With the prospect of being the eighth editor of *Psychology of Women Quarterly (PWQ)* ahead of me, I naturally wanted to take a look back at those editors who came before me, and it is with great pride and trepidation that I now stand on their shoulders. In addition, I prepared a brief history of the journal to help celebrate Division 35’s 35th birthday at the 2009 APA convention in August and was saddened by the news that *PWQ’s* first editor, Georgia Babladelis, passed away (see our tribute to her in this issue). I learned a lot from this retrospective ranging from small points that made me smile (e.g., the shorthand reference to *PWQ* started as “the Quarterly”) to broader points that made me feel that I was on the right track (e.g., Georgia’s reference in *PWQ’s* second volume “considering” [1977, p. 4] a teaching section that has now come to fruition in this volume).

For me, the most fundamental transition point in this history appeared in our 14th volume when editor Judith Worell declared *PWQ* “well-established and scholarly” (1990, p. 1) and feminist. Lamenting “the absence of the feminist flag in our title” (p. 2), Judy both inserted it in the journal’s mission statement (“a feminist journal which aims to encourage and develop a body of knowledge about the psychology of women”) and grappled with its meaning in her editorial, aptly titled “Feminist Frameworks: Retrospect and Prospect” (1990). I want to take this opportunity here to explore how this single word, *feminist*, shapes both the content (explored here in terms of my criteria for consideration of a manuscript) and the process (operationalized through peer review) of this journal.

**Criteria for Consideration: Psychology, Women, and Feminist**
The first substantive hurdle after a manuscript lands in our new web-based submission and tracking system is to be screened by me – a critical point at which I can either pass a manuscript along to an associate editor for additional screening or reject it outright. I am very much aware of the power and responsibility that adhere to this latter option, and I exercise it cautiously. Previous editor Jayne Stake took a major step toward clarifying the criteria for this decision in her disposition letters to authors. Jayne specified that failure to move forward resulted because the paper fell outside the scope of the journal or did not meet the scholarly standards of the journal.

Admittedly, the second option is safer for me: I simply enforce the publication standards laid out in the 6th edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010), including the “Journal Article Reporting Standards” (pp. 247-250). Beyond this baseline for formatting and comprehensiveness, I make a judgment about the quality and suitability of methods and procedures, and again these road signs are rather clearly laid out in the standards of our discipline. For example, Paula Schnurr (1998), editor of the Journal of Traumatic Stress, provides an excellent overview of methodology and hypothesis testing as viewed through an editor’s eyes. Returning to Judy Worell’s editorial for PWQ, she outlined her standards clearly, and I too stand by them:

…we look for the following manuscript characteristics: a theory or rationale for your work, some recognition of the research that has preceded it, a carefully described sample appropriate to the questions being asked, a relevant control group if the design calls for one, instrumentation that is reliable and/or valid and replicable, procedures that are described in such sufficient detail that they can be replicated by others, statistical techniques that are adequate to test competing
hypotheses, clear and concise presentation of the results, and a discussion that
draws the hypotheses and results into context. (Worell, 1990, p. 4)

On the face of it, falling outside the scope of the journal appears innocuous enough; however, it is a judgment that I think requires deeper and clearer thinking as well as transparency. The first and obvious standard concerns the content of the field of the psychology of women. *PWQ*’s mission statements across time have grappled with this point by outlining some appropriate topic areas (followed by a disclaimer that the list is not exhaustive). It is exactly this breadth of our field that I personally find both appealing and challenging. Unlike the concentrated area journals (e.g., social, personality and developmental), *PWQ* cuts across all of these areas (for example, see O’Connell & Russo’s [1991] special issue of *PWQ*), and in doing so, embraces a diverse array of methodological approaches (for example, see Crawford & Kimmel’s [1999] special issues of *PWQ*).

However, *PWQ* is fundamentally psychological (as opposed to interdisciplinary). This focus prescribes a clear literature on which submissions are expected both to build and to contribute. Put concretely, I expect submissions to *PWQ* to be framed within this existing literature in psychology, most obviously operationalized in a paper’s reference list, and to make a substantial contribution to this literature consistent with Kuhn’s (1970) descriptions of “normal science” and the role of a scientific community. I do not mean to restrict a paper’s scope exclusively to the existing literature on the psychology of women (I certainly value interdisciplinary linkages), but rather to note that failure to make these scholarly connections constitutes falling outside the scope of the journal.

In addition to being psychological, the second part of *PWQ*’s focus is on women. Certainly, the field has moved well beyond the simple comparison of women with men that
characterized early research (LaFrance, Paluck, & Brescoll, 2004). Simply documenting gender differences as implicitly essentialized differences without taking into account social context (Yoder & Kahn, 2003) is not appropriate for this journal. More ambiguous are the lines drawn between foci on women and on gender. Certainly, I welcome (and encourage) manuscripts that explore the intersection of gender with other social categorizations, such as sexuality, race and ethnicity, (dis)ability, socio-cultural, and so on and that explore gender’s confounding with socialization practices, stereotyping, social status, and power. More uncertain are manuscripts operationalizing gender in terms of men and masculinity. For me, the litmus test here goes back to the journal’s stated purview in the psychology of women. If women’s well being is at the center of what a researchers is studying (e.g., men’s rape myth acceptance and its effect on behaviors targeting women), even if that paper’s participants are men and its focus is on masculinity, then I believe it falls within \textit{PWQ}’s scope. In sum, I stand by the journal’s stated concentration on a psychology of women, making relevance to women and women’s lives a principle factor in defining the journal’s scope.

The final piece demarcating scope, \textit{feminist}, turns to the most complex component of my decision making. Am I really making decisions about whether or not a paper is feminist or feminist enough? There is a value judgment being made here that would be antithetical to “objective” scholarship within a positivist framework. However, thanks to more contemporary views of social constructionism (Unger, 1998), claiming that \textit{PWQ} is both cutting edge (in terms of its standards for scholarship) and feminist (in its values) is not oxymoronic. Rather we have accepted for quite awhile now that “doing psychological research is inevitably a political act” (Crawford & Marecek, 1989, p. 161), rife with biases (Sherif, 1979) and choices (Unger, 1983), thus making editing – as part of the dissemination of value-laden research – also necessarily
value-laden. What I find most refreshing about *PWQ* is that we put our values on the table, legitimating the transparency of our values as good scientific practice.

I would be loath to shoulder the responsibility of deciding what feminism is alone, and toward this end, I am unceasingly thankful for my editorial board and for peer reviewers to whom I unhesitatingly turn whenever I have any inkling of doubt about a manuscript’s merit. Ultimately though, I know that my role as editor requires decision making, and throughout the decision making process for each manuscript, I turn to my own research and to the “women” part of the psychology of women to establish what I define as feminist. My colleagues and I just completed a study with 215 undergraduate women designed to explore the common ground among five different measures of feminist identification (Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2009). Regressing out the unique contributions of each measure, we identified a core area of overlap across measures that we designated “core feminism.” We further demonstrated that this core feminism correlated with students’ sense of justice entitlement (that women collectively deserve to be treated fairly) and personal empowerment (that is, helping each woman “to become more independent and assertive about attaining her goals and achieving change and psychological growth” [Wyche & Rice, 1997, p. 60]). We further found that justice entitlement and empowerment mediated the relationship between our core feminism and three positive outcomes for women: enhanced well being, greater endorsement of egalitarian relationships, and heightened sexual assertiveness. Furthermore, we linked a woman’s self-labeling as a feminist, regardless of her attitudes, with participation in feminist activism.

In sum, feminist identification works in the service of women as individuals, in relationships, and as a collective. Although I believe that there are many and diverse ways to achieve these ends, it is this end, working *for* women, that I use as the standard to make
judgments about the appropriateness of initially forwarding a manuscript for further review and ultimately accepting it for publication. My immediate predecessor and editorial mentor Jayne Stake stated this fundamental point unequivocally in her editorial: “The primary purpose of PWQ has been to advance the development of theory and research in feminist psychology for the ultimate goal of improving the lives of women and girls” (2005, p. 1).

Peer Review: Feminist Principles in Practice

These notions about a feminist psychology of women guide the process of peer review as well. Beyond specialized reviewers chosen for specific papers, PWQ maintains a large and remarkably diverse pool of registered reviewers. This diversity extends not only to the fields within psychology represented in this list of experts but also to their tenure. Our pipeline of reviewers extends from graduate students to distinguished reviewers with long-term editorial experience. Students on our Student Advisory Board contribute independent reviews as additions to the standard recruitment of 2-3 peer reviewers; other students contribute to joint reviews in collaboration with an invited mentor (following the Collaborative Review Model [CRM] adopted by the Publication and Communication Board of the American Psychological Association). In all cases, reviews are monitored by the editors for their constructiveness to authors and are considered advisory to the associate editors and editor. We provide feedback to all reviewers by sharing our masked disposition letter to the author as well as all appropriate reviewers’ comments. Overall, our editorial philosophy regards the mentoring of professionals, as both authors and reviewers, in the psychology of women to be a goal integral to putting our feminism into practice.

Changes and Future Directions
Typically new editors in their first editorial delineate the changes they made or plan to make, and they forecast their future vision for the journal over the course of their tenure (2010 – 2014 for me). I can honestly summarize my primary goal as largely staying the course. I value *PWQ* as a cutting edge and feminist journal that both catalogues and promotes the continuing evolution of the field of the psychology of women. I am content to contribute the next steps along this pathway, not envisioning any radical shifts.

This is not to say that I expect to stand still. Although empirical papers on teaching have found their way into the journal in the past, I do think that the field of the psychology of women embraces feminist pedagogy. It is in this spirit of inclusion that teaching section editor Margaret Matlin and I hammered out beginning guidelines for this peer-reviewed section that makes its debut in this issue. Many of the same criteria that apply to original research articles involving scholarship, psychology of women, and feminism apply here as well. We expect these essays to be of interest to teacher-scholars in the psychology of women and, not immodestly, to inform the thinking and practice of readers.

I also understand that the statistical and methodological rigors both of psychology as a whole and of psychology of women with its cross-disciplinary scope continue to expand beyond the expertise of most individual researchers and often beyond the topical expertise of an editorial board and its peer reviewers. To respond to this challenge, I have added a statistical and methodological expert, Andrea Snell, to our editorial board whose in-house expertise has been invaluable to all our editors and whose hand in reviewing Results sections, Tables, and Figures will lend some consistency to how data are handled and presented across our empirical articles. In addition, my assistant editor, Jessica Headley, took great pains to begin our compliance with the 6th edition of APA’s *Publication Manual* (APA, 2010), starting with this issue.
It is becoming increasingly clear that major changes are likely in the world of publishing. *PWQ* now operates in a paperless milieu – we receive submissions electronically, process them in a web-based system including electronic communications with reviewers and authors, and submit them electronically to the publisher – up until the point of final publication, somewhat ironically, in hardcopy form (as well as online). As print journals disappear from personal and library bookshelves, it is likely that even this last step in the editorial process will change. Indeed we are taking steps in that direction with this issue, which includes online supplemental information for both a research article and a teaching essay. By the next volume, I expect to be able to make accepted articles immediately available online to subscribers prior to hardcopy publication, and we are considering online only subscriptions.

With these technological changes come opportunities to process more papers more efficiently and to engage more people more seamlessly in the review process, establishing the page limits of the journal (as yet not fully exploited) as the only constraints to *PWQ*’s growth. I admit that as a quarterly publication, I lean toward not giving away hard-earned pages to invited papers and special issues. For example, I think *The Feminist Psychologist* provides an appropriate outlet for dissemination of the work of SPW, including the mechanics of operating *PWQ*. Furthermore, I expect all papers published in *PWQ* to withstand the rigors of masked peer review. Overall, I would like to concentrate on soliciting more authors – established and novice – to submit their work to *PWQ*, recognizing that publishing high quality scholarship in *PWQ* and that providing this opportunity are themselves feminist acts.

Furthermore, I think our commitment to the quick, initial screening of manuscripts, both by myself and by associate editors, encourages authors to take a chance, chances that I hope continue to push the borders of the field. In this spirit of being on the cutting edge of the field, I
encourage authors to submit expanded review articles to *PWQ*, that is, articles that synthesize an area of knowledge then go on to lay out future directions for shaping and extending that knowledge. I would like to see a full range of empirical methodologies represented in *PWQ*, quantitative and qualitative, and I have formed an editorial board equipped to handle this range. Whatever form *PWQ* eventually takes, from old-fashioned paper to not-so-futuristic hand-held devices, my not-so-innovative goal is that *PWQ* remain at the cutting edge of feminist scholarship in a psychology for women.
References


