



Multiperspectival Feminist Critiques and Their Implications for Rhetorical Theory

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Abstract

This article argues that feminist critiques of society are multiperspectival and have important implications for rhetorical theory and the criticism of public address. After outlining these implications, the study traces the development of feminist criticism from echoes of Marxism in second wave feminist critiques, to the parallel development of feminist critiques and postmodernism, and then moves to a survey of the rich pluralism of contemporary feminism. Its appreciation of audience, inclusiveness, and interpersonal caring is noted.

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Because of their pluralistic roots, feminist critiques result in a highly diverse corpus. Ecological feminists highlight earth cultures and natural preservation; socialist feminists seek to reveal oppression, achieve economic equity, and embrace non-hierarchical sharing; standpoint feminists endorse empirical studies of local narratives constructed at the margins of society;¹ contemporary feminists oppose the dichotomous approach of essentialist feminists who believe language is gender based.² Feminist critiques of the legal system call for inclusion of personal narratives as evidence and punishment of offensive performative utterances. As Foss, Griffin and Foss have made clear, "Feminist perspectives are numerous, not easily categorized, and not mutually exclusive" (1997, 118). What they have in common is the search for how gender is constructed and what that means for the rights of women. Unfortunately, these differences and divisions have reduced the impact of feminism on rhetorical theory and the criticism of public address.

This essay not only celebrates feminism's diversity, it attempts to demonstrate that while Marxist and postmodern perspectives help us read recent feminist critiques, one should take into account the fact that contemporary feminist critiques have moved a step beyond these stands to embrace a multiperspectival approach which has important implications for rhetorical theory and criticism. This study proceeds in several stages. First, it traces the echoes of Marxism in some feminist critiques and movements. Second, it examines the parallels between some feminist critiques and postmodernism. Third, the study reviews major contemporary feminist critiques to demonstrate their diversity by way of building to a multiperspectival characterization of feminism.

In the course of this study, I hope to demonstrate that the feminist critiques have significant implications for rhetorical theory and criticism. Feminist criticism has moved beyond Marxism and parallels with postmodernism to posit a multi-voiced critique of the social order and a woman's place in it. As Dow (1995) and others have made clear, this development of critiques makes a unified theory of feminism nigh unto impossible. However, by picking up various threads from these critiques and readings, it is possible to deduce contributions of these different contemporary feminist approaches to rhetorical theory and criticism.

First, those critiques which build on Marxist and postmodern critical theories endorse a fluid discourse that points out the dangers of hierarchies, of linear thinking, and of assuming that logic and science, particularly technology, can solve our problems. These critiques are skeptical of grand narrative, preferring local or personal narratives from which truths can be induced. They ferret out "false consciousness," particularly the

masculine and Enlightenment "false consciousnesses" because of the damage they have done to women.

Second, those critiques which see gender as constructed by discourse attempt to root out masculine biases in word choice, metaphor, labels, and the like. The impact on semantic usage has been significant as has the rhetorical implications of gender based language. In fact, a whole segment of "politically correct" dialogue and discourse flows from the efforts of feminists to cleanse the arena of linguistic possibilities of its masculine biases.

Third, some feminist critiques seek to prevent reason from dominating the search for truth; instead spiritualism and emotion, to name just two alternatives, are given new influence. Like the postmodernist, some feminists recognize the failure of reason and science to solve societies problems. The optimism of Hegel has given way to the cynicism of world wars, civil wars, and holocausts. To transcend such cynicism and find new solutions to old problems, some feminists respect such emotions as empathy to break through to new truths, while others embrace a rhetoric of spirituality that leads to an appreciation of the rhetorical corridors to transcendence (Smith, 2000).

Fourth, some feminist critiques attempt to endorse a new kind of forensic speaking. Whether it be the use of situated, local, and/or personal narratives for evidence in the court room, or the call for treating certain phrases as performative utterances, feminist legal theory would reconfigure forensic speaking to take into account many of the postmodern themes of Foucault and Lyotard (See Sawiki, 1991). Such an undertaking also benefits from the "strong objectivity" of Harding's theory by grounding its evidence in reality and recognizing that social knowledge is constructed. The implications for research into connections between rhetoric and the law are significant.

Fifth, the feminist sensitivity to audience uncovers the power equation in communicative settings and more directly engages and includes audience members. Foucault's (1980) critique is often used to explore the relationship of power and knowledge to demonstrate that by keeping important information from others one participates in a kind of enslavement. Tuchman (1978) studies how the latter has worked in the news media to symbolically annihilate women. She focuses on how the media rhetorizes, if you will, news with a masculine bias. In essence she asks, How can we free women from the tyranny of media messages limiting their lives to hearth and home? Feminist rhetorical scholars have answered this question by dialoguing with audience members, putting speakers on an equal par with their audiences, and calling for more inclusiveness in public address. In like manner, Foss, Griffin and Foss call for an invitational rhetoric that is "built on a new set of values. . ." (1997, 119). Foss and Foss (1994) call for an open ideological approach that invited participation and inclusion while examining feminism's re-definition of evidence.

Sixth and related, some feminists infuse the public realm with consideration of interpersonal situations and relationships. The emphasis on the interpersonal brings to light the intimate, which means that feminist rhetoric focuses on different issues than masculine rhetoric. The importance of caring relationships also affects a speaker's relationship with her/his audience while at the same time empowering those who seek caring relationships or care giving. Blankenship and Robson (1995, 361) claim that the feminine style is different than the masculine because the masculine seeks power for itself, while the feminine seeks it to empower others. However, the foregrounding of interpersonal communication establishes a rhetoric of difference that may exclude those not part of the experiential group (Flores, 1996) or include the outsider who empathizes. Lorde (1984), for example, emphasizes empathy and equality, and thereby embodies the oppositions within its own ranks. Collins (1998) urges black women to use their position as "outsiders within" to reject imposed hierarchies and take up new positions that they define and determine.

These six contributions to rhetorical theory and criticism are born of an assessment of the multiperspectival approach of feminist criticism. To understand its evolution, it is important to see how it grew out Marxist criticism and paralleled postmodern theory. After an examination of those two nurturing pools, this study will move to specific feminist perspectives to reinforce the case for a multiperspectival orientation to feminism and its contributions to rhetorical theory and criticism.

The Marxist Perspective

Karl Marx adapted Hegel's dialectic to material forces in society to demonstrate how the forces of production shape culture. Marx was particularly concerned with the hidden forces behind society's ideological mask, or false consciousness. To construct his methodology, he replaced Hegel's "national spirit" with "historical materialism" of Ludwig Feuerbach. Marx then used his method to spin out a meta-narrative of societal progress in which the forces of capital, labor, production, and land were responsible for the twists and turns of history.

Marx believed history was "determined" by changes in the relationship of production and consumption, and consumption was often a product of rhetorical pressures imposed by ideologies, which created a "false consciousness." These ideologies were an outgrowth of the material interests of those in power and could be revealed as false by comparing them to the material realities of the world. Marx viewed ideology as the mask that had to be penetrated, using a dialectical method to reveal the "real" causes of material conditions in the world (see, for example, [Aune, 1994](#)). The strength of Marx's ability to defend his position is evident in his refutation of Pierre Proudhon, who believed owning property was theft, Mikhail Bakunin, who believed in Communism but not in centralization, and Ferdinand Lassalle, who advanced an "iron law of wages."

A classic example of an early feminist critique that emerged from Marxist ideological explorations is the one undertaken by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949). Her philosophical treatise argued that gender is largely constructed by political and social forces, and thus, can be changed but only if feminine voices are allowed to enter into the dialectical process. Following from de Beauvoir, a host of feminist critiques swelled into the feminist movement of the late '60s. As Spitzak and Carter (1987) explain, this movement of empowerment became a complex process in the 1970s that used an awakening of selfhood as a touchstone.

Regardless of perspective, the feminist movement, as Offin (1990) argues, improved women's lives in an ever-changing culture. The movement's emphasis on raising the consciousness of women brought a new understanding of their condition. MacKinnon, a self-described "radical feminist," writes that "consciousness raising is the major . . . theory of social change of the women's movement" (1982, 515; see also 1989). Feminist critics determined who was responsible for their oppressive condition and sought to elevate women to prominent places in the vocational world to serve as models for others. In short, dialectical feminists became movement feminists who often used a Marxist approach to argue that women had been unfairly defined by their tasks (labor) – whether in the home as "housewives" or in the workplace as "secretaries." They not only called for equality between genders throughout society but asked for a "space" of their own.

In her *Feminist Mystique*, Betty [Friedan](#), for example, described the family as far from a shelter for women and advocated converting the home into a feminist niche in space and time. Using a Marxist analysis to break through false consciousness, she argued that the media assigned a persona to women in order to keep them in the service of capitalism. In the 50s, 60s, and early 70s, an analysis the evening news, situation comedies, magazines, or almost any other medium demonstrates the hegemonic rhetoric of assigning a woman to the home to raise the children and provide psychological support for the husband.

The next generation of feminists, best represented by Margaret Benston, Evelyn Reed, and Zillah Eisenstein, alter the Marxist approach in significant ways. Reed began her analysis in 1971 by tying women's liberation to Marxist politics. Then writing with Hansen (1986), Reed rejected Friedan's feminism by arguing that women's problems can only be solved by a socialist revolution. She analyzed the exploitation of women in the fashion marketplace. Benston (1989) relied on economic analyses of women's problems in society and assessed the impact of feminism on research methods. Eisenstein developed a theoretical approach that builds on and yet refines Marx. She (1984) called for sexual equality, which she saw as the major crisis in liberalism.

In terms of theory and method, the feminist critiques continue to evolve in terms of their relationship with to the Marxist dialectic. Though claiming not to be Marxists, Foss, Griffin, and Foss talk in his terms: "Our primary goal as feminists is to transform the ideology of oppression that characterizes most human

relationships and Western culture in general" (1997, 129). Downey has taken the dialectical approach of Marx and Bakhtin as revised by Kenneth Burke to search for the "both/and quality" in conflicts (1997, 140-41). In her review of feminist rhetorical perspectives, she argues that the "dialectical feminist assumptions enunciated here, admittedly are idealized ones that have yet to realize their potential" (1997, 148). MacKinnon uses this same rhetorical tactic; her 1993 work examines pornography as a classic case of exploitation of the female class. For all of these writers, the material base of male domination derived from control of women's production is the thesis that must fall to the feminist anti-thesis. Working women must no longer be subjected to a double shift: one on the job, and one at home as "housewife."

However, not all Marxist-based feminism built on standard Marxist theory. Many feminists endorsed local and personal narratives that break with the meta-narrative of Marx's dialectical materialism. Hathaway carried that break into the realm of objective science when she argued that "objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibilities" (1988, 581.) She claimed that scientific transcendence separates the subject from its object thereby reducing the subject's sense of responsibility for actions taken. In the process, she re-shaped feminist perspectives on epistemology and ethics.

The Postmodern Perspective

While Marxism preceded the contemporary feminist critiques, many of them developed along side postmodernism. That is why an understanding of the postmodern perspective is important to reading contemporary feminist critiques. The play between postmodernism and feminism is subtle, but readily discernable. Allow me to begin with Jean-Francois Lyotard's shift from the study of consciousness to the study of language. Within the study of language, he moves from structuralism to a relativist, post-structural approach. Lyotard begins his post-structural analysis with narrative, arguing that "master narratives" are giving way to local narratives, which make universal rules about language almost impossible.³ In this way he not only buttresses the position of feminists, he develops a theory of language that must be built on more specialized, localized arguments that can only be found in micro-cultures.

Lyotard claims that an argument cannot be separated from its sponsors whether they be institutional structures, such as the church, or cultural formations, such as ecological groups. They influence the editing process by which knowledge is reported, giving it a contextual aspect that we should not ignore. Like Jacques Derrida, Lyotard believed that nothing was out of context, it was simply in a different context that proper deconstructing could reveal. For example, technology has become a God-term which creates a context in which "the true, the just, or the beautiful" are edited out (1984, 44).

The pluralism of postmodernism can be seen in Richard Rorty's development of a theory to engage in and take account of the "conversation" of various participants in fragmented locations (1979, 377). Rorty claims that ideas are neither noumenal, as Plato claimed, nor rationally unified, as Kant claimed, nor a reflection of nature, as the Romantics claimed; instead *ideas are the constructions of human beings in a social context*. Only indigenous and parochial criteria for validity are able to formulate a "polytheism of values." To create such a tolerance, Foucault posited "a glance" that converts argumentative unity into something diffuse, dispersed, and multiple (1972, 139-64). Furthermore, for Foucault, power is an inherent part of social relations. He describes his accounts as genealogies, which include the detailed rediscovery of struggles, an attack on meta-narratives and other tyrannizing discourses, and the recovery of fragmented, marginalized, local, and specific knowledge.

Jacques Derrida criticized dialectical logic for imposing an exclusive structure on what should be seen as multiplicity. Arguing that any attempt to sustain a unity in philosophy is doomed to failure, Derrida dreamt of "the innumerable . . . a desire to escape the combinatory . . . to invent incalculable choreographies" (Derrida & McDonald, 1982, 76). It may be too glib to say that Derrida's dance is Foucault's performance, but both do prefer subjective creativity to rational objectivity in assessing the world and both are rabidly multiperspectival. As Derrida wrote, "it is not certain that what we call language or speech acts can ever be exhaustively determined by an entirely objective science or theory" (1988, 118). His attack on such structuralists as Saussure and Levi-Strauss is well known as is belief in the metaphorical nature of even scientific discourse. Derrida's brand of deconstructionism feeds on polysemy thereby multiplying possible

interpretations of texts and inspiring multiperspectival readings.

However, we can re-contextualize the fragments into a historical context. Or we could, using Lyotard's "pragmatics" of language, unearth the "differend" between each side. In either case, the re-contextualization of Derrida and the "pragmatics" of language of Lyotard are much more rhetorical than structuralist theory because Lyotard's and Derrida's theories are so much more connected with real, immediate, and local audiences, which provides a strong parallel with feminist criticism. It is not difficult to understand why feminists who believe gender is constructed would be attracted to postmodernists who believe that reality is constructed socially.

The project for Lyotard became the discovery of the differences between various viewpoints, and then the articulation of those differences as "case conflicts" (*differends*) in which "one side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy" (1988, xi.) This tolerance eliminates the possibility of pre-determined judgments, those fore-ordained by myth, hierarchical structures, or social milieu. Lyotard calls for respecting all disputants' positions in a conflict and would engage only in "temporary contracts." The same tolerance permits many conflicting views to surface in society and also leads to a multiplicity of theories built from the new openness.

Lyotard suggests that each side in a dispute should have its claims treated "as if" they were true so that they can be evaluated reflexively in contemporary culture. In this way, Lyotard hoped to avoid the possible tyrannizing effects of metaphysical claims and laws. Obviously, his system comes with a price. It requires society to de-prioritize many values that provide stability, security, and order. It requires others to let go of their identities. And it tolerates the voices of hate and evil that frequently enter into differends. Lyotard builds a marketplace of ideas in which any sentiment will be tolerated as long as others are allowed to combat it.

The localization of feminist narratives in person, place, and standpoint led to postmodernism echoes in feminist writings. Walker claims that the "postmodern feminist critic is almost certain to practice her trade in defiance of authority, often proceeding polyvocally herself and rarely claiming that a unified, coherent, and transcendental subjectivity lies behind the text. . ." (1990, 554). Fraser and Nicholson cite the many similarities between postmodernism and feminism:

Both have offered deep and far-reaching criticisms of institutional philosophy. Both have elaborated critical perspectives on the relation of philosophy to the larger culture. . . . [B]oth have sought to develop new paradigms for social criticism which do not rely on traditional philosophical underpinnings. . . . They have tried to rethink the relation between philosophy and social criticism so as to develop paradigms of criticism without philosophy (1990, 19; see also Flax, 1990, 40).

Both movements share a profound skepticism of generalized claims and both contribute new ways of looking at rhetorical theory, though postmodernism tends to highlight the dangers of modernist philosophy and feminist critiques tend to focus on social criticism.

Hartsock, for example, warns feminists to avoid postmodernism because it is "a dangerous approach for any marginalized group to adopt" (1990, 160). She argues that just when women were given a voice through feminism, it was taken away by postmodernism. She believes that the ill repute in which postmodernism is held in some circles will tarnish the feminist approach. On the other hand, reflecting Derrida's call for multiplicity, Condit uses postmodernism to overcome a dichotomy generated by gender. "*Dichotomy feminism*," she writes, "portrays male and female activities and ways of being as radically separate from one another and assigns rhetoric to the realm of the male" (emphasis hers, 1997, 92). Yet Condit and others warn about postmodernism's masculine language style and advocacy of disruption and resistance. Bonnie Dow (1995) contributes to this debate by arguing that Foss' essentialist approach is problematic and that unified representations of "feminism" are unfounded and misrepresentations.

Others are more sanguine about aligning themselves with the postmodern rejection of universal,

transcendent, and/or abstract objectivism. Balbus (1982), Chodorow (1978), Meisenhelder (1989) and Benhabib (1990) argue that logical positivism is the ultimate end of Kant's intellection -- that which cannot be objectively verified is "non sense." This modernist tenet has contributed to an ideology of scientism that privileges the masculine bias: that knowledge is based in objectivity and reason, that it is discovered not created, that it is a reflection of nature, not society. Universal objectivity allows one to stand aside, to be uninvolved, and, worst of all, to objectify others -- to make women into objects, objects of sex, objects of adoration, objects of scorn.

In particular, Benhabib's quarrel with the modernists resides in their "order of representations in our consciousness (ideas or sensations); the signs through which these 'private' orders were made public, namely words, and that of which our representations were represented and to which they referred" (1990, 110). She argues that knowledge can be obtained subjectively through emotionality. We can learn by feeling, a distinctly non-modernist belief.

The postmodern perspective also fostered a gender diversity perspective that is an outgrowth of "gender deconstructionists," and "third wave" feminists, those following the more revolutionary and demonstration oriented second wave feminists of the 60s and 70s (see, for example, Anzaldúa, 1987; hooks, 1989; Butler, 1990; Moi, 1985). They see neither man nor woman as isolated ontologically, and prefer a much more differentiated view at the individual as opposed to the sexual level.

Postmodernism protests the unitary, conformist, and hierarchical nature of "modernist" rationalism, which posited a systematic division of knowledge into discrete categories. Postmodernism "rejects modern assumptions of social coherence and notions of causality in favour of multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation, and indeterminacy" (Best & Kellner, 1991, 4). From performance to criticism and from criticism to theory, postmodernism has evolved into a complex movement with many offshoots. For postmodernists, when speech is examined as "performance," it reveals who is really speaking, and for whom the speaker is speaking; in the speaking situation, subjects "constitute" themselves. As they perform, they are "inventing themselves" using "patterns . . . which are proposed, suggested, and imposed" by their cultures, societies and social groups (Foucault, 1988, 11). The postmodern society requires postmodern theories inclusive of disruption of modernist patterns and deconstruction of texts revealing their derivative nature and their relationship with various contexts. (Best & Kellner, 1991, 3). Postmodernism presupposes a "modern" philosophy, which was an outgrowth of the enlightenment thinking of such philosophers as Francis Bacon, John Locke, Rene Descartes, and Immanuel Kant. Modernists' optimism collapsed in this century with the discoveries of Sigmund Freud and the advent of horrific wars. Science and reason working together failed to solve the world's problems, expand democracy, or avoid human made catastrophes.

Postmodernists recognize that we live in the midst of a fragmented culture marked by new forms of knowledge and information as a result of computer and other media technology, increased cultural fragmentation, respect for diversity, changes in the experience of time and space, subjective inquiries, and a dissolution of established social orders. Michel Foucault, for example, rejected Marx's rational dialectic for a darker view global persuasion: "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination" (1977, 151). He condemned the dialectical "blackmail" of Enlightenment thinking because there "was no external position of certainty, no universal understanding . . . beyond history and society" (Rabinow, 1984, 3,4, 43).

Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) traced the role that speech plays in maintaining relationships that are systemically unequal. "Official knowledge" gives those in power the ability to keep the marginalized in place. Foucault went on to demonstrate that power networks surround and hold people down by imposing limits on speaking situations (1978, 100). While he acknowledged that power could create knowledge, it was located in "the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production" (1978, 94). Those who have knowledge have power, and knowledge is often encoded into a language of its own.

In "The Order of Discourse" (1981), Foucault examined institutional propensities to prioritize

communication. In like manner, Foss, Griffin, and Foss claim that traditional "rhetorical theory is patriarchal in that it privileges the interests and concerns of white, heterosexual men. Patriarchy is a system of power relations that places the communicative practices of these rhetors at the center and devalues and marginalizes those who are not white, heterosexual, and male" (1997, 128). The feminist critique of power, hierarchies, and owned knowledge nicely complements Foucault's theories.

Gender Based Communication

While Marxist and postmodern perspectives provide an orientation to feminist critiques that helps interpreters read them, many of the feminist critiques have provided fresh values and insights (Capra, 1986, 11-12; Roberts, 1976; Foss & Foss, 1983; Campbell & Jamieson, 1990). If the first achievements of the second wave of feminism were unity, empowerment, and consciousness raising, the next wave was to identify gender based problems in language. Marxist radical feminists such as Shulamith Firestone alleged that various cultural "norms" were clearly "gender based" (1970; see also Pascall, 1986). For the most part, from the beginning of time, males had defined truth, beauty, love, and justice. This "androcentric" domination had, to use the Marxists term, a hegemonic effect: success meant conformance to masculine ideals which were often patriarchal (Mouffe, 1983). The values and characteristics associated with the feminine gender were deprecated, while those associated with the masculine gender were privileged (Steeves & Smith, 1987; Flax, 1990, 52).

The problem began in the "ideology" of Freud, who portrayed the projection of the psyche (the persona) in sexist ways. Ironically, like Marx, he provided a master narrative. It essentialized the genders in damaging ways. The masculine is competitive and judgmental, while the feminine is cooperative and questioning. The masculine is hierarchical and permanent, while the feminine endorses equality and change. The masculine is individualistic and industrious, the feminine is interdependent and passive. The masculine is logical, product-oriented and linear, the feminine is irrational (spiritual, emotional), process-oriented and cyclical. The masculine seeks power and status in the hierarchy, the feminine seeks collective gain. Many feminists embraced Freud's understanding of feminine and masculine personas because it gave weight to their critiques. Karen Foss put it this way when discussing "male and female realms:" "Women's reality is characterized by such features as a sense of interdependence and connection with others and with the world, . . . an egalitarian use of power, and a focus on process rather than product" (1989, 1-2). Sociologist Carol Gilligan (1982) says that one root of these linguistic differences occurs at age four when boys begin to break their dependence on their mothers, while girls immerse themselves in intimacy and empathy.⁴ Using case studies and attempting to show how different values and social norms develop, Gilligan concludes that women are defined by their ability to care, connect, and respond to others.

Other feminists, however, demonstrated that Freud's and other's theories elevated masculine over feminine values in their linguistic structures because men were the agenda setters, dictionary writers, and reward givers (Rosaldo, 1974, 17-42). Gearheart (1979), Humm (1986), Braidotti (1991), Hekman (1995) and Spitzak & Carter (1987) make clear that the association of certain values with one gender and not the other is a strategy of suppression. The culture needs to understand that since women experience things differently than men, privileging a male understanding of experience prejudices society against a female understanding while at the same time forcing women to live in a world dominated by masculine values. Using a post-structuralist perspective and developing this line of thinking into the 1990s, Biesecker (1992) criticizes the practice of rhetorical criticism for being patriarchal. If masculine understandings predominate in communication, then feminine understandings are marginalized.

To remedy this situation, some feminists reflect Lyotard's position by calling for a rhetoric of "difference," one that rejects masculine hegemony and embraces a group-oriented discourse built around a unity among the marginalized (Schwichtenberg, 1993). Among gender-based critiques, some argued that communication differences were biologically driven,⁵ while others argue they are psychological, reflecting a Jungian influence as modified in the work of Alice Miller.⁶ Such a position, as Condit makes clear, leads to gender dichotomy which needs to be tempered by postmodern multiperspectivalism.⁷

Assessing the Feminine in Public Affairs

Feminist scholarship can provide a grounding for new examinations of women's roles in public affairs and public rhetoric. Early moves in that direction occur in the work of Karlyn Campbell, who, like Freud, argued that archetypal values can inhere in male or female speakers and reveal either a masculine or feminine genre of speaking style. However, Campbell also claimed that "conflicting demands of the podium" caused a feminist adaptation that was unique (1989, 12; see also Campbell, 1973, 1986; Dow & Tonn, 1993). Blankenship and Robson (1995) explored the "feminine style" in political discourse as it emerges from women's lived experiences.

Using Campbell's and Blankenship's theory, it is possible to construct a continuum running from the masculine to the feminine in terms of persona, but avoiding gender essentialism. A critic could place speakers toward one end or the other and justify that placement in terms of the language used in their speeches. The masculine and feminine would become personas *separated from physical genders*. The feminine side of George Bush or his speech writers called for a "kinder, gentler America" in his acceptance speech at the 1988 convention, which was otherwise marked by the drop dead language of Clint Eastwood. Bush's subsequent calls for a "team effort" with Congress also represent a feminine side to his rhetoric. His valorization of competition, playing by the rules, and working hard represent the masculine side of his rhetorical persona. Margaret Thatcher, the long term Conservative Prime Minister of Great Britain, moved toward the masculine end of the continuum when valuing of work, individualism, and hierarchies. Her decision to go to war with Argentina was her most masculine moment. Promotion of competition among her cabinet members, use of masculine metaphors, and valuing of individual achievements and objectivity won her the title of "iron butterfly." As we have seen, those feminists influenced by the postmodern movement attempt to complicate this continuum even further to provide for a more differentiated approach to any single individuals' rhetorical style.⁸

Instead of seeking equal treatment of personas, some feminists argue that feminine values that contrast with masculine values would improve society if only they were allowed to predominate. Many of these feminist step beyond Marxism and postmodernism to explore a unique feminine perspective. Starhawk, for example, advances a notion of spirituality that rejects both the materialism of Marx and the prejudice against meta-narratives of Foucault. She writes that "a commitment to the Goddess, to the protection, preservation, nurturing, and fostering of the great powers of life as they emerge in every being" is part of the "Craft" of being (1987, 8). She calls for a recognition of the "inherent value of each person and of the plant, animal, and elemental life that makes up the earth's living body . . ." (1987, 314). Her promotion of goddess-centered cultures certainly enhances multiculturalism and diversity in feminism, while searching for transcendent unifying forces and themes in public rhetoric.

To reform society, Wood (1994) and Noddings (1984) appropriate the inter-relational existentialists' rejection of the modernist model. Wood and Noddings explore human connections by arguing that they are more valued by women than men. Echoing Karl Jaspers and Martin Buber, Wood and Noddings fuse the call for equality and caring with a request that humans build responsible partnerships not as "I" alone, but as "I" in a series of dependent relationships with others. The notion of "goodness" should be derived from concrete relationships, not abstract intellection. Acts of caring teach the most about others and develop the strongest sense of tolerance. Such a privileging of the feminist value of caring infuses public realms with interpersonal dimensions.

Standpoint Feminism

An outgrowth of feminist values and contemporary research into public policy generation can be found in the theories of "standpoint" feminists such as Hartsock (1990), Fraser (1989), and Harding (1990). The feminist standpoint emerges from an examination of the conflict between male and female life activities in our culture often from the perspective of the marginalized group. As Harding says, "[W]e start our thought from the perspective of lives at the margin" (1991, 269). Since male and female *experiences* are different, they operate from different standpoints, which affect their attitudes and communication (Hartsock, 1983, 305; Harding, 1991, 128-29). Harding (1990, 98) endorses a localized and concrete feminist empiricism ("strong objectivity") to observe and analyze this problem, and to undermine "Enlightenment assumptions." Hartsock, on the other hand, employs the relativity of postmodernism to explore gender in a way that avoids

abstract individualism and seeks case studies, actual locales, and narratives. And Fraser attempts to keep feminist analysis focused on real contexts such as the workplace or the marketplace, a la' Lyotard. Hallstein (1999, 35) puts this theory in Foucauldian terms: "Knowledge is socially located and arises in social positions that are structured by power relations." However in so doing, she reveals the Hegelian side of this postmodern approach; that Hegel's investigation of slave and master revealed their different standpoints links standpoint critiques to the Marxist tradition.

Together these theorists contend that due to women's past and continued marginalization from the political system, they have a unique perspective on it, one quite different from white males who have participated in politics since the founding of the country. These preferences can be revealed in several ways, all of which have rhetorical dimensions. First, using Harding's (1991) "strong objectivity", theorists have completed analyses based on observation of the workplace. The case for change is created with the collected evidence.

Second, feminism has employed contextual narratives--for example, stories in the workplace--to explicate the values that are contained in it. This method has the advantage of having a natural "congruence" because it is situated in a familiar and verifiable environment.

Third, from the feminist standpoint, some, such as Adrienne Rich (1986, 57), "re-vision" the situation; that is, they re-create a context by seeing through new lenses and using new critical methods to find larger or hidden texts. One the best practitioners of this approach is Collins (1998), who asks black women to overcome their predilection for self-sacrifice, particularly to protect emasculated black men, and model new roles for the next generation.

Feminist Legal Theory

Building on standpoint theory, the feminist legal community has called for new sources of evidence to provide critiques of the legal system. As Nedelsky has written, "We need to see the new conceptions of self that are emerging in feminist rethinking of legal rights" (1993, 1286). Reflecting a strain of the feminist movement that seeks an incorporation of its values, West writes, "feminist legal theorists need to show through stories the value of intimacy--not just to women, but to the community--and the damage done--again, not just to women but to the community--by the law's refusal to reflect that value" (1988, 65). Smart (1995) problematizes this point when she analyzes feminist legal theory. She claims that feminist narratives often use patriarchal terms and values to make their point. These narratives are "confining" and often support current laws instead of reforming them (1995, 187). She calls for treating women more as individuals and less as entities that are hegemonically bound together in gender.

She warns feminists to avoid conspiracy theories over the law. She points out that men are subject to the laws and often convicted under them. Feminists who assume that there is a conspiracy assume that they can identify male special interests. Smart argues, however, that they have failed in this endeavor; feminist conspiracy theory ignores class struggles that transcend gender. She writes, "the idea that law simply serves the interest of men against women and that legislation and legal practice is commonly guided by these principles does not stand up to closer examination" (1995, 142).

So while West sees that the narrative power of rhetoric can advance the cause of equality and tolerance for women, Smart points to the fly in the ointment: narratives need to be "congruent" with an audience's perception of reality if the story is to be persuasive. That adaptation, however, may distort legal rhetoric to the masculine world view. Standpoint feminism, particularly as espoused by Hartsock, calls for a grounding of narratives in objective world environments that overcome this difficulty.

Other legal thinkers built critiques based on the notion of "performative utterances" borrowed from ordinary language philosophers. Using this theory of speech acts, some legal feminists have argued that verbal rape parallels actual rape and therefore should be punished in civil court as a tort. The leading strategist among these thinkers is Catharine MacKinnon (1982; see also Dworkin, 1981-2 and Eisenstein, 1988) of the University of Michigan Law School, who begins by debunking the modernist legal myth that laws are a reflection of and discovered in nature. Like Rorty, she sees ideas as constructions of humans. MacKinnon

(1990, 223) goes so far as to argue that treating each person as an "individual" is a way to "mask" and "obscure" collective realities and to defeat the unity of women.⁹ She attacks the objectivist approach to the law as dehumanizing. On this point, she is supported by Weedon, who employs a post-structural approach to "throw light on how gender power relations are constituted, reproduced, and contested" (1987, vii). Weedon uses post-structuralism to deny the usefulness of "individual experience" in constructing civic virtue and turns to "socially constituted" frames "within discourse" (1987, 125).

MacKinnon (1993) advances her position in *Only Words* by narrowing her definition of actionable pornography to that which is "graphic sexually explicit materials that subordinate women through pictures and words" that are intended to make a profit, and *can be shown to have resulted in damage to women* (1993, 22).¹⁰ Since words are considered acts when they result in sexual harassment, they should also be considered acts when they degrade women (1993, 45). In both cases, "social inequality is substantially created and enforced--that is, *done*--through words and images" (1993, 13). It is one thing to protect pure speech, but quite another to protect the action of the speech when it violates the rights of others: "To express eroticism is to engage in eroticism, meaning to perform a sex act. To say it is to do it, and to do it is to say it" (1993, 33). In this way, MacKinnon brings us full circle to Lyotard's and Foucault's theory that speech is performance, and performative utterances are reality.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that various feminist critiques emerge from Marxist theory and complement postmodern thinking. Feminism has evolved multiperspectivally to seek to discover the ways by which the masculine value system has been privileged, seek to give at least equal status to feminine values or in some cases to demonstrate their superiority to the masculine, seek to rid the language of sexism, and seek to develop new theories that use gender as a way to open rhetoric in general and the law in particular to different scholarly approaches. These critiques provide a "re-visioning" of culture so that male-centered premises and values can be rethought and/or replaced, and have major implications for forensic speaking, speaking in public forums, and audience analysis.

In summary, it should be clear that multiperspectival feminism stresses the inductive by generating theory from personal cases, cultural narratives and individual standpoints. This feminism employs real life experiences, lived experiences that ground the present critiques of so many feminists, rather than using transcendent narratives and/or abstract theories of modernist philosophy. Campbell demonstrated that since women did not have "publicly shared experiences," they spoke of "private, concrete, individual experience" (1973, 79). Today, that approach is transformed into an egalitarianism which includes more telling examples and equalizes the relationship between the speaker and the audience. The personal has become public. The feminine style, perhaps best demonstrated by Elizabeth Dole at the 1996 Republican Convention and Oprah Winfree on her talk show, is much more inclusive of *the audience* in terms of give and take and much more sensitive to the audience in terms of empathy.

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Endnotes

1. See, for example, Foss, Foss, & Griffin (1999). Even within this substrata of feminist critiques there is a great deal of difference. Davis-Popelka and Wood (1997), and Hallstein (1999) go so far as to suggest that there is no solid standpoint theory.
2. For an example of rhetorical theorists attempting to derive a rhetorical theory from a single feminist writer see Foss and Griffin's (1992) comparison of Starhawk to the standards of Kenneth Burke.
3. See Rudd, Dobos, Vogl, and Beatty (1997) for example.
4. Gilligan's research has been criticized by a number of feminist scholars. Wood claims that Gilligan's work is based on "precarious generalization" and moves "from limited and unrepresentative data to quite broad generalizations of women . . ." (1992, 3-4).
5. Biologically based studies of language can be traced back at least to Susanne K. Langer (1960).
6. See Steeves. The work of Margaret Mead, Anke Erhardt, Patricia Goldman, Sarah Hardy, Annelisa Korner, Eleanor

Maccoby and many female scientists support the view that sex roles are not learned but are biological.

7. Condit, (1997).
8. See particularly Condit.
9. MacKinnon played an instrumental role in the Butler case in Canada which helped re-write obscenity rules there.
10. In the book, MacKinnon reveals her influence on the evolving nature of obscenity laws in Canada.