Feminist and Curriculum Discourses in
The Review of the National Policy for the Education of Girls: A

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ABSTRACT:
The recently released Review of the National Policy for the
Education of Girls: A Draft Action Plan endorses the four
objectives and identifies seven priority issues as the focus of
continuing implementation of the 1987 National Policy. Taking up
one strand of the process of policy analysis, this paper examines
current discourses in feminist and curriculum theorising in the
Australian context, analysing the ways in which the Review of the
National Policy for the Education of Girls: A Draft Action Plan
is informed by, or reflects these discourses. Ways in which these
theoretical discourses might be used to enhance future policy
development and implementation are highlighted.

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Introduction
The adoption of a nationally agreed policy on the education of
girls in Australian schools in 1987 was a landmark in Australian
educational policy (Connors and McMorrow 1988, Kenway 1990,
Lingard 1991). One of the four key objectives of the National
Policy, called for 'fundamental curriculum reform' (Commonwealth
Schools Commission, 1987a, p. 30). However, the National Policy's
action proposals did not contain any extended discussion of how
fundamental curriculum reform might be achieved.
Since its publication, the allocation of significant Commonwealth
funding to support the curriculum objective of the National
Policy has seen the establishment of the Gender Equity in
Curriculum Reform Project. This project has directed most of its
activities towards incorporating the principles and objectives of
the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian
Schools into the national collaborative curriculum activities
currently being undertaken under the aegis of the Australian
Education Council' (Department of Employment, Education and
The implications of the Commonwealth government and Australian Education Council decisions to link the curriculum element of the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools with the program of national collaborative curriculum initiatives through the Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project has yet to be critically examined by theorists working in the area of gender and curriculum, or by mainstream curriculum theorists.

The national collaborative curriculum activities are premised on their ability to identify common elements and principles as a basis for national agreement and cooperation (Mapping the Australian Curriculum: K-12 Studies of Society Curriculum Map, p. 10). In contrast, the curriculum component of the National Policy for the Education of Girls is premised on the possibility of reforming the curriculum in fundamental ways. The apparent tension between the premises underlying these two sets of policy initiatives accentuates the need for a thorough critique of the National Policy's theoretical base, and of its compatibility with the theoretical base of the national collaborative curriculum activities.

This paper draws on aspects of current approaches to policy analysis within the field of policy sociology (Ozga 1987) to investigate the theoretical bases for the assumptions about curriculum and curriculum development or curriculum reform that underpin the Review of the National Policy for the Education of Girls: A Draft Action Plan 1992 (Australian Education Council 1992). Specifically, the paper explores the question: can insights derived from examining the intersection of curriculum theory with feminist theories about gender and education be applied to an analysis of curriculum policy to enhance the pursuit of the objective of gender justice/equity in the Australian context? When taken together, these two bodies of theory have the potential to inform analysis of policy such as the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools.

Locating the discussion within an appropriate theoretical framework

The overarching theoretical context of this discussion is policy analysis. Curriculum studies and gender studies are used to inform the task of policy analysis. At a time of widespread questioning of academic traditions, the discussion focuses on clearing the ground for more effective policy analysis through systematically examining existing theoretical positions or discourses, and constructing a fresh analytical framework for use in analysing gender and curriculum policy.

Codd (1988, p. 244) argued that policy documents '...are ideological texts that have been constructed within a particular historical and political context. The task of deconstruction begins with explicit recognition of that context'. Fulcher's
(1989) view of policy helps to further clarify the nature of this task. She emphasises the importance of theoretical positions (discourses), whether explicit or implicit, in directing the activities and decisions of those involved in articulating and enacting policy. Elaborating the range of theoretical positions available in the literature provides a tool for reviewing policy documents. Clarifying the theoretical positions inherent in current policy documents assists in assessing their acceptability. It also assists in estimating their chances of success within the policy context for which they have been formulated and in which they must be enacted. It also clarifies the range of alternative positions available for consideration in future policy forums.

This activity may be seen as constituting an important part of the overall task of policy analysis. Its relationship to other policy analysis tasks is represented diagrammatically in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Locating the discussion within a framework of policy analysis activities (After Codd 1988, pp. 235-236)

Designing a conceptual framework for analysing the role of theoretical discourses in policy documents

The conceptual framework which is the basic tool of the study reported here was developed and applied in a three stage process:

Stage 1 involved a review of the literature and the development of an initial conceptual framework;

Stage 2 involved the application of the initial conceptual framework to feminist and curriculum theory literature resulting in further development and refinement of the framework;

Stage 3 involved the application of the conceptual framework to an analysis of current gender policy documents. The specific procedures adopted in each stage of the study are set out below.

Stage 1: Developing an initial conceptual framework

A wide range of literature was identified, covering both curriculum theorising and feminist theorising from Britain, the United States of America and Canada as well as Australia. Through a systematic review of this literature it was possible to develop a series of conceptual frameworks that would support an in depth analysis of a selection of the literature. The first of these takes the form of the set of key questions and sub-questions presented in Figure 2. These questions were then addressed to feminist and curriculum theory.

Figure 2: Research questions for investigating the theoretical assumptions underpinning national gender and curriculum policies

Can insights derived from examining the intersection of curriculum theory with feminist theories about gender and education be applied to an analysis of curriculum policy to enhance the pursuit of the objective of gender justice/equity in the Australian context?
1. What positions are articulated in feminist theories of gender and education regarding the role of curriculum in achieving gender justice/equity?
   - What vision of gender justice/equity is offered?
   - Does curriculum contribute to maintaining unequal/unjust patterns of educational achievement and outcomes?
   - Can curriculum serve as a vehicle for achieving gender justice/equity?
   - How would the necessary changes in curriculum be effected?

2. What positions are articulated in theories of curriculum regarding the role of curriculum in achieving gender justice/equity?
   - What vision of gender justice/equity is offered?
   - Does curriculum contribute to maintaining unequal/unjust patterns of educational achievement and outcomes?
   - Can curriculum serve as a vehicle for achieving gender justice/equity?
   - How would the necessary changes in curriculum be effected?

3. What are the points of intersection between theories of curriculum and feminist theories regarding the role of curriculum in achieving gender justice/equity?
   - What should be addressed in an adequate feminist theory of curriculum?
   - How has feminist curriculum theorising been undertaken in the past?
   - What commonalities and differences can be identified between feminist theories and theories of curriculum regarding the role of curriculum in achieving gender justice/equity?

4. Do current policies for reforming the curriculum in the interests of gender justice/equity address the issues raised by this analysis of gender and curriculum theory in the Australian curriculum policy context?
   - What are the current policies?
   - What theory/theories about gender and education underpin these policies?
   - What theory/theories about curriculum underpin these policies?
   - Do the policies address the issues inherent in the Australian curriculum policy context?

The review of the literature suggests the framework illustrated in Figure 3 is appropriate to represent the range of feminist theoretical positions which have exercised an influence in Australian gender policy.
Australian curriculum theorising can be effectively represented using a simple two category distinction between system maintaining theories and system opposing theories based on the work of Reid (1981) and Marsh (1986) (see Figure 4). This makes a useful distinction between theorists whose effect is to serve the interests of the state, even where they may not explicitly acknowledge this as their role, and those who explicitly seek ways to challenge state interests. This distinction has obvious relevance for investigating the positions articulated in curriculum theories regarding the role of curriculum in achieving gender justice/equity.

These questions (Figure 2) can be combined with the feminist and curriculum theorising frameworks (Figures 3 and 4) to form a matrix which establishes parameters for interrogating feminist and curriculum theory literature (Figure 4).

In Stage 2, this matrix has been applied in an analysis of the literature to identify and elaborate key elements of each theoretical position in both feminist and curriculum theorising. Generally, Australian theorists, or theorists writing on the basis of experience with Australian education, have been used to represent the various perspectives. Within the field of feminist theorising, Eileen Byrne's Women and Education (1978) formed the basis of the discussion of the liberal feminist perspective. Dale Spender (1982, Spender and Sarah 1988), through her writing and through numerous personal appearances, has contributed a significant radical feminist perspective to the work of Australian theorists, policy makers and practitioners. The socialist feminist position has been
articulated in a variety of forms internationally and locally. Sandra Taylor's (1989a, 1989b, 1991) work draws upon, and extends, the perspectives developed elsewhere and was a significant source for articulating the socialist feminist perspective here although other Australian and international writers' work was used to fill out this perspective. Bronwyn Davies (1989a, 19849b) is a major proponent of a poststructuralist feminist perspective in education in Australia and her work formed the basis of the discussion of this perspective. Reference was also made to writers outside Australia whose works have been influential in, or have the potential to add to, the development of Australian theorising.

Australian system maintaining curriculum theorists, whose dominant concern is the improvement of school systems, include Hughes (1973), Skilbeck (1976, 1984), Marsh (1980, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1992), Print (1987), Brady (1982, 1983, 1986, 1990), and, it is argued, Smith and Lovat (1990). In the majority of cases, theorists working within the tradition of maintaining the system either take as given the role of curriculum in communicating the dominant social values, and/or confine curriculum theorising to providing tools for determining what ought to be reflected in the curriculum. The major Australian proponents of system opposing theories, who are critical of existing social structures and particularly of education systems, include Kemmis (1981, 1982, 1988, 1990), McTaggart (1991, Kemmis and McTaggart 1981 & 1988) and Grundy (1987, Grundy and Kemmis 1982).

The six categories of feminist and curriculum theorising are summarised in Tables 1 and 2. These summaries are simplified and it is acknowledged that they provide a caricature rather than an accurate picture of a set of theories which are characterised by their complexities and subtleties.

Thus Stage 2 identified a set of theoretical discourses, both feminist and curriculum, present in the Australian context, which might be expected to be apparent in policy documents addressing gender justice/equity and curriculum. It provided a framework which became the research tool for Stage 3 of the investigation.

Stage 3: Analysis of gender equity policy documents

In Stage 3, an analysis of the Review of the National Policy for the Education of Girls: A Draft Action Plan was undertaken which involved searching the text of the document for statements of principle, descriptions of practice and other expressions which were consistent with the assumptions of any of the six theoretical discourses identified in Stage 2. A profile was developed showing the patterns of influence of the various discourses.

Towards an adequate feminist theory of curriculum

As well as facilitating a disciplined analysis of the theoretical discourses present in the policy document, the matrix makes it
possible to identify the points at which feminist and curriculum theorising intersect, diverge, or remain silent. An analysis of this pattern, and a critique of each of the theoretical positions, can be combined to derive a set of criteria which form the basis for an adequate feminist theory of curriculum. Liberal feminism's acceptance of existing social structures as a framework from within which to achieve gender equality goals supports the proposition that it is generally compatible with system maintaining theories of curriculum. Liberal feminist analyses of the ways in which curriculum currently operates to maintain gender inequalities have been incorporated to a limited extent into mainstream Australian system maintaining curriculum theorising in some more recent accounts (Print 1987, Marsh 1992). System maintaining curriculum theorising has elaborated on systemic curriculum policy making structures (Skilbeck 1984), and described curriculum development and implementation procedures (Print 1987, Marsh et al 1990). These aspects of system maintaining curriculum theorising have the potential to inform the liberal feminist enterprise of developing policy to remove barriers to women's participation in the curriculum, and to ensure the elimination of bias from, and the inclusion of women's experience in, the curriculum. Fowler's (1987) proposal of a set of principles for gender inclusive curriculum provides an example of the framing of a liberal feminist reform agenda in terms of a system maintaining curriculum development strategy. This comparison of liberal feminist theorising with system maintaining curriculum theorising is further elaborated in Table 3, highlighting the points of intersection of these two sets of theories.

Insert Table 3 here

Socialist feminism and Australian system opposing curriculum theorising both drew initially on Marxist or critical theory to develop a position which challenges the control exercised over curriculum by existing structures of power and authority. Early formulations of the socialist feminist position on curriculum (Lather 1984, Maher 1987, Leck 1987) adopted an essentially parallel position to that advocated by Kemmis (with Fitzclarence 1986) and Grundy (1987), although the feminists were critical of the gender blindness of critical theorists. Table 4 summarises the points of intersection between socialist feminist theorising and system opposing curriculum theorising.

Insert Table 4 here

At its core socialist feminism rejects capitalist and patriarchal social structures. In the context of Australia, which is arguably a capitalist and patriarchal society, socialist feminism must be opposed to the curriculum of compulsory state schooling which is intended to serve, and to reproduce, that society. In the light of reinterpretations of individual/state relationships, and of their location in relation to compulsory schooling rather than
tertiary based women's studies programs, socialist feminists in
Australian education are increasingly advocating 'liberal
feminist' strategies: working within existing systemic structures
in order to change those structures. What separates these two
feminist positions is their ultimate goal: success within the
system on the system's terms (liberal feminism); or a fundamental
reconstruction of the system (socialist feminism).
Radical feminism clearly stands as a system opposing theory, but,
except for Yates's (1987) work, Australian curriculum theorising
has not addressed the issues raised by radical feminism. It is
through the vehicle of socialist feminism, with its parallels to
Australian 'critical curriculum theorising', that radical
feminist concepts are most likely to be transmitted to the
resistant community of curriculum theorists. Particularly, the
implications of radical feminism's challenges to male ways of
making and legitimising knowledge have yet to be applied
systematically to the field of curriculum theorising. Like

radical feminism, poststructuralist feminism has no ready
counterpart in the field of Australian curriculum theorising.
Tong (1989, p. 134) posed the dilemma facing feminist theorists
in this way: 'To add to and subtract from the patriarch's
calculations, or to start counting anew, that is the eternal
feminist question'.
In broad terms, liberal feminist and system maintaining theories
of curriculum seek to add to the patriarch's calculations while
radical feminism seeks to subtract from those calculations.
Poststructuralist feminist theorising in education seeks to start
anew but as yet it is not clear how this may be done outside the
framework of the patriarch's calculations. At this time,
socialist feminist theorising offers the clearest statement of
how we might take into account the patriarch's calculations,
while using them as a point of departure for creating something
new.
This process of comparison reveals some critical themes which
will need to be addressed by any adequate feminist theory of
curriculum. The themes centre around the following concepts:
structure and agency and the role of power in achieving change;
difference, including the notions of masculinity and femininity
and their relationships to the public and the private;
diversity, particularly in experiences of being female, but also
in the range of feminist discourses; and
the curriculum context.
These themes are elaborated in Table 5 which proposes a minimum
set of criteria which must be addressed by an adequate feminist
theory of curriculum. Table 6 summarises the contribution made by
current positions in relation to each of these criteria.
(Insert Tables 5 and 6 here)
The overall picture shows that feminist theories have constructed
analyses of structure and agency, power and change, difference, and diversity. Neither feminist theorising nor curriculum theorising offers an adequate analysis of the gender equity implications of the curriculum context specifically. Increasingly, there are a range of curriculum solutions being advanced as ways of addressing issues of structure and agency, power and change, and difference. Least guidance is offered in terms of curriculum solutions and change strategies to address the diversity of female experience. An ongoing challenge, and potential source of tension, is the task of seeking to change the system fundamentally while acting within the system which is the task facing policy makers in the area of gender justice/equity.


All four feminist perspectives are identifiable in aspects of the Review of the National Policy for the Education of Girls: A Draft Action Plan. The language of liberal feminism, which was pervasive in earlier gender policy documents (Kenway 1990a), is still present in passages such as the following:

*Is attention given to the achievements and experiences of women as well as men in all areas of the curriculum? (p.17)*
*What strategies does your school use to avoid sex-stereotyping in the provision of work experience? (p.19)*

But the document cautions against accepting such statements as sufficient in their own right.

The bias against girls cannot be solved by simply altering selected parts of the curriculum or by writing women and girls into the existing content. Neither is it simply a matter of removing stereotypes from texts, or placing appropriate role models in front of classes. Curriculum reform requires a fundamental reworking of what knowledge is valued in the curriculum and how it is taught. It requires a focus on areas of knowledge which have hitherto been excluded or misrepresented (p.16).

Radical and socialist feminist perspectives are prominent in the analysis of what constitutes a fundamental reworking of what knowledge is valued. A radical feminist perspective informs the discussion of sex-based harassment, for example, which offers a clear analysis of harassment as a vehicle for the exercise of male power.

Because sex-based harassment and sexual harassment are about exercising power over girls, harassment must not be accepted as harmless teasing or as natural play between girls and boys. At school, sexual harassment is commonly used within peer groups to maintain girls 'in their place' (p. 10).

The document advocates that students be given access to this analysis of sexual harassment through the curriculum. Similarly, the discussion of broadening work education reflects strongly a
socialist feminist agenda. The discussion opens with the statement:

Work education has marginalised much of women's experience by focussing only on paid work. While it is rarely acknowledged, most paid work structures are set up to match the circumstances of workers who either enjoy domestic support or who have few or no family responsibilities (p.18).

The strategies recommended to address this situation include attending to the role of women in paid work, but also to the place of unpaid work, particularly aspects of family and household management, in the lives of both men and women.

Poststructuralist feminism is not a significant influence in the document. The poststructuralist emphasis on abandoning gender as a major social category, and its language of 'discursive practice' are not taken up explicitly. However, there are overtones of poststructuralist influence in aspects of the discussion, particularly in relation to the construction of gender. A strategy recommended for examining the construction of gender, for example, is to:

Develop curriculum which enables both girls and boys to engage critically with the various genres of popular culture text (including romance,) in order to develop an understanding of the ways in which gender is constructed (p. 12).

This catholic use of a variety of feminist positions contrasts with the predominantly liberal feminist perspective of the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools.

On the issue of single sex classes, for example, the National Policy cautions:

There is evidence to suggest that it may be valuable for girls to have opportunities to learn together and for teachers to learn to work with girls; this is clearly simpler to arrange in sex-segregated settings. It is vital to ensure that such arrangements do not, however, have the effect of entrenching a 'deficit' approach to the education of girls, marginalising girls themselves or obscuring mainstream educational issues (Commonwealth Schools Commission 1987, pp. 52-53).

The Draft Action Plan is unequivocal in its advocacy of single-sex strategies:

If school facilities and resources are monopolised by male dominated classes or by boys [sic] assumptions of ownership, then the school needs to consider a range of interventions, including management policies that address inequitable interaction, single sex classes, and the use of single sex teaching methods in mixed classes (p. 20).

The Draft Action Plan is weakest in its treatment of diversity. In the discussion of Priority 4, reforming the curriculum, only passing reference is made to the need to include the experiences of 'women from many cultures' (p. 17). Apart from that girls and women tend to be treated as a homogeneous group in the discussion of each of the priority areas. Only Priority 7, addressing the
needs of girls at risk, attempts to address diversity. 'At risk' is defined as 'girls at risk of not completing their secondary education' (p. 22). The document argues:

For some time it has been recognised that education disadvantages girls who are poor, Aboriginal, who are from non-English speaking backgrounds, live in isolated rural communities or who have a disability (p. 22). This provides a framework for addressing the negative effects of diversity, but does not provide a positive view of diversity as something to be welcomed and fostered. The major focus of the discussion of girls at risk is actually health and welfare issues such as teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse and violence. These are crucial issues, but the discussion offers little in the way of guidance for responding to issue of diversity.

On the issue of curriculum context, the Draft Action Plan provides an interesting departure from earlier policy documents, including the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools, in its explicit recognition of the curriculum context. It records:

The general economic and administrative frameworks in which schools and school systems operate have changed significantly since 1987. These changes include policies of devolution which have led to greater self-management in schools, an associated strengthening of centralist policy making, and significantly increased community participation in education (p. 4).

The document offers no explicit analysis of the implications of this for the policy initiatives, but some assumptions are evident in subsequent recommendations for strategies. The most prominent assumption is that the national curriculum policy initiatives are an appropriate vehicle for putting into effect curriculum aspects of gender policy. The document argues, for example, that a key strategy for eliminating sexual harassment is to:

Address the issue of sex-based harassment in the National Collaborative Curriculum Statements and Profiles, particularly in STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT and HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (p. 10).

The extent to which this has been achieved is suggested as an indicator of achievement of the policy objective. Similar strategies, embedded in the national curriculum process, are recommended in relation to reforming the curriculum. Such strategies assume a degree of articulation between areas of policy which has not been present in the past.

At the same time, the majority of strategies and over a third of indicators are non-specific in terms of whose responsibility it is to put them into effect. The questions which are intended to provide a 'useful starting point for taking action' (p. 9) are all directed to schools. This appears to indicate a lack of direction in terms of who the policy document is addressed to,
beyond the general acknowledgment that it provides '...key strategies for action at National system, authority and school levels' (p. 9). It certainly leaves ample leeway for those who do not support its recommendations to argue that the responsibility is someone else's rather than theirs.

There is another element of the Draft Action Plan which indicates its lack of analysis of curriculum policy context and processes. Priority 6 addresses changing school organisation and management. It raises the issue of the hidden curriculum of organisational practices and acknowledges that:

Other school policies, such as decision making, discipline and parent and student participation, have a strong influence on the immediate participation of girls, and also on what they learn about themselves and options for their future (p. 20). It recommends 'routine gender audits of school policies and procedures' and strategies to ensure women are represented in leadership positions. However, despite the emphasis which is placed on reforming the curriculum as a vehicle for change, the Draft Action Plan does not explicitly address the procedures adopted at national, system and school level to bring about curriculum reform. Particularly, it does not address the issue of who the key participants are in the curriculum reform process. The changing policy context, with its inherent tensions between increasing devolution which emphasises self-managing schools on the one hand, and strengthened 'centralist' policy making on the other, is not taken up adequately in either the analyses or the strategies and indicators provided in the document. This appears to arise, at least in part, from the more general lack of analysis at the level of theory of the relationship between curriculum policy and processes and gender policy and processes. The most significant consequence of this has been the decision to invest the majority of the funding available to support the implementation of the National Policy in the national curriculum activities. This was done without a thorough analysis of how effective this might be as a strategy given that authority over the curriculum continues to be vested in the States and Territories, not in any national authority.

Conclusion

Broadly speaking, the picture reflected in the Review of the National Policy for the Education of Girls: A Draft Action Plan is similar to that reflected in the review of the current state of theory in relation to an adequate feminist theory of curriculum. Specifically, the Draft Action Plan is clearest in its analysis and recommendations of strategies in relation to power and change, and has least to offer on the topic of diversity. While it acknowledges aspects of the curriculum policy context it lacks a coherent analysis of this context and its
implications for implementing gender aspects of curriculum policy. This study has served to highlight aspects of feminist and curriculum theorising which can inform and strengthen policy development. At the same time, it has highlighted areas which are not adequately understood or theorised at present. The resulting framework provides a useful tool for reviewing gender policy initiatives. It reveals that the recent Review of the National Policy for the Education of Girls: A Draft Action Plan offers a much stronger analysis of the central policy issues than the original policy, the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools. However, the Draft Action Plan would be strengthened by further attention to those areas of intersection between feminist theorising and curriculum theorising which are currently undertheorised. The study also clearly highlights areas which need further research, particularly the ways in which feminist agendas can be introduced and maintained as central elements in general curriculum policy processes.

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Although born in England and resident there at the time of writing Women and Education, Eileen Byrne has since accepted appointment as Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Queensland and has contributed significantly to the development of State and Federal policy, both as an adviser and as a researcher. She continues to be a strong advocate of liberal feminist strategies for reform.
Like Byrne, Dale Spender's most significant writing on education has been published in the British context, although she was born and is now again resident in Australia. Throughout the period which is the focus of this study Spender has featured regularly at national conferences and in system level and local inservice activities across Australia.

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Bronwyn Davies is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social and Cultural Studies in Education at the University of New England. She has produced a national report on gender equity and early childhood (Davies 1988), and in 1991 was invited to contribute to the deliberations of the consultants to the Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project.

Smith and Lovat appear to adopt a system opposing stance in that they use the same language as theorists within the system opposing category. However a careful analysis shows that their major concern remains that of maintaining the existing system. With regard to the concept of vision, for example, they attempted to identify shifts in the dominant ideology as a basis for articulating a vision of the future. Their intention in doing this was to ensure that curriculum continued to accurately reflect the dominant ideology, rather than questioning the role of the dominant ideology in maintaining gender or other social inequalities.

Table 1: Summary of feminist positions on the role of curriculum in achieving gender justice/equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision of gender justice/equity</th>
<th>How curriculum maintains gender inequalities/ injustice</th>
<th>Curriculum as a vehicle for gender justice/ equity?</th>
<th>Approach to changing the curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Feminism</td>
<td>• Equal access to and participation in the current social structures. • Freedom from existing legal, political and social constraints upon equal access and participation. • Imposition of discriminatory requirements and regulations. • Contributes to sex role stereotyped socialisation. • Access to all areas of curriculum. • Gender inclusive curriculum - including women's experiences and free from sex stereotyped bias. • Role modelling. • Development of policy requiring removal of barriers to participation, elimination of bias, and inclusion of...</td>
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women in curriculum.
• Short term affirmative action such as single sex classes.

Radical Feminism
• Freedom from the patriarchal structures of male domination.
• Development of women's culture.
• Curriculum addresses male knowledge and activities and denies female experience.
• Male relations of domination, including sexual harassment, prevent women from participating and teach women to be subordinate.
• Woman-centred curriculum for girls.
• Introduce women's studies into school curriculum.
• Gender inclusive curriculum - transform mainstream curriculum through incorporation of knowledge created through women's studies.
• Withdraw from the system (single sex schools).
• Challenge male ways of making and legitimising knowledge.
• Create supportive environment for girls and women.
• Equip children to deal with effects of gender order on their lives (sexual harassment).

Socialist Feminism
• Freedom from the domination of economic structures of capitalism and patriarchal structures of male domination.
• Hidden curriculum reproduces dominant capitalist and patriarchal values which direct men into public life and women into domesticity.
• Complex interaction of individuals with social structures.
• Incorporate explicit knowledge about work to redirect women into public life.
• Gender inclusive curriculum - challenges hegemony.
• Oppositional pedagogies.
• Collective activity to change policy at school and system levels.

Poststructural Feminism (Moving beyond the male female duality)
• Changes to 'discursive practices' which maintain domination.
• Elimination of the categories of male and female.
• Curriculum as set of discursive practices which construct social structures.
• Curriculum as expression of western modes and, therefore, of 'male symbolic order'.
• Curriculum which offers 'multiple subject positionings'.
• Change discursive practices.
• Abandon categories of male and female.
• Absence of strategies directly addressing curriculum change.

Table 2: Summary of Australian curriculum theory positions on the role of curriculum in achieving gender justice/equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision of gender (social) justice/equity</th>
<th>How curriculum maintains gender (social) inequalities/ injustice</th>
<th>Curriculum as a vehicle for gender (social) justice/ equity?</th>
<th>Approach to changing the curriculum</th>
<th>System Maintaining Theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of dominant social values taken as given.</td>
<td>Improve effectiveness of curriculum policy and practice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Absence of focus on gender or social justice.
• Majority of theorists offer no analysis of curriculum and gender or social injustice.
Either:
• Curriculum designed to mirror dominant social values; therefore supports gender inequalities;
or
• Curriculum may inadvertently maintain inequality (hidden curriculum).
• Some recent theorists incorporate aspects of a liberal feminist analysis.
• Majority of theorists offer no analysis of curriculum as vehicle for gender or social justice.
• Incorporate into formal curriculum measures to address negative effects of hidden curriculum.
• Inclusive curriculum as essential learnings for all students
• Some recent theorists incorporate aspects of a liberal feminist agenda for curriculum reform.
• Incremental change - effectiveness of change enhanced by similarity to status quo.
• Central determination of direction of social change to be incorporated in curriculum.
• Administrative procedures for management of change.
• Acknowledgment of key role of schools, teachers and local communities in giving effect to curriculum change.
• Absence of specific strategies to address gender injustice.
System Opposing Theories
• Emancipation as individual autonomy arrived at through self reflection.
• Empowerment as individual and group control over their own lives.
• 'Critically reflective' forms of social and educational organisation.
• Absence of focus on gender justice.
• Analysis of how dominant ideology is maintained.
• Covert operation of ideology as 'common sense' understanding of the world which supports interests of the ruling group.
• State control of schooling and curriculum.
• Curriculum legitimates some experiences and ignores others.
• Absence of specific analysis of how gender inequalities are maintained.
• Focus on struggle for control of curriculum rather than on curriculum itself.
• Negotiation of content between teachers and students.
• Absence of focus on curriculum as vehicle for gender equality.
• Action research as a means of shifting control over the curriculum away from the state and into the hands of teachers and students.
• Promote critical consciousness.
• Control of research by participants.
• Collective action.
• Strategies to achieve consensus.
• Action research as form of critical pedagogy.
Absence of specific strategies to address gender injustice.

Table 3: Identifying points of intersection through a comparison of liberal feminist theorising with system maintaining curriculum theorising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal feminist theories</th>
<th>System maintaining curriculum theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points of intersection</td>
<td>Vision of gender justice/equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal access to and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom from existing legal, political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and social constraints upon equal access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintenance of dominant social values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>taken as given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve effectiveness of curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>policy and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence of focus on gender or social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal feminism provides</td>
<td>a statement of values to feed into the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>system maintaining curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>theorising enterprise of determining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social values for incorporation into the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How curriculum maintains gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inequalities/ injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition</td>
<td>of discriminatory requirements and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to sex role</td>
<td>stereotyped socialisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority of theorists offer no analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of curriculum and gender or social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>injustice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum designed to</td>
<td>mirror dominant social values; therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support gender inequalities;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum may inadvertent</td>
<td>maintain inequality (hidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>curriculum).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal feminism presents</td>
<td>quantitative, rational data to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum theories</td>
<td>challenge gender blind assumptions of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>system maintaining curriculum theories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum as a vehicle</td>
<td>for gender justice/equity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to all areas of curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender inclusive curriculum</td>
<td>including women's experiences and free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from sex stereotyped bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modelling.</td>
<td>Majority of theorists offer no analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of curriculum as vehicle for gender or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate into formal</td>
<td>Curriculum measures to address negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>effects of hidden curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive curriculum as</td>
<td>essential learnings for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essential learnings for</td>
<td>Liberal feminism expands the concept of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all students.</td>
<td>inclusive curriculum by considering a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to changing the</td>
<td>gender specific definition of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum</td>
<td>inclusiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of policy</td>
<td>requiring removal of barriers to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participation, elimination of bias, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inclusion of women in curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term affirmative</td>
<td>action such as single sex classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change - effectiveness of</td>
<td>change enhanced by similarity to status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change enhanced by</td>
<td>quo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central determination of direction of social change to be incorporated in curriculum.

Administrative procedures for management of change.

Acknowledgment of key role of schools, teachers and local communities in giving effect to curriculum change.

Absence of specific strategies to address gender injustice.

System maintaining curriculum theories inform liberal feminist strategies by elucidating targets and procedures for policy change initiatives.

Liberal feminist agenda incorporated into curriculum principles for selection of content and organisation of learning experiences.

Table 4: Identifying points of intersection through a comparison of socialist feminist theorising with system opposing curriculum theorising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socialist feminist theories</th>
<th>System opposing curriculum theories</th>
<th>Points of intersection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision of gender justice/equity</td>
<td>Freedom from the domination of economic structures of capitalism and patriarchal structures of male domination.</td>
<td>'Critically reflective' forms of social and educational organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empowerment as individual and group control over their own lives.</td>
<td>• Empowerment as individual and group control over their own lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 'Critically reflective' forms of social and educational organisation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of focus on gender justice.</td>
<td>Socialist feminism provides a critique of the gender blind analysis of critical theories which form the basis of system opposing curriculum theorising.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How curriculum maintains gender inequalities/injustice</td>
<td>Hidden curriculum reproduces dominant capitalist and patriarchal values which direct men into public life and women into domesticity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complex interaction of individuals with social structures.</td>
<td>Analysis of how dominant ideology is maintained.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Covert operation of ideology as 'common sense' understanding of the world which supports interests of the ruling group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State control of schooling and curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum legitimates some experiences and ignores others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of specific analysis of how gender inequalities are maintained.</td>
<td>Socialist feminism builds on critical theory to produce a more complex and comprehensive understanding of hegemony and the mechanisms of dominance as well as of the individual's interaction with social structures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum as a vehicle for gender justice/equity?</td>
<td>Incorporate explicit knowledge about work to redirect women into public life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Gender inclusive curriculum - challenges hegemony. | Focus on
struggle for control of curriculum rather than on curriculum itself.

- Negotiation of content between teachers and students.
- Absence of focus on curriculum as vehicle for gender equality.

Socialist feminism provides a concrete focus for system opposing theorists' concept of struggle for control of the curriculum, and an agenda for the development of counter-hegemonic curriculum. Approach to changing the curriculum:

- Oppositional pedagogies.
- Collective activity to change policy at school, system and government levels.
- Action research as a form of critical pedagogy.
- Promotes critical consciousness.
- Advocates control of research by participants.
- Advocates collective action.
- Strategies to achieve consensus.
- Action research as a means of shifting control over the curriculum away from the state and into the hands of teachers and students.
- Absence of specific strategies to address gender injustice.

Socialist feminism provides a precise critical focus for 'critical action research'.

Some socialist feminists expand the arena of oppositional strategies to incorporate system and state levels rather than attempting to shift control of the curriculum away from the state into the hands of teachers and students.

Table 5: Towards an Adequate Feminist Theory of Curriculum: Some Criteria

Structure and agency, power and change

Difference:

- Male and female
- Diversity:
  - Male and female experience,
  - Of feminist positions
- The curriculum context:
  - Women as active agents struggling to control and change their lives
  - Women as constrained subjects shaped by social, cultural and economic structures.
  - Contextualised action, always socially situated, always problematic
- The possibility of transformation or change: the role of women as active agents in the construction and reconstruction of gender
- Gender must be defined and analysed in relation to power.
- Complexity of attempting change within an interconnected set of power bases
- The importance of diversity as a cross current in understanding structure and agency is apparent in this analysis of power.
- Dynamic definition of the state
- Curriculum policy development and implementation can be viewed
as an example of the operation of power through institutional arrangements; and as an example which embodies the complex of social relationships, including gender relationships, which constitute the 'state'

- Policy as a form of social practice, operating at a variety of levels
- Identity politics. 'The idea here is that one's identity is taken (and defined) as a political point of departure, as a motivation for action, and as a delineation of one's politics'.
- Addressing the dichotomy between the public and private realms
- How the subjective experience of gender intersects with other experiences of sexuality, race, ethnicity and class.
- As women, we must root out internalized patterns of oppression within ourselves if we are to move beyond the most superficial aspects of social change. Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each other's difference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles (Lorde 1984, p. 122).
- The goal ultimately is the formulation of a new theory '...within the process of reinterpreting our position, and reconstructing our political identity, as women and feminists in relation to the world and to one another (Alcoff 1988, p. 288).
- Such a theory may be better equipped to handle the issue of diversity which has arisen from the different standpoints developed within the various expressions of feminism.
- One feminist discourse may still be used to advantage by feminists of other persuasions.
- Structure and agency: 'sites and agencies' which operate in the development of curriculum policy
- The nature of power and change in the context of curriculum
- The nature of knowledge: what is important knowledge in contemporary society

Table 6: Towards an Adequate Feminist Theory of Curriculum: a Summary of Current Theoretical Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and agency, power and change</th>
<th>Difference: male and female</th>
<th>Diversity: of female experience, of feminist positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The curriculum context</td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>The visions of the various theoretical positions considered to date can be distinguished by the presence or absence of a concern with structure and agency. Radical, socialist and postmodern feminism each develop a vision of gender justice/equality premised on the elimination of patriarchal dominance. Socialist feminism extends the analysis to include additional forms of dominance, particularly economic and racial and ethnic dominance. Liberal feminism delineates some significant steps towards this goal but does not address the issue of structure and agency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poststructuralist feminism incorporates the notion of changed discursive practices as an aspect of this vision. System opposing curriculum theories generally restrict their vision to individual rather than group freedom while system maintaining generally do not see the need for a different vision. Radical feminism advocates the development of an alternative women's culture, while poststructuralist feminism, as expounded by Davies, seeks to resolve the problem of difference by eliminating it. Socialist and 'reconceptualist' feminist curriculum theorising identified the need to delineate a different relationship between the public and private realms. The other theoretical positions do not present a vision which addresses the issue of difference. This is not addressed explicitly by any of the theorising considered here. None of the theorists discussed here explicitly addresses the notion of a vision of the curriculum context in terms of gender equity or gender equality. Analysis: Liberal feminism explained gender inequities in terms of discriminatory regulations and attitudes, and in terms of sex role and socialisation theory, but not in terms of structural oppression. Radical feminism draws on analyses of patriarchy as a form of structural oppression expressed in the curriculum in predominantly in terms of sexual harassment and the devaluing of women. Socialist feminism adds to this an economic analysis which focuses on the hidden curriculum as a vehicle for reproducing gender based economic inequality. They also explore the complex interaction of individuals with social structures seeking ways in which women as individuals and as a group can actively seek to change their circumstances. Poststructuralist feminism offers an analysis in terms of the effects of discursive practices. System opposing theories offer an analysis of how curriculum acts to maintain dominant ideology through the covert operation of ideology as a 'common sense' understanding of the world which supports interests of the ruling group. Curriculum legitimates some experiences and ignores others. System maintaining theories either support the position that curriculum is designed to mirror dominant social values and therefore supports gender inequalities; or that curriculum may inadvertently maintain inequality through the hidden curriculum. Australian curriculum theorising generally offers no specific analysis of how gender inequalities are maintained. The radical feminist analysis draws attention to the ways in which existing curriculum addresses male knowledge and denies female experience. Poststructuralist feminism draws on this but explains it in terms of the concept of discourse. Socialist feminism adds an additional exploration of the ways in which curriculum constructs the public realm as male and the private realm as female, and then ignores or devalues the private realm. Socialist feminists initially offered an analysis based on diversity of experience arising out of class differences. They have increasingly extended this analysis to incorporate race, ethnicity and, in some
instances, sexuality as well as class as intersecting with gender to produce diversity in the experience of being female. System opposing theories of curriculum present an analysis of the curriculum as oppressive because it is an instrument of the state.

Table 6: Towards an Adequate Feminist Theory of Curriculum: a Summary of Current Theoretical Contributions (Continued)

Structure and agency, power and change
Difference:
- male and female
Diversity:
- of female experience,
- of feminist positions
The curriculum context
Curriculum solutions
The liberal feminist approach to curriculum advocates measures to ensure equal access to all areas of curriculum. Socialist feminists have supported the incorporation of explicit knowledge in the curriculum about work to redirect women into public life. In addition, socialist feminism has expanded the notion of
gender inclusive curriculum to include the idea of challenging hegemony. System maintaining curriculum theorists either offer no analysis of curriculum as vehicle for gender or social justice or advocate incorporating into formal curriculum measures to address the negative effects of hidden curriculum. Inclusive curriculum is redefined by these theorists as essential learnings for all students. System opposing curriculum theories focus on the struggle for control of curriculum rather than on curriculum itself. They are generally characterised by the absence of a specific focus on curriculum as vehicle for gender equality.

Liberal feminism responds to the issue of difference by advocating that curriculum be made gender inclusive curriculum through the removal of sex stereotyped bias, and the inclusion of women's experiences.

Radical feminists have supported the development of woman-centred curriculum and advocated the introduction of women's studies into the school curriculum. Poststructuralist feminism as, presented by Davies, supported moving beyond the male female dualism. The poststructuralist feminist concept of 'multiple subject positionings' can also be argued to respond to the issue of diversity. System opposing curriculum theories advocated negotiation of content between teachers and students.

Change strategies
Liberal feminism seeks to work within existing structures, advocating the development of policy requiring removal of barriers to participation, the elimination of bias, and the inclusion of women in curriculum. Their strategies include the use of short
term affirmative action measures such as single sex classes. Radical feminism argued for the transformation of mainstream curriculum through the incorporation of knowledge created through women's studies. Other radical feminist strategies include creating supportive environments for girls and women, and equipping children to deal with effects of the gender order, particularly sexual harassment, on their lives.

Poststructuralist feminism advocated changing discursive practices, but has not directly addressed strategies for curriculum change. System opposing theories seek to promote critical consciousness, but with no direct focus on consciousness of gender issues. Davies's version of poststructuralism advocates abandoning the categories of male and female. Some radical feminists support withdrawal from the system through strategies such as single sex schools. They also support challenges to male ways of making and legitimising knowledge.

The major socialist feminist strategies include the idea of oppositional pedagogies, and collective activity to change policy at school and system levels. System maintaining curriculum theories support incremental change, and discuss administrative procedures for managing change. They address the issue of central determination of the direction of social change to be incorporated in curriculum, while acknowledging the key role of schools, teachers and local communities in giving effect to curriculum change.

Australian system opposing curriculum theories advocate action research as a means of shifting control over the curriculum away from the state and into the hands of teachers and students. This includes control of research by participants, collective action, strategies to achieve consensus. Action research is viewed as form of critical pedagogy.