

How Do We Intervene in the Stubborn Persistence of Patriarchy in Communication Scholarship?

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International Communication Association (ICA) scholars have been on the forefront of hot button issues that cut across all spectra of the communication discipline. From Twitter wars, outrageous Uber, and fake news to populist governance and datafication regimes more broadly, at the 2017 annual conference we heard talks, saw posters, and interacted with digital platforms that grounded the ‘now’ in longer trajectories of inequality, discrimination, and power disparities. These interventions seem more needed than ever to us at this critical juncture. The vicious return of outright expressions of sexism, racism, and nativism have hit us on our home campuses, while more subtle forms of hierarchy have expressed themselves in the guise of precarious labor practices and endless assessment exercises. We are grateful to have ICA as a space where we confront these systemic problems head on.

Now perhaps we can look in the mirror?

For all the formal attention dedicated at ICA 2017 to the discipline’s status and role in the crises of the current conjuncture, the informal conversations we participated in during the week revealed the *stubborn persistence of power regimes over our own disciplinary knowledge*. These regimes are organized both vertically, in terms of who writes disciplinary knowledge, and horizontally, in terms of who is *cited* in the canonical summaries of the discipline. This insight, which one of us has applied in the realm of film production crews and research grant programs (Verhoeven & Palmer, 2016), exemplifies how power operates through measures of scale and connectedness within labor clusters (Verhoeven, 2016)—of which academia certainly is one. We feel them subjectively, but more importantly, they act as structural impediments to benefit white

CIS men in academia, particularly as online citation indices join authorship statistics as prominent factors in faculty hiring, evaluation, and promotions. “Citations of your work [...] are an important factor in determining your track record,” scribes Timothy Smith (2013) in *The Conversation*. “They can be thought of (rather crudely) as the intellectual equivalent of Facebook “likes”. Someone who publishes a lot, but isn’t cited often, is like that friend we all have that posts a lot but has nothing interesting to say.”

As Danica Savonick and Cathy Davidson (2017) point out in their annotated bibliographic review of gender and bias in academia, “Several recent social science research studies, using strictly controlled methodologies, suggest that these first-person accounts of discrimination are representative, not simply anecdotal.” Lack of peer citation may seem petty to those who insist their authorial choices are freely chosen and unbiased. Yet, those choices reverberate in an era of “perverse incentives and hypercompetition” for citations, motivating scholars towards copious self-citation and the insularity of knowledge within closed peer groups (Edwards & Roy, 2017). Women, queer and trans people, and people of color have been the victims of these processes.

It’s time for an intervention.

Who Are the People in our Neighborhood?

We can begin the intervention with the recognition that, once examined systematically, we find gender and other intersectional forms of bias in our discipline of diverse interests and subfields. In the vast and burgeoning environment for academic publishing in the Internet age, new volumes have proliferated (Thompson, 2005), promising to be references for communication and many of its divisions (e.g., in ICA there are Political Communication, Media Studies, Organizational Communication, etc.). Offered primarily in the form of encyclopedias and

handbooks, these reference books allow Wiley, Sage, Oxford, and Routledge, international publishing houses for communication, to easily monetize academic outputs by selling entire sets to institutions, while morselizing profits via discrete articles sold separately to individuals, especially students. The electronic distribution of these volumes inflates the profit stream through institutional subscription models, much as journals have over the past decade (pp. 322-324). Universities maintain these investments for their efficiency, increasingly in lieu of print editions.

Each of us have spearheaded the collection of authors and articles for such publications and can relay the difficulties of coordinating thirty or more authors to deliver their best work, often unpaid, on a press schedule. Despite the challenges, though, these collections serve as important invitations to enter disciplinary conversations. Wiley alone offers 26 *Handbooks in Communication and Media* dating back to 2008. The volume titles reflect both traditional communication fields, such as rhetoric and intercultural communication, and emerging fields of interest, such as children and media, psychology and communication technologies, and financial communication. Indeed, ICA now has a division called Children, Adolescents and Media and interest groups for Mobile Communication and Media Industries, which might suggest that there is at least some relationship between these published collections and the formation or legitimation of research communities. Anecdotally, an Australian colleague noted that these overviews of communication are essential to international graduate students who need concise overviews of the literature beyond their country of origin. We ourselves enjoy editing and writing the summaries of our own sub-fields as a service to our peers and as a celebration of our colleagues with whom we have co-authored, debated ideas, and cited in our work.

Yet, these multiplying numbers of reference guides seem unrelated to the *pluralism* of their contents. As A. Suresh Canagarajah (2002, p. 33) notes in his overview of the geopolitics of academic writing, “The increase in avenues for publication, should not, however, suggest that the publishing field is getting more democratized.” To illustrate, we chose to look more closely at one reference collection, *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* (2016), which purports to be the ICA’s “definitive reference work on communication theory and philosophy.”¹ Published in 2016 by Wiley, the online and print collection promises to be both current and comprehensive, both cross-national and cross-disciplinary, and in short, “the ultimate resource for scholarly reflection on key issues in the discipline, covering the history, systematics, and potential of communication theory.” Theory and philosophy arguably are foundational to the study of communication, regardless of sub-field, school of thought, or geographic region, so this seems to be a place to see whether the scuttle at the conference had some empirical merit.

Though a purportedly holistic guide to the field, few of the 272 reference articles in the Encyclopedia are written by or about women. We focus on gender primarily, both because of the available data and the relative ease in identifying authors through biographic statements, but suffice it to say the presence of nonwhite or queer authors was also minimal.² Women were named as author or as co-author in fewer than 20 percent of all the articles. Although 40 articles themselves are dedicated to male communication scholars, *not a single* woman was judged prominent enough to merit an entry on her own. Instead, this issue of gender diversity gets a nod in articles, such as “Feminism,” “Feminist Theory,” and “Women in Communication Research.” In the editors’ topical organization of the volume, these latter two entries are disciplinary

“traditions,” while “Feminism” resides in the “ideas” category. The impact of this taxonomy becomes more apparent under a finer lens.

Just to cherry-pick an example close to our hearts we can point to the male-authored article “Audiences” in the *Encyclopedia* (Butsch 2016). As women who were part of a wave of feminist scholars involved in media reception analysis in the 1980s and 1990s, we were disheartened to see only Ien Ang and Sonia Livingstone as the only female lead authors worthy of mention in a reference list of more than 30 names. This is particularly galling in light of recent historiographies that show women were at the forefront of groundbreaking audience research and theory at the U.S. Office of Radio Research (ORR) and the Bureau of Applied Social Research (Rowland & Simonson, 2014). The seeming absence of women in such a highly-gendered field of knowledge production raises all sorts of interesting personal dilemmas for those of us who see marginalization as strikingly as meritocracy in the discourses of academic production. Were the omitted authors in the references of the “Audiences” article not worthy of mention? What was the bar for being cited? Is it just knowing other authors, which would mean the mostly male authors of these overview articles are more likely to cite others like themselves? Would the overall evaluations of certain fields change if they incorporated the insights of those excluded in their reviews? We don’t know the answers to these questions, but we do know, to modify an Oscar Wilde quote to our context, “There is only one thing in [academic] life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.”

Systematic Erasures

Who writes, who self-cites, and who gets cited, are, of course, all questions that can be answered empirically. We are not alone in asking them. Most of the focus has been on gender bias, though race is more prominent in recent studies (e.g. Chakravarty et. al., 2018) and sexuality is on the

horizon. Jonathan Cole and Harriet Zuckerman (1984) long ago noted that men and women scientists exhibited extremely different patterns of publication. Following up on this research in 1990, Catherine Lutz noted the tendency for women social scientists to be cited far less frequently than are men, even in a majority-female field such as anthropology. Lutz writes:

Examination of the abundant writing by women and feminists in sociocultural anthropology suggests that it is partially "erased" by evaluative or canon-setting practices, including the citation. [...] Women have relatively high rates of receipt of grants (34 percent of the total number of NSF awards in the period 1980-86), of participation as organizers of meetings symposia where they are self-selected (47 percent), and of invitation to panels (45 percent), including invitation to serve as discussants (41 percent). Women also have high rates of journal article and book writing (32 percent in 1982-86 and 29 percent in 1986, respectively). Citation rates, however, are low--18 percent for 1982-86--and have remained level for the last four years of that period. (Lutz, 1990, p. 622)

Even closer to home, Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick and Carroll J. Glynn (2013) found that in a corpus of 1,020 articles published from 1991 to 2005 in *Communication Research* and the *Journal of Communication*, women received far less recognition for their articles in terms of citation rates. Although 40 percent of the articles featured lead female authors, those articles received approximately two-thirds fewer citations than those by male lead authors. From their results, they conclude that even if women have published more in the top communication

journals, a partial effect of the blind-peer-review process, their achievements are still ghettoized and underrepresented in elite scholarly networks.

These biases cut across all communication fields. As just one example, we looked at the first 100 articles of the *Encyclopedia*. These cover letters A to F, encompassing both “Feminism,” and “Feminist Theory” as well as overviews of “Epistemology” and “Communication Theory.” If we take the gender of the first author for these entries alone, a mere 16 out of 100 articles were first-authored by women.³ The entirety of the 100 articles cite references by 1015 individuals, counting only single authors or the first named authors in co-authored studies, and excluding anonymous or institutionally authored works. Our analysis of these numbers is revealing. Women cite other women (first-authors) at more than twice the rate of men: 34 percent of the time versus 13 percent of the time.

<i>Citations of Communication Scholars by Gender</i>	No. of Cited Female Authors in References (%)	No. of Cited Male Authors in References (%)	No. of Cited Unidentified Authors in References (%)
<i>Female Authors (n=16)</i>	84 (34%)	160 (66%)	0 (0%)
<i>Male Authors (n = 84)</i>	156 (13%)	1012 (86%)	2 (>1%)

As our analysis starkly shows, men were not only more likely to be lead authors (84% of the time), they were more likely to cite other men as the icons of communication theory in the official ICA reference work on the topic. Even adjusting for more recent works, the rate of citation hardly changes. Publications after 1990, following Susan Faludi’s (1991) consciousness-

raising invective to fight a feminism backlash, have the dubious honor of belonging to the era when women supposedly won equal status with men. Hooray. In referencing terms, male first-authors can congratulate themselves for citing women 17 percent of the time (126 times out of 749 citations). Yet female first-authors cited women nearly 47 percent of the time (69 times out of 148 citations). One final irony in the corpus is that in the two instances in which authors misattributed a reference to an author, in both cases a male author was inserted in the place of a female author.⁴ Here we have a clear case of the Matilda effect that Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn described in which women's achievements are attributed instead to male colleagues!

The differences become starker when including other vectors of inequality. While we were not able to consider and cross examine the data in terms of racial identities, the dearth of women of color listed as references in the *Encyclopedia* points to the added invisibility of intersectionality in communication scholarship. With exception of the article "Critical Race Theory" as the obvious outlier, the relative absence of race in general, and women of color in particular, speaks to the "hierarchy of visibility and value" (Chakravarty, et. al., 2018) embedded in the ways knowledge is produced, reproduced, and canonized in the field.

It is rather astonishing to us that we find in our analysis here very little change in this situation, despite the overall progress which has been made by women academics since 1990 (Toutkoushian, 1999). Although women are more represented at each rank level, our data illustrate that there is still a noticeable gap in how frequently they are cited. There are competing theories in the literature analyzing women's careers in academe as to why this might be so. One theory that has been researched extensively is the idea that networks are extremely gendered, that women network less (or, that women tend to network with other women primarily), and that networks are crucial to being cited by others (Leahey, 2006). Another complication specific to

the social sciences is that for decades in fields such as anthropology, sociology, and communication studies, when women did specialize, they tended often to be identified with work in gender and feminist studies, a specialization that was often more isolated than others from the mainstream of the field. This is reproduced in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy*, where as we've mentioned, women's contributions are condensed to the "ghettos" of Feminism, Gender Theory, and Women in Communication Research, as though in 2016 women's contributions to the field are still contained to these areas. Erin Leahey (2006, p. 617) recounts several "canon-setting" anthropological overviews that left women out entirely when recounting important work in the field, in part for this reason. A further complication is that women tend to possess less cultural capital than men so, when they enter the academe, they often end up at less prestigious schools, in less prestigious positions, all of which is linked to publishing in outlets which tend to receive fewer citations (Weeden, 2002). "The overall results of these patterns in scholarly communication may be cumulative, leading to an inability for female scholars to forward themselves in their academic careers," conclude Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn (2013, p. 22).

Interventions: Wanted and Unwanted

ICA has come a long way (baby), but structural inequalities do not topple with an invective against 'manels' (male-only panels) or more 8 a.m. slots for new interest groups. It seems oddly quaint to raise the issue that in our supposedly post-feminist, post-racial era of complexity, gender, sexual, and racial inequality stubbornly remain in communication scholarship. Indeed, in an academic discipline dominated by female students (Bui, 2014), and for an international organization with so many prominent women scholars at the top of the organization, it is

astonishing that we should have to remind the membership of our presence in the discipline. For a generation of junior scholars familiar now with the critiques of ‘manels’ and ‘mansplaining’ why is patriarchy so damn persistent?

There is a certain double-edged quality to the results of our brief inquiry into the politics of publishing and citation, discussed among our networks in San Diego and then tracked a bit through ICA publications. In an organization of over 4,300 members in 2016-2017, 221 individuals were members of the Feminist Scholarship Division. Relatively few people identify with feminist communication scholarship enough to choose it over other labels not so wedded to a gender politics (Political Communication had 654 members in comparison). From our personal experiences, as well, it would seem female authors are finding it less advantageous to define their intellectual identity as being centrally about an identity, which might then marginalize them in their respective disciplines although as we have illustrated they can hardly avoid this ideational ghettoization even when they overtly try.⁵ Instead, many female scholars have moved to working on issues considered more central to the intellectual agendas of their disciplines, making it even more surprising that they remain less likely to be cited than their male colleagues.

On the one hand, no one wants to be pigeonholed as *just* a modifier. We are feminist scholars but we write communication research and scholarship, not just feminist communication scholarship. There is no reason why articles about feminism should only cite references by women, but such is true for articles on political communication, mass communication, journalism, political economy, and so on. Women’s work should be visible throughout ICA publications and sponsored research, because it has passed the same peer review standards as men; because it has shaped the ways we understand communication; because it is simply excellent.

On the other hand, feminism as a concept for communication scholars—and not just women—to acknowledge seems more relevant than ever. From our locations in the United States, Australia, and Canada, the resurgence of misogyny in the public sphere needs to be battled not just “out there” but at home in our professional organizations and divisions. We would expect that more of our colleagues interested in issues of power, equality, and diversity would be attending panels in the Feminist Scholarship and Ethnicity and Race Divisions, and the LGBTQ Studies interest group. We would expect our peers writing now on social change and structural imbalances, political subjectivities and subject making, affective politics and economies, social network analysis, among other hot topics to reference works by members of those ICA groups.

Here’s some starter strategies for what we are talking about (#makebakedissemminate for those cooking up solutions at home). First:

Make syllabi that represent the diversity of the field!

Then:

Bake it in the Ph.D. exams, and reading lists, and teaching pedagogies!

Finally:

Disseminate diversity in every panel, special journal issue, not to mention those hallowed handbooks and encyclopedias.

To fix the white CIS man problem, we need to apply pressure everywhere the field reproduces itself. We need faculty in departments to hold one another accountable for who is being taught in which courses, and to explain to students why diverse bibliographies are important as part of their pedagogy. Nobody should be allowed to pass a comprehensive exam or receive a PhD citing only (or close to only) white men. We need reviewers who will reject or send back for

revise-and-resubmit papers, panels, collections and book proposals with all cis, white male contributors or bibliographies. We need editorial boards who will make diversity an official policy for journals and books in the field. We can also do it informally, in suggestions to colleagues and students, in person, or over email. Or we can be funny, for example by contributing to memes popular in other fields, like “Congratulations, you have an all male panel!” or by creating an alt-speakers’ blog, such as *Women Also Know Stuff* in political science. We should organize and collaborate, drawing on existing models for feminist organizing, like Fembot and FemTechNet. And violators need to be held to account: if they are not working to diversify the field, they are part of the problem.

This chapter did not set out to use statistics to simply describe the status quo. Instead, we propose a collaborative, evidence-based intervention. Our data suggests that women and other marginalized scholars suffer from a “closure penalty” (Lutter, 2015) as a result of the cohesive networks of male authorship and citation evident in the key publication outlets for communication studies. Reducing the cohesion of these male authorship structures will have flow-on benefits for women’s careers in the discipline. Our intention, in the first instance, is to expose and open these patriarchal networks for future organizing. Rather than quantifying the absence of minorities or the lack of diversity we propose an unambiguous starting point – the quantification of white, CIS male dominance and its eradication. This is not about producing another bunch of *numbers*. This is about the *values* of our field.

We have watched strategies for improving inclusion and encouraging diversity come and go over many years. Almost invariably these strategies rest on notions of affirmative action, looking for ways to uplift the excluded out of the harsh focus of injustice into the softer, beneficent light of personal development (think mentoring, confidence training) and individual

interventions (be an ally, speak up, lean in). As our research demonstrates, these ideas have been completely ineffectual and have not resulted in the kinds of changes we want to see in our lifetime. It's time to shift the framework of the debate and our own focus.

What we urgently need is a detailed analysis and consequent series of actions focused on addressing the tenacity of patriarchy's operations of exclusion *at a structural level*. Significant and collective pressure needs to be brought to bear on ICA to stop men talking only to and about each other. There need to be clear conference policies and editorial guidelines, with measurable targets minimizing male dominance to achieve this. Other industries have achieved success in this way.⁶ Why is ours any exception?

We have the data. We know the names. So to those in the discipline we have approached with this matter at the conference who responded, "OK, OK I'll cite *you*," this is a warning. Next time, we'll name names.

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Endnotes

¹ Editors' note: One of the co-editors is a contributor to this publication.

² By bibliographic statements, we consulted professional autobiographical websites, author biographies on books and articles, as well as Wikipedia articles for posthumous authors. We considered 'trans' as a third gender category, but did not find evidence of a single trans author in our corpus as evidenced by the pronouns 'they/theirs' (see endnote 3).

³ We decided to assign gender of referenced articles and their citations based on the gender of the first author in the case of co-written articles. This decision is in keeping with the methodology of other gender bias studies mentioned here and the social scientific convention of naming the author with the most influence over the text first. Gender categories included 'male,' 'female' and 'unidentified.' Category labels were assigned using scholarly academic websites which referred to the gender of the author by pronoun (he/him or she/her). We did not find any evidence of an author referred to on an academic website by the non-binary pronouns 'they/theirs'. In two cases, gender could not be determined via this process. A special thank you

to Sarah Taylor at RMIT University for her assistance in developing the coding sheets in Excel for us. Coding data is available through the authors.

⁴ In the first case, the editor of a volume was mistaken for the author. In the second case, a source in the article mysteriously became an author. Anecdotally, we remind readers that the canonical book *The export of meaning: Cross-cultural readings of Dallas* (1993) was written by Liebes and Katz, not Katz and Liebes! This has been mis-cited too many times to count.

⁵ For example, it proved quite difficult to solicit contributions from scholars across the social sciences and the humanities for the Routledge volume *The Handbook of Contemporary Feminism* (Oren and Press 2018). Many scholars had moved away from defining their intellectual identities through their contribution to feminist theory. It was difficult to track down scholars who prioritized this work, and therefore saw a contribution to this collection as useful for their academic progress.

⁶ The Swedish Film Institute mandated equal gender funding in all film productions and hit their targets in record time (Byrnes, 2015).