

## A POST-MODERNIST PEDAGOGY FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

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The term 'sociology of women's education' was coined by Madeleine Arnot  
(then writing as McDonald, 1980) to refer to feminist scholarship within  
the sociology of  
education. As an academic subject, it has developed since the mid-1970s,  
when the ideas of the second wave of feminism were increasingly  
influencing the thinking of many academic women. Since 1981, I have been  
designing and teaching undergraduate courses in  
the sociology of women's education in a New Zealand university. In this  
chapter, I draw on this experience to address some broader pedagogical  
problems which have emerged as common concerns amongst many of us who  
'network' internationally as  
feminist sociologists and teacher-educators.

We have developed our courses over a period of rapid change. Theoretical  
shifts in 'contributing' disciplines such as women's studies, the sociology  
of education, and  
'radical' By 'radical' I include both 'critical pedagogy' (e.g. Giroux,  
1982) and  
feminist pedagogy.

pedagogy have raised new questions about curriculum content and teaching

methods. Political events at both national and local levels have altered the professional conditions and the institutional settings in which we work. For example, the various institutions in which we and our students study and teach have been 'restructured'. This restructuring has influenced both the context and the content of our teaching - shaped our material circumstances and become an object of our academic inquiries.

At a more personal level, our experiences of 'aging' are also changing our educational perspectives and methods. As we who teach feminist university courses become older, we notice a widening gap between ourselves and our students. Like many of today's feminist and 'left' educators, I attended university during the 1960s and began my school teaching career in the early 1970s - times of full employment and hope. Today, as a university teacher in the 1990s, I watch my younger students moving into adulthood in times of economic recession and despair. The kinds of feminism and progressive educational theories which offered possibilities to my generation of teachers may seem to today's students irrelevant and quaint anachronisms.

As Maxine Greene (1986: 440) has asked, "what might a critical pedagogy mean for those of us who teach the young at this peculiar and menacing time?" In this chapter I address this question by reflecting upon some of the ways in which my own teaching in a New Zealand setting has, over the last decade, been influenced by changing perspectives and power-dynamics in the 'theoretical field' of my discipline; by dynamics between my own, and my students', biographical (and generational) circumstances; and by the political configurations of 'educational restructuring'. I demonstrate specific teaching strategies which are part of my wider project of devising ways in which we, middle-aged and older teacher-educators, can develop feminist courses which are appropriate for the lives and times of today's students.

### Theoretical Dilemmas.

In 1980 - my first year of employment as an academic - I proposed a new course, 'women and education'. I was the first, and only, woman teaching in my university's education department. Many of my male colleagues expressed grave reservations about this proposal. Some argued that their courses already covered 'women's issues' through lectures on 'stereotyping'. Others were worried that a 'narrow focus on women's issues' would be damaging for me professionally. Their most prevalent concern, however, was that there was too little 'content' upon which to base my curriculum. There was no sound theoretical or disciplinary base.

Accordingly, I set about 'reviewing the literature' - proving that there was, indeed, a discipline, a set of theories, concepts, and debates, into which my students - like those in other disciplines - could be initiated. At the same time as I was developing this curriculum, I was struggling to write a proposal for a doctoral thesis on feminist teachers. To satisfy the relevant committee, I had to position my research questions within an 'acceptable' body of theory. My literature review would serve a dual purpose - I was simultaneously positioned as academic staff member and as doctoral student. My teaching, and my research, would begin in a conventionally academic manner. I would draw a 'map of knowledge' which would serve as a navigation guide for my own, and my students' inquiries.

#### The Sociology of Women's Education - Mapping the Field

Like many of my contemporaries, I approached my task as one of 'marrying' (Hartmann, 1981), or bringing together, two fields of study - sociology of education (and/or curriculum theory) and feminist theory. Similarities were perceived between the theoretical divisions and debates which were commonly described as characteristic of sociology of education and those which feminists had identified within (academic and grassroots) women's studies. With minor variations in categorizations and terminology, those of us who published 'maps' or typologies of the discipline in the early to mid 1980s saw the sociology of women's education as characterized by three or four major sets of theoretical perspectives.

Liberal feminism (e.g. Friedan, 1963) is centred on women's individual rights and opportunities. Its political aim is the equitable distribution of the genders across the various divisions of labour and throughout existing social hierarchies. Within liberal feminist educational writing (e.g. Byrne, 1975), women are constituted as disadvantaged by our socialization - by 'sex-role stereotyping' - and as in need of measures of compensatory education and affirmative action. As will be illustrated in the final section of this chapter, liberal feminist arguments were readily incorporated into policy-making because they extended to 'women and girls' the kinds of ideas and strategies which were already being applied to the situation of other 'disadvantaged groups'.

More radical theories were based on a rejection of the individualism of liberal approaches which were seen as merely 'adding women in' (Yates, 1987) to hierarchies which were inherently inequitable. The more 'revolutionary' feminist analyses differed according to whether they were grounded in Marxist or in radical feminist assumptions. Marxist feminists researched the ways in which women's education served to reproduce the sexual division of labour and the class differences between women (Deem, 1978). Radical feminists, emphasising women's oppression by men, studied how schooling reproduced women's sexual

subordination and how 'patriarchal curricula' served to alienate us from our own experience (Spender, 1983). They emphasised 'essential differences' between the genders and a distinctive 'women's epistemology' based on 'interpersonal' (rather than abstract) reasoning (Gilligan, 1982). Marxist feminists criticized radical feminists' treatment of women as a homogeneous category and brought into the foreground the class differences between women. Radical feminists accused Marxists of ignoring or underemphasising patriarchal power.

Socialist feminism emerged as a drawing together of these positions as we struggled to integrate the increasingly dominant neo-Marxist ideas in sociology with our feminist concerns. Students and teachers were studied as simultaneously, and contradictorily, positioned within the relations of class and gender (e.g. Kenway, 1990). Socialist feminists developed critiques of the ways many male neo-Marxists had rendered women and girls invisible, marginal, or depicted us only through the eyes of men and boys.

These were the major theoretical tendencies which sociologists of women's education identified in the typologies which were published in key journals and textbooks during the early to mid 1980s. Many such typologies assumed this form, progressed through a similar sequence, and were written from within a socialist feminist problematic. By 'mapping our field' in this way, we conceptualized the sociology of women's education as a conventional academic discipline (e.g. Acker, 1983; Arnot, 1981; Arnot and Weiner, eds, 1987; Middleton, 1987b; Yates, 1987). With respect to our teaching in 'women and education' courses, we had produced 'curriculum content' - a 'map' of the sociology of women's education - which could be taught as 'received knowledge.' It was necessary for us to do this in order to gain approval for our courses within the university system.

As a New Zealander, I found myself 'marginal' - positioned both inside and outside the Anglo-American discourses which dominated the discipline. Finding little local writing upon which to base my curriculum, I used overseas texts. As New Zealand children's author, Margaret Mahy has expressed it (in Kedgley, 1989:137), my "reading imposed a distance between me and my natural environment."

For example, the 'sex-role stereotype' - a passive, simpering suburban femininity - described by American liberal feminists (Friedan, 1963) were almost unrecognisable to tomboyish New Zealand girls. Liberal feminists' demand for the abolition of 'gender-roles' was antithetical to the traditional gender-differentiation in some Maori rituals. Rather than seeing such differences as oppressive, many Maori women viewed these as a source of strength (Irwin, 1992; Pere, 1988; Smith, 1992). Marxism was criticised as rendering invisible Maori people's experiences

of racism and colonialism (Awatere, 1984). British socialist feminism was also 'foreign' - grounded in the experiences of a vast urban industrial proletariat with a culture very different from that of New Zealand working women. Our positioning as New Zealanders made visible the 'conceptual imperialism' (Stanley and Wise, 1983) of western feminist theories.

Those of us 'on the margins' had long been aware that 'disciplines' are 'articulated to the ruling apparatus (Smith, 1987). We could not 'see ourselves' clearly in foreign texts which were grounded in the various 'master narratives' of liberalism,

Marxism etc. Life-history methods - telling our own and others' stories - offered ways of 'making knowledge' which were grounded in what Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1973) called our own 'native imagery.'

As 'mainstream' northern academics began to hear the voices of those who had been inaudible within their disciplines, the older monolithic or dualistic sets of categories (e.g. 'class and gender') were found to be too simplistic to work with. The "master narratives of the disciplines" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991:18) began to collapse. The new 'post-modernist' theories were based on a scepticism about the possibility or desirability of attempting to produce 'totalising narratives' which 'revealed essential truths about' the world. The "larger cultural shifts of a post-industrial, post-colonial era" (Lather, 1991: 5) required theories which could accommodate people's multiple and simultaneous positionings in complex, changing, and often contradictory patterns of power-relations - between races or cultures within countries, between the Anglo-American - European nations and those of the 'third world', between indigenous populations and those descended from former colonists, between those of different sexual orientations, those of different religions, the differently abled, etc.

Postmodernists' concerns with multiplicities and differences brought into focus the location of academic and professional 'knowledges' within various multiple relations of power. For example, dominant theories in the social sciences, in educational theory and in pedagogy, are seen as conceptualising the social world from various vantage-points of 'ruling' (Walkerline, 1984). While scholars have traditionally been primarily concerned with the scientific 'accuracy', 'objectivity' or 'truthfulness' of their theories or disciplines, post-modernists are more interested in what Nancy Fraser (1989:19) described as "the processes , procedures, and apparatuses wherein truth, knowledge, and belief are produced." A post-modernist perspective enables us to study sociologically the ways academic disciplines and their associated professional or clinical practices are complicit in the monitoring, surveillance, and regulation of populations (Foucault, 1980; Henriques et al, 1984). Disciplines such as sociology (including some versions of feminist

sociology) have contributed theories and research data which feed into what Dorothy Smith (1990: 14) referred to as "the governing of our kind of society [which] is done in abstract concepts and symbols."

The emergence of postmodernism has major implications for our teaching of theories in the sociology of women's education. Those who use the 'flat map' approach to the teaching of theoretical typologies can 'add postmodernism' as a category to existing taxonomies. However, such theories also have major implications for the ways we teach theory, for our pedagogy. They raise questions about the experiential grounding, the perspectivity, of the feminist and other social theories we teach. From within a postmodernist perspective, the various feminist theoretical typologies themselves are seen as inscribed in multiple power-relations.

### Some Problems With Typologies

While many have disagreed with the ways the various typologies and taxonomies have classified feminist sociological and educational theories, some post-modernists have attacked the very idea of a taxonomy. Here, I shall take up one such criticism. I shall apply to the above typology the post-modernist argument that "to put into categories is an act of power" (Lather, 1991: 125).

In accordance with the conventions of western academic rationality, I constructed my typology as if I were standing outside it, as if I were looking from an 'eye of God' position. In this, I assumed the standpoint of the scientist, the grounds from which "sociologists have sought to practice an objectivity constituted in relation to an 'Archimedian point' - that is a point external to any particular position in society" (Smith, 1987: 71). Such writing, however, is not 'objective'; 'I' am 'in' my text (Jones, 1992). An account such as this can be read as resting upon evolutionary, or 'progressive', assumptions - that our analyses have been getting us nearer to 'the truth'. By concluding with socialist and post-modernist feminisms, I implied that these positions are the evolutionary apex of feminist theory and thereby position myself within them. As Donna Haraway has expressed it (1990: 198), such

typologies tend "to make one's own political tendencies appear to be the telos of the whole." The 'overview' I have sketched, then, is not a view 'from the skies' but is a landscape drawn from my own perspective.

When such a typology is used as a framework for curriculum design, the students are positioned 'outside' the theories. They are like spectators, looking in. Theory is presented as a map, a chart drawn by those with the expertise to depict objectively 'what is there' in the theoretical terrain. The international debates in the sociology of women's education appear to students as "abstracted from particular participants located in particular spatio-temporal settings" (Smith, 1987:

61). Theories appear as disembodied and de-contextualized abstractions.

We can use the kinds of insights post-modernist theories can provide without teaching the theory in a formal sense - for a premature confrontation with the vocabularies of post-modernism can terrify some undergraduate students right out of social theory. Rather than presenting theories as a flat or two-dimensional, map, we can assume a post-modernist stance as teacher-educators by demonstrating ways in which - as teachers, as students, as social researchers - we are positioned 'inside' the social and educational phenomena which are the object of our inquiries. The personal, political, and theoretical dimensions of educational experience are studied holistically. In the remainder of this paper, I shall demonstrate ways in which I have approached my own teaching from such a perspective. However, before doing so, I shall contextualise my approach in previous discussions about the place of 'the personal' in feminist pedagogy.

Feminism, Pedagogy, and the Place of 'the Personal.'

Many have argued that a feminist pedagogy is a 'student-centred' pedagogy, which emphasizes the educational worthwhileness of using students' (and sometimes teachers') personal experiences as a basis for learning. Discussions of such questions can usefully be grouped into three major sets of arguments - empirical, psychological, and political.

There is empirical research which supports the claim that women teachers, to a greater degree than men teachers, prefer the pedagogies which are based on students' 'personal knowledge'. For example, in a study of academic women in Massachusetts, Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington (1988: 94) noted a tendency for women's scholarship in their various disciplines to focus "on the relation of actual daily experience to larger social or moral patterns". Similarly, all of the feminist school teachers in Kathleen Weiler's study "mentioned the value of nurturance and caring in themselves and their work - values that are emphasized as positive aspects of women's experience..." (Weiler, 1988: 78). The Catholic religious and Jewish women in Kathleen Casey's thesis on feminist teachers spoke of "a genuine care of children" as their major motivation for becoming teachers; a "kind of attachment", argues Casey (1988: 225) which "has enormous potential for progressive action". The New Zealand feminist teachers in my own study (Middleton, 1987a; 1989) expressed similar concerns.

A second set of writers have based their arguments on psychological or psychoanalytic theories. Drawing on 'object relations' theory (e.g. Gilligan, 1982), some radical feminist curriculum theorists see feminists' espousal of student - centred pedagogies as expressions of

women's 'essential femininity'. For example, Madeleine Grumet has

argued that, as teachers, women draw their "experiences of reproduction and nurturance into the epistemological systems and curricular forms that constitute the discourse and practice of public education" (Grumet, 1988: 3). Concerns with what Nel Noddings (1991) calls "caring and interpersonal reasoning" structure such feminist, or women-centred, curricula. Such radical feminist positions have been criticised as essentialist (Grosz, 1990).

The political rationales derive from various versions of the 'consciousness-raising model', which developed in the early phases of the second wave of feminism. Consciousness-raising originated in 'grassroots' settings, and has been adapted for more academic situations. It was a technique of finding words for what Betty Friedan (1963) described as 'problems with no names', as women met in informal groups to share their 'sense of something wrong' (Mitchell, 1973) with their experiences as women in particular (usually middle-class, white, western, urban) settings. It was a way of 'making knowledge' where no prior written records remained.

Critics argued that, within this framework, 'experience' was conceptualized as unproblematic - it was assumed that 'pure experience' could be described and was in and of itself valid knowledge. A politics grounded in consciousness-raising rested on 'women's experiences' to provide a basis for an oppositional 'women's knowledge' and 'feminist culture'. Such assumptions, said socialist feminists, rendered invisible the material conditions and power-relations of the wider (capitalist/ patriarchal) society which 'structured' such experiences (e.g. Rowbotham, 1973). What was needed, they argued, were historical and materialist analyses which would contextualise 'women's experiences' within the wider power-dynamics in which they had come to form. Socialist feminism (a combination of Marxism and feminism) could help us locate our biographies within the wider, oppressive, power-relations of gender and class. The 'teaching of theory' was an aid to liberation.

Some such feminist arguments were influenced by theoretical shifts within the wider, and 'overlapping', disciplines of the sociology of education and curriculum theory. During the early to mid 1980s - the years when the sociology of women's education was in its formative stages as a discipline - the increasingly dominant neo-Marxist perspectives in the sociology of education had constituted educational institutions primarily as sites of social and cultural reproduction. Rejecting the liberal view that schools and tertiary institutions were agents of social mobility and human emancipation, many sociologists had studied how such institutions constructed and reproduced the oppressive power-relations of class, racism and gender in the wider society. As intending, preservice, or practising teachers, many students found the reproduction theories profoundly depressing. If the educational institutions in which they studied and taught merely reproduced existing social and cultural

inequalities, they as teachers were mere agents of oppression and preservers of privilege.

Perhaps partly as a response to the pessimism of 'reproduction theories', many 'left' and feminist educators paid increasing attention in their writing to 'radical' (or 'critical') pedagogy. They argued that radical teachers could make visible to students the patterns of power-relations which constrained their own and others' lives and could help make audible the voices of students from oppressed and marginalized groups. Writers such as Giroux suggested that teacher-educators could teach their students life-history techniques to enable them, as prospective teachers, to develop "the concepts and methods to delve into their own biographies, to look at the sedimented history they carry around, and to learn how one's cultural capital

represents a dialectical interplay between experience and history" (Giroux, 1982: 24).

Recently, some feminists have expressed reservations about the usefulness of critical pedagogy. Although they recommended teaching techniques which required students to analyse their lives, many 'critical pedagogues' rendered invisible their own biographies (e.g. Giroux, 1986). Similarly, 'reproduction theorists', who may themselves have been of

'educationally marginalized' backgrounds and yet have been empowered and politicised by means of their own education, usually bracketed out in their writing the conditions of their own intellectual production. Feminists noted a kind of evangelical tendency in 'critical' pedagogies which positioned radical (including feminist) teachers as conduits to revealed truths about students' and others' oppressions (Ellsworth, 1989; Lather, 1991; Miller, 1990).

Somewhat ironically, this was also true of some feminist post-structuralist writers - authors such as Chris Weedon (1987) positioned themselves as 'masters of truth and justice' (Lather, 1991), as knowers or revealers of the truth about others' oppressions, through addressing such questions at a purely rationalist level - omitting to mention the problem of what made their own ideas possible. As Linda Nicholson has argued, academic feminism has shared the

failure, common to many forms of academic scholarship, to recognize the embeddedness of its own assumptions within a specific historical context. Like many other modern western scholars, feminists were not used to acknowledging that the premises from which they were working possessed a specific location (Nicholson, 1990: 1).

A Life-history Approach to Feminist Pedagogy.

If we are to take seriously such post-modern insights about relationships between our 'feminist educational knowledge' and power, we must 'problematise' our own perspectives - make visible to, and explore with, our students those aspects of our own life - histories which impact upon our teaching. We must analyze relationships between our individual biographies, historical events and the broader power relations which have shaped and constrained our possibilities and perspectives as educators. As Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989: 312) has argued, "a relation between teachers/ students becomes voyeuristic when the voice of the pedagogue... goes unexamined." Our academic perspectives are viewed as historically, socially, and biographically constructed. The everyday world is viewed as 'problematic' (Smith, 1987) and is studied as that in which our research and pedagogical questions originate.

#### A Teacher's Voice.

I should like to invite you into my undergraduate 'women and education' classroom. It is the first class in the twelve week course. There are about forty undergraduate students. The majority are teacher-trainees, taking this course as part of their education major. The B.Ed degree has been jointly taught by university and teachers' college staff. As part of the 'education major' my course is 'academic'. I am not involved with the teaching practice side of the students' professional training.

. A few are taking it as part of the women's studies programme. While some of the 'education' students (and all of the women's studies students) identify themselves as feminists, some are suspicious of, or hostile to, feminism. For example, one student described her image of feminism as "some strange type of religion which only women belong to. Some of their [feminists'] characteristics are hairy bodies, wearing

lots of purple and necklaces with 'the symbol'. They enjoy hating men and do body building. The students' comments used in this paper are excerpts from Middleton (in press).

" The majority of the students are Pakeha (New Zealand - born white); some are Maori or of Pacific Islands descent. The majority are in their early twenties.

I begin this first session of the course with slides - images from my own school exercise books and childhood paintings produced in the late 1950s and early 1960s in New Zealand - in a rural primary school and a state girls' secondary school in a provincial town. These give access to my 'native imagery' - to my interpretations of the world in which I grew up and to my dreams, wishes, and fantasies. They are of interest in this course not as personal memorabilia, but as examples of ways in which the

'grand narratives' and historical events of my childhood and adolescence contributed to the development of my adult perspective as a feminist educator. More broadly, they identify several of the generative themes of the academic women's studies created by my (post-World War Two) generation of Pakeha academic feminists. They depict an experiential basis for the feminist theories we came to adopt and develop as adults. I shall share with you three of these slides. The full text of this lecture - including additional pictures - is in Middleton (1992b). The complete text is also contained, and a detailed theoretical rationale developed, in Middleton (in press).

The first illustrates my positioning in the 'grand narrative' of colonialism as reproduced in my childhood reading of the social studies curriculum in the late 1950s (McGeorge, 1981). This was the title page of an eleven year-old rural schoolgirls' social studies exercise book in 1959. The 'good ship social studies' bears - in descending order - the signs of the Christian cross, the British crown, the Union Jack. God, King, Country. On the beach stand 'hostile natives' - black men in grass skirts brandishing spears. What counted as 'school knowledge' (the social studies curriculum) rendered legitimate this 'way of knowing' colonization. Indigenous peoples were constituted as 'other'.

INSERT PLATE ONE, SAILING SHIP

We learned about the history of exploration - how Europe 'discovered' and 'took possession' of much of the rest of the world. The poems we studied reinforced the ideology of 'our glorious empire' and male battles. We learned that New Zealand had been part of this process. However, during the years of my schooling - the 1950s and early 1960s - it was believed that modern New Zealand was a truly egalitarian society. We were taught that equal rights and opportunities for Maori and Pakeha had been guaranteed in 1840 with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi by Maori chiefs and the colonial government.

At primary school such colonial power-relations were taken for granted. We never questioned them. However, during our secondary schooling, 'our glorious empire' was to collapse. These momentous changes led many of my generation to question taken-for-granted ideas about the 'nature' of 'races' and the legitimacy of Pakeha domination.

It has proved very useful to discuss in classes these 1950s images of a child's interpretation of colonial relations. This was particularly true in 1990, for this marked the sesquicentenary of the signing of the Treaty. Unlike Australia, which had marked its bicentenary with a huge celebration, New Zealand 'commemorated' rather than 'celebrated' its

anniversary. For many Maori, as for Australian Aborigines, the birth of the colonial state was not cause for celebration. The 1980s had seen strong protests by Maori that the Treaty had not been honoured, that they had been dispossessed of their lands, forests, and fisheries. The Treaty became one of New Zealand's most contested political issues. Today it is used as a basis for arguing for Maori people's rights to be educated in the Maori language and to cultural autonomy.

In New Zealand university education and women's studies courses, as in other educational and feminist settings, the Treaty has been a central issue of debate. Issues of Maori - Pakeha relations and biculturalism have become increasingly prominent in New Zealand Pakeha feminist theory, and in women's studies courses (Smith, this volume). New Zealand students are helped through this exercise to position themselves (variously, and multiply - for example, as middle-class and Maori and female) within the power-relations of colonialism.

The next group of slides (one of which is reproduced here) are indicative of the 'possibilities and constraints' experienced by Pakeha rural girls of the time and place. In these childhood impressions of everyday life in a rural town in the 1950s clear gender relations are apparent in the work force. Access to certain kinds of technical knowledge and occupations was not at that time seen as suitable for girls. For example, this painting of a shearing shed suggests a great fascination with machines and technology. As the daughter of a stock agent (a person who buys and sells livestock on behalf of farmers), I was around farms and machinery a great deal. In this painting, the men are doing the shearing - handling the machines - while the women clean up.

INSERT PLATE TWO, SHEARING SHED

To be able to take the 'academic' subjects which had at the time high status (Latin and French), I had to leave home and board at a state girls' school in a nearby provincial city. During this time in our

adolescence, 'sexuality' became an important concern. 'Sexuality' and 'intellectuality' were often constituted as being in conflict or contradiction, as is evident from this painting done when I was a junior at the boarding hostel. "Seniors swotting" shows girls reading 'love comics', setting one another's hair in rollers and perfecting their suntans. ('Swotting' was our term for 'cramming' for exams).

INSERT PLATE THREE, TEENAGE GIRLS

Such pictures are helpful in exploring the ways in which young girls of my age-group and class were constituted as 'gendered subjects' (Henriques et al, 1984) within the 'regulatory apparatuses' of the time. Drawing on a feminist reading of key education policy texts, as well as other women's life-histories and empirical research (Middleton, 1987a), I show how, as children of the post-World War II baby boom, we were members of the first generation to be promised equality of opportunity in education. Children of both sexes, all races and classes were promised 'equal opportunities' to what the policy-makers had described as "a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers" (cited in Beeby, 1986: xxxii). The promise was one of 'meritocracy'.

However, at the same time, it was believed that the morality, stability and cohesion of society rested on women's domesticity. Girls' experiences, then, were contradictory. On the one hand, within the discourse of liberal individualism, we were educable, potentially rational and autonomous, individuals who were to be accorded equal opportunities with men. On the other hand, within the 'pre-feminist' 'pre-feminist' sociological theories, I mean those 'master narratives' in the sociology of women's education, such as the various forms of functionalism which dominated the field in the 1950s and 1960s (Friedan, 1963), which constituted women according to patriarchal or sexist assumptions. See Middleton (in press). By

assumptions of patriarchy, our domesticity within the patriarchal nuclear family (with the husband/ father as 'breadwinner') was essential to the maintenance of social cohesion and stability. Our education, and our socialization, would prepare us for our 'natural functions' as wives and mothers. Our intellectuality and our feminine heterosexuality were constituted as contradictory.

In this early stage of the course, I use my own constructed account of my own educational life-history, previous research, other women's stories, and key 'official' policy documents of the time to suggest ways we can connect 'the personal, the theoretical, and the political'. Such combinations of materials can show clearly how certain gendered sociological assumptions have been productive of specific professional practices or 'technologies of the social' (Henriques et al, 1984) which have served to classify, regulate, and rank students. The use of personal texts can help us to avoid the deterministic assumptions which can be made when, for example, theoretical and policy texts alone are used as curriculum content. For example, my own generation of feminist teachers did not become mere passive victims of our socialisation. We

were creative strategists who resisted and resolved the contradictions we experienced. For some of us, such contradictions - together with the alternative possibilities our historical circumstances made visible to us - were generative of our feminism (Middleton, 1987a; 1989; in press).

#### Students' Assignments

Students keep a diary during the first half of the course. In their 'responses' to my slide presentation, and in their written reactions to various set readings, many choose to write about their own experiences. I do not require them to write autobiographies because I respect their right to privacy. I do not wish to 'pry', to engage in the monitoring and surveillance of their private lives (Foucault, 1980). I do not wish to be what Ellsworth (1989) termed a pedagogical 'voyeur'.

However, after the session on my own schooling, I run one class based on the students' 'official personal' texts - photographs, school reports, exercise books - an 'archaeology of our schooling'. As 'official records' these 'depersonalise', objectify, make public aspects of personal biographies. Because I have used such artifacts as part of my own biographical narrative - made aspects of my schooling visible to them - the students do not seem shy about doing this. They choose whether, or what, to provide. We discuss these documents in small groups whose membership is determined by the age of the student. This enables the younger students (aged nineteen or twenty) to speak freely - many in previous years had felt intimidated by what they saw as the greater experience of the mature students.

As a woman in her early forties I found that my own life-history and my

writing about the radicalization of post-war feminist teachers spoke to the mature students, but alienated, constituted as 'other', some of the younger students. I try to provide for them a space in which my generation's analysis and experience does not silence or distort theirs. Within the groups the students discuss how their educations were similar to and different from one another. We then 'report back' and bring together the experiences and documents from the different generations. This becomes a basis, a grounding for our theorising during the course.

The students then undertake a research assignment on women's educational life-histories. They are required to interview two women with at least a twenty-year age gap between them. They are to compare and contrast the two women's experiences of education, taking into account not only their individual biographies, but the historical events, educational policies and provisions, and the relevant power-relations (e.g. race, class, gender, town/country) characteristic of the time and place. In C. Wright Mills' (1959) terms, the focus of the assignment is simultaneously on "biography, history, and social structure."

The use of life-history methods as pedagogical techniques can help teachers and students understand the circumstances of one another's possibilities. In our feminist pedagogies, as Dorothy Smith (1987: 127) has argued with respect to sociology, "Opening an inquiry from the standpoint of women means accepting our ineluctable embeddedness in the same world as is the object of our inquiry."

#### Teaching About Educational Policies 'From the Inside.'

Many of our students, especially younger women without teaching experience, feel alienated, not only by theory, but also by talk about policy, which they see as dull conversations and texts produced by grey-suited men in remote offices. Life-history techniques can make policy 'three-dimensional' as students study the educational 'choices' of individual women of their own and other generations as contextualized in the constraints and possibilities of their circumstances and come to see the part played by policy-makers in these. As 'discourses', educational 'theories' and policies are constitutive of our subjectivities. As sociologists of women's education, we are positioned within, produced by, and productive of, that which is the object of our inquiries.

While my own schooling was shaped by 'pre-feminist' education policies, that of many of my younger students took place during the 1970s, a time when the second wave of feminism was influencing the kinds of 'choices' offered to girls and boys in schools. However, issues of racism, sexism, and contradictions between 'the intellectual and the sexual' come through strongly in many of the younger students' oral and written

comments. For example, one young woman wrote of her experiences in a woodwork class: "I remember purposefully getting things wrong so that the boys would come to my aid and help me. I got the attention I wanted, but I also reinforced the notion that girls were clumsy, needed help and aid when attempting male subjects." Unlike the women of my generation, this younger student had the 'insider's knowledge' of a former pupil whose educational experiences were shaped within a feminist-inspired 'equal opportunities' policy in a school in the early 1970s. Such students position themselves 'inside' feminist-inspired education policy.

To teach about more recent policy changes (the educational restructuring of the late 1980s and 1990s), I rely on the discourse analysis of key policy documents. Rather than approach the teaching of the various feminist theoretical perspectives as a 'flat map', I focus on the ways various feminist theories have become "articulated to the ruling apparatus" in the New Zealand setting - become tools of the policy-makers. The various feminisms (liberal, radical, Marxist, etc) are studied sociologically. 'Feminisms' are conceptualised as historically, and variously, located within the broader political configurations and institutional apparatuses of New Zealand education.

Many previous feminist writers have discussed the ways in which various versions of 'liberal feminism' have been incorporated into educational, and other social, policy. The more radical versions of feminism are seen as having had less influence on, as being incompatible with, the central projects and perspectives of, policy-makers. The various 'feminisms', then, are seen as being of 'unequal weight and power' within the political configurations of the wider society (Haraway, 1990; Weedon, 1987). New Zealand provides a particularly dramatic example of the ways different forms of feminism have been articulated to, and marginalized by, various apparatuses of state policy-making during rapid changes of government. Our experiences provide particularly useful 'content' for the teaching of post-modern insights about relationships between feminist theories and power. For the benefit of overseas readers, I shall briefly outline these political and theoretical shifts.

New Zealand's Fourth Labour Government (1984-1990) undertook a radical restructuring of school administration. Following recommendations in a

document which has become popularly known as the 'Picot Report' (Taskforce to Review Educational Administration, 1988), policy-makers devolved responsibility for many major educational decisions from central government authorities to elected school boards of trustees. The powers of the boards were listed in school charters, which contained detailed statements of broad objectives and specific goals. School

successes and failures in achieving these were to be monitored regularly by state Educational Review Officers.

New Zealand's 'left-wing' critics identified similarities between these reforms and those in Britain, North America, and Australia (Lauder and Wylie, eds, 1990). They claimed that 'new right' economic discourses were having an undue influence - that the language of competitiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability dominated the new educational policies. Education was being increasingly conceptualized as primarily an economic (not a social, political, or moral) activity. An extreme form of liberal individualism in which the role of the state was minimal was being put forward.

However, alongside its libertarian economic policy, the Labour Government had also made a strong commitment to 'equity'. In contrast to the individualistic free-market ideas which have been so frequently described as characterizing the educational reforms, Labour's view of 'equity' involved conceptualizing the population as groups. Certain groups (rather than individuals) were seen as having been disadvantaged educationally - through no fault of their own - in the past. Compensation was owed. Schooling became a site for the bringing about of 'compensatory justice' (O'Neill, 1977). "Equity objectives" were to "underpin all school activities" (Ministry of Education, 1989: 8).

During 1989 and 1990, the boards of trustees of all educational institutions were required to write their charters. In this, they were - in the words of the school charter guidelines - to ensure that their

policies and practices seek to achieve equitable educational outcomes for students of both sexes, for rural and urban students; for students from all religions, ethnic, cultural, social, family and class backgrounds, and for all students irrespective of their ability or disability (Ministry of Education, 1989:8).

With respect to gender, school boards of trustees were required to develop specific targets for bringing about equal opportunities, to provide role-models along non-sexist lines, to develop a non-sexist and non-racist curriculum, and to provide freedom from sexual harassment. Boards were also required to develop policies on biculturalism: "The board of trustees accepts an obligation to develop policies and practices which reflect New Zealand's dual cultural heritage" (Ministry of Education, 1989: 6).

The belief that state 'intervention' is necessary to achieve equal opportunities between individuals is characteristic of liberal feminism. Measures of 'affirmative action' are seen as 'compensation' for disadvantage. The requirements to develop 'non-sexist and non-racist curricula' are somewhat more radical as they raise questions about the nature of knowledge and the possibility of 'feminine' and 'culturally

pluralist' epistemologies. The requirement to address issues of sexual harassment challenges the take-for-granted behaviours of many men and raises radical questions about relations between the genders. Labour's policies, then, embodied strong liberal feminist and radical feminist assumptions. Both liberal and radical feminisms had become inscribed within an apparatus for the surveillance, monitoring and regulation of the population.

However, in October 1990, New Zealand had a general election and Labour was defeated by a landslide majority. During the election campaign, Lockwood Smith (now Minister of Education) announced that "Under National schools will be free to re-negotiate their charters if they wish to do so. They will no longer be compelled to adhere to Labour's 'Orwellian' social agenda" (N. Z. National Party, 1990b:8). During the first weeks of its administration, National announced that 'equity provisions' in educational institutions were to be optional.

In terms of National's view of society as consisting of autonomous competitive individuals, Labour's 'collectivist' requirements to bring about social equity for disadvantaged groups were constituted as 'social engineering'. In describing their paramount educational aim as being the creation of an 'enterprise culture', National constituted education as an economic, not a social, activity (Middleton, 1992a). During the early months of 1991, the National Government attacked other women-oriented social policies: pay equity legislation (based on the radical feminist notion of 'equal pay for work of equal value') was repealed and social welfare benefits cut.

Within New Zealand's ruling apparatus, liberal and radical feminist discourses are power-differentiated and unequal (Haraway, 1990; Weedon, 1987). A

'non-interventionist' liberal 'equal opportunities' position - one of allowing both sexes 'freedom of choice' of available options - is compatible with the free market model espoused by conservative or libertarian right governments. A more interventionist (liberal and feminist) model of affirmative action and compensation may become - and has been in the New Zealand setting - a site of struggle between sexual conservatives and those espousing more interventionist positions (e.g. Labour Party politicians). A radical feminist approach - which challenges both the sexual power and the epistemological authority of men - is less likely to enter the discursive practices of governing and, if it does, as in New Zealand, is particularly vulnerable in a new-right or conservative backlash.

As teachers, my students are likely to find themselves involved in struggles over their schools' charters. They will need a knowledge and understanding, as well as an opinion on, the theoretical assumptions and the political dynamics which are shaping

the institutional settings within which they work. They are 'positioned inside' the feminist debates which, in a course on the 'sociology of women's education', are their topic of study. It is important, then, that we continue to teach the various 'feminist theories.' However, such teaching need not take the traditional form of the 'flat map' which position students as spectators, but can be approached as 'three-dimensional', from our various points of view as 'insiders.'

## Conclusion

Like other feminist methodologies, a post-modern feminist pedagogy is subversive to traditional social science approaches which, following the dictates of 'natural science', have required what Dorothy Smith (1987: 146) referred to as "the suppression of the personal". Because such a 'scientific' world-view is said to be detached from the social world and to provide an objective, birdseye view of reality, researchers and teachers are required within such a tradition to 'begin outside ourselves'. Women's Studies' reliance on 'the personal' is antithetical to such approaches and its apparent 'subjectivity' has frequently been used in the past by academic gatekeepers as a basis for its exclusion from, or devaluation within, what counts as high-status or 'proper' academic knowledge. For example, making visible to students aspects of one's own biography lays the feminist academic open to accusations (from students as well as colleagues) of being unscholarly. Developing a feminist pedagogy can involve taking professional, as well as personal, risks.

We can reduce such risks by giving our practices a strong theoretical base. In this chapter, I have used post-modernist theory to help develop such a position. However, to my New Zealand undergraduate students, most postmodernist theoretical texts appear as abstracted conversations between overseas intellectuals - feminism receding into terrifying reifications. For postmodernism - the perspective which seeks to deconstruct relations between knowledge and power - is itself 'articulated to the ruling apparatuses' and can become an instrument for the perpetuation of academic conceptual imperialism.

I have argued that, at undergraduate level, we can use post-modernist insights without directly teaching the theory. To develop pedagogies which are authentic to our personal and collective histories, we must explore the ideas and imagery which are indigenous to our circumstances - geographical, cultural, historical and material, generational. This provides teachers and students with ways of understanding how our own subjectivities have been constituted and with means of making visible the alienations which can result from interpretations of our personal and collective histories purely through the eyes of theorists whose perspectives have arisen elsewhere.

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