REFRAMING THE GLASS CEILING AS A SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED PROCESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND CHANGE

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Traditional definitions of the glass ceiling perpetuate gender-biased organizational practices and quick-fix solutions. By creating an illusion of opportunity for women, they prevent critical assessment of contemporary organizational practices and of gendered communication. This article engages in feminist research as praxis first by discussing how current organizational practices fail to alter power imbalances. To create awareness of unjust organizing processes, these ways we ordinarily "do gender" are juxtaposed against contrastive contexts: alternative settings (organizational forms), processes (community-as-dialectic), and organization members (women). These alternatives enable us to visualize how language creates and sustains gender divisions that emerge in glass ceiling processes and effects. The second stage in research as praxis calls for action. I discuss implications for research and for change that challenge the gendered motif of organizational life.

M ost definitions of the glass ceiling focus on women's historic underrepresentation in powerful organizational positions and the culmination point at which time women recognize the discriminatory practices, gender stereotypes, and individual biases that have hindered their advancement (Conrad, 1994; Morrison, White, Van Velsor, & the Center for Creative Leadership, 1987). In these definitions, the glass ceiling functions as a barrier to women (and minorities) as a group, rather than to individual women.[1] There appears to be no industry type without glass ceilings, no other similar form of structural plateauing, and no comparable barrier for white males. This blockage occurs in governmental, scientific, business, and educational organizations (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Schiebinger, 1987) and cannot be explained simply by male-female differences in background, competence, or managerial behavior (Conrad, 1994).

Unfortunately, current definitions oversimplify this discriminatory phenomenon. They link the glass ceiling to hierarchy in ways that promote gender-biased research and quick–fix solutions. By conceptualizing the glass ceiling as a problem that can be managed by providing opportunities to women that men routinely obtain, they preclude discussions and social action that could create transformational change. While appearing to be logical solutions, they fail to address the ways in which gender organizes every aspect of our social and work lives including how we formally and informally communicate in organizational settings. Because our language and discourse practices often recreate stereotypic masculine and feminine divisions of family, work activities, and occupations (Lorber, 1994; Wood, 1994), our solutions to add more women or to train women do not make any real differences in women's lives. These solutions do not question unstated assumptions that women's work is secondary to men's

work and to women's roles of wife and mother. Contemporary glass ceiling approaches cannot address fundamental issues unless they situate gender in language, discourse practices, and social interaction because language is the critical factor in the ways "we think [about gender relations] or equally important, do not think about them" (Flax, 1987, p. 622). However, by envisioning the glass ceiling as a socially constructed process and as a product of ways we "do gender" in our organizing processes, we can create long-term change.

Several assumptions guide this article: that the glass ceiling as process and product will not change until feminist beliefs, values, and ways of knowing are valued equally with traditional approaches; that research on the glass ceiling must be explicit in political and value implications; and that social issues such as the glass ceiling require fundamental, rather than surface, change. I use social constructionist ontological arguments to display the glass ceiling as a socially enacted process occurring through language, discourse practices, and interaction. Because glass ceiling processes and effects are socially constructed, they also are changeable. I use different feminist epistemologies to challenge the ways we think about and live our gendered lives because no single feminism fully accounts for how women know and experience their lives (Buzzanell, 1994). My viewpoint is consistent with cultural feminism that honors feminine values and urges reconstruction of the world for both women and men so that neither sex is oppressed by binary sex–role stereotypes. However, I also borrow from postmodern feminist approaches that describe how language creates our common sense meanings about gender and that see gender as individually, historically, economically, and politically situated (Weedon, 1987).

In conducting this analysis, my arguments follow the critical tradition of praxis. In Marxist and contemporary socialist feminisms, praxis is the "process of shedding 'false consciousness,' or 'male-identified' ideologies that serve male, ruling-group interests" to develop individual and societal change (Donovan, 1985, pp. 67–68). My premise is that the glass ceiling will remain substantively unaltered if we fail to see gender as a means of maintaining power imbalances in organizing. These imbalances are sustained by discourse, "the range of symbolic activities by which members of a culture name, legitimize, and establish meanings for social organization" (Wood, 1994, p. 122).

Because I use the two-phase praxis process as my research method, my goal in this article is twofold: (a) to expose and critique current glass ceiling practices and (b) to promote change by exploring how alternative settings, processes, and organizational members can offer contexts in which we can form egalitarian gender expectations, talk, and activities. The first section is a feminist analysis of contemporary thinking about glass ceiling practices. These practices have reified the glass ceiling as a "thing" so that real change becomes difficult. In addition, these approaches often position gender as a variable in their analytic frameworks (Mumby, 1993), meaning that they do not consider gender as an underlying aspect of everyday organizing. By exposing the patriarchal nature of current research and practice on the glass ceiling, we explore how our language and discursive practices inhibit thinking and interacting that can challenge the status quo. Policy mandates such as hiring and advancing more women or minorities have not corresponded with changes in values, talk, and organizational structures. Indeed, some researchers believe that individuals in the U.S.

have simply become more covert in enacting sexism (and racism) (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).

Feminist critiques begin with the ways women know and express *their* problems, lives, and values (Harding, 1987a, 1987b, 1991). From this starting point, we can rethink commonly accepted communication notions and improve the status of women. By reframing the glass ceiling as a consequence and as a process of gendered communication, we focus on *both* an understanding of different women's work-family lives *and* an analysis of how culture and organizational communication systematically and, often unconsciously, discriminate against women. We can display how everyday interactions undermine opportunities for radical change.

In the second section, I focus on three contrastive research contexts that parallel the traditional approaches in my first half: alternative organizational structures, processes (community-as-dialectic), and members (women's turning points and emotions). Without this juxtaposition of routine and alternative contexts, we may be unable to visualize where and how we can change our language, discourse practices, and interaction.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO THE GLASS CEILING

Men and women maintain gender stereotypic interactions by defining what work is considered valuable, where women's "natural" talents are most useful for organizational efficiency, and how organizational members socially construct work identities. In this first half, three glass ceiling definitions and interventions are discussed: (a) numbers of women representing organizational levels, (b) reasons for women's exclusion, and (c) strategies for developing women's potential. These perspectives explore the positivist thinking that drives contemporary recommendations for fixing the glass ceiling.

These current approaches are ordered from the simplest to the most extensive ways to account for and to "correct" the glass ceiling. They are inadequate for two reasons. First, they deal only with surface issues and fail to alter power imbalances. While traditional practices have opened some opportunities for women, they are still aligned with career rules, discourse, and organizational structures created for and by men. By simply allowing women to participate at higher organizational levels, these approaches do not change gender dynamics. Second, these practices fail to account for ordinary interactions of organizational men and women that sustain biases against women. A critique exposes how these practices create an illusion of change. The second half of this article explores alternatives to each of these three approaches.

The Numbers Argument

Historically, women have been underrepresented in top layers of business, educational, governmental, and scientific organizations, in addition to suffering unequal parity. The data are compelling. According to the first federal Glass Ceiling Commission report, only 3% of senior managers in 1,500 of the biggest U.S. businesses are women (Nomani, 1995). There are three times as many male senior vice presidents as females (Spaid, 1993). Similarly, 37% of U.S. business managers are women (a 76% jump from 1983 to 1992), but these women are concentrated at bottom levels (Schwartz, 1992). Across the board, in the 1960s

women used to earn 60 cents of the dollar men earn, whereas they now earn 70 cents, with wage parity converging mostly among hourly workers and diverging among white–collar workers (Rigdon, 1993).

Women are underrepresented in top organizational positions in part because executives fear that these women may fail and hurt their own, or the firm's, reputations and affirmative action numbers (Lopez, 1992). But identifying reasons behind inadequate representation is *not* the crux of the numbers argument; rather, the numbers argument proposes that promoting women to top levels solves the problem. In this way, glass ceiling issues and logical recommendations merge into one solution, namely, to simply gain numbers.

The number-promotion practice meets surface needs by advancing highly competent women or by relaxing criteria to admit token women into upper organizational echelons. However, two issues remain problematic. First, re-search suggests that at the current rate it will take decades for women to truly be represented at top levels (Morrison et al., 1987). The Women's Research and Education Institute reports that "it will take 75 to 100 years for women to achieve equitable representation and pay at all management levels" (Karr, 1993, p. B1). Second and more importantly, promotion and pay equity plans divert attention from the *real issues* of why there is discrimination against women and how discrimination continues despite victories by liberal feminists at removing discriminatory laws. Even with "adequate representation," the problems persist because "the presumption of incompetence . . . comes to those whose hiring is attributed to affirmative action preferences rather than to merit" (J. Martin, Price, Bies, & Powers, 1987, p. 43). Schwartz (1992) argues that most companies are simply "going through the motions of improving women's situations, but they have not come to terms with their deeply rooted preconceptions" (p. 107).

Reasons for Women's Exclusion

The second traditional approach focuses on practices aligned with reasons for women's exclusion from full organizational participation. Most of these reasons can be subsumed under equality-versus-difference arguments and corresponding organizational practices. These reasons appear to offer women choices but actually undermine attempts to develop equality by failing to address how our discourse practices negate free choice and individual differences.

On one hand, equality beliefs maintain that women and men have identical interests, abilities, and opportunities. Therefore, women should be treated in equivalent ways with no special preference because sex is irrelevant. Equality arguments, however, neglect to add that normative behavioral patterns and models of successful work behavior are male. From this viewpoint, the glass ceiling is rational if women do not or cannot conform. Most traditional ap-proaches to the glass ceiling and to management assume that stereotypical masculine traits must be emulated. Self-help books train women to minimize their deficiencies (meaning that they are not men) and focus on what *women* can *do* rather than how the workplace, men, and stereotypes can be altered (cf. Koester, 1982). They imply that women will succeed in time through traditional masculine behavior.

However, emulating the male model is ineffective for most women over the long run. Despite employees' equivalent organizational entry and training,

managers treat women and men differently in recruitment and retention practices (Jacobs, 1992; Spaid, 1993). Women are given more routine tasks, paid less, promoted more slowly and/or into less challenging activities, "punished" for not demonstrating loyalty by working long hours in the office (and "punished" if they do), and expected to make limited contributions (Forisha, 1981; Moore, 1986). Often women experience tension, resentment, and exhaustion as they attempt to manage feminine and professional roles (Hochschild, 1989; Wood & Conrad, 1983).

On the other hand, difference claims maintain that women and men as groups have diametrically opposed values, needs, and approaches to life issues. Organizational, legal, and institutional members have used difference arguments to create three overlapping sets of organizational and political practices that subordinate women: (a) female superiority, (b) redefinitions of discrimination, and (c) beliefs that women lack organizational commitment.

The gender–difference literature legitimated male-female differences (Gilligan, 1982) and now promotes female superiority in managerial and leadership roles (Loden, 1985; Rosener, 1990). This most recent phase in feminism, female superiority, focuses on stereotypes, dichotomies, and convergence of gender and sex identities (masculine/male and feminine/female) that can damage women's arguments for true equality. As long as we stress difference, several interrelated problems ensue: (a) one side is devalued and its contributions are minimized, (b) numerous variations between and within the labels "masculine" and "feminine" are unacknowledged; (c) women's "feminine" management styles are still defining what is useful and valuable from an organizational perspective, and (d) expectations are perpetuated that all women should behave in "feminine" ways. The stereotypical "nurturing" role of caretaker often subscribed to women is particularly dangerous because it is based on subordination. Even more chilling is Faludi's (1991) reminder that "marking women as 'special' . . . may sound like superior, but it is also a euphemism for handicapped" (p. 327). Glorification of the feminine management style is "just a smokescreen of no real consequence" because the style effects no transformational change (Calás & Smircich, 1993, p. 71). By reshaping feminism to advocate female superiority, the threat against bureaucracy is diminished because women do women's work in organizations and because women are still playing the competitive game in which one side wins and the other side loses.

In the second practice that maintains social and legal inequity, discrimination is redefined using sex–difference claims. Scott (1988) deconstructs arguments in the sexual discrimination suit brought against Sears, Roebuck & Co. by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) in 1979. Through her analysis, Scott demonstrates how Sears argued successfully that labor force imbalances were caused by fundamental sex differences based on culture and on socialization rather than by discriminatory hiring policies. According to Sears, policies, laws, and organizational practices that are aligned with stereotypical sex differences simply confirm women's natural tendencies to enact feminine behaviors and values in organizational contexts. Fundamental sex–difference arguments not only essentialize women by obscuring variations among women but also negate any diversity in the behavior of the sexes.

Finally, difference is used to sustain beliefs that women lack organizational

commitment. Exclusionary practices occur because executives do not want to invest in members who will not provide adequate return. These beliefs are based on: feelings that women will relocate with spouses and will leave the organization; maternity; and male-female differences in work themes, career tracks, and values (Schwartz, 1989, 1992; Sheppard, 1992). Grossman and Stewart (1990) reviewed findings from empirical investigations to conclude that most beliefs about women's work behavior, such as women's disinterest in using power, lack support. Where beliefs, such as some women's voluntary refusal of advancement, are supported by research, there are complex reasons for women's decisions (J. Martin et al., 1987).

In sum, organizational members use both "equality" and "difference" arguments and beliefs to affirm gender ideologies (belief systems that underlie individuals' assumptions and negotiated social meanings about what is natural for each gender), gendered work (work delegated to women), and gender work (work confirming beliefs about women's natural tendencies and abilities) (Rakow, 1992). Through gender ideologies, organizations form discursive sites by which language legitimates and reinforces the structuring of masculine and feminine experience (Weedon, 1987; Wood, 1994). These ways of thinking about and of enacting gender are so central to our organizing processes that we do not even notice how members construct jobs, tasks, occupations, and settings to sustain gender.

Strategies to Develop the Potential of/Promote Women

A third traditional approach to the glass ceiling outlines individual and organizational strategies for promoting women and for developing their advancement potential. These tactics propose to weaken the glass ceiling by: inserting women in informal networks (Bennett, 1991; Loden, 1985); developing the best individuals at all organizational levels (Schwartz, 1992); recognizing that women can be particularly useful in international assignments (Jelinek & Adler, 1988); establishing formal mentoring relationships and networking opportunities (Ibarra, 1993; Lopez, 1992); training mentors and proteges in handling the gossip that often accompanies cross-sex relationships (Feinstein, 1987; Ragins, 1989); training managers about gender differences to dispel assumptions of lower expectations, to learn how to read the other's behaviors, and to avoid sexual harassment (Castro, 1992); exposing employees to members of the opposite sex in work tasks (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990); and creating objective unbiased performance assessments (Olofson, 1989). In total, these tactics appear to offer diverse ways of solving the glass ceiling by including women in developmental activities.

The existence of these strategies means that organizations still need to formally construct settings, policies, and male-female relationships to provide for women *what is informally and unquestioningly supplied to organizational men*. These practices have not corresponded with ways of thinking and interacting that value feminine contributions (Calás & Smircich, 1993). These practices often place a burden on women by adding another layer to women's work activities. They do not acknowledge that women rarely have the time, energy, or resources to activate change and to alter power relationships while holding two jobs. In other words, these traditional strategies reflect necessary policies but

not the deep change in discursive practices that promote truly equal opportunity. They establish practices that cannot handle the diverse needs of different women's groups anymore than they can fundamentally alter engrained ways of organizing.

After reviewing the extant literature on the glass ceiling, Morrison and Von Glinow (1990, p. 205) conclude that: "Despite the existence of these various remedies, the glass ceiling continues to frustrate ambitious women and minorities." These frustrations will persist until we reframe the glass ceiling as a communicative process and consequence.

Summary

In contemporary glass ceiling practices we use the same traditional rules for careers, organizational values, gendered roles, and structures when we increase numbers, give lip service against reasons for women's exclusion, and construct newer and better strategies to incorporate women. These ways of tackling glass ceiling issues and processes are necessary but they have not gone far enough; that is, they have not altered the fundamental motif of organizational life. By failing to think past these approaches, we continue to research issues such as: at what point is female representation adequate to reach a critical mass, which feminine traits best serve business needs and deserve promotion, and what new training and development programs can enhance women's potential and visibility within organizations. These strategies are logical solutions that should work in principle. However, in practice, they have been ineffectual because they do not suggest ways to change the social order.

Engagement in research as praxis means that we expose how traditional glass ceiling practices create illusions of opportunity while maintaining gendered divisions of labor and of power relations. In each of these current definitions and practices, our supposedly egalitarian behaviors and nondiscriminatory talk mask the ways we actually endorse the status quo.

CONTRASTIVE RESEARCH CONTEXTS

The three traditional approaches identify the glass ceiling as a problem for women that can be fixed fairly easily through organizational practices directed toward women. In some ways, these practices deal with glass ceiling effects, but they do not address glass ceiling processes. *Glass ceiling processes* are defined as language and interaction patterns associated with gender ideologies in which women are devalued overtly and subtly. *Glass ceiling effects* are differential promotion, development, reward, power, and work structures based on gender.

In the following sections, I discuss three alternative contexts that parallel ordinary glass ceiling definitions and practices. These contrastive perspectives juxtapose common sense meanings and practices with alternative contexts to suggest sites for making gender visible. These alternatives are speculative because, in many cases, we lack research that addresses both what should work in principle and what actually happens in practice. My hope is that these contrastive contexts will display: understandings of conditions in which language and gendered interactions privilege traditional (masculine) organizing over feminist approaches, ways language defines our selves and our range of possibilities for social organizations (Weedon, 1987, p. 21), and avenues for

changing gendered organizing processes. My assumption is that inquiry into the conflicts among our needs for change and for preserving the status quo will eventually lead to changes that will benefit women (and men). By framing the glass ceiling as a communication process and product, we address root causes and solutions for social change.

I advocate inquiry in both the social scientific and the critical traditions to identify where and how to create change.[2] Feminist empiricists challenge the "incomplete [by exclusion of gender] practice of the scientific method, not the norms of science themselves" and conduct research to eliminate social biases, including androcentrism (Harding, 1991, p. 113). Critical scholars show "how organizations function as sites of domination" and "how current theorizing constitutes organizations in particular [patriarchal] ways" (Mumby & Putnam, 1992, p. 465). Neither research approach is sufficient for understanding and changing the glass ceiling because neither provides both the generalizable findings needed for organizational policy decisions and the critique of why policies that should work in principle fail to work in practice.

This need to construct inquiry from differing perspectives is consistent with feminist and social policy theorists' perspectives on complex social phenomena. Feminist scholars urge multiple perspectives to guard against "suppositions that if we employ the right method we can avoid ethnocentrism, totalizing constructions, and false universalizations" (Bordo, 1990, p. 140). Likewise, full endorsement of critical approaches can divert attention from direct action (Bordo, 1990). Hanna (1991) argues that accurately disseminated empirical findings are essential to institutional decision making in democracy whereas critical approaches' contributions to policy formation lie mainly in their analyses of reification processes. This mixing of research traditions is consistent with Habermas' (1971) claim that different strategies often are used by individuals to apprehend reality for motives of prediction/control, of mutual/self understanding, and of emancipation (Bernstein, 1978; McCarthy, 1978).

The three contrastive alternatives differ from each other in that the first two, organizational forms and community, offer settings and interactive contexts for research and change. The third alternative, members, starts with feminism, the epistemological position espoused throughout this critique, and advocates investigation into women's turning points and emotions. These alternatives are not mutually exclusive. Some may view community as an organizational form. If this is so, then my distinction between alternative structures and community as a dialectic process may appear artificial. All three alternatives provide settings, interactive contexts, and assumptions to assist us in observing other (possible) forms of "doing gender," in rethinking glass ceiling processes and effects, and in creating change.

Alternative Organization Forms

The numbers solution defines the glass ceiling as a structural plateau within hierarchy. When viewed as a plateau, the logical solution to advance women past middle–management levels meets surface criteria for resolution. However, some interconnected issues remain problematic. Increased numbers of women are insufficient for changing organizing processes because top women had to behave in promotable (masculine) ways to achieve advancement. It does not

necessarily follow that more women will automatically realign company structures and practices with feminist values. The numbers solution still hides the fact that women's frequent promotions are within dual structures of unequal representation and weak locations (Grant & Tancred, 1992). This solution does not question the ways traditional career systems and hierarchy subordinate women (and men), value exclusionary practices, and promote masculine behaviors (Ferguson, 1984; Kanter, 1977). Because the glass ceiling as typically defined can only occur within hierarchies, then it "represents one more futile attempt by women to seek equality under a system of rules, laws and policies created by men, for men" (Saltzman, 1991, p. 42).

A second unresolved issue is that the numbers solution corresponds with essentialism. Hierarchical organizations are maintained by some people (women) supporting other people (men) who do the real work. Because men's masculinity and women's femininity centers around breadwinner/work and caring/home roles, respectively, common sense tells us that men have the energy, values, and goals conducive to organizational life whereas women are selfish if they prioritize work over family (Lorber, 1994; Wood, 1994). Essentialist arguments and hierarchical arrangements cannot help us understand women's racial, class, and gender experiences with organizing because they assume that all women have similar needs and wants aligned around cultural understandings of gender (Bell, Denton, & Nkomo, 1993). In brief, my argument is that language and discourse linked to hierarchy disenfranchises groups.

In contrast, innovative organizational structures may lack the stability in jobs, levels, and reward systems to systematically discriminate against women (and minorities). In principle, individuals working within alternative forms should be rewarded based on contributions to task completion and on successful organizational restructuring rather than normative ways of "doing gender." Because the glass ceiling is a socially constructed process and product that serves hierarchy, eliminating hierarchy may provide a context in which traditional discourses about sex and gender conflict with organizational interests, providing an opportunity for change. To discuss this possibility, I describe alternative forms, speculate on possible connections between these forms and glass ceiling processes and effects, and conclude with implications for research and change.

Alternative Forms

Rational-legal bureaucracy is the normative organizational structure in the United States. Recently, organizational researchers and practitioners have focused on alternatives, such as self-designing, adhocratic, improvisational, and web forms, to redesign corporations around core issues of permeable boundaries and of inclusionary values. Each of these forms can operate as whole organizational systems or as subsystems within bureaucracies. In each nontraditional form, successful work completion is dependent on interconnectedness as well as on utilization of the most appropriate members for specific problem solving (Helgesen, 1990; Morgan, 1986, 1993). These forms foster personal growth, diminished status differences, awareness of others' talents, and redefinitions of self in relation to others as work needs shift.

Within these four alternative forms, organizational members work in somewhat different structures and work orientations. Improvisational organizing

draws upon members' understandings of work processes to guide themselves in changing individual and team interactions (Bantz, 1989; Weick, 1989). Self-designing organizations configure themselves as semipermanent structures focused on continuous learning and on restructuring as internal and environmental needs shift. They exist as: "dream teams" that redesign work processes with union and management collaboration; flexible church teams that appear disorganized but are based on strong, coherent, and shared values; and organizations such as Semco S/A, PC Connection, and The Body Shop (Garfield, 1992; Morgan, 1993). Adhocracies often are project teams in aerospace, electronic, and research and development work that dissolve only after project completion and reformulate with new members as assignments warrant (Morgan, 1986). Finally, web networks are grounded in feminist leadership principles that encourage integrative communication practices, fairness in collaborating with organizational members, and responsibility to work, family, and community (Helgesen, 1990).

Alternative Structures, Communication, and the Glass Ceiling

The ways researchers and organizational members talk about work activities and about organizational member relations are qualitatively different in alternative forms and rational–legal bureaucracy discussions. This is because effective member selection, assignments, job activities, and rewards in each of these four nontraditional structures are based, in principle, on egalitarian values, collaborative ethics, and ability to adapt. Egalitarian communication may emerge in the ways individuals "do gender" as well as in occupational, wage, and advancement statistics (while noting that "advancement" may be defined differently in these systems). They may provide case examples in which we can observe how organizational members expand their thinking and their language about gender ideologies, gender work, and gendered work.

However, in general, organizational communication researchers and theorists have neglected alternative organization forms with the exception of jamming/improvisational jazz (Eisenberg, 1990). As a result, there is a great deal we do not know about how these organizations function. For instance, we do not know if members develop work processes to correspond with traditional masculinities and femininities or how gender is negotiated. Decisions based on gender and women's devaluation still may occur despite talk about egalitarianism and about promotion through feminine management (Calás & Smircich, 1993).

We do know that work is associated routinely with gender characteristics so that women and men find compatibility between their jobs and their gender identities (Leidner, 1991). We also know that stereotypical biases and gendered interactions often are replicated in times of uncertainty because they are familiar (Freedman & Phillips, 1988; Gutek, 1992). Reverting to traditional gender interactions occurs even in organizations committed to ending sexual and racial discrimination. For example, women in utopian and social movement organizations often were relegated to support and private roles rather than to action and decision–making roles (hooks, 1981; Kolmerten, 1990). Even when female social advocates initially had power and visibility, traditional gender ideologies re-emerged over time (Hewitt, 1986). Finally, contemporary accounts of women–centered organizational structures describe the daily difficulties of remaining

true to power sharing, free expression, and continuous personal contact with organizational and environmental members (Rodriguez, 1988; Steiner, 1992). Other accounts demonstrate difficulties in maintaining collectivist and feminist organizations that are committed to transforming society (P. Martin, 1990; Rothschild-Whitt, 1979).

Implications for Research and Change

In sum, alternative organizational forms provide settings for testing how gendered communication, glass ceiling processes, and glass ceiling effects emerge and/or change. If covert and overt discriminatory assumptions and behaviors persist, we must understand why and how organization members find them useful. To date, there have been neither (a) feminist empirical nor (b) critical investigations of gender enactment in alternative organization forms.

As feminist social science researchers, we use traditional methods of inquiry but begin with women's experiences (Harding, 1987a, 1991). We can define constructs from women's viewpoints; we can treat organizational type (hierarchical and alternative) as an independent variable and look at the effects on both gender interactions and on organizational outcomes. Millman and Kanter (1987) argue that "not only do we underexamine and distort women's activities in social science, but we also fail to understand how social systems actually function because we do not take into account one of their most basic processes: the interplay between informal, interpersonal networks and the formal, official social structures" (p. 32). To compare gender interactions in alternative and traditional structures, we would examine issues such as: how work is divided and integrated, how decisions are made and by whom, who does instrumental and relational work, who attains rewards and why, and which members are empowered and how (P. Martin, 1990). Our purpose is *not* to investigate work or reward systems per se but to make women's world in alternative forms visible by studying how members communicate gender expectations through social control, informal networks, and support structures (Millman & Kanter, 1987).

Aside from comparing alternative and traditional organizational forms, we also can explore how members' behaviors and gendered interactions may vary within each of these four alternative forms. For instance, Burgas (1991) provides examples of self-designing change processes used by top officers at AT&T. Because self–organizing work and career processes are predicated on continuous learning about self, other, and environment (Weick & Berlinger, 1989), this work at AT&T could provide an optimal context for members' reeducation about gender. The second form, jamming/improvisational organizing entails co–construction of reality in such a way that individuals are "simultaneously and consciously adapting to the whole, supporting the other players, and mutually influencing the outcome" (Bastien & Hostager, 1988, pp. 582–583). Because interactions integrate social practices, work understandings, and implicit contracts about appropriate behavior within very limited time frames, we may have a training ground for new behaviors that diminish glass ceiling processes and effects. In the third form, men and women in web networks may demonstrate: greater accommodation *without question* of work-family schedules, recognition of the different kinds of time and effort necessary for relationship maintenance, and more willingness to share expertise. Since adhocracies remain stable until

task completion, we may observe greater evidence of glass ceiling processes and effects than in the other three alternative structures.

A critical perspective raises qualitatively different issues than these empirical concerns. From a critical approach, we would examine how language may continue to subordinate women in general or specific groups of women in alternative organizations. We can analyze the sets of conditions under which covert sexism is manifest in alternative organizing processes. A critical examination of organizational structures asks whether we (as researchers and as organization members) can truly conceive of alternatives that do not marginalize women and that transform the hegemonic structures of masculinity (Weedon, 1987). A critical examination also would investigate the tensions surrounding needs for status, influence, and reward differences when women are committed ideologically to equal resources in alternative organizations (Rodriguez, 1988; Rothschild-Whitt, 1979). In sum, social scientific and critical investigations may shed light about how members "do gender" in alternative settings.

Some implications for change correspond with broadened images of gender and with alternative structures. As our language changes, so do our meanings of and interactions corresponding with gender. First, we can alter discourse practices in U.S. media and in classrooms. In the media, particularly advertising, textbooks, and popular articles, we often portray stereotypical bipolar visions of gender that restrict the range of possibilities in work, family, volunteer, and leisure areas of life (Weedon, 1987). Males and females learn that masculinity and femininity are asymmetrical power relations (Bem, 1993; Chodorow, 1994). By expanding our thinking and language about sex and gender, we recognize how messages from family members, teachers, and co–workers often limit women's and men's talk, interactions, and thinking about what is normal and prevalent. For instance, if women are absorbed in work, they are "selfish, bad mothers;" but if men work long hours, they are sacrificing family time to fulfill their natural roles as breadwinners.

Alternative forms promise to de–emphasize hierarchy and emphasize inclusion but they do not discuss gender. To actualize these promises, we can incorporate feminists' practical suggestions designed to change our gendered thinking, language, and discursive practices. Bem (1993, pp. 184–196) develops many vivid scenarios of childcare arrangements, jobs, benefits, work schedules, and promotion systems designed around different women's needs rather than around essentialist masculinity. Lorber (1994) incorporates feasible change mechanisms for her detailed ways in which institutionalized gender disenfranchises women across time, race, and culture. P. Martin (1993) displays how and where eight feminist management principles can restructure corporate norms and expectations. Finally, Wilson (1995) explains how some educational institutions are rethinking tenure time-tables and work flexibility to accommodate maternity and families. Wilson's article still subscribes to the notion that work must accommodate families rather than vice versa but it is a beginning.

Alternative Processes

Research as praxis demands that we make our daily gendered communication visible. In part, we create this awareness by conducting research that questions how we "do gender" in alternative settings. Yet, unconventional ways of doing tasks, structures, and careers may be insufficient by themselves to promote

egalitarian communication. Besides structure, we also need to indicate how gender is embedded in social processes and practices. To create awareness of these processes, we turn to the second traditional perspective on the glass ceiling.

The second traditional approach describes reasons, such as equality–versus–difference arguments and assumptions about women's organizational commitment, that members use to sustain glass ceiling processes and effects. These reasons become articulated as routine organizing practices and communicative exchanges. They are the bases for excluding women and maintaining the competitive ethic. By researching nontraditional processes, such as community-building, feminist social scientific and critical research can provide us with descriptions of how organizational members talk and interact in ways that preserve self interests while simultaneously honoring the dignity and values of different groups of women (and men).

In the following section, I discuss different conceptualizations and enactments of community. Next, I frame community as a dialectic process with implications for research and for change. In this way, we view community *not* as a setting or as shared participation in activities, but as a gendered interactive process.

Conceptualizing Community

Community is conceptualized in several different ways: (a) research definitions, (b) connotations of community as idealistic, and (c) images of community as gender work and gendered work. First, in organizational, media, feminist, and social studies, community refers to caring, interrelatedness, and an ecological view in which systems and people are intertwined. In organizational and feminist literatures, community is presented as an alternative to the competitive ethic, as tangible proof of bounded emotionality, as preference for cooperative work settings, and as essential to the maintenance of integrated self-identities (Buzzanell, 1994; Mumby & Putnam, 1992). In media studies, community is associated with an individual's degree of physical, cognitive, and affective involvement in his or her residential location (Rothenbuhler, 1991). In social critiques, community is defined as an interconnected and mutually interdependent group that considers others' needs, engages in dialogues to enhance cooperative ventures, and explores unique talents of all for personal and organizational good (Wachtel, 1983). In these definitions, researchers view community both as an interactive process of caring and as an outcome of interdependence.

Second, community often connotes idealistic images. As an idealistic place, community functions as a setting for gatherings of like–minded people. Examples of this conceptualization include: 19th Century secular utopian cities based on equal rights, leisure, and duties (Kolmerten, 1990); lesbian gatherings in Buffalo, New York (Davis & Kennedy, 1986); science fiction planets with collective memories and identities (Asimov, 1986); and Quaker reform communities in the mid–1800s (Hewitt, 1986). As an idealistic value, community suggests beliefs and behaviors in direct opposition to competitive ethics, individualism, and observable signs of status and success (Buzzanell & Goldzwig, 1991). As an ideal value, community seems unattainable in the competitive U.S. society.

Third, community often connotes gendered images and actions. Community, as popularly conceived and practiced, is stereotypically feminine. Community is

displayed in: women's decision making that is contextually situated and has a strong relational component (Sheppard, 1992), women's career and moral development (Gallos, 1989; Gilligan, 1982), women's peacemaking activities (Kolb, 1992), women's perceptions of work and family as being interdependent (Chester & Grossman, 1990), women's uses of conversation and mediated communication technologies to sustain community identity (Rakow, 1992), women's planning of life–cycle event celebrations on the shop floor (Lamphere, 1985), and women's awareness of themselves as role models and change agents (Helgesen, 1990). Community-centered or stereotypically feminine activities contribute to an understanding of the context/lives of organizational members and to cooperation among diverse organization members.

Hochschild (1989) remarks that women's abilities to project images of empathic listening and concern save organizations millions of dollars in litigation costs during corporate outplacement. Yet, activities designed to promote interconnection often are overlooked because of their indirect contributions to organizational outcomes, because they build on other "trivial" acts, and because they are associated with women and the private sphere. As long as community-enhancing behaviors remain invisible and unrewarded, then these actions will remain detrimental to full organizational participation and to career advancement because organizational members who do the "real" work will be valued and promoted (Huff, 1990).

In contrast, community-diminishing strategies include the use of swearing, boundary maintenance, humor, putdowns, terms of address, and patronizing behaviors that devalue women and their contributions (Huff, 1990; Sheppard, 1992). These communicative acts are not only dyadic, they also are promoted in groups and organizational discourse. For instance, subtle use of language maintains normative masculinity even when corporate value statements espouse equality and concern for women's issues (J. Martin, 1991). Women's unique "feminine skills" are presented as essential to managing in chaotic times, yet they extend the "patriarchally defined 'female' " into organizational life (Calás & Smircich, 1993, p. 74). In corporate sexual harassment policies, researchers uncover subordinating and exclusionary communication strategies embedded in institutional discourse (Clair, 1993a, 1993b). Women's daily efforts to build recognition of competence, relationships, and family support systems are undetermined by unconscious gender ideologies (Faludi, 1991; Hochschild, 1989). In principle, these marginalizing interactions should not occur within community.

In sum, community often is defined as process and product of interdependence, as an idealistic place or a value set, and as gender work and gendered work. Community-building, especially when juxtaposed against community-diminishing interaction, does provide specific processes we can investigate to redesign organizing in ways that benefit women (and men). However, each of these definitions frames community as a process that is difficult to enact or is devalued. None challenge traditional power imbalances and supply ways to socially construct community on a daily basis.

Community as Dialectic—Implications for Research and for Change

The study and development of community can be enhanced by use of a dialectic approach. In this section, issues for research and mechanisms for

change are intermingled. If we understand how to change our language to realistically create community, we can weaken glass ceiling processes and effects. Somewhere between autonomy and interdependence lies community as an interactional and contextual dialectic process. Community is the process of valuing relationships and meeting self and other needs. To discuss community as dialectic, this section describes dialectic processes, suggests four research approaches for altering gender ideologies within community, and speculates on social scientific and critical research agendas.

Community as dialectic can be compared to the "community of otherness" (Arnett, 1986, p. xv) and to more microscopic interactional and contextual dialectics characterizing U.S. friendships (Rawlins, 1992). The "community of otherness" recognizes that there are many different points of view but there are common concerns that balance commitment to people (women and men), to self, to principles, and to organizations. The challenge is to recognize differences as manifestations of real human beings and to engage in dialogue that creatively incorporates the tensions inherent in multiple commitments. In both interactive and contextual relational dialectics, interactants are vulnerable to strains and recognize their power of choice to manage change. Interactional dialectics include freedoms: to be independent and dependent, to exhibit/feel affection and instrumentality, to communicate judgment and acceptance, and to exhibit expressiveness and protectiveness. Contextual dialectics include the private and the public as well as the ideal and real (Rawlins, 1992).

Dialectic enactments of community are difficult to sustain. Some reasons why secular utopian communities in the 1800s did not survive were their inability to manage contradictions in autonomy-connection and to develop language that enlarged gender (Kolmerten, 1990). Likewise, as women and men in 19th Century Quaker reform movements absorbed mainstream ideologies of domesticity, separation of public-private spheres, and female moral superiority, they lost gender equality (Hewitt, 1986). At the present time, individuals who do not view community as continual dialectic tensions can become caught in subordination of their own needs (self-victimization; Rich, 1979) and protection for others' incompetence under the guise of caring (Lugones & Spelman, 1987).

To achieve enactment of community-as-dialectic, we investigate how bifurcated gender hinders community development. We can analyze and learn how to negotiate the tensions underlying maintenance of self and of other using four main perspectives for research and societal change. Each method can be studied in the social scientific tradition to determine the efficacy of the approach and the time frame for effectiveness. Each can be scrutinized from a critical perspective to determine if discursive practices continue to constrain community.

One way of revaluing community is by demonstrating how caring is accomplished in different masculinities and feminities. Caring involves interactional dialectics that balance affective and instrumental goals and freedoms. At present, gender ideology aligns "caring for" and "caring about," or service and affection, with women's work (Rakow, 1992). To realign gender thinking and language with community behaviors, we can use varied strategies from different feminist perspectives and transformation models (Buzzanell, 1993). We also can develop and implement comprehensive programs, such as those envisioned by Wood (1994), for forming and informing U.S. "cultural priorities as well as

particular social conditions, practices, and language behaviors that preclude or encourage caring for others" (p. 143).

Second, strategic responses to contradiction in dialectic research suggest how community might be sustained. These responses direct interactants to: recognize the limitations of selecting one pole (e.g., judgment) rather than the other (e.g., acceptance), use time and space in managing dialectics such as disclosure versus privacy, and integrate opposing tendencies (Baxter, 1988). Integration can be accomplished through moderation (use of neutralized messages biased toward neither polarity), disqualification (avoidance of either polarity), and reframing (attempts to redefine contradictions and transcend the dualisms) (Baxter, 1988, p. 261). Awareness of daily behaviors can assist organizational men and women in managing dialectic tensions. For example, Helgesen (1990) describes how successful women executives manage dialectics by incorporating time to be alone and time to enjoy spontaneity in their schedules while maintaining productive environments.

The third way of re-valuing community and enhancing understanding of glass ceiling processes and effects is through reframing. Putnam and Holmer (1992) describe frames as references that enable conflict interactants to construct meaning and make sense of situations by altering fields of vision to reveal different vantage points. Putnam and Holmer (1992) discuss three divergent bodies of literature that focus on framing negotiations: frame categories that link cognitive changes with interactions over time; issue development that reveals how interactants' discourse indicates their definitions of concerns, problems, and agenda items; and, cognitive heuristics that display information processing and decision biases.

In the case of the glass ceiling, these reframing processes can be utilized as data for research and as mechanisms for change. Reframing assumes that language creates reality that can then promote conscious choice and community change. For instance, Helgesen (1990) describes female leaders' conscious selection of organization images such as the web metaphor and explores how these linguistic choices become enacted interactively. In addition, Morgan (1993) urges manager's use of action-based metaphors to "forge our relationships with the world" (p. 277) and create visions for desirable change in self-designing organizations. Finally, Clair (1993b) describes how rhetorical framing devices in sexual harassment narratives reproduce the dominant ideology but also offer potential means for emancipation.

Fourth, value realignment can aid research in understanding of and change in the glass ceiling by delineating different levels of values associated with women, organizations, and careers and by creating arguments to reposition value premises (Zarefsky, 1993). Creating values that acknowledge contributions of women and diverse workforce members would fundamentally shift organizational cultures, the ways in which we do work and gender, and imperatives from organizational to cooperative (Mitchell & Scott, 1990).

Zarefsky (1993) offers several suggestions for conducting value realignments that can be used to counter biases against and devaluation of organizational women. One strategy is to argue "that one value is preferred over the other because it makes it possible to achieve both, or because it is a prerequisite for the other" (p. 228). In organizations, community-enhancing behaviors can (a)

establish "family-friendly" workplaces that make recruitment and retention much easier and (b) promote intra– and inter–organizational collaborative interactions that increase strategic competitive advantage. Zarefsky's second strategy, *ad hominem* arguments, demonstrates that logical extension of an opposing position leads to results inconsistent with the position, such as the insistence on competition in an organization that "values diversity" but that does not respect alternative ways of doing work. Using his third value strategy, women could suggest that their values are preferred because they maximize other common values that are more highly ranked in the organizational imperative. For example, in stereotypical feminine values, women rank family over career and self. However, research findings indicate that both organizational men and women increasingly emphasize family needs in career decisions (Shellenbarger, 1991). To recruit and retain high performing members, organizations often bridge work-family issues. As a final value strategy, value appeals could rely on societal or organizational precedent. Value appeals promoting community could emphasize research that demonstrates how individual and corporate self-centeredness are detrimental to our daily lives and to society as a whole (Kohn, 1992; Schlender, 1992).

In sum, feminist organizational communication researchers can create awareness of and promote community as an ongoing dialectic process. By re-valuing women's contributions and offering models for how people manage tensions of negotiating self and other concerns, we may fundamentally alter organizational life. As feminist organizational communication researchers, we have the tools to investigate how organizations as discursive sites subordinate women. As feminists, we have an obligation to develop programs of inquiry that suggest how community can be integrated realistically in organizational communication theory, research, and practice. As long as community-enhancing behaviors are invisible or are valued less than reward-linked actions, women who choose to enact them will experience glass ceiling processes and effects. In principle, valuing of community-enhancing behaviors should promote recognition of women's contributions because community respects individuals regardless of sex. However, even if there is no overt contribution to an organization's bottom line, these activities must become visible because many women invest energy into these activities knowing that they are valuable. Others may not see their importance until: these activities stand out against the backdrop of other everyday interactions; women deliberately stop doing these activities; community–diminishing strategies become visible to researchers and to organization members; or community-enhancing behaviors within alternative settings, such as collectivist organizations, become visible. Once we see how members negotiate community on a daily basis, we may be able to translate our understandings and findings to other organizational situations.

Alternative Members

The third traditional approach to the glass ceiling emphasizes strategies for developing women's advancement potential and visibility in organizations. These tactics are based on assumptions that short-term changes alone will lead to increased female representation at top levels and that women will act like and be treated like men. Rather than attempting to transform women into men or

giving women the same experiences as men, we need to value women and their experience *as an end in itself*, just as we do with men. By starting with women we move from the linear problem-solving mode associated with masculine orientations and investigate what is logical from women's viewpoints. This third alternative suggests that by valuing the complexity of women's lives and feelings from these women's own viewpoints, we may enlarge our thoughts, language, and discourse practices about gender. By shifting our focus from quick fix strategies to understandings of how differential treatment occurs, we may be able to show how power imbalances are embedded in much deeper levels of human cognition and language.

Feminist perspectives provide us with epistemological, ontological, and methodological approaches to investigate women's everyday lives. Two feminist perspectives are particularly advantageous for this discussion because one requires in-depth contextual analyses of ordinary experiences (standpoint feminism) while the other offers broader cultural and epistemological reasons for women's subordination (postmodern feminism). Both of these feminisms challenge common sense assumptions and practices; both reject mainstream social science that essentializes and marginalizes women. As such, these feminisms are philosophically incompatible with social science. hooks (1994) writes, "women and men cannot create unbiased scholarship—or even challenge sexism in the workplace and in other aspects of their daily lives—without an understanding of feminist thought grounded in historical knowledge of gender relations and in theoretical argument" (p. A44). Therefore, in this third alternative, I focus on critical research and change. However, I use a research technique borrowed from social science, turning points, to develop awareness of discriminatory practices and results. Once organizational members begin to understand turning points and emotions associated with glass ceiling processes and effects, we may have a foundation to create change.

Feminist Standpoint Theory and Turning Points

In this section, I discuss feminist standpoint epistemologies and then focus on a research method, turning points, that can be used to direct research and change. Feminist standpoint theory argues that all women do not share the same life experiences, cultural practices, and social relations with the result that no one feminism or group of women can speak for the whole (Harding, 1987b; Wood, 1992). Our standpoints externalize women's struggles to "see beneath the appearances created by an unjust social order to the reality of how this social order is in fact constructed and maintained" (Harding, 1991, p. 127). We develop this awareness by exploring African American, Latina, and other ethnic and minority women's own distinct experiences with and understandings of organizational life. For instance, Kramarae (1992) displays how verbal sexual harassment for women of color differs from European American women's accounts because of meanings based on race, history, and class. hooks (1981) describes African American women's often futile attempts to earn the same respect accorded to middle and upper class European American women. Bell et al. (1993) discuss how corporate women of color are disadvantaged through racial and ethnic stereotypes that inhibit interactions. From a feminist critical inquiry tradition, we can use these standpoints to develop research and change

mechanisms that address how glass ceiling processes and effects are manifest for different women within specific contexts. There are many methods that can be used to investigate women's glass ceiling experiences but turning points offer one beginning.

Baxter and Bullis (1986) define turning points as "any event or occurrence that is associated with change in a relationship" (p. 470). These events in adult friendships emerge conspicuously on some occasions but less noticeably on others (Rawlins, 1992). Relational turning point literature offers ways to position events, metacommunication, relational outcomes, and feelings within the time frames of women's lives. However, if we operationalize turning points as external events and as patterns of relational change but do not use richer methods to investigate underlying premises and common sense gender constructions, we would not present the thick description needed for standpoint understandings.

Implications for Research and for Change. We have anecdotal and case study evidence attesting to the importance of glass ceiling turning points and talk. Posner (1992) documents the "final straws" when she says that, "for most women, leaving is just the end result of years of frustration and dissatisfaction, . . . frequently precipitated by specific episodes or experiences" (p. 100). Researchers document workplace turning points such as losing a mentor and facing the workplace "alone," having children, recognizing physical and emotional isolation in the workforce, puzzling interviews or conversations, seeing that others are doing major portions of tasks in your territory, and acknowledging that exhaustion is the price for women who work two jobs (Hochschild, 1989; Milwid, 1990; Moore, 1986). Frequently, turning point recognition occurs when women are "five or six years out of school" (Moore, 1986, p. 3). This time frame fits only educated European American women's experiences. We have no comparable discussions of time frames or of turning point reasons for women of color.

If we used turning point methodology as a first step in investigating organizational women's standpoints, we might question: why and how some women are consciously aware of interactions that subordinate them; how organization members respond to and initiate gendered, sexist, or discriminatory messages; in which ways specific groups of organization women are reminded daily of their second class status because of sex, gender, race, and class; and what relational interactions precede and follow turning point recognition. We have a few research exemplars that explore turning points, language, and discursive practices. These examples demonstrate how women express and silence personally significant passages.

In the first exemplar, J. Martin's (1990, 1991) turning point is her standpoint expression, that is, her achievement of seeing and of discussing organizing processes without illusion. J. Martin talks about her initial inability to account for her uneasiness when listening to corporate messages glorifying women's contributions. Essentially, she found that rereadings of corporate stories to deconstruct the real message helped her to understand what was "wrong" when the talk was "right." Examples of women's conscious subordination of their own interests can be found in Weedon's (1987) and Wood's (1994) work. Wood (1994) describes her mother's transformation from energetic stockbroker to

"proper" mother and wife in the 1950s. Wood asks not only how her mother could have "sealed off so much of who she was" but also how she could have survived with any contentment had she not lived the life others defined for her (p. 38). Through turning points combined with other methods, we can investigate how language and gender ideologies create discursive practices and organizing processes that keep women in their feminine roles and keep the glass ceiling intact.

Implications for change can be derived from the insights turning points analyses may provide. We do not know how, when, and why different women become aware of their marginalization or how they respond to their devaluation. To create awareness among organizational members who doubt the significance and the pervasiveness of women's turning point experiences, we could identify turning point types. These lists alone would not supply the situated understandings needed for standpoint understandings but they suggest areas for exploration and change. With the assistance of trained facilitators, organizational members could discuss ways of addressing these turning points and of responding to detailed cases (see Burgas, 1991, for implementation strategies). To see how we could accomplish this reeducation, we could use a case study such as Mock and Bruno's (1994) narration of different case characters' and expert analysts' opinions about promoting a (presumably European American) pregnant executive. In this case, Diane's boss "couldn't see an obvious way to deal with her leave" (p. 18). He is frustrated at Diane's "lousy" timing with a new product launch; his colleague questions "how reliable she'll be when she comes back"; and Diane argues that she is the same committed employee despite maternity (pp. 16–18). What is left unsaid is that motherhood and work do not mix. Although the boss admits to Diane that she is the only qualified candidate, he offers her no assurances. One expert chastises Diane for not realizing how much energy motherhood demands. As readers, we never hear how she analyzes her experience and how her awareness of gendered communication changes (or fails to change) her thinking about work, family, and career because we focus on the "real" (promotion) issues.

From an organizational perspective, glass ceiling turning points would provide a means of examining critical experiences in different women's work lives that may lead to outcomes, such as memos about sexism (Reardon, 1993), decreased organizational identification (Bullis & Bach, 1989), low self esteem among professional caregivers (Wood, 1994), and alienation. This alienation sometimes becomes so severe that women self-select themselves out by starting their own businesses (Leach, 1993). By feeling as though they have no choice but to resign, these women may lessen the numbers of women who could advance to top levels and could create corporate change. Understanding standpoints and gender-related turning points cannot result in corporate and governmental policy applicable to all women, but it may provide some insights into effects of specific policies on groups of women.

Postmodern Feminism and Emotion

A second avenue for valuing organizational women is a focus on emotion. Traditionally, women are linked with emotion in ways that devalue the understandings we would gain from exploring women's (and men's) feeling expres-

sions. Planalp (1993) believes that recognition and exploration of emotional responses can promote change: "If we want to *move* people, we must study e-*motion* because it is pathos combined with logos and ethos that changes people, for good or for ill" (p. 6, italics in original). Planalp argues that communication may be the most important route to changing emotions and, secondarily, to changing the ways we think and evaluate. Rather than analyzing the glass ceiling logically, rationally, and efficiently with a focus toward solutions, we could engage in an emotion/feeling perspective of organizing. In this section, I outline some aspects of postmodern feminism to provide a framework for linking emotion to the glass ceiling. Next, I suggest implications for research and for change.

Postmodern feminists discredit synthesis and take the stance of the "Other," the outsider who critiques social practices, values, and norms by deconstructing taken–for–granted and traditional boundaries/oppositions such as reason/emotion, public/private, work/family, and male/female (Mumby, 1993; Tong, 1989). Our language about organizing has centered on only half of our lives in ways that have prompted thinking and policies to separate our work lives from other life aspects. In Fineman's (1993a) collection of essays on emotion in organizations, one theme emerges clearly and consistently. That is, emotion is rarely incorporated into discussions of organizational life. As such, we truly do not understand why and how people construct their lives within and outside organizations.

If we define "emotional" as the opposite of "rational," then we limit our understandings of how the glass ceiling is perpetuated. Throughout this essay, I have argued that the glass ceiling can be traced back to one observable human characteristic, biological sex, in an area of life, work, that is supposedly guided by rationality. Our corporate language espouses fairness and rational decision making whereas our organizational and social experiences are based on gender and corresponding power imbalances. Through emotions, we may find the language to make detrimental glass ceiling processes and effects visible and changeable.

Emotions concerning the glass ceiling surface, in part, because recognition of glass ceiling processes and effects peel back layers of taken-for-granted assumptions about corporate life, myths of competence, and equality. The depth of frustration expressed by women can only surface in situations where women have given their all—their commitment, their time, their best efforts, their selves battling against sexualized environments, their obvious hope that they can make the difference—and have recognized that they failed to equalize power imbalances. The frustrations are feelings of victimization and self-recognition as well as grief for what could have been. The destructive element to the glass ceiling lies in the emotional and alienating aspects of the glass ceiling—for every time women are bypassed for well-deserved promotions, they call themselves into question and wonder why they were not good enough. And there is no corporate answer because the reason lies in *what they are not* and cannot ever be—it lies in their sex, in language that continually relegates women's interests secondary to those of men, and in gendered workplace and social relationships.

Implications for Research and for Change. With regard to implications for research, there is a small, emerging body of research on emotion in organizational life that uses different methods. In most studies, researchers focus on the analysis and consequences of separating learned and spontaneous emotion. Some researchers describe organizational control mechanisms that constrict expression of genuine emotion (Sutton, 1991), whereas most relate appropriate emotional display to task accomplishment and organizational goals (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). Ashford and Humphrey (1993) dichotomize emotion into spontaneous/genuine emotion and emotional labor/display of appropriate work emotion. However, none investigate how emotions are expressed by women, how women use emotions to make daily and pivotal life decisions (or understand themselves), and which emotions are associated with the social construction of glass ceiling phenomena.

Women's complex emotional responses are documented in cases, such as those by Hochschild (1989) and Reardon (1993), but are rarely the subject of investigation in and of themselves. One notable exception is Hochschild's (1983) investigation of flight attendant's emotion work, the channeling of feelings displays or emotional states into appropriate social enactments, and how this gendered work often produces estrangement and alienation from self. Mumby and Putnam (1992) also examine how emotional alienation fragments the individual. They describe the ideal situation as one in which "work feelings are *spontaneous and emergent;* they are not directed to particular instrumental goals, but rather are outgrowths of relationships and interpretive schemes" (pp. 477–478).

Returning to Planalp's (1993) argument, we also can explore emotion as an initial step in making change in glass ceiling processes and effects. Schwartz (1992) notes that organizations have failed to make real change for women because of the "conspiracy of silence [that] precludes discussing the matter openly" (p. 106). We can promote emotional understanding of what it means and how it feels to be marginalized, silenced, and devalued over and over again. Ways of feeling are also ways of knowing and living. Glass ceiling phenomena continue because men (and women) choose not to see how unjust social and organizational practices affect their mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, and other family members. By understanding what these feelings and self-doubts do to the self-worth of a workforce whose competence is never fully and consistently acknowledged, we can find ways to create change.

Implications for change are varied. Underlying discussions of women's emotions are the ways in which our language about gender corresponds with areas of our lives that we must hide from ourselves to remain sane (e.g., Wood's, 1994, mother's "acceptance" of her job termination and of her nonworking self; Hochschild's, 1989, couples who talk egalitarianism despite obvious home work imbalances). We can affect change by pushing for full recognition of the limitations on women's choices through education and through women's group discussions. Fineman (1993b) opens our eyes to social creation of emotion in the workplace and the many ways in which we develop organizational cultures that either can help us enact our fully human selves or can limit our emotional expression. Limiting our emotional expression may have serious consequences. According to Offermann and Armitage (1993), women seem to exhibit greater

propensity toward Type A personality characteristics associated with hostility, anger, and aggression and correlated with coronary heart disease and stress-related illnesses. Offermann and Armitage (1993) present a multifaceted model with corresponding research that highlights social system, organizational, and "personological" stressors faced by female managers. Many of these stressors can be traced to our thinking and language about gender.

CONCLUSION

The glass ceiling is both a process and a consequence of traditional gendered interactions in organizational settings. Through glass ceiling processes and effects, we can investigate how women have been discriminated against—not by laws or unequal corporate advancement—but by the ways women and men socially enact gender identities in their everyday organizational lives. The foundations for this social creation of gender are language and discursive practices that normalize and reinforce distinct masculine and feminine experiences, expectations, and values. This investigation conducts feminist communication research as praxis. First, I critique the usual approaches to and organizational practices associated with the glass ceiling. This step creates awareness, movement from a mindless acceptance of unjust conditions to conscious engagement in the world. This analysis reveals that viewing the glass ceiling from a positivist ontological perspective forever limits us to: increasing female representation in top organizational positions, locating reasons behind unequal organizational participation and advancement, and developing new and better strategies to provide for women what is informally and unquestioningly accorded to men. While these tactics have made surface changes, they have failed to alter fundamentally the gendered motif of organizational life. They divert attention from the real issues and consequences of glass ceiling processes and effects.

The root issues and consequences must be examined from a feminist communication perspective situated within a social constructionist ontological stance. Feminism urges us to start from women's daily experiences and question every instance in which we think about, or fail to think about, gender. However, it is difficult to acknowledge and confront the ways we ordinarily "do gender" because they are embedded in language. The next stage in research as praxis is active engagement in locating alternatives for research and for change.

In this second half, I focus on change by advocating programmatic communication research conducted in feminist social scientific and critical traditions. By investigating gendered communication surrounding alternative settings (innovative organizational forms), processes (community-as-dialectic, community-building), and organization members (women's turning points and emotions), we can expose how our communication associated with traditional settings (hierarchical structures), processes (enactment of reasons to exclude women), and organization members (men's experiences as normative) blind us to the need for radical changes in our organizing.

This second section simultaneously presents contrastive research contexts and possibilities for change. The goal of praxis is to free individuals from social constraints in their thinking, interacting, and organizing. If accomplished in this article, then we cannot return to traditional ways of talking about and of constructing gender. Rather, praxis means that we engage in explorations of the

tensions between what is and what can be. Some ways to explore these tensions in "doing gender" organizationally are presented in this article.

ENDNOTES

[1]Most of the statistics, research, and recommendations on the glass ceiling described in this paper are derived from analyses of middle-class European American women's experiences. As such, there are very few descriptions of African American, Latina, and other women's glass ceiling experiences (for exceptions see: Bell et al., 1993; McGuire & Reskin's, 1993, study based on 1980 data). Glass ceiling research on Asian American and Native American women is practically nonexistent (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). These women of color may not be doubly disadvantaged, but they are certainly differently disadvantaged from white women.

[2]There are such profound differences among social science and postmodern epistemologies and methods that many would argue they are incompatible. Postmodernism challenges social scientific assumptions of and methods grounded in generalizability, essentialism, and objective truth by valuing ranges of differences. Rather than advocating research in one area only, I suggest exploration in areas of conflict and possibility. Some researchers who are bridging multiple perspectives include: Fraser's (1987) democratic/socialist/feminist approach that incorporates empirically based analyses drawing heavily from postmodern approaches, Steeves' (1987) assessment of how feminisms can contribute to mainstream media studies, Foss and Foss's (1989) push toward pluralism, Lorber's (1994) deliberate mixing of feminist and social scientific theory and research to achieve a "coherent picture of gender as a process of social construction" (p. 5), Bem's (1993) and Flax's (1990) theoretical syntheses to account for the systemic reproduction of male power, and Morgan's (1983) perspective of science as possible modes of engagement.

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