. Zuckerman and Carsky 1990). We must also look beyond the academy, to the practice of marketing, where women were more likely to be involved. Many of the innovations and ideas used by female practitioners reached out to and influenced marketing thought (e.g. Frederick 1929; Bartos 1982; and Bartos 1989). As Bartels acknowledged, the evolution of marketing involved "new concepts, literature, education programs and business practices" (Bartels 1962: 21, emphasis added). Using the feminist perspective in this manner provides a fresh view of that interactive process between theory and practice which has often moved the field of marketing forward.

Attention could be focused on the active role played by female consumers in shaping the marketing process. Women have long been the objects of research and attention by marketers. Fundamentally turning around the way women and consumption have been viewed would add a new dimension to the history of marketing thought. Scholars could focus on the power and strength of these female consumers, their role in influencing product development, distribution channels, and promotional techniques, and their efforts in the arenas of consumer protection and consumer education. Phillips was the first to recognize the problems of the consumer in a marketing textbook (Principles of Marketing 1938). He was surely influenced by the criticisms levied against producers of shoddy products, greedy middlemen, high retail prices, and "puffery in advertising," by dissatisfied female consumers (Schlinsk and Chase 1929; Kallet and Schlinsk 1932). These issues had been brought to the fore primarily by the protests, boycotts, and complaints of female consumers who had gained power to influence business and government decisions. A 1938 Journal of Marketing article reported that 5,000,000 women in various organizations were more or less active in efforts to secure legislation favorable to consumers (Bader and Wernette 1938). The authors also discussed the dissemination of consumer information by 120,000 female members of the American Home Economics Association, the League of Women Voters, and the American Association of University Women. This information and
education, wrote the authors, could significantly reshape the buying habits of consumers. This would suggest that the power of female consumers strongly influenced marketing thought and practice.

Another area ripe for research concerns gender and consumption. We might examine how the history of consumption has differed for men and women, how the very act of consumption has differed for the two sexes, for individuals and over time. Are these types of analyses incorporated into our theory of consumer behavior? Do the classic works on the history of consumption, those of scholars such as Grant McCracken (1988), talk much about gender differences when describing the development of consumption? It has been argued by historians and sociologists as well as a few marketers that women have learned to express their femininity through consumption (Winship 1981; Waller 1987). How and when did men learn to express their masculinity through consumption? Do men and women use the consumption process to the same ends? Gender appears to provide a key distinction in how this consumption process worked, one that needs further exploration (see e.g. Gould 1990).

One might also look at how differential appeals have been used to persuade men and women to buy, over time, up through the present. How have the campaigns differed? Who was writing these campaigns? Did it matter if males or females developed the campaigns? Were women more effective in appealing to female consumers, as many throughout the twentieth century believed? (J. Walter Thompson 1918; and Waller 1987). Traditionally, predominantly male marketing theorists have investigated and formulated theories about predominantly female consumers. Many of the conclusions were patronizing, condescending and in keeping with the tradition of marking out females as "different" and/or "other." One male scholar, writing in the Journal of Marketing in 1947, acknowledged the possibly biased effect emerging from a scholarship written by male scholars about female subjects. He listed all the contradictory images of women which prevailed (woman as goddess, as seductive Lorelei, as noble mother, as source of miseries, etc.), then admitted "if most of our literature had been written by women instead of by men, it would probably have been equally full of contradictory conclusions regarding men"

(Alexander 1947). 10

In focusing on these last research areas we move away from a male-centered model, which looks at the development of the field of marketing from the experience of men alone (white men). Adding women's experience into the equation, not only those women who fit the male model, but even more fundamentally, those who do not, enriches the history and base of the marketing discipline, even as it offers new insights; it transforms the very way we look at marketing history and theory.

Interdisciplinary Dimensions of Research

Just as they believe in interconnectedness of knowledge, so feminist scholars stress the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to research (see e.g. Keller 1987). In order to understand and comprehend the complexities of any phenomenon it must be examined from several perspectives. The salience of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding human behavior is self-evident.

In this area the marketing discipline appears very strong. By incorporating psychologists, anthropologists, home economists and economists, marketing draws on a variety of disciplines. In consumer behavior this is particularly true, and the Association for Consumer Research specifically notes that it is an interdisciplinary body. Consumer research has often been at the vanguard of interdisciplinary and innovative perspectives (e.g Firat, et al. 1987). It has been within this domain of marketing that logical empiricism or logical positivism as the only legitimate mode of seeking knowledge has received the most attention. The work of scholars from divergent backgrounds with different philosophical methodologies and ontological frameworks are provided with a forum for presenting alternative world views of the consumer environment. While Anderson (1983) suggests that paradigmatic conflicts cannot be resolved as they require too great a "conceptual leap," the emergence of new paradigms arising from the interdisciplinary nature of ACR and its journal may occur as a result of exposure throw this association that acknowledges the legitimacy of different philosophies and methodologies.

In reviewing three recent issues of two major marketing journals, the interdisciplinary character
of research on marketing institutions and seller behavior can be observed by reviewing the references cited to these articles. Two issues of The Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, for example, showed that the six articles on seller behavior and channels included citations to literature in management, psychology, econometrics. The Journal of Marketing Literature Review shows citations to journals outside the discipline. As an applied discipline, marketing would be expected to draw from a wider range of sources than would a root discipline with a longer tradition, and less applied theoretical foundations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REFORMING THE PARADIGM

Marketing has moved from a study of products and services, to a study of social interactions (human behavior). When considering the design of a product, for example, we are interested not in the product itself, but rather in the benefits that will accrue to the user of the product. Marketers' inquiry then must turn to understanding the attitudes, motivations and desires of the actors involved in the exchange transaction. Yet as suggested more than twenty-five years ago (Halbert 1964), there is no simple route to understanding human behavior:

"...our scientific research must be turned inward as well as outward. We must study marketing operators and marketing scientists... and we must study ourselves. Only after we know what we do and how we do it can we begin to do it better" (1964: 32).

The feminist approach offers a conceptualization and suggests methodologies for studying such social phenomena. It emphasizes the context or milieu in which individuals operate in the exchange relationship, with each acting in his or her own self interest to maximize the perceived benefits and minimize the costs of the transaction. If a general theory of marketing is to be developed, we must study actors in the transactions within the natural environment, something a feminist perspective facilitates. Through the tenets of interconnectedness, a holistic view, anti-elitism, and a non-hierarchical research methodology, a better understanding of marketing phenomena will be realized.

In defining marketing as the behavioral science that seeks to explain relationships, Hunt (1983) delineated four sets of marketing explainanda, including: 1) the behavior of buyers directed at consummating exchanges; 2) the behavior of sellers directed at consummating exchanges; 3) the institutional framework directed at facilitating exchanges; and 4) the consequences on society of the behaviors of these parties. The feminist approach can broaden marketers' perspective in each of these areas.

Women have long been the primary target for the marketing efforts of producers and distributors of many consumer goods. Feminist theory offers an understanding of women's ways of knowing--of the female mode of conceptualization and processing of information that will lead to better comprehension of the manner in which women engage in the selection, consumption and disposition of goods, and how it may differ from that of men. The theory specifies that most women view things in a context. To separate out one minute aspect of the purchase process for study is inappropriate for understanding their buyer behavior.

Knowledge about the behavior of sellers can also be furthered by using a feminist perspective. To understand why sellers produce, price, promote and distribute as they do requires anti-elitism and a non-hierarchical research approach. We must, as feminist theory suggests, seek to empathize with the position of the seller, to utilize interactive modes of inquiry in which both the research and researched learn from the process. We must use inductive and qualitative methodology. As women now fill the ranks of the industrial salesforce, we should also examine the differences in the ways men and women operate within the occupation. In light of the feminist scholarship on cognitive differences between the sexes, we might find that male and female salespeople respond to customer service needs differently. Successful salespeople of the two genders may differ both in their routes to success and in their reasons for success.

In examining marketing's institutional framework, we must employ an historical methodology, one which looks at the societal environment in which institutions have evolved over time. In viewing this history we need to consider the societal conditions involving not only the public sphere of marketplace transactions populated principally by men,
but also the private sphere, typically the domain of women. We need to examine the interactions between these two arenas, and how this interaction might have influenced the development of institutions important to marketing. For example, changes in the nature of women's work in the home influenced the development of department stores in the nineteenth century. In more recent years, the changing role of women, the dual earner family, and smaller household size have forced changes in the retailing community.

To look at changing institutions without considering the last of the four explananda, the effects on society, would be to examine one aspect of the environment out of its context. From the end of the last century women have been instrumental in spearheading movements to improve working conditions, the safety of products, and the inequities of the marketplace. They have been leaders in the environmental movement and the consumer protection movement. We must study what particular factors motivate women to take up and/or support a cause, and investigate how and why they are frequently earlier than men in spotting inequities and spillover effects of production. By understanding the world view of women, we can better learn to identify potential problems with our marketing efforts and correct them as they are about to occur.

In summary, the feminist approach calls for a fundamental rethinking of the marketing discipline. In so doing, it will enrich the field. As Belenky et al. note, to see "knowledge as a construction and truth a matter of the context in which it is embedded greatly expand(s)... the possibilities of how to think about anything, even those things we consider to be the most elementary and obvious" (1986: 138). Conversely, marketing tools and analysis can be used to explore more deeply and understand more completely gender construction in our society. The areas outlined here point to new areas of research for marketers, feminists, and feminists within the marketing discipline.

This conceptual framework for analyzing the impact of feminist thought on a body of knowledge owes much to Childers and Grunig 1989; and Gergen 1988. These studies look at the influence of a feminist perspective on the field of journalism and psychology respectively. See also Zuckerman 1990.

Two ways feminist scholarship has achieved this re-examination of the status quo have been through 1) arguing that women have been oppressed and not been provided with equal opportunity, access to resources, or given recognition for their contributions to society; and 2) identifying sex differences that exist between men and women which need to be acknowledged and appreciated for these divergent contributions to society. See DuBois et al. (1987)

Others in marketing have called for such examination of underlying assumptions, although not explicitly with respect to gender. Hunt, for example, asks for just this, noting that "...explicit awareness and acknowledgement of the oftentimes implicit assumptions of research... is likely to lead to better, more effective research," 1991: 395; see also Firat, et al 1987: xiii-xii).

These terms were derived to characterize modalities of living forms: agency for the existence of an organism as an individual, and communion for the participation of the individual in some larger organism of which the individual is a part (Carlson 1981: 271).

For example, Gilligan and Belenky et al. have reported that boys enjoy the rule making and laws of their games, and that their games are individualistic and competitive. Girls, by contrast, engage in play activities that are more relational and reliant on cooperation and activities that are "imitational." These lead to greater concerns for interpersonal relations and a contextual orientation. See Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986).

The editorial review boards for major marketing journals are as follows: Journal of Marketing 5%, Journal of Academy of Marketing Science 10%, and Journal of Consumer Research 21% female. However, the number of publications by women in these journals has increased more rapidly than numbers in the academy, which suggests that women do not experience undue difficulty in getting their work published in these journals.

Although studies report that up to 40% of food shoppers are men, women are still primarily
responsible for food shopping and food purchasing decisions within the household (Food Marketing Institute 1989:63).

8In Dickson and Sawyer, the items used were coffee, toothpaste, margarine, and cold cereal. All are replacement items, for which shoppers may not have felt they had a choice. See Dickson and Sawyer, 1989, 1999.

9Feminist scholars Schuster and Van Dyne have created a model which describes how inclusion of gender works in transforming a discipline. One of the first steps is that of "searching for missing women." This is typically followed by an attempt to understand why so few women have been included in the history (Schuster and Van Dyne 1985).

10This paper summarized findings on sex differences from the field of experimental psychology, a discipline which has had its own share of gender-biased research.

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