

The Suppressed Voice Hypothesis in Women's Writing: Effects of Revision on Gender-Typical Style

Donald L. Rubin
The University of Georgia

Kathryn Greene
East Carolina University

I have observed what seem to me to be such womanly touches, in those moving fictions, that the assurance on the title-page is insufficient to satisfy me, even now. If they originated with no woman, I believe that no man ever before had the art of making himself, mentally, so like a woman . . .

—Charles Dickens (commenting on his first readings of George Eliot, quoted in Heller, 1992, p. 4)

Strong conceptual foundations undergird the supposition—like that expressed by Charles Dickens in the opening epigraph—that women and men write with distinct, gender-typical styles. Rubin and Greene (1992; see also Annas, 1987; chapters 6 and 8 of this volume) reviewed three bodies of literature that support the notion of gender-typical style in written language: (a) research on women's speech, (b) analyses of women's literature, and (c) theories of women's epistemologies. Extrapolating from work on gender differences in oral language, some analysts have postulated, for example, that women's writing is marked by especially frequent use of hedges (*sort of, almost*) that blunt the force of assertions (e.g., Lynch & Strauss-Noll, 1987; Taylor, 1978). Some examinations of literary language conclude that women's writing style—at least in fiction writing—is marked by grammatical parallelism and balance and also by some features of emotional expression (e.g., Hiatt, 1977). Inspired by theories of women's "ways of knowing," yet other scholars conclude that women's writing manifests a rhetorical style characterized by indirectness, narrative, and interpersonal connectiveness rather than confrontative argumentation (e.g., Cooper, 1989; Flynn, 1988).

These accounts of style in women's writing are conceptually compelling, but the empirical evidence upon which they draw bears closer scrutiny. Often the writing episodes used to explicate and illustrate the purported nature of women's writing are—quite naturally—anecdotal and deliberately selective (e.g., Lunsford & Ede, 1990). Moreover, a number of the anecdotal studies (e.g., Cooper, 1989), as well as some more social scientific investigations (e.g., Hunter et al., 1988), are flawed for yet another reason: They draw conclusions about gender-typical style without in fact comparing women's writing to men's. Indeed, a good deal of research on gender, such as the otherwise invaluable work of Gilligan (1982), suffers from failure to directly compare male responses with those of women (Crawford, 1989).

Those studies that employed more systematic methods to confirm gender differences in writing have collectively yielded mixed and often undramatic results. For example, two separate studies of male and female business writers (Smeltzer & Werbel, 1986; Sterkel, 1988) examined a wide range of text features, and neither detected any gender differences. Roen, Hansen, and Abordonado (chapter 6 of this volume) did find that women generally exceeded men in hedging their writing, particularly in hedging threats to face. But most expected differences did not arise in production of politeness units, nor even in expressions of women's epistemological stances.

On the other hand, Roulis (chapter 8 of this volume) infers from her findings that evaluators are in fact sensitive to some set of rhetorical features that must be distributed in gender-typical fashion. But her design does not identify exactly what those features may be. Mulac, Studley, and Blau (1990) did present one of the few compelling demonstrations of highly distinctive gender patterns in written language. In their study, impromptu writings were collected from 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade boys and girls. Each of the ages displayed a particular constellation of linguistic features that discriminated (with an impressive accuracy of about 85%) among boys and girls. For example, among high school seniors, uncertainty verbs, subordinating conjunctions, judgmental phrases, and sentence initial adverbs were all typical of male writing; whereas progressive verbs and fillers discriminated female from male. Moreover, these features of written language did also predict raters' impressions of the writers (again, see chapter 8 of this volume).

Unfortunately, it is difficult to impose conceptual coherence on the findings of Mulac and his colleagues (1990). Some of the linguistic features examined appear to be ad hoc choices, not clearly linked to gender in any theoretic way. This is the case, for example, for sentence initial adverbs. In addition, the list of features represents mixed and seemingly overlapping levels of linguistic analysis. We find oppositions ("It seems like a good idea, but it isn't") (Mulac et. al, 1990, p. 448) tabulated separately but alongside coordinating conjunctions (of which *but* is an instance). A final difficulty in interpreting these findings is the degree of inconsistency in the gender iden-

tity of particular linguistic features across the grade levels. For example, longer sentences are typical of boys in the fourth grade, but sentence length fails to discriminate among male and female writers in any of the other grades. Sentence initial adverbs are typical of 4th-grade girls, but in the 12th-grade they are typical of boys.

Rubin and Greene (1992) examined gender effects by taking into account not only biological gender, but also psychological gender role orientation (Bem, 1981). Characterizing women's writing were a prevalence of exclamation marks, "egocentric" formulae (e.g., *I guess, I think*), and certain hedges (auxiliaries of possibility, e.g., *could, might*). Women were also more likely than men to acknowledge some legitimacy to an opposing point of view (similar to two-sided argument).

These findings of Rubin and Greene (1992) must be interpreted in light of the full complement of results. First, it is important to recognize what was *not* found: Most candidate features were not found to be affected by the writer's biological or psychological gender. Even some features for which women showed greater affinity than men were not used by a *preponderance* of women. Only 24% of men writers acknowledged opposing points of view. In contrast, 52% of women writers did so. But it hardly seems reasonable to label a feature used by barely more than half the women a feature of "women's written language." Moreover, it is interesting to note that men in the Rubin and Greene study exhibited higher relative frequencies of certain features—first-person pronouns constitute one example—that had been conceptually linked to women's discourse. Finally, the amount of variance in language use that was attributable to gender was of much smaller magnitude than the amount of variance attributable to writing task (instrumental/persuasive vs. reflexive/expressive tasks). That is, writing task was a more powerful determinant of gender-typed style than was gender itself.

Several explanations may account for the disjunctures between grounded theory and empirical evidence for gender typing in written language. We must look to methodological inadequacies, first off. It may be that stylisticians are unable to adequately articulate and code subtle textual features that evoke women's (or men's) voice in writing. Rubin and Greene (1992), by way of illustration, expected that women would use more illustrator connectives (*such as, for example*) than men, because women's style has been portrayed as particularistic and experientially based. Contrary to that expectation, men produced a significantly higher frequency of illustrators. This finding properly signifies less than what it initially might seem to mean. It means only that men were more likely to *explicitly mark* illustrations. We do not know if women used numerous illustrations that they wove into their discourse in a more seamless way.

Besides rough-hewn methods of text analysis, two hypotheses in fact predict lack of differentiation between male and female writing. One po-

tential explanation points to the highly conventionalized nature of written language. Unlike speech, writing is learned primarily through the uniform institution of schooling, and it is regulated by the standardization of publishers. Therefore, according to this view, written language (or at least mature writing) is perforce devoid of sociolinguistic patterning, devoid of social markers. Writing is gender-neutral because it is socially neutral. And that neutrality is regarded as a positive attribute for a communication system that functions as writing does. This position was expressed by Lakoff (1977), whose own work is the touchstone for most contemporary scholarship on gender and language.

The second possible explanation for scarce gender differences in writing rejects the view that style in writing is socially neutral. As proposed by a number of feminist scholars (e.g., Annas, 1987; Ritchie, 1990), this alternative view posits that the "conventions" of writing in fact impose male-oriented norms. These imposed norms, such as third-person voice or explicit syllogistic conclusions, are not gender-free. They require women to adopt male modes of thinking and valuing and languaging. They demand that women suppress their voices in writing in ways that men need not.

According to Spender (1980):

Women writers can attempt to pre-empt . . . criticisms by careful reproduction of the male scale of values but to do so would be to accept external demands that play no role for the male writer. And it is possible that such demands take their toll, that they introduce a "translation" factor which distorts what it is that the writer wishes to say. (p. 202)

Cayton (1990) similarly concluded on the basis of her study of gender differences in writer's block:

Trying to write academic prose seemed to give many [female college seniors] a sense that they were obliterating themselves from the project; nevertheless, when they wrote of their own experiences in a voice that they felt comfortable with, they expressed doubts that the problems they addressed were anything other than idiosyncratic, and they feared that no one would attend to their message. (p. 325)

Limited and indirect support for the suppressed voice hypothesis arises from studies that examined the interaction between gender and genre in writing. In general, gender differences were most apparent in less formal or less conventionalized genres, whereas male and female styles converged in more expository genres (e.g., Hiatt, 1977; Lentz, 1986). The Rubin and Greene (1992) study provides a clear illustration of this phenomenon. With respect to egocentric sequences (*I guess, I think*), men used about equal frequencies when writing first drafts of expressive messages to friends, com-

pared to when they were writing revised drafts of persuasive messages to a university official. Women produced relatively more egocentric sequences. But they did so mainly when writing in an expressive mode to friends. When women were writing revised drafts to a distant audience, their production of this feature purportedly associated with women's language converged with men's. In this case, women tended to make an adaptation when moving from informal to formal writing that men did not.

If it is the case that women "obliterate" their voices when writing and that they do so by "translating" their writing into a particularly alien idiom, then the process of revision must take on a different cast for women than it does for men. Flower and her colleagues (Flower, Hayes, Carey, Shriver, & Stratman, 1986) presented an elaborate model of revision, wherein the writer detects and ultimately changes text features that are at variance with her goals. Usually we think of the goals that drive revision as relating to clear and rhetorically effective expression.

It is the thesis of this book, of course, that identity management goals likewise drive composing processes, including processes of revision. For women revising formal expository prose, accordingly, one set of revision goals may pertain to detecting and eliminating vestiges of female-typical language. Campbell (1992) quoted a Radcliffe student in the early 20th century who was learning to adopt exactly that goal:

There were too many short sentences, the transitions were a little too obviously thought out, there was repetition of thought, above all there was too personal [an] element. I must write it over and make it flat, insipid, take out all individuality, and I can do this . . . as the section man likes it written. (p. 479)

To be sure, a great deal of revision occurs pretextually; no visual trace of it ever appears on the written page. In fact, pretextual revision is particularly common among high-ability writers (Witte, 1985). A number of observers note a sort of syndrome in which especially high-achieving women self-monitor, self-censor, or otherwise mute themselves in anticipation of convention or readers who might react negatively against authentic female-identified voice (e.g., Boice & Kelly, 1987; Cayton, 1990; Spender, 1980). Sperling and Freedman (1987) aptly stated that such writers need not be reminded, "a good girl writes like a good girl!" (p. 357).

Pretextual revision notwithstanding, the suppressed voice hypothesis can be evaluated in part by comparing male and female production of gender-typical features, examining how those features vary across successive drafts. The suppressed voice hypothesis would predict that women produce a high frequency of features like hedges and audience acknowledgments in first drafts that they know will not be evaluated. The frequency of such gender-marked features should drop as a result of revision, particularly as women

revise for a formal (and male?) reader. The between-draft decline, if any, should be much less pronounced in men's writing. Women's use of female-typical features in revised drafts of formal writing, according to this hypothesis, should conform closely to the male norm.

As a follow-up to Rubin and Greene (1992), this chapter reports just such a test of the suppressed voice hypothesis as it bears on women's and men's revision of formal instrumental writing.

METHODS

Participants

This study analyzes additional data collected during the course of the research previously reported in Rubin and Greene (1992). Sixteen college men and 27 women volunteered to participate in this study in order to fulfill a class assignment for a basic course in speech communication.

Procedures

Participants wrote messages to a university vice president regarding a fictional proposal to test university students for illicit drug use. At the first session they received a fact sheet regarding the proposal. They were encouraged to write first drafts that captured their most persuasive ideas without worrying at that point about mechanical correctness. They were also urged to fill at least two pages. At the second session, about a week later, initial drafts were returned. Participants were told to rewrite their papers, making sure their final drafts were presentable for the university official. They also completed the Wheless and Dierks-Stewart (1981) revision of the Bem (1981) sex role inventory. At the end of the session, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Analysis of Linguistic Features

The language analysis in the present study follows that described by Rubin and Greene (1992), which was, in turn, primarily adapted from methods developed by Rubin and Nelson (1983) and Hiatt (1977). The analytic scheme, depicted in Table 7.1, codes 23 distinct features that are linked in previous research or theory to gender-typed verbal expression. Although 2 of these features (refusals and enumerations) are treated solely in a univariate fashion, the remaining 21 features are grouped into six a priori multivariate clusters: (a) nonessentials—dashes and parentheses; (b) markers of excitability—exclamation points and underlining; (c) markers of subjectivity—

TABLE 7.1
Coded Language Features

I. Nonessentials	
A. parentheses	A drug class won't help (they know it all anyway)
B. dash	It could take a year-maybe more
II. Excitability Markers	
A. exclamation point	That's absurd!
B. underlining	There are <u>a lot</u> of people who will just go somewhere else
III. Audience Acknowledgment	
A. second-person address	I am writing to tell you this whole idea just won't work
B. questions	Who will pay the cost of these tests?
IV. Connectives	
A. illative	So this isn't going to solve anything
B. adversative	You might catch some people who are abusing drugs but innocent people will suffer too.
C. causal	The number of students will drop because some people will not apply
D. illustrative	Other things can make it seem like you're taking drugs, like if you're on birth control pills
E. additive	Some people just experiment a little and they only use drugs once or twice
F. temporal	Suppose someone takes the class, then will they really stop their drug habit?
G. conditional	If you test people for drugs, then what about alcohol?
V. Hedges	
A. intensifiers	It is so typical of this university
B. deintensifiers	Only a small minority abuse drugs
C. proximals	Almost everyone would have to take a class
D. modal adjuncts	Maybe 5% use drugs
E. auxiliaries of possibility	It could hurt innocent people
F. perceptual verbs	It looks like students have no rights
VI. Subjective Reference	
A. egocentric sequence	I think it's just a bad idea
B. first-person reference	We're all adults
VII. Refusals	I don't know, but it seems like this is not the best way to go about it
VIII. Enumeration	Applications will drop by 10 or 15%

egocentric sequences and other self-reference; (d) connectives—illative, adversative, causal, illustrative, additive, temporal, and conditional; (e) hedges—intensifiers, deintensifiers, proximals, modal adjuncts, auxiliaries of possibility, and perceptual verbs; and (f) audience acknowledgments—second-person reference and questions. In addition, verbosity was indexed by means of total numbers of words, and sentence length was indexed as words per sentence.

Two coders working independently analyzed each of the 86 scripts in the sample. Reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) across drafts one and two av-

eraged .86 for enumerations, .77 for refusals, .90 for nonessentials, .95 for markers of excitability, .86 for first-person references, .83 for connectives, .78 for hedges, .94 for audience acknowledgments, .99 for total number of words, and .98 for total number of sentences.

Data Analysis

The measure of psychological gender role yields two scores for each participant: (a) expressive gender role orientation and (b) instrumental gender role orientation. The former corresponds to traditional female gender roles like nurturing and empathy, whereas the latter corresponds to traditional male gender role traits like competitiveness and acquisitiveness (Bem, 1974; Wheelless & Dierks-Stewart, 1981). For this sample, the mean expressive score for women was 55.52, and 52.44 for men. No significant difference between these means was indicated by *t*-test analysis. For instrumental scores, the mean for women was 48.86, and 56.13 for men. This constituted a statistically significant difference ($t_{42,df} = 3.64; p < .001$).

The study was conceptualized as a mixed factorial design with participants nested in gender (at two levels) and crossed with the repeated measure, draft (at two levels). Instrumental and expressive gender role orientations were treated as separate covariates. For each of the six multivariate clusters, separate multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVAs) were run with univariate analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) run as follow-ups to statistically significant MANCOVAs, as well as for those features (refusals, enumeration, verbosity, sentence length) that were not included in multivariate clusters. All analyses were run on relative frequencies; that is, the feature counts for each language variable were divided by total number of words, to adjust for differences in sheer output.

Of particular importance in this analysis would be any findings of interactions between gender and draft. Consider the following *hypothetical* set of findings. Suppose, for example, it were found that women writers, relative to men, produced more of some gender-typed feature like egocentric sequences (*I guess, I think*). Suppose, further, that this main effect for gender were modified by a statistically significant interaction between gender and draft. If it were found that women produced more of these features in their first drafts than in their revisions (whereas the rate of production held constant for men across drafts), then we would have strong evidence for the suppressed voice hypothesis in writing. That is, this pattern of statistical interaction would be showing us that women edited out their use of some gender-typed feature as they moved from a relatively spontaneous and unmonitored writing to a revised draft intended for consumption by a psychologically remote reader. Student-Neuman-Keuls analyses were to be used for post-hoc comparisons among cell means within significant interactions.

RESULTS

Nonessentials

The MANCOVA for the cluster of nonessentials revealed a statistically significant covariate effect for expressive gender role orientation ($\lambda_{2,38} = .741; p < .005$). No additional main or interaction effect achieved significance in this MANCOVA.

To follow up this multivariate result, separate ANCOVAs were run for each of the two components of the nonessential cluster: dashes and parentheses. The expressive covariate effect did not prove statistically significant for the analysis of dashes. For the analysis of relative frequency of parentheses, however, expressive gender role orientation did exert a strong covariate effect ($F_{1,39} = 12.97; p < .001; \eta^2 = .231$). The negative slope of the regression coefficient ($b = -.007$) indicates an inverse relation between expressive gender role orientation and use of parentheses.

Markers of Excitability

The MANCOVA for markers of excitability yielded no significant covariate, main, or interaction effect.

Audience Acknowledgments

The MANCOVA for audience acknowledgments similarly manifested no statistically significant effect.

Connectives

The MANCOVA for connectives indicated a statistically significant effect only for the repeated measure, draft ($\lambda_{7,35} = .597; p < .01$).

To follow up this multivariate effect, separate ANCOVAs were run for each of the six types of connectives. No draft effect emerged for illatives, illustrators, additives, or conditionals. The effect of draft on adversatives ($F_{1,41} = 14.36; p < .001; \eta^2 = .259$) was due to a higher relative frequency of adversatives in second drafts ($M = .0073$) compared to first drafts ($M = .0053$). The effect of draft on temporal connectives ($F_{1,41} = 6.58; p < .05; \eta^2 = .147$) similarly appears attributable to a higher frequency of this connective in second drafts ($M = .0027$) relative to first ($M = .0019$).

Hedges

The MANCOVA for hedges yielded no significant covariate effect. The main effect for gender of writer, however, was statistically significant ($\lambda_{6,34} = .696; p < .05$). Separate univariate ANCOVAs for each of the six types of

hedge indicated no significant gender effect for intensifiers, deintensifiers, proximals, perceptual verbs, or modal adjuncts. The effect for auxiliaries of possibility ($F_{1,39} = 6.80$; $p < .05$; $\eta^2 = .146$) was due to relatively higher usage among women ($M = .0039$) than among men ($M = .0022$).

Draft also exerted a significant multivariate effect on use of hedges ($\lambda_{6,36} = .584$; $p < .005$). No interaction between draft and gender emerged, however. Univariate follow-up of the multivariate draft effect revealed that second drafts ($M = .0103$) contained relatively more intensifiers than did first drafts ($M = .0087$; $F_{1,41} = 4.41$; $p < .05$; $\eta^2 = .097$). Similarly, deintensifiers were also relatively more common in second drafts ($M = .0048$) than in first ($M = .0029$; $F_{1,41} = 12.63$; $p < .005$; $\eta^2 = .23$). Perceptual verbs also manifested a main effect for draft ($F_{1,41} = 6.70$; $p < .05$; $\eta^2 = .139$). Once again, Draft 2 ($M = .0016$) exceeded Draft 1 ($M = .0008$).

Markers of Subjectivity

The main effect for draft was the sole statistically significant effect in the MANCOVA of markers of subjectivity ($\lambda_{2,40} = .771$; $p < .01$). As follow-up procedures, univariate ANCOVA indicated a statistically significant main effect only for first-person references (other than egocentric sequences ($F_{1,41} = 6.22$; $p < .05$; $\eta^2 = .128$)). Second drafts ($M = .0185$) exceeded first drafts ($M = .0159$) on this variable.

Refusals

The ANCOVA for refusals revealed no statistically significant covariate, main, or interaction effects.

Enumeration

The ANCOVA for enumerations revealed no statistically significant covariate, main, or interaction effects.

Verbosity

The ANCOVA for total number of words indicated a single statistically significant effect. Participants' second drafts were longer ($M = 361.73$) than their initial drafts ($M = 343.84$; $F_{1,41} = 3.99$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .088$).

Sentence Length

The ANCOVA for words per sentence revealed no statistically significant covariate, main, or interaction effect.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in between-draft revisions of certain linguistic features. In particular, the study was designed to test whether women tend to suppress female-typical features during the process of revision, in order to more closely approximate male-typical norms in their final writing products. The results of this study provide no support for that suppressed voice hypothesis. The types of revision observed here were equally distributed across male and female writers.

Not all revision effects are observable, however, and for that reason, the present study cannot offer definitive proof against a suppressed voice hypothesis. As Witte (1985) noted, a considerable amount of revision may take place in mental rehearsal, that is, pretextually. The first draft is not always the first *written* draft. Skilled writers often engage in especially extensive pretextual revision; that is why their first written drafts often need undergo less change than those of less mature writers. It is altogether possible that women suppress their gendered voices as they revise pretextually. Gender identity is transformed (distorted?) before the pen ever touches the paper, perhaps.

Still, if it were the case that women's language were largely suppressed pretextually, one would expect to find at least some residue "leaking" through onto the page in Draft 1. This study found no such residue. If there is a women's voice that is suppressed pretextually in writing, it would appear to be silenced quite completely.

All writers must suppress voice in the most literal sense when they write, and some leakage from oral voice to written style is quite normal. Learning to differentiate spoken language from written is an important developmental task we all must undertake, and only the most successful among us learn eventually to reintegrate a measure of orality back into our writing (Rubin, 1987). More commonly, failing to adequately suppress more familiar speech forms can result in writing dysfunction (Shaughnessy, 1977). Horowitz (chapter 3 of this volume) shows how culturally distinct oral voices can infuse writing style, sometimes to very positive effect. In the present study, however, there simply is no evidence of a distinct female voice either leaking or infusing nor being suppressed.

Although our findings do not substantiate any gender-linked trends in revision practices, some individuals certainly did display patterns that were consistent with the suppressed voice hypothesis. Compare parallel sections of two drafts for one female participant:

Draft 1:

I don't know how to stop the drug problem on university campuses. I realize that it is very easy to get if you know the right people. I've been to party's

where my friends have been strung out on pot, acid, & X. One was a kindergarten teacher, a 26 yr. old clean cut senior, one got kicked out of [name of school], & the others are just avg people. So it's not horrible people who are doing this stuff. Some do it very rarely so I don't see a big deal with then right now. Later they could be a problem . . . I guess that drug testing in t/univ & then the 5 hr. noncredit course would be a help in some ways but at least 90% of the student pop will be enrolled in this class.

Draft 2:

Another aspect is the cost of running such a program. 90% of the college students have tried drugs sometime. That means practically a whole new department the size of t/English one would have to be put in. That is definily out of most universities budget plans. . . . It also not just college students who do drugs. I know a kindergarten teacher who was on Ex this weekend. In order to stop the problem it should be the whole of society who changes and not just a part.

If nothing else, these two drafts show the writer moving from a mainly narrative-centered ("I've been to party's"), tentative style ("I don't know how . . ."; "Later it could be a problem;" "I guess . . .") to a more linear ("I know a kindergarten teacher . . ."), conclusionary one ("That means . . ."; ". . . it should be the whole of society who changes . . ."). Most readers to whom we have shown these samples concur that the first draft is marked by female voice much more so than the revision.

And yet other female writers actually seemed to *increase* their use of female-typed style as they moved from original to revised drafts. Examine the way one writer alters her opening paragraph.

Draft 1:

The proposal by the Georgia State Legislature to test all students for drugs is wrong. The concern for students using drugs is commendable, but the idea that students would be mandatorily tested is to me a violation of my Constitutional Rights.

Draft 2:

I'm writing you in concern for the proposal submitted by the Georgia State Legislature that suggests all students here at the University be tested for drugs. The concern for students abusing drugs is commendable, but frankly I feel it is very unnecessary. As well as being unnecessary, it is probably in violation of our students' Constitutional Rights. I believe this propaganda is another underlying technique from the Legislature to stir up attention and needed support from the community.

This writer does not appear to be suppressing a female voice as she revises, but rather accentuating it. The second draft is more clearly framed in a first-person, subjective stance. It is more patently interpersonal ("I'm

writing you . . ."), includes egocentric sequences (*I feel, I believe*), and female-typed hedges (*very, probably*). Curiously, this writer registered the strongest traditional *male* gender role orientation—as measured on the adapted Bem sex role inventory—in the entire sample of participants. That is, she scored highest on instrumental gender roles and lowest on expressive. Was she perhaps "unsuppressing" a female identity as she revised?

If simple and systematic gender effects were not clearly visible in these data, strong effects of revision were quite apparent for a number of the variables examined. Temporal connectives, intensifiers, deintensifiers, perceptual verbs, first-person reference, and verbosity have all been associated in various places in the literature with women's writing. In the present study, these gender-typed features were instead associated with redrafting rather than with gender.

It is important to note first off that the instructions to revise apparently did exert a potent impact on these writers. Effect sizes for the draft factor (indexed by values of 1-lambda for the MANCOVAs or by eta² for the ANCOVAs) were not insubstantial. Our failure to find an interaction between gender and draft in these data cannot be attributed to any general failure among the participants to revise.

Second (with respect to the effects of revision), it is worth observing that both men and women have apparently assimilated the notion that writing is improved by increasing tentativeness (perceptual verbs like *seems to be*, deintensifiers like *only* or *just*), by increasing narrativity (temporal conjunctions like *then*, first-person point of view), by increasing intensity (*really* or *very*), and by simply elaborating (longer messages). It is particularly interesting that these norms emerged from a deliberately persuasive writing task, as they seem more attuned with what Bleich (1988) might have regarded as flexible or mixed (as opposed to "official") "genders" of writing. That is, irrespective of writers' actual gender, and even in the face of a very traditional argumentative task, writers tended to revise by augmenting elements of female-typed voice.

Of course what may be female-typed style in the collective imagination is not necessarily female-typical in the world of empirical evidence (Edelsky, 1979). Findings in the present study tend to confirm Rubin and Greene's (1992) conclusion about gender-typical style in writing, and to contradict that of Mulac et al. (1990). That is, writers' gender exerted only a small impact on style as tabulated here. In this corpus of writing, it is true, women tended to use a greater relative frequency of auxiliaries of possibility (*might, could*). Contrary to expectations, however, expressive gender role orientation was negatively associated with use of parentheses. In previous studies (e.g., Hiatt, 1977), the use of parentheses was taken to be a constituent of a nonlinear, digressive style that is supposed to be typical of female discourse.

Writing/Revision and Doing Gender

To its detriment, the design of this study treats biological gender, along with psychological gender role orientation, as if they were independent variables. The design of the study implies that language behaviors result from gender. Yet the conceptualization of gender we would instead profess asserts that gender is not a given, not an independent factor. Rather, gender is constructed individually and culturally (Kessler & McKenna, 1979). And as Rubin (1988) noted, writing is a "human activity that constructs roles. Texts bring social contexts into existence" (p. 13). Surely, therefore, writing is one behavior through which people do the work of constructing gender identities for themselves, one behavior through which people impose definitions of gender on contexts.

This view of writing as part of the activity of "doing" gender draws upon feminist critiques of gender research in communication (e.g., Putnam, 1982; Rakow, 1986). These critiques point out that because gender is an outcome (more correctly, a set of outcomes) of communication, it cannot be understood just as an input to a communication model. Nor can gender be understood as some static entity, as if it were apart from and prior to dynamic and contextualized interaction (see Hecht, 1993).

Thus, in the study of revision, we must appreciate that some writers on some occasions choose to en-gender their style in order to project a clearer or stronger gender identity. Revision, in such cases, might take the form of strategically augmenting gender-typed stylistic markers. The revised opening paragraph we presented earlier (beginning, "I am writing to you . . .") seems en-gendered in just this way, though we can only speculate on the reason for it.

To understand writing (including revision) as a kind of gendering activity, we would need to become privy to how people negotiate their gender identities in interaction with other writers and readers and in interaction with other aspects of rhetorical context. No doubt this project would require rich and diverse data. We would want to collect several writing samples from authors as those writers moved across audiences and modes. We would want to know how those authors construed power relations in each of those writing events. We would try to determine how stylistic choices exercised between drafts, that is, revision processes, reflected choices about constructing social identity. And one would want to know how each process of writing strengthened, enervated, or redefined the writers' own sense of social identity.

The present study is considerably more modest in scope than the research outlined previously. Still, it may furnish some tentative notions about writing and doing gender. For example, the presentation of unclear case writers showed at least that patterns of suppressing or augmenting gender in writing

are not deterministically constrained by biological gender. According to the gender construction position, the writers were assuming or appropriating—not merely reflecting—gender role identities as they composed. The writer who in her second draft withheld narrative detail about her experience at a party was casting herself, perhaps reinforcing herself, as a person who understands how to write in the "male rhetorical mode" (Farrell, 1979). In that male mode, details must serve as evidence linked explicitly to conclusions. This writer does not construct herself as not some womanly person who would use narrative alone as a form of proof.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that men as well as women—unlike the case cited previously—generally increased female-typed language when revising. Because skilled writing is often stereotyped as a female-typical faculty, it may be that skilled writers habitually seek to construct a more female identity in their formal writing.

Feminist authors such as Penelope (1990) and hooks (1981) consciously manipulate language as a means for breaking free from imposed gender roles. The process of reflecting upon and appropriating written language is, for them, one tool for doing gender. They construct gendered identities for themselves by deliberately violating the status quo of power and identity relations that standard edited English helps enforce. By the same token, feminist writing teachers (e.g., Annas, 1985; Cooper, 1989; Fiore & Elsasser, 1981) encourage their students to work hard at doing gender as they write. They want their students to use writing as an opportunity for exploring what it means to be a gendered person. In that way, learning to write and developing gender are part of the same process.

When writing is seen as a way of doing gender, gender-typical style in written language is necessarily seen in more complex light: not as determined by gender, but in interaction with it. Sometimes gendered voice is suppressed, sometimes augmented. Sometimes gendered voice is distributed differentially among men and women, sometimes it is shared.

REFERENCES

- Annas, P. J. (1985). Style as politics: A feminist approach to the teaching of writing. *College English*, 47, 360–371.
- Annas, P. J. (1987). Silences: Feminist language research and the teaching of writing. In C. Caywood & G. Overing (Eds.), *Teaching writing: Pedagogy, gender, and equity* (pp. 3–18). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bem, S. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 155–162.
- Bem, S. (1981). Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing. *Psychological Review*, 88, 354–364.
- Bleich, D. (1988). Genders of writing. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 8, 10–25.

- Boice, R., & Kelly, K. (1987). Writing viewed by disenfranchised groups. *Written Communication*, 4, 299–309.
- Campbell, J. (1992). Controlling voices: The legacy of English A at Radcliffe College 1883–1917. *College Composition and Communication*, 43, 472–485.
- Cayton, M. K. (1990). What happens when things go wrong: Women and writing blocks. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 10, 321–337.
- Cooper, M. M. (1989). Women's ways of writing. In M. M. Cooper & M. Holzman (Eds.), *Writing as social action* (pp. 141–156). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Crawford, M. (1989). Agreeing to disagree: Feminist epistemologies and women's ways of knowing. In M. Crawford & M. Gentry (Eds.), *Gender and thought: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 128–145). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Edelsky, C. (1979). Question intonation and sex roles. *Language and Society*, 8, 15–32.
- Farrell, T. (1979). The male and female modes of rhetoric. *College English*, 40, 909–921.
- Fiore, K., & Elsassner, N. (1981). Through writing we transform our world: Third world women and literacy. *Humanities in Society*, 20, 395–418.
- Flower, L., Hayes, J., Carey, L., Shriver, K., & Stratman, J. (1986). Detection, diagnosis, and the strategies of revision. *College Composition and Communication*, 37, 16–55.
- Flynn, E. (1988). Composing as a woman. *College Composition and Communication*, 39, 423–435.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hecht, M. L. (1993). 2002—A research odyssey: Toward the development of a communication theory of identity. *Communication Monographs*, 60, 75–82.
- Heller, D. (1992, January 5). Letter to the editor. *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 4.
- Hiatt, M. (1977). *The way women write*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- hooks, b. (1981). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*. Boston: South End Press.
- Hunter, P., Pearce, N., Lee, S., Goldsmith, S., Feldman, P., & Weaver, H. (1988). Competing epistemologies and female basic writers. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 7, 73–81.
- Kessler, S., & McKenna, W. (1979). *Gender: An ethnomethodological approach*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, R. (1977). Women's language. *Language and Style*, 10, 222–247.
- Lentz, T. M. (1986). Communication difficulties in a large federal agency. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 29, 303–319.
- Lunsford, A., & Ede, L. (1990). Rhetoric in a new key: Women and collaboration. *Rhetoric Review*, 8, 234–241.
- Lynch, C., & Strauss-Noll, M. (1987). Mauve washers: Sex differences in freshman writing. *English Journal*, 76, 90–94.
- Mulac, A., Studley, L. B., & Blau, S. (1990). The gender-linked language effect in primary and secondary students' impromptu essays. *Sex Roles*, 23, 439–469.
- Penelope, J. (1990). *Speaking freely: Unlearning the lies of the fathers' tongues*. New York: Pergamon.
- Putnam, L. (1982). In search of gender: A critique of gender and sex roles research. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 5, 1–9.
- Rakow, L. F. (1986). Rethinking gender research in communication. *Journal of Communication*, 36, 11–26.
- Ritchie, J. S. (1990). Confronting the "essential" problem: Reconnecting feminist theory and pedagogy. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 10, 249–273.
- Rubin, D. L. (1987). Divergence and convergence between oral and written communication. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 7(4), 1–18.
- Rubin, D. L. (1988). Introduction: Four dimensions of social construction in written communication. In B. Rafoth & D. Rubin (Eds.), *The social construction of written communication* (pp. 1–33). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

- Rubin, D. L., & Greene, K. G. (1992). Gender-typical style in written language. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 26, 7–40.
- Rubin, D. L., & Nelson, M. W. (1983). Multiple determinants of a stigmatized speech style: Women's language, powerless language, or everyone's language? *Language and Speech*, 26, 273–290.
- Shaughnessy, M. P. (1977). *Errors and expectations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smeltzer, L., & Werbel, J. (1986). Gender differences in managerial communication: Fact or folklinguistics? *Journal of Business Communication*, 23, 41–50.
- Spender, D. (1980). Women and writing. In *Man made language* (pp. 191–233). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sperling, M., & Freedman, S. (1987). A good girl writes like a good girl: Written responses to student writing. *Written Communication*, 4, 343–369.
- Sterkel, K. (1988). The relationship between gender and writing style in business communication. *Journal of Business Communication*, 25, 17–38.
- Taylor, S. O. (1978). Women in a double bind: Hazards of the argumentative edge. *College Composition and Communication*, 29, 385–389.
- Wheeless, V. E., & Dierks-Stewart, K. (1981). The psychometric properties of the Bem sex role inventory. *Communication Quarterly*, 29, 173–186.
- Witte, S. (1985). Revising, composing theory, and research design. In S. Freedman (Ed.), *The acquisition of written language: Response and revision* (pp. 250–284). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.