

Feminist Methodology and Contemporary Feminist Research in India

Dr. Poulami A. Mukherjee

Assistant Professor, PG Department of History & Research Centre, Assumption College,
Changanacherry

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70613>

Received: 26 April 2023; Revised: 12 May 2023; Accepted: 16 May 2023; Published: 19 June 2023

ABSTRACT

Feminist methodology seeks to assess knowledge-generating strategies in terms of their suitability for feminist research. Feminist methodology is not to be identified with any particular object of study or specific set of theories, doctrines or knowledge claims. This type of research is a self-reflexive inquiry that seeks knowledge for emancipation and which challenges asymmetric and inequitable constructions. Historically, feminist research expanded the theories and objects of investigation to a focus on women, then their work moved towards recognizing gender disparities and then even more specifically moved to contemporary critiques that include the investigation of the types of methods used in all research; the analysis of how theories are incorporated into the research; the critique of how evidence is gathered; and determination at higher levels of abstraction in what counts as truth and authority. The present study will try to focus on problematic of feminist research and what should be the basic components of feminist research methodology in contemporary India.

Keywords: Feminism, Feminist research, Feminist methodology, Inequalities

INTRODUCTION

Feminist research is research which is carried out by women who identify as feminists, and which has a particular purpose for knowing (a 'why'), particular kinds of questions, topics and issues to be known about (a 'what'), and an identifiable method of knowing (a 'how'), which distinctly draw on women's experience of living in a world in which women are subordinate to men. The most central and common belief shared by all feminists, whatever the 'type' is the presupposition that women are oppressed. It is from this common acceptance that there is indeed a problem, that there is something amiss in the treatment of women in society that feminism arises. If there is a central reason why feminists do feminist research it revolves around the need to know and understand better the nature of the hurt we sustain as a group, a group which is subordinated on the grounds of the female gender. This is not 'knowledge for its own sake' but rather is knowledge explicitly dedicated to bringing about change and improvement in their situation as women. [1]

There are many different views amongst women who identify themselves as feminists about what their oppression entails, what are its sources and what should be done about it. For example, some feminists see the problem of women as one of having been 'left out' of positions of power, from written history, and from everyday conversations. Others may see the problem as one of having been actively excluded through a more or less deliberate, even if unconscious effort by men. Others may question the kinds of situations women have been left out of or excluded from, and not want to be included (or fight for) positions that are elitist and oppressive. Some may see the matter as originating from men's fear and contempt for women, or from men's greater physical power, or from a determination not to lose historical and economic advantages

over women, or from habitual socialisation, or a combination of these.[\[2\]](#)

Some women may see the answer in asking men to change their ways. Others may see it more as a matter of having to make demands in the face of inevitable resistance, requiring a far more concerted attack. Some may devote their energies to the reform of social institutions to include women. Some may turn away altogether from men and the organisations they control and concentrate instead on strengthening women as a group from within and to examining all existing knowledge with a view to constructing new knowledge in women's interests. Kath Davey reminds us of Shug's words to Celie in the film 'The Colour Purple': 'You can't see anything at all till you git man off your eyeball.' Some may see this move as strategic, while others may see it as a permanent solution to 'the problem of men'. Some women will seek to increase their education and income levels, own their own homes, 'reclaim the night', organise collectively for equal pay, or seek each other out for support. Women may call themselves radical feminists, socialist feminists, humanist feminists, separatist feminists, 'femocrats', liberal feminists and so on, to express in shorthand form their different positions on 'the problem'.

All of these different 'feminisms' lead to women's differing interests in topics for research, differing preference for techniques, differing theories for interpreting what they see as going on, and differing conclusions about what new actions to take. Feminist methodology seeks to assess knowledge-generating strategies in terms of their suitability for feminist research. Feminist methodology is not to be identified with any particular object of study or specific set of theories, doctrines or knowledge claims. This type of research is a self-reflexive inquiry that seeks knowledge for emancipation and which challenges asymmetric and inequitable constructions.

Historically, feminist research expanded the theories and objects of investigation to a focus on women, then their work moved towards recognizing gender disparities and then even more specifically moved to contemporary critiques that include the investigation of the types of methods used in all research; the analysis of how theories are incorporated into the research; the critique of how evidence is gathered; and determination at higher levels of abstraction in what counts as truth and authority. The present study will try to focus on problematic of feminist research and what should be the basic components of feminist research methodology in contemporary India.

What feminists seek to research?

Feminists have sought firstly to understand their own experiences as women in a culture which many of us have found it useful to describe as 'patriarchal'[\[3\]](#). Like all 'new paradigm science'[\[4\]](#), feminist research starts from the personal experience of unease about a difference between the way things are and the way we might prefer them to be, whether in their 'private' lives at home or at work. In research this is sometimes referred to as starting from a 'discrepancy' between an 'is' and a sense of an 'ought'. [\[5\]](#) Perhaps the largest proportion of feminist research has been devoted to hearing women speak, in their own words, about their own such experiences[\[6\]](#): experiences of being women, of being frustrated, humiliated, subordinated and put down, of being invisible, of violence and of being violated, of losing and regaining self-regard, of being trapped and of gaining or regaining freedom, of rising above difficult times; and of their history and cultural heritage over the centuries and millennia, of their childhoods, their teenage years, their young adulthood, of being wives and mothers, of being single women, of getting educations and jobs, of being in the paid and unpaid workforces, of institutions women find themselves in (or excluded from, or incarcerated in) – schools, hospitals, churches, work organisations, parliament, bureaucracies, unions, marriages, prisons and psychiatric institutions – and of all the contradictions of being in or out of them; and of their experiences with men, of being of different class, ethnic and racial backgrounds; of their bodies and their reflections of the oppression, of their illnesses and addictions, of menstruation and of menopause, of having different abilities and disabilities, of growing older, of chronic and acute illness, and of dying.[\[7\]](#)

Research for change and improvement

However this exchange of experiences is not without judgement. It is not merely research ‘about’ women, but instead is research ‘for’ and ‘by’ women. That is, whenever women do feminist research they take a step beyond merely hearing each other. Instead the hearing is for a higher purpose – in order to derive better understanding, and identify ways to bring about change to alter the subordinated and oppressed position of women. Thus, while feminist research commences with a first essential ‘experiential’ (or ‘phenomenological’) step, it moves secondly to ask: ‘Given that this is how we currently experience things – how can we explain these experiences? What are desirable experiences? How could things be improved?’

The importance of context

To take this step, women then explore the contexts and reasons for why we experience what we experience. We examine history, the economy, the political economy and material realities, and ask who benefits, and how it is that unhelpful but dominant ideas are held in place (such as ‘women must be youthful and beautiful’, or ‘father knows best’, or ‘boys will be boys’). Women ask how it is that they find themselves colluding with these ideas that hurt us; what are we up against when we try and resist or act differently; what are their successes and triumphs and the conditions for these, and so on. Importantly, women may also research men, men’s actions, and ideology, practices and institutions which favour men, or they might research men and women together. All of these questions comprise the critical process of examining the ‘structural’ matters which surround and shape us, so that we can begin to form theories about alternative ways of acting.

Early feminist research

At the commencement of ‘second wave feminism’ in the 1960s and 1970s, women gathered in self-study groups (called consciousness-raising or CR groups) in their suburban family homes and in student households. These were very similar to third world study circles where people gathered to discuss matters troubling them, and to seek to transform personal experience of the world into collective understanding of how the world was operating to oppress some to the benefit of others.

Some CR groups used what might now be called ‘participatory action research’ to discuss, study and possibly read about issues, and then draw conclusions about what to do, then take those actions, and then review them to decide on new actions. Out of these groups arose many concepts and ideas (such as women’s liberation, sexism, male chauvinism, etc.) and services and changes familiar to us now, such as child care centres and other children’s services, women’s health services, termination and sterilisation services, neighbourhood houses, non-sexist books and writing, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, income security for single mothers, refuges for women fleeing domestic violence, and moves towards equal pay. As well, a whole generation of mature-aged women returned to study and jobs, earned independent incomes and came to own their own homes in unprecedented numbers.

Each new wave of theorising about women’s lives yielded new topics and new areas requiring study. Initial efforts were around what would comprise non-sexist children’s books and school teaching or more acceptable presentation of images of women in the media. These were followed by examination of the ways in which the publishing industry operates or how the culture of the media is constituted both by everyday practice and managerial decision-making. By redefining the idea of ‘women and madness’, feminist research shifted to a systematically alter mental health services. Current feminist research interests are in examining the culture of violence, men as perpetrators of violence, the relationship between sex and power, and the nature of each area of male-dominated knowledge – arts, science, religion, architecture, literature, technology and so on.[\[8\]](#)

While women in suburbs and in the country were meeting around kitchen tables and demanding neighbourhood houses, academic feminists were developing a critique of the hurtful experience of being subjected to conventional social science or of themselves having inflicted this methodology on their sisters. These insights have begun to accumulate into a more explicit account of how feminists can best go about the particular task of 'doing feminist research' – whether they be feminist researchers who are anthropologists, consumers, epidemiologists, family members, farmers, historians, household members, house workers, medical scientists, members of any profession or discipline, members of resident action associations or ethnic organisations, mothers, philosophers, psychologists, readers of newspapers and magazines, service-users, shoppers, sociologists, statisticians, unionists, women with disabilities, and women who use social security, libraries, public transport, and cinemas. Wherever women experience the world – and record their experiences in systematic ways to exchange and together develop theory and improved practice – women can work in ways which approximate a model of feminist research. [9]

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Feminist researchers, depending on their definition of 'feminism', will develop methods and preferences for techniques that they see as yielding the best results for women. Some women may use standard surveys, collect numerical information, and perform statistical computations, in order to establish matters of extent or amount regarding women's position *vis a vis* men's. Others will undertake secondary analysis of documentary material and policy papers or research and develop new policy and assess its impact on the position of women. Other women will concentrate on directly hearing the stories of women – perhaps using more or less in-depth interviews or ethnographies, recording verbal information, and writing them up and publishing. Still others will work more as members of groups of women doing their own self-directed research; much as did the CR groups of early 'second wave' feminism. All of these techniques and methods continue to be subjected to healthy internal debate about whether or not, and in what ways, they may further perpetuate or alternatively contribute to interrupting patterns of oppression of women. [10]

Some feminist researchers have attempted to articulate what are the criteria or grounds on which research might be more likely to perpetuate and reproduce, or alternatively, to illuminate, confound and alter patterns of oppression. Some of these major points are summarised below:

Criteria for feminist research

Research may be more likely to address women's oppression if it:

- Understands that all research is essentially value-driven and always results in some kind of new action or practice, and consequently examines its own values and contribution to altering (or perpetuating) existing situations.
- Is 'driven' by the interests of the women whose problematic situation was the reason for the raising of the research questions in the first place.
- Involves as many such women as is desirable and feasible in the collaborative design and conduct of the research.
- Involves maximum attention to the benefits for the women involved (Ex. way beyond merely enjoying the chance to talk about things, and reaching towards genuine self-generation of understanding and new personal ways of being and acting), and less emphasis on the benefits to a single researcher (tertiary qualifications, improved cv, published books or articles, career promotions, etc.).
- Questions, and otherwise disrupts the reproduction and perpetuation of power relationships that subordinate women 'subjects' as objects of someone else's study; and instead embraces as many women as is desirable and feasible as participants in a joint effort.

- Respects and values women's experiences and their accounts of them, creating a collective 'culture' for the respectful sharing and examination of all relevant participants' experiences.
- Hears and reflects back exactly what is of most concern and interest to women.
- Does not only 'study down' but also researches other powerful or elite parties' contribution to women's oppression (Ex: that of men, professionals, bureaucracies, television, radio, videos, magazines, etc.).
- Uses conceptual language which accurately names the phenomena (Ex: 'criminal or illegal assault in the home' rather than 'domestic' or 'family' violence; 'wife beating' rather than 'spouse abuse'; or 'women's resistance to isolation in the home' rather than 'suburban neurosis').
- Makes claims only which the women thus described recognise as their 'truths' or as valid or 'objective' for them, and not claims which they may identify as distorting or stereotyping or as making them appear invisible, deviant or deficient in comparison to men.
- Contextualises and substantiates various truth claims so that other women can make their own judgements, rather than attempting to identify something as a single irrefutable truth.
- Attempts to represent the richness, complexity, interconnectedness, and contextualised nature of women's experiences, rather than representing women's experiences in categories which are either not useful or which too greatly distort or diminish understanding.
- Contributes to women being able to identify new or better ways of understanding their situation.
- Results in women being able to identify ways to change and improve their situation.

Techniques of Feminist Research

Techniques used in feminist research are concerned to present women's perspective and are more likely to be, particularly at the earliest points of inquiry, 'naturalistic' and resemble the normal ways women communicate, or involve sources accessible to women. These normal ways are the ones with which women feel most comfortable and thus empowered to speak. Conversation, group discussions, story-telling, and participant/observation (participants-as-observers) are more likely to be used than more artificial techniques such as questionnaires, one to one interviews, pre-structured schedules, scales and standardised inventories, and secondary materials analysis. The latter kinds of techniques may be used, but only if they appear to empower women and women participants and are deemed by them the best ways of answering the particular research questions at hand.

When using less directly democratic techniques, women may safeguard the ethics of their research by assembling a reference group of women who can assist in making decisions where women cannot be consulted (Ex. use made of census results or newspaper stories). Other sources might include photographs, written and other documentary records, historical archives, statistical and economic records, artefacts, environment records, and so on. Many women believe that feminist researchers should seek to use a multiplicity of techniques to reflect the multidimensional nature of their experiences. [\[11\]](#)

In a well-known article (1981), Ann Oakley called interviewing women a 'contradiction in terms'. Here she reflected on the power dimension of research and the way in which a more powerful woman who asks the questions and a less powerful woman who gives the answers constitutes an uneasy relationship, and that a particular kind of social reality is constructed from such an interaction. Such research may be uneasily close to what two Melbourne researchers have termed 'social voyeurism' and a 'data raid' or what Abraham Maslow has called 'spectator knowledge'. Feminist researchers will be more self-conscious of this matter and may alter their research designs to lessen the impact of unequal power-holding (Ex. work with groups or pairs, find indigenous interviewers, opt for more collaborative designs, conceptualise their task as the 'sharing of stories', etc.).

Record-keeping and writing up

When the research is driven by the concerns of the women whose particular oppression has given rise to it,

this not only shapes choice of techniques and of explanatory theories, but also the forms in which its knowledge is recorded and exchanged. Traditionally the researcher kept all the field notes and assumed rights to 'write up' and publish whatever and wherever she wishes. Feminist research generates its own logic regarding what, how, where and even whether there is a written record of the research. For example, participating women will decide whether deeply personal revelations should be taped, transcribed and written up, or whether 'findings' may be shared within a group, perhaps on butchers paper, and no special write up necessary – or just a strategic summary or article produced. 'Findings' may take the form of a video, a tapestry, a collage, an art piece, cartoons or drama. They may be transformed into a novel. Findings may be contributed to a popular women's magazine rather than (or as well as) the usual refereed professional journal. More conventional research write-ups must also be able to communicate with whatever audiences are in the interests of the women the research is intended to benefit.

Matters of confidentiality, accessibility, appropriateness, validity or trustworthiness of data, rigour and the underlying issues of driving values and power and control now become matters to be determined by or in consultation with the women who are involved in and/or are to benefit from the research. The researcher no longer makes these decisions unilaterally or without connection to other women.

Pressures faced in doing feminist research

All women carry out their research under social and economic conditions currently still oppressive of women. Thus their efforts to transform women's oppression by using research are also carried out under these same difficult conditions and face the same associated barriers and pressures. Subsequently, at this point in time, feminist research can expect only to approximate any ideal. It is perhaps more helpful to think of all feminist research as more or less feminist research, rather than taking an all-or-nothing approach and seeing research as either 'feminist' or 'not feminist'.

Thus feminist research may range from work which is more contested and needs to be disguised in more hostile organisational settings, or work where women take a more conventional stance of 'studying down' and reporting on women in academic journals or to policy makers in the hope of influencing decision-making men or non-feminist women to improve the conditions of women's lives; to more overt or explicit 'qualitative' research that more directly seeks to involve women in speaking through the researcher's write-ups to decision-makers and others; to 'critical' research which sets out to question and intervene more strategically and more actively by 'envoicing' women to speak directly to demand significant change.

The more that feminist research moves away from the approved and dominant ways of doing things, the harder it often has found that it is to function. The harder it is to even find the words to ask the unpermitted questions, the harder it is to find others who are prepared to join a unpopular project (or one labelled 'radical'); and the harder it is to find financial support, participants, resources, publishers and peer approval. Much feminist research requires huge courage, confidence and possibly independent means! Fortunately enough women have been working for a long enough period of time, to have carved out a more comfortable space in which many women can work. Enough legitimacy has accrued to the questioning of women's subordination to at least now make the feminist research endeavour possible and even probable.

Nevertheless, pressures on feminist research are firstly those which face any woman trying to emerge from a subordinated position: pressures subtle and blatant to be acceptable to men whether at home or at work or to other women who want to be acceptable to men; to be 'nice', polite, and modest; to be selflessly caring, to be unquestioning, not to make men and other women feel uncomfortable or offended, and to be grateful for existing mercies. Secondly the pressures are from those who would ensure research is 'scientific' – that is objective, comprises the 'hard' facts, is unbiased, and value-free. Thirdly there are pressures wherever women are not acting with sovereignty over their own lives, and the personal sphere of home and private life and the public sphere of work are in conflict.

Any funders, administrators, managers, professional groups or other parties who do not share feminist research assumptions and who have power to impinge may present barriers. Conventional assumptions about who owns and controls research, its findings, its write-up, and so on – may contradict the ethics which accompany feminist research. As well, since feminist research – like all new paradigm science – raises the possibility of there being a far more collaborative effort involved in social research, the question is raised: ‘Should co-researcher/subjects’ also be salaried for their work?’ This matter is increasingly being addressed by research funders in other areas (Ex. Aboriginal, general practice and mental health research), as well as in feminist research where researchers have more autonomy over funds in order to begin to ‘prefigure’ appropriate future practice.[\[12\]](#)

Can ‘Men’ do feminist research?

If a feminist is a woman who knows that she and other women are oppressed on grounds of gender from personal experience, then a man will not be in a position to either be a feminist or do feminist research. However a man can come to realise that women are oppressed on grounds of gender from his own experience and that he and other men collectively benefit from the oppression of women and take a position against this.

Men can be pro-feminist, and can engage in pro-feminist research (for example if they can fulfil the conditions set out previously in this paper). However this may prove difficult for men if they must therefore hand over the control of the design and carrying out of ‘their’ research to the critical reference group of women (who determine whether it meets their interests and resolves their problem or not). They may also be less likely to research women’s experience directly (although this might be an initial phase, perhaps through the study of feminist research literature, or by the conduct of local, small-scale participatory action research with and for – and not on – women in their own lives).[\[13\]](#)

They might be more likely to research their own dissatisfaction with elements of patriarchy and turn their attention to how the structures of subordination of women by men (and of some men by other men) are put in place and held in place. The methodological approach of feminists will be relevant to men seeking to research their experiences and those of other men in order to transform subordinating practice. Objectifying, disempowering methods will have as little place in their research as it has for feminist researchers. It may be more appropriate to talk about men carrying out anti-patriarchal research rather than pre-feminist research.[\[14\]](#)

Feminist Research in India

Feminist Research in India aims at promoting gender equality and justice by producing relevant knowledge that leads to action. It is based on the premise that knowledge is not ‘value-neutral’. It is an instrument for domination as well as transformation. Hence feminist research is aptly described ‘as the intellectual arm of the women’s movement’ not only for changing state policies but also for transforming women’s perceptions about themselves. Transformation of the existing intellectual tradition which has also contributed to maintaining patriarchal social relations is emphasised equally by feminist activists and researchers.

In India there is a close linkage between feminist research and feminist movement. Women activists and researchers have been working together to redefine knowledge. Women’s groups have played a vital role in the expansion of knowledge and generation and dissemination of information. Activists from women’s groups and organisations are also active participants in all public forums pertaining to feminist research methods. They have made a significant contribution by giving expression to the silent voices of ordinary women and integrating their concerns into the research agenda of women’s studies. They also have played an important role in articulating the need for developing feminist methodology on the basis of experiences of the women’s movement in order to understand the social reality of women at the grassroots.

In India Feminist Research has also striven to break the isolation of academia and learn from the experiences of others. This is evident from the close involvement of many academics with the activities of the women's movement. Research inputs of women's studies have also enriched the women's movement by providing conceptual and analytical tools to interpret forms and mechanisms of women's oppression.

Women's groups and organisations working at various levels also look to alternative knowledge produced by feminist research to develop strategies for empowering women. Thus women's studies in India contains the potential of bringing substantial change to the position of women by linking academic visibility of women's issues with political action. With the growth of women's studies however opinions have become divided regarding its role and focus. Women activists fear that the 'excessive academicization' of feminist research will alienate it from the women's movement. On the other hand scholars are apprehensive that excessive preoccupation with action can lead to the dilution of scientific endeavour. Instead of acting as a catalyst to change all disciplines had shake the foundations of existing knowledge it could be marginalized as a discipline in the university system. Against the twin danger of 'excessive academicization' and 'activism' the key challenge facing scholars is how to blend research and action theory and practice without losing its broader political goals. In the 1990s feminist research faced the challenging task of pursuing its goals of gender equality and social justice in the context of globalization and liberalization. Until now feminist research has survived in the university system with the financial support and patronage of the government and donor agencies.

It may argued here that under the combined effects of commercialization, urbanization, migration and employment, significant changes are taking place in India's process of modernization. In India women are not a homogenous category; they belong to diverse castes, classes, communities, economic groups, and are located at different geographic and development zones with all its distinctiveness of culture. We find three types of inequality or diversity in conducting feminist research in India. The Regional Diversity is based on inter-state and rural-urban disparities. The diversity of Social Groups is based on caste, religion and class. There is diversity of Economic Groups as well. However the further growth and sustainability of feminist research centres and women cells are constrained by the present fiscal crisis in every aspects of Indian society. Given the rigidities of the university system the institutionalisation of women's studies related research is in danger of losing its transformative and critical role. Thus in the changing context it remains to be seen to what extent the committed academic community can pursue knowledge that transforms policies and builds perspectives to empower women.[\[15\]](#)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be argued that initiatives must be taken to understand the socio-economic and cultural inequality before initiating feminist research in Indian context. We may categorize the inequalities into following heads:

Mortality Inequality: Inequality between women and men directly involves matters of life and death, and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates of women and a consequent preponderance of men in the total population, as opposed to the preponderance of women found in societies with little or no gender bias in health care and nutrition.

Natality Inequality: Gender inequality can manifest itself in the form of the parents wanting the newborn to be a boy rather than a girl. With the availability of modern techniques to determine the gender of the fetus, sex-selective abortion has become common in many countries.

Basic Facility Inequality: Deficiencies in basic facilities available to women, varying from encouragement to cultivate one's natural talents to fair participation in rewarding social functions of the community.

Special opportunity inequality: The opportunities of higher education may be far fewer for young women than for young men. Indeed, gender bias in higher education and professional training can be observed.

Professional Inequality: In terms of employment as well as promotion in work and occupation, women often face greater handicap than men. Yet progress to elevated levels of employment and occupation seems to be much more problematic for women than for men.

Ownership Inequality: The absence of claims to property can not only reduce the voice of women, but also make it harder for women to enter and flourish in commercial, economic and even some social activities.

Household Inequality: There are often enough, basic inequalities in gender relations within the family or the household, which can take many different forms. Even in cases in which there are no overt signs of anti-female bias in, say, survival or son-preference or education, or even in promotion to higher executive positions, the family arrangements can be quite unequal in terms of sharing the burden of housework and child care.

ENDNOTES

1. Bowels, Gloria and Renate Duelli Klein (Eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London Especially chapter 7 'How to do what we want to do: thoughts about feminist methodology' by Renate Duelli Klein; chapter 9 'Towards a methodology for feminist research' by Maria Mies; chapter 12 'Back into the personal or: our attempt to construct 'feminist research' by Liz Stanley and Sue Wise; and Shulamit Reinharz's contribution 'Experiential Analysis: A contribution to feminist research'. 1983.
2. Harding, Sandra (Ed), *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987.
3. Patriarchal – literally means the 'rule of the father'. Patriarchal societies are structured by the dominance of more experienced or authoritarian men who subordinate younger men, women, children, animals and the rest of nature. Subordination may involve ownership and/or responsibility rights. Men have sovereignty over others and these others rely on men for the meeting of their basic needs. Within such a structure women may carve out some areas of their own, but attempts to live independently of men, or even in equal partnership with men, will be contested, resisted and contained. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-andmaps/patriarchy-and-matriarchy>)
4. New paradigm science is a term being used to describe the kind of science which accompanies -in the physical world – the shift from Newtonian to post-Einsteinian physics, and – in the social world – the shift from 'positivism' to 'critical interpretivism' or 'constructivism'. 'Positivism' refers to a school of philosophical thought which saw the world as having a single 'reality' which existed independently of the observer, and which could only be discovered by an objective and uninvolved scientist through acts of pure perception, ideally in a laboratory setting where all variables could be controlled and manipulated, and exact causation determined and measured. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/energy-government-and-defense-magazines/new-paradigm>)
5. Bleier, R (Ed.), *Feminists Approach to Science*, Pergamon, Elmsford, New York, 1986.
6. Other terms for this element of feminist research may be 'interpretive', 'experiential', 'phenomenological', 'Verstehen' (which means 'understanding'), hermeneutic, 'illuminative', 'naturalistic', 'responsive', 'constructivist' or 'interactionist'. Primarily these approaches attempt to ensure that the researcher understands how others see and comprehend the world, in their own way, and using their own words. In feminist research this is understood as involving an essentially

communicative or collaborative relationship between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’. As this increasingly involves the exchange of perceptions, the boundaries between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ start to break down as each becomes more informed about the other in order to better communicate their own position, and collectively construct understanding, theory and proposed new action.

7. Harding, Sandra, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1986.
8. Stanley, Liz and Sue Wise, *Breaking Out – Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983.
9. Eichler, Margrit, *Non Sexist Research Methods – a Practical Guide*, Allen & Unwin, Winchester, Mass. Chapter 7 is a set of ‘Guidelines’ which is similar to a standards manual, and there is also an Appendix ‘Checklist’, 1988.
10. Stanley, Liz (Ed), *Feminist Praxis*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London See especially ‘Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes’ by Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, 1990.
11. Bell, Colin and Helen Roberts (Eds.), *Social Researching – Politics, Problems, Practice*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London Especially the article ‘It’s great to have someone to talk to’ – the ethics and politics of interviewing women’ pp 70-87, 1984.
12. Belenky, Mary Field, Bly the McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women’s Ways of Knowing: the Development of Self, Voice and Mind*, Basic Books, New York, 1986.
13. Roberts, Helen (Ed), *Doing Feminist Research*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London A classic and recommended reading; it includes Ann Oakley’s article ‘Interviewing Women: a contradiction in terms’ pp 30-59
14. Carter Kathryn and Carole Spitzack (Eds), *Doing Research on Women’s Communication: Perspectives on Theory and Method*, Ablex, Norwood, New Jersey, Particularly Chapter 8 ‘Interviewing Women: a phenomenological Approach to Feminist Communication Research’ by Kristin M. Langellier and Deanna L. Hall, and Chapter 9 ‘Phenomenology as Feminist Methodology: Explicating Interviews’ by Jenny L. Nelson, 1989.
15. Lather, Patti, *Feminist Research in Education: Within/Against*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1991.