The editors and authors gratefully acknowledge the permission granted to reprint the following: The excerpts in Chapter 2, by Clayton P. Alderfer, are reprinted by permission of the University Press of Kansas from *The Life of a Psychologist: An Autobiography* by Fritz Heider, © 1983; and by permission of Random House, Inc., from *Methods of Research in Social Psychology* by J. M. Carlsmith, P. C. Ellsworth, and E. Aronson, © 1976. The excerpt in Chapter 11, by Philip H. Mirvis and Meryl Reis Louis, is from "Little Gidding" in *Four Quartets* by T. S. Eliot, copyright 1943 by T. S. Eliot; renewed 1971 by Esme Valerie Eliot. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

For information address:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
275 South Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90212

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
M-32 Market
Greater Kailash I
New Delhi 110 048 India

SAGE Publications Ltd
28 Banner Street
London EC1Y 8QE
England

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Exploring clinical methods for social research.

Bibliography: p.
1. Social sciences—Methodology—Addresses, essays, lectures. 2. Social sciences—Research—Addresses, essays, lectures. 3. Social sciences—Field work—Addresses, essays, lectures. 4. Participant observation—Addresses, essays, lectures. I. Berg, David N., 1949- II. Smith, Kenwyn K.
H61.E97 1985 300'.72 84-27618
ISBN 0-8039-2432-1

FIRST PRINTING

Exploring Clinical Methods for Social Research

Edited by David N. Berg
Kenwyn K. Smith

SAGE PUBLICATIONS Beverly Hills London New Delhi

CHAPTER
7

FEMINIST DISTRUST: Problems of Context and Content in Sociological Work

Shulamit Reinharz

We do not know exactly what is on the Other Side until we arrive there—and the journey *is rough*. (Daly, 1978)

CONVENTIONAL AND ACADEMIC DISTRUST

One of the hallmarks of both the modern attitude and the scientific method is distrust. We moderns do not trust one another because we see that self-interest takes precedence over other considerations. Skepticism also pervades our relation to scholarship. Science requires that we do not simply accept assertions, but rather that we seek evidence according to standardized criteria. We must question if the author employed the correct methods; if the interpretations of data reflect bias; if the instrumentation was appropriate, and so on. In addition, we have recently discovered that certain methodological, epistemological, and social psychological dilemmas are constraints in the production of social science knowledge.[1] Thus, a social scientist learns to compound conventional distrust with academic distrust.

We are also taught that distrust can be suspended when someone's work has been found acceptable according to certain criteria. True, at

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The following people provided helpful reviews of this chapter: Loraine Obler, Gordon Fellman, Barbara Gruber, Anne Mulvey, Margaret Fearey, Oliva Espin, Brinton Lykes, Hortensia Amaro, Tracy Paget, Maurice Stein, Irving K. Zola, Barrie Thorne and Liz Stanley. Evan Harriman typed the manuscript and helped prepare the references.

some later point we might uncover new criteria or evidence that force us to reexamine previous assertions. But this possibility should not lead us to a relativist position, wherein one says, "Since I can never know anything with certainty, nothing can be judged."

Conventional criteria for determining the worth of scholarship do not include the extent to which findings match one's personal experience (see, e.g., Toby, 1955). In fact, it is believed that there would be no unique purpose for scholarship if it coincided with personal experience. Experience, it is believed, is the foundation of idiosyncratic claims on limited instances. In sum, the attitudes of the modern scholar/scientist include distrust of others' work, belief in the value of particular criteria for judging work, and disdain for personal experience.

FEMINIST DISTRUST

Feminism adds another dimension to this modern attitude. It suggests that conventional and academic distrust are limited because, as Kuhn has discussed, they function within a dominant paradigm erroneously equated with reality (Brandwein, 1984, p. 5). Feminism proposes that this paradigm is not sufficiently recognized as a paradigm. Therefore, feminist distrust applies to work *within* the conventional paradigm compounded by distrust *of* the paradigm itself. Feminists have alluded to this problem when referring to "personal tension" (Westkott, 1979) or "ontological anguish and exile" (Vickers, 1982). Only rarely has the attitude been labelled *distrust* (Lugones & Spelman, 1983).

The anguish mentioned by Vickers refers to a related problem—the lack of a solution to the problem of distrust (see, however, Register, 1979, p. 8). Feminist theory and research should, of course, be the solution, but these are still relatively new and somewhat problematic. For instance, the degree and nature of feminist anguish vary among the disciplines (Stacey & Thorne, 1984). And even in a single field there is more divergence than consensus. Moreover, feminism includes a heterogenous set of beliefs ranging from radical and separatist to liberal, reformist, and even conservative (Firestone, 1970), resulting in minimal consensus about guideposts for research (Reinharz, 1981). Furthermore, it is somewhat dangerous even to discuss the topic of feminist anguish without jeopardizing the fragile hold feminist scholars have on their jobs as researchers and teachers (Westkott, 1979, p. 430; Bernard, 1981, p. 17). Feminists do not as yet have sufficient resources to own or control settings for research. Finally, because feminism provokes among those who think in its terms a reevaluation of all aspects of one's life,

acceptance of a feminist perspective introduces self-doubt. Thus, feminist consciousness places added demands on the researcher.

FOREMOTHERS OF FEMINIST DISTRUST

Feminist sociologists' distrust originated in the awareness that sexism was pervasive in the discipline, making it wrong, conservative and embarassing (Friedan, 1963, chap. 6). Kate Millett, writing from outside the field, was one of the first to make this point: "Modern research . . . takes patriarchy to be both the status quo and the state of nature" (1969, p. 78). For the sociologists who wrote during the early phase of this second wave of the American women's movement (see Gornick & Moran, 1971), the capacity to articulate a feminist critique was rather remarkable. After all, these women had been socialized within the dominant paradigm (Bernard, 1981, p. 14).

Nevertheless, as they discovered that the scholarship in which they had been trained was embedded in a patriarchal paradigm, they began to claim that there was strain and even incompatibility (Wittig, 1982) between "their" academic discipline and their feminist consciousness. For example, Daly (1978) argued that reform of patriarchal scholarship is impossible unless new language is used. Stanley and Wise (1983) argued that patriarchy is so intertwined with heterosexuality that to eliminate the former would mean little without eliminating the latter, the prospects of which were nil. This argument has been applied to other components of the dominant paradigm—such as classism, racism, capitalism, ageism—all of which render conventional scholarship partial and leave attempts at generalization limited (see, e.g., Reinharz, Bombyk & Wright, 1983; Ladner, 1973; and Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974).

Furthermore, feminist scholars' thinking about method became influenced by the effectiveness of consciousness raising in generating a social movement and in forming the groundwork for the articulation of feminist theory (see Reinharz, 1983). Because of the central role of consciousness-raising in the history of contemporary feminism, some feminist scholars give it a central role in all forms of feminist scholarship (see, e.g., Lugones & Spelman, 1983). MacKinnon, a well-known feminist theoretician, has expressed this view:

> Consciousness-raising is the major technique of analysis, structure of organization, and theory of social change of the women's movement. In consciousness-raising, often in groups, the impact of male dominance is

> concretely uncovered and analyzed through collective speaking of women's experience, from the perspective of that experience. . . . Its claim to women's perspective is its claim to truth. (1982, pp. 519, 536)

The adoption of this position, however, encourages a methodological and epistemological shift that seems to take us out of the tradition of sociology—and conventional science—altogether (see Smith, D. E., 1974).

A few years after the Millett insight, Daniels wrote that when a feminist perspective is applied to the work of sociologists, "we are forced to rethink the structure and organization of sociological inquiry" (1975, p. 340) in all its aspects. In other words, she implied that sexism in the *content* of conventional sociological research was part and parcel of the sexist *context* in which sociological research was done, in particular, the university and other "normal" institutions.

In both arenas—content and context—some feminist sociologists have come to feel that we have to begin again. We have made some strides with regard to content—textbooks that have a feminist, sociological orientation have begun to appear (Bernard, 1981; Andersen, 1983) as have guides to the elimination of sexism in teaching (Thorne, 1982) and in theory and research (Millman & Kanter, 1975; ASA, 1980; Bowles & Duelli-Klein, 1983; Roberts, 1981; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Feminist criticism of all the disciplines, not just sociology, has even broken into the public arena (Fiske, 1981; Howe, 1982) and projects have been funded to mainstream some feminist materials. But this is only a beginning.

CONTEXT: THE MALE-CENTERED INSTITUTION

Research is a socially organized activity done in the context of socially structured institutions such as universities, hospitals, and research institutes. From a feminist perspective, the university is male-dominated rather than woman-centered (Bart, 1971; Bernard, 1973; Rich, 1979). It is a place in which men dominate, in part because they predominate (only approximately 17 percent of university faculties are female; U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 1979) and because they earn more than the women do (in 1981 women college teachers earned 80 percent of what their male colleagues earned; Kendrigan, 1984, p. 36; see also Ehrenreich & Stallard, 1982). And even though male faculty earn more than women on average, at all ranks, with the same length of service, and at the same age, courts have ruled that this does not constitute discrimination against female faculty members (see *On Campus with Women,* 1982, p. 5).

It is a place in which men who want to succeed marry, whereas women who want to succeed don't.[2] The same pattern holds for having children.[3] These patterns combine, so that "married women are substantially less likely to earn tenure than unmarried women who are still less likely to earn tenure than married men with children" (Hu-DeHart, 1982, pp. 8-9). Thus, it is less likely that research will be conducted by married women with children than by other groups. It is probably even less likely that research will be defined and conducted by gays or lesbians, or by people from racial and ethnic minorities.

The university, from the perspective of feminists, is a place where sexual harassment is common (Somers, 1982; Verba, 1983); a place where the names of persons found guilty of sexual harassment are not always divulged, thus allowing the practices to continue;[4] a place which is increasingly dangerous to women in terms of rape (*On Campus with Women*, 1982, p. 1); a place where there was so little attention to women's existence, that women's studies had to be created. It is a place where recruitment procedures have been demonstrated to be inequitable (Szafran, 1984); a place where as one goes up the academic ladder—from student to lecturer and through the professional ranks to the ranks of highest administration—there are fewer and fewer women (Committee to Study the Status of Women in Graduate Education and Later Careers, 1974); a place where there are more demands made on women than on men (e.g., affirmative action activities, sexual harassment committees, women's role conferences) and there are also fewer role models for women to emulate. It is a place where feminists, minorities, and women in general must compete with each other since there is little room to move up (for a discussion of this issue, particularly with regard to tenure, see Freeman, 1979). It is a place where textbooks and classics abound with sexist language. And finally, it is a place where most of these factors are not considered very important or where they are no longer considered important.

Although we may want it to be otherwise, this context is reinforced by the *content* of the work done within the university, including much of its research. This is because research is conducted within disciplinary methodological and theoretical *traditions* that act as constraints. Although the origins of the disciplines were developed at a time when society differed in major ways from the present, certain structures such as sexism were pervasive then as now, and through their influence on the tradition continue to influence the content of current research.

Generally, the methodological and theoretical traditions are learned during the socialization process; internalized, and then used and trans-

mitted (Reinharz, 1979, 1983). Feminist consciousness raises doubts about these disciplinary conventions, particularly epistemology. Within sociology, this questioning of tradition calls into question the dominant positivist paradigm. It is to this that I now turn.

CONTENT: THE POSITIVIST PARADIGM

Modern social science is conducted in the framework of positivist philosophy (Alexander, 1982; Coser, 1975; Giddens, 1974; Polkinghorne, 1983).

> Positivism stands for a certain philosophical attitude concerning human knowledge . . . it is a collection of rules and evaluative criteria referring to human cognition: it tells us what kind of contents in our statements about the world deserves the name of knowledge and supplies us with norms that make it possible to distinguish between that which may and that which may not reasonably be asked. (Kolawowski, 1969, p. 2)

One of the key components of the positivist view is that knowledge must be concerned with *observable* phenomena whose explanations must be limited to forces that are not metaphysical or religious in nature. The explanations, however, need not consist of observable phenomena but can be ideas. In my view, the invocation of these explanatory ideas constitutes a defection from the very innovation that positivism was supposed to introduce. I will explain this problem in the context of feminist distrust.

There are three assumptions in the positivist paradigm. First is the assumption that there is a clear-cut distinction between observable phenomena on the one hand and metaphysical entities or religious phenomena on the other (Alexander, 1982). It is assumed that this distinction is obvious and not a result of human interpretation rooted in particular interests.

This assumption leads to the second underlying view: that there is a dichotomy between the object of study and the person who is conducting the study. This distinction is referred to as the subject/object dichotomy. It allows those who work in the positivist framework to believe that "the investigator's commitments have no influence on his or her data . . . [and that] generalizations are based solely on objective evidence" (Alexander, 1982, p. 6). The insistence on subject/object differentiation has been linked by feminist theories to the male child's need for individuation in relation to his mother (Keller, 1982). Feminists see in this insistence a defensive, even dangerous, need for differentiation, distance, and separation, which characterizes patriarchal culture.

In addition, positivist philosophy assumes that procedures can be applied to observable phenomena in a way that produces certain knowledge with which everyone is compelled to agree by virtue of rules of logic and mathematics. These three assumptions lead those working in the positivist perspective to disregard the context in which phenomena are embedded (Mishler, 1979; Cicourel, 1982), to believe that "facts" are unproblematic (Thomas & Edmondson, in press), to be disinterested in the unique human experience (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 21), and to be intolerant of ambiguity.

Positivism is contrasted with speculative, introspective subjectivism, defined as prescientific, arbitrary, and incapable of producing lawlike generalizations from specific instances. Positivism posits that the rules that apply to the study of the physical environment can be applied to all phenomena, because human behavior, like nature, is law-like. Finally, positivism implies that because empirical observation is definitive, the certainty of science yields legitimate *power*. In their rejection of theology, positivists took the power from God and put it in the hands of scientists. The subject/object dichotomy inherent in positivist philosophy complemented the androcentrism of the culture in which it was formulated and the personal views of the people who worked within it. Together they formed a deep male-centeredness[5] which erased women's experience and set the stage for feminist distrust. I shall attempt to document this statement in the following section.

POSITIVIST ORIGINS AND SEXISM

A French male aristocrat, Claude Henri de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), should be credited with having developed the framework of positivist philosophy. He also linked this philosophy with social goals. He believed that empirical social science could be harnessed for "organizing and rationalizing human relations" (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974, p. 68). In other words, when speculation and philosophy were replaced by the scientific method, a positive society could be created.

Saint-Simon did not rid himself of religion, but instead attempted a synthesis of science and religion. Yet he called this positivism. Having been profoundly influenced by the French Revolution, his description of the ideal society which could be brought about through the application of positivist principles reflects a mix of protecting vested interests and supporting democracy:

> I believe that all classes of society would benefit from an organization on these lines: the spiritual power in the hands of the scientists, the temporal

> power in the hands of the property-owners, the power to nominate those who should perform the functions of the leaders of humanity, in the hands of all; the reward of the rulers, esteem. (Saint-Simon, 1964, p. 11)

A student of Saint-Simon's, August Comte (1790-1857), is generally thought of as having defined positivism and having dedicated his life to its widespread adoption. He believed that the power of positivism was such that using its principles, social scientists could construct the ideal society free of social problems. Ironically, the ideal society envisioned by this French Catholic man was infused with religious symbols and rituals. For example, in the ideal society built on positivist principles, Comte believed women would play the role of "guardian angel" and would be worshipped. As for the reproduction of society, a Virgin Mother would give birth to children by means of artificial insemination (Kolawowski, 1969, pp. 62-63).

Historians of social science "explain" Comte's development of religious idealism from the foundations of scientific positivism by reference to his long periods of mental illness. This explanation avoids acknowledgment of the fact that positivism cannot escape being interwoven with values and pragmatics. However, studying the development of Comte's philosophy raises doubt about the ability of positivism to withstand the influence not only of individual psychopathology but also political ideologies, religious beliefs, and values of other kinds. Particularly apparent is the inability of positivism in general, and positivist sociology in particular, to withstand the influence of patriarchal ideology.

Emile Durkheim, an anticlerical French Jew, considered by most sociologists as a founding figure because he defined social phenomena and showed how they should be studied, stipulated rules that should be followed in order to discover empirically based knowledge. His book, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895/1938), states that all preconditions must be eradicated, thus assuming that they *can* be. Durkheim earns his place as a founder of sociology because he produced both a model and the standards for empirical research in his classic study, *Suicide* (1951). This study contains much material on the differential rate of suicide among men and women. As is well known, Durkheim used suicide statistics to develop his theories. But it is generally not discussed that he *inferred* or *speculated* about the motivations of the people who had committed these suicides. The inferences drew on ideas held subjectively by Durkheim, which may be referred to as *the ideology that underpinned a surface positivism.* For example, Durkheim's explanation of the greater rate of suicide among married women than among married men includes the following:

> Women's sexual needs have less of a mental character because, generally speaking, her mental life is less developed. These needs are more closely related to the needs of the organism, following rather than leading them, and consequently finding in them an efficient restraint. Being a more instinctive creature than man, woman has only to follow her instincts to find calmness and peace. She thus does not require so strict a social regulation as marriage, and particularly as monogamic marriage. (1951, p. 272)[6]

This passage is one of many that illustrate how positivist philosophy and research procedures were unable to eliminate the influence of patriarchal social ideology.[7] What this means is that thought, which had been believed to be governed by the rules of objectivity, was not objective at all, but rather a reflection of the social relations in which it was produced. This link converted the liberating potential of positivism to a new form of tyranny (Myrdal, 1969).

THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE AND SEXISM

The thesis that science, thought, and culture are mental superstructures that reflect the social substructure (Stark, 1958) is the central tenet of the sociology of knowledge, defined first by Karl Marx and elaborated later by Karl Mannheim, C. Wright Mills, Robert K. Merton, and others. This idea, sometimes referred to as "historical realism" (Suppe, 1977; Gergen, 1973), claims that "science is a human activity which takes place in various *historical* contexts and is not a process of formal logic attaining timeless truths" (Polkinghorne, 1983). Because the sociology of knowledge position represents a radical critique of science, it is a framework that feminists have found useful (see, e.g., Sherman & Beck, 1979; Bernard, 1981). Feminists have shown that it is not only the class structure of the historical period that influences the production of knowledge, but also the sex of the writer, because social conditions differentially affect men and women, making the perspectives of each a reflection of their sex-based ideology.

Mannheim, the man identified as the definer of the field, stated that the sociology of knowledge endeavors "to comprehend the theories and their mutations in close relation to the collective groups and typical total situations out of which they arose and whose exponents they are" (cited in Stark, 1958, p. 12). The whole point of this endeavor is to unveil the connection between social relationships and the knowledge accepted in a particular period. Essentially, the connection between the two rests on

the values that underpin both. Unfortunately, however, these values are not easily recognized at the moment, but become more apparent with the occurrence of social change and social conflict (Merton, 1957; Shaskolsky, 1970).

Despite the sociology of knowledge, the relation between knowledge and the fact that it was produced by men in a patriarchal society was rarely, if ever, considered by scholars in this field, leading to extraordinary contradictions. For example, Stark devoted an entire book to showing that thought was rooted in social conditions, and that different people's perceptions of the "same phenomenon" depend on their interests. Yet, here is an example he offered in support of his thesis:

> When a man and a woman see a lady passing in the street, they will (unless the man happens to be a fashion designer!) receive different impressions and images of her. The man's mind is likely to register her features and bodily form rather than her frock, the woman's her frock rather than her features and bodily form because their order of values is in all typical cases different from that of the majority of males . . . men on the one hand, women on the other—are constituted by nature, not by social forces, and the eye-opening interest or value is rooted in the instinctual rather than the social life (though it certainly is not purely instinctual, as our reference to the dress-designer is sufficient to demonstrate). (Stark, 1958, p. 133)

Despite the author's commitment to the basic premise of the sociology of knowledge, he claimed that *sex differences* in the production of thought are *not* rooted in social circumstances, but are instinctual. Patriarchal ideology stood firm despite the sociology of knowledge insight because it was an integral part of the thinking of social scientists, characteristic not only of positivists but of their sociology of knowledge critics as well.[8] It was so taken for granted that it could not be seen.

This confounding of seemingly "scientific" assertions with ideological beliefs is a central concern of feminists. To explore instances of its occurrence is to engage in a kind of consciousness-raising about the discipline (Lopata, 1976, p. 176). Recognition of this interpenetration of social science and social ideology brings in its wake distrust of sociological theory, concern about the value of accumulated social science knowledge, and questions about the distinction between science and ideology. As Eisenstein argued, "to the degree that sociology is rooted in a male world-view, it is as much ideology as it is science. The dichotomization between science and ideology does not hold" (1982, p. 36). In other words, feminist uncovering of patriarchy suggests that both what was thought to be positivist and the supposedly scientific critique of positivism were ideologically infused.

A pure form of positivism could function only in a society that has no divisions or interests, including the interests of the social scientists (Berg, 1984). The feminist critique of social science supports the view that since interest-free knowledge is logically impossible, we should feel free to substitute explicit interests for implicit ones. Feminism challenges us to articulate our values and, on the basis of these, to develop new theories and formulate new research practices.

SEXISM IN OUR "TRUSTED" CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS

Cultural attitudes toward women at the time in which American sociology was being defined were also sexist (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974, pp. 290-334). These attitudes became part of American sociology in terms of its body of knowledge and its professional associations (Deegan, 1981). As a result, the contributions of female sociologists were not acknowledged and had little influence in shaping the discipline. This pattern continues (Welch & Lewis, 1980).

Hand in hand with this discriminatory context was the pejorative writing about women among both positivist sociologists and their sociology of knowledge critics. I will clarify this statement by presenting examples from the writing itself. I located this material by looking at esteemed sociology books, not in terms of their major arguments, but rather in terms of their asides, illustrations, and examples. I looked not at what the authors thought needed explaining, but at what they thought did not—that is, their taken-for-granted assumptions. To me this is a first strategy for working away from feminist distrust—facing the preconceptions squarely. Examples writers use reveal the images with which they think and build their arguments. The examples writers offer can be likened to Thematic Apperception Test pictures used by psychologists to trigger their subjects' way of looking at the world.

For example, a much praised book still widely adopted in sociology courses, Peter Berger's *Invitation to Sociology* (1963), does not look very inviting to me when the images are examined. Upon reexamination, the fact that many sociologists accepted this book as a self-definiton is rather alarming.[9] Berger's use of analogies and images is extensive throughout the book. Here are a few examples at the start of the book:

> Perhaps some little boys consumed with curiosity to watch their maiden aunts in the bathroom later became inveterate sociologists. (p. 19)

> The geologist looks at rocks only at appropriate times, and the linguist speaks English with his wife. Anthropologists use the term "culture shock" to describe the impact of a totally new culture upon a newcomer.

> In an extreme instance such shock will be experienced by the Western explorer who is told, half-way through dinner, that he is eating the nice old lady he had been chatting with the previous day—a shock with predictable physiological, if not moral consequences. (p. 23)

On page 44 we learn the "sociological principle" that men are happy when their families are not around so that they can conveniently "use marginal people for their pleasure." On page 45 we learn that Veblen was an inveterate seducer of other people's women. (People *are* men, they *have* women.) On page 55 we learn that youth ends when a man decides to join the church and remain faithful to his wife. Here is Berger's definition of middle-age:

> The middle-aged Joe Blow, having accepted the fact that his wife will not get to be any prettier and that his job as assistant advertising manager will not become any more interesting, looks back on his past and decides that his earlier aspirations to possess many beautiful women or to write the definitive novel of the half-century were immature. (p. 59)

According to Berger, social mobility has occurred

> when the girl of one's teenage daydreams is transmuted into an ignorant though pretty peasant, [when] even Mama, who used to be the orb around which the universe revolved, has become a silly old Italian woman one must pacify. (p. 60)

Whereas sociologists usually asserted that wives acquire their socioeconomic status through their husbands, Berger seems inadvertently to suggest otherwise:

> Most individuals to whom an executive career is open marry the "right" kind of wife (the one that David Reisman has called the "station-wagon" type) almost by instinct. (p. 85)

Perhaps, as Berger suggested earlier, sociology is inviting to those boys who are titillated by watching others. In the following definition of sociology's power, the little boy who used to peep through the keyhole to watch his maiden aunt in the bathroom, now is seen observing couples in their bedrooms:

> A sociologist can predict whether a man of a certain class has sexual relations with his wife with the lights turned on or off. (p. 81)

Sociologists may self-consciously claim that marriage and the family are the foundations of a stable society, but actually find them miserable institutions:

> The idea that a man should fixate his sexual drive permanently and exclusively on one single woman with whom he is to share bed, bathroom and the boredom of a thousand bleary-eyed breakfasts was produced by misanthropic theologians. (p. 85)

Berger concludes his "inviting" book by explaining that sociology is humanistic, even though it is so difficult to be a humanist in our culture:

> It is not easy to introduce a humanistic dimension into research designed to determine the optimum crew composition of a bomber aircraft, or to discover the factors that will induce somnambulent housewives in a supermarket to reach for one brand of baking powder as against the other. (pp. 169-170)

In my view, the problem with these excerpts is not eliminated by calling them a "writing style." Rather there seems to me to be a sociological vision that underlies the images. My point is that the writing of sociologists reveals their view of society, a view that sees women primarily as stupid, sexually unexciting wives *or* objects of sexual desire and violence.

Another "trusted classic" of contemporary sociology that defined the field and is in its seventeenth printing (at least) rarely used images that referred to women, but if so only as wives whose significance was as possessions that helped define the character of men:

> We . . . want to know how much each is influenced by his contemporaries, and in which realms of life this influence is more important—in the choice of one's car, the books one reads, the wife one takes, the profession one pursues? (Inkeles, 1964, p. 53)

With Luckmann, Berger coauthored *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967), a work that represents a cornerstone of contemporary sociological theory in the sociology of knowledge tradition. In this book women appear only once in the index, referring to the ill effects on boys if their father is "absent" and their mother's and sisters' presence influences them to be effeminate. Women make their appearance here only as vehicles of potential harm. It is almost ironic that Berger and Luckmann end their book with this revealing conclusion:

> Sociology takes its place in the company of the sciences that deal with man as man . . . [the] object is society as part of a human world, made by men, inhabited by men, and, in turn, making men, in an ongoing historical process. It is not the least fruit of a humanistic sociology that it reawakens our wonder at this astonishing phenomenon. (p. 211)

Criticism of the limited view of women that is an integral part of structural-functionalism, one of the most widely accepted among contemporary sociological theories, is well known (Millett, 1969, pp. 310-329). Yet even critics of structural-functionalist theory, advocates of conflict models, may unwittingly integrate sexist imagery into their theory. Sexist imagery is present in the works of humanistic critics of mainstream sociology, just as sexist practices were prevalent in humanistic social movement organizations that attempted to alter American society before the resurgence of the women's movement. For example, here are some images used in Derek Phillips's *Abandoning Method*:

> Imagine a situation where Mrs. Jones' husband has behaved toward her in an abusive and violent manner over a period of several years. Finally after he has pushed her down a flight of stairs, Mrs. Jones obtains a knife and kills her husband. We might want to say that this situation fits a typical formula of causal ascription: no B without A. Had he not been so violent and abusive, had he not pushed her down the stairs, she would not have killed him. However, to support such a causal assertion it is also necessary to show that, if A is not present, B will not occur, or that whenever A occurs B will follow. But B could conceivably occur without A; Mrs. Jones could have killed her husband for a great variety of reasons; he beat the children, or insulted her mother, or snored too loudly. And there are too many abusive and violent husbands for us to say with any degree of certainty that their behavior will always be followed by their wives' killing them. So concepts such as motive, reason, and purpose have doubtful and indeterminate application. (1973, p. 174)

The misogyny in this excerpt is apparent in the implicit ridicule of a woman whose murder of her husband could have occurred for four apparently equivalent reasons: her husband's violence toward her, his beating of their children, his insulting her mother, or his snoring. She becomes absurd if she is considered willing to murder for snoring. By casting doubt on her reasonableness, she is demeaned and he is almost excused. To me, this conjecture about her motive speaks louder than Phillips's explicit disdain for violent husbands.

In a previous discussion of the concept of probability, Phillips uses the following telling example:

> A man who "flirts" with a woman at a party by ripping off her clothes and throwing her to the floor will almost certainly be seen as exceeding the rules of flirting. (1973, p. 159)

These examples reflect the workings of a misogynist imagination in a patriarchal culture. Yet it is this same imagination that these writers think of as sociology and that has been legitimated as such. Violence toward women and the view of women as ridiculous, particularly in their evaluation of men, is embedded in the writing of people thought of as reliable interpreters of society. Recognizing that sociology written by men has been "male sociology," not "sociology," can be a way of sidestepping the problem of distrust (see also Patai, 1983).

SEXISM IN CONTEMPORARY TEXTBOOKS

Even contemporary textbooks contain pejorative references to females despite recent public recognition of the need to expunge sexist writing from publications (Miller & Swift, 1980). In my view, these textbooks reinforce prejudice against women and other groups even when they disparage negative beliefs about them. When illustrations are ostensibly directed at undermining associations between certain groups and negative traits, people are reminded of these associations. Again, this problem arises in the examples and analogies, not in the explicit argument of the books. For example, one of the most highly regarded textbooks in sociology contains the following:

> Suppose you were once cheated by a shopkeeper you thought to be Jewish. You might conclude from that one event that Jewish shopkeepers are dishonest in general. Subsequently you'd probably take special note of dishonest actions by other Jewish shopkeepers, while ignoring honest Jews and dishonest non-Jews. Some people take special note of all lazy blacks they come across and ignore energetic blacks and lazy whites. Others notice irrational and emotional women while overlooking stable women as well as unstable men. (Babbie, 1983, p. 12)

Babbie returns to a discussion of Jews, blacks, and women when explaining the principle of deduction:

> Suppose, for example, you had decided that all Jewish shopkeepers were dishonest, and then *one of them* walked four miles to return the wallet that you left on the store counter. What would you do? In *our* casual, day-to-day handling of such matters, we often make up information that

> would resolve the contradiction. Maybe the shopkeeper isn't really Jewish after all. Or maybe the shopkeeper was just casing your house with a later burglary in mind. (emphasis added)
>
> Perhaps that hard-working and energetic black at work is just trying to get promoted to a soft executive post. Perversely, people often doubt the general femininity of the woman who is tough-minded, logical and unemotional in getting the job done. Concluding that she's not really a woman protects the general conclusion that women are irrational and flighty. (Babbie, 1983, p. 12)

In this methods textbook, necessary and sufficient causes are explained by scenarios about anti-Semitism:

> Let's postulate, for example, that being an anti-Semite is a necessary cause for murdering Jews in the streets. Non-anti-Semites don't do it. This causal relationship is not at all diminished by the fact that the vast majority of anti-Semites do not murder Jews in the streets. (Babbie, 1983, p. 58)

The racism and sexism that I believe pervade such examples begin with seeing certain groups as "them" rather than "us." Since pronoun use reveals the author's identifications, one strategy for dealing with distrust is to look specifically at the way an author uses pronouns. To do this means to treat scientific writing not only as a source of information as defined by the author, but also as a text revealing something about the author. Although the passive voice of much scientific writing hides the author's voice to a large extent, clues can sometimes be found in introductions, conclusions, and asides. The pronouns with which the author writes reflect the perspective through which the author sees.

Another window on the author's implicit sociology is the use of adjectives. In the passages quoted above, some groups are given adjectives and others are not. People who are black are called black because they are a kind of person, whereas people who are white are not called white. Blacks are shown to be a variation of people, whereas whites are the people of which other groups are variations. The objects of derision or violence are specified as blacks, Jews, or women, but the agents of prejudice are labelled vaguely as people, not as groups with characteristics of their own such as Christians, men, or whites. This language use conforms to what psychologists have shown—namely, that men are seen as the norm, women as the deviation. The strategy out of distrust that flows from this idea is to not label blacks as blacks or women as women unless everyone is labelled in terms of race and gender. In addition, one

could eliminate adjectives altogether and write about women or blacks as if they represented the universally human (see Patai, 1983). Reading social science with these ideas in mind reveals the extent to which contemporary prejudice can be reinforced by contemporary social science.

Examples keep women pregnant, homosexuals feared (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1984, pp. 137-138), and the elderly stupid. The metaphor of the witch/woman/bad as a contrast with science/male/good is common. For example, Rosnow and Rosenthal (1984) contrast an old woman with the implicitly normative young man and middle-aged male magistrate, casting her as a weird, benevolent witch. Abrahamson (1983, p. 12) does likewise in his reference to the Sphinx, who was part monster and part woman, slain by Oedipus (here a symbol of science) after he acquired knowledge. The scientist as Oedipus and woman as "other" is perhaps the most succinct clue to the paradigm from which positivism has not yet been freed.

The problem is not resolved by looking at qualitative research texts written by men. For example, when using metaphors to discuss the researcher's attitudes, Douglas draws on sexual/military imagery:

> A research assault on a social institution is often analogous to a military assault on a nation. (1976, p. 31)
>
> The researcher, like the wise lover, *never presses his* case to the point where an explicit "no" is possible—*unless his* situation is desperate or unless there is no tomorrow. (emphasis added; 1976, p. 32)

The feminist researcher is likely to feel alienated from methodological instruction such as this (see also Gurney, in press). In Douglas's world, researchers are men who ensnare other men into acknowledging their deviance vis-à-vis women. For example, he explains that his clever dinner party tactics enabled him to trick a businessman into revealing that his company kept a list of callgirls for special customers (1976, pp. 66-67). He explains the idea of self-deception by reference to a man who tries to convince a "friend" to give up a girlfriend because he "wants the girl." Women appear frequently in this text, but only as the duped party, the whore, or the girlfriend manipulated by others.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON REREADING SOCIOLOGY

A male sociologist in a patriarchal milieu sees the world not only as a sociologist but also as a male, oftentimes in aggressive, manipulative, sexualized ways (unless he has gone out of his way to change his

consciousness and behaviors through specific feminist commitments). In addition, he writes for a male audience who sees the world in the same terms. If this is so, then the challenge for the female and/or feminist sociologist is to figure out how to use selectively the sociological tradition—that is, to determine what she can trust.

In the classic sociological texts women were perceived only as objects, if they were perceived at all. Yet women made up half the society the sociologists were writing about. Rereading sociology leads to the conclusion that male sociologists have been unable to transcend their society's commonplace ideas.[10] In addition, despite the claims of objectivity (a supposed product of positivist methodology), the attitudes apparent in the work of male sociologists are not unlike those of their class and gender. What Simone de Beauvoir said of society in general was also true of sociologists. Women were defined by male sociologists as "the other" or were not there at all. Hatred and fear of women has been given the label *misogyny*. Perhaps a new word—*gynopia*—is needed to point out the inability to perceive the very existence of women as fully human actors.

Feminist distrust of sociology stems from the insulting, inaccurate, and entirely "other" nature of much theory, methodological instruction, and even humanistic criticism. But then the question remains, What theory and method would be a useful alternative? If it were only a question of defining new topics relative to women's lives and correcting specific sexist biases in research (see ASA, 1980) or teaching (Gappa & Pearce, 1982) things would be *relatively* simple. But the problem seems deeper than that.

Perhaps the answer is that sociology can never be free of sexism in a world characterized by misogyny and gynopia. Positivist science did not free thought of prejudice. Rather, social movements, political power, and consciousness raising seem to have made the most significant impacts in this regard. In my view, there is a continued need for consciousness-raising among social scientists, focused on the questions, To what extent does our research incorporate the prejudices of the day, and to what extent does it transcend them?

Although I have focused on distrust, I have also mentioned some means of working with distrust. First is to reexamine classic and contemporary sociological texts written by men in terms of their gendered authorship in a patriarchal society. This reexamination should seek the implicit sociology revealed in asides, examples, and metaphors. The use of pronouns and the phrase "of course" are other clues. Second is to seek missing historical and neglected contemporary works written by women and use them to build a modern sociology. These two consciousness-raising strategies redefine "sociology" as "male sociology" and "female sociology" as "sociology" (Patai, 1983). Third is to search for a postpositivist paradigm based on feminist and other critical assumptions (for an example, see Thomas & Edmondson, in press). These assumptions include recognition of one's values and the extent to which one is embedded in one's research (see Reinharz, 1979, 1983). Fourth is the construction of new contexts in which we can do our postpositivist feminist sociological work. These new contexts include institutions that have been transformed from competitive and bureaucratic to cooperative and egalitarian. In these new institutions, knowledge producers would be demographically representative of the population at large. It goes without saying that these new institutions would be physically and psychologically safe. In the meantime, a sociology grounded in values other than those that define our society may have to be carried out in alternative settings alongside the university (see Nebraska Feminist Collective, 1983; Reinharz, 1983). Since the context in which knowledge is created affects the knowledge that is created, our attempts to develop an unalienating social science will always be linked to our ability to develop a fully humane society.

NOTES

1. See Rosnow and Rosenthal (1984) for a discussion of the methodological and epistemological problems of artifacts and values, and see Peters and Ceci (1982) for a discussion of the social psychologically based inconsistency in the evaluation of scientific work.

2. "Fewer than half of women academics are married, compared to almost 90% of the men" (Hu-DeHart, 1982, p. 8).

3. "About one-third of the women in academe have children, compared to more than two-thirds of the men, and these women tend to have fewer children than men with families" (Hu-DeHart, 1982, p. 8).

4. Names of sexual harassers are sometimes written in women's bathroom stalls as a way of alerting potential victims.

5. I am indebted to Barrie Thorne, who suggested this phrase (personal communication, 1984).

6. Part of this quote is discussed in Nebraska Feminist Collective (1983). To Durkheim's credit, it must be said that he did not lump all women in one category but rather recognized the differences among types of women, depending, in this case, on whether or not they were married. Similarly, Durkheim recognized that marriage has differential consequences for the male and female partner. He thereby implicitly accepted a conflict-of-interests model of marriage—a model that feminists are also developing in contrast with the structural-functionalist model.

7. See also, Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1933/1964, pp. 55-63).

8. Anti-positivists, phenomenologists, critical theorists, and Marxist sociologists seem to have been similarly encumbered by and not cognizant of their patriarchal

assumptions. For this reason, although the feminist sociological critique has benefitted from these preceding critical perspectives, it has not been satisfied by them.

9. When I was preparing to teach an introductory social psychology course in 1982, I asked colleagues at various universities which books they thought were best and Berger's was hailed as a twenty-year-old classic worth using nowadays. I continously see praise for the book. For example, Westhues (1982), a humanistic sociologist, annotates a reference to it as "a little book that brims over with clarity and cordiality" (p. 32).

10. The extent to which this is true is continuously being discovered. For example, Charlotte Schwartz and Merton Kahne have shown that in the theorizing of medical sociologists there has been an unwitting and implicit assumption that the physician is a white male and the patient is a woman, child, or person compromised economically or socially (1983, p. 335). They show that these assumptions have almost undermined the theory built on them.