FEMINISMS IN EDUCATION
An Introduction

Gaby Weiner presents an overview of recent developments in feminist educational thinking and practice in Britain, exploring the ethical and professional challenges which now face feminist teachers and educators. Her main aim is to introduce issues relating to gender, curriculum, pedagogy and practice. She also affirms the good news of the transformative powers of feminist consciousness as well as the bad news of social inequality.

She relates feminist thinking and practice to her own autobiographical experiences, to research and practitioner perspectives on gender, and to a variety of teacher and policy gender initiatives. She examines how the curriculum is implicated in the construction of gender relations, for example, in defining gender appropriate behaviour and/or in shaping perceptions of the appropriate place for girls and women in the family, school and employment. Throughout, she offers suggestions for feminist practice and the book concludes with specific proposals for developing an educational politics out of poststructural feminism, and for creating a feminist praxis as a basis for feminist action in education.

Gaby Weiner has been involved in education at a number of levels: as a student, parent, primary schoolteacher, researcher, course developer and lecturer in higher education; and is currently professor of educational research at South Bank University. She has published widely on equal opportunities and feminist issues within education and edited a number of collections, she also co-edited (with Rosemary Deem) the Open University Press series Gender and Education.

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Women and people of low birth are very hard to deal with. If you are friendly with them, they get out of hand, and if you keep your distance, they resent it.

(Confucius 551–479 BC)

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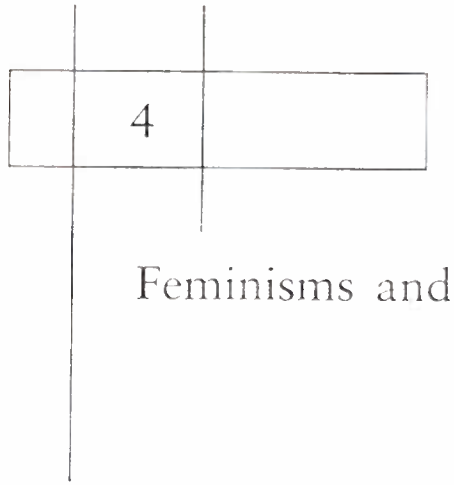
Loreia Parada-Ampedia

structure and in its focus on revealing how power is exercised through discourse.

Is there a future for feminism, then, in future curriculum metamorphoses? Whilst this question will be addressed in subsequent chapters, perhaps, first, we need to know what forms of feminisms are available to us, and also why education has appeared relatively resistant to feminist challenges. Thus, discussion of developments within feminism and how they apply to education will form the basis of the next chapter.



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Feminisms and education

Introduction

Many people think of feminism as a comparatively recent phenomenon – a rather 'hippy' and utopian vision left over from the 1960s and 1970s. Some have even termed the 1980s onwards as a 'post-feminist' era in which women can relax at last, safe in the knowledge that all the necessary gains (the vote, equal pay, opportunities in the labour market, sexual freedom and so on) have been safely secured (Rumens 1985).

In fact, feminism has a very long history even though the term is of more recent origin. It derives from the Latin *femina* (woman), feminism initially meaning 'having the quality of females', and came into use as a perspective on sexual equality in the 1890s. Rossi (1974) traced its first usage in print to a book review published in *The Athenaeum*, 27 April 1895 although this does not signal the beginning of feminism as a movement since, prior to this 'womanism' was more commonly used to describe interest in sex equality issues. According to Tuttle (1986: 349), nineteenth-century usage of the term 'The Woman Question' to denote interest in the condition of women signalled 'a pre-feminist consciousness'

rather than feminism as a political movement, as it is conceived today. To purloin Dale Spender's book title, indeed, 'There's Always Been a Women's Movement' (Spender 1983b). As feminist historians have found, if you look hard enough, every era has had its share of women complaining of their lot in relation to their male contemporaries. From Sappho in the seventh century BC, through the middle ages to the modern (and even the post-modern) period, there has been a distinctive feminist presence in history.

However, different feminisms have prioritized different aspects of women's struggle against oppressive forces. It has been common in recent years to categorize each feminism according to its particular ideological source in order to show the differences within feminism as well as the shared commitment to women's advancement. In 1987, Madeleine Arnot and I identified three perspectives on feminism which, we argued, had made the most impact on education: these we termed 'Equal Rights in Education' (namely liberal feminism), 'Patriarchal Relations' (radical feminism) and 'Class, Race and Gender: Structures and Ideologies' (marxist/socialist feminism) (Arnot and Weiner 1987). We were later rightly criticized for rendering as marginal those feminisms on the fringes of our three categories, in particular, black feminism and lesbian feminism. Measor and Sikes catalogue four main strands of feminism in their book on gender and schooling – liberal, radical, socialist and psychoanalytic – (Measor and Sikes 1992), while Tong in her introduction to feminist thought published in 1989, distinguishes liberal, marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, existentialist and postmodern feminisms, seven in all. As post-structuralism rightly identifies, it is proving ever more difficult to categorize the amoeba-like changes in feminism, due to the shifting nature of terminology, say of 'woman' or 'feminism' or 'femininity' and the discursive frameworks which have helped shape the 'normalizing' processes for generations of women. Indeed hooks (1984) argues that feminist thought is always a 'theory in the making', always open to re-examination and new possibilities. Moreover, if there is any agreement about feminism, as Mitchell points out, it is likely to be of a general and diffuse nature.

> If feminism is a concern with issues affecting women, a concern to advance women's interests, so that therefore anyone who shares this concern is a feminist, whether they acknowledge it or not, then the range of feminism is general and its meaning is equally diffuse.
>
> (Mitchell 1986: 12)

However, what has clearly marked out modern feminism has been its emphasis on the need for feminist *consciousness*; that is, the concern to understand what has caused women's subordination in order to campaign and struggle against it. Because such theoretical understandings (of the causes of women's oppression) are dependent on ideological and political value positions, however, and also because feminism as 'theory in the making' is resistant to any one dominant discourse, any attempts to summarize differences in feminist perspective are necessarily hazardous and vulnerable to criticism. Nevertheless, in this chapter I shall attempt (perhaps unwisely) to consider, as far as it is possible, the various shifts in modern feminist thought and their impact on education, at the same time as emphasizing feminism's 'harmonious' goals of equality and sisterhood, and its discordant tones of difference and identity.

Feminisms and feminist thought

We tend to be familiar with the two most recent feminist 'waves': the first, in the nineteenth century stretching into the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the second, from the late 1960s onwards.

The 'first wave' movement was associated with the emergence of liberal individualism and Protestantism at the time of the Enlightenment (at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries), drawing specifically on ideas about natural rights, justice and democracy. Not surprisingly given its origins, the movement was *liberal*, *bourgeois* and highly *individualistic*, principally concerned with extending legal, political and employment rights of middle-class women. Whilst different class interests such as Owenites, Chartists, Unitarians and middle-class reformers united in campaigning on 'The Woman Question' (often as part of a pattern of reforms that embraced universal suffrage and a national system of education), improvement of the marriage property laws, greater access to education and the professions, wider employment opportunities and participation of women in

government and public life undoubtedly yielded greater benefits for middle-class women.

Liberal feminism, which has arguably been the most enduring and accepted of all the feminisms (visible currently in the campaigns in the UK for more women members of parliament and for the rights of women to become Church of England clerics on an equal basis with men) asserts that individual women should be as free as men to determine their social, political and educational roles, and that any laws, traditions and activities that inhibit equal rights and opportunities should be abolished. Access to education is fundamental to this perspective since it claims that by providing equal education for both sexes, an environment would be created in which individual women's (and men's) potential can be encouraged and developed. Liberal feminists also assume that equality for women can be achieved by democratic reforms, without the need for revolutionary changes in economic, political or cultural life, and, in this, their views are in sharp contrast to those of other feminist campaigners.

The 'second wave' women's movement had more dissident origins and aims, although was initially much influenced by the liberal feminism of Betty Friedan whose 1963 publication, *The Feminine Mystique* has been popularly regarded as signalling its beginnings. The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM, also called the modern or new feminist movement) was born in the USA in the 1960s out of other movements of the political 'new' Left, particularly the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam war movements. A group of women, thoroughly disenchanted with the male domination of political organizations ostensibly committed to democratic/egalitarian practices, began to explore ideas about women-centredness in political organizations and to organize their own autonomous movement for women's liberation. Though its debt to marxism is clearly evident in the terminology used, for example Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex* (1970) sought to define society in terms of a sex/class system and offered the case for a feminist revolution, the ideas developed came to be known as those characterizing *radical feminism*.

First, the concept of 'patriarchy' was used to analyse the principles underlying women's oppression. Its original meaning – the rule of the father – was altered to describe the historical dominance of men over women, this being seen as the prototype of all other oppressions and necessary for their continuation.

> Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression . . . are extensions of male supremacy . . . All men have oppressed women.
>
> (*Redstockings Manifesto*, quoted in Bouchier 1983)

Further, Millett (1971) argued that patriarchy is analytically independent of capitalist or other modes of production and Firestone (1970) defined patriarchy in terms of male control over women's reproduction.

However, whilst the concept of patriarchy has been crucial to modern feminism because as Humm (1989: 159) puts it 'feminism needed a term by which the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect women could be expressed', different feminist discourses produce different versions of how patriarchy is constituted, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Another related assumption of radical feminism is that of the 'universal oppression of women'. It necessarily follows that if all men oppress women, women are *the* oppressed class, though there has been some disagreement about how patriarchal relations were/are created and sustained. Firestone (1970) argued that the fundamental inequality between men and women is traceable to the physical realities of female and male biology (particularly their roles in reproduction) and their consequences. Ortner (1974) in contrast, saw the relegation of women to the private sphere arising out of the *interpretation* of biology in terms of women's association with nature and men's, with culture and civilization.

The third main assumption of radical feminism is that, to be aware of the effects of male domination, women have to undergo a process of women-focused education (or re-education) known as 'consciousness raising'. Developed in the 1960s, consciousness raising is a means of sharing information about female experience and was used as a means of education for women in the absence of a comprehensive knowledge-base on women.

> We wanted to get the truth about how women felt, how we viewed our lives, what was done to us and how we functioned in the world. Not how we were *supposed* to feel but how we really did feel. This knowledge, gained through honest examination of our personal experience, we would pool to help us figure how to change the situation of women.
>
> (Shulman 1980: 154)

For a time, during the 1970s, radical feminist goals dominated the 'second-wave' women's movement as it drew in women from a wide range of backgrounds and interests. In Britain, Rowbotham remembers that there seemed to be small groups in most large towns, loosely connected together through national conferences; thus, 'the movement was sufficiently concerted to back national campaigns, for example on abortion' (Rowbotham 1989: xii).

Feminists grouped to address one or more of the numerous concerns of women characterizing the last quarter of the twentieth century: issues such as sexuality, women's health, abortion and reproductive rights, pornography, male violence, and also access to and conditions of employment, child-care provision, sexual harassment in the workplace and so on. The need to create a knowledge-base that illuminated the experiences of women resulted in a burgeoning feminist scholarship and also the emergence, particularly in the United States, of a proliferation of Women's Studies courses. Further, the perceived need to create a more effective, female, political power-base led to increased interest in the development of women-friendly organizations and practices (non-hierarchical, cooperative etc). This was characterized by 'the refusal of formal delegated structures of political organisation, a stress on participation rather than representation' (Mitchell 1986: 26).

Further, as Mitchell (1986) points out, radical feminism not only sought to challenge contemporary sexual relations and politics; it also produced a new language and a new discursive framework based on liberation and collectivism.

> One of the most striking features of women's liberation and radical feminism was their recourse to a new language – the language of liberation rather than emancipation, of collectivism rather than individualism.
>
> (Mitchell 1986: 26)

However, by the end of the 1970s, a number of different feminist perspectives surfaced to challenge the hegemonic position of radical (and to some extent, liberal) feminism, both as a critique and an extension of the feminist project. For example, women within *marxist* and *socialist* organizations began, in a sense, to strike back at the sisters who had originally defected, although in Britain, as early as the 1950s, Juliet Mitchell had begun to articulate feminist ideas within the British Left. Because she was criticized by male

comrades for ideological incorrectness, she began to develop a feminist position that demanded changes outside conventional marxist economic and social policy. These included changes in: *production* – women's place in the labour market; *reproduction* – sexual divisions within the family; *sexuality* – in the views of women as primarily sexual beings and sex-objects; and *socialization* – in the way in which the young were reared and educated (Mitchell 1971).

Later, other marxist and socialist feminists attempted to incorporate ideas about women's oppression and patriarchal relations into classic marxism, focusing in particular, on the relationship between production (the labour market) and reproduction (the family); the interrelationship of capitalism and patriarchy; and the complex interplay between gender, culture and society (see, for example, Barrett 1980; Davis 1981; Segal 1987).

Accordingly, patriarchy has a materialist and historical basis in that capitalism is founded on a patriarchal division of labour. Hartmann (1976) for example, defined patriarchy as a set of social relations with a material base underpinned by a system of male hierarchical relations and solidarity.

An important emphasis was that of the impact of class on gender formation exemplified in MacDonald's claim that gender and class are inexorably drawn together within capitalism:

> both class relations and gender relations, while they exist within their own histories, can nevertheless be so closely interwoven that it is theoretically very difficult to draw them apart within specific historic conjunctures. The development of capitalism is one such conjuncture where one finds patriarchal relations of dominance and control over women buttressing the structure of class domination.
>
> (MacDonald 1981: 160)

Whilst this feminist perspective had greater explanatory power, it appeared to be less successful than radical feminism in attracting large numbers of women to its political position, possibly because in seeking to incorporate feminist ideas within marxism, its complexities posed an obstacle to all but the most theoretically sophisticated.

In many ways, the most important challenge to radical feminism came from *black feminism* which criticized not only the white, patriarchal society for triply oppressing black women (on the basis

of sex, colour and class) but also the oppressive nature of the white women's movement which had glossed over economic and social differences between women in its attempt to articulate an authentic, overarching female experience. Moreover, in the United States, both waves of feminism were associated with black political campaigns: in the nineteenth century, around the abolition of slavery and in the twentieth, around the Civil Rights movement. The apparently new black feminist presence was to shatter irreparably the notion of universal sisterhood – though as Tuttle points out, black feminism has been in existence as long as white feminism 'although [it has] . . . suffered the fate of most women of being "lost" to history' (Tuttle 1986: 41).

Black feminists challenged the idea that a feminism that ignores racism can be meaningful. As bel hooks wrote in 1984:

> Feminist theory would have much to offer if it showed women ways in which racism and sexism are immutably connected rather than pitting one struggle against the other, or blatantly dismissing racism.
>
> (hooks 1984: 52)

Moreover, it mounted a challenge to some of the most central concepts and assumptions of the white women's movement. Carby argues, for example, that the concept of 'patriarchy' has different meanings for black women.

> We can point to no single source of our oppression. When white feminists emphasize patriarchy alone, we want to redefine the term and make it a more complex concept. Racism ensures that black men do not have the same relations to patriarchal/capitalist hierarchies as white men.
>
> (Carby 1982, reprinted 1987: 65)

hooks further argued that the concentration of the white feminist movement on identifying white middle and upper-class men as the 'enemy' and the 'oppressor' let other men off the hook.

> The labeling of the white male patriarch as 'chauvinist pig' provided a convenient scapegoat for black male sexists. They could join with white and black women to protest against white male oppression and divert attention away from their sexism, their support of patriarchy and their sexist exploitation of women.
>
> (hooks 1982, pp. 87–8)

Black feminists pioneered the concept of identity politics, of organizing around a specific oppression, which allowed for both difference and equality to become issues within feminist politics. Hill Collins adds a commitment to a humanist vision in her definition of black feminism as 'a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize a humanist view of community' (Hill Collins 1990: 39). She also draws on standpoint theory to articulate a specific black woman's position in the political economy, in particular, their ghettoization in domestic work enabling them to see white élites from a position not available to black men.

Interestingly, British black feminists retain stronger links with marxist and socialist feminism than their North American counterparts due to the specific experience of British imperialism and colonialism. For example, Brah and Minhas present their feminist position as follows:

> We start from the position that any discussion [of education] . . . must be understood in the context of the complex social and historical processes which account for the subordination of black groups in British society. Social relations between white and black groups in Britain today are set against a background of colonialism and imperialism.
>
> (Brah and Minhas 1985: 14)

In particular, British black feminists emphasized the exploitation and unjust treatment of black immigrants (women and men) from the Caribbean and the Asian subcontinent from the 1950s onwards, for example, concerning overt discrimination such as the use of the 'colour bar' in housing, employment and education (Bryan *et al.* 1985). The state was further viewed as having created new forms of racism (termed 'institutional racism') within the bureaucracies and institutions for which it was responsible; thus 'contemporary racism now needs to be seen as a structural feature of the social system rather than a phenomenon merely of individual prejudice' (Brah and Minhas 1985: 15).

Furthermore, the possibility of making generalizations across all groups derived, say, from theories based on the white family as a site of sexual oppression, was heavily criticized. Phoenix (1987) argues that in the light of the endemic and unremitting racism of British society, the black British family is more likely to be a

source of strength and a haven, than a site of oppression for black women.

Simultaneously, radical feminism began to exhibit divisions as breakaways championing a *separatist* feminist position were taken up by the 'new age' philosophies of Mary Daly and her followers on the one hand, and political lesbianism on the other. Mary Daly, in her 1979 volume *Gyn/Ecology* offers a new, metaphysical *spiritual feminism* in which men are depicted as evil and death-loving, parasitical on the energies of good, life-loving women. Daly argued that patriarchy is itself the world's prevailing religion and that women need to withdraw from men in order to create a new, women-centred universe with a new philosophy and theology, and even a new language.

Lesbian feminism, in sharp contrast, took a much more overtly political stand, arguing that lesbianism is not simply a matter of sexual preference or an issue of civil rights but rather a whole way of life combining the personal with the political. The concept of *political lesbianism* was developed as a critique of the ideology and practices of heterosexuality. According to Charlotte Bunch,

> Lesbian-feminist politics is a political critique of the institution and ideology of heterosexuality as a cornerstone of male supremacy. It is an extension of the analysis of sexual politics to an analysis of sexuality itself as an institution. It is a commitment to women as a political group, which is the basis of a political/economic strategy leading to power for women, not just an 'alternative community'.
>
> (quoted in Tuttle 1986: 180–1)

The argument was made that since sexual orientation is a matter of personal preference, lesbianism should not be stigmatized and furthermore, that lesbianism should be made more visible within the women's movement, in history and in society as a whole. Moreover, because political lesbianism constitutes a major challenge to male domination in its commitment to an autonomous, women-centred society, it has a legitimate and central place in any movement which seeks to redress the power balances between the sexes.

Significantly, the more 'radical' feminist groupings were remarkably successful in achieving societal attitudinal change, particularly given their relatively small numbers. Their public campaigns, for instance, concerning the seriousness of rape and the establishment of rape crisis centres, the revelation of hitherto unacknowledged incidence of child sexual abuse and male violence in the family, the establishment of havens for battered wives, and campaigns against pornography as a violation of women's civil rights, all fundamentally affected the societies within which they were active (see, for example, Brownmiller 1975; Dworkin 1981).

Another form of feminism to emerge in the 1970s, drawing to some extent on both marxist and radical feminism but also with its own specific knowledge-base was that of *psychoanalytic feminism*. Its main concern was to place greater emphasis within feminism on how the oppression of women affects their emotional life and their sexuality (as opposed, say, to their employment prospects or position within the family). It argued, for instance, that the roots of women's oppression are deeply embedded in the psyche and that for women to free themselves, an 'interior' (as well as societal) revolution is necessary so that women are able to challenge their own oppression. Extending her earlier ideas on the necessary prerequisites for women's liberation (see earlier in this chapter) Mitchell (1982) continued to articulate her concern about the ideologies underlying women's position, this time taking Freud's theories about the unconscious and the construction of femininity and demonstrating their importance as tools for analysing and challenging patriarchal society.

Criticisms of the phallocentric nature of Freud's work led other feminists into alternative ways of theorizing women's position in the family and in child-rearing. Chodorow, for example, explored mother/daughter relationships. Rejecting the notion that women's universal primary role in child-care could be explained in purely biological or social terms, Chodorow claims that women become mothers because they were themselves mothered by women. In contrast, the fact that men are parented by women psychically reduces their potential for parenting. Women's exclusive mothering, Chodorow asserted:

> creates a psychology of male dominance and fear of women in men. It forms a basis for the division of the social world into unequally valued domestic and public spheres, each the province of a different gender.
>
> (Chodorow 1978)

According to this view, patriarchy stems from the gender formation of females and males, uniting psychic and property relations

(Dinnerstein 1976). Thus to achieve women's liberation, the family must be reorganized so that women and men share parenting responsibilities equally and children grow up dependent upon both women and men from their earliest days. Not surprisingly given other radical feminist perspectives, major criticisms of Chodorow's thesis includes her prioritization of psychic dynamics over social structures in women's liberation, and her failure to appreciate the diversity of family structures inter- and intra-culturally (Tong 1989).

Other, more complex (and often more confusing!) critical feminisms emerged in the 1980s to challenge and critique both the women's movement and patriarchal relations, developing out of the general disillusionment with science and macro-political theory in the post-Chernobyl and post-Communist/Cold War eras. They were grounded, as Lather writes, in 'the disappointed hopes engendered by optimistic confidence in the continuing progress and imminent triumph of Enlightenment reason' (Lather 1991: 87).

They arose out of theories of poststructuralism and postmodernism, increasingly popular and influential in the social sciences towards the end of the 1980s. However, there was much confusion about what poststructuralism and postmodernism brought to the understanding of social relations. In fact, Hudson reveals the extent to which characterizations of postmodernism differ: seen alternatively as a myth, periodization, condition or situation, experience, historical consciousness, sensibility, climate, crisis, episteme, discourse, poetics, retreat, topos, and task or project (Hudson 1989: 140). Calinescu (1985) suggests however that postmodernism is principally used in two ways: as a historical category (namely defining a post-modern era) and as a systematic or ideal concept (namely a theoretical, analytic framework). Also, its relationship to poststructuralism lies in the acceptance by poststructuralists of the analytic framework but not the sense of periodization.

Thus, if postmodernist critiques aim to deconstruct philosophical claims generally, and the very idea of possible unitary theories of knowledge, *post-modern feminism* also concentrates on such critiques but within feminism (Nicholson 1990). Accordingly, feminism is perceived as having much in common with postmodernism in questioning the 'foundationalism and absolutism' (Hekman 1990: 2) of the modern historical period (from the late eighteenth century onwards); in criticizing the claims to objectivity and rationality of modern (male) western scholarship; and in asserting that this epistemology must be displaced and a different way of describing human knowledge and its acquisition must be found.

> Feminism, like postmodernism, poses a challenge to modern thought in every discipline from philosophy to physics, but the cutting edge of both critiques is to be in those disciplines that study 'man'. Both feminism and postmodernism are especially concerned to challenge one of the defining characteristics of modernism, the anthropocentric [male-centred] definition of knowledge.
>
> (Hekman 1990: 1–2)

However, Hekman makes the point that feminism is also tied to the universalisms of Enlightenment epistemology, both because of its modernist legacy (namely the emergence at the end of the eighteenth century of liberal feminism as part of Enlightenment thinking in, say, the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792), and because of radical feminism's adherence to dichotomies and absolutes connected with revealing an essential nature of womanhood. Accordingly, a post-modern approach to feminism must necessarily reject outright the epistemological categories that have created and sustained the female–male dualism and also aim to reveal some of the flaws in contemporary feminism, such as the attempt to define an essential female nature (such as by Mary Daly), the failure to recognize the historical and cultural embeddedness of its own assumptions, or to replace the current 'masculinist' epistemology with a similarly flawed 'feminine-ist' epistemology. Moreover, if all knowledge (including that created by feminism) is perceived as interpretive and open to criticism this will add considerable substance and power to the overall feminist critique.

In contrast, *poststructural feminism* has placed more emphasis on the creation of new ways of seeing and knowing. Drawing on the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault among others, poststructural *feminism* seeks to analyse in more detail the workings of patriarchy in all its manifestations – ideological, institutional, organizational and subjective. Moving away from the universals of liberal and radical feminism, social relations are viewed in terms of plurality and diversity rather than unity and consensus, enabling an articulation of alternative, more effective ways of thinking about or acting on issues of gender (Wallach Scott 1990).

A poststructural analysis, it is argued, differs fundamentally from structuralist analyses such as that of the linguist Saussure in that

it recognizes the importance of 'agency' as well as structures in the production of social practices:

> It recognizes not only the constitutive force of discourse and the social structures emerging through those discourses, but accords the possibility of *agency* to the subject. For children and anyone else not accorded full human status within society, agency stems from a critical awareness of the constitutive force of discourse.
>
> (Davies and Banks 1992: 3)

Thus people are not socialized into their personal worlds, not passively shaped by others but rather, each is active in taking up discourses through which he or she is shaped.

Moreover, feminist poststructuralism argues that what it means to be a 'woman' and/or to be acceptably 'feminine' shifts and changes as a consequence of discursive shifts and changes in culture and history. If the meanings of concepts such as 'womanhood' or feminism, for that matter, are necessarily unstable and open to contestation and redefinition, then they require continual scrutiny; according to Wallach Scott (1988: 5):

> they require vigilant repetition, reassertion and implementation by those who have endorsed one or another definition. Instead of attributing transparent and shared meaning to cultural concepts, poststructuralists insist that meanings are not fixed in a culture's lexicon but are rather dynamic, always potentially in flux.

What poststructural feminism claims to be able to do, then, even if it lacks any substantive powerbase, is to offer discursive space in which the individual woman is able to resist her subject positioning (a specific fixing of identity and meaning). According to Weedon (1987: 105):

> A constant battle is being waged for the subjectivity of every individual – a battle in which real interests are at stake, for example, gender-based social power – dominant, liberal-humanist assumptions about subjectivity mask the struggle.

As a 'reverse-discourse', feminism is positioned to challenge meaning and power, enabling the production of new, resistant discourses. Weedon suggests, however, that radical feminism has failed to do this thus far since it has run parallel to the hegemonic, male discourse, rather than subverting its power. On the other hand, while privileging the interests of women, feminist poststructuralism, Weedon argues, is more analytical and illuminating in revealing how power is exercised through discourse, how oppression works and how resistances might be possible.

Criticisms of postmodernism and poststructuralism have largely been concerned with questioning their appropriateness, although theoretically strong, for political action. Thus the charge that postmodernist (and indeed poststructuralist) feminism cannot provide a viable political programme because it rejects absolute values and verges on relativism, needs seriously to be addressed even though its rejection of male-defined knowledge and action is one of the most obvious goals of feminism.

The range of feminisms described above, I suggest, are those that have been of most influence to British feminism; however, other forms have had greater prominence in other cultures. In France, for example, different forms of feminism have emerged both out of *existentialism* and *poststructuralism/postmodernism* – indeed Tong claims that until recently, post-modern feminism was popularly referred to as 'French feminism' (1989: 217).

In the first instance, drawing on the work of the French existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in her 1949 book *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Simone de Beauvoir (1953) conceptualized woman's oppression as unique, derived from her position as the Other, not only separate from man but inferior to him. Her perception of the effects on women of having and caring for children suggested to de Beauvoir that it was harder for a woman to become and remain 'a self', especially as a mother. Writing at a time when feminism was at a low point, de Beauvoir argued the case for cultural factors in women's oppression, seeing causes and reasons beyond those suggested by female biology and physiology to account for why woman is invariably selected by society to play the role of the Other (de Beauvoir 1953). At the time of writing *Le Deuxième Sexe*, de Beauvoir declared that she was not a feminist, believing the class struggle to be more important and that women's rights would come with the achievement of socialism. In the 1970s, however, she joined the Women's Liberation Movement, latterly convinced of the need for women to unite to fight against the manifest continuation of sexual inequality in revolutionary, leftist societies.

Later, in the 1980s, younger French feminist writers such as

Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva drew on the work of de Beauvoir as well as the philosophical writings of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, to develop a philosophy of *deconstructionism* which aims to illuminate the internal contradictions of the predominant systems of thought and also to reinterpret Freudian psychoanalytic theory and practice (Tong 1989). Cixous (Cixous 1971), for instance, applies Derrida's notion of 'differance' to writing, contrasting feminine writing (*l'écriture feminine*) with masculine writing (*literatur*) and arguing that these differences are psychically constructed. For a variety of socio-cultural reasons, masculine writing has reigned supreme over feminine writing with the consequence that man has been associated with 'all that is active, cultural, light, high or generally positive and women with all that is passive, natural, dark, low or generally negative' (Tong 1989: 224). However, the legacy of de Beauvoir is also clearly evident in this strand of French feminist thought since Cixous also asserts that man is the self and woman is his Other; and woman exists in man's world on his terms. She further argues that women need to write themselves out of the world men have constructed for them by putting into words the unthinkable/unthought, and by using women's own particular forms of writing.

As feminism has become more fractured, and identity politics more possible, other feminisms have continued to emerge: for example, *Christian feminism* (concerned with the creation of a feminist theology – e.g. Maitland 1983) *humanist feminism* (advocating equality that judges women and men by a single standard – e.g. Young 1985); *Muslim feminism* (which sees women's liberation as both more threatening to Islam than it is in the West but also more broadly based – e.g. Mernissi 1985); *eco-feminism* (another broadly-based movement with aims ranging from a quest for a new spiritual relationship with nature to concern to empower women in developing countries – e.g. Vidal 1993) and so on. Conflicts within feminism led also to the use of labels of a more derogatory nature for the activities and beliefs of certain forms of feminism by those holding alternative views: for example, the terms 'revisionist', 'bourgeois', 'career' have all been applied to liberal feminism (Tuttle 1986) which has often been viewed by more radical feminist perspectives as conservative and conformist.

If anything is certain, it is that new feminisms will continue to emerge in the decades to come to reflect the different cultural, psychological and material concerns of new generations of women,

rather than any terminal decline of feminism or entry into any post-feminist era.

Feminisms and education

Having attempted, albeit briefly, to give a flavour of the variety of feminisms that have influenced British culture, I want now to pay some attention to how these influences have permeated education. In particular, I shall evaluate their impact on *educational research* and the issues that feminists have chosen to research and the implications of their findings; and *educational understanding* concerning the explanations, causes and effects, given by feminists for the inequalities that currently exist between the sexes in schools.

Feminisms and educational research

It will come as no surprise that different feminist perspectives have generated different research questions for education. For example liberal feminist research studies have tended to focus on girls' 'failure' or underachievement in the schooling system and education more generally in order to campaign for change. They have thus explored the apparent failure to achieve by girls and young women at school, in higher education and in the workplace in relation to their male peers; the causes of differential attainment patterns between the sexes in certain subject areas (particularly in maths, science and technology); sex-stereotyping in optional subject areas and in careers advice; bias in the way examinations and tests are constructed and marked; sex-differences in school staffing patterns, and so on. The aim has been very clearly directed towards working within the current system to achieve change quickly and with minimal disruption. Thus, in utilizing terms such as access, choice, disadvantage, underrepresentation and underachievement, a discourse is produced in which the most acceptable answers are those that are unlikely to make too many overtly threatening demands on a largely sceptical (and male) educational status quo.

Radical feminists within education, on the other hand, seem to have no such reservations about alienating the educational establishment, being concerned with more fundamental criticisms of the male domination of society and the nature of school knowledge. Thus their research questions have tended to focus on

critiquing 'male' school subjects, and examining the patriarchal processes of schooling and power relations between the sexes in the classroom. Unlike their liberal feminist sisters, they prioritize the role played by sexuality in the oppression of girls and women in the classroom and staffroom, and in the schooling process more generally. A key debate has been whether there is a role for the single-sex school in the creation of an autonomous female learning culture (see Deem 1984, for a full discussion of this). Thus, the terms most frequently used within this feminist research discourse – patriarchal relations, domination and subordination, oppression and empowerment, woman and girl-centredness – signal both its connectedness to radical feminist thinking in general and its fundamental criticism of current educational practice.

Alternatively, marxist and socialist feminist research on education appears more complex in orientation, concerned with examining the degree to which education and schooling have been effective in producing sexual inequality, say compared, to the reproduction of class inequality. In particular, researchers have focused on how gender and power relations are continually reproduced in schooling (Clarricoates 1978; Wolpe 1988); the formation of gendered class groupings in the schooling context, namely the process by which working-class girls and boys become working-class women and men (Willis 1977; McRobbie 1978); and the relationship between the family, schooling and the labour market in maintaining dominant class and gender relationships (David 1980; Griffin 1985). The concepts utilized within this discourse – capitalism, production, reproduction, class, gender, patriarchal relations, correspondence theory etc. – are distinctively marxist in origin, insightful in pointing up the different positioning of pupils within state (and private) schooling. Yet it is not a discourse that has been influential for practitioners in the classroom, yielding little ground to general feminist demands for accessibility in theorizing for, as well as about, women.

As previously stated, black feminists also mounted a vigorous attack on schooling, criticizing in particular the endemic nature of both racism and sexism. Rather than focusing on the 'clash of cultures' explanations given by many white teachers for the general underperformance of black girls and young women (Brah and Minhas 1985), they concentrated on exposing the pathologization of black family culture and fracturing the widely held stereotypes of black femininity. They explored, for instance, the *actual* experience of black girls and young women in British schooling and in higher education (Amos and Parmar 1984; Mirza 1992); the sexism and racism of teachers (Wright 1987); and the simultaneous construction of women and black students as a problem for, and within, education (Williams 1987). The terminology of this discourse – for example, antisexism, antiracism, black disadvantage, institutional racism, stereotyping, lack of expectation – seems more eclectic in origin than those of other feminist positions drawing on discourses from antiracism as well as from the variety of feminist discourses available.

Other feminisms appear to have had less impact although poststructuralism has recently been more influential. Jones suggests that in contrast to feminist macro-theories of education, feminist poststructuralism holds to a view of 'positive uncertainty' (Jones 1993: 158) in which complexity rather than pattern prevails:

> When girls are seen as multiply located, and not unambiguously powerless, a feminist approach to classroom research must shift away from the 'disadvantage' focus. An interest in the *unevenness* of power means that . . . studies might focus on the ways in which girls are *variously* positioned in the classroom.
>
> (Jones 1993: 160–1)

One of the key proponents of this form of analysis, Walkerdine, explores the ideology of progressive pedagogy which although conceived in terms of the liberation of children, she sees as clearly oppositional to the liberation of female teachers (Walkerdine 1990). Accordingly, the 'regime of truth' of the progressive primary classroom is the male-as-norm child as active and the female-as-norm teacher as passive. The independence and autonomy of the teacher are sacrificed, through her role as quasi-mother, to observing and facilitating the 'naturally' developing activity of the child. At the same time, the working-class, female child or black child is seen as somewhat of a problem since she (he/she) rarely conforms to the ideal child. Thus, according to Walkerdine, in the 'fiction' of the progressive classroom – of freedom, democracy, safety and nature – there is a denial of power and of inequality; the discourse simply does not allow for them to be considered.

Davies' (1989) study of the ways in which sex and gender are constituted through discursive practices fleshes out some of Walkerdine's ideas. Davies looked at story lines and narratives

and the ways in which gendered identities are implicated in pre-school children's understandings of the dominant cultural storylines made available to them. She found that children could not necessarily understand feminist stories because their 'hearings' were shaped and informed by dominant, 'regulative' discourses of gender of the traditional children's story or fairy tale.

Lather (1991), more interested in postmodernism as well as poststructuralism, identifies her research aims in terms of 'praxis' and 'self-reflexivity' of the feminist researcher, calling for the displacement of hierarchies as the ordering principle of research.

> The goal is difference without opposition and a shift from a romantic view of the self as unchanging, authentic essence to a concept of the 'self' as a conjunction of diverse social practices produced and positioned socially, without an underlying essence.
>
> (Lather 1991: 82)

She argues, drawing on the experience of a three-year investigation into student resistance to the 'liberatory curriculum' of an introductory women's studies course, that researchers must constantly think against themselves as they 'struggle towards ways of knowing which can move us beyond ourselves' (Lather 1991: 83).

The terminology of this feminist research perspective is, like that of marxist feminism, sometimes highly complex and 'difficult', utilizing terminology such as discourse, subjectivity, power–knowledge, drawn from mainstream postmodernist and poststructuralist writing. In my view, McWilliam (1993) is rightly critical of what she terms the PMT (postmodernist tension) of such writers as Lather who on the one hand, argue for openness and self-reflexivity, yet in using highly complicated writing styles, seem implicitly to deny that possibility to their readers. As McWilliam suggests, 'it is not that there is nothing worthy here . . . the difficulty is that one doesn't so much read this text as wrestle with it' (McWilliam 1993: 201).

Feminisms and educational understanding

Once again, different explanations have been given for why sexual inequalities have continued to cast their shadow on schooling and education more generally. Also, different analyses have generated different solutions and strategies for change. Liberal feminists (such as those at the Schools Council mentioned in Chapter 3) argue that ignorance is the main cause of sexual inequality and therefore knowledge dissemination is the principal solution. In this view, because sexual inequality within schooling is caused by a variety of factors such as prejudice (of parents, teachers and society in general), 'traditional' values, the lack of proper role models and structural barriers, the solution is twofold: awareness-raising through in-service training and school/LEA policy-making, and the removal of the barriers, where necessary, through the use of law (e.g. by passing equal opportunities legislation).

Radical feminist educators, as might be expected, attribute inequalities in schooling to patriarchal forces and male-dominated power relationships in which (hetero) sexuality and hierarchy combine to create the dominant male and subordinate female dualism. Further, they assert that these are manifested at every level of society: in the family, in the school, in higher education and in the workplace. Therefore neither the responsibility nor solution to sexual inequality can be placed entirely on the shoulders of educators; rather they must do what they can to re-educate society into non-sexist behaviours and practices, as part of the overall feminist challenge to patriarchal forces. This view holds that education can be potentially liberating but not in its present state; it can only be transformative if it shifts the curriculum, and school knowledge and educational culture from its male baseline.

Radical feminism has also sought to clarify the nature of patriarchal relations of schooling, looking in particular at the links between male power, sexual violence, masculinity and femininity, and sexuality in the context of education. Interestingly, in recent years it has highlighted the problem of male sexuality.

> Male sexual violence . . . is central to the maintenance of male power by being structured into a model of masculinity which schools have done little to challenge. But if we are seriously committed to equality, then we have to make rather fewer curriculum analyses of girls studying physics and boys parentcraft and spend rather more time addressing these much more difficult issues.
>
> (Jones and Mahony 1989: xv)

The critique underpinning this position – of the heterosexual normalization within schooling that confirms girls and women in their subordinate status as properly feminine – constitutes a sharply

focused and, in my view, illuminating analysis of the male–female dualism and the role of the patriarchal state in closing down the options of women. The hope expressed is that of widening opportunities for young people by: 'exposing the lack of safety for girls in many of our schools and . . . placing the often neglected story of sexuality and the social control of girls in education, on the map' (Jones and Mahony 1989: xvi).

Marxist and socialist feminist educators appear to have less faith in the role of education in social change; rather they see it as one of the terrains upon which the sex as well as the class struggle is played out and in which patterns of social domination and subordination are reproduced and sustained. They argue, for example, that working-class girls are doubly disadvantaged in schools in undergoing similar experiences of class inequality to their male peers yet also receiving messages about female inferiority. The solution of this feminist perspective to educational inequality is, thus, fairly limited because of the perceived structural nature of sexual inequality within capitalism (although socialist feminism places equal importance on the influence and necessary overthrow of patriarchy). Nevertheless it has been active in the teacher unions in particular, seeking to challenge the domination of male hierarchies and to place feminist issues on the union agenda (Rowbotham 1989).

Black feminism has also seemed equally sceptical about the extent to which British education can overturn or transform inequalities in society; the law has to some extent been more important in eradicating some of the most overt forms of racial and sexual discrimination. However, black activists have been prepared to point out patterns of institutionalized and individual racism in an effort to re-educate ideologically more sympathetic colleagues into more consciously egalitarian practices. Black feminists have also pointed out that by distinguishing between gender and 'race' issues in education (rather than fusing them) black girls have been effectively rendered invisible. Also, the tendency to treat girls from a variety of ethnic groups as a homogenous group on account of their colour, has been heavily criticized; whilst their encounters with racism might be similar, their often diverse cultural, economic and perhaps religious backgrounds mean that their perception and experience of education is likely to be substantially different.

Postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist educators, although comparatively new on the educational scene, are also beginning to

have more to say about inequalities in schooling and about how challenges can be made. Because of their interest in the way in which discourse operates as a 'normalizing' and 'naturalizing' process in which knowledge and power are connected and, also, in their prioritization of the 'local', they argue that it is possible to create a counter-discourse in which the unsayable may be said. One point of action is to promote in students a critical awareness of their positioning within educational discourses. Another is to be alert to possibilities for feminist action as they occur – to be 'street-wise' or to 'get smart' as Lather (1991) puts it. A major problem, however, has been how to create critical consciousness without implying an ideological correctness or clashing with the complex subjectivities and loyalties of female (and male) students.

In this chapter, I have tried to provide a broad overview of the shades and projects of contemporary feminism, in particular as they have influenced educational ideas and practices. If such analyses might be construed as divisive and therefore weakening to the overall feminist project, I suggest that such criticisms are overtimid. It is my contention that feminism must subject itself to the same forms of scrutiny that it applies to other discursive and epistemological frameworks, that it needs to recognize its own embeddedness in history and culture and also that it must come to terms with the inevitability of its splintered existence.

The next chapter will show, in more detail, how these feminisms, particularly those of liberal and radical feminism, have permeated and influenced the British school curriculum and educational practices more generally.

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13
Prima Donna inter Pares? Women in Academic Management

Miriam E. David

This essay aims to explore women teachers' careers in higher education, focusing on academic social scientists. Because of the dearth of literature, except for Acker (1980) and Sutherland (1985), I have unashamedly decided to reflect upon my own experiences as an academic social scientist to try to tease out some of the issues and factors which construct such female academic careers. In this journey I have come to the realization that my own career experiences — both the pleasant and the painful — are not unique but mirror those of other women academics. Inevitably, of course, the particular complex combination of personal and professional experiences is unique, but there are parallels and similarities with other women's experiences. Feminist academics in North America, especially Keller and Moglen (1987), have begun to explore the effects on academic women's lives of interpersonal questions. I do not think that male academics have the same experiences in the academy as do female academics. I want to argue that gender is indeed a significant variable in the construction and experience of academic careers, as it is now recognized to be in other educational careers, such as schoolteaching and educational administration and management.

This argument about the significance of gender is, however, quite difficult to sustain at the statistical level. In Britain we have such a paucity of statistics about women's place in the academy, especially as social scientists. What we do know, from studies such as Williams *et al.* (1974) and Rendel (1984), is that the expansion of the higher education labour market entailed an expansion of the social science disciplines including sociology, social administration, social policy and social work, and an increase in the numbers of women employed as social

scientists. In the early years of this expansion, however, women's careers were typically different from men's. Women were more likely than men to be found in temporary research, rather than tenured teaching posts. In recent years we have witnessed a return to this pattern of academic social science careers. For a brief period in the 1970s women were appointed to tenured teaching posts in proportionately greater numbers than hitherto. From the early 1980s, with the general contraction and tightening of the higher education labour market, there has been a disproportionate reduction in social scientists and a consequent reduction in the representation of women. Nevertheless, because of the consolidation of women academics' careers in the 1970s, this reduction has not had uniform effects. Rather a curious phenomenon has emerged of the diversity of women's career patterns. In this situation some women have been afforded opportunities for career advancement such as promotion through the academic hierarchy to senior academic positions, including professorial and/or head of department posts and deanships. The spread of women's academic positions, from temporary researchers to tenured posts to deanships and beyond, is now typically greater in the social sciences than it was in the past, especially a decade or two ago.

For some, academic posts are a 'position for life' — as with the classroom teacher so with the tenured academic — a career grade. On the other hand, career progression may entail the acceptance of some minor or more substantial administrative or managerial responsibility. Typically in Britain, although not in other higher education systems such as those in the USA or Canada, managerial and administrative responsibility is of a permanent rather than temporary and rotating kind, and it is usually so substantial that it takes one away from the 'chalk-face' or classroom. Increasingly educational management within the academy has begun to take on a distinctive flavour different from that of the 'career-grade' academic. This change in job definition has occurred more by incremental changes in the majority of institutions than by deliberate design. It has at least something to do with the redirection, nationally, of higher education policy and the characteristics and nature of the constituent institutions. The effect, however, is to make career prospects and promotion realities rather at variance with one another. The old assumption, which held true for at least two generations of academics, that promotion through to professor or head of department was as much to do with seniority as anything else is no longer tenable. Being 'primus inter pares' is not an adage that fully rings true. Instead, the job now entails some management responsibility

covering not only academic guidance and/or leadership but also deployment of resources, both physical and staffing. In the cu harsh economic climate this means making difficult, and often to choices between people and the necessary materials to carry academic tasks.

The generation of academics currently empowered to make decisions was not brought up to expect to be engaged in this kin exercise. Rather the assumptions made at the beginnings of acad careers were about the pursuit and implementation of intellectual through course design and development, as well as research. A diff gloss is now put on academic life from that of the post-war cons tion of academic careers. The expansion of social science departm especially sociology and social administration, in the two to decades after the end of World War II brought with it hope optimism in designing new courses, new curricula and new res endeavours, and contributed to rising expectations for career cre and construction. These hopes and expectations are no longer ea sustain.

The initial development of the social sciences accepted the for the wider social context in terms of the relations between the sex was completely gender-blind. No specific consideration was giv the social sciences either to questioning the relations between the in the subject matter nor in the gender composition of the students chose to enter higher education. The academic careers that ini developed for the social sciences flowed from this and were very in the general academic mould — new specialized careers, essentiall men, although the exclusion of women was not by design. This p remains generally unbroken.

Margrit Eichler (1986) has provided an extremely useful critiq the way in which the social sciences as a discipline have developed tries to apply the Kuhnian notion of paradigmatic shifts to the w which the discipline might have responded to the various f feminist appraisals of it. She suggested that the discipline could been radically altered by the feminist contributions either by accep totally feminist reorientation or by developing an explicit, non- approach. More modestly the discipline could have been sli modified by the addition of a liberal feminist approach. Howeve close investigation she discovers that the enterprise of social scien been relatively untouched by the various feminist critiques an remained within the traditional 'business-as-usual' gender-blind adigm.

articularly attracted to trying to use Eichler's approach for a tion of the development of academic careers in the social hich in a sense are the other side of the (subject) coin. I have applied Eichler's approach to my own career pro- rough doing contract research to becoming a tenured teacher 37). I would like to use it again to look at my becoming an ader and/or manager, committed to the notion of being a some variant. This commitment has implications for the hich one might teach and work with others. The commit- ad previously understood it, came largely out of a somewhat action to the ways in which I had experienced my academic s, especially within largely male hierarchies. On reflection, here are two other more positive reasons for this commit- s the developing network of feminist colleagues and friends, knowledged in part before; but the other is the growing of the nature of the student clientele. The vast majority of s — at all levels within the academy — have been women, searching for some new and exciting understanding of their tuations. Their quests have greatly influenced my own and do so.

's critique can be used first, and briefly, to re-assess whether attern of academic social scientists' careers was any different f the discipline developments. Although I noted above that 0s in Britain the proportion of female social scientists in ching posts increased, it increased only at the margins and ely temporarily. Despite these accretions to the profession, vas not to alter its essence. It did not even go so far as the inor change of 'adding on' a feminist touch. The general nd pattern of the profession essentially remains that of s-usual'. Of course what is 'business-as-usual' is only that in gender sense. The enterprise of social science, especially for rs and academic leaders of social scientists, has changed to a ness-like style. In other words women have entered the in greater numbers and proportionately more have risen in ic hierarchy, but that, in itself, has not altered the characteris- profession. Insofar as a small number of those women have had feminist inclinations or leanings, this has not, sadly, ctive effect on the general characteristics of the profession or ic offerings. It has not entailed any paradigmatic shift. I do suggest any indictment of the women themselves nor of the feminist scholarship. It is merely to point to the tremendous difficulties entailed in such a task of trying to alter a now well established academic profession. Also I would not want to dissuade others from the pursuit of this objective of attempting, in some ways, to feminize and/or humanize the endeavour of social science, and to try to do so through those involved in teaching and research.

Eichler's approach can also be applied to my own situation. Indeed, in my own case, and presumably that of other feminist social scientists, I believed — and still believe — that I have something qualitatively different to present as a woman academic leader. I would want to go further than trying to 'add-on' a feminist approach to the conventional one, but would want to develop an alternative feminist perspective or an explicitly non-sexist strategy for the social sciences, which takes seriously the variety of feminist critiques.

My own belief that I have a distinctive approach came from several different sources. With growing maturity based not only on chronological age but also on research knowledge and experience of educational management, I began to realize what the various styles of academic leadership in the social sciences might entail. Inevitably as a social scientist I was familiar with different theories of organizations and their management but, more than that, I had even tried to investigate them in my doctoral research. Distinguishing chief education officers, or directors of education, into 'conciliators' or 'educators' (David, 1977) made me keenly aware of the inter-personal skills necessarily involved in that kind of job. Through the growing network of feminist scholars I realized that inter-personal skills could not be used without a recognition of gender relationships, too, and the purpose for which they would be applied. It was this network which began to develop a sound basis for the assumption that we, as a group of feminist social scientists, had more than a set of critiques of the discipline to offer. We also had the personal qualities we thought necessary to try to transform the discipline through our own activities, such as in the professional associations and in the departments as academic leaders. This growing assurance, however, was not born of arrogance, it also derived from the exciting developments in teaching both on conventional social science courses and in the specialisms of women's studies. The inter-personal relationships between women staff and students were both exhilarating and encouraging, building up both bonds and knowledge and pointing the way to highly creative new ways of working. However, the translation of some of these non-hierarchical, cooperative ways of teaching and learning from their origins in informal settings into the academy was not easy. Given academic hierarchies, such

ways of working could only be achieved fully on the edges.
ortant at this stage, however, to identify alternative strate-
ilities and their potential for implementation.
exciting new possibilities were often on the brink of being
the difficult milieu in which we were increasingly required
Just as we were beginning to realize quite how innovative
be, through our various experiments and investigations, the
ext began to throw shadows over our achievements. With
of both distance and hindsight it may now be important to
for me personally, along with the Bristol Women's Studies
realization of our goals coincided with Mrs Thatcher's
power. *Half the Sky: An Introduction to Women's Studies* was
n the summer of 1979, within months of the Conservative

er, that victory could not gainsay our own achievements
ition of new ways of working in the social sciences. What
to modify and limit the possibilities for implementation.
quickly the Thatcher government began to require new,
-effective' ways of working from institutions of higher
The impact on universities and polytechnics differed, as did
n the disciplines within and between different institutions.
University, where I then worked, the impact was resounding
tic. It rapidly forced us all to reconsider our roles and
lthough our immediate day-to-day teaching and research
ely untouched. In retrospect the senior managers of Bristol
responded to government requests with amazing alacrity
itly in a very traditional, sexist mould. The long-term effect
w to confirm the university in its élitist, patriarchal form,
he contribution built up by an active, cohesive group of
olars in the social sciences. Although we were all by now
in our knowledge that our new ways of working in
d research were of value to other such scholars and students,
not avoid the regular bruises to our confidence as the
assiduously seemed to ignore us. The opportunities for
ncement within the institution began to recede into the dim
radually I, amongst others, recognized the reality of this —
n our daily lives, on our ambitions, on our teaching and
began to look elsewhere to realize my ambitions to
he nature of the social sciences, still confident in the belief
be an academic leader and that I had something distinctive

and creative to present that students and scholars alike seemed to appreciate.

Having convinced myself of my capability, I was soon offered the opportunity to test my abilities as head of a department of social sciences at South Bank Polytechnic. The interview for the post confirmed me in the belief that my qualities were appropriate. I had mentioned on my application form my feminist commitments and activities, and I was given the chance to discuss them in the interview. I was asked about my strengths and weaknesses, and I offered as one of these weaknesses 'my sex'. The rejoinder was that the institution was committed to equal opportunities. I remarked that the commitment was not self-evident from the interview panel, there being only one woman out of a panel of twelve, and she was an external advisor (a professor from a university). I quickly realized that this repartee was very risky and might have cost me the post, but fortunately (or unfortunately) it did not.

Nevertheless, I had reckoned without a range of other factors, which all became critical in preventing me realizing any of my ambitions. On reflection this problem could have been an indication of my lack of self-awareness and maturity, but I think not. I think the problem arose from an extraordinary conjuncture of at least four other factors. First was the gulf in daily working procedures and practices between universities and polytechnics. Although part of my early educational research had been focused on the setting up of polytechnics and the creation of one polytechnic, I was only aware of the working relationships at a theoretical level. I only knew how it felt at one remove — through colleagues and friends who worked or studied in polytechnics. The crucial difference to me, it now becomes clear, is nothing to do with committee structures or forms of decision-making, but rather with how power and authority are exercised and experienced. I remain astonished at how it is with ease that the power in Bristol University is exercised as compared with South Bank Polytechnic. At the latter the senior managers or directorate have constant struggles to impose their will and have in the end to exercise heavily coercive forms of control. By contrast the unquestioning acceptance of the authority of the university's senior management, or rather the fact that it is a tacit assumption that they would brook no opposition to their rules, leads to a less overtly combative situation. Negotiations appear, on the surface at least, to be carried out with consummate gentlemanly ease, as compared with the pitched battle at South Bank. I do not think the

rences are to do with the resource base, as many have tried to ie, but rather, to use Weberian terminology, the traditional ority of a university institution as compared with the ational-legal areaucratic authority of a polytechnic. In other words the maturity ge of the institution contributes to the ways in which it is able to itself.

The second, and indeed third, factors have to do with unique facets outh Bank Polytechnic. They have to do with aspects of the history he institution as a whole and the department's place within the tution. The polytechnic had experienced a series of rapid changes in anagement and the incumbent personnel over a short period prior y appointment. Immediately following my interview and in the six ths prior to my taking up the post on a full-time and permanent s, three successive Directors (the equivalent of the university -Chancellor) left. Several more members of the directorate team in the first six months that I was in the post. I began to feel that I ht have something to do with this exodus. The interregnum lasted a year, but had been preceded by lacunae in authoritative personnel. in there had been a similar interregnum at Bristol University which managed by a senior pro-Vice-Chancellor and certainly did not voke so many anxieties or uncertainties.

Similarly at the departmental level there had been an interregnum ng for over two years, and during that time the department had n managed by a succession of acting heads. Taken together, these ous changes in management provoked tremendous anxieties and ertainties for the department. Finally, the fourth factor was that the at of reductions in resources, both staff and equipment, had hung r the institution and been implemented on a piecemeal basis, rather n savaging one department, discipline or course. Equal misery, as osed to selective butchery, had also taken its toll on morale, creating ost permanent uncertainty.

It was into this context that I stepped and tried to find a way to lead department: a department which in a university context would roximate a faculty of social science, having almost fifty members of f. The four different strategies that Eichler's analysis suggested were ones with which I toyed. Obviously I was not at all sympathetic to idea of maintaining the 'business-as-usual' approach, both because its sexist implications and the fact that I had some particular ideas t I wished to pursue. I certainly believed then, perhaps somewhat vely, that I could develop exciting new courses both for undergradu- s and postgraduates, and that I could develop the potential of my staff to explore new ideas in both teaching and research. I was particularly keen to try to implement some of my feminist notions, through courses in women's studies and new ways of working with the staff.

However, it was in the exploration of how to implement these ideas that I quickly began to experience difficulties. I did not merely want to 'add-on' a liberal feminist or woman's approach to the usual social science frame. I was inevitably different in style from the previous permanent incumbent not just because I was a woman but also because I was an active feminist. In any case being a woman in this context implied being rather motherly as opposed to being patriarchal or fatherly. Yet in all sorts of ways that style of leadership itself posed rather a lot of problems for the department — and perhaps for myself in terms of self-image and personality. This left me to consider either the separatist feminist or non-sexist approach. Both of them also posed difficulties, and I pursued both somewhat unevenly. For example, I suggested, almost on taking up office, new non-sexist ways of working to try to allow for more democratic, cooperative methods. But this initiative was quickly misunderstood and interpreted to mean that I was a 'soft touch', incapable of providing a firm, directive framework of leadership. I also suggested new course developments to take account of these predilections, but again my speed — and timing — were too hasty for such a nervous and somewhat demoralized group to accept.

I also tried some separate forms of feminist organizing, as well as proposing women's studies teaching. For example, I invited all the women on the full-time academic staff to lunchtime meetings to discuss our ways of working together. This group made up half the total full-time teaching complement of thirty staff. What immediately became clear was that their various interpretations of the term 'feminist' were very different from mine and did not have the same implications for their teaching, research or organizing activities. There was very little enthusiasm for developing such group understanding. For the most part they were chiefly committed to some notion of implementing equal opportunities: that is, improving the workplace opportunities for women and blacks or minority ethnic groups. They were not particularly keen to develop a collective notion of feminist scholarship. Indeed many of them poured scorn on such an endeavour, seeing it as élitist, since it initially at least excluded part-time teachers and the research staff. These distinctions have been nicely raised by Weiner (1986).

Thus I quickly drew a blank in every direction I pursued, and I

pidly became extremely disheartened. I felt like a stranger in a foreign nd, not understanding the language, habits or culture of the people of hom I had become a part. It seemed even more foreign to me than my arious sojourns in North America had — it was more the fact that we oke the same words but they had different meanings. The Mad Hatter ould have found life easy! The culture and its framework were fferent at every level. Although they taught BSc and MSc courses in cial policy, sociology, sociology of education, all of which I had ught and written about, I found them hard to grasp. The staff of the partment appeared not to understand me, and I clearly could not derstand them.

More than that, I found very little support or help in interpretation om the rest of the faculty, from the directorate or the Personnel fficer, all of whom I turned to in turn and in increasing desperation. here were, of course, different and special reasons for each one failing interpret for me. The over-reaching reason, however, was that they o were deeply absorbed in this culture and could not see its special aracteristics. The rapid turnover of personnel in the directorate meant at they were all far too busy with crisis management to lend a pportive ear or to suggest styles of leadership.

I was left to 'sink or swim' for at least a year, and by the end I felt I d almost drowned and was incapable of ever being able to get a grip the management, never mind academic leadership, of the depart-ent. Increasingly I became shrill and almost hysterical — and the more at happened the more stubborn and resistant to my authority the staff came.

The only ray of light for me at this juncture was the appointment d imminent arrival of the new Director — the first woman to direct a olytechnic. I was excited and pinned all my hopes on her transforming e polytechnic and therefore my life. In fact, things in my department itially became much worse immediately after her appointment. I think was frequently confused with her; together we escalated rather than othed their fears and uncertainties. The only readily available model f a woman leader is and was Mrs Thatcher. In retrospect now I think at we three became indistinguishable in the eyes of the staff of my epartment (and I suspect others too).

The crisis escalated in my department to such a pitch that I began to ate my job and planned to leave. At the next departmental meeting, hen the majority of the thirty academic staff had left early, as they nded to do, I decided to brave it and ask the remaining half dozen how ey wanted me to manage the department. One or two supportive

women academics, experienced in issues of social service management, proposed some form of external consultancy to review the department's processes and procedures. This idea was agreed with alacrity by other members of staff still present.

It was an idea which had already begun to germinate in my own mind and which I had discussed with other colleagues outside the college, particularly to find a consultant sympathetic to these feminist issues. It seemed to be the only way forward — and it might at the same time return me to my former state as an academic rather than crisis manager. I took further soundings on the matter both within the polytechnic and with outside consultants. Various possibilities were considered, within the over-riding constraint of limited resources *and* the fact that the new Director was herself considering a plan for senior management training.

My own feminist inclinations led me in the direction of *consultancy* rather than training, where the skills of psychodynamics or psychotherapy might also come into play. At both a personal and an intellectual level I find the feminist revisions of psychoanalysis extremely appealing and had used such work for both teaching and research. In particular I had found Chodorow's (1978) work extremely illuminating in attempting a synthesis between psychoanalysis and social structure in order here to understand mothering.

This led me to choose a woman consultant, suggested to us through a member of the department. She had a range of relevant experience from a degree in social policy to social work to psychotherapy to management consultancy to local authorities and their women's committees. She seemed too good to be true! That proved not to be the case — she was simply excellent!

She helped us to develop a two-stage process for *recreating* the department, first to deal with the management structure, and second to develop a new culture and set of identities for the staff. At the time of writing this second stage has only just started. It is a stage of development that is necessary and relevant not only to South Bank, but also to all social scientists in the last decade of the twentieth century. It is also central to the issue of what academic and social science careers are to be in the twenty-first century — in other words who will we ourselves be, and who will we be teaching and preparing for what kind of lives and careers?

The fact that these questions were once again open to debate and discussion gave me renewed enthusiasm for the job, and helped me to get over the painful two-year initiation rites that I had undergone.

In any case the process that the consultant facilitated exorcised, by externalizing, the spirit of that pain. A two-day staff development event was held to discuss the problems that we had all experienced and the ways in which these might be overcome. Once the feelings were aired and shared, it became much easier to put them to one side and start again. We quickly devised a new management structure in which power could be more evenly spread throughout the department. Built into that was a system of regular review, by an advisory team of the department, composed chiefly of sympathetic and supportive staff. The task for the last six months has been to get that new system into smooth working order, to free us to think afresh about our futures as academics, as teachers, as social scientists.

The constraint of our internal working procedures was but one of several preventing our clear thinking. Another is the rapidly changing context of our work, due to changes emanating from the Conservative government and built into the Education Reform bill, destined to receive royal assent in July 1988. The changes alter the financial status of polytechnics and have led already to major administrative redesigns, internal to the polytechnic, to fit us for our new corporate, accredited status. The speed at which all the changes are occurring is too rapid for most of us to assimilate easily. The implications of the changes are massive: they imply resource changes, administrative and management development and, most importantly, course developments which require new visions of our subject or discipline base. The uncertainty that the now classic notions of social science will have any place in the academy in the twenty-first century is ever-present. The changes clearly require and have already set in train a cultural transformation. Our values and visions with which we all entered academic careers in the social sciences are no longer tenable. Rethinking our identities as teachers and researchers and what we wish to convey to our students is the major task facing us. It is, however, a task that we can now face together, having opened up and shared the ways in which the uncertainties deformed us each individually and forced us into combative working relationships. My particular visions as a feminist, teaching a largely captive female student audience of aspiring social scientists, also need revision. We are now required to go into the marketplace to seek students, and although we know that there are still plenty of potential mature students, it is difficult as yet to know how we or they will find the resources for such study.

The context in which we are all now operating is completely new: there have been paradigmatic shifts in both academic life in general and

in the social sciences in particular. They are probably in part due to the impact of social movements, including feminism, on the nature of the discipline and the wider social context. The effect, however, has been to transform what is 'business-as-usual' into a search for 'business-enterprise', which may include feminist reappraisals insofar as they are in tune with potential student demand. The tragedy is that these transformations have been imposed from the outside rather than being the result of creative search for new ideas and new clientele; to that extent there has been resistance. Yet the effect may be to create an exciting new discipline and scholarship to fit future generations of men and women for the twenty-first century.

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