

# feminist perspectives féministes

No. 19

## **Feminist Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning Liberation**

Linda Briskin



**CRIAW  
ICREF**

CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN  
INSTITUT CANADIEN DE RECHERCHES  
SUR LES FEMMES

151 SALTER - SUITE 408 - OTTAWA - ONTARIO K1P 5K3

### **FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES**

is a series of topical, provocative, issue-oriented papers and essays exploring many aspects of women's experiences and concerns.

The papers come from a variety of sources including established scholars who wish to write outside their usual disciplinary boundaries, graduate students, and community researchers and activists. All papers must be non-sexist in methodology and language.

Papers are assessed by members of CRIAW's Publications Committee or other qualified referees. Authors of accepted papers must provide a camera-ready copy conforming to guidelines which will be supplied upon request. A license to publish is obtained from the author for a negotiated number of copies. Copyright will be retained by the author.

CRIAW believes that this series will not only contribute to the advancement of knowledge about women, but will also add fresh 'feminist perspectives' to the dialogue and debates on many current issues.

### **PERSPECTIVES FÉMINISTES**

une nouvelle série de publications de l'ICREF, contient des essais ou articles d'actualité sur le vécu des femmes. Ces derniers, non-sexistes, sont rédigés par des étudiants de second cycle, des personnes impliquées en recherche communautaire, et d'autres. Les documents choisis pour publication par notre comité éditorial, devront correspondre aux normes de format édictées par l'ICREF, qui sont disponibles sur demande. L'ICREF demandera la permission de l'auteure pour la publication d'un certain nombre d'exemplaires. Celle-ci retiendra ses droits d'auteur.

Selon l'ICREF, cette série de documents contribuera à la connaissance des sujets d'actualité concernant les femmes, et apportera une 'perspective féministe' aux débats.

## **FEMINIST PEDAGOGY:**

### **Teaching and Learning Liberation**

**Linda Briskin  
Social Science Division  
York University**

CRIAW/ICREF gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Women's Program, Secretary of State, in the production of this publication.

The ideas expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of CRIAW or of the Women's Program, Secretary of State.

♀ ♀

#### CRIAW PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Jennie Hornosty and Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay - co-chairs  
Diana Relke - anglophone editor  
Marina Lessard - francophone editor  
Alicja Muszynski  
Linda Clippingdale - staff liaison

♀ ♀

© Linda Briskin

Published by  
CRIAW/ICREF, August 1990  
408-151 Slater Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 5H3  
Reprinted August 1991

ISBN 0-919653-88-X

Cover Design: Julia Ames

## PART ONE: FACING THE CONTRADICTIONS<sup>1</sup>

Feminist pedagogy starts from the acknowledgement of women's oppression and speaks to the gendered character of the classroom, of interactions between students and teachers, of the curriculum itself. It is more than 'good teaching', and although some of the techniques associated with feminist pedagogy are not dissimilar to those found in student-centred education, humanistic approaches or other radical pedagogies, feminist pedagogy is unique in its attention to gender.

In order to develop a feminist pedagogy, we must unravel the contradictions women experience as learners, as teachers, as feminists, as change-makers. This paper deals with three sets of contradictions: first, the contradictions in the messages that women carry around in everyday life and bring into the classroom as students and as teachers; second, the contradictions women experience as educators, especially as feminist educators; and third, the contradictions women experience as activists and as change-makers. Out of these contradictions, three strategies emerge: teaching leadership, anti-sexism and reclaiming feminism in the classroom. The feminist pedagogical standpoint -- a standpoint of teaching and learning liberation -- is generated from the interplay between these contradictions and strategies.<sup>2</sup>

### Contradictions Women Bring to the Classroom

The first set of contradictions relates to the texts that women, both as students and as teachers, bring into the classroom. They frame the way that women and girls relate to the learning environment, understand the curriculum and evaluate its relevance to their lives, and interact with both teachers and students. I would like to mention six of these contradictions.

A powerful contradictory message for women is the devaluation of mothering (motherwork, housework and wifework) and the simultaneous presentation of motherhood as a woman's lifework -- as the means to be, and the definition of, a successful woman. The underlying implication is that to be a woman is to be socially devalued. This complex presentation of mothering creates a dilemma for girls about where to situate schooling in their future. The commonsense appreciation of mothering assumes it is 'natural' for women, and that schooling in motherwork is not deemed necessary. For girls to commit themselves to schooling is at some level to repudiate themselves as women.

The widespread violence against women concomitant with the continued powerful ideology that women will be protected and cared for by men constitutes the second contradiction. Statistics demonstrate the extensiveness and embeddedness of violence against women (rape, wife abuse, incest, sexual harassment, date rape, teenage battering, etc.) -- violence that occurs in relationships, in the family, on the street, in schools, in the workplace.<sup>3</sup> For young women the problem is particularly acute: recent studies show that almost 25 per cent of all Canadian sex offenders are under 18 years old and nearly half are only 14 or 15. Not surprisingly, 88 per cent of the victims are female.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the conviction that men will protect women encourages women to be soft, sensitive and weak in relationship to men. Young women get forceful messages that such behaviour will make them attractive to men. In fact, such behaviour makes women more vulnerable to abuse. Widespread gender stereotypes reproduce patterns of violence. When men try to live up to socially constructed notions of masculinity, they act tough, domineering, aggressive and are quick to turn to violence when angry. When women try to live up to socially constructed notions of femininity, they are passive, conciliatory

and blame themselves in the face of violence. Victimization is the result. Young women are struggling to make sense of how to relate to men given the contradiction between the ideology of man as protector and the reality of violence.

The classroom is one site in which this contradiction gets played out. Adrienne Rich stresses this point:

Women and men do not receive an equal education because outside the classroom women are perceived not as sovereign beings but as prey.... The undermining of self, of a woman's sense of her right to occupy space and walk freely in the world, is deeply relevant to education. The capacity to think independently, to take intellectual risks, to assert ourselves mentally, is inseparable from our physical way of being in the world, our feelings of personal integrity. If it is dangerous for me to walk home late of an evening from the library, because I am a woman and can be raped, how self-possessed, how exuberant can I feel as I sit working in that library?<sup>5</sup>

In 1989, the terrible massacre of 14 women engineering students at the University of Montreal and events around an anti-rape campaign at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario emphatically reinforce this point. At Queen's, women protested when male students responded to the annual 'No Means No' rape awareness campaign with signs reading 'No means dyke' and 'No means kick her in the teeth'. As part of the protest, a group of women occupied the principal's office "demanding an apology for the administration's slow response to the display of obscene and sexist signs". The Toronto Star's report ended with a comment that speaks for itself: "Most of the protestors kept their faces hidden by scarves and said they feared violent retaliation by sexist male students."<sup>6</sup>

A third contradictory dynamic relates to messages about sexuality. On the one hand, heterosexual sexual practices are deemed normal and natural. Yet what is deemed natural does not 'come naturally', so to speak; these practices change over history, vary cross culturally and must be learned. They also must be enforced through government policy and social pressure.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the pressure to conform to heterosexuality -- what Adrienne Rich has called 'compulsory heterosexuality' -- is not only about sexuality and sexual practices but also about the life choices of all women, regardless of their sexual orientation.<sup>8</sup> The institution of compulsory heterosexuality teaches women that their survival and life choices are (indeed, should be) entirely bound up with men and marriage. This is reinforced ideologically by a range of rules, norms and practices: from the images of unmarried women as undesirable to welfare policies that discriminate against what are seen to be unconventional forms of the family.

Young people struggling with their emergent sexuality experience contradictory messages about normality, sexuality, pleasure and deviance. Not only do these pressure young women toward certain kinds of relations with young men but they also lead to homophobia (hatred and fear of gays and lesbians), which is simultaneously a mechanism to prove sexual 'normality'. Further, such heterosexism means an absence of gay and lesbian positive images and a deafening silence about the homosexual reality, a serious problem for the 10 per cent of students who are lesbian and gay.<sup>9</sup>

The fourth contradiction is about the tension between attractiveness and intelligence. Conventional stereotypes suggest that to be a successful female is to be attractive and powerless. By contrast, intelligence and power are seen to be male and masculine -- the opposite of female and feminine. This causes no end of difficulties for young women in the classroom as they

struggle to cope with defining their relationship to school at the same time as maintaining a place in a mixed peer group.

The fifth contradiction reveals the tension between widespread practices of discrimination and the mythology that everyone is treated the same, especially in the classroom. Classrooms are supposed to be places where girls and boys are treated equally -- the myth of co-education<sup>10</sup> -- and many teachers assume they are sensitive to gender equality. Yet the hidden curriculum -- both formal and informal -- reinforces the salience of gender, the significance of gender difference and the devaluation of women. Many studies demonstrate that classroom dynamics -- between teacher and student and between students -- favour boys. Barbara Houston's summary of the research findings in this area merits quoting at some length:

Studies on teacher-student interactions indicate that within co-educational classrooms, teachers, regardless of sex, interact more with boys and give boys more attention (both positive and negative), and that this pattern intensifies at the secondary and college levels....

At the post-secondary level often the brightest women in the class remain silent, women students are in general likely to be less verbally assertive, they are likely to be called on less often than men students, and those who do participate may find that their comments are disproportionately interrupted by teachers and male classmates and that teachers are less likely to develop their points than those made by men students....

It is startling just how unaware teachers are of the phenomenon we have described. Their perceptions of how they interact with students are often grossly inaccurate. Saying that they treat girls and boys equally in the classroom, they are shocked to discover through

objective measures that they spend over two-thirds of their time with boys who constitute less than half the class; or that they reward boys for getting the right answers and girls for neatness; or that they criticise boys for poor work and criticise girls for being assertive; or that they explain a boy's achievements in terms of his abilities and a girl's in terms of the degree of difficulty of the text or in terms of luck. Students, however, are often clear in their perceptions of the gender differences in student-teacher interactions.<sup>11</sup>

Overwhelming evidence suggests that discriminatory practices co-exist with the ideology of equal opportunity, and that students implicitly recognize and accept differential treatment on the basis of gender.

The sixth contradictory message is not only about gender bias but about race and class bias. It speaks to the intersection of an ideology of individualism with the limits circumscribed by class, race and gender. Perhaps more than any other, students get the 'bootstrap' message: hard work leads to riches, fame, success and happiness. This is undoubtedly an important message to give young women, many of whom have a very restricted sense of what is possible for them. It begins as an empowering message because it challenges biologism -- the notion that women cannot do certain things, science for example, by virtue of their biology or 'femininity'; it also challenges the racism that argues for the natural inferiority of blacks.<sup>12</sup>

'Bootstrapism' confronts the mystification that represents skills as 'natural talents'. Too often students dismiss their potential because they believe that school skills are based solely on talent. Further, they generally assume that such talents are 'naturally' distributed in sex and race specific ways.

But the bootstrap message is not solely a message about hard work and what can be learned. It is also about individualism, which emphasizes personal power to change oneself and one's circumstances. For this reason, bootstrapism often ends up by disempowering women. The dictum that all is possible -- every choice available -- is coincident with the view that lack of success is a result of laziness or personal failure. If a woman does not make it, it is because she has not tried hard enough -- a thinly disguised version of 'blaming the victim'.

As a result, the ideology of individualism and bootstrapism functions to justify the system, masks the necessity of systemic change and interferes with the potential to make change. Bootstrapism does not recognize the deeply embedded structural, economic and political barriers that circumscribe women's choices. Individual solutions and successes are indeed available, but primarily to those who have some privilege. The degree to which hard work pays off is limited by the constraints of race, class, gender and sexual orientation.<sup>13</sup>

The irony is that the bootstrap message contradicts women's experience, and that of their families. For example, first and second generation immigrants have seen their families struggle and work very hard, and they haven't 'made it'. Perhaps at best they have been able to buy a house or send a child to university. Students implicitly know that bootstrapism has a class, race and sex bias but they do not know how to make sense of the conflict between the almost overpowering hegemony of the ideology of individualism and their own experience.

This contradiction is played out in the career goals of young women. Commentators often assume that young women suffer from limited aspirations. However, the problem is less one of vision than one of actual barriers. Through interviews with 1000 female Ontario secondary students, Avis Glaze demonstrated a major gap between career aspirations and career

expectations: young women aspire to careers as lawyers and doctors, but expect to become secretaries.<sup>14</sup> This is not unrealistic. Young women have aspirations that their mothers may never have had, but they are adjusting their goals to what is realistically possible.

In opposition to the bootstrap ideology, we need a counter-ideology of 'agency'. Agency challenges the false promise of choice and the notion of the 'abstract individual' inherent in bootstrapism; it situates the individual in historical context, thereby making visible both the limits on individual instrumentality and the possibilities for change. Agency openly acknowledges the relations of power based on class, race, gender and sexual orientation while bootstrapism mystifies and conceals them; agency recognizes that the social organization of power, production and reproduction, not just the individual, needs changing; agency recognizes that the power to change is vested in the collective will and collective action, and that the power that accrues to most individuals is severely restricted.

What do we learn, then, from examining the contradictions that women experience in their everyday lives and bring into the classroom as teachers and students? The classroom is an environment permeated by contradictory messages about gender, race, class and sexual orientation -- messages about power and powerlessness, and value and worthlessness, which accurately reflect the relations of power and the assessment of worth that exist in Canadian society. The student's experience is always gendered (also raced, sexed and classed) but it is disorganized by contradictory messages and masked by the ideology of individualism. The next section will demonstrate that teachers are also shaped by these contradictions; they, too, are always gendered subjects.<sup>15</sup> There is no 'abstract individual' and ideologies which promote such a view, when 'unpacked', are virtually always a cover for the promotion of white, male and middle class interests.

## Contradictions Women Experience as Educators

The second set of contradictions focuses on women's experience as educators, especially as feminist educators.

The contradiction between authority and expertise, on the one hand, and nurturing and femininity, on the other, is central to the experience of women teachers; exploring this contradiction reveals that, in the relations between teachers and students, teachers are always gendered subjects.

Stereotypes which suggest that intelligence, expertise and authority are masculine traits are played out in a complex way for the female teacher. Students and teachers "have been socialized in a culture that has negated and trivialized women's intellect",<sup>16</sup> associated women with nature and emotion, and men with culture and reason. Women teachers often face a struggle to accept their own expertise and this is often reinforced by student attitudes.

Power and authority are also seen to be "incompatible with the feminine".<sup>17</sup> Studies show that students have different expectations of female and male teachers; in particular, students have an ambivalent relation to the authority of female teachers. One study found

students accepting high standards, discipline and toughness from their male teachers and deeply resenting any such behaviour from their women teachers.... [S]tudents may pressure any woman-teacher to fulfill the role of the all-forgiving, nurturing mother whose approval is unconditional.<sup>18</sup>

Students in my fourth-year seminar on Feminist Thought did an assignment theorizing the construction of themselves as 'gendered subjects' in the university classroom. Doing the

assignment made many aware of the different expectations they have of male and female teachers. For example, Michele explored the 'gendered professor' and the fact that

professors often fall into the 'teacher as parent' role. This role allows male teachers to remain aloof from their students and allows them to run a classroom freely without student input. A female teacher taking the role of parent has different things expected of her and must work hard to earn the respect a male colleague has simply because of his sex.... Ninety percent of the professors in my major field of psychology have been male. Most of these men have run their classrooms, which are usually made up predominantly of women, like father figures.... The male professor seems to have an easier time in his role as class leader. He does not have to justify himself or what he says, he can be lax or tough. He can be inflexible and stringent, but these are seen as positive attributes in a man or a father figure.... Also students would not generally consider approaching a male professor with a personal problem. Male professors, like fathers, are not expected to deal with the personal problems of their charges nor are they expected to be constantly polite, fair, friendly, and uncritical.

The female professor on the other hand is expected to be all of these things, as though she were the mother of her students.... My first woman professor taught German.... She tried to encourage us to do our best but we fought her. The class was not willing to take responsibility for the classroom nor was it willing to see the professor as a professional rather than a woman. Had she been a man, I feel the class would have responded to her teaching methods without resentment.

I had not realized how little I expect from male teachers and how much more I expect from female teachers.<sup>19</sup>

Not only do students respond differently to the authority of male and female teachers, it may also be more difficult to establish expertise in what some see as the 'soft' subjects where women predominate. To what extent this is a result of the devaluation of subjects seen as feminine is hard to say but there is no doubt that the problem is exacerbated when the curriculum deals explicitly with gender issues: feminists face more challenges to their authority than other women teachers. The prevailing assumption is that the feminist body of knowledge is, by definition, 'political' and 'biased', and therefore without authority.<sup>20</sup>

Women teachers employ a variety of strategies to resolve these dilemmas. A commonly evoked image in these strategies, as Michele suggests above, is the continuum based on parental stereotypes with mothering on the one end and fathering on the other.<sup>21</sup> The fathering strategy has women teachers adopting the norms and practices of patriarchal, often male, teachers who use strict discipline, authoritarian practices, right answerism etc. The mothering strategy uses the model of the all-forgiving nurturing mother mentioned above. In the parental continuum, the opposition between reason and emotion, discipline and nurturing is maintained.

Those who reject the parental continuum are often informed by two principles: a rejection of authority in favour of sharing power, and a rejection of expertise in favour of validating the knowledge of students. Although these are important principles which find a place in feminist pedagogy, the gender-specific reality of female teachers also means that they are not unproblematic.

The fact that students always respond to teachers as gendered subjects means that attempts to renegotiate power



relations in the classroom always have a gender-specific reality. This point was underscored in a revealing interview I conducted with a predominantly female group of faculty who discussed the complexities of rejecting traditional power relations in a context where their authority and expertise was constantly challenged. In sharp contrast, a male faculty member talked about his attempts to divest himself of the authority of teacher, as well as the privilege of being male and white. What became apparent was the subtle and largely invisible privilege which accrued to him: because he had authority by virtue of being a white male, he could choose to divest himself of it. Students were responsive to his relaxed and anti-authoritarian manner. Clearly he was not confronted with the contradictions facing female faculty.<sup>22</sup>

It is also the case that an overemphasis on the principles of sharing power and validating student knowledge can take female teachers full circle: to a place where they again abdicate both expertise and authority, which is, in fact, an abdication of the role as teacher.<sup>23</sup> Susan Friedman explores this problematic:

As feminist women in the universities, many of us attempted to circumvent the mystique of professional expertise and specialization by emphasizing student 'expertise' based on the authority of their own experience and by de-emphasizing the leadership role the classroom structure demanded of us.... In our eagerness to be non-hierarchical and supportive instead of tyrannical and ruthlessly critical, we have sometimes participated in the patriarchal denial of the mind to women.... In our sensitivity to the psychology of oppression in our students' lives, we have often denied ourselves the authority we seek to nurture in our students.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, both the ideology and practice of sharing power and of validating student experience can reproduce rather than challenge the power relations in the classroom. In the first instance, the ideology of sharing power can conceal the final authority of the teacher: to discipline, to grade, to select the curriculum, etc. As importantly, students' ability to claim classroom power varies on the basis of gender, class, race and sexual orientation. When teachers make the naive assumption that they can easily share power, they create yet another contradictory message for students: the offer of shared power competing with the reality of the teacher's power, and with the differential access of students to power in the classroom.

A parallel critique can be made about validating student expertise. The danger in such an approach is that student knowledge, especially at the university level, is often class, race and sex specific, that is, heterosexual, white and middle class. An overemphasis on the centrality of that experience to understanding the world can make invisible the experiences of working class and poor women, native women, and women of colour, many of whom may not be in the university classroom to put forward their experience, and if in the classroom, may be silenced by the hegemony of the dominant viewpoint.

### **Strategy #1: Teaching Leadership**

Although these criticisms of sharing power and validating student expertise do not justify an outright rejection of these strategies, let me suggest an additional paradigm which claims authority and rejects authoritarianism; recognizes that acknowledging teacher expertise does not necessarily negate the authority of the students' experience; and puts forward the possibility of a reconstituted nurturing that validates the emotional, supportive and affective in a non-parental mode.

Rather than a focus on sharing power, it advocates a strategy of 'teaching leadership'. Caroline Shrewsbury says

Leadership is a special form of empowerment that empowers others.... [T]he goal is to increase the power of all actors, not to limit the power of some.<sup>25</sup>

Teaching leadership has important resonance for teacher and student in reference to curriculum and classroom practices.<sup>26</sup> It recognizes the expertise of the teacher, that is, she has something to teach. Although it does not depend on authoritarian practices, it does not reject authority per se. Rather it names the power differential between student and teacher and seeks to equip students to use power (for those unused to it), to acknowledge their power (for those to whom power has accrued by virtue of their class, race or gender) and to develop an appreciation of collective power.

Teaching leadership directly is one way of addressing the gender, class, race and sex inequities in students' ability to claim classroom power. Lisa Delpit argues that those who are outside the 'culture of power' learn best how to access that culture when the rules of that culture are taught explicitly. Delpit makes this argument in her discussion of effective strategies for teaching black students. She concludes

that students must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavours; that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher's expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own 'expertness' as well; and that even while students are assisted in learning the culture of power, they must also be helped to learn about the arbitrariness of those

codes and about the power relationships they represent.<sup>27</sup>

When students are expected to be critical learners, participate fully in discussions, be responsible for their learning, those who already come equipped with the 'power culture of the classroom', to paraphrase Delpit, are advantaged, and those who do not, are disadvantaged. If classrooms are to be challenging environments, if students' commitment to learning is to be developed, if sex and race inequities are to be challenged, then the question of power and of leadership must be addressed directly and explicitly -- in terms of what is taught and how it is taught, that is, through skills and curriculum.<sup>28</sup>

From this perspective I would challenge what I see to be mystified notions of democracy in the classroom. These suggest that direct intervention in the classroom dynamic somehow undermines student autonomy and cannot be democratic. Kathryn Morgan falls into this confusion when she argues

[I]f the feminist teacher actively assumes any of the forms of power available to her -- expert, reward, legitimate, maternal/referent -- she eliminates the possibility of educational democracy in the feminist classroom.<sup>29</sup>

This argument does not problematize the role of democracy in pedagogy, it rests on the assumption of an abstract equality (a concept rooted in liberalism) among all classroom participants that can exacerbate inequality rather than address it, and further assumes that all forms of claiming power are necessarily anti-democratic. The paradigm of teaching leadership rejects this argument.

To teach leadership is not only to name, negotiate, and try to change the power relations of the classroom, it is to focus

students' attention on their own agency outside the classroom. Emphasizing the importance of leadership rather than rejecting it, teaching leadership rather than assuming it, naming the power relations of the classroom rather than masking them highlights student capacity and responsibility to act as change agents -- as leaders -- in the world outside the classroom.<sup>30</sup>

The second contradiction educators face arises out of the strategy of non-sexism, which is the central informing vision put forward to deal with the gendered classroom environment. The operative assumption of the non-sexist strategy is that the discriminatory effects of sexism can be eliminated in the classroom. The goal of 'non-sexism' (non-racism or non-classism) reflects a belief embedded in liberalism that discrimination is somehow incidental to the system -- a result of prejudice -- and that good attitudes and intent can erase that discrimination and make sex, race and class irrelevant, especially in the classroom. Such a view conceals rather than reveals structural inequality and institutional limits. It holds out a false promise to students: of a safe space away from the sexism, racism and classism in the rest of their lives.

A focus on non-sexism suggests that, through desire, individual teachers can liberate their own classrooms from gendered social realities.<sup>31</sup> This attributes an extraordinary power to individual teachers and no doubt provokes guilt and self doubt when teachers are unable to put such a non-sexist environment in place. It thereby reinforces that aspect of liberal individualism which emphasizes individual agency regardless of historical context and social conditions.

The strategy of non-sexism obscures the degree to which the classroom environment is shaped by the relations between students. Even with good intentions, and sensitive teaching and curriculum practices on the part of the teacher, the gendered character of the classroom will continue.

[E]ven if the teacher were successful in ignoring gender, it is obvious that students do take cognizance of it. The gender-connected conventions and expectations that students themselves bring to their classroom interactions will continue unaltered, if not actually strengthened, if teachers do not intervene to change the patterns.<sup>32</sup>

Students theorizing the construction of themselves as 'gendered subjects' reveal the power of student interaction, even in the face of self-conscious anti-discriminatory techniques on the part of teachers. Giselle reports that

In the tutorial of one of my political science courses, the women are greatly outnumbered by the men. It seems as though when the men in the class speak, everyone pays attention. However when a female tries to speak, the rest of the class acts as if no one is speaking.<sup>33</sup>

Janet begins by describing the many techniques used by her professor to challenge tradition: both in the curriculum and in teaching practices. Nonetheless a gendered dynamic persists between students which greatly disadvantages the women.

In the class there still remains a great hesitancy to participate. There is a genuine tension felt among the group members. The conversation is generally led by the male members of the group, with little female content. The females who do speak are highly intelligent.... There is however a distinct difference in the tone used by the female students as opposed to the male. The males speak in a casual and confident tone, often allowing humour into the discussion. The females on the other hand sound aggressive and defensive.... The males are not as intent on having their opinions heard and digested. This may be due to the fact that there is a unsaid political assumption that the male voice and

opinion hold the final authority without any required debate....

When the voices of the more silent females of the class are heard, they are usually in response to contrived questions proposed by the teacher. The answers usually require less critical analysis or opinion and more readily pertain to direct content. The females usually jump at these questions in hopes of salvaging some participation marks. This behaviour seems to stem from two causes. The first is the fear of introducing or risking one's own opinion in the midst of such a cut-throat atmosphere. The second seems to be reluctance to be viewed in the same light as the female students that do participate. The so-called aggressive or perhaps just the women who give their critical analysis in class are often outcasts of sorts. Students often collectively criticize the individual females. They suggest that their participation takes the form of self-indulgent speeches. At times these criticisms are warranted on the basis of other behaviours which students take part in. They often whisper to the student beside them about criticisms pertaining to the speaker, instead of waiting till they are able to present their opinion in a more constructive and group sensitive manner.... At the same time it seems interesting that none of the men are criticized for their manner of participation. It becomes difficult to distinguish to what degree the females are being criticized because their behaviour goes against the accepted norm of docile female behaviour or that the group is uncomfortable with the classroom dynamics and feels the only way to relieve this is through a scapegoat. It would seem that the former proposition is the more likely in my experience. There seems to be a pattern of labelled aggressive women, from class to class and all are criticized by both male and female students.... Are these female students

developing their abilities with this aggressive type behaviour, or are they enacting the only possible channels which they find they are able to express themselves in?<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the non-sexist approach disguises the reality that educational institutions are part of a complex of institutions -- the state, families and households, workplaces etc. -- which both reflect and reinforce the values and practices of patriarchal capitalism.

The classroom is always a 'gendered environment': teaching practices and curriculum always take gender into account -- self-consciously or unconsciously, through presences or absences, in ways that empower students or disadvantage them. It is not possible, therefore, for schools, individual classrooms or teachers to transcend these power relations and make gender irrelevant. A single classroom cannot overcome the realities of a racist, heterosexist patriarchal capitalist society. It can only engage with them. It is for these reasons that I argue that non-sexism is not a viable strategy and advocate in its place an anti-sexist strategy which takes gender (race and class) firmly into account.

### Strategy #2: Anti-Sexism

Anti-sexist education highlights the functioning of these structures and empowers, in the first instance, through knowledge. An anti-sexist strategy makes gender an issue in all classrooms in order to validate the experience of students, to bring it into consciousness, and to challenge it. It makes gender an official rather than an unofficial factor in classroom process and curriculum;<sup>35</sup> by extension, an anti-sexist strategy takes up race, class and sexual orientation, which interrelate in complex patterns with gender.

Anti-sexism shifts the focus from the realm of morality (I am not sexist) to the realm of political practice (what can I do about sexism?). Non-sexism, by contrast, confuses an individual stance of trying to appear 'non-sexist' with actively and collectively working to eradicate sexism. The concern with personal appearance reinforces existing sexism and becomes a barrier to change. Terry Wolverton, in using Elly Bulkin's distinction between non-racist and anti-racist, stresses this point.

Bulkin's distinction between non-racism and anti-racism helped me to see an obstacle in my own approach to racism: I had confused the act of trying to appear not to be racist with actively working to eliminate racism. Trying to appear not racist had made me deny my racism, and therefore exclude the possibility of change.<sup>36</sup>

To a certain extent, the position of non-sexism is a logical absurdity. In a society so riddled with sexism and racism, no person -- black or white, male or female -- can claim to be free of either. To focus on personal moralities is, paradoxically, to decrease individual responsibility rather than to increase it. Such a focus demands no public political activity, only a neutrality that can inadvertently serve to bolster the status quo.

Let me draw out the distinction between anti-sexism and non-sexism by considering two examples: role modelling and sex stereotyping in textbooks. A common non-sexist strategy is the use of role models. For example, a teacher invites a woman electrician to class to encourage young girls to consider the skilled trades as a career. The message is that little girls can be anything, and the woman electrician stands as proof that sex can be irrelevant. Although I would not deny the importance of role models, the truth is that little girls cannot be anything they want: formal and informal, ideological and material discrimination stand in their way. So if they are taught that everything is

possible, that sex and gender do not matter, then when they come up against the limits of what is possible, easy or acceptable, they can only conclude that they must be at fault. In contrast, an anti-sexist approach would focus on explaining the barriers that prevent women from being electricians, and the collective strategies that have allowed some women to overcome these barriers. It is interesting to note that many women in non-traditional jobs resist describing the barriers they face as sexism, and acknowledging the role of the women's movement in facilitating their entry into such fields. This resistance is a result of buying into bootstrapism, which encourages them to see the difficulties they face as a result of their own limitations, rather than as institutional barriers, and their successes as a result of their individual efforts rather than as part of a collective process.

The distinction between anti-sexist and non-sexist strategies helps to clarify the debate about non-sexist school textbooks, which continues unabated after two decades of organizing and countless reports. As Gaskell, McLaren and Novogrodsky in Claiming an Education point out,

the lack of change is not evident just in texts: it is in the organization of Canadian society....These texts continue to reflect a fundamental reality -- the sexual division of labour. The question is what relationship texts and the school curriculum should have to the world outside the schools. Should texts portray a world that is better than the real world?

The authors of the FWTAO [Federation of Women Teachers of Ontario] study suggests they should. They argue that texts should portray an ideal and non-sexist world so that youngsters learn what is possible for them, and for the world at large.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, Gaskell et al. take an anti-sexist position, although unnamed as such.

We want children to see their experience reflected in their texts, not to create a new world of androgynous superpeople, and not to exclude material that shows women in traditional roles.... We believe that children should be helped to see the world as it is, while being encouraged to develop a critical consciousness, a sense of active and co-operative participation that equips them to engage in the struggle for social change.<sup>38</sup>

To make gender an issue in the classroom is, by definition, to take on the gendered relations of power in our society. Two examples. Male students often complain that my first-year course on Women and Society is anti-male. This has puzzled me because I present a systemic analysis of gender discrimination that focuses, only in a very secondary way, on the individual actions of men. In pursuing this issue, what became clear was that a statement like "Women earn 65 per cent of what men earn" was perceived as a criticism of men, an anti-male statement. Simply to reveal the gendered character of the social order is to threaten it!

Houston reports on a study described by Dale Spender where attempts to eliminate gender bias against girls provoked claims of discrimination by the boys.

When a teacher tries to eliminate gender bias in participation by giving 34 per cent of her attention to girls who constitute one-half the class, the boys protested: "she always asks girls all the questions"; "she doesn't like boys and just listens to girls all the time." In a sexist society boys perceive that two-thirds of the teacher's time is a fair allotment for them, and if it is altered so

they receive less, they feel they are discriminated against.<sup>39</sup>

The solution, then, is not to seek a gender-free environment which inevitably leads to a disavowal of the saliency of gender in our society. However difficult, addressing gender directly allows for the unnamed, hidden and naturalised assumptions about gender rights to be named and re-negotiated.

When the gender, class and race realities of the classroom are named for and by students, their awareness is deepened and their sense of contradiction heightened; this, in turn, can inspire a shift in consciousness and a change in practice. In 1855 Lucy Stone, an abolitionist and activist in the American suffrage movement said,

In education, in marriage, in religion, in everything, disappointment is the lot of woman. It shall be the business of my life to deepen this disappointment in every woman's heart until she bows down to it no longer.<sup>40</sup>

I suggest that deepening the disappointment and heightening the contradictions, some of which I outlined in the first part of this paper, is part of a strategy of anti-sexism.

### Contradictions Experienced by Activists

The final contradiction concerns the ability of teachers to act effectively as change-makers and to empower students with a vision of alternatives and possibilities. The ability to act, and the desire for change and to inspire change-making confronts oppression and fear of change. Recovering agency means, in the first instance, dealing with the fear of change endemic in our society and rooted in the powerlessness many individuals experience.

There is a certain irony in this fear of change, for, objectively, our society is always changing. We might go so far as to say that one central contradiction of advanced capitalism is precisely this tension between a conservative ideology that fears change and the reality of people's daily lives. Our lives are full of change: job change, marriage breakdown, forced geographic mobility to look for work, new technology, changing sex roles and patterns of child-rearing, to name a few. These changes are most often perceived as being outside our control, they are rarely initiated by popular movements, and they contribute, not surprisingly, to the fear of change and the desire for social stability.<sup>41</sup>

This feeling of being at the mercy of outside forces and the sense that the social world is a 'solid artifact' to which we must adapt feeds a kind of political and personal immobilization. Elaine Batcher points out in her study of the attitudes of young women to the rules in mixed adolescent peer groups that

girls tend to learn the rules too well and then see them as having a life of their own, apart from the individuals who made them up.... They do not see 'the rules' as structures within which to work, but as solid artifacts of life, even if they personally disagree with them.<sup>42</sup>

The fact that girls see the rules as unnegotiable may reflect the naturalism so often used to explain women's place in the world: women are biologically suited to motherhood and service work; women's place is in the home etc. Such an approach lends itself to an ahistorical, static view in which the current state of affairs is seen to be right/best/correct; change would, therefore, upset a natural order.

Recovering the belief in the possibility of making change means challenging the inherent pessimism associated with ideo-

logies of naturalism. It also means reclaiming collective action as a strategy for change. Our society basically denies our status as agents of change, except as agents of personal change. It suggests that we lose ourselves and our individuality in the collective experience. Such a view confuses "individualism (which prizes the rights of individuals over the rights of the collective) and individuality (which focuses on the development of individual potential)".<sup>43</sup> To reclaim the right to change the world as well as to change ourselves -- indeed, in order to develop fully our individuality -- means to resist individualism.

Collective action -- active involvement in the politics of school and community -- is a source of individual empowerment, a context in which we grow and develop.

Rather than requiring the submission and negation of self, [the collective] means the liberation of self from isolation and competition. Rather than enforcing sameness and conformity, a sacrifice of individuality and difference, the collective can be the context in which difference is supported and encouraged.<sup>44</sup>

The experiences of women organizing collectively certainly reinforce this view. Arja Lane describes her involvement in Wives Supporting the Strike (WSS), a volunteer organization that supported the 1978 INCO strike in Sudbury:

Working with WSS was a politicizing experience.... As women we 'came out' in many ways. We became more confident about our ability to use our homemaking skills to organize actions that effected change outside the home. We became less shy about speaking out about the way we saw issues. For many, it was our first time at meetings, and our first exposure to the how's, what's and why's of labour versus management. The information and skills that were shared at meetings and

events enabled us to cope better with our everyday lives.<sup>45</sup>

Another member of WSS graphically describes some of the changes that the collective experience of organizing had on her life:

My husband saw me in a new way after the strike. He saw me yelling at meetings and going by myself to Toronto to that rally and I realized I had more rights in this family. Some of it is small stuff like now he has to look after the kids once in a while if I want to go away for a weekend. But other stuff is bigger like I say what I think about family plans. And now he listens.<sup>46</sup>

Participation in collective action moves women from the position of victim to that of agent. It demonstrates that we can make history and change ourselves.

### Strategy #3: Reclaiming Feminism in the Classroom

Feminism is critical to this process: it implicitly challenges naturalism and rests on the fundamental premise that social change is possible and necessary. Feminism and the women's movement provide the reference point and the context for collective action. Feminist practice is central to a feminist pedagogical strategy.

What does it mean to bring feminism into the classroom? In the first instance it means studying the feminisms -- both historically and theoretically, and the multiplicity of feminist practices; this goes beyond studying women and gender issues. Feminism as a world view allows us to make sense of our individual experiences; pulls us away from individualism and individual instances of discrimination to an understanding of the systemic character of oppression; moves us from a dependence

and reliance on individual solutions (which often result in blaming the victim, who is unable to overcome the limits of her individual life) to collective strategies and social and political solutions.

Feminism is also about reclaiming anger. The role of anger for women has always been complex and contradictory. On the one hand, the response to women's anger is to trivialize it and dismiss it, name the woman as unfeminine, unfulfilled and overly emotional. Perhaps these responses reflect a recognition of the potential danger of women's anger for to be angry is to name oppression and, by definition, to challenge it.

But anger has also been dangerous for women. To be angry is to mobilize the wrath of men, possibly to increase violence against women, and certainly to marginalize oneself in both work and personal environments. So women have often turned anger into guilt and impotent, often repressed, rage, internalized it, and destroyed themselves with it.

Feminism is a medium for women to reclaim anger, share it, proclaim it publicly, and ground it in the economic and political conditions of our lives. Audre Lorde says, "My fear of anger taught me nothing."<sup>47</sup> She goes on:

Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change.<sup>48</sup>

The classroom is one site within which that anger can be explored; the women's movement one context for organizing around it.



Bringing feminism into the classroom also means naming ourselves as feminists. As part of the collective struggle to act as agents, feminism needs to be reclaimed from the media and the right. Their rejection of feminism is, in part, a fear of change, in part a resistance to the redistribution of power and resources that is fundamental to a feminist politic. Naming ourselves as feminists challenges the myths about feminists as persons and forces the opposition to deal with the substantive issues raised by feminism. Rebecca West understood something about this dynamic; she said in 1913:

I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.<sup>49</sup>

With tragic irony, the massacre of women engineering students in Montreal in 1989 has clarified for many the necessity to name ourselves actively and publicly as feminists. There is no doubt that claiming feminism is claiming the collective power of women. Finally, bringing feminism into the classroom means linking the struggles in the classroom to struggles in the community. This means building an active connection with the women's movement, environmental and anti-racist groups, trade unions and other progressive community forces organizing for social change.

Changing teaching practices and schools, empowering students with knowledge, embracing a feminist perspective in the classroom involve a forceful challenge to the contradictions that play themselves out in the educational context. Contradictory messages about womanhood, about the authority and expertise of female teachers, about strategies for dealing with sexism, about the possibilities for change, all must become part of a self-conscious political approach.

Throughout this discussion I have emphasized the 'contradictions' of the classroom experience. Alan Sable in his discussion of the contradictions he faced as a white professor teaching minority students comments:

I have used the word 'contradiction' where others might prefer a simpler term such as 'problems'.... To me a 'contradiction' connotes dynamic tension between two opposing forces. Also in dialectic thought, contradictions are never fully resolved; instead, they are continually being transformed into new situations of tension. Unlike problems, which may be 'solved', contradictions require continual struggle.<sup>50</sup>

This concept of contradiction recognizes that what needs to be changed is not superficial and not only inside the individual: it is systemic -- structurally and ideologically. Naming the contradictions is a powerful motor for change. The recognition of 'opposing forces' suggests choices; challenges the obvious, the accepted, the 'natural'; and forces students to seek understanding in order to take a position. The struggle with contradictions shifts consciousness. The recognition of alternatives highlights the possibility of change, if not the possibility of resolution. Bruce Rappaport in his discussion of radical teaching notes:

A certain amount of defeatism and cynicism has been common regarding our ability to do radical teaching in this society, especially in public schools. While such feelings are understandable, contradictions are really not defeats but indications of both the possibility and inevitability of change. While capitalism makes teaching difficult, the crisis produced by the system creates an ever increasing need for our students to understand what is going on.... We can offer an effective way of understanding the world and, quite crucially in these

often depressing times, a powerful sense of optimism about change.<sup>51</sup>

For teachers to avoid contradictions is to reinforce stasis in learning, to bolster 'commonsense' sexism, racism and naturalism; to reveal contradictions is to create what Mies has called 'ruptures'.<sup>52</sup>

## PART TWO: THE STANDPOINT OF FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

This paper has examined the contradictions in women's experience as learners, as teachers, as feminists, as change-makers. This examination has highlighted three change-making strategies -- teaching leadership, anti-sexism, and reclaiming feminism -- and revealed that feminist pedagogy is not a unified perspective. In the same way that it is more accurate to talk about 'feminisms', it is also more accurate to talk about a variety of feminist pedagogies, each with a politically specific approach. For example, a strategy of non-sexism is more consistent with the political assumptions of liberal feminism; a strategy of anti-sexism arises out of a socialist feminist perspective.

This paper has not focused on specific techniques. Although feminist educators have developed innovations and many more can be adapted from other radical classroom pedagogies, and from community-based forms of popular education, the evolution of such techniques must arise from a self-conscious gender and race-specific standpoint that incorporates an understanding of the gender and race-specific character of experience, a feminist perspective and an anti-sexist and anti-racist strategy. The challenge is so fundamental that a grab bag of new techniques is inadequate. Rather, feminist educators are developing an alternative teaching and learning standpoint.

Feminist pedagogy is about teaching from a feminist world view; from a perspective on the world which is in favour of the sharing of power, privilege, property and opportunities; which recognizes the systematic and systemic oppression of women; which believes in the possibility of change; and which understands the need to organize collectively to make change. By definition, feminist pedagogy challenges what is seen to be the obvious, the natural, the accepted, the unquestioned.

Feminist pedagogy is about teaching in a particular way: recognizing the relations of power -- based on gender, class, race and sexual orientation -- that permeate the classroom. It is influenced by the emphasis of the women's liberation movement on 'process' and accepts the intrinsic link between changing curricula and changing teaching practice. In this sense, feminist pedagogy is about validating the process of teaching.<sup>53</sup>

From my perspective, several aspects of feminist pedagogy are central. Feminist pedagogy makes visible the real experience of gender in society, in the school and in the classroom. It unmasks the dynamic of power/powerlessness, the devaluation of women and the invisibility of their experience. For women students, the public acknowledgement of the gendered experience is empowering. There is always a gendered experience but they have no name for it. They live it as anxiety, powerlessness, rage, feelings of inadequacy and ambivalence.

Feminist pedagogy names the personal as political: the individual experience as a social and political reality. By definition, it challenges the ideology of individualism which suggests that we are each able to shape our lives through individual will and determination, and that any failure is due to personal failure or laziness. In contrast, the feminist identification of the social and political character of gender underscores the structural and ideological barriers that face women, and helps turn them from guilt -- an inward and individualistic focus -- to anger -- an outward and societal focus -- and from the standpoint of victim to that of agent.

Second, in identifying the female experience as different from the male experience and thereby challenging androcentrism (the predominance and power of the male perspective), feminist pedagogy lays the basis for the legitimation of the multiplicity of experiences based on the class, race, ethnicity, gender, age and

sexual orientation of students and teachers. This validation enables students to speak with a new authority and further reveals to them the way in which their lives are shaped not by their own choices but by their social location.

Third, in respecting the gendered character of experience, feminist pedagogy revalues the experience of women: be it the domestic work done in the household or the values of nurturance, life giving and cooperation, which are seen to be traditionally female. This is reflected in teaching practices through a challenge to the overly rationalist approach to knowledge and understanding. A feminist pedagogical approach seeks to incorporate the affective, emotional and experiential into the learning process and to replace the competitiveness of the classroom interaction with communal, collective and cooperative ways of learning.

Finally, feminist pedagogy alters the classroom dynamic; however, it also recognizes the impossibility of overcoming the endemic sexism of the society inside an isolated classroom. In fact, to make gender an issue in the classroom is to take on the gendered relations of power -- indeed all relations of power -- in our society. This deeply embedded organization of power demands strategies of anti-sexism and teaching leadership whose goals are not the utopian propagation of a gender-free or non-sexist environment but rather the development of a strong movement for social change.

This emphasis on social change recognizes feminist pedagogy as a form of feminist practice having its roots in the women's movement, and firmly situates feminist pedagogy in the traditions of critical and radical pedagogies that see education as a form of empowerment and a tool in social change. The intrinsic link between feminist pedagogy and organizing for social change reflects the connection between the classroom and the world outside it, and the feminist understanding that change

is necessary and must be systemic. Without a vision for making change, the revelation of endemic sexism can remove traditional supports (although in large part illusory) and demoralize students -- embitter, not empower them. A vision of alternatives and a strategy for change can counter that demoralization, make the classroom newly relevant and provide students and teachers with a sense of their own agency in the world. Feminist pedagogy is, indeed, about teaching and learning liberation.

## ENDNOTES

1. This paper is based on a keynote address, "Toward a Pedagogy for Change", given at the inaugural symposium of the Coalition for Equity in Science, Mathematics, and Technology, Glendon College, May 1989.

I would like to thank Pat Rogers for her critical and insightful comments on, and her enthusiasm about, this paper; and Jane Springer for her editing.

2. The phrase 'learning and teaching liberation' occurred to me as a result of the following comment by Jane Thompson. "[T]he intention is not to describe women's education as an object of interest, but to illuminate the process through which women, against considerable odds, are learning liberation" [emphasis added]. See Learning Liberation (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 4.

3. For a Canadian anthology on the issues of violence against women, see No Safe Place, eds. Connie Guberman and Margie Wolfe (Toronto: Women's Press, 1985).

4. Figure quoted in Alf Holden, "Sex offenders often teens, report finds," Toronto Star, March 8, 1990.

5. Adrienne Rich, "Taking Women Students Seriously," in Gendered Subjects, eds. Margo Culley and Catherine Portuges (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 25.

6. Rob Tripp, "Women end protest over sexism at school," Toronto Star, November 11, 1989.

7. For an excellent summary of this approach to understanding sexuality, see Jeffrey Weeks, Sexuality (London: Tavistock Publications, 1986).

8. See Rich's seminal article, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," reprinted in Powers of Desire, eds. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983).

9. For a powerful discussion of homophobia in the classroom, see David Bleich, "Homophobia and Sexism as Popular Values," and Allison Berg et al., "Breaking the Silence: Sexual Preference in the Composition Classroom," both in Feminist Teacher, Vol. 4, Nos. 2/3 (Fall 1989). See also the section in Lesbian Studies: Present and Future, ed. Margaret Cruikshank (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1982) that deals with the classroom.

10. Adrienne Rich says, "If there is any misleading concept, it is that of 'co-education': that because women and men are sitting in the same classrooms, reading the same books, performing the same laboratory experiments, they are receiving an equal education. They are not, first because the context of education itself validates men even as it invalidates women. Its very message is that men have been the shapers and thinkers of the world, and that this is only natural. The bias of higher education, including the so-called sciences, is white and male, racist and sexist." in "Taking Women Students Seriously," p. 24-25.

11. Barbara Houston, "Should Public Education be Gender-free?" in Women and Men, ed. Greta Nemiroff (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1987), pp. 136, 137, 139.

12. Phillip Rushton, a professor at the University of Western Ontario has persisted in propagating such blatantly racist ideas.

13. There is an extensive literature on this, especially the reproduction of class relations in the school system. See for example, Life in Schools, by Peter McLaren (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989).

14. See Avis Glaze and Dormer Ellis, "Career Aspirations and Expectations of Ontario Girls," Paper prepared for the 21st Annual Conference of the Ontario Educational Research Council, Toronto, November 1979. Based on Avis Glazer, "Factors which influence career choice and future orientation of females: implications for career education," Ed.D Thesis, University of Toronto, 1979.

One optimistic result indicated that "the girls who had the most liberated sex-role ideology had higher educational plans and aspired to more non-traditional occupations than was true of girls who held more traditional sex-role views" (p. 7).

15. In this discussion I have examined the texts of women's experience. There are also contradictory texts for male students. The gendered character of the classroom and of society places a burden on young men (to be successful, aggressive, heterosexual, tough etc.). They pay a price for this, and women in turn pay a second price in their relations with men. We need to be asking how we can empower male subjects such that they will recognize and understand their privilege and their role as oppressor.

16. This discussion about authority relies heavily on Susan Friedman, "Authority in the Feminist Classroom: A Contradiction in Terms?" in Gendered Subjects. Quote from p. 208.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

Gender, race and class all play a role in how authority is established in the classroom. Lisa Delpit, in discussing the problems Black children often face with White teachers, makes the following observation: "Black children expect an authority figure to act with authority. When the teacher acts as a 'chum', the message is that this adult has no authority, and the children react accordingly. One reason this is so is that Black people

often view issues of power and authority differently from people from mainstream middle-class backgrounds. Many people of colour expect authority to be earned by personal efforts and exhibited by personal characteristics. In other words, "the authoritative person gets to be a teacher because she is authoritative." Some members of middle-class cultures, by contrast, expect one to achieve authority by the acquisition of an authoritative role. That is, "the teacher is the authority because she is the teacher." Lisa Delpit, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 58, No. 3 (August 1988).

18. Ibid., p. 205-206.

See Elaine Martin, "Power and Authority in the Classroom: Sexist Stereotypes in Teaching Evaluations," Signs, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1984).

See also the 'chilling' anecdotal evidence in a recent report, "The Chilly Climate for Faculty Women at UWO: Postscript to the Backhouse Report," by Constance Backhouse, Roma Harris, Gillian Michell, and Alison Wylie (University of Western Ontario, November 1989).

19. Quoted with permission. Student requested anonymity.

20. The relation between expertise and authority is constituted differently at various levels of the educational system. One might hypothesize that at the university, expertise confers a degree of authority more readily than in the elementary system.

21. For example, Kathryn Morgan speaks of the "paradox of the 'bearded mother'": "But we need to ask whether such supportive nurturance is compatible with teaching critical theorizing since the very concept of mothering and maternal presence involves unconditional support whereas the process of teaching involves interacting with one's students as a model of critical thinker."

See "The Perils and Paradoxes of Feminist Pedagogy," Resources for Feminist Research, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 1987), p. 50.

Margo Culley et al. talks about bringing family 'texts' into the classroom using the analysis of the psychodynamics of mothering put forward by Chodorow and Dinnerstein. "Our students see us as something more, or certainly something other, than their teachers. We are, inescapably, also their mothers -- necessary for comfort but reinforcing a feared and fearful dependency if such comfort is too easily accepted. But we are also, in part, their fathers -- word-givers, truth-sayers.... As our maternal power is feared, our paternal authority is mistrusted.... [W]e, the teachers, are implicated in the classroom dynamics as fully as our students.... [T]eachers see students as unruly daughters who must be both reformed and protected; students see teachers as old-fashioned mothers -- powerful enough to command children, but necessarily rejected by all who would call themselves adults" (pp. 14-15). Culley et al. conclude that 'the feminist classroom may become the place where the cultural split between mother and father may be healed.... If... the rage at mothers daring to be fathers derives from a terror that women will abandon the side of life responsible for keeping the world partly safe and sane, feminism can assert that its project is not to abandon the feminine standpoint, but to insert its best qualities into history" (p. 18). See Margo Culley et al., "The Politics of Nurturance" in Gendered Subjects.

Pat Elliot in "Remodeling Feminist Pedagogy: A Graduate Student's View," distinguishes between the feminist teaching strategies that she calls 'benevolent paternalism' and 'benevolent maternalism': "[B]enevolent paternalism engages in a kind of gentle coercion.... [T]he idea here is that feminist students have to learn to compete in a competitive, male-dominant world by using the master's tools.... The second model, benevolent maternalism...also regards students as children to be taught for their own good, but in this case they are considered in need of

nurturing. As 'good-mother' the feminist pedagogue encourages, praises and coaxes her students..... Both benevolent paternalism and benevolent maternalism impose a parental model on the pedagogical relationship, a model I would argue serves the teacher, not the student. Investing herself with a benevolent familial authority, the feminist teacher puts herself beyond certain kinds of criticisms for she supposedly has the best interests of her students at heart.... Substituting the social authority of parents for the institutional and contractual authority of teachers gives the pedagogue a psychological advantage she otherwise might not enjoy." Paper presented at the meetings of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, Windsor, Ontario 1988.

22. From a research project I am currently conducting on gender-informed and feminist teaching practices at York University.

23. Kathryn Morgan says, "[E]xamining the metaphors that give some promise of equality -- sister, peer, friend, or translator -- it seems that the teacher's role, qua teacher, vanishes altogether." See Morgan, op. cit., p. 51.

24. Friedman, op. cit., p. 206-207.

bell hooks makes a similar point: "To have a revolutionary feminist pedagogy we must first focus on the teacher-student relationship and the issue of power. How do we as feminist teachers use power in a way that is not coercive, dominating? Many women have had difficulty asserting power in the feminist classroom for fear that to do so would be to exercise domination. Yet we must acknowledge that our role as teacher is a position of power over others. We can use that power in ways that diminish or in ways that enrich and it is this choice that should distinguish feminist pedagogy from ways of teaching that reinforce domination." See "Toward a Revolutionary Feminist

Pedagogy," in Talking Back (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988), p. 52.

25. Carolyn Shrewsbury, "What is Feminist Pedagogy?" Women's Studies Quarterly, Vol. XV, Nos. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 1987), pp. 12, 8.

26. The discussion of teaching leadership that follows focuses on negotiating the power relations of the classroom. This approach could be expanded to look also at the development of critical skills in relation to the curriculum, such as developing students' ability to ask questions and challenge received authority.

27. Lisa Delpit, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Aug 1988).

28. A comment by Nancy Schniedewind is suggestive of this approach. "While I share leadership with students in these and other ways, I don't have a totally egalitarian classroom. I take more leadership and have more power than any of the students. I have found that students need an arena in which to learn to take responsibility for themselves and the group." See "Feminist Values: Guidelines for Teaching Methodology in Women's Studies," in Learning Our Way, eds. Charlotte Bunch and Sandra Pollack (New York: The Crossing Press, 1983), p. 265.

29. See Morgan, op. cit., p. 51.

Morgan goes on to say: "If she dispenses with these in the name of preserving democracy, she suffers personal alienation, fails to function as a role model, and abandons the politically significant role of woman authority. In short she stops functioning as a feminist teacher."

30. A parallel discussion of leadership has occurred within grassroots feminist organizations. The elitist practices associated with conventional forms of leadership led many feminists to reject leadership itself. For a discussion of the contradictions of this position, see Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, Feminist Organizing for Change (Toronto: Oxford, 1988), chap 7.

31. Caroline Shrewsbury's conception of "the classroom as a liberatory environment" reflects some of these problems. See Shrewsbury, op. cit., p. 7.

32. Ibid., p. 139.

33. Quoted with permission. Student requested anonymity.

34. Quoted with permission. Student requested anonymity.

35. Barbara Houston says, "Gender may be excluded as an official criterion, but it continues to function as an unofficial one" (p. 138). She distinguishes between a gender-free strategy and a gender-sensitive one (a term she borrows from Jane Martin):

"Jane Martin has suggested that we employ a gender-sensitive perspective which recommends that we pay attention to gender when it can prevent sex bias or can further sex equality" (p. 145).

Houston points out that "the central problem with the gender-free mandate is that it misleadingly suggests that in order to free ourselves of gender bias, we have to stop paying attention to gender.... If we look closely, we find that any significant success of the gender-free strategy would require that one continue to pay scrupulous attention to gender" (p. 142). See Houston, op. cit. 35.

36. Terry Wolverton, "Unlearning Complicity, Remembering Resistance: White Women's Anti-racism Education," in Learning Our Way, p. 191. It is striking that the literature on racism is much clearer and more explicit about the need for an anti-racist rather than a non-racist approach. The literature on sexism more often tends to take a classical liberal position calling for neutrality and non-sexism.

37. Jane Gaskell, Arlene McLaren and Myra Novogrodsky, Claiming an Education: Feminism and Canadian Schools (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1989), p. 37.

38. Ibid., p. 38.

I suggest that the distinction between anti-sexism and non-sexism would clarify the point of view in this book. The authors do not use the term 'anti-sexist'; rather they use the term 'non-sexist' with a multitude of meanings. For example, in concluding the above discussion, they say, "The fundamental issue is our conception of a non-sexist (or gender equitable, or feminist) curriculum and its relationship to a democratic and socialist curriculum" (p. 38).

39. Ibid., p. 141.

40. In a speech to the National Women's Rights Convention, held in Cincinnati, Ohio on 17 and 18 October 1855, recorded in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joselyn Gage, eds. The History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. 1 (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1887), p. 165. Quoted in Margo Culley, "Anger and Authority in the Introductory Women's Studies Classroom," in Gendered Subjects, p. 210.

41. Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, op. cit., p. 146. Chapter Four, "The Politics of Making Change" contains an extended discussion of what we have called "the ideology of change".



42. Elaine Batcher, "Building the Barriers: Adolescent Girls Delimit the Future," in Women and Men, p. 155.

43. Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, op. cit., p. 101.

44. Ibid.

45. Arja Lane, "Wives Supporting the Strike," in Union Sisters, eds. Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz (Toronto: Women's Press, 1983), pp. 330-31.

46. Quoted in Meg Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees," in Union Sisters, p. 343.

47. Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," in Sister Outsider (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), p. 124.

48. Ibid., p. 127.

Margo Culley in "Anger and Authority in the Introductory Women's Studies Classroom," in Gendered Subjects talks about the specific management of anger in the women's studies classroom as students move from denial and anger -- often at the teacher, to a more outward and politicized anger.

"[W]e are angry, and the feminist classroom is one arena where the historic, social, economic, cultural and psychological sources of that anger can be studied. Anger is one important source of energy for personal and social change facilitating the transition from passivity to action" (p. 216).

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in "Women's Studies in the 1980s: Now More Than Ever," Women's Studies Quarterly XII:3 (Fall 1984) had this to say on anger: "Women's studies must cultivate the recognition of women's anger that bourgeois civilization has done so much to repress. Feminism is not necessarily

comfortable, but it is necessary if women are to learn to act for themselves" (p. 27).

49. Rebecca West, The Clarion, November 14, 1913. Quoted in Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler, A Feminist Dictionary (Pandora, 1985), p. 160.

50. Alan Sable, "Facing Some Contradictions: My Experiences as a White Professor Teaching Minority Students," in Studies in Socialist Pedagogy, ed. Theodore Mills Norton and Bertell Ollman (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 335-36.

51. Bruce Rappaport, "Toward a Marxist Theory and Practice of Teaching," in Studies in Socialist Pedagogy, p. 280.

52. "Only when there is a rupture in the 'normal' life of a woman, i.e., a crisis such as divorce, the end of a relationship, etc., is there a chance for her to become conscious of her true condition. In the 'experience of crises' and rupture with normalcy, women are confronted with the real social relationships in which they had unconsciously been submerged as objects without being able to distance themselves from them. As long as normalcy is not disrupted they are not able to admit even to themselves that these relationships are oppressive or exploitive. This is the reason why in attitude surveys women so often are found to subscribe to the dominant sexist ideology of the submissive, self-sacrificing woman. When a rupture with this normalcy occurs, however, the mystification surrounding the natural and harmonious character of these patriarchal relations cannot be maintained." Maria Mies, "Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research," in Theories of Women's Studies, eds. Gloria Bowles and Renate Klein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 125-26.

53. There is no doubt that teaching practices are seen to be increasingly less significant as one moves through the educational system. Thus the validation of teaching becomes more difficult

and more necessary. In the university system the emphasis is almost entirely on curriculum.

#### ON WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN CANADA

CRIAW Paper No. 24 - *Canadian Women's Autobiography in English: An Introductory Guide For Researchers and Teachers* by Helen M. Buss, 1991. This study surveys a wide range of Canadian women's autobiographical writing in order to describe the ways in which women have constructed themselves as female subjects. A selected list of texts on the study of autobiography is also included.

#### ON A FEMINIST VIEW OF THE SCIENCES

CRIAW Paper No. 25 - *Searching for Subjectivity in the World of the Sciences: Feminist Viewpoints* by Roberta Mura, 1991. Does it make sense to examine disciplines that do not deal with human beings, such as physics, mathematics, zoology or engineering, from a feminist perspective? This paper presents arguments in the affirmative. Any science, whatever its object, is a product of human endeavour - a product open for examination of the marks that its creators, most often men, may have left upon it.

#### ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

CRIAW Paper No. 26 - *The Women's Movement and Its Currents of Thought: A Typological Essay* by Francine Descarries-Belanger and Shirley Roy, 1991. This article examines the different currents of thought that have developed within and around the women's movement over the past decades eg. ranging from feminism of equality to maternal feminism. It aims at a better comprehension of the content and the stakes involved in the key debates. Thus it proposes a single and systematic grid of analysis by which to understand what is happening in the world of feminist thought, to grasp the issues, and to bring to light the multiplicity, complexity and continuity of the perspectives presented; this in order to become aware of, explain and transform the many facets of the individual and collective experience of women.

#### ON FEMINIST ETHICS

CRIAW Paper No. 27 - *Is Feminist Ethics Possible?* by Lorraine Code, Maureen Ford, Kathleen Martindale, Susan Sherwin and Debra Shogan, 1991. In this collaborative project, the authors seek to explain their understanding of feminist ethics and to reason about the importance of theory for its development. They also take this opportunity to write about the ethical practice of collaborating across differences. Their investigation proceeds through analyses of subjectivity, power and knowledge, and ethical community. They end by applying feminist theory to the practice of collaborative writing.

Each of these publications are \$4 + \$1 postage and handling. To order these and other publications from CRIAW, please contact us at 408-151 Slater St., Ottawa, Ontario K1P 3H3. Tel. 1-613-563-0681 or 0682 (Fax). We offer a special discount of 20% when you order 10 or more publications of the same title. Examination copies are available upon request.

In order to develop a feminist pedagogy, we must unravel the contradictions women experience as learners, as teachers, as feminists, as change-makers. This paper deals with three sets of contradictions: first, the contradictions in the messages that women carry around in everyday life and bring into the classroom as students and as teachers; second, the contradictions women experience as educators, especially as feminist educators; and third, the contradictions women experience as activists and as change-makers. Out of these contradictions, three strategies emerge: teaching leadership, anti-sexism and reclaiming feminism in the classroom. The feminist pedagogical standpoint -- a standpoint of teaching and learning liberation -- is generated from the interplay between these contradictions and strategies.

Linda Briskin teaches women's studies at York University; she previously taught high school in Montreal, and community college in Ontario. She has co-authored *Feminist Organizing for Change: the Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford, 1988), co-edited *Union Sister: Women in the Labour Movement* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1983) and co-authored the children's book *The Day the Fairies Went on Strike* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1981).

Si nous voulons mettre au point une pédagogie féministe, commençons par débrouiller les contradictions auxquelles se heurtent les femmes au cours de leur apprentissage, en enseignement, comme féministes, comme agentes de changement. Ce document traite de trois types de contradictions: d'abord, les messages contradictoires que les femmes assimilent tous les jours de leur vie et qu'elles véhiculent comme éducatrices féministes et enfin, les contradictions auxquelles elles se butent comme activistes et agentes du changement. Du jeu de ces contradictions, trois stratégies finissent par émerger: inculquer aux femmes des qualités de chef, faire valoir l'antisexisme et récupérer le féminisme dans la salle de classe. C'est le jeu de ces contradictions et stratégies qui sous-tend à la fois le volet enseignement et le volet apprentissage de la pédagogie féministe.

CRIAW  
ICREF

CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN  
INSTITUT CANADIEN DE RECHERCHES  
SUR LES FEMMES