

The One or the Other?

Textual Analysis of Masculine Power and Feminist Empowerment

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ABSTRACT. Psychological writing, both theoretical and empirical, is assumed to exist free of the social dynamics of the psychologist who produced it. If anything like social power or control is contained within psychological writings, it is presumed to be an acknowledged feature of the experimental design or a manipulated attribute of the subject-participants. However, close analysis of these writings reveals a rarely acknowledged yet elaborate system of power relations. In the present study, discourses of power and empowerment are defined and compared in two different forms of psychological writing. The first form stresses the perspective of the observer, employs the male gaze, is relatively unreflexive, embraces the experimental method and attempts to centralize knowledge among a few while marginalizing a mass of unknowing others. The second form is grounded in women's attempts to voice their own and other women's concerns. It is watchful of men, advocates a decentralization of power, and tries to achieve understanding through dialogue.

Writing in psychology has been dominated by a reasoned, factual, objective discourse. The hegemony of this style in journals is so complete and such a familiar feature of the textual space of our field that its presence has become invisible to most of us. Close textual analysis, however, reveals a discourse constituted through highly refined and sometimes ritualized social relations of power. The hermeneutic investigation that follows locates these regular and sometimes peculiar aspects of texts within the psychological canon by contrasting them with a non-canonical heritage of writings which have at best always been at the periphery of the professional landscape. Without including such marginal texts it would be difficult to find a dialectical vantage-point from which to identify the power arrangements of traditional texts, simply because their perceptual hegemony of a point of view occludes other ways of seeing. In our habituation to a nomothetic method, we lose sight of its idiosyncratic features.

The present interpretive exercise features analysis of power as it ensues from gender relations. Other researchers have shown the centrality of gender in scientific practice (Haraway, 1990; Harding, 1987; Keller, 1985; Merchant, 1980) and its structural complexity in language (for instance, de Beauvoir, 1952; Marks and de Courtivron, 1981). Hélène Cixous (1981) has referred to this presence of power and gender in conventional discourse as '*marked writing*' and argued that it has privileged male status and excluded women. Cixous' position is that:

...until now, far more extensively and repressively than is ever suspected or admitted, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural—hence political, typically masculine—economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously (p. 249).

This writing, according to Cixous, exaggerates sexual opposition and creates a discursive world 'where woman has never *her* turn to speak. . . ' (p. 249). The present study develops the concept of marked writing but also includes texts where a 'masculine economy' is displaced. The analysis proceeds by looking at two forms of writing in psychology: the traditional masculine style which establishes the power of the psychologists, usually male, over the phenomena he is investigating, and an alternative feminist discourse which seeks to empower both the author and others. Hermeneutic analysis of the former would have been impossible without the latter, and we see that, in establishing their power as authorities, the rather typical male authors whose writings are considered here denied or tried to eliminate the sentient existence of others—particularly women.

Over the last two decades feminist psychologists have challenged conventional psychology and its underlying bias toward a masculine world-view. These challenges have taken many forms but the vast majority have focused on the methodological biases which either omit consideration of gender or serve to misrepresent women's experiences. As such, these critiques ensue from a perspective of 'feminist empiricism' (Harding, 1987; Morawski, 1990). The present study is grounded in another feminist perspective which, although sympathetic to the arguments of feminist empiricism, recognizes deeper structural bases of sexist practices: methodological biases are but one form of the androcentrism that informs metatheory, theory and all other research practices, including scientific writing. From this perspective, science itself is a male-oriented enterprise (Keller, 1985), and it becomes necessary to reconsider critically every facet of scientific work.

Situated within this more comprehensive feminist perspective, our study undertakes textual analysis of the gendered aspects of psychological writing. Scientific discourse comprises more than a mere telling of the data or reporting of methods. Once made a subject of systematic analysis,

scientific discourse has been found to function in additional ways: this discourse constructs the author and audience, privileges one interpretation of the experienced phenomena, denigrates scientists who claim other interpretations and persuades readers of the authenticity and pure objectivity of the report (Bazerman, 1988; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984).

The present study is informed by these studies of scientific discourse as well as by hermeneutic methods. Although gender appears in multiple forms in psychological works, no one manifestation of it is as pervasive as that of power relations constructed throughout the texts read here. This study is guided by feminist analyses of 'marked' writing and by theories of power, like that of Michel Foucault, which recognize power as a network of social relations and not as an individual attribute or status. In psychological writings, authorial power is constructed through discursive tactics, often taking the form of routinized and technical language. The play of these power relations is made apparent by comparing conventional psychological writings with unorthodox writings, in this case, feminist texts, where authorial power gives way to relations of empowerment.

The Dialectics of Textual Power

In studying power, Foucault advises that we examine 'the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with. . .its object, its target, its field of application' (1980, p. 97). Being a science which relies on journals, books and papers for most of its public transactions of knowledge, one of psychology's arenas of power is the text. By a careful reading of three rather typical psychological texts—Freud's 'Medusa's head', Mischel's 'Continuity and change in personality' and Nisbett and Wilson's 'Telling more than we know: Verbal reports on mental processes'—we show, following Foucault, how the power of an author over his subject(s) is systematically constructed; how in the dialectics of power—long ago analyzed by Hegel (1807/1967)—the possession of power produces fears that it will be lost; and how rationality, objectivity and facts are used as textual strategies that deny the relativity of the author's perspective. These tactics are used to privilege the author's position by associating him or her with traditions in the field which with the weight of convention, have become well-worn truths (for analysis of these conventions, see Latour, 1987).

The case of Freud's 'Medusa's head', to the contemporary reader, appears as an excessive example of authorial power. However, a review of Freud's textual strategies sensitizes us to the somewhat more subtle but nevertheless salient strategies used in more recent psychological writings. Freud's paper recalls an historical tradition which, as we shall see, has not been entirely forsaken. For similar reasons of locating the enduring

traditions of textual power and relations, and due to their prevalence in psychological writing, our study also gives relatively more attention to those traditions than to the emergent model of textual empowerment.

The Male Gaze

Kaplan (1983) has shown how in popular cinema the seemingly 'objective' camera is in actuality recording a male point of view. This is not simply because in film, as in psychology, men dominate the medium, but because in our society men, not women, are traditionally pictured as voyeurs or observers looking on at the acts of others while not participating. (This is of course also the traditional position of the scientist, see, for instance, Keller, 1985.) It is also because men are usually the heroes of a film's narrative and we see events and other characters, especially women, through male eyes. Finally, as audience members we imitate the film itself. As viewers we are voyeurs identifying—often regardless of our sex—with the male lead. We see the world the way he does.

In 'Medusa's head' (1922/1955/1940b) Freud analyzes why the 'decapitated head of Medusa is horrifying' (p. 273). Using a conventional psychoanalytic formula, he writes: 'To decapitate=to castrate. The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something. . . .[I]t occurs when a boy. . . catches sight of the female genitals. . . .' (p. 273). Here, in capsule form, is the 'male gaze' masquerading as universal objective vision. Without regard to gender, Freud analyzes why the headless Medusa is 'horrifying'. His interpretation requires that we see the event through his male eyes and identify not with the beheaded female in the scene but with the male. We are also asked to look with 'a boy' as he 'catches sight' of 'female genitals'. This is the narreme of voyeurism and a use of textual power that is as invisible to us as the act of watching a movie, for we rarely look at ourselves looking at movies or reading; and yet, without such a doubling of consciousness, which produces the self-and-social-consciousness that makes the habitual problematic, we simply cannot see what we are doing. Be the reader female or male, she or he has assumed the typical reading perspective which is masculine in its orientation—a male subject viewing a female object.

After establishing that the Medusa's hair is often represented by snakes, and that these snakes are phallic symbols that mitigate the horror of castration for the spectator, Freud continues: 'The sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone. Observe that we have here once again the same origin from the castration complex and the same transformation of affect! For becoming stiff means an erection' (p. 273). Notice the numerous textual tactics. In an essay dominated by visual description Freud tells us that 'the sight' makes the spectator 'stiff'. Then he directs us to 'observe', that is to look on as spectators and see, in a metaphoric sense, that in reaction to fears of castration, men become stiff.

That charge is emphasized by the most erect and ejaculatory of all punctuation: the exclamation point (!). This point is immediately followed by the exegesis 'becoming stiff means an erection'. The text is literally and graphically becoming an expression of Freud's ideas as the reader is drawn into his vision and excitement.¹

After this textual climax, Freud says that 'displaying the genitals' is an apotropaic act; he explains, 'What causes horror in oneself will produce the same effect upon the enemy against whom one is seeking to defend oneself.' His examples are Athena's display of the Medusa's head as an emblem to ward off men, and a passage from Rabelais where 'the Devil took to flight when the woman showed him her vulva' (p. 274). By Freud's definition of an apotropaic act—what frightens oneself will frighten another—both Athena and Rabelais' woman must find their own female genitals horrifying. But, if we attend to the gaze instead of the definition, we see that Freud is looking through the Devil's eyes at the woman, and through men's eyes at Athena's Medusa emblem. It is not women who are frightened by female genitalia, but men who are scared off. Apotropaic acts then seem to be sex specific; it is women's genitals that men find horrifying. Freud does not here speak of women's fears of the penis, in fact, for him, the penis is a symbol of reassurance. He says, 'the erect male organ also has an apotropaic effect. . . . To display the penis . . . is to say: "I am not afraid of you. I defy you. I have a penis"' (p. 274). For Freud the apotropaic act is no longer based in fear of seeing the dreaded object, but in pride of possessing the powerful object. This is the only place in this short essay where Freud uses the personal pronoun 'I', thereby melding textually his identity with those who possess and defiantly display the penis. Following Freud's textual perspective, we become caught in the male gaze. He requires us to view the female genitals with horror, but to join him in becoming heroic subjects defiantly displaying the penis.

The uses of power in this text, even with its excesses, deserve noting because they are a paradigm of masculinist discourse. The other, in this case women and their genitals, are made into an object of male observation; he the voyeur, she the victim. With centuries of convention to aid him, the author so controls the field of vision that he passes off a typical artistic and cinematic illusion as reality; that is, we do not see that our entire view of the phenomena is through an idiosyncratic perspective—the male gaze. The essay itself so completely displays a masculine textual position that it seems almost as if it, itself, is an apotropaic weapon warding off a powerful other.

Phallocentrism is a term generally used to describe perspectives and discourses which often pass as 'objective', but which are actually loose conglomerations of typically masculine virtues including those of distance, coldness, egocentrism, discomfort with intimacy and involvement, the desire to dominate and the reactive fears that one will be dominated (Griffin, 1978; Keller, 1985; Merchant, 1980). Freud's 'Medusa's head' could well be used to illustrate the term: looking at the world through male

eyes with the vision of the penis as the prized possession and weapon valued by all and the vagina as a threatened horror to one and all. That such a perspective is endemic to psychoanalysis is hardly a discovery. This reading prefaces the analyses to follow in order to sensitize us to a way of looking at the world that is so pervasive that its clues go unheeded. Thus, Freud's essay can be taken as a comic rendition of the paradigm; yet it signals the ways in which a deeply embedded bias in psychology continues to distort both theory and practice.

The Logomachinist

While Freud's 'Medusa's head' was dominated by themes of castration and gender warfare, Walter Mischel's 'Continuity and change in personality' (1969) is a more typical modern journal article. In it Mischel argues that to bring personology in line with quantitative data, thereby making it more objective, we must realize that personality inventories show very low retest correlations and that continuity in people's socioemotional traits has not been empirically demonstrated. He nevertheless holds that there is great cognitive consistency over time and concludes that personality research should join what was becoming the 'cognitive revolution' in psychology by turning to the more scientifically viable study of how people cognitively process their environments. However, interpretive scrutiny of Mischel's text uncovers an entirely different account. Mischel's work undercuts itself because latent within the background of the manifest work lies an elaborate subtext which reproduces one of the oldest stereotypes held by man: women are dangerously irrational creatures and men (when acting truly human) are cognitively consistent, rational and as predictable as machines. What Mischel recommends for emulation is what women often criticize about men: they are, as LeClerc writes about heroes, 'Always the same, the thinker, the logomachinist' (LeClerc, 1981, p. 85).

A detailed hermeneutic dissection of Mischel's article has been reported elsewhere (Steele, 1989); the results of that analysis are used here to highlight three essential elements in discourses of power and show how they interact with each other. These elements are: the authoring of authority, denigrating the power of others and warding off the return of the other.

In a field built on the social-class opposition between experimenters and subjects the power of the psychologist is increased at the cost of the subjects. Mischel, and, as we will see later, Nisbett and Wilson, establish their authorial authority—their privileged place as experts—by demeaning or diminishing the powers of their subjects. Mischel says that although most 'subjects' transform 'their seemingly discrepant behavior into a constructed continuity, making unified wholes out of almost anything' (1969, p. 1012), no such uniformities in socioemotional traits are seen in research: 'the consistency data on IBM sheets. . . probably would account for only a trivial portion of the variance' (p. 1012). In other words, there

are very low retest correlations on traits. There is for Mischel a tension between what subjects do or say—that is, finding consistency in their behaviors—and what data sheets representing subjects show: no such consistency exists. Mischel exercises his authorial power by asserting that the sheets are right, the subjects wrong. According to him, in so far as the subjects are numbers on ‘IBM sheets’, that is, objects of scientific reductionism, they are reliable. However, as sentient subjects, that is, beings capable of self-reflection and of constructing a personal history, they are untrustworthy.

Having denigrated the subjects, Mischel then valorizes the author, himself. In the very next paragraph he counters the desubjectification of others when he introduces and privileges himself as a special subject—the scientist who knows. He says, ‘I had’ the opportunity to review the ‘voluminous evidence’ on consistency, and that ‘In my appraisal, the overall evidence. . . shows the human mind to function like an extraordinarily effective reducing valve that creates and overturns the perception of continuity even in the face of. . . changes’ (p. 1013). Allying his ‘I’, his subjectivity, with the scientific evidence, he asserts that the human mind functions like a valve. Unaware of its contradictions, the text swings back and forth between self-enhancement and devaluing others. The valve simile, overworked in psychology, is used by Mischel to characterize what others do, although he seems to be unaware that it could have likewise caricatured the scientific enterprise and his own argument. Science reduces seeming phenotypic diversity to supposed genotypic similarity; the author here has reduced people to data on sheets, and centuries of philosophical speculation and decades of research to a simple mechanistic metaphor. An essential of power is this split consciousness—a rigorous denial of reflexivity. Power is enhanced by the ability to condemn in others the very basis of one’s own practice. If Mischel is correct then his own mind must perform like the reducing valve that is the essence of everyone’s mental equipment, and he too might be mistaken in constructing unity where what exists is diversity.

The mind-as-valve trope reappears several times in the article at strategic points where Mischel employs it both in a mechanistic denial of diversity and as a display of authority. By considering one of these critical points we can become sensitized to the particular ways in which power manifests itself textually. ‘It is essential for the mind to be a reducing valve’, Mischel asserts, for, ‘if it were not it might literally blow itself!’ (p. 1015). ‘Reducing valve’ is no longer a simple simile for the mind, it is now ‘essential’ that the mind *be* a reducing valve. There appears to be an implicit threat: believe this metaphor is actual or your mind will ‘blow itself’. One of the powers of language lies in our continual attempts to use it to overcome its own limitations. The word ‘literal’ screams actuality before one’s eyes, but careful reading discloses only a word trying to point beyond itself. Mischel joins in the excitement of his prose by assuming that

he is describing something literal, however, he has simply confused the symbolic and the real.

Having established the actuality of the mental reducing valve Mischel employs it to establish his power over others, specifically women. This move appears first in an apparently inconsequential example: he writes that, 'When we observe a woman who seems hostile and fiercely independent some of the time but passive, dependent, and feminine on other occasions, our reducing valve usually makes us choose between the two syndromes' (p. 1015). This introduction of women into a previously genderless article produces a number of perturbations. First it throws into question the positions of genders in the text. 'When we observe a woman' is a phrase that asks the reader to join the author in a typical male activity, 'girl watching'. Once this position of women is established the entire gender structure of the text is crystallized. It is genderless in the same way the generic 'he' or 'man' is used to stand for both males and females: it assumes that masculine experience and signifiers adequately characterize the experiences of both men and women (Miller & Swift, 1980). But, in actuality the text is structured with typically masculine values and interests: the certainty of thought; the fecklessness of emotions; the importance of reason and science; the valorization of machines; and finally the objectification of women.

For the author, the 'reducing valve' is the organ of choice when deciding what a woman is like. He continues by saying that because multiplicity is reduced to unity by the mind the woman will be seen as one of two things: 'She must be a really castrating lady with a facade of passivity—or perhaps she is a warm, passive-dependent woman with a surface defense of aggressiveness' (p. 1015). This fantasy woman who is such a threat to a mind that might blow itself if overstimulated has her power stripped from her by being made into a linguistic oxymoron: a 'castrating lady'. The common phrase is 'castrating bitch' or 'castrating woman', but Mischel creates the 'facade of passivity' he describes by substituting a genteel signifier for these earthier terms. 'Castrating lady', however, serves to establish his power by denying the woman the full force of being castrating by turning her into a 'lady'. Mischel thereby inverts the feared castration by metaphorically castrating (taking away of the power of) the woman. Further, the inversion enables him to propose seeing the woman in the reassuring traditionally feminine way as a 'warm, passive-dependent woman'.

Mischel has employed his mental machine in the same apotropaic way in which Freud displayed the penis: to defy others and protect the self. Mischel's instrument, then, is no simple mechanism, but is like a mind-penis-valve which enables men to protect themselves and their powers by transforming emotionally confusing, complex, threatening women who overstimulate them ('blow their minds') into ladies or traditionally feminine women.

Few readers in the late 1960s would have faulted Mischel for the masculine bias of his text, because at that time there was no such thing as masculine bias and Mischel was simply writing by the conventions of his day. However, even with this power of unseen patriarchal prejudice on his side, the briefest introduction of women into his text prompts deployment of the traditional weapons of phallalogocentrism to return women to a powerless status. Central to both Mischel's and Freud's establishing and maintaining their authorial powers is the creation of an other (women and subjects) who are continually placed in textual combat (or banished beyond it to the realm of objects). But, as further interpretation indicates, these others return, for without subjects there can be no masters (Hegel, 1807/1967).

Power and Knowledge

The relationship between Master and Bondsman which Hegel (1807/1967) used to characterize the complexities of self-consciousness—the experience of making one's awareness an object of one's own consciousness (or reflective awareness) is useful in illustrating the vicissitudes of power and knowledge in relations between experimenter and subject in psychological writing. Although a subject could be conceived of as one capable of self-knowledge, this is not how either Mischel or Nisbett and Wilson use the term. For these researchers, as for most experimenters, subjects are objects of study. They are mass-producers of knowledge usually represented as not knowing what they produce or the significance of their labors. They are subjects incapable of self-reflection or at least not able to accurately report to the experimenter's satisfaction what they are doing. Experimenters display the power to reflect on the activities of the subjects thereby transforming subjects into objects of study. It is the experimenters who have access to 'the literature', and who explicate for other experts the inchoate utterings and behaviors of a collective mass known as subjects. Subjects, on the other hand, are given a restricted voice; instead of publishing, they return to their dorm rooms in silence or tell room-mates about 'some dumb psych. experiment'.

The relationship between experimenter and subject is much like the one Foucault describes between intellectuals and the proletariat: the proletariat (subjects) are the 'immediate, unreflected bearer' of a universal knowledge that they cannot articulate; the intellectual (experimenter) aspires to make this sense conscious and elaborate its form. Foucault suggests that 'The intellectual is thus taken as the clear individual figure of a universality whose obscure, collective form is embodied in the proletariat' (1980, p. 126). In almost all reports in the literature, experimenters are named and their thought is assigned to who they are, it is their owned labor. Subjects, on the other hand, are anonymous and their labor is mass-produced raw

data which are shaped and given meaning by the experimenter or intellectual.

A reading of Nisbett and Wilson's milestone work (1977) in social cognition 'Telling more than we know: verbal reports on mental processes' affords a detailed exploration of power and knowledge relations between experimenters and subjects. In that text, a questioning of the ability of others to account for what happens in psychological experiments spreads like a decaying mental disorder up the hierarchy of psychological knowledge from subjects, to subjects acting as observers, to experimenters, to the authors themselves. As Hegel long ago noted, the doubt of another's consciousness must eventually rebound until the foundations of one's own knowledge are put in jeopardy.

Nisbett and Wilson open their work by stating that subjects and some psychologists think that people can account for the 'cognitive processes underlying our choices, evaluations, judgements, and behaviours' (1977, p. 231). However, the cognitive psychologists with whom Nisbett and Wilson soon ally themselves believe that both subjects and psychologists who believe this are mistaken and that people 'have no direct access to higher order mental processes' (p. 232) involved in making judgments.

Nisbett and Wilson base this bold assertion on conclusions drawn from a 'review of the evidence' (p. 233). They argue for three major conclusions:

1. that subjective reports are so poor that subjects' 'introspective access . . . is not sufficient to produce generally correct or reliable reports',
2. that when subjects give such reports they do not actually interrogate their experience but instead use 'implicit, *a priori* theories about the causal connection between stimulus and response', and
3. when subjects are 'sometimes correct' it is not due to any special insight but because their *a priori* causal theory just coincidentally matched what happened (p. 233).

The 'evidence' that casts doubt on the ability of 'people' to report on their cognitive process, Nisbett and Wilson report, 'comes from a study of the literature that deals with cognitive dissonance and self-perception attribution processes' (p. 233). Before we go on, one textual manipulation needs to be noted. Throughout their work Nisbett and Wilson shift between the words 'subjects' and 'people', a sliding of signification that is important because it leaves the reader thinking that what has been studied under a set of carefully demarcated circumstances, the experimental situation, on carefully constructed individuals, subjects, is likewise true of people's actions in the world.

'Actually', Nisbett and Wilson continue, 'the evidence comes from a consideration of what was *not* published in that literature. A review of the nonpublic, *sub rosa* aspects of these investigations leads to three

conclusions' (p. 233): (a) subjects cannot report the chief response produced by an experimental manipulation, (b) they do not report changes in attitudes or behaviors, and (c) subjects cannot identify stimuli that produce responses. Not only are subjects bad at reporting what happened in experiments, so are experimenters. Nisbett and Wilson first doubted subjects' conscious reports of what happened in experiments and constructed a notion of unconscious processes to account for what happened; now their doubt has spread. Experimenters, in their carefully constructed, conscious public literature, failed to account for what happened in dissonance experiments; to understand what happened Nisbett and Wilson had to go to a non-public, *sub rosa*, 'unconscious' text and explicate what the experimenters did not know. When made the objects of Nisbett and Wilson's investigations experimenters, it seems, are much like subjects: neither knows what is actually happening and both give accounts that miss the point. Doubt spreads.

After reviewing several social psychological studies, Nisbett and Wilson conclude that even though 'skilled and thorough investigators have worked in the dissonance tradition' there were few accounts of subjects' reports on their mental processes. So few, in fact, that the authors are forced to move outside the traditional literature and solicit personal letters from two experts. By now, one wonders why the reader should ever trust researchers' reports that subjects do not report accurately what has happened to them, especially when the events occurred at least a decade ago, and when the reader has just been told by the authors that research reports themselves are not to be trusted. Nisbett and Wilson anticipate this likely reservation and counter it by saying that if mental processes other than those 'posited by investigators were responsible for the results of the experimenters', indeed, whatever intentional processes are postulated, 'the experimental method makes it clear that something about the manipulated stimuli produces the. . . results. Yet subjects do not refer to these critical stimuli in any way in their reports on their cognitive processes' (p. 239). It should be added that often investigators, as Nisbett and Wilson have established, also fail to report either the critical stimuli or the relevant cognitive processes.

It seems Nisbett and Wilson have reached an epistemological impasse, for nobody is able to reliably report what is happening. Subjects cannot at all accurately account for what experimental stimuli are controlling their responses, and experimenters' reports, when made the subject of critical inquiry, are seen to be as unreliable and inconsistent as were the subjects. Who knows? No one. It is 'the experimental method' that 'makes it clear'. One can again return to Hegel to chart this path to its impasse and beyond. Once, as Hegel (1807/1967) argues, consciousness is called into doubt by self-consciousness, a continual sublation of knowing must occur, until a pure consciousness is again postulated. If subjects are deprived of the

power of self-knowledge by being made objects of study (sublation) by experimenters, then experimenters can be deprived of knowledge by being made into subjects who are then deprived of self-knowledge by being made objects of critical awareness (sublation). One way out of this endless sublation—the power of consciousness to make an object of itself or another consciousness—is to postulate a knowing which cannot be questioned, cannot be subsumed in the dialectical dance of domination in subject-object relations. For Nisbett and Wilson, as with many experimenters, this pellucid consciousness is the experimental method. However, another way out of such a regressive impasse is to stop the cycle of on-upmanship that is essential to such hierarchical relations as those of lord and bondsman, expert and subject. (Such prospects are explored in the writings analyzed in the second portion of this article.)

Almost all the experiments reviewed by Nisbett and Wilson, and most of their own work that they report, involve the use of some deception. Therefore, it has been all along the experimenter's intent to deceive the subjects and in almost all cases the subjects were deceived. The problem for Nisbett and Wilson is that subjects do not report correctly on how they were deceived, which is, of course, a conundrum because if one is deceived, one cannot report accurately what has happened. But even when given ample clues by the experimenters (short of being told outright) on how they were deceived, subjects often will not accept the experimenters' accounts, and insist on their own causal explanations, even though these are utterly implausible to the experimenters.

Nisbett and Wilson do concede that deception is important in insufficient-justification attitude change research: deception is crucial to producing subjects' erroneous accounts, for it is the 'fundamental unawareness of the critical role of the experimenter's behavior' which is 'essential to the erroneous attitude inferences obtained in these experiments' (p. 239). But in other experimental contexts even when pushed to admit that their behavior was a product of some heretofore hidden-from-view manipulation, subjects would not admit to the hidden power of the experimenter's control over their behaviors. When these experiments are viewed in terms of ongoing relations of power, it seems social psychologists have, over the last several decades, suffered a crisis of confidence in their powers. They know they can control experimental situations in order to make unaware subjects change their attitudes and behaviors, but if the experimenters indicate to subjects during the experiment how they are being manipulated, subjects will not be changed. However, if subjects are successfully deceived and do change without knowing what has caused them to change, they will not, even under pressure, admit that it is due to the experimental manipulations—the power of the social psychologist. The power of the social psychologist is then quite precarious, existing only when it is not recognized.

In reporting their own research the authors, as researchers, admit that

like other researchers 'we were highly unsuccessful' in predicting whether or not 'a particular stimulus would exert an influence on subjects' responses but that the subjects would be unable to report it'; they also reported being unsuccessful in predicting experimental outcomes where a stimulus would in actuality be ineffective, but subjects would report it to have been influential (p. 242). 'In general', Nisbett and Wilson conclude, 'we were no more accurate in our predictions about stimulus effects than the subjects proved to be in their reports about stimulus effects' (p. 242). Doubt spreads. Not only are subjects and other experimenters not very good at reporting the actual causal connections in experiments, but our authors, too, admit to no special powers of prediction. Gone is the goal of 'prediction and control' so familiar to generations of psychologists; their goal appears to be simply control.

So who knows what is going on? There is some evidence that 'observer subjects' (that is, subjects asked what other subjects in an experiment will do) make predictions 'that in every case were similar to the erroneous reports given by the actual subjects' (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977, p. 247). Although Nisbett and Wilson, as experimenters, found it impossible to predict wrong-headed ways in which subjects would act, subjects, in other research when acting as observers, could predict how subjects would act. Further, in these latter studies employing observer subjects, 'Both subject reports and observers' predictions were slightly negatively correlated with true cueing effects' (p. 247).

How, amidst all this confusion, can a 'true' effect be found? For Nisbett and Wilson truth lies in the convention of the statistical analysis of the effects of experimental manipulations. These numbers are not questioned. The data are sacrosanct, even though the context in which such numbers are reported—the literature—and the interpretation of their meaning is highly suspect.

In their lengthy discussion of the implications of their review and reformulation of much of the literature at the heart of social psychology, Nisbett and Wilson introduce an idea which, had they used it to reflect on their work about what experimenters and subjects know and don't know, could have helped dissolve the increasing despair evident in their article over the unreliable accounts of what happens in experiments. They say, 'It should be obvious that the individual's reports will be superior to those of observers when the observer is from a subculture that holds different causal theories' (p. 256). Remember in some cases, observer-subjects are better at knowing what actual subjects will do than are experimenters. This might well be because the observers are actually subjects and are therefore from the same subculture of subjects while experimenters are from a different subculture. Certainly, experimenters hold entirely different causal theories than do subjects. Subjects look to the stimulus situation immediately within their experience to construct a brief causal narrative of

what has happened. They deal with the events as individuals. Experimenters neglect completely the individuality of subjects and deal with them as numerical aggregates who are transformed into data and whose mass actions are accounted for by a correlational or causal statistical analysis. There is a substantial explanatory difference between accounting for the actions of an individual and those of aggregate data points. The truth for one will not be the truth for all, and the subculture of the former is not that of the latter.

Of the three articles used for close contextual analysis of the ways in which psychologists gain power through disempowering others (subjects and women), we have not commented on the place of women only in our reading of Nisbett and Wilson. Written in the middle of the 'women's revolution' of the 1970s, one might suspect some effect on the text of the changes that middle-class and academic culture were experiencing. However, it is in Nisbett and Wilson's text that women are most completely marginalized. There is no attempt as we saw in Freud or Mischel to combat a threatening adversary. Women are not a threat. While men have power as the generic he, as difficult subjects, as authorities, as men of genius and as the authors, there are very few appearances by women in the article and these are in very traditional or dependent roles as mothers, girlfriends, infants, alcoholics and subjects in an experiment which asks female students to evaluate whether brains or beauty will win a woman a job. The most effective application of textual power is not by vying with and testing the other, but by marginalizing or omitting her from the text. However, the other returns in her own ways, inventing her culture of empowerment.

Empowerment: Understanding Others

The movement of knowledge in power discourses is toward a central figure of authority, the knowing consciousness of the (male) scientist-researcher-author-psychologist, and away from others who are constructed by the expert as being either adversaries or unknowners—subjects and women—whose existence is objectified, that is studied as a thing incapable of self-reflection or viewed as an object whose feelings go unheeded. Thus, the traditional movement of power in the field of psychology has been from the margins to the center. Empowerment is an enantodromea: a reversal of the flow from center to the margins. It diverts the power of a hegemonic consciousness by returning to others the power to speak their minds and know their lives. Nisbett and Wilson conclude their work saying, 'It is frightening to believe that one has no more certain knowledge of . . . one's own mind than would an outsider with an intricate knowledge of one's history. . . .' (p. 257). This fright is a fear of loss of power to another, to an outsider. Its presence can be suggestive of another fright: that of subjects

in the foreign territory of the lab with uncertainties about what the psychologists are doing.

Rather than constructing foreign (research) situations in which subjects are deceived and might feel frightened, psychologists who work to empower, instead design situations which foster trust, sharing and familiarity. They are trying to decrease the distance between expert and subject and transform that traditional relationship into one of co-participation. In their texts of empowerment, psychologists paint a complex portrait of subjects coping in many ways with environments that are threatening to them. Unlike power texts where subjects are a unidimensional mass, the subject in empowerment writings not only ceases to be an object, but also a subject; she (or he) takes on the personal identity of a woman-or-man-in-the-world coping with it and capable of constructing meanings and acting upon them.

Feminist philosophers have suggested moving away from an adversarial model of knowledge so familiar in academic debates—a paradigm which in part creates the covert combat between researcher and subject (as well as between researchers) noted in Mischel and in Nisbett and Wilson—and moving to a cooperative model for solving problems (for example, Moulton, 1983). The complexities of such models are being worked out by feminist social scientists. A reading of works by three of these authors affords a view of the relations of power being defined and negotiated in these models. The first two works, by Ann Oakley and Brinton Lykes, furnish an understanding of the fundamental and massive shifts in power demanded in this feminist research.² The third, a study of rape counseling by Michelle Fine, receives more detailed attention because it gives an exceptional sense of the deep risks to authorial power that necessarily accompany any departure from the canonical voice of the psychologist-author.

Before proceeding to these works, several comments on context are warranted. First, a comprehensive interpretation of the works reviewed in this paper must be diachronic and situate the works within a moving historical context. Concerning the writings just addressed, that history is familiar. However, there is no parallel understanding of the history behind the new feminist writings to be reviewed next. Yet to suppose that such works are a fairly recent innovation without a history would be incorrect: empowerment research has a past which, in part belongs to a history of women's resistance to marginalization. Excluded from positions of power and consequently from framing and making history, these women's works are scattered. The resurgence of feminist politics appears to be bringing this diaspora to an end, and the making of its history is just underway (see Agronick, 1988; Morawski, 1988, 1990; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987; Shields, 1975).

A second feature of the following writings concerns their place within contemporary feminist research in psychology. Feminism has influenced

psychology in varied ways, ranging from remedial correctives to biased methods to unconventional studies of women's experience (see Morawski, 1990). Whatever theoretical orientation or feminist framework is assumed, the feminist researcher remains situated in some relation to professional practice. The resultant dilemma was long ago recognized by Virginia Woolf:

We, daughters of educated men, are between the devil and the deep sea. Behind us lies the patriarchal system; the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility. Before us lies the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed (1938, p. 74).

Woolf warned the new academic woman to stand apart from the traditional academic processions of men and their visible displays of educational hierarchies. In their stead, she advocated an erotics of education for pleasure and service to others.

Few feminist psychologists have chosen to remain outside the professional system, although many share Woolf's appraisal of it. Many feminist-oriented researchers, in fact, have become unwary members of that system, with the result that their work co-constructs the relations of power found in the texts analyzed above. A recent debate over the inclusion of sex-difference analysis in experimental reports illustrates the ways in which the professionalization of feminist psychology can serve conventional power relations. In that debate (Eagley (1987, 1990) argued that for scientific and political reasons, researchers should include sex difference measures in their work, while Baumeister (1988) suggested that the routinized practice of reporting sex differences actually works against feminist objectives by perpetuating stereotypes and magnifying difference. The debate shows that even modest alterations in scientific practice have no clear or guaranteed effect and that professional practices pose complex problems for feminist researchers. For this reason, the feminist writings selected for analysis here are not those which have been engulfed by the professional system or have served professional ends. Instead, the articles test that very system along with its masculine and hierarchical relations of power.

'No Intimacy Without Reciprocity'

Some women who were entering the social sciences in the 1970s brought with them questions from the women's movement; their inquiries prompted a reassessment of academic disciplines as 'masculine paradigms'. These women also sought 'to bring about change in the traditional cultural and academic treatment of women' (Oakley, 1981, p. 48).

When faced with interviewing women about motherhood, Ann Oakley, a sociologist and herself then recently a mother, encountered a conflict

between the role prescribed to her by her profession and both her own research interests and her commitments as a feminist to other women. What was suggested by the profession was a methodology of detachment between researcher and subject. The interviewer asks subjects standard prearranged questions, but avoids answering any queries put by the subjects. Like the psychoanalyst, the interviewer is opaque; the subject is supposed to be open—to disclose potentially intimate details of her or his life. Oakley could not brush aside questions like ‘Why is it dangerous to leave a small baby in the house?’ with a stock interviewer dodge like ‘I really haven’t thought about that’ or worse ‘my job at the moment is to get opinions, not to have them’ (p. 48). Oakley suspected that in order to gain the trust of women she was interviewing she needed to establish intimacy with them: she was certain there would be ‘no intimacy without reciprocity’ (p. 49). This closeness would in turn provide motivation for participation and encourage rapport and further sharing of confidences. It opened the way for ascribing to subjects voice, action and interpretive practices. As a result of this sharing Oakley had few drop-outs from her study and a high level of participation among the women.

Oakley also felt it was essential to depart from traditional interviewing formats because she ‘regarded sociological research as an essential way of giving the subjective situation of women greater visibility’ (p. 48). If we recall either Mischel or Nisbett and Wilson, the contrast here between power and empowerment research is obvious. Oakley attempts to reverse the social marginalization of women by making their voices heard and their lives more visible; she declares, ‘Interviewing women was, then, a strategy for documenting women’s accounts of their lives’ (p. 48). As an interviewer she positions herself as a ‘data-collecting instrument for those whose lives are being researched’ not as a ‘data-collecting instrument for researchers’ (p. 49).

The paradigm crises that we see in Oakley’s work is an essential element in moving from one vision of phenomena to another (Kuhn, 1962/1970) and, in particular, is a common feature in the work of researchers who move from their training in the traditional masculinist power paradigm to an empowerment model for their research. This crisis signals a transformation in scientific practice that has yet to be completed. The final two writings discussed below demonstrate both the ongoing transformation in research practices and its incompleteness as well as problems.

The second writing by Brinton Lykes (1989) documents this movement toward empowerment through a case study of the problems of informed consent and whose interests it serves. A reading of her work will give us another view of empowerment and methods used to establish cooperation between co-participants in research dialogues. Just as Oakley viewed herself as an instrument to give mothers a voice, so Lykes positions herself in the service of those with whom she is working: she wanted to help Guatemalan refugee women record and share stories of their culture and

the crises in their communities created by governmental repression. Lykes reports that in her initial interviews she made a startling discovery which challenged her presuppositions about what an interview means. Lykes says that, for a Guatemalan women, 'her story and the story of her people were synonymous' (p. 168). Guatemalans resisted giving idiosyncratic accounts and insisted on a group story. The notion of an individual narrative was as foreign to Guatemalans as a collective tribal tale is personally unfamiliar to North American researchers.

Much like the process of movement recounted by Oakley, and testified to by many other feminist researchers (see Harding, 1987; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990; Mies, 1983; Roberts, 1981; Unger, 1989), Lykes too reports that it was her actual work with Guatemalan women that, as she says, 'enabled me to depart. . . from the *quantitative* methods of my training toward a more qualitative participatory model of research' (1989, p. 172). Scattered throughout empowerment texts, researchers acknowledge a debt owed to those with whom they are working, a debt for prompting these researchers to question their training and its ineffectiveness. Contact with the Guatemalans forced Lykes to find methods that helped her to ask better questions and 'engage in research that [was] consistent with [her] social goals and commitments' (p. 172). Lykes had to re-ask fundamental questions and find new answers. She asked who has 'control over the research process?' and found that the assumptions in orthodox methods 'of researcher control and participant powerlessness' produce an atmosphere of competition, not cooperation throughout the research process. In all the fundamental areas of research—subject selection, data collection and obtaining consent—Lykes developed procedures that were radically different from paradigmatic techniques. For instance, subject selection was done cooperatively. The decision about which particular women would be interviewed 'emerged out of continuing conversations' among researchers, contact people and the Guatemalan women who in turn consulted with their own groups. A continuing dialogue between participants yielded methods that allowed a retelling of the Guatemalan's women's stories in their own ways and words; it also met the author's requirements for research rigor. Lykes found that the researchers and the Guatemalans were constructing a shared reality, one that 'reflected the conversations' they were 'building together' (p. 178).

An informed consent form threatened this shared space. While such forms purportedly protect the subject, they also guard the researcher and sponsoring institutions from legal entanglements. To the participating Guatemalans the document was a formal declaration of mistrust between the researchers and themselves. When Lykes introduced the consent form she, in her own words, was 'seeking to protect myself while, on the other hand, implicitly asserting that I needed to protect them from abuses of my control'. She continued, 'The introduction of the form threatened to undermine our previously negotiated contractual arrangements of trust'

(p. 178). The women refused to sign. From this Lykes learned two important lessons:

1. their resistance was an affirmation of their power and their belief in the cooperative venture, and
2. as a researcher she was unknowingly trying to take control.

This lesson encouraged her to further clarify the position of mediation she held between the women and North American institutions.

Gone in the work of Lykes and Oakley is the distrust and fear of the other (women and subjects) that we saw in Nisbett and Wilson, Mischel and Freud. For Lykes, Oakley and other empowerment researchers, other individuals (women, in these cases) are a source of education, inspiration and challenge. They are co-participants in a research process which more often puts the researcher at odds with the scientific establishment than it does with the women being questioned. Unlike Mischel who joined himself with science or Nisbett and Wilson who allied themselves with the experimental method, these researchers find themselves allying with other women in an attempt to give each other voices. The flow of power is not to the center, but to the periphery—to those who have been marginalized by the more powerful. Also gone is the textual despair shown by Nisbett and Wilson over two subcultures not being able to understand each other. Lykes and the Guatemalan women participated in a discourse which dismantled cross-cultural and cross-class barriers to develop co-understanding. Nisbett and Wilson could not even break down intracultural domestic barriers between experimenter and subjects—boundaries which appear to be essential for maintaining the power differentials between expert and subject.

Whose Power?

Michelle Fine criticizes the most prevalent psychological popularization of empowerment literature: the 'taking-control-yields-coping' strategy. 'Psychologists', Fine says, 'have demonstrated that individuals cope most effectively with unjust or difficult circumstances by controlling their environments' (1989, p. 187). However, she argues such a strategy is only really effective for people who already have certain powers and can take control over their circumstances. To assume that taking on the responsibility for changing unfair treatment is desirable is only just if the oppressive circumstances can be righted. People with relatively high social power may succeed when they act to take control, but Fine argues that such strategies are limited by sex, race and class differences. For people 'whose life conditions are indeed beyond their control', then a sense that one cannot do anything is realistic. Fine shows that in constructing the 'learned helplessness' of the 'disadvantaged', psychologists (because of their own

class prejudices about individualism, self-definition and social control) have failed to see the coping strategies which are often effectively employed by those with low social power. By analyzing a conversation she had with a poor, black woman rape-survivor, Fine illustrates her argument.

An interesting feature of establishing an empowerment discourse is evident in the way in which Fine organizes her paper. Seemingly unable to integrate her disparate roles as psychologist, volunteer rape crisis counselor, Michelle Fine, and author, she gives voice to all these in her writing. The psychologist is a rather formal writer citing studies, weighing arguments and drawing conclusions. The rape crisis counselor is a lower-status individual engaged in helping other women; she is represented not only by a textual 'I', but also as 'Michelle Fine' who is talking with the victim 'Altamese Thomas' in a textually simulated dialogue.

It is as the volunteer, the least powerful of Fine's textual roles, that she is most directly challenged by the inequities in social power about which she is writing. This is because 'Altamese' feels free to question, doubt and openly talk with 'Michelle'. From their exchange Fine learned that Altamese viewed Michelle's trust in the justice system as absurd, her desire to speak openly about rape as impulsive, her expectations that witnesses would testify on Altamese's behalf naive, and her volunteering for such work as strange. Fine also learned that Altamese was coping as well as she could in a society in which she had little power. Because of past experiences, Altamese knew better than to trust institutions, she knew that talking about her problems while bringing temporary relief did not really solve them and just prolonged the time it took to forget them, and that time taken to pursue the prosecution of her rapists would be time taken away from those most dependent on her. In her words explaining why she does not want to 'take the guys to court', she says, 'No, I don't want to do nothin' but get over this. . . . When I'm pickin' the guy out of some line, who knows who's messin' around with my momma, or my baby. Anyway nobody would believe me' (1989, p. 190). To the 'take-control' psychologist these words are those of the helpless victim, but Fine sees in this, and in other statements by Altamese Thomas, assertions of the power she has to:

1. refuse to give time to a system in which justice is unlikely,
2. avow her ties with her family,
3. remind others of her responsibilities to them, and
4. challenge the inequities in the racist society in which she lives by reminding those in power that nobody is going to listen to her.

The rape crisis volunteer, Michelle Fine, listened to Altamese Thomas and what she heard challenged the assumptions of the higher prestige Fine, the social psychologist: 'One way to take control over adversity, supported by much psychological research (including my own), is to do something to

improve one's own life circumstances. . . ' (p. 194). In arguing against the psychologists' traditions Fine, the author-psychologist, is then also arguing against a previous self who, like many middle-class psychologists, misunderstood the coping strategies of victims. Listening to Altamese, allowing her voice to be heard, and then reproducing her words for others to see changed Fine. What it did for Altamese we do not know.

When the psychologist relinquishes power and makes herself vulnerable to the criticisms of the dispossessed, she will be empowered, for she will gain a radicalizing understanding of how the underclasses know and move in the world. Psychologists and other professionals often never see such interpretations and actions, in part because they are the ones being duped by them. Reasserting her professional voice, but radicalized by genuine disclosure, Fine argues that as 'the creators of what Foucault calls power-knowledge. . . psychologists have an obligation to uncover the dialectics of psychological control and structural control. . . ' for if they do not expose it; they will impose it (p. 193). Fine's penultimate conclusion as a psychologist is that: 'A feminist psychology needs to value relational coping and to contextualize, through the eyes of those women affected, the meaning of victimization and taking control' (p. 196). The advice is implemented in her ultimate conclusion, stated in a different voice: 'Altamese Thomas, a pseudonym, and the millions of women who have been raped, have taught me a lot about being a psychologist and being a woman' (p. 198).

Discourse and Disclosure

In most psychological journal articles, like the present one, the author or authors are a cognitive presence and are known only by their writing. Certain meaningful self-disclosures and expressions of particular emotions have been forbidden for so long that few, if any, have the courage in the context of all this cognitive expertise to express doubt, insecurity, or changes of mind and emotion. The discourse of power which rules professional publishing produces the authorial voice of the unitary, rational, anonymous everyego contemplating ideas, positions and data to reach conclusions having some degree of universal validity. Fine's article, not, by the way, published in a journal, challenges the hegemony of the unified text and solitary authorial ego. She adopts personae and writing styles to fit the differing roles in her life and she acknowledges confusions, emotions and uncertainties. Empowerment through relational coping—that is, doing what is needed for oneself and others in a situation—which she advocates, is graphically illustrated in the shape her text has taken. It is a work with several voices, each engaged in different power relations and yet all in some communication with each other.

Empowerment writings contain a continual sense of the simultaneous revelations of social discovery and self-disclosure. As such, they signal a different political reality. In her analysis of psychological and political ideologies, Griffin (1982) specifically links the two and we have seen this same connection made in the works of Oakley, Lykes and Fine. If these writings flower into a tradition which can avoid the reifications caused by time and orthodoxy, and which can maintain a reflexive authorial voice, then we might see a dissolution of two boundary conditions which are at the foundation of traditional psychological power discourses: those between the individual and society and those between self and other.

Although it may seem as if this presentation has exhibited a decided bias in favor of empowerment discourses, the reader should consider a counterweight to our manifest textual preference. This latent text, which goes unseen for it conforms so closely to the traditional context of theoretical debate in psychology, is definitely a discourse of power posing two competing systems, one masculine, the other feminine, in a dialectical dance of opposition. We have written of others and disclosed little of ourselves, and rarely been in doubt. Like the good experimenter, we have kept our distance and avoided personal involvement.

This paper, and the empowerment writings reviewed within it, are unfinished texts. Each of them maintains a female regard, sometimes anxiously, for the authorial other that is the masculine gaze. Each of them is moving in experimental ways toward reflexive science—a science that acknowledges and incorporates the relations between representation and object, and observer and the observed. While conventional psychological writers work to cover the methodological ‘horror’ of reflexivity (Woolgar, 1988b), those constructing empowerment models engage reflexivity and, as such, must continually recognize the fragility and tentativeness of their own textual representations (Woolgar, 1988a).

Conclusion

Canonical psychological writing, although adopting a literary genre that attempts to erase authorial presence or agency (Latour, 1987; Woolgar, 1988b), nevertheless contains traces of the author and the culture of power relations within which he or she writes. Critical studies recently have forged significant advances in identifying how cultural power makes its way into psychological theories (for instance, see Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984; Rose, 1989; Sampson, 1981; Stam, 1987). The present study contributes to this critical understanding through hermeneutic analysis of the scientific discourse which both records and reports psychological work. Created within the pervasive cultural relations of power, conventional writings adopt the male gaze, including its frequent

contradictory stances, and a mechanistic social epistemology along with its hierarchical arrangement of power. Our analysis of these features of discourse relied upon a dialectic established by comparing canonical writings with emergent writings of empowerment. Developing from an as-of-yet hidden history of resistance to cultural power arrangements, empowerment discourse struggles to reconstruct power relations and to represent the interpretive repertoire of other agents. The textual practices of empowerment writing are far from refined and the discourse reveals the nascent quality of the work in focusing on particular and isolated power relations and in the tentative fashioning of authorial voices.

Both forms of writing are marked and future interpretive studies must attend to these differential features of the two discourses while also discerning the relations of power and knowledge which each discourse establishes and maintains. Finally, we need to be continually aware of how each one regards the other.

Notes

1. The German text (Freud, 1941/1940a, pp. 47–48) is the same.
2. Although Oakley is not a psychologist, her critique addresses the methods of interviewing which are commonly employed by psychologists and her writing has informed numerous psychologists working toward models of empowerment.

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