Making it Political:

Feminist Pedagogy in the Nova Scotia Classroom

by

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requirements for a Master of Arts (Education) degree at
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Abstract

Public schools in Nova Scotia, as elsewhere, provide a multi-tiered education system which actively discriminates against women and persons of colour. In this paper, I will review the educational policies, pedagogical innovations and curricular practice (specifically in English and Social Studies) within the context of Nova Scotia to show how those inequities continue to be reinforced and to show how feminist pedagogy could address the litany of discriminatory practices. Lastly, I will explore the potential responses that feminist teachers may receive in our quest and propose principles for implementation of more effective change.

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MAKING IT POLITICAL:
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Introduction

In North America, women, on average, earn sixty-five cents for every dollar earned by men. And while one in three marriages ends in divorce (Statistics Canada, cited in Day, 1990), women's post-divorce standard of living drops as significantly as men's standard of living increases (Hewlett, 1986). The economic climate of the 1980's and 1990's is such that most women need to work in order to help support their families, but the largest occupational category (clerical) for women in Nova Scotia is also one of the lowest paying.

Against this bleak picture of contemporary life for women, it is interesting to consider the expectations and ambitions of today's students. A study by Dian Day (1990) of Nova Scotian girls in grades ten and twelve records a number of disconcerting observations. The students in her study expressed a very passive approach to their future plans, seeing the future as unpredictable, inevitable, and beyond their control. Ninety-three per cent of the girls expect to marry, and few expect divorce (15%), but a significant number of them see marriage and families as significant obstacles to career plans. Although fifty-eight per cent of the respondents express a desire to go to university after high school, only ten per cent of Nova Scotia's women (aged 25 -44) currently hold a university degree. Further, although university plans are closely correlated to parents' level of

education, most parents (63%) have a high school education or less. While university graduation is no guarantee of improved living standards, there is a direct correlation between the level of education and earning potential. There is also a disconcerting discrepancy between the aspirations and expectations of these young women:

> In almost every professional occupation, consistently fewer young women expect to have the occupation they most desire. ... Fully 44% of the young women lower their expectations when they talk of the career they most expect to have in the future. (p.10-11)

This report indicates that young women in Nova Scotian high schools are expressing the same passive, traditional attitudes that mark the current feminization of poverty described above. Nor is Nova Scotia alone in this situation; these findings have been reiterated in studies in other parts of Canada and the United States.

What is the Nova Scotia educational system doing to provide these young women with a sense of autonomy that will empower them to claim more control over their destinies? The provincial Department of Education states that its mission is "to provide all students in Nova Scotia with a broad-based, high quality education" (1993). However, if local research (Arbogast, 1994; Day 1990) and research from other parts of North America (Baldwin and Baldwin, 1992), Britain (Coffey and Acker, 1991) or Australia (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell, and Dowsett, 1985), are any indication, then we are failing in our mission. Young women and men are

receiving a narrow educational perspective that serves to entrench them in traditional patterns of separation and marginalization in which males generally have the economic, political, and cultural upper hand.

Nor are young women the only ones who are neglected by the educational system. The social dynamics of race, class, sexual orientation/preference all interact in multiple layers of omission and silence. In Nova Scotia, the many black and Mi'kmaq communities face a constant struggle to find representation in our schools. Dr. Harvey Millar (1992) identifies a high drop-out rate, a disproportionate number of students in general streams and the disproportionate number of students who receive suspensions as indicative of the struggles faced by minority students. Diane Scott-Jones and Maxine Clark (1986) report that although drop-out rates are decreasing, the drop-out rate is significantly higher among black students:

> The proportion of blacks who did not graduate from high school declined substantially between 1970 and 1982. The number of black females who left school without graduating dropped from 65.2% to 47.7% during that interval, while the number of black males who dropped out fell from 67.5% to 44.3%. For whites of both sexes, the comparable decline was from about 42% to about 27%. (p.523)

The disparity in drop-out rates should raise serious concerns about the alleged equality of the educational system. Demands for a "sorely needed" anti-racist education policy (Millar, 1992) and promises of respect for multicultural diversity (School board, 1992) are symptomatic

of the token response that is given to anti-discriminatory education.

Although purporting to provide an education for all students, to provide the skills and abilities needed to become "competent, confident, lifelong thinkers and learners" (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1993), the educational system is culpable of a multi-tiered approach to schooling which promotes an elite few at the expense of the many. Business as usual in the public schools means continuing the reproduction of a patriarchal, phallocentric society where opportunity is largely ruled by the shape of your body, the colour of your skin, and the depth of your wallet.

This document is about the feminist response to this system and within this document I use the word feminism to describe the social movement that promotes greater equality for women (specifically) and enhanced benefits for society (in general). Although feminism represents a variety of perspectives,

> [it] begins with the premise that women's and men's positions in society are the result of social, not natural or biological factors. (Anderson, 1993)

Further, feminism engages both thought and action, and work for social change is an essential aspect of the feminist agenda. However, it is important to recognize that just as 'man' is not a generic term embracing all people, neither is 'woman' a monolithic term. Feminism needs to address the

different realities of women from different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. The multiple threads of discrimination are not easily unwoven or simplified to singular causes. Therefore, within feminism it is also necessary to address and challenge the wide range of discriminatory discourses.

Although Roger Simon (1992) suggests that pedagogy is often a pretentious word used interchangeably to mean teaching, I envision the term as embracing the larger implications of the interactions among education policies, curricular planning and classroom practice which form the subject of this document.

Hence, feminist pedagogy is a political and philosophical stance which seeks to subvert the current system and actively challenge the status quo. First and foremost, feminist pedagogy addresses the inequities of patriarchy, putting gender on the table for discussion in every context. Feminist pedagogy also makes explicit the multiple layers of discriminatory discourse, questioning whose interests are benefitted and/or subverted by specific curricular interpretations. In this way, feminist pedagogy goes beyond the usually singular focus of other non-discriminatory or anti-discriminatory approaches. Feminist pedagogy asserts itself both in curriculum analysis and in classroom approach. The specific strategies used depend on

the nature of the teacher's beliefs, but they have much in common with other innovations in pedagogical approaches.

In this thesis, I plan to provide an overview of some of the existing inequities of the educational system in Nova Scotia and then explore how various pedagogical innovations have tried to correct the imbalance and address the needs of the students. To do this, I will cite examples from Department of Education policies, curriculum guidelines, pedagogical innovations and curricular practices (especially in English and Social Studies). I will discuss the non-sexist policies which represent a liberal feminist response to revelations of systemic sexism, insufficient though they are in making required changes. A more effective (and more deeply political) feminist pedagogy is exemplified by recognizing the larger political and social implications of classroom practice and it is from this stance that we can hope to meet the needs of our students and fulfil the mission statement set by the Department of Education. Lastly, I will examine the reception that feminist teachers may receive in the crusade and propose a set of principles for effective implementation.

As a teacher who is also a feminist, I have often been discouraged when I see my students, both girls and boys, replicating stereotypical gender roles in their academic and social interactions. I have been frustrated by my inability to promote an effective change and I have heard this same

frustration voiced by my colleagues. It is with this in mind, that I have sought a practical definition for feminist pedagogy in Nova Scotia.

Chapter One

So What's the Problem?

The study of young women's attitudes and aspirations
(Day, 1990) paints a frightening picture for Nova Scotia.
Young women continue to view the future as unpredictable,
inevitable and beyond their control. They expect to marry
and have families, and although they would like to have
careers, their expectations in this area are significantly
lower than their aspirations. However, the Nova Scotia
Department of Education says that our role as educators is
to provide a "broad-based, high-quality education" (1993).
If that is the case, why are our female high school students
expressing the same passive attitudes that have marked the
traditional feminization of poverty?

The problem is threefold: a patriarchal social
structure, a curriculum comprised of phallocentric
knowledge, and a school system that works to reproduce the
status quo. Those who hold the advantages of power may be
quite content either to deny or to accept their privileges,
but we need to recognize that exclusion of any group in
education and in society, generally, diminishes the benefits
of and to the whole. The schooling system, which purports
to provide equal educational opportunities for all students,
is ignoring the needs of a wide range of marginalized groups

within that system who are, as the film *Network* suggests, "mad as hell and not going to take it any more."

Patriarchy

Hierarchical model of schools. North American society is blatantly patriarchal in that the positions of economic, political and cultural power and authority rest almost entirely with men. The school system mirrors and, indeed, reproduces, that same patriarchal order. Dr. Charol Shakeshaft (1989) records that in 1985, 83.5% of American elementary school teachers were women, but only 16.9% of elementary school principals were women. At the secondary level, where 50.1% of the teachers are women, only 3.5% of principals are women. The figures record a mere 3.0% of district superintendents are women. In the province of Nova Scotia, women fare only slightly better. Here, women hold 22.6% of principalships and only 8% of high school principalships (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1994). Although the majority of teachers in Nova Scotia are women, they report to predominantly male principals, male supervisors and male chief executive officers.

Patriarchal models also dictate the accepted leadership styles. Senior administrators appear to jealously guard their jurisdictions and grudgingly delegate lesser tasks to those below them on the hierarchical ladder. Each level is discrete and often isolated from all other levels. Power is seen as finite; to share means to lose out. Research

(Rosener, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1991) has determined that male
and female executives or administrators usually perform the
same tasks, but that their approach to those tasks varies by
gender:

> The men are more likely than the women to describe
> themselves in ways that characterize what some
> management experts call "transactional" leadership.
> That is, they view job performance as a series of
> transactions with subordinates -- exchanging
> rewards for services rendered or punishment for
> inadequate performance. The men are also more
> likely to use power that comes from their
> organizational position and formal authority.
> (Rosener, 1990, p.120)

School principals are perceived as administrators with
responsibilities very different from teachers. Charol
Shakeshaft (1991) notes that the turn-of-the-century
bureaucratization of school boards was related to the
perceived equivalency of education and business.

> This kind of thinking led school boards to invite
> men into school administration, men who did not
> necessarily have educational backgrounds. ... It
> might be that this lack of educational underpinning
> of the managers forced them to take care of the
> technical or clerical aspects of administration
> rather than the instructional and educational ones,
> thus molding administration into a managerial,
> rather than an educational or instructional
> enterprise. (p.87)

When this attitude filters into the classroom, it is
embodied in what Paulo Freire (cited in Belenky et al.,
1986) refers to as the banking model of teaching. Students
are seen as empty vessels into which so-called true
knowledge is deposited. In this model, students are passive

participants, captive audiences to and receptacles for the
expertise of the omnipotent teacher.

Walk down the halls of many schools and you will still
see some classrooms where desks are arranged in rows facing
the front of the room in concrete recognition of the
traditional hierarchical banking model of education. This
passive approach to learning leaves students uninvolved with
the creation of knowledge and leaves them with the unfounded
and uninformed notion of objectivity of knowledge. In this
model, students are expected to receive unquestioningly;
those who don't succeed, are held culpable for their own
failure.

Teacher contact. Researchers studying classroom
behaviours have long found that boys and girls receive very
different treatment. Boys receive more teacher contact of
all kinds: instructional, remedial and disciplinary (Brophy
and Good, 1970; Jackson and Lahaderne, 1967; Lafrance, 1991;
Leinhardt, Seeward and Engel, 1979; Nairn, 1991). Sadker
and Sadker (1984), leaders in research in gender and
interaction in classrooms, reported that boys, more
aggressive in initiating responses, most often received
intellectual counter-responses; girls, on the other hand,
were usually reprimanded for calling out. In this way, boys
learn the privilege of controlling conversations, that their
voice will be attended to promptly; girls, on the other

hand, learn that their perceived role is to be listeners, passive and polite.

Other researchers have found that boys tend to dominate equipment and hands-on tasks, but girls are more persistent in their work habits (Tobin, 1988). When teachers need reliable students to complete a project, they tend to call on girls. Girls are expected to 'be good', to 'please others' and to learn to defer to their eventual husbands (Weiler, 1988).

This differential treatment of boys and girls teaches boys that their role in the social structure is secure and natural. It also misleads males into overlooking the role of gender in the creation of their privileged position, and the role of race, class and sexual orientation in the limitation of their potential (Davis and Nemiroff, 1992).

Differences in teacher-student interaction also reflect racial and socio-economic bias. Jerome Dusek and Gail Joseph (cited in Scott-Jones and Clark, 1986) report that black children received less intellectual encouragement than their white peers and that black females were more likely to receive praise for behavioural matters than for academic matters.

The research reinforces the belief that students are assessed on the basis of how they fit into the existing system. Although boys are expected to be rowdy and rebellious, and their misbehaviour is largely excused,

girls, who are also going through the rebellious changes of adolescence, are expected to be 'ladylike'. As McLaren (1982) points out, "conflict breaks out when the girls deliberately resist the role expectations and concomitant patriarchal codes which the schools try to impose on them" (p. 21).

When the sexist codes of a patriarchal system are multiplied by racist codes, the problem is further compounded. Many black students are often criticized for their language and behaviour; many black girls are criticized for their expressions of what white society sees as unfeminine. Many West Indian homes are seen as unstable because of the lack of a male head of the house (Coultas, 1989). The sexist and racist assumptions evident in these statements blame the victims of a system that does not address their educational needs and view them through a eurocentric lens.

Separate spheres. The historical division of labour and social organization into separate spheres of influence for men and women is well-established (Rooke, 1994). Women's role is seen as primarily domestic; it is dictated on male terms and through male control (Smith, 1975). In 1796, Thomas Gisborne wrote

> [it] is natural that after God has bestowed all necessary intellectual powers on men, He would impart them to the female mind with a more sparing hand. (Beer, 1982, p. 42)

The prevalence of this attitude in the eighteenth century severely limited the educational opportunities of women. English was introduced as a university subject in the late nineteenth century to provide a suitable topic for woman who insisted on university admission; the subject of English would train a wife in sympathy and understanding and provide general moral improvement (Thomas, 1991). The residual effects of this attitude continue today as women still out-achieve and out-number men in language and literature courses.

The concentration of women teachers in the elementary schools is one more result of these separate spheres. Women's role is "mothering"; teaching young children is seen as a natural extension of this work and, therefore, a 'natural' occupation for women.

> Believing that teaching was a proper sphere for a woman and that it prepared her for the work of marriage and motherhood, these women [Catharine Beecher and Emma Willard] led crusades to bring women into teaching. (Shakeshaft, 1989, p.25)

It seems that Beecher and Willard accepted the separation of spheres of duties; what concerned them was the devaluation of the domestic sphere. By emphasizing the skills and knowledge components of the domestic sphere, they were attempting to enhance the acceptance of the domestic sphere as equal in importance to the male-dominated public sphere, not unlike the efforts of feminists such as Jane Roland Martin and Nel Noddings, today.

The grudging acceptance of women principals still
reflects the separation of duties, in that women are most
often granted principalships at the elementary school, where
their "mothering" talents can best serve the students. Only
rarely are women hired as principals in the junior or senior
high schools. In Nova Scotia, 33.9% of elementary school
principals are women; only 8% of high school principals are
women. Northside-Victoria District School Board paints an
even more graphic picture: although 52% of their elementary
schools have women principals, not one of their junior or
senior high schools has a woman principal!

The most commonly used excuse for this division of
principalships is a variation of the separate spheres
argument. Women are allegedly too nurturant to provide a
firm disciplinary hand to the rough boys in the senior
schools:

> The emphasis on maintaining discipline as a
> component of the assistant principalship keeps
> women from being hired for those positions.
> (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 70)

Further, since it is the line positions in the secondary
schools that most often lead to upper levels of
administration, excluding women from the line positions can
successfully sidetrack them away from the senior positions.

Phallocentrism

> The "representation of the world, like the world
> itself, is the work of men; they describe it from
> their own point of view, which they confuse with
> absolute truth. (Simone de Beauvoir, cited in
> Balsamo, 1987, p. 66)

Phallocentric curriculum. The very substance of our
curriculum is based on knowledge that is written largely by
men, about men and often generalized unquestioningly as if
it does apply and should be applied universally. Further,
curriculum in Canada is usually written by white, middle-
and upper-class men (Baldwin and Baldwin, 1992). As such,
they define the academic, ideologic, and economic discourse
(Mura, 1991; Smith, 1975) presented in schools as objective
knowledge. From their dominant position, it is men who have
the privilege of identifying what is accepted as interesting
and worthwhile subjects of study and what is acknowledged as
suitable questions for research. From their elite and
arrogant positions, they have either not considered or have
dismissed dissenting views.

This following example demonstrates a case in point.
One of the key historic references for the settlement of
Canada was the American Revolution and the arrival of
Loyalist settlers. While most Canadian textbooks describe
the Loyalists as "American colonists who remained loyal to
Britain throughout the rebellion" (MacKinnon, cited in
Matas, 1994), historian Janice MacKinnon points out that
they were simply "Americans who sincerely believed the best
destiny for the colonies was to remain part of the British
Empire". Thus, it is not so much a question of loyalty, as
a question of political and economic pragmatism. The story
is told from a European, pro-British standpoint. Another

example demonstrates how the telling is also male in its
perspective. While the history books describe the Loyalist
women generally as "helpless and incapable of taking care of
themselves", many were actually spies who gathered military
intelligence, political pamphleteers, and homesteaders who
took care of their family and property while the men were
away" (MacKinnon, in Matas, 1994). The question of why that
aspect of our history has so rarely been reported or
included in our texts can only be adequately answered
through an analysis of the eurocentric and phallocentric
perspective of curriculum.

As well, the terminology that has been utilized in
academic analysis similarly often reflects the dominant
gender constructs. In poetry, for example, the 'feminine
ending' is defined as the "termination of a line of verse
with *an additional and unaccented final syllable* [my
italics]" (Funk and Wagnall's, 1986). This type of
terminology is not unusual and it provides a clear
demonstration of the pervasive, academic disrespect and/or
devaluing of women.

Gender Construct. Part of the phallocentric knowledge
that is learned through school and society is the construct
of gender. Female or male is what we are born with, our
biological sex, but woman or man, our gendered identity, is
a socially constructed role that alters according to social
and economic circumstances (Rooke, 1994). Thus, while sex

is biological, the attached characteristics and values are social. As women, gendered beings within the social construct, we have been commodified as objects of desire by men and for men (Wolf, 1991). These messages surround us, and girls learn early that the most important thing is to be sexually attractive, desirable and accepted on terms dictated by patriarchal society.

This gender position creates a double-bind for the girls in our schools. They are required to perform according to academic standards within a discourse of competition and individualism that is written by and for men, while at the same time conforming to a gender construct of passivity (Briskin, 1991; Davis and Nemiroff, 1992). If they are assertive and active in their academic pursuits, then they are deemed unfeminine and undesirable. If they meet the passive constructs of femininity, then they are criticized for having low ambitions. This construct is emphasized in the reading materials that are used in our schools. While publishers have become more attentive to removing stereotypes from their textbooks, women are still often portrayed in passive roles (Baldwin and Baldwin, 1992).

In much adolescent literature, girls are most often depicted as being beautiful and troublesome or plain and homey (McCracken, 1992). Consider, for example, the characters in *The Girl Who Wanted a Boy* (Zindel, 1981).

Sibella, the fifteen-year-old lead character, describes

herself (without contradiction from anyone) as

> a clod, that's, what I am, a bounding clod -- fifty
> pounds of science books. The cheap artificial
> coat, a shapeless cardigan peeking out, and my
> stupid jumper. (p. 1)

Sibella, who is also proficient at science, carpentry and

car repair, has no friends and, worst of all, no boyfriend.

In comparison, her sister, Maureen is

> a shocking contrast to Sibella, oozing personality,
> extroverted, gorgeous, sexy, aggressive. She had
> been voted the best all-around body in high school.
> And she knew more than anyone that she had
> graduated only because she could do a rather
> exemplary baton act. (p. 21)

Sibella, the plain, is shown as generous, compassionate and

selfless. Maureen, the beautiful, is self-centred,

intrusive and sneaky. She also has a boyfriend, her own

apartment and the supportive approval of her mother. This

book, typical of teen literature, is offensive on many

levels: it perpetuates the stereotypes of the unpopular

smart girls, dumb blonds, socially inept mothers, and wise

but distant (divorced) fathers; it reproduces the myth which

denies female sexual agency; and continues the myth that

women's success is defined by 'having' a man.

In history texts, a similar message is often

reproduced: in *The Enduring Past* (1982), the women of Egypt

are described in terms of their beauty, the beauty of their

clothes, and their roles as adored wives (p.49). There is a

strong message that the acceptable roles for women are to be

physically attractive to men and to become good mothers. Given this largely unchallenged bias in our curriculum, which is reiterated on many other social sites, it is not at all surprising that half of Nova Scotian girls feel that they are overweight even when the majority of them fall into the "normal" weight range (Day, 1990) and that marriage is perceived as more important than career (ibid).

Selection of Topics. The selection of topics for inclusion in the public school curriculum is a direct function of the phallocentric posture. History becomes the study of titanic clashes, and development of government (Belenky et al., 1986). The focus is on the victory of physical strength and the morality of rights. As will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter four, this is a very masculine-defined perspective. Moral development differs between men and women and, where women are concerned, different has traditionally been defined as deficient, Carol Gilligan's notable study, *In a Different Voice* (1982), shows that women, as a consequence of their gendered identity, often take a perspective which gives more emphasis to ethics and concern for others. The emphasis on physical strength and dominance of situations also reflects the masculine development, and the study of the development of government is at this point a study of the exploits of men in the public sphere, from which women have been systematically excluded. Units such as "When Empires Collide", "The War of

1812", "Municipal Government", "Responsible Government",

"Western Expansion", "Evolution of Responsible Government",

"World War I" and "World War II" are all part of the grade

seven and eight social studies program (Nova Scotia, 1993),

and, certainly by title, they reflect the perspective of

titanic clashes or government development.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education (1993a)

includes the following as a global objective:

> The program is an important means of educating
> students to respect the dignity, rights and
> humanity of all persons and promoting the
> principles for anti-racism, multiculturalism,
> interculturalism and gender equity. (p. 83)

However, in its listing of units of study for the junior

high schools, there is only one unit on multiculturalism

("Becoming a Multicultural Nation", grade eight) and none on

gender or racial issues. Neither is such analysis of race

and/or gender usually integrated into subject materials.

Grade seven students learn about the elimination of the

Beothuks of Newfoundland, but they don't learn the history

of the Mi'kmaq, a thriving aboriginal nation in the Atlantic

Provinces. Grade eight students should learn about

boundaries, taxations and fisheries as "growing pains in

British North America", and they could deal with other

topics such as the United Empire Loyalists in the Maritimes

or black Loyalists (Nova Scotia Department of Education,

1976, p.41). The emphasis on such historical data clearly

reflects the interests of a white capitalist patriarchy.

The grade ten ancient and medieval history program recommends a course of study that includes the development of agriculture, government, religion or revolutions. Again, these thematic perspectives all examine the public spheres of activity which are not only the areas that men are inclined to study, but also, the areas where men are active to the near exclusion of women. Those who represent dominant interests exercise the privilege of identifying the curriculum of schools and maintaining their interests within it.

Teachers of grade ten history are also offered the alternative course organization along the development of "First Western Civilization", "Emergence of European Nations" and "Development of the Renaissance Ideal". This offers a potentially more gender-inclusive program. However, even though the course includes a study of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China, the perspective offered by the development themes is clearly eurocentric and neglects the importance of African and Asian societies. In this construction of knowledge, it is the racial dominance of the white, eurocentric cultures that is clearly evident.

The grade eleven history program continues in the same vein:

> Major key concepts include the notion of progress, power, and the rights of the state, the group and the individual. (p. 85)

These are certainly important topics, with potential for important social and historical insights. As a history teacher, I would even argue that they are interesting. However, the questions need to be raised about who has defined progress, who is benefitting from this notion of power, who is being excluded and at what cost?

A similar posture is evident in the study of literature. A student recently asked me why there were not more women authors included in the high school program. Before I could answer, another student informed her that it is because there "aren't any important women authors". Hopefully, teachers know differently, but are we teaching our students differently? The books that are considered classics, those most often taught, are selected by academics as examples of 'high literature'; diaries and letters are representative of 'low literature', not coincidentally, forms often favoured by women writers who rarely had the financial resources or available time to indulge in writing 'high literature' (McCracken, 1992). As well, women were often denied access to publishing, which is one reason why many wrote under male pseudonyms (ie. George Sand, Ellis Bell).

Our schools further reflect patriarchal values in the ranking of different disciplines; science and mathematics, typically male-identified studies, are considered more rigorous than the 'softer' subjects, such as English or

humanities (Kenway & Modra, 1992). This message is clearly internalized by students. Discussing the various merits of the top four graduates, a group of high school students decided that it wasn't fair to compare them because one of the high-flyers wasn't taking any real subjects, just social studies and a couple of English credits. Further, the lower representation of women in sciences and mathematics suggests that women have internalized the message that we do not belong in this allegedly male domain.

When Howard Gardner (cited in Hunter, 1991) developed his theory of multiple intelligences, he attributed to them the same ranking style as is attached to academic disciplines. He classifies mathematical-logical intelligence as superior to the linguistic and interpersonal intelligence, and values pure abstraction over physical realities. This belief is clearly reflected in the schools. True scholarship is deemed to be marked by rational thought, dispassionate study and objectivity; empathy, understanding and intuitive knowledge are denigrated as inappropriate, frivolous and subjective. Certain, often innocuous, forms of critical thinking are glorified and students are encouraged to establish impersonal, detached truths (Belenky et al, 1986, p.102).

This division of thought into binary opposites -- objective reason versus subjective empathy is clearly gendered and it creates contradictory messages for girls.

First, they are encouraged to be more like boys in order to be successful (Kenway and Modra, 1992), but at the same time, girls who engage in this style of thinking are often seen as somewhat unfeminine (Livson and Peskin, cited in Belenky et al, 1986), since intellectual thought is seen as a contradiction of conventional femininity.

Further, the adversarial, competitive approach to learning which typifies academic streams in secondary and tertiary schools is not generally a comfortable approach for girls. Many female students adopt this adversarial model only when it is demanded by the educational system (Belenky et al, 1986). And, if they must engage in this verbal jousting, they often prefer to do so only in "safe" situations where the debate would not "threaten the dissolution of relationships" (ibid, p.105). In contrast to the male model that dominates the educational systems, women prefer to discuss new ideas, to share half-ideas to be developed into fuller understandings.

The accepted writing style is also a recognition of this male perspective. After elementary school, the formal essay with "a clear thesis substantiated by a set of logically developed points or illustration with appropriate organization and style" (Freedman and Pringle, 1985) is considered essential for schooling. Teachers complain about the students' inability to successfully produce this style of paper and demand that English departments 'fix' the

problem; and English teachers teach students to write their responses in the third person, present tense, following the conventions of Aristotelian logic. In this mode, impersonal is valued over the personal, argument over experience. In this mode, students learn that their work is inferior and they become alienated from their experience (Brown, 1992). This situation has severely negative consequences for social groups which are not well-represented by the dominant interests in schooling.

Pringle and Freedman (1985) also disparagingly observed that "in attempting argument[,] students are often 'ruminative' or exploratory, and that "students indulge in 'pathetic argument' based on emotions, feelings -- but not on reason." However, Sanborn (1992) points out that "the variety of forms found in essays is not just a matter of style but is connected with ways of thinking, ways of making knowledge" (p. 144). Students learn to write well by reading and *writing* a variety of essay styles. And writing in an exploratory model is an effective way of grappling with new conceptual knowledge.

Reproduction of the Status Quo

> The role of the Canadian school in the socialization process provides an important means whereby a society can produce members who are willing to conform to a social order that serves the interest of the dominant group.
> (Tilley and Miller, cited in Haughton, 1986, p. 5)

Historically, schooling was developed as a means to inculcate 'good habits', as a solution to the problems of

criminality and poverty (Walkerdine, 1992). By providing education for the (mostly working class) masses, urban youth would be kept off the streets and through suitable curriculum programmes, they would learn patriotism and civic duty (Curtis et al, 1992). By careful scientific examination of childhood development, educators hoped to learn the best ways to teach control of emotions and regulation of the population. In these ways and many more, the educational system was developed to maintain and to reproduce the separation between the valued public sphere and the devalued domestic sphere, to reinforce the hierarchy of subjects and knowledge and to subvert cultural differences in the interests of white, capitalist patriarchy.

The very hierarchical structure of the public schools with buzzers and timetables and absolute authority vested in teachers and principals is designed to prepare young people for the labour market where they will spend their adult years (Bigelow, 1990; Weiler, 1988). Education is complicit in the reproduction of a capitalist, patriarchal system (Kenway and Modra, 1992), in which activities are valued according to sex-identified roles, and power accrues, for the most part, to those who are white, male, heterosexual and affluent.

This educational design also reproduces the class system, whereby those from working class families can look

forward to a substandard education that will reduce their possibilities for escape from a subsistence lifestyle. As McLaren (1982) writes,

> Through the ritual construction of social relations in the classroom, schooling transmits and reinforces those ideologies which reflect the prevailing values and ethos of a male-dominated, hierarchical, middle-class social structure. (p. 21)

Public schools model middle-class values to the denigration of the culture of all other groups (Bigelow, 1990; Scott-Jones and Clark, 1988). In, for example, the dress standards of the teachers, the insistence on standard English, and the demands for quiet submission, schools must seem a very alien place to many of our students.

Through selection of text and topic, school systems also reproduce the "common wisdom of established knowledge embedded within the disciplines" (Davis and Nemiroff, 1992). As has already been seen, the disciplines are heavily scripted by a phallocentric and eurocentric world view that excludes the perspectives of those marginalized by race, class, and/or gender.

School culture and school texts also serve to reproduce the inequities of our society. What conclusions are drawn when girls observe the roles filled by women in the schools, as teachers of children, or teachers of 'soft' subjects, and compare those roles to those filled by men, as principals or teachers of 'hard' subjects?

Further, in interactions among students, boys are often unchallenged as they strut their importance by ignoring girls, ridiculing them and refusing to work with them simply on the basis of their sex.

> If boys are encouraged in this behaviour for all of their formative years ('boys will be boys'), there is no way to expect them to suddenly turn about as adults and see female peers as equals. (Verheyden-Hilliard, 1975, p. 19)

In these interactions, girls again learn that their needs are secondary to the boys' needs.

Even the literature that is written for young adults serves to reinforce the status quo. Although some changes have taken place over the last two decades, much remains the same. Girl protagonists are refusing to be treated as sex objects and they are showing interests in having careers; however, the careers they choose tend to be in traditional fields. Women in this young adult literature are often stay-at-home mothers or personal failures, thus reinforcing the notion that the suitable role for women is motherhood (Stover, 1992). Male leads still outnumber female leads and the boys in these novels tend to fit traditional models of stoicism and reserved emotions (ibid). If these novels are vicarious dating manuals, which researchers have found they sometimes are (Christian-Smith, 1990; Willinsky and Hunniford, 1986), then the lessons learned are not much different from the lessons taught two decades ago.

Exclusion

If you asked ten people to write about the five most
critical events of the past year, you would obviously
receive ten different reports. Truth is constructed from
what is known, what is experienced and what is perceived.
It is influenced by our individual and collective social
locations in terms of status, region and security. When
ideas are constructed and applied generally without
acknowledging disparate views, then the ideas will fit badly
and exclude large groups of people. Such is the situation
with the phallocentric and eurocentric knowledge of our
society.

Through custom and law, women and persons of colour
have been excluded from entering the academic discourse.
Writers like Martin Luther, Thomas Gisborne and others set
in print a paradigm of the docile, domestic woman (Beer,
1992; Rooke, 1994). In the middle ages, women who dared to
question the actions of the church or practiced medicine
were burned as witches. During the French revolution,
women's societies were banned (Smith, 1975). Practices of
slavery, segregation and white imperialism denied full
potential to Africans, East Indians and others; the legacies
of these injustices remain.

But women are not the only ones excluded from the
academic discourse:

> Feminists would argue that, historically, placing
> the emphasis on quality (whose definition?) and

> progress (whose ideals?) has only served to
> marginalize certain groups of students, namely
> women and minorities. (Brown, 1992, p. 53)

Just as there is no one definition of truth or knowledge,
neither is there just one universal woman. Women, like men,
come in multiple shapes, colours, ages and means, and their
perspectives are distinctive and should be valued and
educated as such.

Conclusion

Clearly, the schools represent a microcosm of the
larger social context, and in this they are susceptible to
all the stereotypes and biases that permeate the larger
setting. Through the curriculum, the hierarchical school
structure, and pedagogic practice, the public schools are
complicit in the reproduction of a white, eurocentric, male
world view to the exclusion of discourses better
representative of women and persons of colour. The few
random messages exhorting girls to pursue careers in
science, and encouraging them to see their potential in non-
traditional ways are often messages directed at changing
young women into imitation boys, recognition of a male model
where female is seen as deficient. Further, these messages
are not enough to counter the barrage of messages chaining
our students firmly to the traditional sex-identified
separate spheres.

In response to feminist and civil rights criticism,
there has been a shift in pedagogical practices across North

America, away from the banking model to methods that are
more constructive and experiential. The influences are
multiple. The next chapter will examine some of the
educational changes as they relate to the the public schools
of Nova Scotia.

Chapter Two

La Plus ça Change

(The more things change; the more they remain the same.)

In the first chapter, I described some of the ways in which the public school system reproduces the patriarchal and eurocentric social structure and reinforces the primacy of these same bodies of knowledge. In its emphasis on the inculcation of passive behaviours suited to low status workers, the system has been culpable in the paucity of creative problem-solvers. In its emphasis on the regurgitation of accepted knowledge, it is responsible for the disengagement of the electorate and of learners. In its reinforcement of existing hierarchies, it is complicit in the persistence of oppressive conflicts of race, class and gender. The system is designed to benefit students who are white, middle-class and male. Others succeed despite the disadvantages the system presents them.

However, the school system has not escaped criticism; successive educational initiatives have attempted to address the various inequities that are implicit in the status quo. Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller (1992) provide a good historical perspective of the challenges to the system as it developed in Ontario. More recent innovations -- whole language, inquiry-based learning, collaborative learning, to name the more progressive and prominent -- all take issue

with various aspects of the public school educational
system.

Whole language and inquiry-based learning seek to alter
traditional methods in order to increase the learner's
involvement with and access to information. Collaborative
and cooperative strategies seek to challenge the competitive
nature that has been typical of the system and thereby
change the interaction and success patterns of students.
Each of these approaches shares with the others a
dissatisfaction with the methods and underlying philosophies
of the school system. In this chapter, I will show the
similarities and differences of these different paradigms,
discuss how they challenge the status quo and show their
varying degrees of neglect of classism, racism and sexism.

Whole Language

Challenging the hierarchical classroom structure. Nova
Scotia considers itself among the founding locations for the
whole language movement. Starting in the 1970's,
researchers such as Judith Newman at Mount Saint Vincent
University led teachers to explore ways of teaching that
would challenge the behaviourist theories of approaching
language from bit to whole, sounds to sentences (Portelli
and Church, 1994). With the 1986 publication of the
provincial guide, *Language Arts in the Elementary School*,
whole language became the mandated approach to classroom

practice in Nova Scotia, accompanied by ongoing efforts to provide in-service support for teachers (Church, 1992).

Whole language emphasizes that reading and writing are best learned in the context of the student's own experiences. Instead of working from contrived texts of limited vocabulary -- "See Dick run." -- students learn to read messages written to them about their classroom experiences. The visual information system (letters and words) can best be acquired when fully supported with the non-visual information of reading such as language knowledge, contextual meaning and purpose (Smith, 1978). In terms of social inequities, this program, ideally, should begin to address the realities of the students in their own cultural climate, taking into account different family structures, living conditions, or range of general knowledge.

When Sandy Gow (1991) taught in a native community in northern British Columbia, it quickly became clear that basal readers and curriculum guidelines reflected a white malestream world view that either ignored or denigrated the realities of the village. Her students were more successful when she applied the principles of whole language and used local materials of immediate interest to the class, including ski-doo manuals, assembly instructions and recipes. By respecting the cultural knowledge of the

students, the teacher is able to enhance the students'
success with the academic curriculum.

Also, in whole language classrooms, students are
encouraged to work collaboratively to support one another's
work. Students learn to hold writing conferences and to
revise for content, based on questions of audience
appreciation rather than linguistic correctness (Graves,
1983). Whole language challenges the 'banking model' of
education by passing ownership of the lessons to the
students. It also apparently challenges the reproduction of
a classed society by encouraging collaboration instead of
competition among students.

Continued competition. In reality, the ideals of whole
language are often subverted within classrooms. Students
move into groups that become increasingly homogeneous, and
students in low-achieving groups rarely demonstrate upward
mobility (Curtis et al, 1992; Rist, 1970, 1975). Students
of visible minorities, or from low-income families, are
disproportionately identified as non-achievers (Curtis et
al, 1992). Although whole language purports to work with
individual students to enable them to maximize their
individual potential, it does little to address the power
structure of a system that reinforces classism, racism and
sexism.

The emphasis on individualism glorifies the ability of
each student to act as "meaning-maker extraordinaire"

(Kelly, 1994) and ignores the multiple ways in which we are ourselves scripted by texts. Students have already internalized much of the patriarchal code and their reading and writing reflects their inculcation in sex-identified roles. For this reason, little boys still write stories of gory battles and little girls still write stories of princes and princesses. Pam Gilbert (1989) asserts that the discourses of individualism fail to provide young women with positions of authority from which to write, and act instead to reinforce their exclusion:

> The prevailing personalist and individualist pedagogical discourses on language and literature education in schools are not discourses which offer speaking positions of authority for women and girls, largely because they are discourses which assume that the self is a coherent, ungendered entity, easily discovered and recognised and empowered. I would suggest that rather than empowering young women, these discourses encourage the construction of stereotypical female subject positions which limit women's understanding of their textural inscription and encourage them to see such inscription as "natural" and "normal". (p.263)

Within the school context, some students do attempt to resist the social politics, but, without support, encouragement or example, they are often left to flounder.

In the whole language classroom, as elsewhere, it is a neglected but necessary requirement that the influences of gender, race and social class be analyzed overtly and explicitly by the teacher. Teachers should be encouraged to intervene to help students to recognize and confront patriarchal and eurocentric scripting. Unfortunately, in

Nova Scotia, as elsewhere, whole language teachers are reluctant to interfere with student process. There is a mistaken notion that whole language is all-accepting, "warm and fuzzy", and that challenging students to engage critically or politically is at odds with the holistic philosophy (Church, 1994).

Further, the whole language emphasis on individualism manages to shift the entire onus of performance to the students. If they succeed, it is because they have worked well; if they fail, it is their own fault. Linda Briskin (1991) records this as one of the myths of public schooling:

> Perhaps more than any other, students get the "bootstrap" message: hard work leads to riches, fame, success and happiness. (p.6)

While this message challenges the notion of biological limits -- such as the presumed natural inferiority of women, blacks or aboriginals -- it does not identify the additional structural hurdles that exist in the current discriminatory education system or society at large. In the end, it serves to blame the victim for failing in a system that does not address her or his needs.

Inquiry Models

Student construction of information.
Picture a high school classroom, one of the traditional kind -- six rows of desks, all facing the front, each desk occupied by a student who is supposed to face the front of the room where stands the teacher, dictating notes, or transcribing them on the

board, notes on, say, the three causes of the American
Revolution, or the significance of Columbus's discovery of
America, or the theme of *The Crucible* or symbolism in *To a
Coy Mistress*. In such a situation, the teacher is
responsible for having a package of information ready for
distribution; the students are responsible for absorbing the
information ready for regurgitation on the examination. The
students complain that the information is boring and
irrelevant to their lives. The teacher complains that the
students lack enthusiasm and don't take the material
seriously. One solution is to have the students find the
answers on their own.

In the inquiry model, the students are given access to
original data, and asked to develop answers to a pre-
established problem. The students are taught a series of
steps to solve the problem, starting with problem
definition, statement of hypothesis, gathering of evidence,
testing and, finally, reaching a conclusion which states the
'best' solution to the 'main' problem. In this method,
students learn to analyze information independently of the
teacher. It teaches and provides practice in analyzing data
with ambiguous and conflicting statements. It teaches
objectivity and "respect above all for reason and evidence"
(Maher, 1987). Since the students are usually grouped,
this method also emphasizes interdependence and
collaboration.

Continued dominance of phallocentric constructions.
However, the analytical process utilized in inquiry teaching
is very similar to the scientific model, maintaining and
reproducing the hegemony of this discipline. While it
claims to encourage a "tolerance for ambiguity" (ibid),
students are still required to arrive at a single 'best'
solution. "Given the same information, all reach the same
conclusion" (ibid). Inquiry does not address the imbalance
of power that would make generalized 'best' solutions
suspect. It does not ask who is served by this 'best'
solution or who is neglected or harmed.

Further, inquiry teaching is "a process in which
personal bias and perspective are understood as evils to be
transcended" (Maher, 1987). This fallacious premise is
basic to traditional thinking, as well, but it is necessary
to recognize that there is no neutral solution, and no
neutral observer (Ellsworth, 1992). Each person brings to
the situation, a political understanding -- a set of
interests and a perspective. Inquiry teaching continues to
avoid this powerful source of bias which is a characteristic
of all knowledge and all inquiry. Although inquiry methods
teach students to be more active and more analytic in their
learning, it limits the extent of their critical awareness
by not encouraging analysis of the social construction of
knowledge and the relationship of knowledge and power in our
society. It also leaves unchallenged the power dynamics

within the groups of student inquirers, a topic to be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Collaborative/Cooperative Groups

Robert Slavin (1988) was one of many researchers to articulate the basic elements of collaborative learning: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, collaborative social skills, and processing/debriefing (Jacobs and Ilola, 1991). In collaborative learning situations, students work together to develop their understandings of the academic material. Because the students work in groups, collaborative approaches are designed to diminish the highly competitive, individualistic interactions of the traditional class.

The principle of positive interdependence requires that all students are responsible for the learning of their peers, while students are also held accountable for their own work. Heterogeneous groupings encourage students of different strengths and different backgrounds to work together harmoniously, gaining from the mix of experiences.

Collaborative learning also includes a significant writing component, encouraging the use of journals as a place where students explore their understanding of new material. In this way, students have the opportunity to personalize their learning and look for applications in their own lives.

Collaborative learning challenges the hierarchical structure and passive learning of the traditional classroom by encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. By mixing students in work groups, it has the potential for creating positive work experiences that will reduce the tensions of race, class and gender.

Discriminatory speech patterns. However, in a study of discussion group behaviours, Hilliard (1981) found that while in single-race groups, black participants spoke more, but in inter-racial groups, the discussions were dominated by white men. Hilliard's study did not provide a definitive explanation of the phenomena, but it is clear that not all realities were being expressed in those group discussions. Indeed, it is possible that racial stereotypes are in fact reinforced rather than challenged in groups where the dominant group controls the direction of the discussion. Marginalized groups often do not feel sufficiently "safe" or comfortable, given the power differences, and so silence is the result.

In mixed-gender groups, traditional speech patterns often assert themselves, allowing boys to dominate the discussions even at the expense of the learning task. Hazelwood and Roth (1992) found that in small mixed-gender groups, boys spoke as primary speaker 71% of the time, while girls spoke in that role 42% of the time. Close observation of the groups showed that the girls' talk was usually on

task and exploratory; the boys' talk was often inaccurate and summative. In spite of the higher quality of task-oriented discussion initiated by the girls, their input was ignored and silenced. In a separate study of small-group interactions, Fisek (1991) observed that interaction patterns quickly become stable and reinforcing, acting against the potential for equal participation. He found that when girls are operating in male-dominated contexts, other status characteristics, such as knowledge, race or class, become less salient than gender and prevent group leadership by girls. Implementation of a collaborative approach does not of itself address the existing discriminatory scripts which act to reinforce themselves if left unchallenged.

Conclusion

Educators, at least some of them, have been calling for change within the system. By trying to build opportunities for collaboration, to break down the hierarchical opposition of the classroom, to challenge the texts and writers of text, teachers and researchers are struggling to provide students with the tools to construct a more just reality locally and globally.

Whole language engages the student in an interaction with real language, respecting the child's pre-established knowledge. Applied in this way, this approach offers an opportunity to diminish the discriminatory discourses by

dealing with students in their lived realities. No longer
is it necessary to teach a class of students where, for
example, single parent families are the norm, that the
'typical' family has one male and one female parent living
in a detached home. Reading and writing can centre on the
daily encounters of the students, validating the worth of
the individual and the group.

In its emphasis on writing development and development
of audience and voice, whole language has the potential to
challenge the systemically imposed silence of marginalized
groups. Opportunities for prolific writing could enable
students to personalize and process their academic work.

Similarly, inquiry models of teaching offer students
much greater involvement in their own acquisition and
personalization of information. Provided with adequate data
and frequent opportunity for analysis, they are potentially
more involved in and committed to their own education.

Further, in their emphasis on peer collaboration, whole
language, inquiry-based and collaborative models all provide
opportunities for children to learn to work productively
together. By encouraging cooperation instead of
competition, they challenge the inequities of a classed
society.

The collaborative/cooperative models articulate the
specific social skills that are needed to make student
groupings work effectively, enhancing positive interactions

and diminishing the competitive individualism of traditional classes.

However, the potential benefits of these programs continue to accrue dominantly to the white, middle-class, male student because of the systemic inequities. Unless teachers actively intervene to challenge the status quo, young women and persons of colour will continue to acquire their education from the sidelines.

Despite active pedagogic innovations, the education system is still perpetuating the inequities of racism, sexism and classism. Identifying the inequities is a significant initial step in countering their pervasive influence, acting on those findings is more complex. One response to classroom bias is the liberal feminist approach of non-sexism which is the topic of chapter three.

Chapter Three
The Search for Neutrality: The Limits of Non-Sexism

In chapter two, I identified some of the pedagogical
innovations that have been introduced in Nova Scotia to
address the systemic inequities described in the first
chapter. However, the gendered, racial and classed biases
that permeate the public education system cannot be
eliminated or even diminished through minor curricular
changes. A drastic, focused plan of action is required to
address the built-in, multi-level discriminatory practices.

Due in part to the low status of women in our society,
and the hold patriarchal influence has on most institutions,
including media, much feminist criticism is often dismissed
or belittled, and generally misunderstood. However, when the
demands are stated clearly and repeatedly, some form of
action must be taken; that often token response is usually
what is felt in the schools. Faced with mounting evidence
of the blatant sexism in schools, many public school systems
have put some measures in place to attempt to correct the
situation. Textbooks are monitored to avoid overt
stereotyping by race or gender (Baldwin and Baldwin, 1992);
some provincial policies, such as the Nova Scotia policy
statement cited earlier, include statements about equity
(ibid); and teachers are encouraged to "understand the need
to promote equal opportunities" (Coffey and Acker, 1991).

To the limited extent the educational system has responded to the feminist critique, it is through a stance of *non-sexism*. This stance is based on the liberal philosophy that sexism, like racism, is incidental to the educational and social structures, and that, through sensitization and good intentions, the negative attitudes of individuals can be corrected (Anderson, 1993; Briskin, 1990; Mukherjee, n.d.). However, the reality is that discrimination on the basis of sex and race is indemic, deeply engrained in the entire social structure and the effects of this discrimination permeate every aspect of our lives. The liberal stance of non-sexism, as with non-racism, fails to address the issues of power and powerlessness that perpetuate the oppressive hierarchies.

Non-sexism is built on the false assumption that equal access is the same as equal opportunity. It assumes that as long as teachers respond to each individual, and avoid stereotyping, then gender and race are not issues. However, "this model tends to de-emphasize the social and political context in which teaching takes place" (Coffey and Acker, 1991, p.253). This approach assumes that we can find a neutral place in which to teach, devoid of social influence and social struggle. But non-sexist approaches are not neutral; they hide the power structures and continue to reinforce the status quo. The patterns of interactions between students, and between students and teachers betray

the patriarchal and eurocentric systems where women and minorities are routinely devalued. These same patterns are evident in our curriculum materials and in the social context in which we operate. Bringing balance to interaction patterns and textbooks will not alter the structures which deny equality to women and visible minorities. Rather, ignoring the patterns of power and powerlessness will merely allow them to continue unhindered.

Non-sexism

Commatising gender. School boards have been making gestures towards addressing sexism in the schools. However, often the attention to sexism tends to be understated, "commatised" (Coffey and Acker, 1991) and clumped with other social divisions. Baldwin and Baldwin (1992) note that school board policies addressed racism long before sexism and it still tends to be addressed more frequently. The *Nova Scotia Public School Programs* (1993), in a section on Preparing all Students for a Lifetime of Learning states that

> the teaching/learning environment must be sensitive
> to the culture and heritage of learners and must
> actively promote anti-racist principles" (p.2).

Promoting anti-racist principles is long overdue, but what about promotion of anti-classist and anti-sexist principles? In the same document, in a statement of common essential learnings, it states

> Students need to respect persons of different
> social and religious backgrounds, different gender,

and different abilities from their own. They need to understand, respect and value cultures and races different from their own, confronting racism where and when it occurs. (p.5)

Why don't they need to confront sexism? How is this form of discrimination any less vile?

If anything, sexism is a more virulent oppression because it is the one form of social subjugation where the members of the dominant and marginalized groups live intimately with each other. As bell hooks (cited in Lewis, 1992) writes:

> Sexism is unique. It is unlike other forms of domination -- racism or classism -- where the exploited and oppressed do not live in large numbers intimately with their oppressors or develop their primary love relationships (familial and/or romantic) with the individuals who oppress and dominate or share in the privileges attained by domination ... (For women) the context of these intimate relationships is also the site of domination and oppression. (p.182)

Further, the statistics on violence against women show that women are most often the victims of the men who are allegedly their protectors. Indeed, as the Statistics Canada (cited in Brady, 1993) study shows,

> ... women were twice as likely to be assaulted by men they knew (45 per cent) than by a stranger (23 per cent).

In a related article (The Body Shop, n.d.), it is reported that "one in five men living with a woman admits to assaulting her". This manifestation of violence is part of the patriarchal structure that relegates women to second-class citizenship. Not only do these policy statements fail

to provide a clear anti-sexist stance, they continue to
overlook the complexity of multiple layers of oppression.
As social disorders, racism, sexism, and classism are all
sypmtomatic of the same abuse of power and as such, the
reflect and reinforce one another. Thus a black working
class female is lower on the hierarchical ladder than a
black working class male. This meshing of overlapping
biases makes the feminist struggle even more complex within
visible minority cultures, as bell hooks (1992) notes:

> [Black men] wanted black women to conform to the
> gender norms set by white society. They wanted to
> be recognized as "men," as patriarchs, by other
> men, including white men. Yet they could not
> assume this position if black women were not
> willing to conform to prevailing sexist gender
> norms. (p. 92)

Black women are expected to help their brothers to fight
against the yoke of racism, and then willingly assume the
yoke of sexism.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education's limited
commitment to battling sexism is clearly shown in their
'commatised' approach to policy statements. However, in the
Nova Scotia curriculum guideline for Language Arts (1983),
gender and race are not mentioned even in this 'commatised'
approach. And although this guide lists possible approaches
to literature, it makes no mention of feminist literary
theory, one of the most influencial theories in the
'academy' over the past two decades. The general aims of
the English language arts programs includes a requirement to

> nurture the students' growth in awareness and
> appreciation of both personal identity and the
> diverse values of others as reflected in Canada's
> multicultural literature and society
> (p.2).

This statement clearly reflects the liberal multi-cultural

approach to racism by adding an appreciation of the exotic

diversity of non-western groups (Mukherjee, n.d.). It is

also a glaring example of the continued omission of gender

issues.

Cleaning Up the Language

The generic 'man'.
Academics and grammarians who

oppose efforts toward a more inclusive language insist that

'man' is a generic reference that refers to people as a

whole, but research indicates otherwise:

> Although feminist efforts to combat sexist grammar
> are often ridiculed, experimental studies have
> demonstrated that children illustrate stories about
> primitive *man* with drawings of men. Likewise,
> university students asked to select appropriate
> illustrations for chapters entitled "Social Man"
> and "Industrial Man" usually chose male
> illustrations, whereas a control group illustrating
> chapters for "Society" and "Industrial Life"
> selected pictures of both sexes. (Stanworth, 1983,
> cited in Baldwin and Baldwin, 1992, p.112)

The use of discriminatory language patterns is still

prevalent. David Blakesley (1992) notes that while women

are more likely than men to use 'he/she', they are still in

the minority. He recommends engaging students in discussion

about the implications of language in order to show them

that the language we use reflects and reproduces the beliefs

upon which we act.

Alice Freed (1987) writes that sexist language, more
than sexist ideas, frames and informs the perpetuation of
sexism. As Rosalie Maggio (1991) illustrates,

> The textbook on American government that
> consistently uses male pronouns for the president,
> even when not referring to a specific individual
> (e.g., "a president may cast his veto"), reflects
> the fact that all our presidents have so far been
> men. But it also shapes a society in which the
> idea of a female president somehow "doesn't sound
> right". (p. 3)

The more often discriminatory notions are articulated in
sexist/racist language patterns, the more ingrained and
'natural' they seem.

To those who claim that we should spend more time
working on important social problems instead of worrying
about mere grammar, Blakesley (1992) cautions against
trivializing the power of language.

> If the aim is to teach students to write clearly,
> to write what they mean, teachers should help
> students realize that it will no longer do to
> stereotype or exclude people by using pronouns
> indiscriminately. (p.29)

Freed (1987) recommends sensitizing students to the effects
of language by having them maintain journals recording
sexist comments heard or read, and then write a narrative or
fictional account about one of the examples.

Advocates of non-discriminatory language (Blakesley,
1992; Freed, 1987; Maggio, 1991; McClure, 1992) remind
teachers of the importance of monitoring our own language
use:

1. choose non-traditional examples (The boss asked
her secretary if he could ...)
2. use he/she
3. avoid biased phrases (forefathers, black-and-
white, gypped, welfare mom)
4. use parallel constructions (man & woman; husband
& wife, instead of the imbalanced man & wife)

A bias-free word-finder for student and teacher use is a
valuable classroom resource that should be readily
available. Most students, indeed many adults, are unaware
of the extremely offensive roots of many of our common
idioms and expressions. To speak of "being gypped" is
fairly common, but few speakers recognize the racist slur
against the Romani population. How often do we consider the
connotations of once parallel constructions, such as
hubby/hussy or master/mistress? The bias-free word finder
can be employed to teach them the history of word/phrase
usage, which is interesting of itself, and often leads to a
voluntary modification of language.

Removing biased language is an important principle in
the non-sexist/non-racist approach and it is an important
aspect of a more inclusive educational system. However,
inclusive language is still a principle which is often more
noticeable in the use than the breech.

Cleaning Up the Text Books

Non-Sexist Language. Textbook authors and editors are
fully aware that new publications must conform to
Departmental policy statements regarding gender and racial
equity. "McGraw-Hill Book Company has published a pamphlet

entitled *Guidelines for Bias-Free Publishing* for its authors and editors, and Ontario textbook evaluators receive a checklist prepared by the Ontario Council on the Status of Women" (Baldwin and Baldwin, 1992, p.113).

The authors of *The Enduring Past* (Trueman and Trueman, 1982) preface their book with the following statement which shows their awareness of the requirement:

> The authors have done their utmost to ensure that the language used in this edition is free of gender. When the word "man" or a variation of it does appear (except, of course, in quotations, which cannot be altered), it is used because it is clearly the male of the species that is being referred to. (p.xi)

How well do they do in their promise? A cursory glance reveals that pronouns are largely avoided and that words like 'hominid' or 'citizen' take the place of 'early man' or the generic 'man'. However, there is still reference to "man's earliest achievements in a settled mode of life" (p.20), and a schematic showing the importance of agriculture bears the caption "Man tills the soil" (p.20). In the description of Buddha's teachings, the authors write

> Buddha believed that man did not have to remain chained to the ever-revolving wheel of life. It was man's desire for material things that shackled him there, and if he could conquer desire he could escape this repeated rebirth into successive existences. (p.61)

Trueman and Trueman provide no explanation of Buddha's vision of the role of women. The authors' "utmost effort" to free their text of gender-language appears more as an

effort to ward off criticism than to take seriously the issue of language inclusion.

The above example aside, publishers and their authors are making an effort to remove sexist language from the texts that are used in classes, and, again, this represents a step in the right direction. There are still those who argue that 'he', 'his', and 'man' are generic, but the continued resistance tends to demonstrate the significance of language usage and the threat to status quo power posed by inclusive language.

Women and history. The Ontario Ministry of Education (n.d.) recognizes that the historical participation of women is too often overlooked:

> Most history and political studies texts and political studies texts gloss over or ignore the contributions of women, with the result that students may complete their secondary school education having little or no knowledge of the female involvement in history" (p. 65).

Recognizing this discrepancy, publishers are making an effort to include more of the contributions of women in the curriculum. However, Patricia and Douglas Baldwin (1992) examined the role of "textbooks in fostering negative images toward women" (p.110) and noted that the standard texts reinforce the separate spheres of men and women and trivialize woman's role in history. With an average of 70 to 90% of classroom time devoted to textbook study (Muther 1985, cited in Baldwin and Baldwin, 1992), the textbook has significant authority and influence.

The textbook subtexts are deeply interwoven and it is often easy to overlook some of the subtle discriminatory messages, unless one is trained to recognize them, a training that is significantly lacking in teacher preparation programs.

In *The Enduring Past*, a textbook mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are twenty pages in a five-hundred page text, indexed referring to the subject of women. One of those references takes the reader to a passage called the "Arts of Peace":

> And so the Harappans cultivated the arts of peace. They produced some clay figurines and some very fine sculptures in stone and bronze, and left behind them a large collection of bracelets, rings, and beads, fashioned of gold, silver, copper, bronze, and stone. From such an abundance of jewellery we might guess that the inhabitants of the Indus valley cared considerably about their appearance. Indeed, they were not above using tricks to improve it. Archaeologists have discovered that it was common practice to use rouge, lipstick, tweezers, and ear-piercing implements over 4500 years ago! (p.57-57)

In what way is this about women? Are woman identified as sculptors or jewellers? Or is it that inhabitants who care 'considerably about their appearance' and use 'tricks to improve it' must necessarily be women? Even the phrasing is an affront. In a society that actively promotes a $20 billion dollar cosmetics industry (Wolf, 1991, p.17) and where "professional women are devoting up to a third of their income to 'beauty maintenance' (ibid, p.52), a

reference to cosmetics as 'tricks' is both simplistic and cruel.

Trueman and Trueman make an effort to represent women in each of the historical periods about which they write, but their references usually belittle women and reinforce the separate spheres that are well-entrenched in society. The description of the role of women in ancient Egypt begins with a description of the beauty of those women, their beautiful clothes, their use of cosmetics, and the love and affection of their husbands. After these things are mentioned in length, it is also briefly recorded that

> Some women could read and write (there is even an
> Egyptian word for a female scribe), and they could
> own property and had certain legal rights (p.49).

Trueman and Trueman also mention that a woman, Hatshepsut, "even occupied the throne". There is nothing written about what she did during her 'occupation'. Not only is Hatsheput silenced as a woman, she is also silenced as a black woman. Chief aide to her father, King Thothmes I, she became the first self-proclaimed pharoah of Egypt because Egyptian law did not allow a woman to become ruler (Morgan, 1991).

In another example, the photograph caption describes Eleanor of Aquitaine as "one of the earliest splendid examples of feminism" (p.364), but there is nothing to describe what she did that was so splendid. Her husband, Henry II, is described, as are her sons, Richard and John,

but the 'splendid example of feminism' is silenced in this
text.

Further, this book includes no chapter on the role of
orders of church women, no comment on the women of science
or literature, no comment on the significant roles of women
in history. If the Trueman text is any indication, the 'add-
women-and-stir' liberal recipe for including women in the
study of history is not making any significant change to the
patriarchal eurocentric standard.

The Enduring Past is the principle text for the grade
ten ancient/medieval history course (HIS 421). In Nova
Scotia, students are required to obtain one history credit
in order to be awarded the high school graduation
certificate. Approximately half of students enrolled in
grade ten select this course.

Women in literature. The English departments are also
aware of the need to increase the number of women evident in
the curriculum. Consider the literature that is studied in
Nova Scotia high schools and the list includes *Lord of the
Flies, The Chrysalids, Each Man's Son, Julius Caesar,* and
Animal Farm, all by male authors. Margaret Atwood's *The
Handmaid's Tale* also makes it to the list as an optional
selection for the independent novel study. Michelle
Landsberg reports that the same phenomenon is operating in
Ontario:

> Of the "Top 26" literary works -- that is, the 26
> novels, plays, and anthologies most used in high

schools -- 88 percent are written by men.
(Landsberg, 1982, p.9)

Is it any wonder that students graduate from high school

believing that there are no significant women authors?

The advocates of non-sexist education would increase

the availability of books written by women and, in this

respect, anthologies used in the schools have improved, but

only modestly. In 1965, Tillie Olsen (cited in McCracken,

1992) reported that only one in twelve stories in

anthologies were written by women; by 1988, Bonnie Davis

(cited in McCracken) found that the number was three in ten

stories by women authors. This imbalance must be addressed

if young women are to receive the message that women can

write and do have important messages to share.

The phallocentric standard evident in young adult

books, mentioned in chapter one, is also evident in

literature chosen for the curriculum. Not only are most of

the authors male, but the characters in this literature are

also predominantly male. Women who are included are shown

in passive, supporting, traditional roles.

> In all Top 26, the most frequent social position of
> women was housewife; second most frequent was
> servant.
> While female authors often write about strong,
> rebellious, or creative women, male authors tend to
> depict women as dulled and pliant domestic victims,
> thrilled masochists, or evil temptresses.
> (Landsberg, 1982, p.9-10)

An analysis of reader series used in Ontario (Batcher,

Winter, Wright, 1987) shows that the language arts texts

most often used in classroom, continue to reflect a social
structure for which they were criticized in 1975:

> Set in the past, set in the present, set in the
> future, peopled by girls, boys, women, men, or
> indeterminates who may stand for anyone, based in
> history, in fact or in fancy, within a context of
> ecology, of psychology, of legal responsibility, or
> of any other of the several dozen contexts we found
> in the Readers, *The Old Metaphor* underpins every
> story. We are never given access to, or even a
> vision of anything other than a male-dominated
> world in which women's place is limited and
> specific. (p. 39)

What do our students learn from this study? They learn that
the real doings of this world are enacted by men and that
the proper role of women is as quiet wives and loving
mothers.

This literature continues to reinforce the living
contradiction between passive construction of femininity and
the masculine construction of active student. School
readers depict girls as incapable, incompetent and
powerless; they depict boys as "men-in-training" (Batcher,
et al, 1987, p.30). Even when the circumstances are
occasionally modernized, showing women in sports or boys
showing emotion, the old script often shows through:

> The girl in sports is accused of trying to be a
> boy, and the boy who cries is still called a cry-
> baby. (ibid, p. 31)

With deeply engrained socialization emphasizing the
importance of being feminine in order to be accepted, the
accusation of imitating boys is often unacceptable.

Further, there is also a dearth of novels by or about persons of colour. Black students may see themselves represented in one of two novels, neither of which is written by an African-American: *Underground to Canada* or *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The first is occasionally used in the grade seven language arts program and shows the accomplishments of one determined black woman leader, but continues a eurocentric representation of black history as being a history of slavery. The second novel is part of the grade ten curriculum, and while the black characters are the subject of the court trial, they are shown as passive bystanders at the whims of prejudice and biased justice. This novel is the subject of ongoing controversy in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick where active African-Canadian communities are rejecting the perpetuation of negative images without sufficient effort to provide a balanced perspective.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education (1993b) has published a bibliography of resources, *Free and Equal Without Distinction*, which provides a few alternatives, but prominent authors of African descent such as Zora Neale Hurston are still missing from the approved reading lists. "Free and equal" is an ideal that is still unfulfilled in our public schools.

Sex Differences in Teacher-Student Contact

Researchers have extensively analyzed sex differences in teacher-student interaction in terms of amount and nature of the interactions to find that girls are being short-changed (Lafrance, 1991; Leinhardt, Seeward and Engel, 1979; Sadker and Sadker, 1984). Further, it is very evident that students not only notice but internalize the bias that surrounds them. Linda Briskin (1992) writes that

> overwhelming evidence suggests that discriminatory practices co-exist with the ideology of equal opportunity, and that students implicitly recognize and accept differential treatment on the basis of gender. (p.6)

As teachers, it is imperative that we carefully self-monitor the messages we send in our daily interactions.

The Gender/Ethnic/Racial Expectations and Student Achievement (GESA) program is an American-based staff development program designed to support and implement strategies to reduce the classroom disparities. Holly Lindley and Mary Keithley (1991) report that successful implementation of the GESA program reduces the disparity of response opportunity from 89% male to 57% male, alters student perceptions of gender-biased roles (engineers versus childcare), and increases student performance in mathematics and reading. The program provides workshops on five topics over a five-month period, with each workshop followed by peer coaching. The workshop topics include instructional

contact, grouping/organization, discipline, student self-concept, and evaluation.

Instructional contact. In the classroom, boys consistently receive more instructional contacts (Jackson and Lahaderne, 1967; Nairn, 1991) and are involved in more work-related and procedural interactions with teachers (Brophy and Good, 1970). Boys receive more praise, remediation, acceptance and intellectual interactions (Sadker and Sadker, 1984). To reduce the existing disparities in the classrooms, teachers are encouraged to provide an increased number of response opportunities to the girls and to acknowledge the girls' responses in appropriate academic ways (Lindley and Keithley, 1991).

Teacher response also varies depending on the race of the student. Teachers have higher performance standards for white students than for black students and the praise given to the latter is likely to be qualified (Scott-Jones and Clark, 1986).

Boys tend to be more aggressive in demanding attention and shouting out their responses (Cooper, 1987; Sadker and Sadker, 1984). The GESA program trains teachers to provide a longer wait-time between the teacher's question and acceptance of a student's answer; the longer wait time allows the less aggressive or more reluctant students the opportunity to participate.

Cooper (1987) reports that teachers respond to girls and boys in noticeably different ways: boys are reprimanded in a harsh tone, whereas girls are reprimanded in a more conversational tone; boys are reprimanded more often than girls; boys tend to talk longer and interrupt more; and, teachers more often call boys by their names. Further, boys and girls and criticized for different behaviours: boys for poor work, girls for assertiveness (Houston, 1987, cited in Briskin, 1992, p.6). This establishes a pattern for performance assessment that is continued in the workplace. Robin Morgan (cited by Media Women, 1993) illustrates that the office vocabulary is distinctly gender-based:

> If a person is supportive, call her 'bright', call him 'yes-man'.
> If a person is innovative, call her 'pushy', call him 'original'.
> If a person is politically involved, call her 'overemotional', call him 'committed'. (p. 87)

In order to reduce the gender disparities in schools, and by extension, in the workplace, teachers must abandon this double standard and respond to girls and boys in similar ways (Damarin, 1990).

Likewise, teachers must learn to abandon double standards of response to students of different races. Linda Grant (cited in Scott-Jones and Clark, 1986) found that teachers were inclined to encourage social competence of black female students while encouraging intellectual competence of white females. Tomlinson (cited in Coultas, 1989) noted the overlap between racism and sexism, finding

that "black boys are more likely to be stereotyped by white teachers as deviants and troublemakers than black girls." Discrimination is revealed in deeply engrained behaviours, which emphasize the inseparable quality of various oppressions. It is not enough to attempt to deal with them singly, rather they must be identified and challenged as systemic political and social issues of power and powerlessness.

Houston (ob.cit.) also records that a boy's performance is usually explained in terms of ability, while a girl's performance is described in terms of luck. Boys who dislike mathematics are more likely to blame the subject for being irrelevant, but girls who dislike the subject are more likely to say that it is "too difficult" (AAUW, 1990). Girls consistently receive messages that they are less capable than boys and this acts to diminish their self-esteem (ibid). They also receive contradictory messages about their role in society. If the proper role and best for women is seen to be motherhood, then what is the role of a girl in school? As Valerie Walkerdine (1992) queries, "Is she to be the knower or the nurturer of knowers?" Girls must receive the message consistently and strongly, in our words and our actions, that they are capable and worthy students, of no less ability or value than their male peers.

In measuring the disparities of interactions, Lafrance (1991) noted that not only are girls given fewer

opportunities to respond to classroom interactions, but they are also called upon to answer the lower levels of questions, another aspect of classroom practice that needs to be addressed. All students should be given opportunities to respond to all levels of questions. Further, they should receive supportive and analytic feedback which encourages them to enhance their learnings.

Conclusion

The non-sexist approach to the classroom is an important re-action to the educational demand of the feminist movement: changes in the sexist language that is used in daily interactions and in written texts; recognition of the role of women in history and literature; and the removal of discriminatory practices in the classroom.

Of itself, non-sexism is a challenge to implement and the intensive structure of programs like GESA are an indication of how much work is involved in making classroom changes. But, even though it has finally received at least minimal recognition in Department of Education policy statements, the reality falls sadly short of the rhetoric. Most students continue to attend classes where the 'he/man' discourse is the order of the day and where boys continue to claim two-thirds of the discussion time.

The successful implementation of the liberal premises of non-sexist education is an important step towards diminishing the surface features of a discriminatory

discourse. However, non-sexist education neither addresses nor challenges the dominant methods of teaching, the patriarchal social context of our schools and society, or the phallocentric curriculum. Non-sexism is striving for an elusive neutrality that does not exist given the intricate and complex workings of power. In order to effect a real and lasting change, it is necessary to work for structural as well as surface change.

Researchers are beginning to examine how women, given their gendered experiences, prefer to learn and are finding that there are differences between men and women as learners and workers. The implementation of practices to respond to these differences in learning styles is actively promoted in Women's Studies courses at tertiary institutions and in anti-sexist pedagogy. Anti-sexist pedagogy recognizes that sexism, like racism and classism, are the result of social and political power structures. Anti-sexist pedagogy seeks to identify the myriad manifestations of bias and to actively challenge their privilege. In chapter four, I will explore the gender differences in leadership, moral development, educational ideals, learning styles, language, and school structure, in order to develop an overview of a distinctly feminist pedagogy.

Chapter Four
Making it Political: The Need for Anti-Sexism

As shown in the previous chapter, education systems are attempting to respond to the feminist critique through policies of non-sexism. Non-sexism is based on the liberal belief that the discriminatory practices are surface problems which can be eliminated by educating people to be more sensitive. Although this stance recognizes the problems of sexism, racism, and classism, it does not view them as structural problems. It places the onus on teachers to provide a gender-neutral environment in their classrooms and it reinforces the notions of individual agency to counter systemic conditions (Briskin, 1990). A non-sexist approach obscures the gendered and racial power relations that exist among students and teachers, relations which left unaddressed will continue to exert themselves in self-perpetuating ways (ibid).

A more critical evaluation of the pervasive influence of the patriarchal ideology is required. Sexism is the result of real historical, political and economic forces; it is an issue of power relations; it is part and parcel of every social structure. To challenge and defeat sexism requires personal and political action: being sensitive is not enough; surface changes are not enough. As Briskin (1990) points out

> To a certain extent, the position of non-sexism is
> a logical absurdity. In a society so riddled with
> sexism and racism, no person -- black or white,
> male or female -- can claim to be free of either.
> To focus on personal moralities is, paradoxically,
> to decrease individual responsibility rather than
> to increase it. Such a focus demands no public
> political activity, only a neutrality that can
> inadvertently serve to bolster the status quo.
> (p.20)

It is futile to deny that gender exists and influences our daily lives in a myriad of ways; rather, it is imperative that we learn to name it accurately, to critique its influences, and to choose our responses from a well-informed standpoint. We must learn to ask not *if* gender is a variable (a non-sexist inclination) but to ask, instead, in what ways a given context (teaching, administration) *is* gendered. Anti-sexist pedagogy is about teaching and learning this dynamic, and devising pro-active challenges to patriarchy. Anti-sexist pedagogy is teaching "not to change women to fit the world, but to change the world" (Manicom, 1992).

Influence of Patriarchy

Patriarchy's influence is felt at almost every level of human response and yet it varies from subject to subject in chimeric capricity. It is present in the sexual division of labour, it is observable in the gender-based literature preferences (ie. romance novels), it is seen in the colours chosen for infant-wear, and it is present in the different approaches to morality. In our students, we often

generalize certain behaviours as typical of, although not exclusive to, one gender over another.

Some of these generalizations are present more in our expectations than in reality, but that too is a by-product of patriarchy's influence on our categorization schema. Girls who behave like boys are called 'tomboys' and their 'unfeminine' behaviour is accepted with amused tolerance; boys who behave like girls are the source of grave concern for their parents and teachers. It is one thing to imitate the behaviours of the dominant group, but quite another to adopt the mannerisms of the subordinate.

In this way, gender construction can be as limiting for males as it is for females. There is ongoing pressure for boys to conform to the rugged images of heterosexual masculinity which reinforce patterns of misogyny:

> Widespread gender stereotypes reproduce patterns of violence. When men try to live up to socially constructed notions of masculinity, they act tough, domineering, aggressive and are quick to turn to violence when angry. (Briskin, 1990, p.2)

Additionally, the pressure for boys to conform to the masculine construct is part and parcel of rampant homophobic attitudes. Researchers at Macquarrie University in Australia (Kessler, Ashenden, Connell and Dowsett, 1985) describe the systemic celebration of "toughness and endurance" in the football enthusiasm at a boys' school which not only glorifies the macho image of masculinity but denigrates those who do not meet the image:

> The boys who for reasons of physique, capacity, or
> preference have been relegated to study, nonviolent
> games, debating, and the like are condemned by the
> football heroes to be known as "the Cyrils", a term
> indicating effeminacy. (p.39)

In this way, the labeling acts as a form of social control

(Anderson, 1993). Young men face rigidly circumscribed

behaviour norms within which they will be accepted by the

normative group. Certain forms of masculinities are so

highly valued that to not adhere is to betray the entire of

manhood and to incur its wrath!

This controlling feature is also used to discourage men

from adopting pro-feminist perspectives.

> Adopting a pro-woman attitude puts men and women at
> odds with the dominant culture. Men may think that
> by calling themselves feminists they will be
> thought of as gay, itself a stigmatized identity in
> the dominant culture. (Anderson, 1993)

Any identification with women which is not based on sexual

objectification and conquest is suspect. In this way, the

feminist struggle is further relegated to the margins of

social and academic discourse.

Researchers have identified differences in the ways in

which women and men, girls and boys respond to different

situations and in the ways they learn. There is no

convincing evidence that these differences are biologically

based, but in the social-political context which we have

inherited, they are observable and measurable. There is

some debate over recent findings that indicate a sex-linked

differentiation in brain structure; however, even if the

differences could be proven to be in some way biologically based, this in no way rationalizes the social hierarchical ranking of these differences. Frequently, different is reported as deficient. Freud is a notorious example of reporting gender differences as deficiencies; Piaget and Kohlberg are just two of many education researchers who have conducted their research with boys and then generalized their findings to both sexes.

Indeed, Abraham Maslow wrote, in his hierarchy of needs, that self-fulfilment and self-actualization, the highest levels of human needs, are male experiences but that women can *go beyond femaleness* to achieve those levels after they finish with the feminine things like home and family!

Gender Differences in Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg developed an influential model of moral development based on a twenty-year longitudinal study of eighty-four boys.

> "When female behaviour failed to conform to his model, Kohlberg reasoned that females were deficient in moral reasoning, rather than that his model was inaccurate" (Shakeshaft, 1986).

In an important feminist study, Carol Gilligan (1982) refuted Kohlberg's work and found that women take a different, not disabled, approach to moral reasoning. Whereas boys insist on rules of play and will argue based on a morality of rights, girls' play tends to be more centred on relationships and disputes are settled with attention to

an ethics of care. To boys, the game is more important; to girls, the relationships are paramount.

In her work on women in the workforce, Betty Harragan (1977) made a similar observation about the differences in children's play and how that affects their moral and social behaviour:

> The bulk of this important learning about the "rules of the game" takes place during the formative years, and since so much of it is carried out in the guise of team sports, most girls simply don't learn the same material. ... Girls' games teach meaningless mumbo-jumbo -- vague generalities or pre-game mutual agreements about "what we'll play" -- while falsely implying that these blurry self-guides are typical of real-world rules. (p.71)

Harragan was describing how the gender-based difference in childhood games is the rehearsal for the boardroom 'games' of the workplace, and she accurately describes one of the ways in which patriarchy asserts itself. I would take issue with her description of girls' discussions as 'meaningless', but then she was writing at a time when women were just beginning to make their presence felt in the corporate world and neither corporations nor neophyte women managers were ready to consider the advantages of a feminine approach to business management.

Collaboration in the classroom. How does Gilligan's research on moral development affect the classroom? Boys, who become early experts of games with rules and competition, are attracted by competitive situations. Schools, which primarily reflect male needs, provide an

ongoing competitive environment. Alternatively, girls do
better in collaborative settings (Gilligan, 1982; Phillips,
1991; Shakeshaft, 1986) If such findings are valid -- and
there is no reason to believe that they are not -- then to
provide an education that benefits young women, we should be
providing opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.

This, of course, raises a number of questions for
educators. Will boys be disadvantaged by the emphasis on
collaboration over competition? Will the reduction in
competition also signal a reduction in quality of education?
Will an emphasis on collaboration create a further
disadvantage for women entering the workforce, as per
Harragan's work?

Disadvantaging the boys. As discussed in chapter two,
the collaborative approach to learning involves having
students work together in small groups to learn about the
material at hand. In small groups, students can learn to
actively engage with the data, and to discuss with their
peers to gain a wider understanding of different
perspectives. The Nova Scotia Department of Education
(1993) recognizes that "Nova Scotia's future is becoming
more reliant upon partnerships and collaboration" (p.2).
That being the case, it is time for our students to learn
how to collaborate effectively. Collaborative learning

> encourages students to form mutual support systems
> for problem solving and study, both inside and
> outside the classroom. (Davis and Nemiroff, 1992,
> p.24)

Collaboration provides all students with a more active involvement in the learning process; research has shown that the collaborative approach can benefit both male and females students (ibid).

Collaboration is an important aspect of feminist methodology but as described in chapter two, it can also serve to perpetuate discriminatory groupings and language patterns (Curtis et al, 1992; Fisek, 1991; Hazelwood and Roth, 1992; Hilliard, 1981). In the anti-sexist classroom, it is imperative that teachers instruct students in effective group interactions, specifying the sexist/racist/ classist dynamics, and carefully monitor student efforts in order to intervene as necessary. Further, the anti-sexist teacher must create opportunities for students to be heard within the classroom discourse. By making the power structure explicit, the anti-sexist teacher goes beyond the surface changes to enact deeper structural changes.

Reducing the quality of education. Charol Shakeshaft (1986) quotes the American former-President Reagan as complaining that

> if educators had not been so preoccupied with the
> needs of these special groups of students [female,
> minority, and handicapped], education in the U.S.
> might not have succumbed to the 'rising tide of
> mediocrity' (499).

The same type of backlash commentary can be heard in the Canadian press and public. But how does an educational

system provide quality education when it ignores more than half of its population?

The Nova Scotia Department of Education (1993) says that

> Quality is also demonstrated by the diversity of educational experiences in which students are actively involved and by the extent to which individual student's needs are met. (p.2)

We are not meeting the needs of half of those individuals when we persist in delivering an educational program designed for the benefit of white, middle-class boys.

For example, decisions about when skills should be introduced and developed are based largely on male growth patterns (Shakeshaft, 1986), thus introducing a program delay that interferes with many girls academic growth:

> Although females mature earlier, are ready for verbal and math skills at a younger age, and have control of small-motor skills sooner than males, the curriculum has been constructed to mirror the develoment of males. (p. 500)

Additionally, boys tend to show academic difficulties in reading, girls in mathematics. It is not completely coincidental that there is a plethora of diagnostic tools to diagnose and remediate reading difficulties, but few to address mathematical weaknesses. Access to remedial education is similarly skewed by gender (Shakeshaft, 1986):

> ... the majority of students in special education and in remedial reading and mathematics programs are males. But this is not because females do not have problems. Unfortunately, girls' problems are left unattended in schools. If they are addressed at all, they are dealt with when the female becomes an adult -- at her own expense and usually for the

profit of some male who had his remediation at
public expense when he was much younger. (p. 502)

If programming was delivered when students were ready to

receive the information, would more girls demonstrate

excellence in areas of mathematics and science? If

remediation decisions were made more equitably, would more

girls elect to continue their mathematics education?

Further, the evidence indicates that race and class are

also factors in inequitable programming. Although few

social-class or racial differences were found in

mathematical thinking among kindergarden children (Ginsburg

and Russell, cited in Scott-Jones and Clark, 1986), by age

17, the story has changed:

> ... significant sex differences favoring males
> showed up for both blacks and whites. But the
> difference between the two racial groups was five
> times as large as the sex differences within the
> races.   (National Assessment of Educational
> Progress, cited in Scott-Jones and C'.ark, 1986, p.
> 521)

Systemic racism and sexism mitigate against equitable

student achievement and often interfere with the

individual's potential.

In an educational system that purports to provide equal

opportunities for all, many students are left to internalize

a very different lesson. White, middle-class boys learn

that their place in the world is relatively secure and that

leadership their 'natural' place; they are usually unaware

of the costs of their privileges or the discriminatory

messages of the status quo they have acquired along the way.

Students of lower socio-economic groups, students of colour, and young women are generally left to struggle in a hostile educational environment. The cost to the individual is an incomplete education; the cost to society is the relative paucity of well-educated, citizens representative of the full diversity of our community. Excellence and equity in education are dependent on each other; they are not in opposition (Shakeshaft, 1986).

Disadvantaging women in the workforce. The positions of power in the workforce continue to be dominated by men, and women are still struggling to make it beyond the 'glass ceiling'. If business (including school administration) still operates along the lines of gamestership and pseudo-military structure as described by Harragan (1977), will collaborative learning situations serve to reinforce the differences between the feminine and masculine approaches to work?

Collaborative learning does not require an all or nothing approach. Anti-sexist pedagogy is about moving beyond binary oppositions that posit one method (ie. collaboration) as universally good against another (ie. competition) as universally bad. One function of the anti-discriminatory classroom is to explicitly teach students to recognize and utilize competitive power structures as they are encountered in the classroom and in the workplace. Education in leadership and authority is also an important

part of the anti-sexist classroom, as will be discussed
later. Collaborative learning is a method to be used in
balance with other methods to provide a positive educational
environment for those students who function better in a more
supportive climate.

Further, Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) note that the
current workforce is more educated and has greater
expectations than the industrial workforce of the 1950's.
This workforce does not so easily respond to the command and
control leadership style that was so prevalent. Business
leaders are encouraging a transformational leadership style,
which seeks to involve a more people-oriented, cooperative
approach. The movement toward site-based planning for
schools is part of this attempt to flatten the corporate
hierarchy and engage greater participation from the stake-
holders. Students who graduate with a practised skill in
collaboration and attentive cooperation may enter the work
world with a significant advantage and a more positive view
of the human community.

Making collaboration work. In chapter two, I
criticized the whole language and inquiry learning
initiatives for not dealing with the problems of
collaboration in groups. The pervasive presence of deeply
rooted social inequities often results in well-established
speech patterns that serve to re-produce in the classroom
the sexist/racist/ classist inequities of the larger

society. Further, there is a tendency for groups to become self-selecting and homogeneous and thus reinforce the stratification of the schools. Moving students into groups is not of itself enough to challenge the system. Teachers must explicitly instruct students in how to collaborate effectively.

Although non-sexist education methods would teach students to use gender-inclusive language, anti-sexist pedagogy explicitly demonstrates the effects of language so that students can confront the realities of exclusion. Lisa McClure (1992) recommends having students record and analyze samples of conversations between adults, peers, and adults with children. She has them look for the topics of the conversation, who selects the topic, how turn-taking is determined, who interrupts, and what tone is used. This activity models the research that has been done on speech patterns and, through this project, students can learn first-hand the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which conversations are manipulated. They can also learn the implications of these patterns for various social groups.

Having discovered the patterns, it is still necessary to have students monitor carefully the ebb and flow of discussions in their own group activities. Who is talking and, just as importantly, who isn't talking? This can be done by assigning, on a rotating basis, a group chairperson or monitor whose duty it is to make sure that all members

have the opportunity to be heard. Most of all, it is
imperative that teachers show that they truly value the
collaborative process, by carefully monitoring and
consistently requiring students to adhere to it.
Collaborative skills must be explicitly taught, reviewed and
supported in order that students to internalize them.

The collection of speech data can also be extended to
observation of classroom activities. William Bigelow (1990)
has his students monitor their own school experiences:

> Linda [a teaching colleague] and I assign students
> to observe their classes as if they were attending
> for the first time. We ask them to notice the
> design of the classroom, the teaching methodology,
> the class content, and the grading procedures. In
> their logs, we ask them to reflect on the character
> of thinking demanded and the classroom
> relationships. (p.44)

This is a particularly challenging project which needs to be
handled diplomatically. Students will readily recognize the
systemic biases, but the response may be one of passive
resignation and victimization or potentially self-
destructive anger. Teaching them that bias exists is only
part of the process; it is also necessary to teach them how
to effectively challenge that bias. Teaching for political
action is an essential element of anti-discriminatory
pedagogy.

Further, it is necessary to teach students how to
listen to one another. In my grade eleven English class, I
observed that although students were contributing actively
in the large group discussion, they were not necessarily

listening to each other. Following the example of communication counsellors and social workers, I had them preface each of their remarks with a summary of what the previous person had said. The summary had to be accurate, too, because before the new speaker could add her or his comment, the previous speaker had to agree to the accuracy of the summary. The students found it very difficult and awkward, but in the follow-up written response, many of them commented that the procedure forced them to attend more closely to what was said and how it was interpreted.

If we teach students to encourage fuller participation of all group members, then they may learn also to hear the value of different perspectives, which may begin to erode the rigid stratification of groups. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to observe carefully the interactions within and between groups and to intervene as necessary to re-shuffle the groups or to modify behaviours that threaten to circumvent the collaborative model.

Gender Differences in Educational Ideals

In academic circles, and in the public school system, the educated person is defined primarily in terms of the intellect, in the application of the accepted standards of theoretical pursuits, and in the initiation into worthwhile activities such as science, mathematics, and history (R.S. Peters, cited in Martin, 1981). In the dominant model, the ideal educated person values objectivity, rationality, and

dispassion; the ideal corresponds closely to the gender
image of men.

> According to that stereotype men are objective,
> analytic, rational; they are interested in ideas
> and things; they have no interpersonal orientation;
> they are neither nurturant nor supportive,
> empathetic or sensitive. According to the
> stereotype, nurturance and supportiveness, empathy
> and sensitivity are female attributes. Intuition is
> a female attribute, too. (Martin, 1981, p. 75)

As pointed out earlier, the education system is designed to
develop students to fit this male-identified model of the
educated person. But this raises a number of significant
problems, namely the contradictory messages for girls and
cultural minorities, the continued devaluation of the
private (feminine) sphere and the inadequacy of this
definition generally.

Contradictory goals. Feminist writers (Belenky et al,
1986; Briskin, 1990; Gaskell et al, 1989; Manicom, 1992;
McLaren, 1982) accurately note that there is a major
contradiction in the public education system which expects
young women to behave in socially acceptable feminine ways -
- nurturing, sensitive, passive -- but educates them in a
system that values male-identified behaviours --
objectivity, distance, academic aggression.

> When the educational realm embodies only male
> norms, it is inevitable that any women
> participating in it will be forced into a masculine
> mold. (Martin, 1982, p.47)

These attributes are strongly gender-scripted. As Martin
(1982) illustrates, consider the different ways that people

describe aggressive men (powerful, strong, manly) or aggressive women (pushy, obnoxious, *emasculating*), and there is a clear indication that the gender-scripts are not easily co-opted. Girls learn early that it is important to be sexually attractive, and that intelligence and power are unattractive in girls (Briskin, 1990). Girls and women who choose to leave behind the stereotypical feminine traits of weakness and submission are subject to derision and harassment. They are considered unfeminine, alien and unattractive (Belenky et al, 1986; Gaskell et al, 1989; Martin, 1981).

Not infrequently, adopting the mold of the educated person is physically dangerous for women. The massacre at the Montreal's L'Ecole Polytechnique was a frightening example of the anger that is directed at women who choose not to remain closeted in traditional passive roles. Magda Lewis (1992) also cites examples of women students whose books disappear to discourage them from continuing their education or who are offered

> as a 'joke' at a social gathering, that to 'celebrate' the completion of the course [on women's studies] she would be 'rewarded' by being 'raped' so she could 'get it out of her system' and return to her 'old self'. (p.182)

Given the built-in contradictions between the male-identified educated ideal and the passive image of the feminine ideal, it is surprising that so many women do

choose to accommodate the contradiction by continuing to
upgrade their education.

In an anti-sexist classroom, teachers need to engage
students in a discussion of these contradictions, to
recognize their impact and examine ways of deflating them.
Part of this is addressed when we seek to name the imbalance
in teacher/student interactions whereby boys receive
recognition for the work while girls receive recognition for
their compliance. All students deserve to receive quality
supportive feedback relevant to their cognitive and academic
growth.

These contradictions are also addressed when we
challenge the discriminatory banter that emerges in classes.
"It's just a joke" is a common excuse for remarks that are
overtly sexist or racist. Humour is often little more than
thinly veiled hostility (Barreca, 1992). Anti-sexist
teachers need to call students' attention to the assumptions
that are implicit in their name-calling and personal
remarks. Common idioms should also be subject to critique.
For example, fewer people are willing to use a "rule of
thumb" when they learn that the original meaning was a
guideline for the size of stick suitable for lawful wife-
beating, a law not struck from the books in Canada until
1968.

Devaluation of the domestic sphere. The separation
along gender lines of the domestic and public spheres is

well-documented in social science and history. Briskin (1990) identifies this separation as another contentious issue for young women in our school system. Girls learn that 'motherhood' is the definition of successful womanhood and, at the same time, they learn that motherhood is an occupation that has less value than those which occupy the public sphere. "The underlying implication is that to be a woman is to be socially devalued" (ibid, p.2).

Early feminists also recognized this separation of spheres and concomitant devaluation of the domestic. Adelaide Hoodless (cited in Gaskell et al, 1989) sought to rectify the situation by recognizing the complexity of the domestic sciences and including them in the school curriculum.

> [Hoodless] believed that women belonged in the domestic sphere, and that the domestic sphere should have equal status with the public one. (Gaskell et al, 1989, p.34)

Feminist economists like Marjorie Cohen, Linda McQuaig and Marilyn Waring (cited in Salutin, 1993) question the economic logic of valuing only the productive arenas of the public sphere.

> Waring quotes Adam Smith, for example, who said: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Then she comments, "If Adam Smith was fed daily by Mrs. Smith, he omitted to notice or to mention it. What her interest was in feeding him we can only guess, for Adam Smith saw no value in what she did. (Salutin, 1993, p.17)

(A Statistics Canada report (cited in Housework, 1994)
estimates that "housework would have been worth $318.7
billion if people had been paid for it in 1992".)
Examples of the devaluing of the domestic sphere are
prevalent in our classrooms and curriculum materials. In
the anti-sexist classroom, the contradictions inherent in
the social double standard are explicitly identified and
discussed so that students can identify the role of these
images on their lives and can devise strategies for social
change.

The historian Richard Hofstaedter (Martin, 1981) said
that "memory is the thread of personal identity, history of
public identity." It is evident that the school curriculum
employs this definition of history in its near exclusive
focus on the public or male realm of our social inheritance.
Discriminatory discourse is perpetuated when the curriculum
is taught without explicitly drawing the students' attention
to these errors of omission. In order to challenge the
hegemony, students in the anti-discriminatory classroom
learn to recognize the gender and racial biases and the
partiality of perspectives that are written into their
textbooks.

In the passage from *The Enduring Past* (cited in the
previous chapter p.60) that describes the 'arts of peace' of
the Harrapans, the students' attention should be drawn to
the language and the connotations of the passage and the

words chosen. It would be useful to give them the opportunity to re-write the passage to avoid the bias, or to encourage them to write to the authors requesting clarification. The chapters on medieval and renaissance life in this text are noticeably lacking in their description of women's guilds or nunneries. Students would benefit from projects requiring research into those specific topics. Discussions could then pursue why these subjects were omitted from the text, articulating the social implications of omitted perspectives and information.

English courses are also rich sites for confronting phallocentric and eurocentric discourses. We need to enrich our literature programs by providing more writing by and about women and visible minorities.

> While the gender of an author does not always guarantee one point of view or another, it is important for gender-fair teachers to include authors of both sexes (preferably indicating a variety of views related to differing experiences of class, ethnicity, race and sexual orientation) on the reading list. (Davis and Nemiroff, 1992, p.8)

However, the answer does not lie in creating a school world filled with texts showing men and women both operating in the public sphere; this is not reality. As Jane Gaskell argues (Gaskell et al, 1986),

> children should be helped to see the world as it is, while being encouraged to develop a critical consciousness, a sense of active and cooperative participation that equips them to engage in the struggle for social change. (p.38)

This objective demands showing men and women in traditional and non-traditional roles, and discussing honestly the implications of each. John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* is a novel, currently included in the grade eleven curriculum, which shows a community with very traditional gender-based roles. The interaction between the two grown sisters in the book when the one has a mutant baby, provides an ideal opportunity to discuss the roles of family, society and religious ideology in decision-making and to discuss who is given or denied a voice in those decisions.

However, whatever readings or media are chosen to deliver the curriculum, it is the responsibility of the anti-sexist teacher to "draw the students attention to implicit gender-based assumptions either of a sexist or sex-blind nature" (Davis and Nemiroff, 1992, p.8). The curriculum materials which are available are not neutral; it is our responsibility to identify the bias and to help students to identify it on their own.

Defining the educated person. Why does the standard definition of the educated person deal only with the intellect, to the exclusion of attributes of caring, concern, physical capacities, intuitive knowledge? Remaining objective is highly valued in academic study, but often that objectivity is a thin veil for the hegemonic privilege of "situating, characterizing, and evaluating all other discourses" (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990, p.22).

Further, this alleged objectivity has lead to an ideology of

human control of the world whereby the planet on which we

live is viewed as a consumable commodity. We need to

rethink our values, as Jane Martin (1982) suggests, for

> An adequate ideal of the educated person must join
> thought to action and reason to feeling and
> emotion. (p.48)

In order to address the challenges and tensions of the

world's political, economic and ecological realities, we

need people who will approach the situation with an ethics

of responsibility and compassion. The continuation of

action based on the traditional ethics of rights, where

disputes are settled in win-or-lose confrontrations, can

only exacerbate the current world problems. In the

classroom, as in the public domain, we need to recognize

that reason and emotion, thinking and feeling, public and

private roles are all valid ways to make sense of our world

(Maher, 1987).

According to the philosophical ideal, the educated

person values knowledge for its own sake and maintains

objective distance from applications (Martin, 1981). This

is the scientist who explores new scientific knowledge

without concern for the ethics of the applications. This is

the economist who can theorize about patterns of poverty

without having to suffer its pain, or without working to

eliminate the social causes. We need a definition of an

ideal educated person which includes ethical involvement and

which promotes political action. William Bigelow (1991) teaches his students to identify the racist biases of the historical analysis of Columbus and then assigns them the task of preparing a more equitable presentation of the information they discover. Through this project, his students learn that "the best way to address injustice is to work for change" (ibid, p.37). Such political action is part of the feminist agenda and needs to be an integral part of the new definition of the educated person. It must also be part of the anti-sexist, anti-discriminatory classroom.

Gender Differences in Styles of Learning

Beyond the difficulties of education for girls in a system that teaches them contradictory values, there is the problem of how girls, gender-scripted in our patriarchal society, actually go about learning. When William Perry (1970, cited in Belenky et al, 1986) published his study of the cognitive development of college students, his findings were based on interviews with mostly men and only a few women, but he used the men's responses to illustrate his developmental schema. While his research showed what young college men and women have in common in their cognitive growth, it did not examine what was different between them. Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule (1986) conducted their research with women and compared their findings to Perry's to find that women show distinctively different patterns of cognitive development.

Silence and experience. A small number of the women interviewed by Belenky et al occupied a space of representational silence; others recalled their passage through that epistemological stage. Isolated and excluded from the patriarchal and phallocentric discourse of the schools, these women distrust the use of language, fear education, and feel powerless in their world. Their language is limited to descriptions of concrete specific realities rather than expressions of thought. For these women, authority is omnipotent.

In our schools, the dominant discourses are often far removed from the daily realities of our students. Centred on the exploits of prominent men in the public sphere, the relevance to many students' daily lives seems tenuous. In order to meet the needs of the silenced students, whether by gender or race or class, we need to draw on their experiences and perceptions to elaborate the curricular objectives.

Anti-sexist education recognizes that students need to voice their own perspectives of academic inquiry. Active directed dialogue drawn from the students' own experiences is an important feature of the feminist classroom. Through discussion, students are encouraged to seek understanding of the context, and to develop an appreciation for the nature of possible solutions. Frances Maher (1987) writes that students need to learn that historical or social problems

have multiple solutions which can be compared, but ranking must be approached with a clear consideration of whose interests are being considered in the evaluation. She further encourages a discussion of the power base that directs most decisions. Classroom discussion needs to focus on who is and who is not served by any given solution. In this way, anti-discriminatory education identifies the power element that is inherent in systemic sexism and racism and provides a model of political action to challenge the bias.

The silence of women is also reflected in the patterns of conversation which are typical of our patriarchal system, patterns in which women do the work of probing, providing feedback and keeping the discussion going, while men almost inevitably control the topic through interruptions and selected responses (T. Olsen, cited in Lavine, 1987). Ann Lavine (1987) notes that this pattern teaches women to discredit their topic choice in their written work and to value audience over writer or purpose. In the feminist classroom, students need to learn that their voice is valued, and to focus on themselves as writers. As teachers, we need to provide a critical but supportive audience. Herein exists a more serious and worthwhile challenge for a whole-language inspired classroom.

Learning as process. As girls progress through the epistemological stages identified by Belenky et al, certain features continue to differentiate their experiences from

their male peers. Girls continue to demonstrate their concern and compassion for others. Girls are more likely to learn through empathy and tend to take a less judgemental stance. However, the educational system works to develop the objective rational mind through the exercises of the 'doubting game' (Elbow, cited in Belenky et al, 1986), an adversarial approach to problem-solving which focuses on manipulation of the listener. In the 'doubting game', students learn to put their ideas 'on trial', to exlude their beliefs and feelings, and to engage in rhetorical argument to 'sell' their ideas. This is contrary to the academic growth of many girls, who learn best through opportunities to discuss and develop ideas. The collaborative approach is more supportive of the latter style.

Girls also tend to be more aware of the connections of subjects; many dislike dealing with subjects in isolation (Belenky et al, 1986; Damarin, 1991). Suzanne Damarin (1991) describes the traditional, patriarchal approach to learning as looking to reality without empathy, control of nature and a mechanistic view of parts. Alternatively, she emphasizes that the feminist approach should be more holistic in outlook and should value the intuitive as well as the rational.

Gender Differences in Language Arts

For four decades, researchers have studied how teacher-student interactions are different for male and female students. From the late 1950's through the early 1970's, there was concern that North American schools, especially elementary schools, are unfair to boys. Boys were found to have lower achievement than girls in the early grades, especially in reading and writing (Brophy and Good 1974; Maccoby, 1966; Preston, 1962). One of the results of this research is the profusion of diagnostic reading programs. More recent research shows that there is a difference between boys and girls in their approach to and acquisition of language proficiency (Bowman, 1992; McCracken, 1992; Sadker and Sadker, 1986).

Such research findings are reiteratied in my own classroom where many girls typically wrote from three to eleven pages per week in their journals, responding to films or books from class and oftentimes drawing connections to personal interactions inside and outside of school. On the other hand, most of the boys typically wrote one or two pages and their entries were more factual, less reflective and more constrained. Bruce Appleby (1992) confirms this observation, noting that while boys view journals as 'sissy stuff' and use them to vent or plan, girls tend to write prolifically, weaving personal, academic and social observations.

These differences in to writing are observable in education in general. Roslyn Mickelson (1989) notes that the separation of domestic and public spheres is less distinct for women than for men.

> A continuum, rather than a dichotomy, captures more accurately the public and private dimensions of women's lives. (p. 59)

This continuum is reflected in the tapestry of women's writing that seeks connections among the various strands of their experiences. Teaching boys to write in more textured, relational and reflexive ways is one means to expand their humanity beyond the confines of masculinity. On the other hand, girls must be taught to maintain this reflexivity where it exists and assert a more contrary presence over texts that often subvert their best interests.

In a study of literature response learning logs, Cynthia Ann Bowman (1992) analyzed the differences in entries of girls and boys in her classes. She found that most girls respond to the ideology of the text, compare the text to life experiences or other literature, pose and answer questions about the text, are reflective about their readings and are patient readers. Conversely, she found that boys respond to the practicalities of the text, compare the text to television or history, ask questions about the text (but don't attempt to answer the questions), are judgemental and tend to be impatient readers with low tolerance for descriptions and tangential developments.

These differences were by no means unanimously
differentiated by gender. There were some boys -- typically
high-achievers -- who responded as girls did. There were
also girls who responded in a more male mode -- the low-
achievers! Although not specified in her study, it is
possible that these low-achieving girls represented working-
class girls who had refused to model the middle-class
gendered identity.

When journals are an integral part of classroom work,
students learn to explore different issues in their writing.
Some of my quieter students used their journals to explore
lines of thought that they are reluctant to voice in class.
The journal gave them a chance to articulate their thoughts;
my responses provided them with feedback to encourage and/or
redirect their reflections. Some of my students used their
journals to challenge my classroom politics. One student
closed his journal with

> I have to go now. The phone's ringing. It's
> probably my chick. (I expect a response.)

Our class had included several discussions on the use of
slang and the objectifying terms that are used to denigrate
people or groups of people; he wanted to know how I would
reply. A popular magazine provided me with all the response
I (and he) needed: a Wonderbra advertisement with pictures
of a fox, a Barbie doll, a tomato and a baby chick, with a
caption that read "For those who have difficulty telling the
difference between a woman and other objects". I clipped

the advertisement, glued it in the student's journal and wrote nothing. The student seemed pleased with the response and shared it with his classmates; his challenge had been met firmly but with humour. His future journal entries continued to be exploratory and increasingly reflective and free from sexist innuendo and terminology.

Elisabeth Däumer and Sandra Runzo (1987) contend that the writing skills learned through journal entries and exploratory writing are an important part of the students' writing development:

> What students learn in exploring their composing processes is to tolerate ambiguity and to understand that meanings are not fixed things but relationships. (p.49)

Bowman (1992) found that through instruction and guidance, students could develop their response styles, improving their writing skills and analysis skills. By making learning logs an integral part of the class, providing directing questions, and intervening supportively the feminist teacher helps students learn to respond more critically to their reading, to express themselves with more clarity in their writing, and to be more aware of the social order surrounding them.

This approach can benefit all students and provide them with the opportunity to improve their reading skills, to increase their articulation and to weave their personal and academic experiences into a more meaningful tapestry.

Consistently used, it has the potential to challenge the discriminatory discourses of the school system.

Gender Differences in School Structure

Research indicates that while co-education is in the best interest of boys, single-sex schools are the best choice for girls (Shakeshaft, 1986).

> In single-sex schools, girls exhibit higher self-esteem, more involvement with academic life, and increased participation in a range of social and leadership activities. (ibid, p.500)

Answering the challenge of the feminist curriculum developed at the Linden School for girls in Toronto, Dave Hadden, headmaster of Lakefield College School questions the benefits of single-sex schools (Brady, 1994). Hadden recently led the battle to change Lakefield to a coeducational school "in order to benefit his male students", noting that boys' schools "reinforce aggressive behaviour and the notion that girls are second-class" (ibid).

Coeducation in the public schools is often more a matter of economics than of pedagogical ideology. Egerton Ryerson, the outspoken first superintendent of Ontario schools, strongly advocated sex-segregated schools (for the benefit of boys), but was unsuccessful because of the costs of providing duplicate school systems (Gaskell et al, 1989). As Nova Scotia moves to site-based planning and begins to share some of the educational decision-making, and with the current growing awareness of systemic sexism and racism, is

it possible that the community might begin to advocate separate schools for the benefit of the girls? Indeed, this past winter, the African Canadian Education Project (ACEP) opened the "Saturday School" for Black Nova Scotians in a pro-active response to the systemic racism that is too often evident in Nova Scotia schools. However, hopes for significant structural change may be overly optimistic. In many cases, site-based planning exacerbates the inequities by allowing those who currently hold the power to dominate the process in favour of the status quo.

Women's studies. Women's studies courses are typically offered at universities and colleges. They provide a designated space to counter the hegemony of male thought, to promote sisterhood and to raise awareness of feminist issues (Kenway and Modra, 1992). More conservatively, they are also viewed as part of the "department-store selection of separate goods" which provides a place and market for debate without access to decision-making; they are education in victimhood (Nikiforuk, 1994). These two perspectives define the general parameters of the ongoing debate about the value of these courses.

Women's studies courses offer an opportunity to discuss the issues of gender and examine the pervasive influences of patriarchy, capitalism and eurocentrism in women's lives. They are often the only sites where the counter-hegemonic discourse is conducted, and they offer a valuable support to

young women in the academy. Much research about and by women has been done by the teachers of these courses and much work remains to be done. Further, feminist academics argue, combining their focus into the mainstream of other disciplines will only serve to blur the distinctions, lead to tokenism or the add-women-and-stir approach.

However, despite the proliferation of women's studies courses over the past two decades, some feel that the separate approach is having little impact on the mainstream disciplines (Davis and Nemiroff, 1992). Students who don't wish to engage in debate about sexism are able to avoid the topics simply by limiting their enrolment to non-affiliated courses and thus carry on with business as usual. This potential side-lining of the feminist debate is one of the drawbacks of separating women's studies clases from the mainstream disciplines.

Fran Davis and Greta Nemiroff (1992) argue that both segregation and mainstreaming are required. The work that is being done is important, and needs the safe place to continue, but, at the same time, men and women need to hear the influence of feminist work within their mainstream classes. As has been argued throughout this paper, gender is an issue which needs to be addressed throughout the curriculum.

The debate about whether women's studies should be kept as a segregated course or included in the mainstream studies

is not unlike the argument about the inclusion of black studies in the Nova Scotia curriculum. Every February and May, schools throughout the province celebrate Black History Month or Multiculturalism Month, with writing contests, poster displays and the showing of isolated videos. These efforts often seem removed from the continuity of the 'real' curriculum and, all too often, the subject is then ignored for the rest of the year. This piecemeal approach often reinforces the absence of black history from the official curriculum and insidiously serves to further entrench the bias. Students, many of whom have learned the white supremacist, patriarchal view very thoroughly, demand to know why blacks have a whole month to celebrate black history when there is no equivalent highlighting of white achievements. Like men who demand 'men's studies' to complement 'women's studies', they ignore the pervasive hegemony of phallocentric and eurocentric messages. This insistence on 'equal treatment' demonstrates the need for a pedagogy that addresses issues of power rather than naive (non-sexist/non-racist) notions of equality which are based on everyone being treated equally, denying the lack of equality in their initial positions.

Teaching democracy and leadership. Students need to take responsibility for their own learning (Briskin, 1991), to claim an education (Gaskell et al, 1989), but not all students have equal access to the power relations of the

classroom that would enable them to claim that education.

Briskin (1991) emphasizes that teachers need to identify the

power structures and help students to learn how to use them:

> ... to equip students to use power (for those
> unused to it), to acknowledge their power (for
> those to whom power has accrued by virtue of their
> class, race or gender) and to develop an
> appreciation of collective power. (p.14)

Anti-sexist teachers make leadership an explicit aspect of

classroom learning.

Further, Lisa Delpit (cited in Briskin, 1991) argues

that marginalized individuals, especially students of

visible minorities, need to be taught the playing rules of

power and structure:

> ... even while students are assisted in learning
> the culture of power, they must also be helped to
> learn about the arbitrariness of those codes and
> about the power relationships they represent. (p.
> 14)

By helping students to identify and analyze the use of power

wherever they find it, anti-sexist pedagogy can empower them

to interact productively in discriminatory situations.

By teaching these skills, our students will have the

opportunity to gain academic power, and to carry that power

to the community where they can work for social change.

Working from personal experience and searching for

connections in their academic pursuits, students learn to

challenge the contradictions that are inherent in the

patriarchal social structures and to address social

injustice wherever it is found.

Conclusion

Each individual is scripted by the patriarchal codes that labels one as feminine or masculine. We can no more escape our gender identity that we can our sex identity. However, anti-sexist feminist pedagogy provides each student with the tools to identify the influences, and to select a response individually and collectively in the struggle to transform oppressive, inequitable practices. It reveals and names the socially scripted contradictions inherent in our society and empowers students to voice their frustrations and anger in positive productive ways. Further, it challenges the socially scripted contradictions of race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation.

Feminist pedagogy is not about exchanging the existing power structure for another similarly inequitable one; it is about challenging the systemic discrimination that marginalizes whole groups of people in the struggle for a more balance and equitable social system. It recognizes that whenever one group is diminished, then we are all diminished. Feminist pedagogy is about providing excellence and equity for all students in an educational system that has claimed but failed to provide those two features.

However, feminist pedagogy is a program for significant social change. It will be difficult for some to relinquish long-held privileges and it will be difficult for some to change deeply engrained practice. In the final chapter, I

will outline the responses that feminist teachers may receive, and identify some principles for implementation.

Chapter Five

Moving the Mountain: Strategies for Change

Young women in public schools in Nova Scotia, as
elsewhere, are not receiving the quality of education that
they deserve. Social inequities are deeply layered in the
curriculum, in the structure of schools and in the practices
of teaching. A variety of pedagogical innovations have been
introduced to the schools in an effort to enhance individual
performance, to boost standardized test scores, and to
increase graduation rates, but these initiatives are failing
to address the systemic inequities of sexism, racism, and
classism.

Non-sexism has been promoted, like non-racism, as an
answer to the problems of inequity, but classrooms are not
neutral places, teachers and students are not neutral
beings, and the elimination of stereotypes is not enough to
eradicate the power struggles around these biases. Feminist
pedagogy must begin with a clear understanding that a
gender-blind perspective will not meet the needs of the
students or the feminist teacher. If change is to be made,
we must link knowledge with action, and initiate a pro-
active, anti-sexist, anti-discriminatory program in our
schools.

Unfortunately, the road can be a difficult one. The
feminist teacher can expect administrative obstruction,

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collegial anger, parental suspicion and student resistance.
Removing the patriarchal and eurocentric structures that
relegate women and persons of colour to a marginalized
status will create significant social change, and social
change is not generally welcomed.

Administration

The difficult economic climate of the last decade has
increased the pressure on the public school system. There
are demands to reduce the high drop-out rate, to increase
student performance in the technologies, to mainstream
special students, to provide remedial support and to
individualize programming, and accomplish all this using
less money. Against this backdrop, the feminist insistence
on an anti-discriminatory school agenda is perceived as an
irritating needless concern.

> But the massive technocratic influence on
> education, which, for example, in our context has
> been revived via the resurgence of the narrow,
> standardized testing, militates against this
> [democratic] vision of teaching. (Portelli and
> Church, 1994, p.18)

At the same time, school boards are receiving smaller and
smaller budgets with which to work. With the significant
competition for time and resources, there is often a
perception that "effort should be concentrated on the
important matters" (Coffey and Acker, 1991, p.258).

In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary
(Belenky et al,1986; Sadker and Sadker, 1986; AAUW, 1990;
Day, 1990), there are still many in the educational

hierarchy who do not recognize the gravity of the problem, who do not recognize that ignoring half one's clientele ranks as a very important matter (Shakeshaft, 1986), and that all the other "important matters" are affected by the concerns expressed in this document.

One aspect of this lack of recognition is very likely related to gender inequity in leadership positions. As Amanda Coffey and Sandra Acker (1991) point out

> The dominance of men in management roles in schools beyond infant school level and in higher education diminishes the chances of anti-sexism being placed high on the agenda. (p.255)

Although these authors were describing the British reality, the situation is not dissimilar to that in Nova Scotia. With only 22.6% of principalships held by women (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1994) and a smaller 8% of high school principalships held by women (ibid), the discrepancy is clear. If it is the responsibility of the teacher to draw students' attention to "implicit gender-based assumptions either of a sexist or sex-blind nature" (Davis & Nemiroff, 1992, p. 8), who will direct the attention of male administrators to the gender-based assumptions of their agenda?

Another aspect of the concern to concentrate our effort on "important matters" is the fear that attending to the diverse interests of so-called special interest groups -- such as women or people of colour -- will reduce the quality of education. This too is contrary to the research. When

Myra Sadker and David Sadker conduct in-service training to eliminate sex bias in teacher-student interactions, they find that instructors develop

> higher rates of interaction, more precise reactions, more academic contacts, and a greater number of student-initiated comments. In short, the training resulted in more intentional and more direct teaching. Developing equity in teaching had promoted excellence as well. (Sadker and Sadker, 1986)

Clearly the research supports the logical assumption that equity and excellence in teaching are complementary, not oppositional objectives. Everyone loses when any social groups are prevented from contributing to their fullest potential.

Feminist pedagogy depends on dialogical teaching to provide students the opportunity to engage in active learning about the social and linguistic structures that inform their constructions of gender and knowledge. Yet, "large classes, rotary timetables and students with a wide variety of achievement levels and interests often make dialogical teaching difficult to achieve" (Curtis et al, 1992). Increased course enrolments are "one very real w y in which the conditions of schooling nip radicalism in the bud and perpetuate the relations of the status quo" (Brookes and Kelly, 1989, p.122).

Simply put, school administrators have the position and the authority to obstruct the implementation of feminist pedagogy. A survey conducted in the fall of 1993 (Arbogast,

1994) shows that school administrators are only slightly more aware than their teachers of discrimination in the educational system. If principals and vice-principals are no more aware than their teachers, how are they going to provide the leadership required to promote institutional change? Nor do graduate education programmes on the whole offer a substantive base of gender analysis with which to prepare future administrators. The link among administrative duty, leadership and change is such to make these circumstances intolerable.

Alternatively, supportive administrators have the position and the authority to provide moral and systematic support for teachers who choose to develop their excellence in teaching by addressing the needs of previously marginalized groups. Kathleen Weiler (1988) describes women administrators who see their job as providing just this kind of support:

> They see schools as important in bringing to consciousness racism, sexism , and classism but they also recognize the importance of respecting the cultural values of all students.
>
> [These women] see schools as places where ideology can be made conscious, and where prejudice and social stereotypes can be addressed in ways that challenge both students and teachers to reflect on their own beliefs, to articulate them, and perhaps to change them. (p.103)

Such leaders can be counted on to encourage pedagogic change, act as positive intermediaries with the community and model inclusive behaviours.

Collegial Response

Like administrators, teachers also feel the burdens of societal pressures to produce more, better and faster. Susan Church is a widely published curriculum supervisor for Halifax County - Bedford District School Board who actively examines the political implications of pedagogic changes. She notes that

> ... it is becoming more and more difficult to engage teachers in considering innovative practices of any sort. They are under pressure to have their children do well on standardized tests, they have an increasingly challenging group of students to deal with, the families of their children and they themselves are feeling the stresses of this protracted recession, and they seem to be garnering criticism from every quarter these days. (Portelli and Church, 1994, p.17)

Under such circumstances, feminist critique can seem like just another attack on a beleaguered profession.

And then, there is the ongoing concern with excellence in education. Feminist pedagogy is seen as part of the affective realm and therefore less important than practical matters of improving technologies (Jacobs and Ilola, 1991). Even this categorization of feminist as affective and therefore inferior to the cognitive reflects the hegemony of male thought that persistently devalues the affective domain. Instead, those who make such arguments should realize the importance to technological development of educating all students to their fullest potential.

It must also be remembered that, as teachers, we are products of this education system, and many of us have

internalized the methods and structures that reproduce it. Coffey and Acker (1991) note that many teachers appear hesitant to endorse anti-sexist initiatives and projects. Issues of general conservatism (Arbogast, 1994) and a definition of professionalism that demands an impossible neutrality and detachment (Coffey and Acker, 1991) are at odds with taking an overtly political stance in one's teaching. There is a general naivete about how any teaching is always deeply political (Church, 1992; Kelly, 1994). To claim neutrality is to endorse through silence and complacency, the (disordered) politics of the status quo.

Many people, both in and out of our profession, believe that "teaching is a sexless occupation and should be preserved as such" (Coffey and Acker, 1991). They have neither recognized nor questioned the multiple layers of patriarchal constructions that permeate the educational system. As a result, teachers' reactions to feminist pedagogy tends to fall somewhere between "tolerant amusement and genuine antagonism" (Thompson, 1989, cited in Coffey and Acker). And this is from a profession dominated by women. The extent of the internalization of the patriarchal model indicated by this phenomenon is, itself, cause for concern and reason for the educational project of feminist pedagogy.

The changes that will be brought about through the implementation of feminist pedagogy will be significant and widely felt. Students who learn to critique the texts of

their lives and schooling cannot be expected to operate
passively, respecting the status quo. Traditional teachers,
who believe in the authority of the system and the authority
of the traditional disciplines, will be discomfited and
angered by the challenges to their practice. These are the
teachers who will be outspoken in their antagonism in the
staff room, creating a constant barrage of negative and
demeaning remarks.

Michelle Landsberg (1982) is one of many authors who
notes that "nothing provokes more wrath, more fiery
resistance" than changes in language. Landsberg also points
out that resistance to change in language is symptomatic of
the fear of change.

> Small wonder that when we're dizzy from the
> velocity of social change, we cling to language as
> to a rock in a flood. (p.11)

Teaching students to use more precise, inclusive language
and to identify the language bias whenever it appears is
just one small part of the changes that will be introduced
by feminist pedagogy, but it will undoubtedly be
disconcerting to all teachers who persist in using the
allegedly generic 'he/man'.

There are also teachers who accept the feminist label
and accept the feminist ideals of equal opportunity but who
have not questioned the deeper political implications of
inequities. These teachers are satisfied with the
implementation of a non-sexist approach in their classroom

and consider the strongly anti-sexist practices to be too
radical and basically unnecessary. These teachers need to
be recognized for the positive steps that they have taken
and gently encouraged to see the need for further overt
action. Strong leadership from good administration is
helpful, but good grass-roots collegiality is just as
important.

Teachers who choose to embrace feminist pedagogy need
above all else to seek out and "establish working
relationships with feminist teachers in schools" (Coffay and
Acker, 1991). The team approach will provide valuable
support, especially in the face of opposition; it will
provide encouragement to continue the struggle; and it will
provide new ideas and perspectives for change (Weiler,
1988).

Women's networks are an important counterpart to the
Old Boys' Club. Charol Shakeshaft (1991) emphasizes the
importance of developing these groups to encourage women to
apply for and accept positions of responsibility which is
another aspect of increasing equity in the system. She also
points out that although including male support is helpful,
it is necessary to establish an identifiably female presence
because "traditional administrative groups that have had
large male memberships have been unreliable for helping
women" and "there has not been any systematic support for
equity from these groups" (p.137). This is why it is so

important to have organizations such as the Women in
Educational Administration group (Nova Scotia), or the
Federation of Women Teachers' Associations (Ontario).

Parental Involvement

In traditional teaching practices, the experiences of
the students' parents are immaterial to the schooling
process and parents are strongly encouraged to leave
education to the experts (Mukherjee, n.d.). Indeed, the
deficit model of student assessment views the role of the
parents only in terms of what raw material they have
provided or failed to provide for the schools in terms of
attitudes, educational values and discipline (Gaskell et al,
1989; Curtis et al, 1992).

There are times when the values of the home will be in
direct conflict to the values of feminist pedagogy,
especially when one is working with students from very
traditional families (Weiler, 1988). Many question whether
schools have the right to interfere with the values taught
at home. Even Jane Roland Martin (1982) considers
traditional definitions of philosophy of education
inadequate for answering this question. However, school is
just one of many institutions where children learn their
gender scripts; in a feminist classroom, some will have a
stronger sense of how to challenge a poorly fitting script.
It is important that we maintain open communication with our
students' homes and involve them in our decision-making. We

must be clear that we are not attacking the home, but providing an opportunity for young women to create a more secure place for themselves in the world. As Kathleen Weiler (1988) describes, the feminist teacher must respect the "cultural and class identities" of the students, while engaging them in dialogue to "expand the limits of their thinking" (p.119).

Most importantly, feminist pedagogy needs to recognize that parents are an important part of the students' educational process and personal reality. Helping them to see how feminist pedagogy addresses directly the enhancement of opportunities for their children is important. Partnership between home and school is central and essential to successful challenges to systemic oppression by gender, race and class (Mukherjee, n.d.).

Nova Scotia is attempting to implement a program of site-based planning. In some ways, the agenda of this change may be for the province to save money by reducing school board structures, or to divest itself of responsibility for maintaining some level of equity among schools. However, site-based management does provide opportunity for interesting innovations. Some parents are very much aware of the gender bias in the schools, and are very concerned about the second-class education that their daughters are receiving. Given the option, is it possible that some parents will choose to promote single-sex schools

for the benefit of their daughters, or to exact enough
influence to ensure curricular and policy changes within co-
educational schools?

Students: Hostility and Enthusiasm

In a grade twelve general classroom, with a male to
female ratio of 26:3, the class read an essay about women's
images in advertising. It was the fourth reading assignment
of the year, and the first to promote an obviously feminist
perspective. To my surprise, the discussion turned quite
hostile and openly antagonistic. "Are we gonna have to read
this sh-- all year?" I tried to keep the discussion focused
on the arguments raised in the passage and the style of the
rhetoric, but the talk kept coming back to "those da--
women's libbers" and claims of reversed discrimination.

Linda Briskin (1991) relates a similar story. Her
course on Women and Society was perceived by her male
students as anti-male.

> In pursuing this issue, what became clear was that
> a statement like "Women earn 65 per cent of what
> men earn" was perceived as a criticism of men, an
> anti-male statement. Simply to reveal the gendered
> character of the social order is to threaten it.
> (p.22)

The young men in our classrooms have already internalized
the gender identities that are supported by patriarchal
society, identities which still predominantly describe men
as strong and authoritative, women as docile and without
authority (Kessler et al, 1985; Briskin, 1991) They resent
female authority as vested in their teachers and they view

feminism as a direct assault on their masculinity. As

Kathleen Weiler (1988) states,

> The feminist woman teacher faces the resistance and
> use of male privilege in boys, who of course have a
> vested interest in maintaining their own gender
> privilege, particularly if the face race or class
> oppression. (p.126)

There will also be conflicts between feminist teachers

and their students when the students have accepted the

traditional perspective. Students who are succeeding within

the current system in spite of the systemic inequities have

already accepted the status quo.

> Many equal-opportunity initiatives have ... less to
> do with transforming and challenging intertwined
> relations of race, class, and gender, and more to
> do with women assuming power positions similar to
> those of men. (Manicom, 1992, p.369)

Michelle Landsberg (1982) relates an incident in which her

writings were refuted by a woman engineering student at the

University of Toronto who

> claimed that female engineering students, refusing
> to "march or scream or draw attention" to
> themselves, really do more for women's rights than
> other groups because they will "join men in the top
> wage category", not settling, like other women, for
> "dead-end jobs". (p.21)

This student had accepted the educational pathways that led

her to assimilation within the dominant group, and based on

her assimilation, she, and those like her, will often

hostilely reject the feminist message, at least for the time

being.

Susan Hunter (1991) teaches writing to business

students and describes the difficulties inherent in the

"differences between the ways a feminist teaches writing and the ways many of her students are accustomed to learning" (p.231). Her students, like the engineers described by Landsberg, "aspire to become members of the technical and corporate cultures" (ibid). These students also face the conflict between methods in the feminist classroom and classrooms where "selective systems of entitlement are deeply embedded in capitalistic exchanges that students easily accept" (S.Miller cited in Hunter, 1991, p.235).

Like the members of the academic hierarchy and many members of the community, students expect that classrooms are neutral, blind to all differences. The overt recognition of gender, race and class that is provided in the feminist classroom is perceived as evidence of bias.

> Students protest the feminist teacher's bias while accepting without question the proclamations of masculinist research. (Turkel, 1986, cited in Davis et al, 1992, p.8)

Recently, I overheard a group of high school graduates discussing the bias of one teacher who identifies herself as a feminist. This teacher routinely uses the feminine pronoun in lieu of the masculine. The students were concerned that this overt "projection of feminism" would cause a backlash, and would cause students to "hate her, not respect her". They voiced the opinion that teachers should keep their politics private. Linda Briskin (1990) confirms that

feminists face more challenges to their authority
than other women teachers. The prevailing
assumption is that the feminist body of knowledge
is by definition, "political" and "biased" and
therefore without authority. (p.11)

This assumption avoids the reality that all knowledge is

political and all teaching is political. The difference in

the feminist classroom is the open acknowledgement of the

political stance.

This same group of graduates were concerned that the

teacher in question was offending the boys in her classes.

The patriarchal imprint that fosters in women the values of

nurturance encourages us to protect and coddle even those

who hold the privileges of power. Women's nurturing,

protective posture towards men is shown in body language and

verbal deference (Lewis, 1992).

While it is my observation that the practice of a
woman-as-caretaker ideology is more obvious in the
presence of men, this ideology holds sway whether
or not men are present, as long as women believe
their interests to be served by maintaining
existing relations. (ibid, p.174)

The perceived need for many males to cling to the

patriarchal system is easily understood, as the power and

privileges have accrued to them in the past are now being

challenged. Less obvious is the attraction of this ideology

for women. However, women are very aware that accepting the

feminist philosophy can, in the short run, lead to social

isolation and rejection (Anderson, 1993). "Several thousand

years of conditioning have taught us that sexual admiration

is as heady a reward as we women are likely to grasp in this life" (Landsberg, 1982, p.16).

Again, economic uncertainty has its influence here as well. The job market of the 1990's is very insecure and the reality is that men have greater earning potential. It is not unrealistic for a young woman to accept that she has a better financial opportunity if linked with a man than if she struggles on her own (Warner, 1994). It is also not unrealistic that this 'link' will end, leaving her in the feminized cycle of poverty.

Feminist critique is also emotionally draining (Lewis, 1992) as one tries to come to terms with the layers of oppressive influences that permeate our lives. As one student said, "How do you talk about this stuff and then go home to husbands and boyfriends?" This point does raise the issue of preparing students to struggle for change on all sites of their lives, including relationships -- yes, the personal really is political!

The fear of further victimization is a significant point of resistance of young women. Classroom methodologies that itemize the ways in which women have been oppressed over the centuries without offering an alternative can have the end effect of reinforcing women's perceptions of themselves as victims.

> Young women are often resistant to systemic accounts of oppression because they feel disempowered by them. (Davis and Nemiroff, 1993, p.7)

Students who have internalized self-contempt, and who feel inept as learners, will often reject the efforts to include personal input in their writing and discussion (Bigelow, 1990, p.439). In this case the project can be pursued in more abstract but still meaningful ways, exploring the depictions of social realities in film, television, music videos, advertising, and literature.

Political action as a necessary response to oppression is an essential component of anti-discriminatory pedagogy. It is not enough for students to identify the bias in their texts and lives; rather it is essential that they learn how to act (Weiler, 1988; Bigelow, 1990; Manicom, 1992). Students must learn to analyze contexts for evidence of discriminatory discourse, to identify the contradictions and/or power relationships, and to initiate actions suitable to their own lives and to the context.

Students may choose to resist because they fear losing the power they feel they have, because they fear social rejection, or because they need to protect their peers. Magda Lewis (1992) reminds us that for all of these reasons, it is imperative that we use tact and diplomacy to negotiate between the surface meanings and the hegemony.

> We must choose words carefully and negotiate our analyses with the women students in ways that will not turn them away from the knowledge they carry in their experiences. (p.175)

We must value their experience and their historical context
while at the same time, teaching them to unravel the
multiple threads of patriarchy.

Authority. It is one of the basic contradictions of
our educational system that although authority is perceived
as a masculine trait, women continue to exercise authority
in their classrooms (Briskin, 1991). The struggles that
play themselves out in the classroom as a result of this
basic contradiction are complex and difficult. Behaviours
and speech patterns that would never be considered in a male
teacher's classroom become routine and acceptable in the
female teacher's. For example, studies have found that
students will accept more demanding standards, more rigid
discipline and more abrupt behaviour from male teachers than
from female teachers (Delpit, cited in Briskin, 1991).

The struggle over authority is further complicated by
issues of race and class. The white, middle-class women
teacher finds herself in a position of concurrent privilege
and struggle.

> ... to the black student, she can represent white
> domination and thus may be resisted and struggled
> against. The black boy then can call upon his
> dominant position as a male in a sexist society to
> oppose her power as white in a racist society.
> (Weiler, 1988, p.139)

There are a number of strategies that attempt to deal
with the gendered reality of women teachers' authority. One
approach is to utilize the parental continuum between
teacher as father -- stern, demanding, authoritarian -- and

teacher as mother -- gentle, encouraging, nurturing (Briskin, 1991). This strategy unfortunately reinforces the patriarchal gender script and reproduces the status quo.

Some advocates of feminist pedagogy encourage sharing power with students and validating their experiences. However, as has been recognized, this approach has a number of problems. First, given the gendered reality, it is difficult to share what one does not possess and generally speaking, women are seen as not having power (Briskin, 1991), or, at least, having significantly less power than men. Second, such measures also disguise the ongoing institutional reality that teachers do have power over students in the form of grades and assessments (Briskin, 1991; Hunter, 1991; Buffington, 1993; Manicom 1994). Thirdly, such measures also hide the power structures among the students. If the teacher abdicates her power, then there is nothing to interrupt the power relations among the students, whether based on gender, race or class (Briskin, 1991; Buffington, 1593; Manicom, 1994).

Nancy Buffington (1993) rejects the notion of handing over power to the students. As she says,

> ... we can't turn the classroom into a classwomb. And we shouldn't even try. (p.3)

She encourages teachers to acknowledge openly that power exists and to make explicit the goals and expectations of the classroom. She advocates employing conflict as part of the classroom dynamic, making personal the gendered

realities of the students by continually asking "how does this affect you". In this model of teaching, the teacher "names the power differential between student and teacher" (Briskin, 1990, p.14), and thus teaches students to recognize and utilize authority. In this way, teachers maintain their position in the class and prepare students to take an active part in developing their own educational potential.

Power relations among students. It is essential that the teacher recognize power relations among students. In the grade twelve English class described earlier, the three young women were in a very weak power position. By virtue of their gender and class and numbers, they were locked in a position of silence within the dominant discourse of their male peers. Ann Manicom (1992) reminds us that

> exhortations for teachers to relinquish power may often mean that other relations of domination and subordiration in a classroom remain uninterrupted. (p.380)

Teachers must be prepared to intervene in classroom discussions when the discussion is acting to silence the perspectives of any group or individual.

Making It Political

Discussions with high school students illustrate the profound contradictions between their perceptions of how the world should operate and how it does operate. Many students believe that the feminist movement is passé but they question the cooperative education backwaters of secretaries

and hairdressers. They believe that girls have been raised to do "pretty much what they want", but they notice the difference in support for boys' sports and girls' sports. They resent feminist teachers who don't keep their politics private, and also resent the condescension from teachers who ask for strong boys, reliable girls. These students have a vague suspicion that schools are not as neutral as they were led to believe, but they are not quite sure how the bias is operating or what they can do about it.

The volumes of writing about gender and school establishes clearly that the patriarchal social structure has intricately woven itself into the educational system. In the structure of the English language, the mis-representation of women in texts and literature, the inequalities in quantity and quality of attention paid to students, the patterns of discussion in and out of the classrooms, and the devaluation of all things feminine, girls remain second-class citizens in our schools. The absence of women administrators at senior levels, the side-lining of women in curriculum staff positions, the omission of gender from policy statements are all markers of the systemic exclusion of women in the field of education.

Much of the work currently being done by departments of education in response to feminist criticism, is being done to promote women as imitators of men. Programs are developed to influence girls to train for non-traditional

roles; to provide remedial mathematics courses for girls; to
encourage girls to be more aggressive, like boys. Most of
the responses fail to ask what is failing in the structure,
curriculum, and pedagogy of the schools.

Some of the curriculum initiatives introduced in the
past two decades have the potential to challenge the multi-
tiered educational structure in which we operate. Whole
language, inquiry-based, and collaborative teaching change
the classroom structure and allow for greater student input
in decision-making and learning. Unfortunately the radical
potential of these initiatives is circumvented by
perfunctory in-service programs that address the methods but
leave the philosophy and the politics unquestioned. Feminist
pedagogy draws on the strengths of these different
approaches but in its insistence on putting politics first,
it is less likely to be side-tracked.

Nor are women the only silenced voices. In spite of a
large black population that can trace their history in Nova
Scotia back to the landing of de Champlain and a significant
Mi'kmaq population, their voices are also absent from the
dominant educational discourse.

There has been a superficial token response approving
the philosophy of non-discriminatory practice. Lumping
sexism with other oppressions such as racism -- classism has
not been recognized at the policy level -- departments of
education cersure discriminatory practices and encourage the

elimination of stereotypes and the celebration of other perspectives.

These responses fall short of the needed changes. Systemic discrimination is an integral part of the power structure of the educational institutions. It cannot be wished away with good intentions. It must be actively challenged and critiqued. That is the job of feminist pedagogy.

As I have said throughout this document, feminist pedagogy recognizes the political component of teaching and labels it explicitly. Feminist pedagogy teaches students to name the personal effects of our patriarchal capitalist society and to take action against them. Feminist pedagogy is about teaching students to take responsibility for full participation in the democratic process.

In this final chapter, I identified the sources of resistance. Change comes with great cost and there will be a great deal of resistance along the way. Feminist teachers need to seek out like-minded colleagues to nurture and support one another. We need to value the best of what is feminine and learn to value our collective and individual strengths. We need to start teaching all of our students, not just those whose interests are served by the dominant discourse.

Recommendations for Implementation of Feminist Pedagogy

Policy

1. Policy and curriculum guidelines should include a statement specifically recognizing that sexism along with racism is a primary concern of educators and that this power imbalance needs to be actively challenged in schools and classrooms.

2. Curriculum guidelines should include recognition of the scholarship of feminist writers in education and in each discipline.

Teacher Training

3. Faculties of education should be required to address equity issues in all pre-service and in-service courses,

   a. to train teachers to recognize bias in curriculum materials,

   b. to help teachers develop strategies to counter biased materials,

   c. to increase teachers' awareness of inadvertant discriminatory classroom practices, and

   d. to improve administrators' awareness of discrimination and provide them with strategies to challenge it in their schools.

Administration

4. Senior administrators should initiate and consistently practice affirmative action hiring programs to address the gross inequity of representation by women and minorities in leadership positions.

5. Principals should actively promote anti-discriminatory policies in their schools.

6. Principals should take responsibility for actively supporting anti-discriminatory initiatives among their staffs.

Curriculum

7. The provincial reading list should be reviewed to provide more materials by and about women, blacks, First Nations peoples, and other cultural minorities.

8. Course descriptions should be reviewed to be more inclusive of other perspectives.

9. Significant topics that are missing from the official texts should be introduced to students as additional projects of equivalent importance. Discussions should ensue on why the topics are absent.

10. Classroom materials such as tests and handouts should use inclusive language, and provide non-stereotypical examples where appropriate.

11. Analysis of topics should include an analysis of who benefits from the standard interpretation and whose needs are or are not met by the solution reached.

Pedagogy

12. An anti-discriminatory stance should be made an overt practice of every classroom.

13. Teachers should teach students how to critique their texts, recognizing the absence and/or bias of information presented.

14. Teachers should teach students how to take collective political action to work for justice.

15. Teachers should teach students about power, how it is implicated in interactions and how it can be claimed.

16. Teachers should employ collaborative teaching strategies in order to enhance the learning environment for students.

17. Teachers should teach collaborative skills to their students, and indicate that these skills are valued and important.

18. Teachers should be aware of the political nature of teaching and must be prepared to intervene in any class or group activity where discriminatory acts or comments occur.

19. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to engage in reflective activities such as journal writing in

order to personalize the political and academic implications of their classwork.

20. Teachers should recognize and openly discuss among themselves and with their students, the contradictions that are inherent between the social constructs of feminine and academic behaviours.

Conclusion

> Feminism is a way of both thinking and acting; in fact, the union of action and thought is central to feminist programs for social change. (Anderson, 1993)

The implementation of feminist pedagogy in Nova Scotia's public schools will represent a significant social change. As such it will face resistance from many sources, from students to senior administration. Resistance is not only inevitable, it is part of the dynamic that will fuel the change.

Feminist and pro-feminist teachers need to look to each other for support, encouragement, and ideas. Alliances can also be formed across sites of struggle (race, class, etc). We need to encourage our students to value their experience, to critique the texts of their lives and schooling, and to link action to thought. Teachers and students need to learn how to identify the patriarchal influences, critique their impact and select a pro-active response. In these ways, we may have a fighting chance to enact a long-awaited and much-needed social change.

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