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SPECIAL ISSUE: GIRL TROUBLE?

FEMINIST INQUIRY INTO THE LIVES OF YOUNG WOMEN

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Feminist Inquiry into the Lives of Young Women

PHYLLIS HERDA

In the West, adolescence is deemed to be the process of natural physical, sexual, and emotional developments that accompanies human maturation from 'youth' to 'adulthood' – all culturally loaded categories. The papers in this volume consider the experiences of, as well as the normative forces on, young women in several western societies. Adolescence is considered, in these constructs, as a time when sexual behaviour and the establishment of a sexual identity are paramount and many of the papers presented here reflect these considerations. In addition, academic achievement and how it is defined and experienced are explored.

Constructions of 'success' and 'failure', as defined by academic achievement, are considered by two of the authors. **Jane Gilbert** explores the gendered political and stereotypical nature of academic achievement within science and maths in New Zealand. **Valerie Walkerdine** discusses the influence of class on the perception of academic success of young women in Britain. Several of the authors deal with issues of sexuality and an emerging identity. **Myra Hird**'s and **Sue Jackson**'s paper examines sexual behaviour and identity in adolescent heterosexual dating relationships within New Zealand and Britain. **Anita Harris** considers the normative production of feminine behaviour and identity available to adolescent girls/young women. **Kathleen Quinlivan** writes of the normative heterosexual pressure on adolescents through the experiences of young, Aotearoa/New Zealand high school women. **Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli's** paper deals with issues of class, religion, ethnicity and sexuality in Australia. **Denise Bates** analyses transsexual autobiographies in terms of the place of girlhood narratives (or their lack) in the construction of gender identity. Finally, changing notions of 'girlhood' and 'womanhood' in the Netherlands and western Europe since the fifteenth century are explored by **Marion E.P. de Ras**.

The selected papers published here were presented at the *Girl Trouble? Feminist Theory and Young Women/Girls* conference at the University of Waikato, 14 – 15 November, 1998. The conference was organised by Marion E.P. de Ras and Hilary Lapsley and their assistance in preparing this special issue is noted and appreciated. In addition, financial assistance from the conference enabled this to be an extended volume so as to include more of the conference presentations – many thanks Hilary – the volume would be neither as extensive nor rich without your extra effort.

The 1999 WSA conference held at Victoria University in early November was an unqualified success. Alison Kirkman, Prue Hyman and the rest of the Wellington team are to be heartily congratulated for their work. A wide range of interesting and notable papers and workshops were presented over the two and a bit days of the conference. Keynote addresses by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Jane Kelsey, as well as the reunion of the Victoria University Women's Liberation Group and a presentation by Phillida Bunkle and panel, were welcome by those who attended. As usual, the AGM was often a time of lively debate.

At the AGM the proposal to move the *Women's Studies Journal* editorial collective to a nationally networked group was ratified. The networked collective will initially, for a three year period, be organised by Lynne Alice and Lynne Star and will be based in Palmerston North. Those wishing to join the collective or wanting more information should contact Lynne Alice or Lynne Star at Women's Studies, Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North; L.C.Alice@massey.ac.nz.

The 1999 Student Essay Competition is still underway. Eligible students (Stage III – *not* Stage II as printed in the last *Women's Studies Journal* – undergraduate or first year graduate students enrolled at New Zealand universities or polytechnics) are encouraged to mail essays submitted in 1999 on topics of women and gender to: Phyllis Herda, Women's Studies, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland by 31 December 1999. The author of the selected essay will receive a two year subscription to the *Women's Studies Journal* and their essay may be published in the next issue of the *Journal*. Entries from previous years were of excellent calibre and on interesting topics and I look forward to more of the same.

This is the last issue of the *Women's Studies Journal* to be produced by the present Auckland editorial collective. I know that I speak on behalf of all of the collective members when I say that our time with the *Journal* has been enjoyable and, overall, a positive learning experience. We wish the next collective the best and look forward to new and exciting issues.

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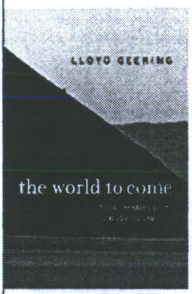

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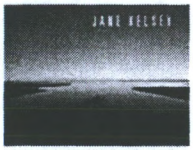

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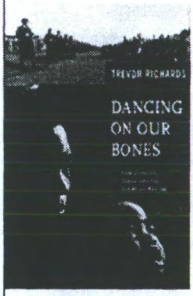

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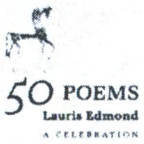

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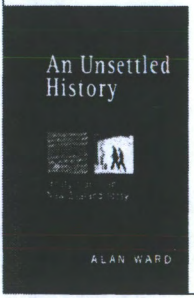

AN UNSETTLED HISTORY
Treaty claims in New Zealand today

ALAN WARD

T he impact of the past upon the present has rarely been analysed so clearly, or to such immediate purpose.

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'It's Life, Jim, But Not As We Know It': The Trouble with Girls' Achievements in Science Education

JANE GILBERT

Since its inception, psychology has continuously produced evidence attempting to prove certain facts about gender and sexuality. Many women have been caught up in this spiraling whirlwind, trying to disprove the proofs, countering evidence with other evidence, showing that 'we can do it too'. But what is it about, this relentless will to truth, this push to prove? ... Why does there appear to be an increasing necessity to prove the mathematical inferiority of girls? Instead of defensiveness, I want to prove the offensive, to turn the tables on this proof. Again and again, the proof is designed to provide positive demonstration that boys possess certain capacities – 'it' – while with equal certainty, girls have a lack – an absence – to be filled with glowing 'equal opportunities' or early remediation. I would suggest that lurking behind the very positivity of this proof is not a certainty but a fear, a fear of loss of power. Why else should proof be pursued with such unrelenting zeal?[1]

Over the last ten to fifteen years in New Zealand, and in many other countries, a considerable amount of work has been done researching and developing programmes designed to improve the participation and achievement of girls in science education, and, by extension, women in science. These programmes have ranged from those designed to remedy girls' perceived lack of particular skills or background knowledge in areas thought necessary to successful participation in science,[2] to those which were designed to make the curriculum or teaching approaches used in school science programmes more 'girl-friendly'.[3] During this period, girls' participation in science subjects (at the senior secondary and undergraduate level) has increased and the level of their achievement in these subjects is, on average, now either equal to or higher than that of boys.[4]

One might be tempted to conclude from this that the 'problem' of girls and science has been solved. In this paper I argue that the 'problem' has *not*, in fact, been solved, and, notwithstanding the

recent increases in girls' participation and achievement, that the 'trouble' with girls is still very much there – at the deepest levels of our thinking. I explore some of the consequences of the early feminist work referred to above, in order to show that this work has *not* resulted in girls' equality with boys. Instead, girls have achieved a status as simply one among many different social groups which are acknowledged as being the 'other' (but not the equal) of the standard white, middle-class, able-bodied, urban male of European descent who is the subject of educational policy discourse. I argue that this has been brought about as a result of the 'talking up' of girls' differences from boys.

My purpose in this paper is, however, not to be critical of the early feminist work which has produced this construction: rather it is to point out some of the (unintended) consequences of this work, in order to make a case for the need to develop alternative approaches to the question of gender in education. My aim, in selecting four examples of the consequences of this work, is simply to illustrate the range – and the unpredictability – of outcomes that are produced as a result of interventions into existing systems, and to point out the ongoing and never-ending nature of this work.

The four consequences I want to look at are as follows: firstly, as outlined above, the early feminist work provided a basis on which the educational rights of an ever-increasing number of different groups could be advocated (in a political context characterised by an enthusiastic re-embracing of the classical liberal political philosophies through which, it can be argued, these groups were marginalised in the first place).[5] Secondly, this work has produced a situation in which it is now common, given the now apparently equal or better school achievements of girls as a group relative to boys as a group, to argue that we need to 'make sure that the pendulum which has swung to one extreme is brought back to equilibrium': that is, that it is time for a return to a focus on the needs of *boys*.[6] Thirdly, it has been followed by the production of a number of books and articles that strongly attack some of the changes recently made to the national school curriculum, most noticeably in the area of science. The fourth outcome I look at is the now widely held idea that, while the situation continues to be bleak for working class and/or Maori girls, middle-class girls now effectively *have* equal educational opportunity, and are, therefore, no longer in need of the attention of feminists. My pur-

pose, in exploring these four examples, is to argue firstly, that the talking up of the issue of girls' participation and levels of achievement in traditionally 'masculine' subject areas such as science, has functioned, *not* to dissolve gender differences as was intended, but, instead, has contributed to their reproduction. Secondly, given this, I want to argue that discussion of this issue needs to be re-focussed in ways that enable us to approach the problem of women's representation with respect to knowledge, *not* at the level of its surface manifestation, but at the – much deeper – level at which it is produced.

As I show later in the paper, it is clear that this early work, with its emphasis on finding ways to better meet girls' needs, has produced feelings of discomfort and anxiety in many people. However, in my view, these anxieties are misplaced, in that, while it might have looked as though the world was about to fundamentally change, the reality is that life continues, largely as we have known it, albeit with a few minor adjustments. It seems to me that, while the early feminist work was clearly very useful in opening up a space within which the problem could be conceptualised, the approaches it used are now reaching the end of their useful life. With this mind, in this paper I look in turn at each of the four consequences listed above, examining some of the issues that arise with each, in order to show that the 'trouble' with girls' educational achievements is still very much there, and that it has not been resolved, but is now to be found emerging in new, different, and sometimes unexpected, places.

The first of these consequences is the development, in education, of an increasing number of different 'person categories', each of which has different and 'special' needs, all of which teachers are required both to be familiar with, and to meet: a development I refer to here as the discourse of 'diversity'.

The Discourse of 'Diversity'

The early feminist work on behalf of girls in education was characterised by an emphasis on equality and sameness, and on the development of strategies for helping girls to 'measure up' to masculine norms in order that they might achieve in traditionally masculine spheres such as science and mathematics. In later work this focus on sameness is commonly replaced by an emphasis on difference, especially on the valuing and celebration of difference.[7]

This focus on difference, however, brings with it certain prob-

lems, given the political contexts within which the work must function. These problems are compounded when girls' differences are subsumed within those of other groups, as, I argue, they have been in the development of the discourse of 'diversity'. For the reasons outlined below, the 'talking up' of difference, first by feminists on behalf of girls, and then later by others on behalf of a range of other groups, has functioned, *not* to produce equality for any of these groups, but to further marginalise them. In addition, it has served to diffuse feminist efforts on behalf of girls and to over-simplify what is an extremely complex set of issues.

Western European political thought is predicated on the assumption of the autonomous, choice-making 'individual'.[8] However, as Carole Pateman and other feminist political theorists have shown, this conceptual system rests on the (largely unacknowledged) assumption of this individual as being a white, middle-class, able-bodied male, and on the elision and/or relegation to the private sphere of all those who do not have these features: that is, one must either *be* the individual that is assumed, or be marginalised.[9]

Within this system, then, it is logically impossible for one group of individuals to first establish themselves as different, and then to later claim equality or sameness.[10] At the same time, however, claims to equality are, within this system, the main, if not the only, basis on which it is possible to make arguments against injustice. Given all this, a focus on difference effectively marginalises claims to equality and justice. Difference, in the Western European political system, can *only* be constructed in terms of 'deficiency', as 'disadvantage', as being in need of help, and, therefore, as marginal. It seems to me that this is what has happened to the construction of girls in educational contexts. The talking up of girls' differences from boys has served to construct girls as boys' 'other', and as, therefore, deficient and disadvantaged with respect to them, with the result that, as Alison Jones and Susan Jacka put it, girls, in educational discourse, are now constructed as:

> disadvantaged and lagging in educational achievement [becoming] a standard 'disadvantaged group', along with Maori, Pacific Islands, disabled, rural and working class groups who are routinely listed in New Zealand educational policy documents on equal opportunities.[11]

A construction that persists, even in the face of the evidence that the

level of girls' achievement in education is, on average, now higher than that of boys.

The net effect of all of this has not been to produce equality of opportunity, or of outcomes, for girls, but to produce *in*equality, in that no matter what girls do, no matter what evidence of good performance is produced, they are still, at some deep level, constructed as 'deficient', as having 'something missing'. I return to this point later in the paper. However, here I want to focus on another outcome of the use of strategies focusing on difference: an outcome which, while it initially appears to be compatible with feminist work on behalf of girls, is, I think, playing an important part in obscuring some important current issues for girls in education.

The early feminist work on behalf of girls in education established a framework on which it then became possible for other marginalised groups to make claims for the acknowledgment and recognition of their 'special needs' with respect to education. This opportunity was quickly taken up, with the result that, very soon after the special needs of girls began to receive official recognition in education policy documents, there was also official acknowledgment of the needs of Maori, of gay and lesbian students, of gifted students, of students with special needs, and so on.[12] In other words, feminist work paved the way for the development of a proliferation of other 'identity categories', or, as they are now known, other 'categories of diversity', the 'special needs' of which teachers are now required to address.[13]

More recently, this initial acknowledging of, first the existence of difference, and then the possibility that different social groups might have different educational needs has developed into what I refer to in this paper as the discourse of 'diversity'. The term 'diversity', and the concept of the 'diverse learner', are now widely used in the discussion of educational issues as umbrella terms within which to categorise students who, for example, are not English-speaking; who are not the New Zealand-born descendants of British immigrants; who are not male and middle-class; who do not fall into the average to above average 'ability' range as well as all students who have a health and/or disability issue; students who are not well-nourished; students who come from a dysfunctional family; students who do not live with both of their biological parents; students who live in a rural or poor area; students who show signs of any form of non-hetero-

sexual sexuality; and/or students who show any signs of a range of psychological 'syndromes' such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder. An obvious consequence of this is that most (if not all) students can be classified into this category: in other words, most classrooms, it seems, now contain *nothing but* 'diverse learners' and/or students with 'special needs', and every teacher is a 'special needs' teacher. Clearly, the only thing that all of these categories of person have in common is that they are all 'other' to the standard white middle-class, able-bodied, urban, heterosexual male assumed in Western European political discourse. The special needs of all of these groups – such as they are – are very different, and cannot be met via any sort of common approach (notwithstanding the claims of some who are currently working in this field).

The result of this focus on diversity has *not* been to produce a valuing, a celebration, or an encouraging of difference (as perhaps might have been hoped). On the contrary, it is clear that the existence of 'diversity' is perceived as being a 'problem' to be overcome, as a 'barrier' standing in the way of the achievement of 'equity' – that is, sameness. This is hardly surprising given the political context outlined above. Given that Western political thought *rests on* (and requires) the assumption that there is one central or 'core' kind of individual, and on the elision/marginalisation of all others, the best that can be hoped for within this system is the development of an acceptance of, and tolerance for, difference. This, in my experience, is how the discourse of diversity is read by teachers and others involved in education in New Zealand. To give just one example: a pre-service (student) teacher in one of my classes (who had just completed another course entitled 'Teaching Diverse Learners'), recently expressed this well when she said, in an assignment, that her goal was to meet the needs of *all* her future students 'no matter what their diversity'.

To summarise so far: I have argued firstly, that the focus on girls as a group and their differences from boys functions, not to produce equality or justice for girls or to produce their inclusion in traditionally masculine spheres, but to invite and contribute to their exclusion and ultimately their exclusion from the concept of the individual assumed in Western European political thought.[14] Secondly, I have argued that the use of this strategy has facilitated the development, in education, of what I have called the discourse of diversity. This discourse arose out of the separate and very different claims of a wide

range of social groups. In the current national curriculum documents, 'diversity' is represented via a set of descriptions of a number of named categories of 'diverse learners' (girls, Maori and so on), each of which is followed by a set of – remarkably similar – suggestions for teachers.[15]

In other words, the different categories of diversity are first acknowledged, and are then homogenised to form one generalised 'other' which is then effectively marginalised and/or pathologised. Girls' differences from boys (if such generalisations are possible) continue to be constructed as 'deficiencies', as 'lacks', *not* as attributes to be celebrated, valued or sought after, and girls themselves are pathologised. In addition, within the discourse of diversity, the category 'girl' is assimilated to all other 'others', in such a way that it then becomes very difficult to distinguish the 'special needs' of girls – such as they are – from those of all the other 'others'. Finally, I have argued that, without a critique of those elements of Western European political thought on which these categories and strategies depend, all of this is inevitable. I return to this idea later in the paper. However, I now want to turn to the second of the four consequences of the early feminist work in education that are the focus of this paper: the lobbying that is currently taking place for a return to an explicit focus on *boys'* needs.

Returning the Pendulum to Equilibrium: The 'What About the Boys?' Lobby

It is now common, in educational discussions, to read of concern being expressed as to whether or not the schooling system is now meeting the needs of *boys*. This debate has been especially ferocious in Australia, where it centred on lobbying for the development of an official Boys' Educational Strategy, presumably to 'complement' the existing one developed for girls.[16] Recently, in New Zealand and Australia, a number of articles have appeared, in publications for teachers and in the popular media, which describe and comment on the 'mounting concern' being expressed about the apparent drop in educational performance by boys as a group.[17] The New Zealand articles draw heavily on data obtained as a result of two major longitudinal studies of New Zealand children and adolescents.[18] In general, the articles just referred to report on the conclusions drawn by the authors of these two studies.

In one of these two studies, Fergusson and Horwood studied a cohort of children who were at school during the period 1982–1995. A period which was, in New Zealand as in many other countries, characterised by a series of major changes in education. There were major changes to the way in which education is funded and administered, changes to the emphasis and organisation of national school curricula, and major changes to the ways in which student learning is assessed. In addition, according to Fergusson & Horwood, this period was also characterised by, as they put it, 'an increased emphasis on the educational under-achievement of girls and the need for gender equity in education'.[19] It is their view that this emphasis is now 'very much out of date', and that it has 'obscured and rendered invisible male disadvantage', a view which, hardly surprisingly, is taken up by the journalists who wrote the articles cited above.[20]

The association of the decline in boys' educational performance with the recent major changes in education posited by Fergusson & Horwood is a common theme in all of the articles, many of which see this trend as an understandable response by boys to what is seen as the increasing 'feminisation' of school culture. Professor Ted Wragg, for example, is quoted as saying that the recent shift towards a greater emphasis on internal assessment has, for various reasons, disadvantaged boys.[21] Similarly, Nash & Harker argue that the problem of boys' under-achievement has been produced as a result of the increasing 'feminisation' of school culture.[22] They say that the levels of diligence, and the rule-following behaviours that are now required, especially as part of the shift towards greater internal assessment, as well as the continuous work patterns and the organisational and time management skills that are necessary for success in this system, tend to mediate school performance in girls' favour. Roy Nash is quoted, in one of the articles referred to above, as saying that the recent shifts in the content and emphasis of the different curriculum areas have made them 'just a little bit more friendly towards girls—fractionally less abstract'.[23] He is presumably referring here to the recent trend towards presenting traditional curriculum materials 'in context': that is, presenting them in situations that are closer to 'real life' than was perhaps traditional. This trend has resulted in science and mathematics curricula which *appear* to be 'less abstract': that is, less removed from 'everyday life', but which are, in fact, *more* difficult (because 'real-life' situations are invariably far more complex than the con-

trived problems which, traditionally, were set to test students' ability to use standard physics algorithms). However, as Nash points out, these changes (the apparently 'less abstract' curriculum and the increased focus on internal assessment) are widely perceived as having produced a shift in school culture which *favours* girls *over* boys (because girls, on average, are apparently more diligent, more likely to follow rules, more likely to enjoy the increased emphasis on student-student discussion and group work, and less likely to enjoy the more 'abstract' curriculum areas).

The recent changes to New Zealand education have been criticised by many other groups of people in many other ways and for many different reasons. The new curriculum documents, in particular, the science curriculum document, have been vigorously attacked because of the extent to which (it is argued) their content has been influenced by feminist thinking. It is to one of these attacks that I now turn, as the third of the four consequences of the early feminist work that I look at in this paper.

The 'Loony Doctrines' of Feminist Educators

In New Zealand, in the period immediately following the release of the new national science curriculum document (1993), it was common, especially in the popular media, to read of a rising level of concern being expressed as to the effect of the increased 'feminist influence' in educational policy-making, and, in particular, concern as to the likely long-term effect, on science as we know it, of the feminist influence on the design of the new science curriculum document.[24] This anxiety was most clearly expressed in the work of Professor Michael Matthews, in his 1995 book *Challenging New Zealand Science Education*, and in a number of newspaper articles written by him. He makes the case that, as a result of its use of 'constructivist theories of learning', and its focus on 'theories of gender and ethnicity', science teaching in New Zealand has gone, as he puts it, 'off the rails'.[25] Science education is now, according to him:

> scientific thinking made easy, it is scientific thinking without the hard work of conceptual mastery, it is the academic version of rugby without training or rules ... Two words that are conspicuously missing ... are 'truth' and 'discipline': they are rarer ... than wingers' tries in test rugby.[26]

According to Matthews, the new science curriculum 'degrades' and 'dumbs down' the subject matter of science proper. Through the 'banner-waving, anti-rationalist proclamations of some feminists in science education', he says, the possibility of students being taught about objectivity and 'respect for reason', is greatly diminished, with the result that the whole of Western culture and thought as we know it is in danger of being swamped by 'anti-science' and/or 'pseudo-scientific and irrational world-views'.[27]

Matthews is not, by any means, a lone voice in his expression of these concerns. Each one of a series of new science curriculum documents, when launched during the 1990s, was accused of 'political correctness'; of 'woolly thinking'; and of 'seriously misrepresenting' the subject matter of science.[28] It is clear that the influence of feminist educators, and of what Matthews refers to as their 'loony doctrines', on the design of school science curricula was *not* welcomed by many scientists, and that it has produced a certain amount of anxiety about the future, not only of science as we know it, but of more general ideals, such as those of rationality, truth, and objectivity.[29]

In my view, while it is interesting that these changes have produced such strong responses, the fears expressed by these authors are largely unfounded. As a number of feminist scholars of science have shown, one of the conditions of scientific knowledge's very possibility (and of positivism and rationality in general) has been the exclusion from it of all that is definable as the 'feminine'.[30] Any evidence of an apparent return of what has been repressed (for example, the apparent 'feminising' of the school science curriculum) will, inevitably, produce a certain amount of anxiety. Similarly, any attempt to associate 'woman' (or 'girl') with rationality, in any way that matters, *must* be refused. As Valerie Walkerdine has shown so convincingly in her work on the ways in which girls' high performance in mathematics is perceived *not* as evidence of the possession of 'rationality', but as the result of their 'hard work', 'diligence', and/or 'rule-following behaviours'.[31] It is not possible to be positioned as a girl, *and* as the possessor of rationality *at the same time*.

As we have already seen, Nash *et al* attribute the recent improvement in girls' levels of achievement in education to the recent shift towards a greater emphasis on internal assessment, 'less abstract' curricula, and more 'context-based' teaching. As they point out, these changes require students to work diligently and consistently *all* year,

to organise themselves so that their work meets certain pre-specified standards (of quality, punctuality and so on), and to follow certain rules. It is clear that, for these authors, girls are achieving success, *not* through their possession of what it 'really' takes to be successful, but through their 'diligence' and/or 'rule-following behaviours'. However, as Walkerdine has shown, this kind of success is *not* the kind that matters. This kind of success is clearly *not* conceived of as evidence of the possession of rationality: it is merely the 'appearance' of rationality, a kind of masquerade, or illusion. It seems that while some girls are achieving this kind of success in the schooling system, a great many boys are rejecting 'school culture' as apparently being too 'feminine'. However, the key point here, it seems to me, is that this is occurring at a time in which the world outside schooling is changing in ways that mean that the 'goofing off' behaviour of boys is, for them, probably not an entirely inappropriate response. For example, we currently celebrate the entry of increasing numbers of young women into what *were* the high-status professions of law and medicine, professions which require of their practitioners a huge knowledge base (that is, 'knowledge' in the terms in which it has traditionally been defined), just at a time in which these professionals are being re-defined as being the 'providers' of health or legal 'services', and in which their status, relative to other occupations, is diminishing. Middle-class young women are moving into these professions at a time in which middle-class young men are *not* entering them, but are instead moving into the information technology, financial and investment sectors.

These sectors are distinguished by their valuing of risk-taking, 'creative', 'innovative', or 'breaking set' behaviours (behaviours associated with competitiveness, aggression, and masculinity), by their valuing of the ability to develop 'just-in-time' forms of knowledge (as opposed to the possession of 'knowledge' in its more traditional forms), and by their dismissal of the ability to follow rules and procedures (as constraining, 'feminine', old-fashioned, and boring). Looked at in this light, the recent increase in girls' apparent success in the schooling system is meaningless (in the terms in which this debate is usually framed). It is clear that girls' 'success' is, to all intents and purposes, illusory, in the sense that it will clearly *not* confer on them the competitive advantage in the workplace that it was widely assumed it would, and in the sense that its achievement

leaves the traditional linking of rationality with masculinity virtually untouched.

This last point is related to the fourth and final 'consequence' that I want to discuss, which is the belief – also widely discussed in the popular media – that, as middle-class girls, on average, now appear to be achieving well in the education system, the problem of girls' education has been 'solved'.

(Middle-class) Girls Can Do *Anything*

It is now common, in educational discussions, to encounter the belief that, as a result of feminist lobbying, middle-class girls now effectively *have* equal educational opportunity: that they are taking up the opportunities available to them and that they are achieving well in a range of previously 'non-traditional' careers. The inevitable conclusion of this is, of course, that these girls are no longer in need of the attention of feminist educators. I want to argue that, for a number of reasons, this is *not* the case. Quite apart from the workplace and economic issues I have just referred to, it is clear that, while young women may *say* that they think, to quote the slogan, 'girls can do anything', they do *not*, in fact, think this. Furthermore, it is also clear that their internal constructs, of themselves – and of the world they inhabit – are just as deeply inflected by gender as they ever were.

A great deal of feminist research in education has focussed on the ways in which discourses of femininity are shaped by and/or intersect with discourses of class – partly as a result of an attempt to understand many working-class girls' apparent resistance to academic success.[32] More recently, other feminist educational research is showing that middle-class girls' apparent good performance (relative to that of girls from other class backgrounds) at school is highly problematic, not just, as outlined above, for the observers of this trend, but *for the girls themselves*.[33] In her recent study of ideas about success and failure among middle-class girls, for example, Helen Lucey shows that the conceptions of 'success' held by the girls in her study are strongly driven by the fear of failure, a fear which is masked by the discourse of rationality.[34] 'Success', for the girls in this study, involved finding ways to *appear* in 'masculine' subject positions – that is, powerful and rational subject positions – while 'failure' involves being positioned in 'feminine' subject positions – that is, as being power*less* and *ir*rational. It is clear that, for these girls, their

achievement of success (particularly in traditionally 'masculine' subjects such as mathematics and science) is only an *appearance*: a charade or a masquerade, in the sense that none of them really believe that they are 'supposed' to be in these positions. Thus, for them, because the appearance of rationality is always an illusion, it is necessarily experienced by them as *irrationality*.

It is clear, not only that girls in general, no matter what their class background, *cannot* 'do anything', but also that, at a very deep level, they do not *believe* that they can. Despite the increased levels of participation and achievement by young women in education, it remains difficult, if not impossible, for women to 'go beyond masochism', to move out of a situation in which they are effectively complicit in their own oppression: a role 'next to the man', as his supporter and helpmate.[35] Despite all the years of feminist struggle, it remains difficult, if not impossible, for a woman to position herself *both* as a woman *and*, simultaneously, as an autonomous actor in the public sphere, as the authoritative 'speaking subject' of some branch of knowledge.[36] This, for a number of feminist scholars, is an inevitable consequence of the way in which 'Western' thought is organised so that the category 'woman' (or 'girl') achieves its meaning via its conceptualisation as whatever is 'left over from', or 'in excess of', the category 'man' (or 'boy'), and, therefore, as whatever is *not* included in categories such as rationality, objectivity and knowledge, categories which have traditionally been associated with the masculine.[37] One result of this is that women's 'real' participation in science (that is, as its 'speaking' subjects) either does not take place at all, or takes place via the denial of – and, therefore, damage to – individual women's internal constructions of themselves as women.

Alternative Approaches to the 'Girl Trouble' Question

As should be clear by now, it is my view that each of the four 'consequences' of the early feminist activity outlined above are evidence that we have moved *away* from – rather than closer to – a possible 'solution' of the 'girl trouble' question in education. It seems to me – and this is what I argued in my doctoral thesis – that if we are to do anything useful with respect to this problem, we will need to develop strategies which are capable of intervening at the level at which gender is represented *symbolically* or unconsciously (rather than at the level at which it is expressed).[38]

To me, two of the most interesting and promising ways this might be done lie in different but complementary directions. The first of these is to focus, not on the elucidation of girls' special features or needs, but on the deconstruction of key aspects of the ontological system through which the 'trouble' with girls is produced in the first place. I have done some work, using this approach, in developing resource materials for a variety of school science topics, mostly in biology, and mostly focusing on deconstructing the association of 'sex' with biology, and 'gender' with the social.[39] Because 'sex' is associated with biology, it is widely seen as being an *a priori*, pre-social category that is fixed and not open to intervention (and, therefore, as not very theoretically interesting). If, however, it can be shown (as it is in these resource materials) that sex is *not* fixed, that it is *not* biologically definable, and that there are *not* simply two (and *only* two) sexes, then both the assumption of sex as a biological category, and its immutability are called into question, as are many of the other key ontological commitments which underlie and make possible Western European thought as we know it. The work described above was designed to allow school students the possibility of both 'using and refusing' aspects of scientific knowledge.[40] To me such approaches are useful because they avoid the problems, identified earlier in the paper, that are produced through the 'talking up' of 'girlness', and, by avoiding 'identity categories' altogether, they sidestep what I see as being the traps inherent in the discourses of 'diversity' and 'inclusiveness'.

The second, rather different, strategy is to attempt to re-think some of the assumptions which are at the basis of what have been referred to as 'feminist pedagogies'. A number of feminist critiques of these pedagogies (which have been extremely influential, especially in the tertiary sector) exist. For example, as a number of feminist scholars have argued, one of the effects of these pedagogies (as they are widely understood) can be to deny and/or relinquish the power and authority which is automatically vested in the person of a teacher – simply by virtue of their being in that position.[41] Other feminist scholars have been critical of the way in which these pedagogies function to deny key aspects of the psychological relationships that *necessarily* exist between women, particularly when they are positioned in teacher-student relationships.[42] For these writers, a genuinely feminist pedagogy would draw on, exploit and further develop these kinds

of relationships in ways that could offer women what they refer to as a *genuinely* female symbolic space: a space within which forms of knowledge which are not necessarily 'masculine' (or 'complementary' to/supportive of the masculine) could develop. It seems to me that it is possible, drawing on approaches such as these, to develop a framework for thinking about educational policy and curriculum development in ways that do *not* simply reproduce existing identity categories, but which open up a space for thinking about questions of identity, knowledge, and education in very different ways.

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Girls Growing up on the Edge of the Millennium

VALERIE WALKERDINE

The introduction to the 1997 British Think-Tank Demos publication, *Tomorrow's Women* states:

> As male jobs disappear, women's importance in society is set to rise, as is their confidence. Forty per cent of women believe that women are naturally superior to men. Women will soon make up a majority of the workforce and Britain is becoming increasingly shaped by feminine values. Values such as empathy, care, community and environmentalism are now central to British society ... Work has become more important for women, and nearly all groups of women have become relatively less committed to the family over the last ten years.[1]

A previous publication from the same organisation, *Generations of the Genderquake*, had argued that women's entry into the labour market was set to rise greatly in the professions, managerial and the running of businesses, while male participation in the workforce was shrinking dramatically.[2]

While Demos presents this situation with a rather problematic easy and celebratory style, it is nonetheless the case that they are referring to a huge change in the global labour market. That is, that in all Western industrialised and post-industrial nations, the rise of the service and communications sectors has meant a massive rise in women's employment, some of it part-time and poorly paid (in telesales and telebanking and other services for example), while traditional areas of, especially working class, male employment in manufacture, for example, have declined dramatically.

This is a vastly changed scenario and I want to discuss what it means for girls to grow up in this transformed work environment. I want to look at this in relation to research carried out by Helen Lucey, June Melody and myself in Britain, as part of a study entitled 'Transition to Womanhood in 1990s Britain', funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. That research worked with thirty-eight young women aged sixteen and twenty-one who had been previously been included in studies when they were aged six in the case of the sixteen-

year-olds and four and ten in the case of the twenty-one-year-olds. The twenty-one year olds were the group who were first seen at as part of the Tizard and Hughes study 'Language at Home and at School' (1985), which was reanalysed as part of the book *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socialising Daughters* by myself and Helen Lucey.[3] These young women grew up through the turbulent, boom-and-bust 1980s and 90s and we were able to think about their lives at twenty-one in relation to what we analysed at four.

Tomorrow's Women has five basic categories that it uses to describe women now and in the future: 'Networking Naomi', 'New Age Angela', 'Mannish Mel', 'Back to Basics Barbara' and 'Frustrated Fran'. By producing these categories as personality types, the research uses advertising categories – types of consumer identity – in a move common with the move from production to consumption and using trends in 1980s market research. The first four types of women map the differing modes of entry into the professional and business labour market and are for women with qualifications. It is the latter, 'Frustrated Fran', who would be characterised as traditionally working class, although class is never mentioned as an issue. The 'Frustrated Frans' are relatively young – under thiry-five – and in the social groups C1, C2 and D. Many are also single parents. Their jobs are typically unskilled, part-time and on fixed term contracts, and they give little in the way of either fulfilment or actual reward.

According to Synergy's survey:

> A solid 15 per cent of all women feel they are getting a raw deal out of life and we estimate that some 33 per cent of all women share many of Fran's frustrations. Among this group, many are mothers with young children who feel hemmed in by the lack of state support, the absence of affordable childcare and the unhelpful attitudes of their male partners … 'Fran' feels cut out of the action, and lacks confidence in herself. Thirty one per cent of all women in Synergy's survey say they suffer from poor self-esteem, and 27 per cent say they feel resigned rather than optimistic. Rather than being supported by her sisters she finds herself increasingly marginalised by the successes of 'Mannish Mel' who also has the education, support and determination to succeed. By 2010 some of the resulting anger could be ready to explode. Already demonstrating a mix of pessimism, escapism and rage, Fran is as likely to turn on women as men, with the girl gangs of the 1990s possible harbingers of things to come.[4]

Even the celebratory Demos presents the female future as bitterly divided. It is what they call the C1, C2 sand Ds, the traditional working class women who are frustrated with their lot, who work, but in poorly paid work with no protection and no benefits, or manage as single parents on welfare. This split, neatly tucked away as a personality type, barely signals what it covers over – huge social divisions between women in the labour market. It is these social divisions which are rarely spoken of but which are absolutely central to an understanding of what happened to the young women in our study.

What Happened to the Girls in this Study?

What has happened to these girls since they were seen at four? At four all were paired, that is, there was one middle class and one working class girl in the same nursery class and both had matched IQ scores. In this study, middle class meant parents with university education and professional work and working class meant parents who left school at the minimum school-leaving age with no qualifications and who went into manual or service work. By the age of ten these girls were already worlds apart. Few pairs were even in the same school. Whereas the working class parents tended to have stayed in the same place, the middle class families had moved out, up and better. The schools they were in were different – the bottom middle class school hugely out performed the top working class one. The life chances of the two groups had diverged dramatically. And it got worse. Not one working class girl went to university in a straightforward and unproblematic way. Three eventually got there, but all but one middle class girl went to university. The kind of differences and divisions that were characterised in the Demos study were there loud and clear.

Work Trajectories

At the time we revisited them at age twenty-one almost all of the middle class girls were in full-time education and three of the working class were. The rest of the working class girls were employed in usually poorly paid and sometimes part-time work. Some had already experienced periods of unemployment. What kinds of practices produced these differences? How can we account for the widely differing subject positions? The position that I want to take here is that it

isn't the case that the middle class is normal and the working class lacking, that if the working class families were more like the middle class then all would be all right. Rather I want to say that these are subjects constituted and regulated differently. Different discourses regulate and different psychic economies produce girls in different positions in response to this changed scenario. It is this that I want to explore in the rest of the paper. First of all, I want to recap on the differences in the regulation of working class and middle class girls that we recounted in *Democracy in the Kitchen*.[5]

The Girls at Four

When Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes carried out their research, which led to the publication of *Young Children Learning,* they were particularly interested in demonstrating that working class children were not linguistically deprived and that mothers provided a rich linguistic environment.[6] While they did indeed demonstrate this effectively in relation to the mother-daughter pairs that they studied, they demonstrated, too, that the nursery schools the little girls attended did not greatly enhance the language of the working class girls, but attended more to the interactive style of the middle class girls, which was more assertive. They wanted to argue against a theory of linguistic deprivation which had, at its heart, the idea that working class children failed at school because of some fault in the linguistic practices of mothering. In *Democracy in the Kitchen*, we concentrated on the fact that Tizard and Hughes had ignored the fact that their sample was composed of girls, failing to examine both aspects of gender and the classed work of mothering. If it is mothers who are supposed to prepare their daughters for school, what exactly are they supposed to do and how do they do it? We discussed the classed nature of the regulation of the practices of mothering and the way that this produced differences in the socialisation patterns of the daughters.

Sensitive Mothers

Tizard and Hughes set some store by the idea that those mothers who were most sensitive to their daughters' emotional and physical needs would also be most sensitive to their linguistic needs, producing both more advanced language and, consequently, intellectual development. Although Tizard and Hughes do not state explicitly that sensitive mothers should produce children who perform well at school,

the implication is there in the theoretical framework to which they refer. That is, that mothering is a natural process, through which child development is achieved, normally or pathologically, progressing when normal towards rationality and achievement of academic success – the production of the bourgeois individual. We discussed this at great length in *Democracy in the Kitchen* and this is not the place to rehearse the entire argument. We argued that women's domestic labour was what produced what counts as natural and normal development and that women have been regulated very strongly as mothers, having the responsibility to produce normality, correct development and educational success.

Texts in education are constantly full of the need to co-opt 'parents' (read 'mothers') in order to make these parents responsible for getting it right for their children from infancy onwards.[7] Women, therefore, bear an incredible burden and responsibility and we argued that it is middle class women who are understood as the purveyors of normality and have to be strictly regulated, and, indeed, to regulate themselves through what counts as love and guilt. After all, who would want their child to grow up abnormal, disadvantaged, etc. and these are the terms that are used. By contrast, working class women show a number of things which are considered abnormal in their practices, which means that they have to be policed by educational, social service and medical agencies (middle class women, indeed) because they tend to utilise strategies of child rearing which have far stronger boundaries between work and play, make power differentials clear and do not value rationality at the expense of other ways of being. It is these women who for many decades have been held responsible for the educational failure of their children, with ideas like deprivation, which Tizard and Hughes strove to oppose.

The proponents of sensitivity assumed that sensitivity carried from the recognising and meeting of emotional needs and thereby being sensitive to their meanings. It is from this base that mothers would provide the basis of educational achievement. However, if we examine the relationship between those girls who had sensitive and insensitive mothers, as defined by Tizard and Hughes, we see that the concept has no predictive potential at all, especially when it comes to the working class mothers and daughters. What is striking is that some of the highest performing working class girls are actually the daugh-

ters of 'insensitive' mothers, though the same does not hold true for the middle class sample. For example, the girls we called 'Dawn', 'Teresa' and 'Maura' all had insensitive mothers, as defined by Tizard and Hughes, yet their performance is above the average for the working class sample: all either sat, or were capable of taking, A levels. If this concept only has predictive power for those mothers and daughters whose subjectivity is constituted through the discourses of sensitive mothering, namely the middle class, then while this is crucial for the middle class, it certainly does not determine working class success and failure. This suggests that, at a social and a psychic level, something else entirely is going on. It is crucial therefore to understand precisely what that is.

In *Democracy in the Kitchen*, we argued that the regulation of mothers varied according to class, with consequent differences in regulative strategies adopted by the mothers in bringing up their daughters. In addition to this, we argued that theories of socialisation assume a psychological subject made social through the taking on of roles and stereotypes, usually provided by significant others such as parents. Such approaches assume that the way children turn out is a fairly direct consequence of what parents do. We argued that such approaches not only invest parents with considerable power, but also place the most incredible burden of guilt upon them. Implicitly or explicitly, all approaches which assume that parents, especially mothers, have an educative effect on their children, are socialisation approaches. We would, of course, not be so foolish as to imagine that what parents do is of no consequence for children, but we would like to understand this in a rather different way, which we will explain with reference to our data.

We are proposing that social groups are produced and reproduced through strategies of regulation, forms of government and power which regulate the day to day practices of ordinary people. As we have explained in many places in the past, in this approach subjects do not pre-exist the discursive practices through which what it means to be a subject are constituted.[8] However, those practices are cross-cut by relations of fantasy, both on the part of the apparatuses of regulation (viz. the 'fear, phobia and fetish in colonial government' referred to by Franz Fanon) and by unconscious and conscious defences produced by family and cultural practices to guard against the terrible fear that they might not succeed.[9]

In *Democracy in the Kitchen*, we pointed to a number of practices through which mother and daughter positions were produced. The practices that we noted related especially to the production of the normal and pathological bourgeois individual. The apparatuses of social regulation, the 'truths' through which a modern individual is assumed to be produced, demand a style of parenting which stresses learning through play. Thus, we argued, mothers were told to turn routine domestic tasks into opportunities for playful learning. Anything could potentially form such a basis, from laying the table to making the muesli, but what was clear was that not only were the boundaries between work and play very fluid, if not broken down, but mothers would find it very difficult to actually assert their need to get on with their domestic work, for fear of upsetting the fragile regime of child development and education through play. We argued that practices like these have a profound effect on what it means to grow up middle class and female, when rational argument wins the day and powerful emotions are at best not very nice.

Such practices differ profoundly from the working class ones in which the mother's power over her daughter is quite explicitly stated. Not only are work and play strongly separated, but on many occasions, the mothers insist that the girls play on their own so as not to disrupt their housework. For example, Nicky's mother insists that she cannot play with her daughter because she's 'got washing to do', 'got ironing to do', 'got altering to do', adding 'yeah, well, it all takes time, love'.[10] Indeed it does, and not infrequently middle class women pay others to do this work, which does mean that they may have more time to play. In addition to this, they are very explicit both about power differentials and their own position of authority, as well as allowing a space in which passionate emotions can be expressed safely. For example, Nicky's mother manages to turn her daughter's desire to 'beat her up' into a game in which the mother pretends to beat her daughter up, getting her into a lock and tickling her.[11]

In this sense then, the practices that they adopt threaten the normality of rational autonomy and nice feelings that is central to the bourgeois order. It is not surprising, therefore, that working class families are often blamed for the failure of their children within the education system, by professionals who want to find some pathological practices that can then be put right. However, while it is true

to say that these practices are abnormal, ie. outside the norm, there is no reason to suggest that there is anything wrong with them. Indeed, more than this, if we are looking at educational success and failure, some of the most successful young women come from families in which the above practices are strongest.

However, there is an issue about how they come to exist if we are arguing that subjects are produced in and through the apparatuses of social regulation. In other words, although there is a great deal of surveillance and regulation of working class family practices, nevertheless these countervailing practices survive, and on the basis of them, some girls are even successful at school. It would be difficult to argue in some simple sense that these practices were forms of resistance to the imposed norm. Rather, we would argue that they are cultural practices which have validity because they make sense in relation to the government of and social relations of working class life: actually two forms of regulation, the bourgeois order on the one hand and the regulation of working class work on the other. While the professional and bourgeois order is founded upon the notion of the rational and autonomous subject, working class life is at the same time epitomised by overt forms of power, in which employees are subject to exploitative and oppressive working conditions, overt authority, and a strong distinction between paid work and play. It could be argued, therefore, that while these practices are pathological to a bourgeois norm, they are extremely well adapted to the conditions of working class life. However, if this is the case, how do any working class girls succeed at school, where the demands of academic practices are far more akin to professional ones and therefore necessitate the learning of new forms of subjectivity? Secondly, as we argued in the introduction, there is a crisis particularly in working class masculinity, because the manufacturing base has been eroded in post-industrial societies. How, therefore, have these family practices changed to accommodate the change in what counts as working class life and social relations? We will answer these questions in a number of ways. I will argue that middle class femininity is regulated in such a way as to ensure educational success and entry into the professions once the nearly exclusive province of men.

Regulative Practices

I now wish to examine the way in which the regulative practices utilised differently in working class and middle class households actually produce aspects of the regulation of different kinds of femininities. I want to look at the production of academic success in middle class girls and its place both in terms of the production of the middle class as feminine and also in terms of the dynamics of the family. I want to explore just how the production of these girls as subjects who can gain power through rational argument, the epitome of the bourgeois individual, is made to work as they progress through the education system. What does it mean that, in this new context, the bourgeois subject may be defined as masculine, but that these young women are allowed entry in increasing numbers?

Their mothers were the 'sensitive' mothers who were, indeed, the facilitators of the knower, the rational and autonomous child of child-centredness.[12] When their daughters were four, they were employed mostly, if at all, in the lowest levels of professional work. This has changed over the course of their daughters' growing up and most are now employed full-time in professional work. What is often covered over, as we pointed out in *Democracy in the Kitchen*, is the work that goes into producing their own housework as playful learning and the effect this has on themselves. These are women who turned routine activities such as cleaning a fish tank or making the muesli into the basis of an invisible pedagogy, one which taught their daughters to argue for their own power through the use of reason, even to the detriment of their mothers, who could sometimes be rather oppressed by these 'suburban terrorists' and which allowed them to talk of nice or nasty feelings, but tended to reason them away rather than allow them to be expressed and contained. Now their daughters are set to enter the professions themselves, to become the bearers of that bourgeois rationality.

How Have Those Early Lessons Served Them as They Grew Up?

How, as the young women grow up, is the relationship between their production as the bourgeois subject and as feminine lived? Do both clash, live alongside each other, or do both have to be transformed in order for the bourgeois subject to become feminised? Professional men have been feeling very threatened by the increasing numbers of women who are doing very well educationally and enter-

ing the professional and business labour market. This has been met with a post-feminist assertion of 'girl power' and of the idea of an active and powerful femininity, which is sexually assertive. This whole cultural and discursive trend fits well with the move for the woman to move into the rationally ordered public space. Indeed, such a discursive field describes well how many of the middle class young women want to present themselves and to be understood. How, in educational terms, do the young women live the intersection of their intellectuality and femininity?

In order to examine these practices, the researchers had to 'make strange' practices that were so often taken for granted. However, because all of us grew up working class, they were to some extent strange to us and this enabled us to have another perspective on what was going on. Part of this was that we began to ask what success meant and what the price was that was paid for it.

Why, we asked, do these girls seem to follow a trajectory that looks a little like a conveyor belt and why must they be kept to that path at all costs, with so much fear that if they fall off they will be in a desert, with no water and visible means of life support? Because there seemed to be something keeping the families on this track at all costs, we began to ask what were the desperate investments, what was it that was being so studiously and relentlessly avoided?

It was these questions which led us to produce the account that I provide in this paper. I wish to examine the place both of rationality and of the feminine in the making of the bourgeois subject. My aim is to demonstrate that what is so spectacularly achieved by these girls and their families is about the production of practices through which maintenance and continuity of the middle class is assured, and that this requires a great deal of very hard work on the part of a lot of people. It is not achieved easily or without a struggle, a struggle which defends against Otherness, the terrifying loss of middle class status: the fantasised fall into the abyss of the masses. In other words, I am arguing that the process of maintaining middle class status is at once social, cultural and psychic. Now that the girls can take the place previously accorded to their brothers, this produces particular stresses for girls, who now have to be produced as the bourgeois subject in a struggle that is in complete opposition to the idea of a free and totally positive 'genderquake'.

Reason and Emotion in the Production of the Post-Enlightenment Subject

We argued in *Democracy in the Kitchen* that rationality in the form of rational argument was a central strategy in the regulation of the middle class girls, alongside the turning of passionate emotions into feelings. To understand why these particular practices were widespread we need to look not only at the recent history of class, education and psychology, but also at the way in which the rational and the feminine have been understood in the move towards the production of a rationally ordered bourgeois liberal democracy. In an earlier volume we argued that:

> Our argument in a nutshell, is that ideas about reason and reasoning cannot be understood historically outside considerations of gender. Since the Enlightenment, if not before, the Cartesian concept of reason has been deeply embroiled in attempts to control nature. Rationality was taken as a kind of rebirth of the thinking self, without the intervention of a woman. The rational self was a profoundly masculine one from which woman was excluded, her powers not only inferior but also subservient. The 'thinking' subject was male; the female provided the biological prop both to procreation and to servicing the possibility of 'man'. Philosophical doctrine was transformed into the object of a science in which reason became a capacity invested within the body, and later mind, of man alone.[13]

Of course, in all of this it is difficult to understand how women, who became the object of science, should become the bearers of rationality. We argued previously that typically girls and the feminine were understood as antithetical to the playful, masculine child of reason, yet also necessary in order to provide the essential feminine caring context in which rational development can occur.[14] This is precisely what the mothers of these girls do: they provide the basis for rational argument, and they do more than this, they make emotions safe. Emotions can be understood as part of the irrational, the dreaded animal passions. It follows therefore that the bourgeoisie has to tame these in some way. I suggest that this is just what these mothers do.

But what has happened in the last twenty years which has allowed these girls to become rational subjects, taking the place in the professions once occupied by men? Feminism certainly has stressed

the possibility that women can accomplish the same as men and has fought long and hard for the erosion of sexism. This has had particular effects in the education of girls and the entry of women into middle class occupations.

However, as we shall see, the entry of the middle class girls into masculine norms of rational academic excellence comes at a price. It is not achieved easily at all and indeed is produced out of the very suppression of aspects of femininity and sexuality. In that sense, in our view, the discourses of 'girl power', which stress the possibility of having and being what you want, provide an ideal which it is almost impossible to live up to, but through which therefore young women will read their own failure as personal pathology:

> I had musicianship classes, orchestra, I actually had more orchestra, choir, quartet, quintet, piano lessons, violin lessons ... if you do something and you don't do it well, well, I didn't do it well, you didn't want people to think that I couldn't do something well. If I can't ... if I couldn't do it well I wouldn't do it at all. (Polly, white middle class)

The Production of Excellence

I want to show how the story of rationality as natural and normal, the new middle class as given through the destiny of their intelligence, is produced by a great deal of work, some of it social and cultural, some of it psychic, defensive. As we have seen, the majority of middle class girls in our sample do extremely well at school and go on to 'good' universities and prepare to enter the professions (most of them do not wish to go into business). Let us examine how precisely this is produced. I have already documented some of the work that went into preparing the four-year-olds. We have seen also that, according to Tizard and Hughes, nursery school staff paid far more attention to the language styles of the middle class girls, thus reinforcing what had already gone on in the home. At ten, the middle class girls' performance already so far outstripped that of the working class sample that performance in the top working class school was worse than the bottom middle class one. In addition to this, three quarters of the middle class families had already taken their daughters out of state schools and put them into preparatory schools in the Girls Public Dayschool Trust (a British system of prestigious fee-paying schools). Such schools were all single-sex and in them behav-

iour, which was split along gender lines in the state school (e.g. boys taking the place of playful rationality, girls working hard), was organised quite differently. Here, girls took all of those places, which meant that the top-performing girls behaved and were treated far more like the boys in the state schools. In addition to this, excellence was simply the expected norm. Nobody was supposed to do poorly and girls were expected to work as hard as it took to produce excellence. Anything else was simply considered to be failure.

When we began the work on this phase of the research, we had a hard time figuring this out. After all, we were used to understanding excellent performance as exceptional, to be praised and congratulated. Yet what we were met with was something quite different. Exceptional performance was treated as quite ordinary, as something expected, unworthy of comment. Indeed, this was summed up by Patty's statement about her mother, who on hearing that her daughter had got ten GCSEs (British academic public examinations taken at age sixteen), nine with an A grade and one with a C, made only one comment: 'pity about the C'. No praise, no congratulations, nothing. We felt dumbfounded. After all, what we were far more used to hearing was the elaborate praise accorded to the working class girls over performance that was far, far inferior, performance which would have been the object of ridicule or shame in middle class households (see below). We began to ask why it should have been the case that only the highest performance would do. How come then, that middle class parents show such distress at anything other than excellence? What function does excellence serve and how is it achieved?

To explore this issue in more detail, I want to consider the example of a pair of sisters in one middle class family which brings out the issue of how family practices operate as regulative through, amongst other things, complex psychodynamic strategies. Andrea is a middle class twenty-one-year-old high achiever who went to a prestigious private girls school where she got ten grade A GCSE's, and three As and one B at A level (British public examinations taken at age eighteen). She went on to Oxford to study medicine. Andrea has a younger sister, Laura, who got only eight GCSEs and two A levels (grades A to C). Laura is also a gifted musician. Her school exam results were respectable, although not as good as Andrea's. This relatively small difference between the sisters is exaggerated by the family. Andrea is seen as the success of the family and despite the reality of Laura's

achievements, she is understood as a failure by all the family. They describe Laura as not very bright, not very academic and a slow learner. She will not be going to university, even though her grades would allow her to, but to a catering college to do a diploma in hotel management. We learn from their mother that Laura's identity as 'not very bright' had germinated from the moment of her difficult birth. Her mother has been carrying extreme feelings of anxiety about Laura's intellect since this time, when she was convinced that Laura had suffered brain damage through oxygen deprivation.

However, the family narrative was very persuasive and June came away from the interview, at that point without the knowledge of her academic achievements, with the impression that Laura, whom she did not meet, did indeed have severe learning difficulties, was an academic failure and was possibly even a candidate for special needs. It was only when we analysed the data that the distortions in the family narrative were discovered. It was also at this point that we realised the limitations of cultural and sociological concepts for understanding these distortions. This triggered our search for an alternative way of analysing and presenting our findings.

Conveyor Belt

This shows us how Laura has become a construction, an unconscious projection of this family's fears and fantasies and that she has introjected their fears and has, in fact, become this person who sees herself as a failure. She is also a victim of her family's unconscious fears. She has also been bullied at school which fits, and perhaps reinforces, this pattern. In this family scenario Andrea's identity as clever is constructed through, and in relation to, the family dynamics (even though, of course, that is not the only site of its production), where she compares herself against this fantasised construction of her sister, therefore, her identity is projective, a product of the family's projections – Andrea's cleverness is intricately linked with Laura's slowness. Although persuaded by the family narrative, June had a feeling that there was something wrong, that the narrative didn't quite fit. Immediately after each interview the researchers took extensive fieldnotes, paying particular attention to the feelings they experienced both during and after the interview. It was later when the researcher re-read her interview notes and listened to the taped interviews that she decided to get a copy of Laura's exam results. These revealed that she was, in fact, in

the top 10 per cent of the population. Clearly, Laura as an academic failure was a fantasy and there were some very complicated narratives that needed to be looked at more closely. For all of the working class girls in our sample to get eight GCSEs and two A levels Grades A to C would be a cause for celebration.

It is important to emphasise, through this example, the relation between the social and the psychic. Within this and other middle class families there exists a particular understanding of what constitutes failure which is vastly different to the way success and failure are judged in the working class families. This understanding of failure nevertheless has its own real effects (and affects), producing objective readings by which to understand performance (on the surface) and, on a much deeper level, the identity of family members. It is crucial to understand that within the middle class families' social milieu Laura has failed. This is not only a projection within her particular family but is an effect of the relationship between specific social and cultural norms, psychical discourses and family processes. This example helps us see more clearly the connection between the unconscious and class. The way in which attainment helps in guaranteeing middle class status, which is tightly bound up with the family's concern that Laura is not good enough. Andrea and Laura give us important insights into the issues that are important in understanding the way that middle class children are brought up, the important family dynamics around which middle class identities are formed, and the way in which middle class life is lived with its enormous anxieties about becoming working class. Any one of the working class girls who got the same grades as Laura would be held up as a success story. They would definitely not be a failure, just as Laura would not, had she been brought up in a working class home.

For many working class young women there is much ambivalence around succeeding. For one young woman this means heading towards an unconsciously planned pregnancy:

JM: So if you got pregnant would you be happy about it? Is that what you mean?

JB: Yeah.

JM: You would be, right.

JB: It's the chance that you take though isn't it? Really.

JM: Yeah sure, but so I mean you don't – if it happened it happened kind of thing, it doesn't cause you any anxiety.

JB: I mean my mum said to me, 'if it happens, it happens'. Just cross that bridge when we come to it.

JM: Right. And you – what – do you use contraceptives?

JB: No.

JM: You don't – not at all?

JB: No.

JM: So, it's possible that you might get pregnant?

JB: Yeah.

JM: And are you hoping that you will?

JB: No, not really. Hope in a couple of years I will but not yet.

JM: Right – so it's quite likely that you will, if you're not using any contraceptive.

JB: That's the chance in it.

JM: Right – um.

JB: 'Spose I'd be scared if I didn't have my mum and dad's backing.

JM: Right – so do you think you're trying to get pregnant?

JB: No.

JM: On some level?

JB: (untranslatable).

JM: But if you're not using contraceptives then it's very likely that you will.

JB: Yeah, it's likely that I will but I'm not, like, going out of my way to get pregnant or nothing like that.

JM: Right – but you're not avoiding it, so – um – and is your boyfriend quite happy about that possibility?

JB: Oh, he don't – he don't want me to get pregnant.

JM: So, what? He doesn't use any contraceptives?

JB: No.

JM: Right. So if you do get pregnant you'll be with him for quite a while, presumably?

JB: Mm.

JM: Longer than you'd wanted?

JB: Yeah.

JM: So, if you did, what will happen about your degree and everything?

JB: Oh I'd come back to it.

What we have here is a working class young woman who is doing quite well in higher education and wants to become a lawyer, who told the researcher that she regularly has sexual intercourse and doesn't use contraceptives. So the chances of her becoming pregnant soon are high. Her parents also said that if she got pregnant they would support her, although this is not what they want for her. The anxiety and fear for both the parents and the daughter around the possibility of the daughter's success is expressed through the unconscious desire of them all for her to become pregnant. As with the middle class young women who want to stay middle class, there is enormous fear for the working class girls and their families of being uprooted, of the successful working class girls leaving home and family to enter the unknown middle class world, which is alien to many working class families, hence the enormous ambivalence of succeeding. This is a serious issue and makes the easy certainty of self-transformation in the global economy a much more difficult project than a celebratory discourse of female success might suggest. In this account, upward mobility through work for working class young women is a socially and emotionally difficult transformation.

Clever but Feminine

Academic excellence is what helps ensure the production and reproduction of the new middle class. It gets the girls places in the right universities and makes sure that they do well there, getting the right jobs afterwards. Only excellence, in these straitened times of the 1990s will act as enough of an insurance: after all graduate unemployment is very high and competition is fierce. The road to be trodden by these young women is to success certainly, but straight

and circumscribed indeed. To attain this goal, they have to play a balancing act in relation to cleverness and femininity, which is managed differently by each of them. To our eyes, many of them at first glance appear to have everything: they are brainy, successful and extremely good looking: a fantasy of 'girl power' indeed! Yet, they struggle hard to achieve this double success. For many of them, what Joan Riviere described in terms of the masquerade seems pertinent.[15] Her argument was based on the psychoanalytic case of a woman patient of hers who was an academic. After occasions on which the woman had spoken in public, she would feel it necessary to flirt with men who happened to be present. Riviere interpreted this as a defence against the subject's feelings that her femininity was a masquerade, covering over her fear that she was too masculine, hence the need to publicly display her femininity. Perhaps for these young women the elaborate displays of femininity are a defence, a defence against the pain, the fear, that clever as they are, they are not really women at all.

There are several examples of girls' anxiety around trying to be clever and feminine, sometimes pushed to extremes, such as Amy who pulled her hair out, but who did not see herself as being allowed to do anything other than do well and go to a good university. In fact, despite her quite extreme emotional problems, she achieved ten grade A GCSE's, two grades As and one B at A level and went on to Oxford, feeling that she was not allowed to fail. Her mother said that the staff at her expensive private school simply did not pay much attention to her emotional problems, caring more that she should achieve the highest academic standards. Being feminine cannot be allowed to interfere with academic success, indeed nothing can.

This is well illustrated by the difference in working and middle class attitudes to pregnancy and motherhood . While the working class parents tend not to like their daughters becoming pregnant, they often come round and will accept a baby in the household, if that is what the girl wants. The middle class girls and their parents simply cannot contemplate a baby. Several girls mention that having a baby would 'kill' one of their parents. Nothing is allowed to get in the way of ambition (and the dread drop into the abyss that it defends against). Indeed, anybody who has a problem with academic success is immediately presented with any number of costly therapies to allay the problem and produce the hoped-for success. For Amy and her par-

ents, the high grades that she achieved were simply expected not exceptional. Indeed, there is a level which, as in the case of Patty's mother's comment ('pity about the C'), could actually be interpreted as in some sense a failure because it was not the desired straight As. While Amy's parents felt that they had not pressured her, her interview makes it clear that she felt extremely pushed to high performance (which was simply the norm) and that this anxiety manifested itself as both hair pulling and anorexia, of which the school took little notice. The time of her school success was, in fact, the very time when Amy hated the available images of herself: 'all the pictures of myself there I absolutely hate at that time, I just really look so awful, and that one (looking at photos of herself) I seem quite happy but – like, I mean, quite sort of smiling and – but I think I felt really drained after.'

It seems that the production of the middle class girl as the rational bourgeois subject requires a huge investment. The right kind of schooling has to be provided, in which she will be made to feel that exceptional performance is merely ordinary and that this performance, therefore, is never enough. She may also be made to feel that femininity is to be struggled over, sometimes renouncing sexuality, because the onset of womanhood is too painful when pitted against the extraordinary academic efforts the girl has to make. So, it is not difficult to see that the anxiety displayed by so many of these girls at ten has escalated. Some cope with it, but others do not and professionals have to be brought in to help so that the girl can be kept on track. Sometimes, as with Amy, she is kept on track even though she is clearly extremely disturbed. What, one may ask, would she actually have to do to herself to be allowed to get off the conveyer belt? Anorexia and pulling her hair out do not seem to be enough for anybody to give her permission to stop. What is the huge psychic and economic investment then, which goes into making these young women into 'the bourgeois individual'? Why must they succeed at all costs? Why is their emotional state at all times subsumed to rationality, to excellence, to brilliance?

I suggest that the huge investment in success covers over the terror of its opposite. That what is defended against here is the fear of falling off the edge of middle class life and culture, of falling off the edge of rationality and into the darkness of those held to be in the pit of unreason, the dark forces of the masses and the equally dark forces

of their own passionate desires, so easily projected onto 'the great unwashed'. If nobody can let rationality go, there must be some powerful emotions and it is so easy to locate them in all of those feared 'Others' who appear to threaten civilisation. After all, if the working class is rapidly splintering and changing, with part of it becoming the non-working underclass, with the middle class containing a defence against falling off the edge, these young women's impossible rebellion must carry all those defences – they cannot be allowed to be seen to fail. It does seem as if their only trajectory is to become both very clever and very beautiful. So, as Riviere argued, and Judith Butler continued, gender can become a performance, a masquerade, now realized by the 'I can have everything' girls.[16] Yet, this heady normality, this utopic success, hides the opposite, the defences against failure, the terrible defence against the impossibility that the super girl identity represents.

Where does all this leave us? I have tried to set out how we might begin to examine some aspects of the production of social difference amongst girls in the global economy of the end of the millennium. The much vaunted, celebratory girl power undoubtedly describes the performance of girls who will not be pushed around in relation to the outside world. While this is a huge and important shift, it has not been produced by feminism alone but relates to complex and global market forces, which allow girls' under representation in science and maths to be a problem in the 1970s and yet girls' educational success to be taken to be a problem twenty years later. These are changed times in which we need to understand the specificity of what has happened and is happening. While there are undoubtedly other aspects of this than those presented here, the positive aspects of what girls achieve, for example. I am, nevertheless, trying to say something complex and difficult about the achievement of femininity at the end of the twentieth century. The story that I have told is one specific to the class system and cultural location in which it was produced. However, this should not hide the fact that other cultural stories are possible which elaborate upon this phenomenon as it exists within other locations. This is an important kind of work on girls which urgently needs to be done at the end of this millennium and well into the next.

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NOTES

[1] Helen Wilkinson, et al, *Tomorrow's Women* (Demos, London, 1997) p. 8.
[2] Helen Wilkinson, *Generations of the Genderquake* (Demos, London, 1994).
[3] Valerie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey, *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socialising Daughters* (Virago, London, 1989).
[4] Wilkinson et al, pp. 142-3.
[5] Walkerdine and Lucey.
[6] Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes, *Young Children Learning* (Fontana, London, 1984).
[7] See for example, Tizard and Hughes 'Young children learning' discussed in this paper.
[8] Valerie Walkerdine, *Counting Girls Out* (Falmer, London, 1988); Julian Henriques, et al, *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (Methuen, London, 1984).
[9] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Macgibbon and Kee, London 1968).
[10] Walkerdine and Lucey, p. 81.
[11] ibid., p. 135.
[12] Valerie Walkerdine, 'Developmental Psychology and the Child-Centred Pedagogy' in Henriques, et al, pp. 153-202.
[13] Valerie Walkerdine, *The Mastery of Reason* (Routledge, London, 1989) p. 27.
[14] ibid.
[15] Joan Riviere, 'Feminity as Masquerade', in Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (eds), *Formations of Fantasy* (Metheun, London, 1986) pp. 115-46.
[16] ibid.; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, New York, 1990).

'You Have to be Pretty, You Have to be Slim, and You Have to be Heterosexual, I Think'[1]: The Operation and Disruption Of Heteronormalising Processes Within The Peer Culture Of Two Single Sex Girls' High Schools In New Zealand

KATHLEEN QUINLIVAN

Zorra's comment to me indicates that she equates heterosexuality with being pretty and slim. This article explores the intersections of gender and sexuality that students draw on in order to make meanings of sexuality and gender in their peer culture. The work forms part of my doctorate in Education, which investigates what's possible in terms of affirming sexual diversity in two New Zealand secondary schools. In this article I am exploring what queer and postmodern feminist paradigms may have to offer in terms of understanding how lesbian and bisexual subjectivities are framed in schools. I am also interested in the potential that discourse analysis and deconstruction hold in terms of classroom practice. This work represents a significant shift for me. The lenses I am currently using to frame queer subjectivities have provided me with a way to move beyond the constraints and limitations of equity discourses in terms of understanding the issue of lesbian, gay and bisexual students in schools.[2]

The operation of the heteronormalising process as it happened within the peer culture of two single sex girls' case study schools is described. I draw on the perspectives of young women in schools in order to suggest that the problem is not the students' sexuality but the (hetero)normalising discourses, which construct and limit understandings of sexuality and gender. Queer and feminist post-structural frameworks are drawn on in order to understand how constructs of sexuality and gender mutually reinforced each other in order to normalise heterosexuality and abnormalise same sex desire. Drawing on the participants perceptions I show how the binary constructions of male/female, homosexual/heterosexual leave little space for the consideration of other representations of sexuality and gender which are found in our communities.

However, while (hetero)normalising discourses operate to regulate and control sexualities in schools, they are also challenged and dismantled by the participants.[3] So an exploration of the disruptions enacted by the young women form an important part of the analysis. Understanding the operation of heteronormalising processes is a first step in developing pedagogies that subvert the heteronormative cultures of secondary schools.

Theoretical Frameworks

Heteronormativity is a term Warner uses to describe the process of normalising sexuality through discourses that render lesbian, gay and bisexuality as deviant.[4] I am increasingly finding the conceptual frameworks that underpin the notion of heteronormativity more useful than equity discourses such as heterosexism and homophobia.[5] Understanding the operation of heteronormative discourses involves placing heterosexuality rather than same sex desire under examination. Identifying the normalising power of heterosexuality is a significant shift. It moves away from framing same sex desire as the 'problem'.

Drawing upon Foucauldian understandings of power, the queer notion of heteronormativity acknowledges that power can shift and change, depending on circumstances and situation. It moves away from positioning queer youth as victims and as oppressed and pinned underneath the huge weight of heterosexism and patriarchy. People can position themselves in relation to discourses which assume heterosexuality is the norm, students, teachers and researchers can (and do!) duck and dive, disrupt and dismantle heteronormative understandings.

Perhaps most challengingly, queer pedagogies call into question the ways in which sexualities and their intersections with gender have been understood; queer understandings draw attention to the ways of seeing: 'a wide field of normalisation, rather than simple intolerance, as the site of violence'.[6]

Understanding the heteronormalising process has enabled me to develop and trial pedagogies with students and teachers which move towards subverting and dismantling heteronormative discourses. The theoretical tools of discourse analysis and deconstruction that I utilise to analyse the data are useful (and sometimes challenging) pedagogical tools for teachers, which could be used to understand sexualities in their work with students in secondary schools. The first

step in this process is to unpack the assumptions and values that lie behind the articulation of understandings of sexuality and gender. This process can reveal and critique the construction of lesbian, gay and bisexual subjectivities and open up venues within which to explore new possibilities and understandings.

Exploring the limitations of queer paradigms is beyond the scope of this piece of writing. However, I do want to suggest that utilising queer frameworks in the classroom can be problematic. Research suggests that the use of queer feminist and postmodern pedagogies in educational contexts can be a fraught, unsettling and uncomfortable process.[7]

Methodologies: Framing the Research Process

In this section I explore my own positionality as a queer/ lesbian researcher and outline the subjectivities of the participants and the contexts of the two school sites. The gendered nature of my experience as a 'queer' educator and researcher has impacted on my understandings and analysis of the perceptions the participants had of their schooling.[8] These experiences have allowed me to focus on the nature of gendered constructions and the limitations this has placed on choices and possibilities for queer youth.

Living Theories: My Queer Attractions ... Kathleen's Research Journal May 1997:

> Investigating queer pedagogy and what it may mean for educational practice reflects to a certain extent, my own path as a feminist, a lesbian/queer woman, an educator and a researcher.
>
> I had been heavily involved in feminism from my school days and it was through that political lens that I came to identify as lesbian in the early 1980s after having my first sexual relationship with a woman. At the time I felt as if I was making a choice about becoming a lesbian after having had satisfactory relationships with men, rather than acting on what were perceived to be innate same sex desires which my peers had felt from an early age. I intuitively felt this was not something to talk about amongst the separatist lesbian community in the remote South Island rural area in which I lived.
>
> Within the social and historical context of that time, radical lesbian feminism was constructed as strongly essentialist and as a political act. Separatism and being anti 'the system' were strong manifestations of that

and I felt an enormous pressure on me to give up my teaching job in a nearby town and live within a community which was perceived by my peers as a rural utopia for lesbians. In my bleaker moments, I felt that the lesbian community, which I entered, was to some extent as constraining politically and socially as the 'heterosexual' world I had left. Looking back now this time was one of those moments when I felt that fixed categories of sexual identity didn't fit me.

Ten years later another of these moments occurred. For my Masters thesis in Education I interviewed ten young lesbian students about their secondary school experiences. Collaborating with gay male researcher Shane Town was something which would have been unthinkable for me to contemplate ten years earlier when men = enemy. The experience brought into sharp relief the ways in which my understandings of lesbian as a fixed identity category impacted on my understandings and analysis of the perceptions the young women had of their schooling.

My experience of gendered constructions as a lesbian/queer educator/researcher and the differing approaches that Shane and I brought to the research questions helped us both to acknowledge not only the silences being perpetuated by our research, but also the binary frameworks and constructions in which we were operating.[9] The limited constructions of passive female sexuality with which I framed the research questions for my 1994 project became explicit. Asking the young women, 'When was your first relationship?' was in contrast to Shane who asked the gay male participants in his parallel project; 'When was your first sexual experience?'. It interested me how I focused on notions of intimacy and emotional involvement whereas Shane was interested in the constructions surrounding 'active' male roles in sexuality. When several of the young lesbian participants expressed an interest in constructing their sexuality in more diverse ways I became interested in exploring what these prescriptions might mean in terms of interrogating fixed gender categories. Then I began to read more queer and feminist theorists who explored constructs of gender and sexuality and how the two ways of thinking operated to mutually reinforce each other in the hetero-normalising process.[10]

The queer collaborative alliance with Shane has enabled me to explore the limited representations of fixed gender/sexual categories and the role these play in constricting opportunities for lesbian and bisexual

students in schools.[11] It has also provided a way into thinking about what it may mean to re-conceptualise understandings of sexuality beyond minoritising models into a more universalising framework.[12] Sexuality, then, can be conceptualised as more fluid and mutable. I have also become interested in the benefits that queer frameworks may hold for teaching and learning about sexualities in secondary schools .

Research Methodologies

As part of my Ph.D, I carried out a case study in a single sex girls' state secondary school in order to explore what was possible in terms of affirming sexual diversity. The data was gained through face to face interviews, written feedback from a seventh form student member check and my fieldnotes and research journal. I undertook the first set of interviews with students and teachers in late 1996. The focus of the original interviews was to gain a picture of what they currently thought it was like to be a lesbian or bisexual student at the school. Of the four students I interviewed, two were in the fifth form; Melissa described herself as lesbian and Heidi saw herself as bisexual. The other two students both identified as themselves heterosexual, Zorra who was then in the seventh form and Gabrielle who was in the sixth form.[13]

Early in 1997 I conducted a member check with the seventh form to gain some feedback on my preliminary data analysis of the student interviews. The purpose of a member check is to get some reactions and evaluations to how you have, as a researcher, interpreted and made sense of the participants' perspectives.[14]

The one hour session consisted of my explanation of the research project and how I had interpreted the perspectives of the students. I asked for their group and individual responses to my interpretations and was also interested in their ideas on what could happen in the school to create a more inclusive environment for lesbian and bisexual students and how they saw their role in that process. They had the opportunity to talk in groups and also to provide individual written responses. I tape-recorded and transcribed the session so I could use it as data to document my role in the process as a researcher/educator. Student suggestions together with staff responses and my ideas formed the basis of the project.[15]

Early in 1998 I re-interviewed Melissa, who had just completed the seventh form and interviewed Margaret who had also just finished

school. She described herself as 'gay'.[16] The focus of the later interviews was to gain their impressions of what had happened in the research process and also to talk to them in more detail about how they saw the intersections of gender and sexuality operating for themselves and for their peers.[17]

During the course of the PhD I also became interested in the informal networking that was going on between lesbian and gay teachers in schools and students. As part of that process I interviewed Belinda who was at that time a self-identified lesbian seventh form student who was out at the state single sex girls' school she attended. I had originally interviewed her when she was in the fourth form in a previous project to find out what it was like to be young lesbian student at school so I had worked and collaborated with her before.

Troubling Representations: Understanding the Heteronormalising Process

Students within schools have a strong peer culture with its own constructions and learning processes which are equally as powerful as the enacted curriculum as it is experienced by students in the classroom.[18] Connecting with young women's lived experiences can provide insightful analyses of the intersections between gender and sexuality for young women in the 1990s. It helps to understand what it means to live with/in those shifting, multiple and contradictory constructions and how understandings of gender and sexuality shift and change over time.[19]

Defining (Hetero)Normal: Gendering Sexuality/Sexualising Gender

A strong interdependency operated between heterosexual and lesbian and bisexual students' data as gendered and sexual beings. The students consistently equated being female with being heterosexual and for them and the majority of their peers, that was what was considered to be normal. The consequences of normalising heterosexuality are that lesbian sexuality in particular and to a lesser extent bisexuality, are framed as 'abnormal'. They fell outside what the students understood being a 'normal' female meant.[20]

Sexuality for the young women I talked to was framed primarily as an either heterosexual/normal or homosexual/abnormal choice. Binary constructions of heterosexuality and homosexuality and mas-

culinity and femininity operated together to reinforce the normality of heterosexuality and the abnormality of homosexuality, and to reinforce essentialist gendered stereotypes. Within binary frameworks, notions of feminine heterosexuality were considered to be 'normal' and desirable in terms of female sexuality and gender. Representations of same sex desire are framed as male and 'abnormal'. The normalising and abnormalising interdependency of the operation of the heterosexual/homosexual and female/male binaries are alluded to by Zorra:

> People are always striving to be normal, people are so afraid I think when they're my age that they're not ... having a boyfriend, doing whatever ... it's awful at that age to think you're abnormal ... it must be hard for (young lesbian and bisexual women) (Zorra, heterosexual student, F7).

Medical and scientific discourses of lesbianism and homosexuality based on nineteenth century medical models equated same sex desire between women with gender inversion: lesbianism was equated with maleness and therefore not 'normal'.[21] Stereotyped assumptions of lesbians based on physical appearance played a powerful role in simultaneously reinforcing the abnormality of lesbianism and legitimating femininity/ heterosexuality for all of the young women:

> People are very concerned about the stereotype that goes with lesbian I think ... I'd find it very hard to come out as a lesbian because of what stereotypes do. I've heard people say, 'Don't shave, wear singlets and gumboots'... people are self-conscious of that (Zorra, heterosexual student, F7).

Zorra drew attention to the powerful effect that stereotypes played in framing her and her peer's understandings of 'myths' of lesbianism as equating with 'myths' of maleness. In this way the students' understandings of sexuality and gender are produced within the binary nature of the discourses which are available to them.[22] Drawing on nineteenth century and current discourses which framed lesbians as deviant and 'inverted', Zorra notes the discomfort she and her peers feel about allying themselves with the representations of lesbian sexuality and maleness. The identification of essentialist characteristics of maleness; hairiness, singlets and gumboots with lesbian sexuality, frames same sex desire between women as abject and abnormal and simultaneously legitimates the heterosexual feminine

ideal, reinforcing the normality of heterosexuality. The disquiet that Zorra and her peers felt with the gendered constructions of lesbianism available to them operated to police same sex desire and reiterated the normality of heterosexuality.[23]

Heidi identified the narrow and limited 'ways of being female' open to young women. She explained the threat presented by lesbians who don't conform to stereotyped constructions of femininity and also how these representations widen constructs of femaleness, while simultaneously threatening them. Any lesbians who look like men can't be female and, therefore, are rendered as abject/males:

> They do have this feminine image, women, and as soon as this big butch lesbian comes along it blows the whole thing ... For people who are really feminine who do have a feminine image of things, this big butch lesbian comes along (and) no longer (are) all the women in the world feminine but you've got the ones that look like a man as well (Heidi, bisexual student, F5).

Lesbian sexuality was also framed as primarily and overtly sexual and, therefore, abnormal for a woman. Framing same sex relationships between women as actively sexual collided with notions that active female sexuality per se was not seen to be acceptable.[24] This dynamic also contributed towards the othering and marginalisation of lesbian sexuality:

> I just sort of need to get out and experiment and I don't want to be like this lesbian slut or anything but I want to go out with different girls, I want to go to the movies and all that sort of thing, I'm not sex crazy or anything I just want to be able to have a good time with a girl and I guess that's what I hate (that I can't do that) (Melissa, lesbian student, F7).

While Melissa is able to identify the double standard that exists for males and females in terms of how sexual activity is represented, she simultaneously reinforced and perpetuated the negative connotations of the construct by maintaining that didn't want to be seen to be a 'slut' and 'sex crazy' herself. She expressed the desire to have as much freedom to explore relationships as her heterosexual friends did. However, she felt that was impossible because it would reinforce abnormalising constructions of her as an insatiably sexual lesbian.

Minoritising representations of queer youth were identified by Heidi, a young bisexual sixth former, as pathologising and not what she either identified with or wanted for herself:

> I've heard other (lesbian and gay youth) talk about their experiences ... they felt like committing suicide, they don't have any friends or the only thing they do is interact with gay people and it doesn't seem to be me and I don't want to get picked on and always have to be shoved into some big adult category, when you haven't lived your life properly, your teenage years (Heidi, bisexual student, F6).

Policing (Hetero)Normal In Lived Student Culture

This section explores the ways in which heteronormativity is policed in the private realm of student peer culture at Hillview College. I show how young women's relationships are invested in the production of certain forms of power and subjectivity which operate as micro-technologies of power in order to reinforce dominant heteronormative hegemonies.

Gabrielle, a heterosexual sixth former provided an example of how the silencing process operated amongst her peers to legitimate heterosexuality and abnormalise same sex desire:

> They were talking about bars ... in town ... they said somewhere we were gonna go ... but (then) they said, 'Don't go there!' I said, 'Why?' and they said, 'It's a gay bar' ... nothing else was said ... there was like, silence (Gabrielle, heterosexual student, F6).

The silence around the 'lack' of heterosexual activity was framed as an expression of 'abnormal' sexuality. Young women who didn't fit the heterosexual 'norm', who didn't have boyfriends, or who were not sexually active were assumed to be lesbians. Zorra, a seventh former told me that in order to avoid the negativity of the lesbian label she decided to get a boyfriend:

> I remember in 5th form I had no interest in having a boyfriend at that stage and I constantly felt this pressure ... people would say, 'Oh yeah, she must be a lesbian' ... 'cos I didn't have a boyfriend ... and I ended up going out with this guy I didn't particularly want to go out with just to prove to everybody I'm not a lesbian (Zorra, heterosexual student, F7).

The fear of being labelled as a lesbian kept many of the young women within the bounds of acceptable femininity. Being a lesbian is perceived to be as abject, as pathologically contagious, as being heterosexually active for young women. Being called a 'lessie' was used along with the other forms of female othering as an insult in an

instance of verbal harassment amongst students, which a teacher observed while on lunchtime duty:

> (One teacher I spoke to) noticed verbal use of the word faggot as a term of abuse by fourth formers and ... she also heard a 6th former say she was going to punch a girl's head in for spreading round the rumour that she was a lesbian ... (Fieldnotes, September 1996).

Representations of bisexuality operated simultaneously to both widen the discourses of same sex desire for young women and to shut them down. While bisexuality was seen to be fashionable by some students, others suggested that when the information about the sexual relationships shifted from rumour into confirmed public knowledge, similar abnormalising constructions of same sex relationships arose to those that I have already discussed. An anonymous seventh former's response framed understandings of same sex female relationships within pathologising constructs of constant, predatory and contagious sexuality. However she also pointed out that after a while, maybe after the novelty had passed, reactions weren't so bad. I wondered later whether this would have been the case if she had been lesbian?:

> I'm bisexual and I don't see it as being fashionable. Last year rumours went around about me and my friend ... walking around school you could ... hear the rumours (and) whispers. But it was when people started asking that it got harder denying the true stuff, or admitting it. In the end I told some people and well I got a lot of shit ... it's hard coming out eg. people step back as though you are going to jump them, but after a while it's cool, everyone sort of, forgets (Anonymous bisexual student, F7, written response from member check, February 1997).

The student's comment suggests that in the move from silence/rumour to speech there is a shift which takes place where articulation equals legitimation for the bisexual student. While supposition and rumour can run rife, the possibility of being (hetero)normal can still exist. Until that information is made explicit, it is not an issue that has to be dealt with.[25] Once the information has been clarified, all the abnormalising constructs came into play. However, as the student points out, those constructions didn't last either. If as Butler suggested, articulations of understandings about sexuality provide an opportunity to examine the discourses which construct them, then maybe in this situation, those abnormalising discourses were found

wanting by both the bisexual student and her peers.[26] The student's friends found out that she wasn't going to 'force them' into having sex with her. In other words the inadequacy of pathologising and contagious constructions of lesbianism and bisexuality were made explicit and the opportunity arose to put those abnormalising concepts 'under erasure'.

The understandings of gender and sexuality that the young women articulated within their peer culture were played out with/in what the students saw to be stereotypically female 'ways of operating'. I will discuss the implications of these constructions shortly. The gendered modus operandi included covert gossip and rumours and overt verbal (rather than physical) harassment. Gossip and rumours about teachers and students perceived to be lesbian and bisexual were features of this world. Allegations of lesbianism were used as a controlling mechanism through rumour. As a seventh former pointed out to me, it's forceful because it's applied by girls to each other:

> People do talk about who is or who isn't lesbian or bi, but it's always as though (the person) they're (talking about is) an outsider and the people talking feel 'close', in a group, by talking to someone else they are proving to others their heterosexuality (Anonymous bisexual student, F7).

Another example of way in which the students positioned themselves simultaneously both inside and on the outside of discourses occurred in their framing of stereotypical forms of female behaviour. By constituting female talk as 'bad gossip' the negativity of stereotypically female 'ways of operating' was reinforced. Covert behaviour, such as gossip and talking behind students' backs while remaining nice to their face were seen by the lesbian and bisexual participants as female 'ways of operating'.

One example of what Melissa and Margaret framed as 'duplicitous female' behaviour occurred when a group of their peers approached Margaret's mother to talk to her about Melissa and Margaret's relationship while Margaret was away. Margaret felt that if she had not already told her mother about the relationship she could have been placed in a very difficult position:

> When I was in England apparently some of the 7th formers ... said something to (my mother) about me and Melissa going out and I still

> don't know who that was either but I felt betrayed that someone would go and tell my mother ... She knew but if she hadn't of known that would have been a horrible way for her to have found out and somebody just went and did that (Margaret, gay student, F7).

Challenging and Dismantling Dominant (Hetero)Normative Discourses

In this section I explore how the young women I interviewed disrupted and attempted to transform the heteronormative peer and school cultures in which they moved.

In the third and fourth form Melissa managed the disjuncture between the construct of the abnormal lesbian and herself by denying to herself that she was a lesbian. She kept friends at a distance, pretended to be attracted to young men and colluded with her peers in harassment of students perceived to be lesbian:

> Well the first couple of years ... I couldn't even accept it myself ... so, it was like just hide it. I could never really be me. I guess I could never really be close to friends 'cos there was a big part of my life they didn't know existed. I was so scared I even invented guys I liked to be 'normal'. Also if rumours went a round about someone else being gay I'd go, 'yuk' and act real homophobic to try and hide it (Melissa, lesbian student, F7).

Remaining silent can be seen as a form of resistance, a way to keep yourself safe within a hostile environment.[27] While Heidi recognised that she paid a huge price in terms of not being able to be open about her sexuality, she still felt safer hiding this information from almost all of her peers:

> I don't want to be gay or lesbian, I'd rather just pretend not to be. Yeah, there's a problem with pretending not to be because you're not living fully, I would just rather live my life secretly (Heidi, bisexual student, F5).

Compartmentalising the different aspects of their lives was a way for Heidi and Melissa, as young lesbian and bisexual women to cope with a less than ideal situation at school, and with what they saw as the heteronormative attitudes of the majority of their peers. While Heidi recognised that living a fragmented life had its disadvantages, she still saw it as preferable to dealing with the possibly negative verbal and physical reactions of other people:

> It's difficult, it's like living three different lives, life with your partner, a life with your friends and a life with school and a life with your partner and your friends and you just kind of wish it could all be one. But if it was all one you'd have to come out and people would have to deal with that. Some people wouldn't deal with it as well as others and I wouldn't like to be backed into a corner and have the living crap beaten out of me, it's easier to live your life without that (Heidi, bisexual student, F5).

Heidi suggested that presenting as feminine/normal was very important and made her feel a lot less 'othered'. Her valorisation of '(hetero)normalising' personas expressed her dissatisfaction with what she saw as the limited representations available to lesbian and bisexual people. Her understandings also operated simultaneously to abnormalise constructs of same sex desire:

> Most lesbian and bisexual people you see are the stereotypical, except for you,[28] really masculine, they've got short shaved hair, they really don't look like me and I don't look like that ... just because you're attracted to the same sex it doesn't mean that you have to look like a guy (Heidi, bisexual student, F5).

Margaret's situation as a young gay woman was different to Melissa's, she only started having a same sex relationship in her final year at school. While she experienced difficulties with negative reactions from family members, her peers were very supportive of her. She suggests that same sex relationships were much more acceptable amongst her own age group and that her peers' acceptance meant that she was able to integrate her sexuality comfortably into her life:

> I think maybe for our age group it's more acceptable and I found like when I told my friends about me and Melissa like they said, that's really good, as long as you're happy. It seems like it's just part of life now (Margaret, gay student, F7).

In some cases bisexuality was framed by the participants to abnormalise same sex relationships amongst young women and legitimate heterosexuality. Several young women framed bisexuality as being more acceptable than being seen to be lesbian. Gabrielle, a heterosexual sixth former, saw bisexuality as more experimental and, therefore, more acceptable than being lesbian, and as an intermediate stage on the way to mature heterosexuality. She saw it as mutable,

even fashionable and fun, a less threatening prospect to acknowledge than the abject construction of the butch lesbian as male:

> It's kind of a fashion lately to be bisexual ... to experiment or something is fine, that's cool, but I'm not sure how it would be accepted if someone came out and said, 'I'm lesbian' ... they have stereotypes of butch lesbians and yet experimenting is exciting and natural, it's more okay (Gabrielle, heterosexual student, F6).

One of the factors that students felt contributed towards a more relaxed attitude towards young women in same sex relationships was the wider range of representations of 'ways of being' lesbian and bisexual which they saw as becoming increasingly more available. Heidi's comments reveal that this shift is underpinned by the same binary systems of thought, which serve to normalise heterosexual/female constructs and abnormalise lesbian/male representations. She saw herself as someone who could be more acceptably female (read normal) because she didn't conform to abject constructs of lesbian as 'big' 'masculine' 'mean' butches ('read abnormal'). In one way her acceptability rested on appearing just as 'normal' as a heterosexual. However, it also widened the range of possible 'ways of being' bisexual for herself and provided a venue within which she could situate herself:

> (These days) it's different. I think more (lesbian and bisexual people) look normal, you don't have to be stereotypical, I'm not big and masculine and I'm not into sport ... I think that if you look normal rather than being stereotypically masculine butch (and) ... I think you're more accepted because people have an image of what a lesbian looks like and it's that butch thing, a bit mean (Heidi, bisexual student, F5).

Both straight and queer students identified the role that popular culture played in creating wider representations of same sex relationships for young people. Britzman's observation that schools aren't the only venues which produce understandings about sexuality which influence young people are echoed by the participants.[29] Lesbian actors, such as Ellen de Generes, and musicians, such as Melissa Etheridge and kd laing, have played a role in widening representations of what it means to be lesbian and bisexual. Heidi pointed out that seeing successful queer women in popular culture who didn't conform to stereotyped constructs and looked 'normal' has lead her towards greater self acceptance:

> Like Melissa Etheridge and things she's not typically butch and masculine and her lover Julia Cypher, she's not. The fact that they're accepted more if you read about it in the media, yeah, people don't people think. Oh yeah, they are, they're happy and they look relatively normal ... It makes it easier to accept yourself as being like that 'cos you've got a role model and maybe you think, well if they've done it, well hey why can't you? If they've survived that long and gone through things then it can't all be bad (Heidi, bisexual student, F5).

Belinda is a young lesbian who, from the age of fourteen onwards, actively worked to dismantle heteronormative culture of her single sex girls state school. By the time she had reached the seventh form, Belinda was working informally to support her lesbian and bisexual peers and formally working to educate and change her teachers and the curriculum. The informal peer support Belinda carried out with her fellow students often consisted of unspoken shared looks of 'mutual knowing' and alliances:

> I know of a few dykes, I mean I haven't actually said anything, but I know of them and they know I'm aware of that, and there's this, 'I'm here if you need me' kind of thing. It's got a lot to do with eye contact and it's got a lot to do with people being brave and just approaching me in a quiet space or just letting me know in little ways ... I mean I might walk down the corridor and someone I know who's a dyke will just look me in the eye, just that knowing kind of glance (Belinda, lesbian student, F7).

Belinda also networked with her straight friends in order to support young lesbians. She used gossip and female friendship networks in order to do this:

> I tend to hear about people being discriminated (against) ... Someone will say to me, 'Oh, ... you'd better watch out for Sarah, you know, just to see how she's going', so that sort of networking as well with straight friends that is really good ... they'll ... just relate the gossip to me and I'll just suss it out. So this same young woman was talking one day, so I started talking about my lover deliberately and my relationship and just different things about different aspects of the community. She picked a lot up and her eyes were like, 'this is great, this is great, this is what I want to hear', and I did it really calmly but I did it really directly ... I made eye contact with her at the same time and it just felt really comfortable (Belinda, lesbian student. F7).

Belinda also acted as a 'lone ranger' change agent in order to change the curriculum within in her school. She described how she negotiated a rather reluctant principal as part of that process:

> (The principal) wanted me to organise sexuality sessions, gay and lesbian lifestyle sessions on my own and ring up everybody and ... she thought I was so busy that I couldn't do it ... She didn't really want to have a part of it ... she was supportive but then again she wasn't ... So what I did was that I got lists of the principal's times when she was available, I got lists off the other sexuality teacher, of her times and I said, 'Right, when are you free to come to a meeting?' and she said, 'I'm not free this day' and I said, 'Well, actually you are', she'd say, 'I'm busy, I'm busy' and I'd say, 'You're not actually' and she'd say, 'Oh right, that's okay, I forgot about that' (Belinda, lesbian student, F7).

The role that Belinda played in the school was both admirable and yet problematic. Her persona as an out young lesbian in her school meant that she educated many of her peers and teachers about the issues faced by young lesbians in schools. Belinda's actions in challenging the school meant that she was viewed by many of her peers as 'a lesbian rather than a person' as she put it to me. However, as an individual she was a lone voice in a larger heteronormative culture. Belinda paid a big price for being a lone ranger change agent and left school at the end of the seventh form feeling physically and emotionally exhausted with glandular fever.

This article has attempted to explore some of the multiple and contradictory discourses of sexuality and gender available for young women within the sphere of peer culture in schools.[30] The lived student culture within the schools played an important role in reiterating, resisting and transforming representations of gender and sexuality for young women who attended the school. I suggest that understandings of the multifarious and shifting ways in which students position themselves in relation to discourses of sexuality and gender and the interplay between the two discourses could provide valuable insights for teachers into how to meet the needs of young women in schools more effectively.

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NOTES

1 Zorra, heterosexual student, F7 (Form 7).

2 Kathleen Quinlivan, '"Claiming An Identity They Taught Me to Despise": Lesbian Students Respond to the Regulation of Same Sex Desire', *Womens Studies Journal,* 12:2 (Spring 1996) pp. 99-113.

3 Mairtin Mac an Ghaill, '(In)visibility: Sexuality, Race and Masculinity in the School Context', in Deborah Epstein (ed), *Challenging Lesbian and Gay Inequalities In Education* (Open University Press, Bristol, 1994) pp. 152-76; Kathleen Quinlivan, '"On Dangerous Ground": What's Possible in Terms of Affirming Sexual Diversity in Secondary Schools in the late 1990s?', Ph.D thesis, University of Canterbury, forthcoming; Kathleen Quinlivan and Shane Town, 'Queer as Fuck?, Queer Pedagogy, Educational Practice and Lesbian and Gay Youth', in Deborah Epstein and James Sears (eds), *A Dangerous Knowing: Sexual Pedagogies and the Master Narrative* (University of Chicago and St. Martins Press, Chicago, 1999) pp. 242-56.

4 Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

5 I am not suggesting that these paradigms should be framed as if in competition with each other. As Sedgwick [Eve Segwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990)] points out, the development of universalising discourses owe a great deal to the minoritising discourses which preceded them.

6 Warner, p. xxvi.

7 Mary Bryson and Suzanne De Castell, 'Queer Pedagogy: Praxis Makes Imperfect', *Canadian Journal of Education*, 18:3 (1993) pp. 285-305; Kathleen Quinlivan, 'On Dangerous Ground'.

8 Patti Lather and Chris Smithies, *Troubling the Angels* (Westview Press, Boulder,1997).

9 Sedgwick.

10 ibid; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, New York, 1990); Judith Butler, *On the Discur-*

sive Limits of Sex (Routledge, New York, 1993).

[11] Quinlivan and Town, 'Queer as Fuck?'.

[12] Sedgwick.

[13] When I interviewed students in the study, I just asked them how they currently identified their sexuality. However, the identification of sexuality is increasingly being viewed as more complex. Recent models of identification propose understanding sexuality as mixture of sexual identity (what you identify yourself as), sexual behaviour (what you do sexually) and sexual orientation (who you are sexually attracted to) – none of these need necessarily line up.

[14] Lather and Smithies.

[15] I underestimated the extent to which this was an educational session for students, it wasn't until later when I read the written feedback that I realised that the session functioned for many of the students as an opportunity for constructions of gender and sexuality to be explored and examined (Butler, *On the Discursive Limits of Sex*). This was not something I had anticipated at all!

[16] When I asked Margaret how she identified herself she replied that she saw herself as gay rather than lesbian. When I asked her why she replied that she thought that the word lesbian had negative connotations and gay sounded happier.

[17] In the year between the first and second set of student interviews changes occurred in terms of the sexual experiences of the young women I interviewed. One finished a same sex relationship and went out with a member of the opposite sex while two of the students had sexual experiences with other young women.

[18] Bronwyn Davies, *Post Structuralist Theory and Classroom Practice* (Deakin University Press, Melbourne, 1995); Michelle Fine, *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School* (State University of New York Press, New York, 1992).

[19] Deborah Epstein and Richard Johnson, *Schooling Sexualities* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1998); Valerie Hey, *The Company She Keeps: An Ethnography Of Girls' Friendships* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1997); Mac an Ghaill.

[20] Hey.

[21] Carol Smith Rosenberg , *Disorderly Conduct* (Alfred A. Knoph, New York, 1995).

[22] Davies.

[23] ibid; Epstein and Johnson.

[24] Michelle Fine, 'Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The

Missing Discourse of Desire', in Michelle Fine (ed), *Disruptive Voices: The Possibilities of Feminist Research* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1992) pp. 31-59.

[25] Sedgwick.

[26] Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

[27] Fine, *Framing Dropouts*.

[28] I dwell on my own 'normalising' persona at length in Quinlivan, 'On Dangerous Ground'.

[29] Deborah Britzman, 'What Is This Thing Called Love?', *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, 1 (Spring 1995) pp. 65-89.

[30] Hey.

'Coming Out/Going Home':
Australian Girls and Young Women Interrogating Racism and Heterosexism[1]

MARIA PALLOTTA-CHIAROLLI

The Interweaving of 'Lifeworlds'

In a collection of diary entries written during her adolescence and entitled, 'Coming Out/Going Home' Jess Langley writes about her coming out as a young lesbian. This necessitates her move to inner city Melbourne to 'be with people like myself and feel more comfortable in my surrounds'.[2] She pays rent while she continues with her schooling and runs a support group for other young lesbians. Hence, 'coming out' has led to the establishment of a new cultural, sexual and socio-economic home as well as setting up a support base, another 'home' others like herself can go to. She also presents another 'going home', regularly visiting her mother in the outer suburban area where she was born and raised. Langley soon finds that this is also a 'coming out' as she and others around her become aware of how different her life and her aspirations actually are as a young lesbian completing school in an inner urban lower socio-economic area. Thus, her life is a regular journeying to and from multiple homes, multiple 'lifeworlds', where even the train journey itself is fraught with fears of violence because she dares to be 'out' as an independent young lesbian.

> As people are simultaneously the members of multiple lifeworlds, so their identities have multiple layers, each layer in complex relation to the others ... We have to be proficient as we negotiate these many lifeworlds – the many lifeworlds each of us inhabit, and the many lifeworlds we encounter in our everyday lives.[3]

Like Langley, many Australian girls and young women are 'coming out' and 'going home' in the negotiation of potentially homogenising and conflicting categories such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, 'indigeneity' and other factors such as class and disability. In other words, they are assertively interweaving 'lifeworlds', positioning themselves and others as home-sites of confluence and intermixture, rather than as having to assimilate to one 'world' or the social

rules of one category at the expense of others. Nor are they 'intersecting' within themselves two or more neat and homogenous 'worlds' with distinct chasms between them. They are acknowledging the differences *within* as well as *between* categories. I use the word 'interweaving' as it metaphorically represents fluidity, boundary-blurring, and the diversity of strategies girls and young women use to 'come out', to negotiate, manoeuver and resist the codes and identities of various categories.

The main question, then, becomes to what extent are schools acknowledging and encouraging girls' and young women's skills of critical perception, critical thinking, the negotiation of differences, and the passion for social justice, that engage with diversity rather than reconstruct it as homogeneity. For example, an increasing number of girls in our schools are finding that membership to several 'lifeworlds' is apparently cancelled due to their making visible their lesbian or bisexual 'lifeworld'. Thus, although educational systems may be (far too) slowly shifting away from the denial of diverse sexualities in young women's lives, this previous invisibility may run the danger of being superseded by policies and programs that deal with non-heterosexual sexuality as something separate from, indeed somewhat 'deviant' from, other aspects of girls' lives. Thus, just as educators have recognised the necessity of contextualising gender education programmes and policies according to specificities such as class, ethnicity and geographical location so too do sexuality education programmes and policies need to be contextualised.

From 1996 to 1998, I worked with over 150 girls and young women from around Australia in the production and publication of writing, photography, cartoons and art that explored the multiple lifeworlds they belonged to and the impact of these 'worlds' on issues such as bodies and health, school and friendship, love and sex. At the beginning of this project, I had just completed an autobiographical novel on five generations of women in my Italian family after undertaking ethnographic research and oral history interviews.[4] Shifting and multiple constructs of 'home', ethnic identity, gender and sexuality were very much my concerns and I was interested in working with young women in the analysis of their own 'lifeworlds'. Australian schools, youth organisations, young women's organisations, ethnic, lesbian and health organisations were informed of the

project and girls and young women were invited to submit written and visual material that they wished to share, in the form of a book, with other girls and young women. Their work was then framed by my own writings: introductions, commentaries and questions for girls to think and talk about. My sections were clearly marked with a particular title, 'Can I Do Some Talking?', and an icon, and always positioned somewhat marginal to the main sections of the page and chapter which had been produced by the girls and young women. As I wrote in the introduction to the publication, eventually titled, *Girls' Talk: Young Women Speak Their Hearts and Minds*: 'I'm one of the old girls who'll pop up regularly asking whether I can do some talking. (You can just say no and turn the page on me!)'.[5] I also explained in the introduction:

> I set about collecting all sorts of girls' talk from around Australia for all sorts of girls from around Australia, from north Queensland to southern Tasmania, from Perth to Sydney. Some days I was floating around in this telephone space over deserts and tropical jungles, hearing the rain in the background at Daly River, Northern Territory, and feeling the heat of Oodnadatta in the dry outback of South Australia! I asked lots of girls, and lots of people living with and working with girls, what girls want to know and what girls want to say.[6]

This call for submissions, with its emphasis on diversity and reaching girls and young women from within the different 'worlds' of Australia, was based on the premise that girls have much to teach about the contextualisation and negotiation of categories such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Thus, alongside the pioneering work of educators such as Georgina Tsolidis which established a research model and theoretical framework for educating 'Voula' or girls from non-English speaking backgrounds, I believe we need to consider how 'Voula' or girls from culturally diverse backgrounds and of diverse sexualities can educate the educators and the wider society.[7] Much of Tsolidis' work was based on listening to girls and their parents discuss their realities. Well into the 1990s, Tsolidis' work is still very relevant as multicultural and multisexual girls' voices are not being given equitable space and are not being listened to in many schools and the wider society.[8]

As Jess Langley's diary entries illustrate, girls growing up in Australia are undertaking three complex social processes of 'coming

out/going home' in relation to categories such as ethnicity, sexuality, gender, rural/urban sites, religion and class:

- the critiquing and interweaving of socially ascribed categories and labels within themselves;
- the crossing, bridging and bordering of 'worlds' and the regulations and codes of those 'worlds'; and
- the employment of strategies of adaptation, negotiation and selection in order to live their lives as satisfactorily and successfully as possible.

Girls are resisting being trapped in the duality of what they have inherited and what the dominant group wishes to enforce, or indeed any single set of perceptions and ascription, keeping in mind that minority groups also tend to enforce their own conformist criteria for 'belonging'.

Postcolonial feminism and mestiza feminism, or the feminism of culturally hybrid women such as Chicanas or Mexican-American women in Latin America, are gaining significance in Australia in informing second and third generation women living within, between and beyond the borders of two or more cultural backgrounds.[9] Postcolonial and feminist theorists represent individual identity as a site of the intermixture of ethnicity, sexuality and gender:

> I am an act of kneading, uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light [going home], but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings [coming out].[10]

Before I proceed, I wish to point out three concerns in the way these very debates, including my own, are presented. First, the very language and categories used to articulate these debates is problematic. It is very difficult to acknowledge and write about multiplicity and heterogeneity while using a language of potentially homogenising categories such as 'Anglo-Australian', 'non-English speaking background', 'Asian', 'Middle Eastern'. Likewise, queer theory is interrogating the potential rigidity and limitations that labels such as 'lesbian' and 'bisexual' can imply.

Second, this system of categorisation also denotes hierarchical dualisms as in the use of the words 'mainstream' and 'minority',

'English-speaking backgrounds' and 'non-English-speaking backgrounds', 'heterosexual' and 'lesbian'. Diversity is recognised but it may be difficult to destabilise a perceived Anglo-centrism marked by class privilege and heterosexism.

Third, this system creates gaps and invisibilities where the realities of many girls are ignored, such as girls from non-Anglo cultural backgrounds whose first language was English, girls who are multicultural in ancestry rather than bicultural, girls who may be in loving relationships with other girls but find the Western construction of 'lesbian' alienating or irrelevant in their cultural contexts. Likewise, the way factors such as class, urban/rural geographical background and present location, religion, level of education, ability/disability, age, sexuality influence and interweave with issues of migration, ethnicity, and language may be ignored.[11]

Having stated all this, a path out of this 'to label or not to label and what to label' impasse, and one which Australian girls are increasingly aware of and travelling, is to use these labels and categories critically and strategically. In other words, it is important to acknowledge the political use of these labels in addressing socio-cultural specificities while simultaneously being aware of and preventing the manipulation of these categories to establish new artificial constructions of exclusion, invisibility and discriminatory boundary-marking. As Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes:

> Multiculturalism does not lead us very far if it remains a question of difference only between one culture and another ... To cut across boundaries and borderlines is to live aloud the malaise of categories and labels; it is to resist simplistic attempts at classifying; to resist the comfort of belonging to a classification.[12]

Hence, in line with postcolonial and mestiza feminisms, girls' writings and visuals in *Girls' Talk* seem to illustrate the significance of five main points in articulating multiple identity and/or multiple oppression; they are:

- acknowledging intracategory differences within a group as well as intercategory diversity between social groups;
- exploring the relationships between various conditions and constructs such as ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, geographical location and education;

- understanding that racism, sexism and homophobia are interconnected as they are all forms of prejudices and discrimination;
- acknowledging definitions and identities as in constant processes of shifting and fluxing rather than static via contextualisation of time and place;
- upholding one's own self-ascriptive perceptions, definitions and meanings and showing agency in resisting, subverting and negotiating externally assigned labels.

Australian Girls and Their Journeys Into Cultural 'Lifeworlds'

From many submissions to *Girls' Talk*, it is apparent that by the late Nineties, many immigrant and second-generation girls *are* speaking various forms of feminism and *are* part of the multiplicity of feminism itself, and this does *not* require comparison to some 'norm' of feminism as defined by a dominant group. Instead, it requires what Yuval-Davis terms 'transversal politics', and what Lugones terms 'world-travelling' in order to prevent antagonisms and misrepresentations.[13] However, both of these feminists, as well as Australian feminists, such as Ang, concede that some differences and ambivalences may not be resolved but may be used creatively and strategically in order to reach and involve all girls within their own multiple locations.[14]

Girls appear keen to explore five social processes:

- exploring cultures and cultural change within the broader framework (the political, social, economic contexts), and thus seeing cultures as being continually reshaped and dynamic;
- exploring the impact of migration such as identifying adaptation strategies; stages in the process of migration such as grieving, 'culture shock', romanticising the past culture; how and why migrants might retain and cherish the past; and how and why they identify strongly with others of similar background;
- exploring the self of the first culture, the cultural framework of the early years of childhood and the present home culture, thus identifying the values that are still relevant to their present lives and/or identifying the changed expressions of these deepest values;
- exploring the self of the second culture, the contributions and new outlooks, the reinforcement of the first culture perspectives and the points of contradiction and conflict;
- exploring the self in many cultures: the self that has continued to be,

> the self that becomes fragmented, the self that is lost, the self that is imposed, how to enjoy being multicultural and indeed value the psychological and social skills gained in negotiating differences and diverse situations.

In 'White, Anglo and Middle Class', M.E. takes the very categories that have been constructed to position her within some notion of socio-economic and cultural 'mainstream' and deconstructs them to reveal the multiplicity within:

> I refuse to accept a racist ideology that says all white experience is Anglo experience. It tears me apart when I see the way Australia is heading back to its genocide beginnings and constructing a white mainstream to support its racist policies. And it angers me even more when people assume I'm part of this racist Anglo majority based on the colour of my skin. White does not mean woman. White does not mean me. White means being racist and patriarchal.[15]

Identifying herself as a young feminist, from a lower socio-economic background, and with a Welsh migrant mother, M.E. demonstrates how those positioned as 'white, Anglo and middle class' are not always so. She has 'gone home' by looking into the label British, finding the hierarchies within, and refuting the standard denial of the diversity within 'white' people.[16]

Young Muslim women and girls write of their need to understand the differences between Islam as a religion and Islam as a patriarchal culture before they could 'come out' and 'go home' as Muslim and female in Australia. This means resisting the stereotype that the veil always signifies ignorance and oppression, imposed from non-Muslim perspectives as well as internalised by Muslims in an effort to assimilate to Western constructions of feminist power and identity. In 'A Metre of Chiffon', Ayse Uyguntemur, a young Sunni Muslim woman, Australian-born of Turkish descent, tells of what made her 'fall from the pedestal of ... Australian Turkish Modern Woman' not only in the eyes of the external Western world but also in the eyes of her Turkish migrant family: 'I could never have imagined that a one metre square piece of chiffon could have made such a dramatic difference'.[17] Wearing the hijaab for her signifies:

> I believe in rights for women ... I *am* a feminist ... I am not a victim, and certainly not a second class citizen as you may think Islam classi-

> fies me … I was born in Australia, have lived in Australia, in fact have never left the east coast of Australia but I'm too dark to be an 'Aussie' I guess. And, well, I do wear the hijaab, so I am considered a 'radical Muslim' by my family and Turkish community. Therefore, they don't consider me 'one of them'.[18]

She explains the fine line that exists between Islamic culture and Islamic religion and how within the latter the status of women was taken to be equal to that of man, while patriarchal control has constructed unjust cultures.

Another young Muslim woman, Karima Moraby, writes in her essay, 'I Am Me: An Australian Muslim Woman', of the multiplicity of being born to an Australian Catholic mother who later converted to Islam and a Lebanese Muslim father.[19] Learning to negotiate these differences within her 'home', she realises there is another world of school that also needs to be negotiated:

> I think my first realisation that I was actually different or perceived to be different was when at eight I was told to stand in front of the class and my teacher said to the class, 'This is what a Muslim girl looks like'. I was not wearing a hijaab (a head scarf) and was in school uniform. So I looked just like everybody else. That day changed my life as I realised that even though I might look like everybody else, and feel like everybody else, this did not mean that everybody else saw me as the same.[20]

The next few years saw Moraby ping-ponging between a denial of her Islamic self, then a rejection of her Western self, and then fully blending the Western and the Islamic to how it suits her such as choosing not to wear a veil:

> I am an Australian
> I am a Woman
> I am a Muslim Woman
> I am an Australian Muslim Woman …
> I am me …[21]

Other girls and young women write of the impact of knowing about their parents' struggles as refugees and migrants, or as women growing up under oppressive political regimes, 'going home' to understand the results of such experiences on family members before being able to 'come out' with aspirations and resolutions for their own lives.[22] For example, Ruiyi writes about her mother's educa-

tional and career aspirations having been thwarted by the Cultural Revolution in China. Her tenacity in eventually returning to her studies and becoming an engineer and, as Ruiyi says, always trying to 'master more knowledge' has deeply affected the way Ruiyi sees her own education and ambitions.[23]

Likewise, young women of diverse Aboriginal backgrounds, such as the 1997 Human Rights Award Winner Tammy Williams, reflect upon the struggles and determination of their forbears, and how these battles have provided the opportunities that Tammy's generation can use to continue working for equality and anti-racism:

> As I look back on the lives of my grandparents, and even my mother's life, I realise I am speaking before you with thanks to their personal dedication and commitment to reconciliation. It is the struggle of our forbears, which has resulted in my generation ... [being able to] enjoy the right to have access to secondary and tertiary education. A right which not even my mother could enjoy.[24]

Australian Girls Journeying Against Heterosexism

Girls are situating homophobia and heterosexism within the parameters of human experience of oppression and marginalisation rather than positioning these prejudices as outside or deviant from the 'usual' prejudices. They do not need to identify as lesbian or bisexual themselves to be affected by and/or actively challenging homophobia. In her personal essay entitled, 'Are You The One With The Gay Brother?', Simone Garske reflects upon the homophobic harassment she experiences in high school because of her brother who had come out as gay and had left the school a few years before: 'I was like a walking disease; I had the gay virus and I might pass it on to the heterosexual guys'.[25] Homophobic graffiti appear on her house and she experiences abuse on the bus such as food being thrown at her. Despite parental support and complaints, the school offers minimal support: 'I realised I was being ruled by these gutless wonders, both students and teachers, at school. I had a wonderful family who loved and supported me. My brother was a fabulous person who was gentle and caring'.[26]

She realises it is up to her to resist the homophobic harassment and 'comes out' confidently and outspokenly as the sister of a gay brother within an unsupportive educational institution, as well as 'going home' to an appreciation of the 'world' of acceptance and strength

in her family environment. She also positions herself as 'living in the real world' where sexual diversity is acknowledged and supported rather than the unreal world of homophobia and heterosexism in education. This successful personal negotiation of the tensions between her 'worlds' of existence has her locating a space for herself where she can live 'exactly the way I want and I'm extremely happy'.[27]

Girls with gay or lesbian parents are also aware of the need to negotiate and bridge the chasms between their 'home' realities and the labels and ignorance of the worlds of school and society. Rebekah Venn-Brown writes about what happened when her father, a Christian minister, came out as gay and left her mother to live with a man when Rebekah was fifteen. In 'You Can Either Get Better or Bitter', she stresses she had no support at school: 'No one recommended counselling, a support network – education and information – absolutely nothing.'[28] So she begins to educate others. When some students in her English Literature class are disgusted that one of the authors they are studying is gay, she asks the teacher if she can address the class for just a few moments: 'He agreed. I told the class of my concern at their narrow-mindedness. And then I told everyone my father was gay and that if I could be accepting surely they could also. It left the class stunned – and I gave myself a pat on the back'.[29]

She is also aware of the social constructions of gender and sexuality as her father and herself move within and between their 'lifeworlds': 'I've also seen a strange parallel – as I was developing, physically and mentally, into a woman, Dad was changing also. He was dealing with changing into a gay man. Just as my changes were subtle and little by little, so were his'.[30]

In 'Your Mum's a Lezzo', thirteen-year-old Sally clearly understands that 'the problem is not having a lesbian mum but having a lesbian mum in this homophobic world. So really everyone else has got the problem if they can't accept it'.[31] She has developed what she calls 'categories, the people who know and the people who don't know', slotting people into these categories in order to assist her in negotiating her 'lifeworlds' of school, home, and small rural community in New South Wales.[32] Again, the school environment is seen as perpetuating a heterosexist mythology about families that alienates some students who belong to a 'home' reality that has no official place in school life.

Interviews with lesbian students conducted by Michelle Rogers reveal their strengths and resistances in negotiating their 'lifeworlds' as they both 'come out' to the wider society, in their schools, and 'go home' to themselves, as young lesbians.[33] They critically question and deconstruct institutional rhetoric as Lisa does: 'I know one of the mottoes of our school is like "enabling you to find out who you are" and I'm not sure how the school would react if someone was very openly "out"'.[34] And again, support in the family 'home' compensates for and subverts the condemnation from school and society as in Shaz's situation: 'I've never really had a problem with my sexuality because my uncle's gay and my mum's, you know, like they are like really close so I was always taught that there was nothing wrong with it'.[35] Questioning institutional rhetoric also involves the interrogation of fixed labels of the gay/straight binary divide that some school policies may be using to structure all anti-homophobic work and yet which also do not encompass the broader dimensions of sexual diversity. For example, Cloe says:

> It doesn't really bug me who I am in love with as long as I am happy … I don't think any boxes can be put onto it [sexuality]. I don't really go, 'OK, I am sleeping with a girl so I am gay', you know, I go, 'I am totally in love with this person and that's what it means and that's what matters'.[36]

Hence, girls are thinking beyond homogenising and singular categories. In 'Take Three Steps Back (Into The Closet)', Tamsin Dancer from Adelaide questions the homogeneity and exclusionary practices often at work within what she had thought was a safe, accepting 'home', the lesbian community, when she has a 'brief relationship' with a male: 'I felt as though I was playing a board game and had turned up a card that read, "You realise you are bisexual. Take three steps back (into the closet)"'.[37]

She also challenges other forms of hierarchy and homogeneity within the lesbian and gay communities that imitate those of the heterosexual world:

> We need to question why the chic, white and well-dressed lesbian image is so attractive. Is it a safe box for the mainstream to keep me in? There are a lot of young dykes, bi and queer women, like me, that will never fit that limited category — we are fat, or poor, or people of colour, or parents, or disabled.[38]

Amanda writes in 'Political Activism: Isn't That A Dirty Word?' about 'coming out' in Brisbane as a young lesbian looking for a space to get support for her multiple interconnected issues.[39] She discovers no such site exists so 'I decided to start one ... All of a sudden I had a political identity as the person who ran the young lesbian support group'.[40] She had constructed a 'home' for herself which would become a 'home' others could also go to. Amanda concludes, 'dreaming about the kind of world I want to live in is great, but getting out and helping to create it is even better'.[41]

Helena, who is of Greek background, has challenged the boundaries and rules of the wider society, the school and her Greek family and community, and 'gone home' to herself where she has stopped organising her life and actions according to external ascription and definitions: 'They all go, "This is a heterosexual school and you shouldn't be here" ... I don't see a name on the wall saying this is a heterosexual school'.[42]

> Mum started yelling the house down...that I needed psychiatric help ... my dad spat on me about 5 times and threw things on me ... Coming out and accepting it myself made me feel better as a person ... before I came out I used to always be rebellious, since I came out I've calmed down ... everything has calmed down.[43]

Girls and young women are publicly resisting the combination of ethnocentrism and homophobic harassment in their schools and other public spaces. They reflect the impact of Australia's multicultural and immigration policies of the last forty years in producing a generation born to migrant parents and negotiating their multiple 'lifeworlds', resisting external racist and homophobic ascription which they perceive as linked, and claiming their particular spaces within their schools and within the wider Australian society.[44] In 'Wandering', Naomi Ullmann not only presents the contradictions and paradoxes inherent within her inheritance of the Palestinian/Israeli nationalist chasm: 'a Jewish state Palestinian land/Arab killing Jew, Jew killing Arab' and the added intricacies and insights of living in a multicultural Australia where she is forming friendships with Palestinian and other Arabic girls, such as Julieanne, Australian-born with Arabic grandparents, who tells her: 'it's important to me that the Jewish people have a safe place to live ... have somewhere for their children ... but it's just as important for everybody else too. No one de-

serves it more than anyone else'.[45] Ullmann also presents the complexity of 'Jew killing Jew' by interrogating her ancestors' complicity in the condemnation and destruction of homosexual Jews:

'HOW CAN YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, WHO HAS BEEN PERSECUTED YOURSELF, PERSECUTE OTHERS?'

I think to myself, and, out aloud,

'The Nazis also persecuted homosexuals'.[46]

A young lesbian of Jewish background, Madelaine, in 'My Mentor and Friend', writes of her reaching a crisis-point in needing to negotiate and resist the codes and regulations emanating from all 'lifeworlds': 'I decided to have a mid-life crisis at age sixteen … I suddenly realised everything was as my parents, school and Jewish background wanted me to be. It was not me. So I started from scratch. The new me.'[47]

She goes to a bookshop to get more information and there meets Jan, the lesbian bookshop owner, who becomes her mentor and friend, who 'has great faith in me, and my ability to be anything I wanted to be.' Many possibilities are opened to Madeline through the worlds on the bookshelves and Madeline, affirmed with new knowledge from which to make decisions, concludes that in her life 'I will do all I can'.[48]

In a poem 'Crimes of Existence', young Aboriginal lesbian writer, Romaine Moreton, explores the parallels between racism and heterosexism, and the internal familial divisions external Christian and Western condemnations of homosexuality have created:

My mother also doesn't stop
to consider,
that when Great Christian Leaders
& other vilifiers of homosexuality
call society to attention
& ask them to jail
The queers, lesos & gays,
that what they really mean
is for her
to
incarcerate

her very own daughter
& make sexuality
her crime.
& place her daughter in the cell
next to
her very own son,
for they have already made Blackness his[49]
(Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1998: 222).

Again, the contextualisation of lesbian sexuality according to other categories such as 'indigeneity', and the multiple identities many students have, are inadequately addressed in schools. As I have explained via the above examples, schools and teachers are in a significant position to act as cultural mediators between student and family/community, student and mainstream society, and student and social services/organizations/community groups that cater for their ethnic, gender and sexual identities to foster more just understandings and practices. And yet, this position is not acknowledged at all, or reluctantly conceded, or faces tremendous obstacles in establishing viable policies, programmes and practices with students.

'Multicultural *Does* Mean Multisexual'

> I do not believe it is blasphemous to compare oppressions of sexuality to oppressions of race and ethnicity: Freedom is indivisible or it is nothing at all besides sloganeering and temporary, short-sighted, and short-lived advancement for a few.[50]

Girls of diverse sexualities and diverse cultures are cultural negotiators in the social processes of 'coming out/going home'. Australia is witnessing both confluence and conflict as the end-products of historical forces and policies in relation to multiculturalism and homosexuality are beginning new inscriptions and resistances to long-standing discriminatory institutions such as education and Church.[51] Culturally and sexually diverse girls and young women are coming forth/coming out as key agents in eroding long-standing exclusions and silences in relation to multicultural multisexuality in Australian institutions such as education.

The publication of girls' writings and visuals constructs powerful sites of intervention and resistance into homophobic, racist and sexist discourses. More spaces need to be provided for girls to 'come

out' and 'go home', to cross borderlines and expand boundaries, to explore the contradictions and confluence inherent in the construction of their multiple social positionings as both end-products of larger socio-political and cultural forces, and beginnings of new inscriptions into society, politics and culture. This recognition of multiple locations as sites of possible oppression, power and resistance can do much to challenge ethnocentric, sexist and heterosexist perspectives. Girls need to be encouraged to gain and articulate their visions of themselves and others who co-exist with them in their schools, their immediate worlds, and the worlds beyond their perception.

Their contributions to *Girls' Talk* have exemplified girls' great potential to demonstrate and transcend categorical limitations, oppressions, and the splitting of concurrent realities inherent in the need to homogenise, categorise and simplify. Their recognition of themselves and others as multiplaced persons, constantly undertaking 'coming out/going home' journeys can do much to challenge ethnocentric, sexist and homophobic perspectives. As Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes: 'as long as the complexity and difficulty of engaging with the diversely hybrid experiences of heterogenous contemporary societies are denied and not dealt with ... the creative interval is dangerously reduced to non-existence'.[52]

The 'creative interval' between and within 'coming out' and 'going home' is becoming a larger and stronger base, constructed by Australian girls and young women. As fourteen-year-old Khizran Khalid writes:

> I'm the voice of tomorrow.
> I'm the one who will make a difference.
> I'm the one who will see tomorrow.
> But can you take the time to listen?[53]

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NOTES

[1] I wish to express my admiration and appreciation of the many girls and young women who submitted such thought-provoking and inspi-

rational material to *Girls' Talk* [Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli (ed), *Girls' Talk: Young Women Speak Their Hearts and Minds* (Finch Publishing, Lane Cove, Sydney, 1998)] and showed incredible patience with me as first-time editor. As a parent, educator and older girl, I am in awe of your strengths, insights and determination.

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Shattered Dreams and Alienated Bodies:
Transsexual Journeys Through Girlhood

DENISE BATES

This paper explores stories of be(com)ing gendered female, or of resisting be(com)ing gendered female during 'girlhood' in sixty-four autobiographies by transsexuals published between 1932 and the present. The language and the way of describing gender dysphoria has changed over the years as society's understanding of 'gender' has evolved through the 'natural' to the 'scientific' to the 'political' and this biographic sub-genre reflects this evolution. The accounts of 'girlhood' contained in these autobiographies tell of confusion, disappointment and an increasing unease with the authors' gender identity and sexual embodiment as they emerge into adulthood. Many of the biographers challenge notions that a conviction of 'being gendered female (or male)' is a natural and inevitable outcome of either childhood socialisation or of sexual embodiment at birth. In this paper, I will draw on the accounts of 'girlhood' to explore what significance life history plays in our conviction of being gendered female (or male). I do not, however, deal with historical change over the time that the autobiographies were written and published.

Theorising Sexuality and Girlhood

What effect does girlhood have on our adult lives? The glaringly obvious response would probably be that girlhood is a necessary precursor to womanhood. However, if one examines the autobiographies of transsexuals, a simple, monolithic thing called 'girlhood' doesn't make sense. What components, if any, of 'girlhood' are actually needed to be experienced to give one the conviction that one is a woman? I cannot accept the assertions of feminist theorists, such as Janice Raymond, who use essentialist arguments to dismiss transsexual claims to gender legitimacy after bodily transformation.[1] Raymond argues that transsexuals are deviant victims of a larger patriarchal conspiracy, and without a childhood socialisation as a girl, no one born in a male body can claim womanhood: 'We know that we are women who are born with female chromosomes and anatomy … Transsexuals have not had this same history. No man can have the

history of being born and located in this culture as a woman'.[2]

Raymond's approach ignores the agency that is claimed by the transsexual authors in negotiating the gender conditioning that they receive as children. Caroline Cossey exerted her claim to 'girlhood' at school, even though the social cost was high:

> the make-up, the long hair, and the refashioned school uniform cost me dearly in taunts and bullying. But my instincts to be female, to behave and be accepted as a woman, were so strong that I had no choice. Being a 'boy' and all that entailed was far more painful than trying, in my own rather stumbling and inarticulate way, to be a girl.[3]

Georgina Beyer responded to threats of punishment for cross-dressing in her claimed gender (as a girl) by becoming more secretive, rather than considering that this gender-affirming process was inappropriate for someone with a boy's body:

> Colin and Mum made it clear that dressing up as a girl wasn't the thing for little boys to be doing. To them it was 'unnatural' and had to be stopped. I was told in no uncertain terms that if I was ever caught doing it again, I would be in for a severe hiding. In fact, I simply became cleverer at hiding it. I went underground.[4]

Jennifer Spry had a 'natural' attitude to her 'girlhood', despite her male body and socialisation as a boy. As pressure mounted for her to conform to 'boyhood', she exercised sufficient agency to maintain her gender-conviction:

> At the age of five I could not have known that what I was thinking would be interpreted by adults as abnormal. In my childish naiveté I don't think I even knew that I was thinking differently from any child my age. By the time I was ten, however, I was using whatever opportunities came to me, via subterfuge or otherwise, to live as a girl.[5]

The essentialist argument must also assume that all gender-socialisation directed at girls, no matter how good or bad, is taken up to similar effect by all but those small number of female-to-male transsexuals often described or categorised as 'deviant'.

Raymond dismisses female to male transsexuals as 'tokens', thus denying them agency and avoiding recognition that the sort of childhood socialisation that is imposed on women could ever be resisted.[6] The accounts of female-to-male authors frequently mention their resistance to 'female' socialisation in girlhood. This somewhat pre-

dictable aspect of their stories could serve to indicate more than that the socialisation didn't 'take' in a passive sense, but that they actively sought to counter-socialise themselves. There is no hint of victimhood in their claims to an ethereal 'boyhood', rather a recognition of their own agency in their gender-socialisation. Robert Allen seems to have known that his behaviour was more significant than a 'tomboy' phase:

> I had a fondness, too, for dressing up in his [father] clothes, even to getting into his trousers which had to be well turned up and secured at the waist with elastic before I could walk around in them. This liking for masculine impersonation, and my preference for the company of boys rather that of girls of my own age, apparently never struck my mother as being a pathological tendency. She had every reason to know, of course, that I was a difficult and refractory child and very unfeminine as little girls go, but then, she must have reasoned, plenty of girls behaved in exactly the same way that I was doing and then grew out of their tomboyishness into demure, marriageable misses. Mother must have thought that that was the way it was going to be with me.[7]

Paul Hewitt recounts not only his agency *in* choosing male friends, despite his embodiment, but he also celebrates the agency *of* his chosen peers (boys):

> Certainly, I was a typical tomboy. All my friends were boys. Indeed, at that time I'm not sure that I noticed that I was any different to them. I simply found the conversations and games which satisfied me were to be found among those wearing shorts and trousers. I empathised with boys' competitive nature, the eternal struggle to be the top of the pecking order, and the way that they fought for respect rather than communicated interest in one another, like girls. I thought I was a boy, or perhaps I never thought about it. I was too busy dreaming that I was Tarzan, diving off waterfalls and wrestling with lions.[8]

Having read over sixty biographies and having met several hundred transsexuals over the past few years, I simply cannot believe that they are dupes of an overly-rigid gender dichotomy, as the essentialists claim. Janice Raymond presents transsexuals as products of the psycho-medical establishment (the Empire), denying the possibility of the transsexual's individuality or any possibility of agency on their part:

> The kind of individualism that transsexual therapy promotes is really an

> individualism that serves a role-defined society and thus it is more realistic to say that it is an ethic of social conformity…
>
> The transsexual therapist – in adjusting the transsexual mind and behaviour to the stereotype of the desired sex – and the medical specialists – in adjusting the transsexual body to the desired body-type of the opposite sex – are dealing with transsexuals as manipulatable objects and reducing them to the world of appearances.[9]

Because I accept the authors' claims to 'ordinary' gender, I also refuse to read the stories as subversive accounts of self-sacrificing sexual agents-provocateurs of gender destabilisation politics that seems to fascinate some post-modernists. There is a growing cynicism amongst transsexuals about the value of theorising by non-transsexuals about transsexual issues. Claudine Griggs gives more weight to a lived experience than theory:

> I watched my femininity rise each new day – as a child, as a teenager, as an adult – even when I vehemently fought its ascent. I recognised unconscious manifestations at age sixteen with my first pregnancy dream, yet I hoped 'Maybe I only dreamed what I dreamed'. Character unremittingly staked its claim. Neither maleness, nor ostracism, nor self reproach could prevent it.
>
> Differences between men and women are all around us. Some are represented by variant role expectations, but *the* difference is inside us. Gender identity is the primary sex characteristic. It is real. It has a pulse. It wails in three dimensions and in the electrochemical substance. Postmodern gender theorists can neither create nor undo this reality.[10]

Riki Anne Wilchins, a transsexual theorist, objects to the academic voyeurism of non-transsexual authors on the topic:

> Is there not something deeply immoral in the way these writers fail to help those whose lives they blithely mine for new insights and incantations? Do they never feel a twinge of guilt as their 'studies' merely escalate the politicisation of our bodies, choices, and desires, so that, with each new book, while the audience enjoys the illusion of knowing more about us, we find ourselves more disempowered, dislocated, and exploited than before? Our performance of gender is invariably a site of contest, a problem which — if we could but bring enough hi-octane academic brainpower to bear — might be 'solved'.[11]

The transsexual stories of 'girlhood' describe the authors' sex/

gender makeup as three distinct, and non-congruent components, that is, sexual embodiment, gender-role socialisation and gender identity. In explaining their gender-dysphoria, transsexuals usually make a distinction between their sense of engenderment and the physical aspects of their sexed body, in ways that non-transsexuals do not need to do. The second aspect, gender-role/socialisation is both the cause of their pain (as it applies to their birth sex) and a substantial part of their salvation (resisting gender-socialisation and re-working gender role-behaviour strengthen their hold on their claimed gender). Jane Fry makes a distinction between her physical sex and her gender-identity, and reduces the significance of her body to that of a 'shell':

> I have the physical organs of a man, but I feel I am a woman ... I know what I am on the inside, a female. There is no doubt there ... The only thing that I want to change is my body, so that it matches what I am. A body is like a covering; it's like a shell. What is more important? The body or the person inside?[12]

I have accepted the transsexual authors' frequent claim that identity has primacy over gender-role and even one's genital arrangement: to do otherwise would be to interpret the texts as something other than primarily an assertion of selfhood. Nancy Hunt subordinates sexual embodiment to her gender identity. Her 'personhood' is female, on the basis of her claimed gender, and she presents her claim as a natural response to a 'biological accident' that any non-transsexual woman might make. In doing so, she also makes a claim to be 'ordinarily gendered', despite the 'realities' of birth sex and history:

> I didn't want to be 'cured', to be reconciled to my male anatomy. I wanted to be rid of those hated organs, to be granted a body in harmony with my nature. If some hypothetical doctor had approached me with a syringe and promised that one injection would cure me forever of my compulsion to be a woman, I would have fled in terror. No woman would abandon her psychological gender merely to accommodate herself to the circumstances of a biological accident. Certainly I would not. Let the biological accident be corrected, not me.[13]

Perhaps the unease created by the visibility of transsexuals (and intersexed people) stems not from their intrinsic pathology, but from the naive construction of 'ordinary' gender. The stories of transsexuals call into question the assumption that one's sense of *being* gendered

is a social construct, and make the conflation of gender role and identity untenable.

While many transsexuals can often change their bodies to an acceptable degree to allow them to live as 'ordinary' members of their claimed gender, and transsexuals claim that their gender 'identity' has always been opposite to their birth sex, what of their history? If, as Garfinkel claims, gender consists of several historically-based components, does that forever preclude occupation of a transsexual's achieved sex/gender as 'ordinary'?[14] I believe that at least part of the story-telling involves constructing a history to stand in the place of 'the real' and is, as such, a process no more dishonest than responding to questions of 'How are you?' with an automatic 'I'm doing well', regardless of the actual state of one's health.

'Ordinary' gender, as it is constructed, demands a contiguous, non-contradictory history, so it seems expedient to supply what is required, and it is sometimes dangerous to offer up anything else. In an 'innocent' model of gender, such as that described by Garfinkel, which does not acknowledge agency of children (or adults) in managing the construction of their own gender roles, these transsexual autobiographers may appear to be merely liars, or at least delusional.[15] However, I believe that the substance of the accounts of 'non-girlhoods' by female-to-male transsexuals and 'ethereal girlhoods' by male-to-female transsexuals is valid, because these people actively filtered out, or gathered in, gender-coded experiences on the basis of their core gender identity that they have had since early childhood.[16] Jan Morris claims that the first incident that she can remember is when she first became aware of her female gender, which neatly serves to validate her claim to have *always* felt she was a woman, as she owns no memory that predates this conviction:

> I was three or perhaps four years old when I realized that I had been born into the wrong body, and should really be a girl. I remember the moment well, and it is the earliest memory of my life.[17]

Kate Bornstein who, unlike the majority of transsexuals, has set out to destabilise the existing construct, sees this story-telling as undesirable:

> I was told by several counselors and a number of transgendered peers that I would need to invent a past for myself as a little girl, that I'd have to make up incidents of my girlhood; that I'd have to say things like

> 'When I was a little girl …'. I never was a little girl; I'd lied all my life trying to be the boy, the man that I'd known myself *not* to be. Here I was, taking a giant step toward personal integrity by entering therapy with the truth and self acknowledgment that I was a transsexual, and was told, 'Don't *tell* anyone you're transsexual'. Transsexuality is the only condition for which the therapy is to lie [emphasis in original].[18]

Kate Bornstein is a public performer and author who makes her living out of gender-destabilisation.[19] But is this a reasonable demand to impose on all transsexuals, who, by doing so, may deny themselves access to the goal that they aspire to: 'ordinary' gender? It also seems implicit in Bornstein's statement that she never experienced anything *remotely* like a girl, never negotiated the gendered landscape as a girl might, or never, even for a fleeting moment, regarded 'us' as female and 'them' as male. Is she giving primacy to society's reaction to genital reality over the survival, resistance and childhood agency, which is the theme of the 'conventional' autobiographies?

Stories of girlhood …

One thing is clear from the stories: There is no 'typical' description of girlhood (or boyhood) that indicates that gender identity (as distinct from aspects of gender-roles) is a social construct. The authors were raised by alcoholic parents, pillars of the community, dysfunctional families, caring families.[20] Another example is that of identical female twins raised together: Martine (now Paul) Hewitt is a female-to-male transsexual while his sister Karen, has a female gender identity. The Hewitt's case challenges notions of both nature and nurture, as the twins share almost identical genetic material and apparently have received similar socialisation as girls, yet their gender identity is quite different in adulthood. Despite their similar socialisation, Paul's (and Karen's) father recalls that he twins were displaying different gender identities in early childhood:

> 'You were both very different as children. A real case of chalk and cheese', he told me. 'Karen liked doing the girls' things and you liked doing the boys' things. You loved football from a very early age'.[21]

Even in families, such as that of Renee Richards, where the most bizarre gender-conditioning was applied to both her and her sister, some siblings are apparently unaffected by gender dysphoria.[22] Renee's older sister was raised as a boy, and called Mike, yet in adult-

hood, she married and adopted an apparently conventional heterosexual identity as a woman. Mike also participated in the sexual torment of her then brother (Renee):

> She [Mike, her sister] was never nicer to me than when dressing me as a girl. Although the feminine clothes in her closet disgusted Mike, she took absolute delight in putting these same clothes on me. Starting when I was about two years old, Mike would periodically dress me in her panties and slip. She would then praise me for being so pretty. Strangely enough, my mother was present at several of these sessions and was as charmed as my sister by the sight of me so transformed. I was, in fact a pretty child, and I was so delighted by the unusual positivity, that I'm sure I was quite lovable. My mother, ordinarily so stern, treated me as if I was a delicate fairy child, a changeling who couldn't be blamed for the shortcomings of my other self. Whatever fears and hates my masculinity stirred in them were apparently neutralised by this simple action.
>
> My sister sometimes played another game with me when we were naked together – or at least when *I* was naked. She would take my penis and push it up inside my body, make it disappear. Then she would say, 'See you're not a little boy, you're a little girl'. She'd let it go, and it would come back out, sometimes much bigger than before. We both thought this remarkable; so my sister would push it in again and again and again.[23]

Whilst the occurrence of female-to-male and male-to-female transsexualism and the level of distress that it causes may be similar, social manifestations of the condition do not always mirror each other. Claudine Griggs concludes, after interviewing transsexuals, that adult female-to-male transsexuals are fleeing *from* 'womanhood' with as much passion as male-to-female transsexuals are trying to move *towards* 'womanhood':

> While it is clear that male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals both suffer from an inability to express gender openly and from gender attributions that oppose their identities, the anguish is different. FTMs are earnest about dispelling the feminine attributions; MTFs are solemn about gaining it.[24]

In adults, 'masculinity' doesn't seem to be the focal point of the transsexuals condition. This situation contrasts with that in childhood where there is usually a degree of tolerance of 'tomboyism'

amongst female children and where the prohibition of 'sissy' behaviour in males makes 'maleness' (or its deficiency) the site of resistance to gender-socialisation.

Many of the transsexuals did not have sufficient information about transsexuality in their childhood and adolescence to recognise the underlying cause of their unhappiness and social isolation, but explore the possibility that their as-yet-unexplained gender dysphoria may be due to a 'queerness'. All of the twelve autobiographies of female to male transsexuals that I have located describe some experience *resembling* lesbian contact, and some actually identify as lesbian for many years before they re-identify as transsexual. Mark Rees, while still embodied female, felt sexually attracted to a woman and initially explained his feelings as 'lesbian', but when he accepted the primacy of his gender identity over his birth sex, the same sexual orientation was re-read as 'heterosexual':

> Had I been male there is no doubt that I would have wanted to 'have my wicked way' with her, restricted only by my own moral code. Yet still, because of lack of information, I regarded myself as some kind of 'deviant' lesbian. I couldn't find another label.
>
> A few years later I attended a lesbian club. That finally convinced me, that whatever others may have thought, I was certainly no lesbian. The women there didn't want to be men; they were happy in their gender role.[25]

While some of these contacts could have been (and were) read as 'lesbian' by outsiders, many of the authors did not see them this way. Raymond Thompson had his first sexual experience in a girls' borstal, but his conviction that he was male and his disdain for his female embodiment forced him into a one-way 'stone-butch' relationship:

> It was at the beginning of my time in borstal that I had my first sexual experience. A girl was very friendly towards me when I first arrived, and a few days later, when we were alone in the dormitory, it just happened … My sexual experiences were one-sided, and for many years they had to be. While my body was the way it was, there was no way anyone would be allowed to see or touch the parts of it that didn't belong to me … My body didn't exist in the way it was born; for me it only existed in my inner identity as male. Having a woman touch me sexually would not only have

> seemed perverse to me, but it would have broken my detachment, which I needed to maintain in order to keep my sanity.[26]

Only three of a much larger number (fifty-two) of MTFs spent time actively and uncritically identifying as homosexual males.[27] Why does a lesbian identification provide a refuge for evolving FTMs, but an equivalent gay male lifestyle rarely serves as a 'holding place' for MTFs during their gender-confusion? Claudine Griggs's observation may be of use in explaining this.[28] If FTMs are *fleeing* womanhood, then the gendered identity that attaches to a lesbian sexual orientation is *different* from 'ordinary' womanhood. Pat Califia, who has not proceeded with bodily transformation, finds a lesbian identity a useful way of managing her transgender feelings:

> My lesbianism is largely a product of my profound emotional and erotic involvement with other women. But it was also a strategy for reducing my gender dysphoria, part of a search for a place where I could be more of a man, or at least a different sort of woman.[29]

However, for MtoFs, who want to *acquire* 'womanhood', a gay-male identity is not the *same* as being a woman. I expect that for many MtoFs, the identity attached to a gay male orientation, despite the sanction given to parody of 'women' amongst drag-queens, does not offer up the possibility of 'sameness' or 'ordinariness' as a woman. Thus, a MtoF exploring hir[30] gender identity, dysphoria and social roles may conclude that a gay lifestyle does offer 'difference' from the male stereotypes that they feel alienated from, but that this identification neither puts them any closer to their goal of 'sameness' with women, nor does it provide a resting place from which further explorations of gender identity can take place. Even when Caroline Cossey was accepted within parts of the gay male community, it was a refuge, rather than an opportunity to explore her gender-identity:

> Although Adrian and I got on well, the differences between us soon became apparent. Adrian never wore make-up and couldn't understand why I did. He was a pretty boy, but, unlike me, he had no desire to be taken for a girl. 'If you look too feminine, you'll never meet anyone in the gay scene,' he explained. 'Gay men like men. That's the whole point.' But I enjoyed going to pubs looking like a girl. I had no words to explain my compulsion, and he was unable to change my mind.[31]

Embodied markers of girlhood (and non-girlhood)

I have explored accounts of female-to-male 'girlhood' to describe what develops as a result of being born in a female body and socialized as a female without owning a female identity. So, what does the experience of being embodied as a female child and receiving the socialisation usually accorded to a girl mean to a FtoM transsexual who has had a conviction that he is male from an early age? How much 'girlhood' seeps through the filter of a male gender identity? How much gender-coded socialisation is inverted or re-read as affirmation of a hidden identity, and how much is unassimilated, and turned into pain, alienation and confusion?

Breasts!

For a FtoM during girlhood, the lack of breasts allows access to 'ordinary' aspects of maleness, and embodiment is less problematic. The development of breasts is problematic, not only because they are signifiers of femaleness, but they preclude occupation of gendered space in the way that was possible prior to puberty. Mario Martino recognised the point in time when breasts, or the imminent appearance of breasts signaled the end of an innocent childhood mimicry of his father:

> Pa liked to work without his shirt. Naturally, I did too. Because Pa did. Everything he did I aped – even to the way he hitched up his jeans. And then, suddenly one day in my ninth summer, he looked at my bare chest a second time and roared out at me: 'Go home! And put some clothes on!' I was mad. Just as mad as Pa was. If he didn't have to wear clothes on top, why did I? No one explained why.[32]

The suddenness of breast development distressed Paul Hewitt, although he may have ignored their initial development and only seen them as a problem when they became intrusive. Paul expresses a loathing over the possession of breasts many times in his autobiography:

> I awoke one morning when I was seventeen and with horror sensed that I was sharing my bed with someone, or something, else. The day before I had no breasts to speak of, but I had awoken with a huge pair from hell which seemed to have appeared overnight. I remember thinking that I must have fallen victim to some bizarre genetic experiment.[33]

Paul eventually celebrates their removal as the climax of his book: 'My new manly chest is the best present anyone could ever give me, and not a day goes past when I don't admire it in the mirror'.[34]

Again, for Mario Martino, the possession of a large pair of breasts made 'passing' as male almost impossible, even with the most uncomfortable of chest-binding. And mere 'passing' is still a long way from comfortable occupation of 'the ordinary':

> Wanting only to be a man, I went to all imaginable lengths to be one: affecting male attire, male mannerisms and figures of speech, having my hair clipped at the men's barbershop, roughing up my bushy eyebrows. But no matter what I did, the picture remained imperfect... My spirits would fall. No amount of masquerading could ever hide a forty-four inch bustline.[35]

Naiveté and its loss....

Many of the autobiographers mention that they were raised in an innocence of the sexual embodiment that would later bring them such unhappiness. A highly developed childhood curiousity about differences in sexual embodiment would be a liability, which could undermine the young transsexual's conviction of their gender. Nancy Hunt recounts: 'In the innocence of the nursery, I paid scant attention to the biological arrangement between my legs, assuming that everyone was constructed the same way'.[36]

Mark Rees believed that he would grow up in accordance with his gender identity, seemingly oblivious to the realities of his embodiment and socialisation as a girl: 'I didn't realise until puberty that I'd grow up into a woman; it was something so inconceivable that I gave no thought to it'.[37] Even as he approached puberty he regarded the disparity between his internal sense of maleness and his experience of an unowned 'girlhood' as quite normal: 'At the age of ten I was happily ignorant of any problem of gender identity and still assumed that all girls wanted to be boys'.[38]

Inevitably, childhood 'innocence' gives way to the increasing imposition of gender-specific expectations and the 'realities' of puberty. Gerri Nettick recalls the simultaneous shattering of her childhood expectation of being eventually recognised as female together with the onset of a fathomless loneliness, when she first wore a school uniform – a boy's uniform:

> No matter how much my thoughts would turn to other things, no matter how much I fit in with my playmates or gained the approval of my parents and teachers, this feeling of dread would stay with me from then on. I knew I was trapped in a lie, and as I grew up, no one else seemed to notice what hung over me like a threatening storm cloud.
>
> I walked on, picturing myself in a plaid skirt and saddle shoes, knowing I had to give up that dream. And I cried now while I could, knowing I'd have to stop before I got home because no one would understand.[39]

Christine Jorgensen saw the unfolding of the sex/gender binary as fundamentally unfair, at least as far as the way 'boyhood' was applied to her. The shock of the imposition of gender-roles is aggravated by the clumsiness of the adult response to this gender-dysphoric child. In some ways, the parents displayed a greater degree of naiveté than their child (although, as a result of the publicity surrounding Christine's later surgical and social transformation from male to female, at least some parents would have been sensitised to the possibility of transsexualism for the first time).

> I became aware of the differences between my sister, Dolly, and me. Those differences, to me lay in the order of 'masculine' and 'feminine' things. Dolly had long blonde hair and wore dresses, both of which I admired but which were not allowed to me, and I was upset and puzzled by this. 'Mom,' I asked, 'why didn't God make us all alike?' My mother gently explained that the world needed both men and women and that there was no way of knowing before a baby was born whether it would be a boy or girl. 'You see, Brud,' she said, 'it's one of God's surprises.'. 'Well,' I replied, 'I don't like the kind of surprise God made me!'[40]

'Sissy-Baiting' ...

In most cases, the MtoF author's expression of female-coded behaviour was vigorously discouraged. Christine Jorgensen's love of a small piece of needlework was stamped out within the school system:

> I can't recall how, but when I was eight, I had in some way acquired one of those rich treasures: a small piece of needlepoint which I kept hidden in my school desk. Occasionally, I would reach in my desk and touch it, or if no one was watching, I'd take it out and admire it secretly. I didn't display it openly, probably sensing the derision that might result.[41]

The author's fears were realised when a teacher confiscated the needlepoint and confronted Christine/George's mother about the appropriateness of her son possessing this gender-coded object:

> In the silence that followed, the teacher took an object from her desk. 'Is this yours?' she asked, with a prim little smile, holding the precious needlepoint just beyond my reach. 'Yes,' I answered. I felt a quick sting of tears, the blood rushing to my face and heard a hot little breath sucked in behind me in excitement. I reached out to take the needlepoint from her hand, but she withdrew it sharply and faced my mother. 'Mrs. Jorgensen, do you think that this is anything for a red-blooded boy to have in his desk as a keepsake? The next thing we know, George will be bringing his knitting to school!'[42]

Ironically, the insults meted out to Christine/George accused hir of a femininity which s/he was unable to articulate at the time.

Canary Conn faced similar taunts from a Gym teacher:

> 'You, that's right little lady. You think that I can make a man out of you? … Listen here, sissy, when I tell you to get your clothes on and get the hell out of here I mean it. And when I ask you a question you're going to answer me like a man. Do you understand me?' 'Yes, sir!' I yelled. My voice cracked and went into a girlish scream. The boys who hadn't left broke into a laugh.[43]

While 'sissy-baiting' may have some effect on policing the boundaries of gender-expression in non-transsexual boys, the insults alluding to femininity would have served to reinforce the conviction in these authors of the girl within themselves. These fragments of an ethereal girlhood are offered of as part of a historical claim to womanhood by MtoF transsexual autobiographers. 'Misattributions' of gender based on physical embodiment can be turned around to affirm a transsexual child's internal sense of self. For Jennifer Spry, a casual observation about her hair generated feelings that were different to their intended purpose, and almost certainly different from the usual reaction of non-transsexual boys. Furthermore, the following incident was so significant that Jennifer remembered it as an adult and offers it up as part of her written claim to womanhood:

> When I was about eight or nine our next door neighbour said one day as we stood outside our house, 'What beautiful hair you have. It is wasted on a boy. It should be on a girl.' The comment struck me hard and I

> silently said to myself, 'Oh but it *is* on a girl, it is. If only I could tell you.' I am sure that other people involved in these incidents forget them in a moment, but for me they hit a chord that I can still hear.[44]

Canary Conn, although hurt by taunts of being a 'sissy', did not alter her conviction of being a girl:

> My looks disappointed my father, although he never came right out and said it. My effeminate appearance was cause for continual challenge from him to 'stand up and be a man'. 'What are you, some kind of sissy or something?' he'd say. 'If you can't do the work, maybe we can get you little sister to do it!' As I grew up, I realised that most of this kind of talk is common among men. But in my early years, I was very much aware that I wasn't a boy, let alone a man. As far as I was concerned, what they said about being a sissy was right. Sometimes the word hurt, though.[45]

The Substance of Transsexualism?

Many of the authors argue the immutability of their gender identity as adults. Yet not a single author claims that their discordant gender identity was *caused* by childhood socialisation. The substance of their hold on gender lies elsewhere: Although the authors either attribute their 'condition' to various causes (medical or spiritual), or simply accept their engenderment as an unfathomable given, the accounts of childhood concern the survival of this identity, despite the counter-conditioning. The stories of 'girlhood' (or 'boyhood') are of an already-existing, healthy gender under siege, not of a deviant gender in the making.

Unlike most non-transsexuals, the autobiographers have felt compelled to explore their gender identity, gender-roles and sexual embodiment as distinct and not necessarily concordant entities. Jan Morris places 'gender identity', at least when problematised by transsexualism, outside both the sex/gender-role and nature/nurture dichotomies: 'In my mind it [transsexualism] is a subject far wider than sex: I recognise no pruriency to it, and I see it above all as a dilemma neither of the body nor of the brain, but of the spirit'.[46]

Christine Jorgensen downplays the influence of outside gender-conditioning on her conviction of her femaleness, allowing her a 'girlhood', despite the socialisation that was consequent from her male embodiment at birth:

> How many of my emotions could be attributed to this early environment I couldn't determine then, of course, but deep within myself, even at that early age, I felt that all these basic feelings were an integral part of me and not highly influenced by outside conditions.[47]

Looking Back ...

These stories of childhood are no more 'objective' accounts of reality than other autobiographical work. They serve as more than a mere introductory preamble, being also a core part of the authors' claims to gender-legitimacy. While gays and lesbians may need to argue for acceptance of 'difference' (of sexuality), transsexuals are claiming 'sameness', that is, as ordinarily gendered people. In the case of MtoF lesbian transsexuals, such as Jennifer Spry, her 'coming-out' covers both story-telling processes:

> The main difference in the lesbian coming-out stories I read, compared to my own experience, was one of degree. I wanted more than the right to live with a same-sex-partner; I wanted the right to change my apparent gender and live with a same-sex partner.[48]

The pursuit of 'sameness' creates a dilemma for transsexuals regarding their personal histories that is different to the story-telling by gays and lesbians: while gay/lesbian histories need only be 'acceptable', transsexual's stories not only need to be 'acceptable', but also, at least at the level of core gender identity, they need to be congruent, and have enduring elements of the author's claimed gender. As the authors make some sort of a claim to have achieved the sex/gender opposite to their birth sex, the stories of a childhood conviction that they have *always* been of that gender serve to reinforce their claims. Not that I doubt the veracity of the claims, but the 'ordinary' construction of gender demands that a 'childhood' be consistent with an adult experience of gender. Gender-history makes demands that go far beyond the minimum necessary in social encounters. As Garfinkel pointed out, one of the characteristics of 'gender' is that 'gender' can't be changed.[49] Even though an affirmation that 'I stand with the women/men' should be enough to allow almost all social transactions to take place without basic misunderstandings over one's gender-affiliation, there is an expectation that even in superficial encounters, each participant will be 'legitimate', i.e., they have always been of the sex, or at least the gender that they are currently presenting.

In the end, it is intangible, personal history which stands between a transformed transsexual and the 'real'. The stories describe the authors' post-transformation lives as occupying their claimed gender as 'ordinary' women or men, that is, their bodily and social metamorphosis is sufficiently convincing to allow everyday social transactions to proceed without constant challenges to their gender-legitimacy. While the post-operative transsexuals are infertile, have chromosomal signatures which do not correspond to their claimed gender, and often have some vestiges of their birth sex in their embodiment (height, voice-pitch, size of hands or feet) these characteristics do not serve to exclude non-transsexual women or men from 'the real'.[50] Whilst most of the physical markers and, in many situations, the legal status of birth sex can be transcended by transsexuals to occupy their claimed gender, they remain different from non-transsexuals in one respect: they have different histories. The first story, a biography of Lili Elbe published in 1932, attempts to overcome the problem of her incongruent personal history by simply abolishing it:

> There could be no past for her. Everything in the past belonged to a person who had vanished, who was dead … Now there was a perfectly humble woman, who was willing to obey, who was happy to submit herself to the will of another.[51]

Of course, leaving Lili without *any* history of sex/gender would not allow her to make a claim to legitimate gender on the same terms as a non-transsexual. Perhaps if Lili had been able to write her own story (she died soon after her transformation) she would not have dismissed her past in this way. The later transsexual autobiographers take their own histories very seriously.

Whilst the substance of transsexual histories cannot be changed, it can be re-interpreted and managed, and offered up as an equivalent to 'the real'. Accounts of 'girlhood' are a tool in building that 'reality'. But 'the real' is elusive: even when a strong case is put for equivalence of historical girlhood (or non-girlhood) 'difference' remains. History remains to haunt the autobiographers. While acknowledging that he has gained some social recognition as a man, Paul Rees still grieves over his disjointed and inauthentic history:

> My past is also that which sets me apart, which isolates me from the rest of the community. I was not reared as a boy or as a young man. My

> experience can include neither normal heterosexual relations with a woman or fatherhood. I have not shared the psychological experience of being a woman or the physical one of being a man. My apparent sex may have been that of a biological female but a woman is a female person. That I have never been. I don't know how it feels to be a normal woman. What changed at my role-assignment was the world's perception of me: my essence, my personhood remains. My gender role was re-assigned, my gender identity confirmed.[52]

The 'real' is constructed on innocence and 'naturalness' and, as a result of their transition, transsexuals know far too much about the construction of sex and gender to ever be innocent again. The loss of innocence can manifest itself as a feeling of loathing towards having a transsexual (i.e., a non-gender-innocent) history. Claudine Griggs was shocked when reminded of the intensity of her feelings:

> In October 1995, I wrote a letter to a friend, which contained a disturbing but accurate statement of how I viewed my life. When I reexamined this correspondence several weeks later, I was startled by what I had written and that it seemed true at its core. I complained: 'After all I've been through with this sex-change thing, I yet hate being transsexual so much that I sometimes can barely stand to look at myself in the mirror. On the bright side, I like being a woman enough that I tolerate my own self-hatred. Hatred is the right term.'
>
> Perhaps I was troubled more on this day than others, but perhaps not. The words convey an undertone that I have felt for many years.[53]

Because 'normal' gender is built on historic artifacts, history both constructs and undermines the transsexual authors' claims to gender legitimacy. They know that the popular notion of immutable sexual embodiment can, in most respects, be transcended: they have survived often relentless and brutal attempts at socialisation in both childhood and as adults. It seems that the natural construction of 'gender' itself is compromised when it demands ignorance of its underpinnings. Agency and self knowledge are not 'natural' parts of gender: for those who have too much first-hand knowledge of its construction, their claims to legitimacy within it are lessened.

The autobiographies celebrate agency in childhood and beyond: the girl within, where she exists, will be heard, defying the 'realities' of embodiment and socialisation. The authors' accounts of the transsexual

condition do not run counter to the substance of 'ordinary' gender, only to some of the naive assumptions which underpin it. If they are, as some essentialists claim, victims of a supposedly over-rigid gender dichotomy, then perhaps non-transsexuals are even more so.

Denise Bates is a Ph.D. candidate in Women's Studies at Waikato University, Hamilton. Her thesis explores accounts of sexual embodiment and gender in published autobiographies of transsexuals.

NOTES

[1] Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire* (Women's Press, London, 1979).

[2] ibid., 114.

[3] Caroline Cossey, *My Story* (Faber and Faber, London, 1991) p. 13.

[4] Georgina Beyer, *Change for the Better* (Random House, Auckland, 1999) p. 27.

[5] Jennifer Spry, J., *Orlando's Sleep* (New Victoria, Norwich, 1997) p. 16.

[6] Raymond, 1979, p. 27.

[7] Robert Allen, *But for the Grace* (Allen, London, 1954) pp. 36-7.

[8] Paul Hewitt (with Jayne Warren), *A Self-Made Man: The Diary of a Man Born in a Woman's Body* (Headline, London, 1996) p. 15.

[9] Raymond, pp. 98, 145.

[10] Claudine Griggs, *S/HE: Changing Sex and Changing Clothes* (Berg, Oxford and New York, 1998) p. 140.

[11] Riki-Anne Wilchins, *Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender* (Firebrand, New York, 1997) p. 22.

[12] Robert Bogdan and Jane Fry, 1974, *Being Different: The Autobiography of Jane Fry* (Wiley, New York, 1974) p. 19.

[13] Nancy Hunt, *Mirror Image: The Odyssey of a Male-to-Female Transsexual* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1978) p. 12.

[14] Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1967) pp. 122-7.

[15] Even some of the innocence of a non-transsexual childhood sense of engenderment can be offered up in the stories. Caroline Cossey tells of how she had at least some of the naïve experience of girlhood that non-transsexual girls have, until the pressures of school destroyed that innocence:

> Our favourite game was dressing up … I would become so engrossed in my make-believe that I would lose all sense of being a boy – I felt like

any little girl posing before the mirror in her mummy's clothes ... But as I approached my fifth birthday I was in for a rude awakening. School was on the horizon, and with it was the growing awareness that I was not like other boys (Cossey, p. 4).

[16] Mario Martino, *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography* (Crown, New York, 1977). Mario Martino is almost boastful when he recounts how he resisted socialisation as a girl:

'We'll make a lady out of you', the counselor ... had said. But I didn't want to be a lady! Accordingly, I'd packed extra jeans and my most mannish shirts to prove the point. After all, being a lady was how you felt inside, not how you dressed outside ... *Nothing was going to change my mind about how I FELT* (Martino, p. 3, emphasis in original).

[17] Jan Morris, *Conundrum* (Faber and Faber, London, 1974) p. 9.

[18] Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (Vintage, New York, 1995) p. 62.

[19] ibid., p. 143.

[20] Martino; Grant; Richards; Morris; Hewitt.

[21] Hewitt, p. 17.

[22] Renee Richards and John Ames, *Second Serve* (Stein and Day, New York, 1983).

[23] Richards and Ames, pp. 12-13.

[24] Griggs, p. 47.

[25] Mark Rees, *Dear Sir or Madam* (Cassell, London, 1996) pp. 58-9.

[26] Raymond Thompson, *What Took You So Long? A Girl's Journey into Manhood* (Penguin, London, 1995) pp. 74-5.

[27] Julia Grant, Traci Fellows and Carmen.

[28] Griggs, p. 47.

[29] Pat Califia, *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism* (Cleis, San Francisco, 1997) p. 3.

[30] In this essay, I use the claimed gender of each author, but because this is a general observation, I have used a gender-neutral term 'hir', which has gained recent currency in intersex and transgender discourse.

[31] Cossey, p. 18.

[32] Martino, p. 11.

[33] Hewitt, pp. 51-2.

[34] ibid., p. 293.

[35] Martino, p. 134.

[36] Hunt, p. 44.

[37] Rees, p. 6.

[38] ibid., p. 8.

[39] Geri Nettick and Beth Elliot, *Mirrors: Portrait of a Lesbian Transsexual* (Rhinoceros, New York, 1996) pp. 40-1.
[40] Christine Jorgensen, *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography* (Bantam, New York, 1968) pp. 11-12.
[41] ibid., pp. 17-18.
[42] ibid.
[43] Canary Conn, *Canary* (Bantam, New York, 1974) p. 33.
[44] Spry, p. 10.
[45] Conn, pp. 14-15.
[46] Morris, pp. 14-15.
[47] Jorgensen, p. 20.
[48] Spry, p. 7.
[49] Garfinkel (p. 122) lists ten assumptions about 'natural, normally sexed persons', the fourth assumption being: 'The members of the normal population, for him the *bona fide* members of that population are essentially, originally, in the first place, always have been, and always will be, once and for all, in the final analysis, either "male" or "female".'
[50] Some intersexed persons, such as those with CAIS (complete androgen insensitivity syndrome) have XY chromosomal signatures typical of males, yet they have external physical embodiment as women. At least in the eyes of society and the legal system, they do not face the same challenges to their 'realness' as women that transsexuals do in many parts of the world.
[51] Neils Hoyer, *Man Into Woman* (Jarrolds, London, 1932) p. 170.
[52] Rees, p. 176.
[53] Griggs p. ix.

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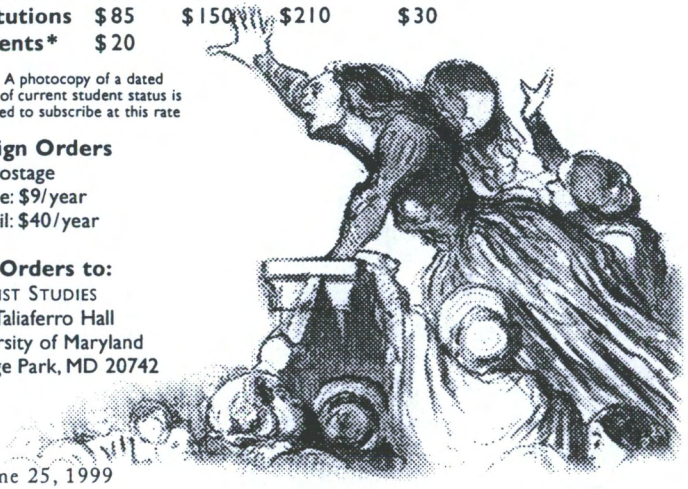

Volume 25, 1999

Number 1:

A cluster of articles examines activism, particularly in the academy, as well as the struggle for affirmative action and against sex discrimination in the workplace. Other articles challenge scholars to re-vision the narrative of US southern history; assess images of the feminine in Sri Lankan contemporary politics; examine the parité movement in France; report on the impact of theEuropean Union on women; and explore bathrooms as a potent social space in the construction of gender and race in the workplace on the Pennsylvania railroad during World War II. Also includes a review essay that examines homeworkers from a global perspective; art by Joanna Kao; and poetry by Susan Thomas and Judith Strasser.

Number 2

Articles include an examination of cooking as a site of contestation and power relations for Black women; what feminists may— or may not— glean from Wittgenstein's conception and portrayals of linguistic practices; and feminist disruptions of presuppositions in western epistemology. Two articles examine issues of privacy—its history and the paradox of changing legal doctrine. Other work includes two review essays, one on The Rewards of Lesbian History, and another examining identity politics and the law in the U.S. *FS* also presents art by Ina Loewenberg and fiction by Julie Fay.

Number 3

A cluster of articles explores aspects of maternalism internationally including reading *Little Women* as an illustration of and a challenge to maternalism in Japan; transracial mothering in Great Britain; Mother Bloor's use of a rhetoric of motherhood in the US Communist Party's labor organizing; and the feminist challenge to maternal education and child health. Other articles examine abortion rights activism in post-wall Berlin and women's grassroots activism in Japan; while a commentary analyzes the institutional incentive in German social work to empower girls. Also featured— an essay on Singapore artist Georgette Chen; creative writing by Davi Walders and A. Wassenberg; and a cluster of Filipina poetry and prose introduced by Edna Manlapaz.

Everything a Teenage Girl Should Know: Adolescence and the Production of Femininity

ANITA HARRIS

This article addresses the discourses through which 'adolescent' identity is constructed and the meanings this has for the constitution of femininity. Commonly, female adolescence is represented through a sociobiological framework as a period of natural, physical and psychological flux.[1] This framework universalises and depoliticises the experiences of young women, and serves to shore up traditional models of feminine behaviour and representations. Here, I take issue with this hegemonic representation of female adolescence as both troublesome and passive, and consider the implications this has for young women's agency and diversity.

It is not a new idea that youth is very much a constructed category through which individual young people can be controlled and patronised. Since the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, analyses of the history of youth as a social category and its connections with the emergence of capitalism and the management of the working class have become more common.[2] Increasingly, questions are being asked about the meaningfulness of classifying or explaining individuals' life experiences by arbitrarily established age brackets.[3] Further, it has been well established that 'youth' is not a monolithic category, and in sociological research about young people at least, increasing care is being taken to attend to their diversity. Finally, feminist research has highlighted the ways in which concepts of youth are deeply masculinist, and tend to either leave out or pathologise the experiences of young women.[4] This trend in particular will be taken up later.

However, what has received less attention have been feminist understandings of 'adolescence'. While it has become acceptable to problematise the concept of youth, the idea of adolescence has remained as a kind of absent presence in much youth research. In some respects, the relationship between youth and adolescence mirrors the sex/gender distinction that has proven to be so problematic for feminist theory. Youth has become the cultural construction, and adolescence is the static, natural bedrock on which this construction is im-

posed. Adolescence, as the supposedly socio-psycho-sexual process accompanying puberty, is generally left untheorised. It is commonly understood as a physical process, simply a natural response to the production of hormones caused by puberty. This, however, raises questions about the nexus between the social and the natural, between culture and bodies. As feminist theory has attested to in recent years, bodies cannot be neatly split off from the social world within which they are experienced, used, disciplined and represented. As Lee argues, 'While bodies are biophysical entities, the meanings attached to bodies are directly related to the historical and sociocultural spaces they occupy'.[5] It is my argument here that the meanings attached to adolescence, as a bodily process, are deeply embedded in the sociocultural space of patriarchy. This has particular implications for young women.

Consequently, what I explore in this article is an interpretation of the gendered construction of adolescence, rather than youth, as this is crucial to good understandings of the representation, treatment and experiences of young women. It is my argument that normative ideas about adolescent development ensure that hegemonic femininity is produced as an irrefutable fact of a healthy young woman's identity. This occurs through the representation and experience of adolescence as a natural process; that is, the problem lies in the very social construction of the biological. What I demonstrate here is that the measures for young women's 'natural' development are founded on principles of traditional femininity. Specifically, successful adolescent identity for young women is based on overcoming a natural phase of 'trouble' and becoming responsible, caring, contained and passive.

The Western Sociobiological Framework of Adolescence

In the West, adolescence is deemed to be the process of natural physical, sexual, and emotional developments that accompanies youth. Certain tasks or stages must be gone through for the individual to emerge as a healthy and normal adult. These are triggered by changes in the body, or the onset of puberty, which are represented as inevitable and universal. Young people are supposed to work through a variety of challenges, some physical, some emotional, and resolve these in ways that enable them to transform themselves from children to adults. Maturity can be assessed by determining the stage reached by the individual in terms of reasoning, morality, emotional and intel-

lectual capacities and so on.[6] The adolescent identity is, therefore, a fairly fixed affair. While it is forged through processes of change and challenge, these proceed along sequential and linear paths, which lead to either a successful or failed adult. This representation of adolescence as a crucial stage in life for the achievement of adult identity has enabled the development of a whole industry of 'youth professionals' to find gainful employment managing, 'servicing', studying and troubling over young people.[7] The construction and reproduction of functionalist, essentialist and, as I will go on to show, *gendered* discourses around adolescence can be located to a large extent with these professionals and the texts that they generate. So-called 'mainstream' psychologists and high profile mainstream psychology journals are often the worst offenders.[8]

As youth researchers and others have begun to argue, this representation of adolescence is highly problematic for understanding the complexity of the social and political construction of subjectivity, especially around gender, culture, and class. The sociobiological framework of adolescence is built around a white, male, Anglo, Western model of identity. It is essentialist in its connection of social identity with a notion of fixed biology, and functionalist in its disregard for the ways in which identity continues to change throughout life. In its commitment to steps of progress from dependent child to autonomous individual, it shows little relevance to young women, who may move between conditions of dependence and independence throughout their lives.[9] It also betrays its roots in Western liberal concepts of the individual, and is, thus, particularly irrelevant to different cultural groups, such as indigenous Australians, where maturity may be defined, in direct opposition to the image of the lone individual, in terms of capacity for connectedness and community.[10]

Thus, these representations of identity formation in adolescence have been questioned by a range of commentators, not least feminists, for their implicit gender and cultural bias. It has been argued that the dominant ideas about the process of personal maturation in adolescence and what constitutes young people's development are generally more relevant to cultural majority young men than any young women, and they have not been formulated to include these young women in any case.[11] As is now well documented, young women have been found wanting, or to be less 'mature', because they are judged by masculinist standards of development, based on notions of

separation and personal honour. Gilligan's re-working of Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning is a famous example of this critique.[12] I would suggest, however, that it is not simply the case that young women are left out of the picture of mature identity formation in adolescence. Rather, they are drawn into a *complementary* representation of the feminine 'quest for self', of which failing to be like cultural majority men is an integral part. While it is certainly true that a particular notion of the development of mature identity is a white masculinist one, namely the *Bildungsroman* version, I would also argue that there is a specific framework for the development in adolescence of a successful mature feminine identity. This is structured by discourses of hegemonic femininity that construct female maturity in terms of containment and responsibility.

Discourses of Female Adolescent Development

While Western images of adolescence have changed in many ways since Hall's 1905 model of 'sturm and drang/storm and stress', ideas of trouble, risk, crisis or problems caused by changes in adolescence have persisted, particularly in gendered ways.[13] For young women, adolescence continues to be represented as a difficult life phase that will cause them trouble, specifically around their bodies, sexuality, and relationships. It is in overcoming these challenges, or managing these troubles that they become proper adult women.

Successful passage through female adolescence is supposed to lead to a female maturity connected to three kinds of responsibility and containment: the first kind involves responsibility for and containment of the body. This is achieved through covering up, concealing 'leaks', and being as physically attractive as possible. The second is sexuality. This includes responsibility for sexual behaviour and 'correct' sexual identity and containment of sexuality, particularly lesbian desire or non-traditional heterosexual desire. The third kind is related to emotional responsibility, expressed by being concerned for others and managing emotional relationships, and containing 'inappropriate' emotions, especially anger and selfishness. The proper adolescent girl, according to these discourses, is one who can adequately contain herself and knows her limitations, but can also express herself physically, sexually and emotionally in the right contexts. This balancing act is further complicated by racialising discourses that deem so-called 'ethnic' and indigenous young women

more 'at risk', or more trouble, because of problems that are represented as 'caused' by their cultural heritage. As a consequence, they need to be more managed than others.

Here, I want to discuss physical, sexual and emotional responsibility, and the ways in which hegemonic femininity and cultural homogeneity are produced through these discourses. In doing so, I will look at some illustrative examples from texts for and about 'adolescent girls'. By taking examples from guide books, advice books, self-help manuals and the like, I do not intend to suggest that young women are the passive recipients of this information. As much feminist research has established, the relationship between young women and texts is a complex one.[14] Rather, my intention is to illustrate the ways ideological work is performed by these texts, which rely on the authority of medical doctors, psychologists and sex educators to transmit the 'facts' about female adolescence. In this process, professional, 'scientific' knowledge is handed over to lay people, who, in the transaction, are encouraged to turn such knowledge into universal common sense. It is in this process that the ideological work takes place.

Managing the Body

Managing the body is perhaps the key task of female adolescence. The physical changes that occur during adolescence, that is, puberty, are seen to set off the entire adolescent process. However, this physical maturation carries with it implicit dangers for young women.[15] They are repeatedly warned that their bodies may mature ahead of them, which may in turn cause 'behavioural problems':

> As a result of their social and cognitive immaturity, combined with early physical development, early-maturing girls are easily lured into problem behaviours, not recognising the possible long term effects on their development.[16]

Young women are, thus, not to be entirely trusted with their bodies, and require the advice and intervention of experts to ensure they behave responsibly. Although it is accepted that young women cannot always exercise control over their bodies, especially if they are 'early maturers', they can certainly *contain* their bodies. For example, studies on menarche demonstrate that young women often perceive their bodies in puberty as messy, leaking and needing to be controlled. Lee has found that menstruation, often depicted as the

pivotal physical event of female adolescence, tended to be experienced by her research participants as 'something that was happening to them, as something outside of themselves and [was] frequently referred to as "it"'.[17] The body through menarche becomes a 'hygienic crisis' that requires management.[18]

Body management in adolescence is also connected to the increased heterosexualisation of the female body. Young women must monitor and control what parts of their bodies can and cannot be seen, and be responsible for the effects of the sexual meaning of their bodies on others. The sexologist Wardell Pomeroy warns young men of girls who are 'cockteasers', who may wittingly or unwittingly use their bodies to arouse men.[19] Haug et al. write that it is through this process that 'innocent' parts of the body become 'guilty'; that is, they are utilised for the production of sexuality.[20] In particular, 'innocent' body parts such as legs, hair and stomachs are drawn into the representation of female sexuality as passive and display-oriented; valuable and meaningful for 'being touched and looked at'.[21] The sexual connotations of areas such as shoulders, thighs, backs and the like ensure that young women are preoccupied with the accidental or intended messages their flesh displays. As a result, they learn to restrict their movements so as to preserve 'modesty' and to attempt to create a neutrality of their bodies to allow them to do everyday activities without the ascription of sexual meaning.[22]

Wex's study of male and female body postures establishes that after the age of ten or so, girls stop sitting with their legs apart in school photos.[23] That is, once they learn the sexual meaning of their bodies, they must take extra measures to maintain its neutrality. Even the school photograph, which is designed to represent the membership of the school as students (not gendered, not sexual), presents as a site of the struggle over the production of adolescent female bodies as sexual. Lesko argues also that girls' school dress codes that emphasise modesty and restraint perpetuate the image of 'girls' bodies as dangerous and needing to be controlled'.[24] 'Covering up' is, thus, a strategy to defend against sexual meaning even whilst reproducing that meaning. The transition from youth to adulthood is marked by learning to read the female body as sexual and then taking responsibility for this meaning.

Young women are also encouraged to relate to their bodies as objects that exist for the use and aesthetic pleasure of others, and to

work on the improvement of their appearance. For example, *Everything a Teenage Girl Should Know*, includes chapters on 'Lovely Skin and Fingernails', 'Bosom Beauty' and 'Slim, Trim Figures'.[25] The body is to be held away from oneself, considered critically and judged by its attractiveness or unattractiveness. Thus, a young woman 'becomes for herself the object who is being worked up to correspond to the textually defined image. She becomes the object of her project'.[26] A mature young woman must learn to competently manage her unruly body in order to attract the right amount of heterosexual interest, but conversely, this lesson about containment and responsibility is also taught through warnings about sexuality.

Sexuality

Thus, female adolescent identity is framed around the management of the 'trouble' caused by the developing female body, and specifically the emergent sexuality that is inevitably linked to it. Sexual desire is represented as caused solely by biology. It is a purely natural process, but because of this, it can trigger unpredictable behaviours. For example, in *Everygirl*, readers are told: 'once the hormonal tides have begun to flow after puberty, a person becomes more sexual'.[27] Csikszentmihalyi and Larson argue that 'a young woman aroused by sexual desire ... is actually doing what she was made to do as a member of a biological species, serving the needs of the genes that have programmed her behaviour for their own ends'.[28] Adolescent development discourses thus define sexual expressions as simply part of the biological and evolutionary program, but because they may result in uncontrollable urges, they must be monitored carefully. By this logic, they perpetuate and endorse heterosexuality as the only appropriate sign of sexual maturity for young women, while stringently policing the ways it can be expressed.[29] Thus, adolescent female sexuality is typically characterised as problematic, conflict-ridden and difficult:

> The adolescent girl's problem in working out her adult sexuality is a difficult one and although most manage to make a satisfactory adjustment, three main areas give rise to many conflicts ... These are masturbation, homosexuality and promiscuity.[30]

Texts written for parents and young women themselves are often pitched precisely in terms of such warnings about sexuality. Publish-

ers' blurbs recommend these resources as advice manuals for young women specifically because they address the responsible management of sexual desires. *You're In Charge* explains 'what a girl should know if she thinks she is ready to have sex'.[31] In *The What's Happening to My Body? Book for Girls*[32] 'advice is given on sexual urges' and 'the increasing choices available to female adolescents as sexual beings are sensitively evaluated in *Girls and Sex*[33] in terms of increasing responsibility'. In *Raising Girls*, parents are reassured that 'there is evidence that girls who receive the most information are those least likely to develop dangerous sexual habits'.[34]

Whilst sexuality is presented as problematic for all young women, young 'ethnic' women are more closely monitored by the majority culture; for both too much and not enough (hetero)sexuality is deemed to be trouble, and their assumed 'culture clash' status causes problems in achieving the balance. Young women of some cultural groups are 'at risk' of being too sexual: often included here are Aboriginal, Maori and Native American young women as well as African-American and Afro-Caribbean young women. Police, youth workers, medicos, teachers, anthropologists and not least, youth researchers, are called upon to monitor these young women and their potential promiscuity. For example, much North American research is devoted to ascertaining that young women of colour who live in poverty are more 'at risk' of early first coitus, teenage pregnancy, or may be generally more sexually permissive.[35] Indigenous young women are subject to similar surveillance. For example, a study of young Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory of Australia determined that monogamy was a fairly new concept for these women, and that to them, a 'date' actually meant having sexual intercourse.[36] Misrepresentations of traditional indigenous cultures and sexualities conveniently enable colonial images of Aboriginal women as sexually undisciplined to be perpetuated with authority.

Conversely, young women of other cultural groups are 'at risk' of not being sexual enough. These often include young women of Southern European, East, South and South East Asian heritage, and confusingly, those who are defined primarily by religious affiliation, for example, young Muslim women. These are represented as young women held back by their patriarchal heritage who must learn greater agency and expression in sexual matters. An example of this perspective is from an English study which found that while white and

Black young women viewed virginity as negative, young 'Asian' women talked in a *problematically* positive way about it, or as the researchers put it: 'Asian young women discussed [virginity] in terms of the body preserved as inactive being something to be proud of'.[37] The authors' interpretation of virginity, 'the body preserved as inactive', is an unequivocally disparaging definition. This may well be at odds with the young women's own views, and results in a lost opportunity to understand these young women's experiences of their bodies and their sexualities. Importantly, it also demonstrates that it is not only 'mainstream psychologists' who perpetuate discourses of appropriate female adolescent sexuality. Feminist youth researchers, in their enthusiasm to enable young women to own and speak of their sexual desires are sometimes responsible for silencing those young women whose sexuality does not fit into a Western liberationist model. A consequence of this is that this model (ironically, itself constructed through sociobiological discourses) becomes the only feminist framework for representing female sexuality. Anything outside it, then, becomes unfeminist. For example, Ayse Uyguntemur is a young Australian woman who writes passionately about feelings of exclusion from the feminist community because she wears the hijaab:

> I could never have imagined that a one metre square piece of chiffon could have made such a dramatic difference, not only to myself, but to the attitudes of people around me . . . This will be me *shouting* and pleading with every Western woman that I am a woman. That I believe in rights for women. That I am a feminist . . . So don't try to 'rescue' me.[38]

Being a virgin or wearing the hijaab jars with the discourse of female adolescent sexuality which deems sexual desire expressed through heterosex and heterosexual display to be the only kind that is normal and natural. Attempts by feminist researchers to sexually liberate 'Asian' and Muslim young women can often dovetail with this discourse, and may well be the reason these young women do not wished to be 'rescued'.

No matter which side of the divide young women fall into, it remains that mature female identity equals responsible heterosexual expression within an appropriate relationship. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring the health of herself and her partners. An example of this is a recent Australian campaign for the use of con-

doms by young people, pitched entirely at young women, with the slogan 'tell him if it's not on, it's not on'. Responsibility for simultaneous containment and expression of polite but unequivocal heterosexuality is central to successful female adolescence.

Emotional Responsibility

Young women's successful passage through adolescence also depends on acquiring a capacity for the management of relationships, and an ethic of care. In becoming the protagonist of their lives, they are in fact rewarded for their supporting roles. The trouble they must manage in this case is their hitherto childish, rebellious self-centredness, which must be replaced by thoughtful consideration of others:

> A mature girl... must become more 'other-centred' or allocentric in her social and interpersonal behaviour without becoming too conforming, that is, the self-centredness of childhood must give way to a greater consideration of how her behaviour affects others. She has to achieve a balance between allocentrism and autonomy. Too great an autonomy which is not balanced by a consideration of others makes a girl aloof or unreasonably rebellious.[39]

This balancing act is made easier by the assumption of a natural disinclination women have to becoming autonomous in any case. For example, in *Adolescent Development* readers are simply told that 'women are less concerned than men with achieving an independent identity status'.[40] Others claim that there is a distinction to be made between individuation and autonomy. For example, White, Speisman and Costos argue that while young women and young men must both individuate during adolescence, it is only men who are required to complete the additional developmental task of autonomy. They say:

> Both boys and girls must deal with issues of individuation during adolescence if they are to become mature and independent adults. After adolescence, women may use their entrance into adult roles to help them gain perspective on people with whom they have had very close relationships ... In contrast, men may use their entrance into adult roles to confirm their autonomy.[41]

Thoughtfulness, consideration, connectedness and compassion are traits that characterise a healthy and mature adolescent girl. The

interpersonal relationships that young women seem so concerned with during this time are simply a natural working through of the development of an 'allocentric' adult female identity. For example, Alishio and Maitland-Shilling ascertain that during personality formation in late adolescence, young women focus on relationships whilst young men focus on occupation, but no explanations are offered for this difference.[42] Young women's disposition towards connectedness is not only a matter of emotional maturity, but comes to shape morality, value judgements and political views. For example, Reiss, Oliveri and Curd argue that, for girls:

> Ethical dilemmas are not solved by abstract principles of avoiding harm and respect for others' autonomy. Solutions involve more situationally determined efforts to maintain relationships: to act while remaining embedded in a web of deeply felt ties with others.[43]

Mindful of feminist psychology and the valuing of these 'deeply felt ties' by those such as Gilligan, these authors argue that this mode of ethical problem solving is merely different but equal.

Young women are taught to contain their emotions, but also their selves by managing to overcome the 'self-centredness of childhood'. This supposedly natural process of identity development dovetails nicely with hegemonic modes of feminine behaviour. Personality indicators for mature adolescent women are consistent with successful performance of femininity. Young women achieve themselves as hegemonically feminine by enacting this psychological disposition towards caring. As Wolf writes, 'Girls are happy to report the wish for intimacy and connection, but are not happy reporting, say, fantasies of rage, competition, victory'.[44] To report these desires would be to bring doubt upon one's capacity for maturity.

Female adolescent identity is constructed through socio-biological discourses that deem 'trouble' to be natural and intrinsic to young women's development. These normative discourses universalise the experiences of young women and offer a limited model of female maturity based on bodily containment, polite and responsible heterosexuality and emotional care for others. The natural phase of trouble that is created by adolescent processes must be overcome by young women by managing their bodies and their desires very carefully. It is by disciplining their bodies and their selves that young women best express their propensity for mature female identity. The work

that the adolescent phase is supposed to perform is, thus, fundamentally gender work. Adolescence is represented as natural, bodily experience, but works through active discursive production to ensure young women discipline themselves into hegemonic femininity and cultural homogeneity.

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NOTES

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Damned if We Do, Damned if We Don't: New Zealand and United Kingdom High School Students' Negotiation of Sexual Identities

MYRA J. HIRD & SUSAN M. JACKSON

Heterosexuality manufactures a set of oppositional relations between femininity and masculinity.[1] Heteronormativity critically informs conceptions of male sexuality. These include the belief that men's (hetero)sexuality is biologically derived, that men persistently desire sex, that the desire to engage in sexual activity is always towards an 'end goal' of coitus and ejaculation, and that this inherent need to engage in sexual intercourse prompts males to always initiate sexual activity with women. This biologically driven discourse of male sexuality contemporaneously operates beside a discourse of compulsory heterosexuality.[2] Kimmel and Connell argue that heterosexual sex is a primary means of establishing masculinity.[3]

As its necessary opposite, femininity refers to a set of characteristics that do not contest masculinity. Thus, femininity traditionally invokes characteristics such as dependency, emotionality, fearfulness, irrationality, passivity and indecisiveness. Female sexuality is particularly conceived in terms of absence. When women's sexuality is considered at all, it is as though it is complex and vague: women do not initiate sexual activity and require sustained sexual stimulation to become aroused; but once aroused, women's desire become insatiable.[4]

Adolescence is a particularly important period of physical development and sexual exploration, a time when concern with intimacy and sexual relations is often brought to the fore. Young women and men are under pressure to negotiate a set of normative conceptions and expectations concerning sexuality. These conceptions involve particular understandings of masculinity and femininity, sexual reputations and desire. Although individual adolescents provide varying accounts of this negotiation, we suggest that the normative structure of (hetero)sexuality can be traced such that gender identity forefronts this process. That is, to become sexually active, adolescents necessarily encounter gendered power relations. 'Normal' heterosexuality is predicated on a conceptualisation of masculinity as active, persist-

ent and powerful, and femininity as passive, receptive and responsive to male sexuality.

The importance of first heterosexual experience as a product of the normative construction of (hetero)sexuality is illustrated in Holland, Ramazanoglu and Thomson's study of young men and women's descriptions of their first experience of sexual intercourse.[5] They contend that 'first sex' is the most significant marker through which young men become men.[6] This study shows the importance of male peer groups which mutually reinforce sexual intercourse with women as signifier of both heterosexuality and masculinity. First intercourse was defined as a wholly male concern; women's 'power' was significantly defined in terms of her possible refusal of his advances. Indeed, we would argue that this possibility of refusal forms a central concern for women within a heteronormative system, as the non-desiring (read 'good') woman is always responsible for saying 'no'.

Female adolescents' 'first sex' often takes place within the context of 'first love' relationships. Accordingly adolescents draw on the intertwining discourses of romance and sexuality available to them in the wider culture. We argue that romantic discourse affirms a traditionally feminine identity, exemplified in passivity, emotionality and dependency. Placing romantic discourse within the hegemonic structure of Western society helps to explain why romantic, traditionally feminine constructions of self prevail over alternatives.[7]

A growing body of theoretical and empirical research has illuminated the link between normative conceptions and expectations concerning female and male sexuality, and sexual coercion. We agree that sexual coercion be defined as 'the use of physical force, use of weapons, threat of harm, blackmail, unfair use of authority, or use of alcohol or drugs to obtain any form of sexual activity'.[8] By interrogating beliefs about 'normal' male and female sexuality, we are able to trace the ways in which sexual coercion is configured as a normal part of hetero(sexual) relationships. Sexual stereotyping by contemporary heterosexual ideology arguably sustains antagonistic relations between women and men. Women's sexuality is considered complex compared with the simplicity of men's constant desire for coitus. This means that men will always initiate sexual activity, to which women will only reluctantly respond positively. Hence, the common belief that men should make sexual advances persistently whilst women should always only react to male volition. Within this discourse, when

women say 'no', they really mean 'yes'.

This paper reflects on the findings of two studies we conducted on violence in adolescent heterosexual dating relationships. One study was conducted by Sue Jackson in New Zealand and the other by Myra Hird in the United Kingdom. These studies took place within the context of growing awareness of the high rates of interpersonal violence in adolescent dating relationships. Such high rates suggested to us that perhaps not a great deal had changed for young women of today, compared with their counterparts of earlier decades.[9] In this paper we want to focus on the narratives which considered sexuality and sexual practices within the context of a 'normal' heterosexual sexuality experienced as coercive by female adolescents. We suggest that a feminist reading of these narratives helps to explain female experiences of coercive sexuality. We conclude by arguing that the development of a positive desiring female subject is essential: that when, how and why girls say 'yes' is as important as when, how and why they say 'no'.

The Studies

Participants

In the New Zealand study, six high schools in a large city were selected. Within each school, participants were solicited within sixth form classes. Participants were aged between sixteen and eighteen. Males and females participated in a total of twelve separate culturally mixed focus groups. The groups ranged in size from four to fourteen students, with an average of eight students. Groups were of two hours duration and took place in school time. In the British study, two high schools in the south midlands of England were selected to participate. One school was predominantly middle-class whilst the other school taught mainly working-class students. Participants were accessed through assembly. The participants ranged in age from fifteen to eighteen. Seventeen focus groups were conducted: two mixed-sex, four female and two male groups at one school; four female and five male groups at the other school. Group membership was self-selected and closed at the request of students. Each group met approximately once per week for one year, although several groups continued for more than one year. In both studies participants were assured of the confidentiality of their talk and asked to maintain the confidentiality of other students' talk.

Group discussions were loosely structured. The topics included heterosexual relationship expectations, pressures in relationships, and the ways in which partners hurt each other. Although key probe questions addressed these topics, much of the questioning involved clarification and extension of material put forward by the students. Students were not required to talk about personal experiences. Sessions were audiotaped with the consent of students and later transcribed. All students were given written summaries of the main themes emerging from the group discussions once the initial analysis had been completed and were also invited to comment on the transcripts.

Process of Analysis

In our studies, Wetherell's call for a more eclectic approach to discourse analysis was heeded, primarily because such an approach acknowledges that people construct their social worlds as much as they are constructed by them.[10] Hence, the analysis drew from the talk of the students as well as from wider social practices and cultural discourses regarding heterosexual relationships, power and violence. These studies emphasised students' shared explanations, descriptions and interpretations, the identification of what cultural narratives they were drawing on and the different positions available to them within these narratives. Common themes (interpretive repertoires) were anticipated but the analysis also identified conflict and inconsistency, based on the view that constructions are typified by struggle and dilemma.[11] We acknowledge the analysis undertaken represents a particular reading of the material and that this reading is only one possible interpretation. We drew on a broad feminist framework, chosen because of its particularly powerful critique of issues central to this study including power, gender relations, heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality.

Although we expected to find significant differences in the ways in which adolescents in New Zealand and Britain talked about sexual issues, we found a strong consensus as to the normative expectations brought to bear on adolescent sexuality and how these normative expectations were to be negotiated, and sometimes resisted. Our narrative analysis focused on the various discourses drawn on in male and female adolescents' attempts to negotiate interpersonal heterosexual relationships. We found biological essentialism and compulsory heterosexuality discourses were used most often. Regarding fe-

male sexuality, a dichotomised 'good girl'/'bad girl' discourse was predominant. We turn now to a closer analysis of our material in relation to these respective discourses.

Male Adolescent (Hetero)Sexuality

Biological Essentialist Discourse

Analysis focused on the various discourses sustained in the male and female adolescents' attempts to negotiate interpersonal heterosexual relationships. We found a discourse of 'biological essentialism' to consistently dominate all explanations of sexuality. Biological determinism most powerfully establishes the meaning of gender through 'inherent' sexual difference. The use of this discourse is illustrated by the following extracts:[12]

(New Zealand study)

Sue*: How likely is it that you think about all that stuff at the time that you're doing it?*

Tim: You don't

Al: No, just go for it.

Cory: Emotions take over.

Sio: Yeah.

Jared: Hormones take over (laughter)

Sue: Hormones take over

Al: Yeah, become something else.

(New Zealand study)

Nick: Get into it while you're young

Joel: A guy's sexual peak is at 18 so normally their desires are quite wild (laughter).

Sue: So, are you saying it's something biological?

Joel: Well, when you're a teenager you've got a lot of hormones flow through you and you generally ... want to get it on with chicks (laughter).

The 'stuff' refers to the previous talk about using protection and being 'responsible' about having sex. Having just talked about the need to be responsible and think about the consequences of sex, the

boys in the first extract tell of the unlikelihood of such responsibility because their 'hormones' and 'emotions' take over. In the second extract, Joel draws on a 'common scientific knowledge' about the sexual performance of males by stating a 'guy's sexual peak is at age eighteen' and uses this to explain the 'wild desires' of teenage males.

As in the New Zealand study, almost all of the boys and girls in the British study assumed that males have a 'stronger sex drive' than females. Mark's comment in the following extract provides an illustration:

(British study)

> I think guys want it more than girls. Girls don't seem to be driven by their hormones half as much as guys. So guys are doing it for that reason. As far as I know guys aren't doing it as much out of peer pressure. But girls are just doing it out of being asked to do it. They don't have the drive to do it [sexual intercourse].

Tom, from the same study, used 'chemistry' to explain his attraction to a girl in his school:

(British study)

> Like I liked a girl for six or seven years and I didn't really know her. It was just that the chemistry was so strong. And if a girl can wind a guy up that much in a really concentrated short period of time it is difficult to say what's going to happen. It's sometimes difficult for me to see and I don't think women can see it at all the kind of feelings it's like.

Tom's comment reiterates a discourse in which male sexuality is active, constant and barely (if at all) contained by male volition. Female sexuality, appears as responsive to male sexuality, and is primarily configured in its 'gatekeeping' function. Girls are responsible for controlling male sexuality because of their ability to 'wind a guy up that much'.

Compulsory Heterosexuality

As Kimmel and Connell have both argued, hegemonic masculinity is premised on the denial of femininity.[13] Sexual relationships provide a proving ground for boys to dispel any association with femininity or homosexuality. In our studies the notion of heterosexual sex as a means of disproving homosexuality (and, subsequently, all that might be considered feminine) consistently and strongly emerged.

Peers served as a form of sexual police, cajoling, teasing and tirelessly asking about one another's sexual 'scores'. The following example is taken from a point in the discussion in which boys were talking about sexual pressuring:

(New Zealand study)

Ben: Yeah, that thing about having sex is a big one.

Sue*: Where does that pressure about having sex come from?*

Chas: Everywhere.

Ben: Peers. Peer pressure really. Society today.

Sue*: How do they do that?*

Ben: Because they always think it always looks cool you know on T.V. and what have you.

Stuart: Yeah, it's all over magazines. It's everywhere. It's the biggest, you know. Everyone knows about it.

Ben: I mean it's been around since time of man really. It's just a lot more accepted now than what it used to be – it's like tattoos and all that. It's a lot more socially acceptable. Like gays and that. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with gays but …

Sue*: How do mates put pressure on?*

Stuart: Competition.

Nick: 'Don't be a wuss mate'.

Joel: 'Come on mate, get in there'.

In this talk, the boys present the pressure to be (hetero)sexual as pervasive and unavoidable. They do not present this as problematic, rather it echoes the naturalist discourse as Ben's 'since time of man really', Stuart's 'it's everywhere' and Ben's 'it's a lot more socially acceptable' comments suggest. The sexual prescription is reinforced within their own age group, as mates add to the pressure to sexually perform. The number of girls with whom a boy has sexual intercourse serves as an indicator of masculinity (Stuart identifies 'competition' as a source of peer pressure) and non-indulgence in heterosexual sex risks being labelled a 'wuss', the name for an effeminate or homosexual male. Kimmel employs a notion of 'currency' to describe women's utility in 'proving' young men's heterosexuality.[14]

The notion that boys used heterosexual sex as a means to prove their masculinity was also commented on widely by girls:

(New Zealand study)

Stacey: But also like with guys I mean they're boasting to each other, saying 'oh, yeah' then I mean that'd be pressure from their friends, 'cos there's a big male thing, 'oh yeah, did you score with her?'

Kel: It's worse to be, so much worse to be a male virgin than it is to be a female virgin.

Ruth: And they're expected to have lost their virginity by a certain age as well.

Jody: They've got one thing on their mind, we all know what that is!

Kel's comment about it being 'so much worse to be a male virgin' exemplifies not only the necessity of sexual performance to establish masculinity but also the notion that girls' sexuality is different. Male sexuality is to be expressed, whereas female sexuality is to be repressed (primarily through the maintenance of virginity). This differential construction of female sexuality is taken up later in our analysis.

Sexual Coercion

Analysis of the narratives in our research revealed that the students commonly used the notion of gender difference to create and maintain a particular understanding of sexual coercion. Talk about biological differences concentrated on vague notions of hormonal differences, differences in physical strength, desire for sexual intercourse and ability to control behaviour:

(British study)

Myra*: In what ways do you think that guys are more physically dominant?*

Chris: It is latent but guys have the potential to be so much in control. When it all comes down to it the guy can take control and just do what he wants.

Clearly, the ability to 'take control and just do what he wants' expedites all forms of sexual coercion. Paul and Max identified physical gender differences as the basis for powerlessness of a girl in a rape situation:

(New Zealand study)

Max: 'Cos they're not that big eh and if the girl's saying no ... they'd just keep going.

Paul: Yeah, have sex anyway, rape them.

In addition to differences of physical size and strength, the 'hormonal male sex drive' was commonly deemed by boys as something 'beyond the control' of males. Hence, rape was seen as a 'natural' outcome of overpowering sexual need, as demonstrated by the boys' comments in the following extract:

(British study)

Myra: *So why do some men rape?*

Joal: Too much sexual drive.

Tim: They just can't read the signs. No matter what the woman does. Their need for sex is more important than ...

Tim's comment suggests the idea that men's hormonally driven sexual needs interfere with men's ability to 'read the signs' that women may not want sex. Another expression of this notion that males have no control over their sex drive was Martha's idea that the male sex drive is dictated by the unconscious. She commented:

(British study)

> Well, he feels frustrated when she keeps stopping him so he obviously thinks well she's not going to stop me this time. In some situations it is unconsciously done. I mean if it is done more consciously then it will be more forceful and more likely to be rape and then it becomes difficult to prove as to whether it was conscious or unconscious.

Male sexual need is understood to be so strong as to over-ride what a girlfriend wants and leads to an interpretation of her protests as an impediment to be overcome. Such a construction of male sexuality excuses rape, attributing responsibility to biology rather than any 'conscious' decision. Abdication of responsibility for rape was also evident in girls' stories about their own experiences of sexual coercion. In the following extract, Rose's story brings together the threads of physical domination and hormonally driven sex drive:

(British study)

Rose: If I just went to him just for a cuddle it would always turn into

sex. And I would sort of like say 'no, no I don't want to' and he'd force me and I'd cry and say 'I just wanted a cuddle, I didn't want sex'.

Myra*: How do you mean he'd force you?*

Rose: He would sometimes pressure me into sex because ... he wanted to basically, so ... he was stronger than me and ...

Myra*: He actually physically forced you?*

Rose: Yeah, and there were quite a few times that he forced me. All of a sudden he was sort of ... it's like he went into, like he blacked out or something, he would become very aggressive. Cause I'd be crying and saying 'I don't wanna. Get off' and so if you think it is rape, really, if I say no. And he would sort of think 'shit, what have I done'. I think in a way he mistook my actions, like I'd go to him for a cuddle, and that's all I wanted, but he got the wrong impression. And at the end of the day it's wrong for him to do that and I know it's wrong and still don't forgive him for that.

In common with many of the girls in our studies who talked about their coercive experiences, Rose tries to construct the story from both her own perspective and that of her boyfriend. She acknowledges 'there were quite a few times he forced me' but a physical reason is suggested in that 'like he blacked out or something'. The notion of misinterpretation threads through Rose's story as well; she 'went to him just for a cuddle', 'but he got the wrong impression'.

Female Adolescent (Hetero)Sexuality

'Sluts' and 'Angels'

The narratives concerning female sexuality strongly suggested that a double standard of 'appropriate' sexuality operated for the girls. We have drawn on the construction of 'sluts and angels' in the girls' talk as a particularly useful paradigm to describe the normative expectations through which girls regulate their sexuality in response to a hegemonic masculine (hetero)sexuality. Girls were particularly expected to limit their own pleasure and desire, producing narratives replete with ambivalence towards sexuality. In this section we firstly examine some examples of the construction of a sexual double standard that positions girls as 'sluts' or 'angels' and then consider the often conflicted ways in which girls negotiate these sexual identities.

Girls receive conflicting messages about themselves as sexual

beings. On the one hand they are barraged through popular media with the idea that they ought to be having sex but risk being labelled a 'slut' if they do become actively sexual. Girls and boys' groups uniformly talked about this dichotomy, particularly the sexual double standard that encouraged boys to be sexual but disapproved of girls engaging in multiple sexual relationships:

(British study)

Myra*: Do you call guys names?*

Elicia: Bastards. That's about it. There isn't a male version of slag. I mean you just say whatever describes him.

Myra*: Why is that?*

Elicia: It is easier for blokes to put girls ...

Emma: Into boxes.

Myra*: Why?*

Elicia: Because of the stereotypes there are? If she's clever then she's 'square' and if she's friendly she's a 'flirt' and she's a 'slag'.

(New Zealand study)

Sue*: Why do you think you've got that dual thing where it's okay for a guy but not okay for a girl?*

Hana: It's not normal for girls to want sex. (Kara: eegh!!) It's just the way it's been.

Kara: Girls are little petite angels – 'la de da' and guys are macho – 'yeah man', you know.

Abby: We're just little born goody goods. Supposed to be like that.

Maree: It's not lady like.

Such positioning places girls in a no-win situation. They can deny their sexuality in order to conform to expectations of 'angelic purity'. Alternatively, they can allow themselves to be sexual and risk being labelled as a 'slut'. Consistent with the 'angel' identity, girls are the gatekeepers of male sexuality.[15] He initiates the sexual moves and she defines how far he can go. Her sexuality is a reactive one, defined by his needs rather than hers. Consistent with this notion, Fine refers to the 'silencing' of girls' sexual desire.[16]

The dichotomised construction of female sexuality as 'slut' or

'angel' creates conflict for girls as they negotiate their sexual identities. As 'sluts', girls are expected to sexually excite boyfriends, but as 'angels' they are expected to apply the brakes to rampant male sexual desire. One of the positions this creates for girls is, in the words of a girl from the New Zealand study, 'cock-tease'. In the British study particularly, the boys reported that girls are responsible for both stimulating and satisfying men's sexual urges. Not surprisingly, this belief is often cited as a justification for rape:

(British study)

Myra*: How do you think it sometimes comes about that guys sometimes rape women that they know or that they live with?*

Mike: I can only see it as some sort of misunderstanding. Where the guy has been led on and he just thinks 'oh, you've taken it this far and now you are just going to shut me out' and he feels annoyed.

Like Mike, boys generally talked about how girls, through a variety of behaviours, were seen to lead boyfriends on, to promise sexual intercourse through action and then renege on that promise. The problem of logic is clear. Men are viewed as initiating sex because men are assumed to be more interested in having sex than women. But women are assumed to lead men on which implies that women are also interested in sex (at least to a certain degree). In the British study, students commonly reported that the reason for 'leading on' was that women enjoy the power and control. As Joal said 'women have power over men. Men have strength but women have their bodies'. This narrative provides an explanation for women's interest in sexual activity, whilst *still* denying female sexual desire.

The dynamics of this situation for girls is marked by conflict as they tread the fine line between the enticing 'slut' and the sexually controlling 'angel':

(New Zealand study)

Sue*: What are some of the ways that some guys put pressure on girls in a relationship to have sex?*

Megan: 'If you love me'.

Ginny: Just make them move like you could be in a situation where ('you're on a bed') and things are happening on a bed and then they start going further you know like they start pushing and you think

'do I say yes?'.

Melissa: And you say 'no' and they go 'oh, but if you love me you'd let me'.

Kris: And when they're making those they don't even say 'are you ready?'.

Jade: It's hard to get them to stop.

Kris: And it's hard for you to think 'okay, how far is this going to go?'; 'is this going to keep progressing?'.

Hayley: Like you don't want to say stop too soon because you might be like it's moved into this, but you don't want to lead him into thinking that everything is going to happen but you don't want to, sort of, you don't want to say stop, but you don't want him to think that he's getting around you.

Kris: Yeah, because often you don't know exactly where it's leading, you know. He just keeps going and it's like is this going ...

Jade, Kris and Hayley all underline girls self-monitoring processes involved when girls have boyfriends. Hayley's comment 'you don't want to lead him into thinking that everything is going to happen' echoes of the notion from the British boys that boys are 'led on' by girls in their sexual encounters. The controlling 'angel' is depicted in Hayley's later comment 'you don't want him to think he's getting around you'. The problem, it seems, is knowing when to close the gate, to say they do not want it to go any further. Melissa and Kris, however, suggest that even when they try to limit a boyfriend's sexual activities, they are not always successful.

Boys in our studies also talked about the gate-keeping of girls in sexual relationships. Here, the meanings attributed to *how* sexual activity is monitored by women is illustrated:

(British study)

Joal: All they have to do is push your hand away.

Myra*: So, it doesn't have to be verbal then?*

Tim: Actually, you are more likely to do what they say if they actually push you away than if they say 'no let's not' because you think 'if I just try a little more maybe I'll get her into it'. But if she pushes you away.

Joal: Yeah, if they push you off then you feel stupid. If they tell you 'no' then you just think 'well, I can persuade them and get around it'.

Arnold: It depends on how well you know them. The first time you would give up. But then if you go out with them for a while and at first they say 'no' and then they will have sex occasionally.

Sexual Coercion

In both New Zealand and British studies, girls consistently reported feeling coerced by boyfriends to engage in sexual activity. Almost all girls reported being either pressured, coerced or actually forced to have sexual intercourse with a partner. The most commonly experienced form of sexual violence was unwanted sexual touching. Sexual violence was almost exclusively perpetrated by young men known to the girls as acquaintances, friends or boyfriends. Instances of sexual violence most often took place on dates, at social events such as parties or in the homes of either boy or girl.

For many of the girls in our studies constant harassment to engage in sexual activity created a pressure that wearied them into submission. Having released themselves from the position of 'angel', however, girls commonly reported feeling like 'sluts' after submitting to sex that they had not wanted. The following extract illustrates this transition from 'angel' to 'slut':

(New Zealand study)

Angela: It's kind of like now we're all suppose to be modern '90s girls, but I think some of us have parts of ourselves which still have that kind of same old feeling like sometimes you don't feel that it's really your place to say no or something like that's really extreme, but sometimes you can find yourself in a situation where it's just like it will be easier if I go along with it, so I don't really care either way (laughter).

Jenni: It's true it can be like that (laughter).

Zoe: Yeah, and it's kinda like, 'oh, this won't take that long – rah rah rah (laughter).

Angela: You sort of think you'll do that at the time. You just think it's easier and simpler at the time and you don't have to have like an argument with them, but later on you do feel like a whore or something.

Sara: Yeah.

Olivia: You do.

Jenni: Violated.

Girls' negotiation of their sexual identities is heavily overlaid with classical romantic discourse. This is problematic for girls for a number of reasons. First, romantic discourse encourages female passivity: he initiates, she submits. Second, the term rape does not exist within romantic discourse. As Jackson points out, when Rhett Butler 'takes' Scarlett, it is rape, but in the romantic context it is overwhelming love and desire.[17] Third, the fusion of love and sex facilitates using love as a coercive tool. This was a recurrent theme in the talk of many students:

(New Zealand study)

Sue*: What are some other ways? (that girls could be pressured into sex).*

Fabian: Saying like 'if you really love me you will'.

Tom: Yeah.

Sue*: Do you think that happens much?*

Joey : Yeah.

Tom: I don't know. Some boys will do it.

Mark: No, I wouldn't do it (laughter).

Sue*: What did you just say? I missed it.*

Tom: Oh, like um if you're alone and some guys would say 'if you really love me you'd have sex'.

Joey: I know someone who does do that.

Tom: I don't think many guys would do that.

Fabian: A lot of girls feel they have to do it because it's part of a relationship.

There was a tentative quality in the boys' discussion about coercive sex, with Mark distancing himself ('I wouldn't do it'), Tom stating that not many boys would do that and Tom commenting that 'some boys will do it'. Fabian identifies the role of love in sexual coercion, in which a boyfriend challenges his girlfriend to prove her love by having sex with him. The notion that sex is an expected part of the

relationship is picked up in Fabian's later comment that girls may feel they 'have to do it because it's part of the relationship'.

Although boys widely acknowledged the use of 'love' to pressure girls to have sex, the situation for girls was more complex and interwove with their insecurities arising from discourses of the female body and the discourse of 'emphasised femininity'.[18] Hence, not agreeing to sex brought with it the fear of losing a boyfriend. This notion is explored by Angela:

(New Zealand study)

> Guys I think still mentally pressure girls and like there's all the old lines, like, 'if you loved me you would' and all this stuff and you just think like you learnt all this in, like, third form and you think, 'oh well, I can get out of that', but when you really, really, really care about a guy and he sits there and goes, like, 'what's wrong with it?' 'You know it's a perfectly natural thing to do' ... 'Oh, if you're not going to do this, well, I'll go out and find some other girl' ... 'There's some girl that wants to' and you're sitting there thinking this isn't right, this guy can't care about me if he does this, but you just don't want to lose them. It just messes with your mind a lot.

Love and sex are fused such that sex becomes a 'perfectly natural' part of a love relationship. As a girl in one of the groups put it, 'it's called making love isn't it?' In Angela's example the threat of losing a boyfriend to another girl adds to the pressure. Even though a girl knows her boyfriend's coercive tactics are not 'right' she is torn by the prospect of losing him. Hence, as Angela puts it, 'it just messes with your mind a lot'. Girls are placed in a difficult dilemma. Heteronormative sexual relations present an either/or submission to the coercion and 'proof' of their love or resistance and possible loss of a boyfriend with all the emotional upheaval that such a separation may bring. Angela's talk so clearly echoes the romantic discourse in which women's priority is to maintain relationships, whilst men's priority is to maintain their own autonomy.[19]

While the fusion of love and sex emerged as a strong theme in relation to sexual coercion, some girls suggested a dichotomised sexuality, driven by their own needs on the one hand, and romance on the other. Hence they differentiated sexual intercourse 'for its own sake' and sexual intercourse for 'love':

(New Zealand study)

Sue: *What are some of the ways in which girls are sexually pressured or put in a situation where they end up having sex when they don't really want to.*

Shelley: Well, from what I see in the media – any kind of 'Girlfriend' mag – a lot is that they kind of separate love and sex a lot and so even magazines just like ('Lisa', 'Girlfriend', 'Dolly') and to me that causes quite a lot of unhappiness and expectations. If I could explain that a lot more clearly I would, but I'll pass on.

Rachel: I don't know. I'd say people who are alcoholics and they drink too much and they end up fighting and at first it's just physical violence but it ends up sexual violence because the guy maybe thinks that's one way to dominate and I don't know, it's all very weird and I just think it's sick but I dunno girls these days seem to be like no morals left in society really, like chastity has kind of gone out the window sort of thing. I don't know, sex seems to be just one of those things these days it's not really that special anymore.

Olivia: I think it can be. I think that there is definitely a distinction between making love and having sex and often having sex is just something you need to do you know. If you feel like having sex you have sex whatever, but there's a huge distinction between making love and having sex. There's times when you know. (Sara: making love is special) Yeah, making love is special.

Carla: Having sex is just like, you know, having fun you know

(laughter and several girls talking at once).

Lilly: It's like if you have sex then later on you go, 'oh yeah, we had sex' but when you make love you go 'oh, wasn't that beautiful'.

Olivia: Yeah, you hold that moment.

Jenni: You don't go wow, sex!

Olivia: Well, you do say, 'that's great sex' and 'that's just part of life' and then there's making love which is a bit more special.

Here a distinction is made between 'sex' and 'making love', the former being about need or fun, but the latter being 'special'. Sex for fun or need aligns with the 'slut' position, whilst special 'making love' anchors the position of 'angel'. 'Special sex' borrows from a romantic discourse in which 'women are supposed to do romance in

relationships and men are supposed to do the sex'.[20] Certainly, boys and girls in most groups positioned girls as desiring romance in a relationship.

In summary, sexuality presents a myriad of conflicts and dilemmas for girls. Construction of the 'good girl'/'bad girl' dichotomy mitigates against control of their own sexuality. Indeed the girls' accounts suggest a system of gender relations largely dominated by male need and initiation. The cost of acquiescence is high, pushing a girl from virginal 'gatekeeper' to violated 'whore'. Although girls did construct a sexuality suggestive of their own needs, there was again a dichotomous split between sex for fun on the one hand and sex as special love making on the other.

Constructing a Positive Female Sexuality Through Feminist Discourse

Our findings strongly concur with feminist analyses of heteronormative expectations which operate within a sexual ideology centred around male sexual coercion of females. The bulk of data from both the New Zealand and British studies consistently revealed that these adolescent interpersonal relationships relied on a powerful heterosexual narrative in which 1) masculinity and femininity are defined *a priori* as the antithesis of each other; 2) men's sexual desire is established as active, constant and satiated only by coitus; 3) young men must be vigilant in establishing and maintaining their distinction from homosexuals which requires young men to be seen as actively pursuing women; and 4) young women's desire is framed as an absence and women's sexuality is framed around the accommodation of male desire.

As feminist researchers we are particularly concerned to imagine a female adolescent sexuality which disrupts biological determinist discourses and positions women as desiring subjects who experience their sexuality as embodied and pleasurable. Our findings strongly suggest that young women's sexuality is rarely explored in its own right, but almost always as a secondary desire, responsive to an active male sexuality. We think the lack of narratives concerned with female desire is a reflection of the lack of access to, and use of, feminist discourses by young women and men. We argue that feminist discourse provides a space in which female desire can be considered in its own right, as well as interrogating the myriad of

heteronormative expectations placed on female sexuality.

We are also as concerned as other feminist researchers about the danger of constructing female heterosexuality solely in terms of victimisation.[21] Our data provides ample examples of young women's experiences of sexual coercion, narratives which we think are imperative to voice. However, as Gavey points out,

> an unintended effect of feminist portrayals of heterosexuality and rape is perhaps the production of a regulatory discourse which unwittingly colludes with technologies of heterosexual coercion.[22]

Current practices in sex education in schools appear to vary markedly. Some schools engage the services of Family Planning educators who promote models of positive sexuality and personal decision-making. However, other schools appear to be conveying the 'just say no' message, at least according to a large proportion of the young women interviewed in the New Zealand study. For example, Treena commented: 'I get sick of it getting hammered into us saying it's okay to say no. And what they're really trying to tell us is to say no because there's nothing saying it's okay to say yes as well, because it is okay to say yes if that's what you want. But I think it gets hammered into us too often'. Young women and men *are* engaged in sexual activity and it is imperative that we do not further erode young women's sexual identity by focusing on their traditional (heteronormative) role as the gatekeepers of active male sexuality. We need to work towards ways of encouraging young women to express a positive, desiring sexual identity in spite of a heteronormative narrative which reinforces the primacy of male sexuality. This positive female sexuality may still be interpreted as responsive; young men desiring sexual activity to which young women respond by saying 'yes'. The active female sexuality we seek concerns a different economy of gender relations. But nor can this sexuality simply prioritise the rejection of the role of victim. Young women's assertion of their own sexual desires which prioritise active assertion in order to shed the traditional role of victim *also* merely respond to male sexual norms.

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Susan M. Jackson recently completed her Ph.D. at the University of Auckland and is currently engaged by Uniservices at the University of Auckland as a research Project Manager. She will shortly take up a position as Lecturer in the School of Psychology at Victoria University of Wellington.

NOTES

[1] Liz Kelly 'Some Thoughts on Feminist Experience in Research on Male Sexual Violence', *Studies in Sexual Politics*, 2 (1984) pp. 61-88; Denise Richardson, *Theorising Heterosexuality* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1996).

[2] Wendy Hollway, *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology* (Sage, London, 1989).

[3] Michael Kimmel, 'Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity', in Mary Gergen, and Sara Davis (eds), *Toward a New Psychology of Gender* (Routledge, London, 1997) pp. 263-281; Robert Connell, *Masculinities* (Polity Press, Oxford, 1995).

[4] Martha Burt and Rochelle Albin, 'Rape Myths, Rape Definitions, and Probability of Conviction', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 11 (1981) pp. 212-230; Leonore Tiefer, 'In Pursuit of the Perfect Penis: The Medicalization of Male Sexuality', in Michael Kimmel (ed), *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* (Sage, Newbury Park, 1987) pp. 165-184.

[5] Janet Holland, Caroline Ramazanoglu and Rachel Thomson, 'In the Same Boat? The Gendered (In)experience of First Heterosex', in Diane Richardson (ed), *Theorising Heterosexuality* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1996) pp. 143-160.

[6] 'First sex' was defined by the young men in this study as the penetration of the man's penis into the woman's vagina until climax was achieved. As Holland, Ramazanoglu and Thomson (ibid.) point out, this definition of sexual intercourse is both heterosexist and masculinist as it emphasises a traditional account of sexual intercourse as the active male penetrating the passive female and involving primarily penis and vagina.

[7] Connell.

[8] Todd Morrison, Lindsay McLeod, Melanis Morrison, Dana Anderson and Wendy O'Connor, 'Gender Stereotyping, Homonegativity, and Misconception about Sexually Coercive Behaviour Among Adolescents', *Youth and Society*, 28:3 (1997) pp. 351-364.

[9] Sandra Mercer, 'Not a Pretty Picture: An Exploratory Study of Violence Against Women in High School Dating Relationships', *Resources for Feminist Research,* 17 (1988) pp. 15-25; Barry Levy, *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger* (Seal Press, Seattle, 1991); Sue Lees, *Sugar and Spice* (Penguin, London, 1993).

[10] Margaret Wetherell, 'Positioning and Interpretive Repertoires: Conversation Analysis and Post-structuralism in Dialogue', *Discourse and Society,* 9 (1998) pp. 431-456.

[11] Margaret Wetherell and Janet Maybin, 'The Distributed Self', in Richard Stevens (ed), *Understanding the Self* (Sage, London, 1996) pp. 219-281.

[12] All names of participants have been changed to preserve anonymity.

[13] Kimmel; Connell.

[14] ibid.

[15] Py Bateman 'The Context of Date Rape' in Barrie Levy (ed), *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger* (Seal Press, Seattle, 1991) pp. 94-99.

[16] Michelle Fine, 'Sexuality, Schooling and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire', *Harvard Educational Review*, 58 (1988) pp. 29-53.

[17] Stevi Jackson, 'Love and Romance as Objects of Feminist Knowledge', in Mary Kennedy, Cathy Lubelska, and Val Walsh (eds), *Making Connections: Women's Studies, Women's Movements, Women's Lives* (Taylor and Francis, London, 1993) pp. 39-50.

[18] Connell.

[19] Wetherell and Maybin.

[20] Margaret Wetherell, 'Romantic Discourse and Feminist Analysis', in Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger (eds), *Feminism and Discourse* (Sage, London, 1995) pp. 128-144.

[21] Fine; Nicola Gavey, 'Women's Desire and Sexual Violence Discourse', in Sue Wilkinson (ed), *Feminist Social Psychologies*, (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1996) pp. 51-65.

[22] ibid., p.56.

Female Youth:
Gender and Life Phase from a Historical and Socio-Cultural Perspective

MARION DE RAS

> What does thou make of our daughters, oh morality. Thou forces her to lie and to pretend. They are not allowed to know what they know, not to want what they desire, not to know what they are. 'You're not a good girl. No girl asks such things. No girl speaks like that!'
>
> There you have warp and woof of upbringing. And when such a poor swaddled girl believes, resigns, obeys … when she, subdued, has spent her entire sweet blossoming season with clipping and pruning, with smothering and violating every inclination, mind and heart … when she, properly distorted, crumpled, wasted, has been a *good* girl – that is what morals call *good!* – then she has the chance that one or the other bloke will present her with the wages for being such a *good* girl by giving her an exclusive position as warden of his linen cupboard, as exclusive-certified-machine to keep his lineage and his sex going. It really is worthwhile![1]

The history of Western girls and contemporary analysis of girlhood and girls' existence is still, by and large, dominated by a pedagogical and educational perspective. The concept of socialization, upbringing, educating and schooling girls towards womanhood, towards adult female 'subjects' is central to this perspective. Despite the innovative ideas from the new branches in academia such as Women's and Gender Studies and Cultural Studies, the history of female youth remains, with few exceptions, primarily focused on that which is believed to be part of her existence, the 'small' world: the family, the school, the community and youth culture.[2]

What I miss is a wider, broader perspective on 'girls'. A perspective which is not only comprised of the pedagogical or micro-social history of girls in the life phase of puberty and adolescence, but broadens its scope to the social process of the making and development of the life phase of female youth itself – a making which can be described as a historical, social, cultural, physical and mental construction.

The construction of female youth is the theme of my research. I

am specifically interested in the coherence (cohesion) between long-term historical processes and the development of the life phase of female youth in the Netherlands and Western Europe since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[3] The questions I pose are: at what moment in history and under which historical and social conditions did female youth become a specific life phase with a culture and discourse of its own? How far is this process of specification related to other historical processes? Within such historical processes how are power relations between men and women, and between generations, developing and changing? What influences do these processes and power relations exercise on the physical, psychological and sexual developments of the life phase of female youth and vice versa? How do biological, psychological and sexual premises of female puberty and adolescence receive, through these processes and power relations, social and cultural meanings?

In general, I ask cultural-historical questions such as: are phases, ruptures and dominant trends to be detected in the construction of female youth? And if so, how do these relate to specific social, national and cultural developments? How do other European countries such as France, Germany and England and the Dutch context compare in this history? Put differently: how do specific Dutch cultural expressions, such as the culture of homeliness and domesticity, of early embourgeoisement, of Calvinistic and Catholic morality and of the pillarisation of Dutch society in general, relate to the construction of female youth in the Netherlands?

To answer such questions means to embark on a substantial and complex project, because it really means focusing on a grand history of girls and girlhood in Western Europe. In order to bring this grand history down to manageable proportions, yet still to allow for a complex view and the possibility to distil major trends and developments, I have, in the first instance, chosen three sub-research projects. One project focuses on the history of words, specifically the etymology of the word 'daughter', 'girl', 'young woman' and of other notions referring to the life phase of female puberty and adolescence. A second project focuses on two dominant discourses, namely the medical and pedagogical discourse, with regard to female youth. A third project focuses on the socio-cultural and juridical history of the female age of majority and consent. In this paper, I will give a brief and general overview of some of the findings of

these projects, without specification into class, regions or ages.

Periods in the Development of the Life Phase of Female Youth

I situate the beginning of the development of the social and cultural category of 'female youth' in Early-Modern times. The age of Renaissance and Humanism, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, forms a historical rupture with the preceding period, the late Middle Ages.[4]

The late-medieval existence of girls in the Northwestern part of Europe was, generally speaking, determined by social and governance systems, built on kinship and religious laws (both Christian and to some extent pagan, residues of Germanic laws and customs) and by societies built on feudalism, militarism and agriculture. Depending on descent, birth, and origin, milieu and class, the existence of girls moved between servitude to parents, kin, lord, master, husband or the convent – in fact, all constituting a continuum of being kept under tutelage. Daughters were a vital link in the formation of social, economic and political ties, the provision of services, of labour, the settlement of debts, the preservation of tradition, honour and faith. Anthropologically speaking, girls functioned as a gift and, as such, were to be married off – marketable, exchangeable and saleable. In societies in which kinship and blood-ties meant servitude, loyalty, the organization of political power and the acquiring of property, estates and ownership, this function was vital and indispensable.[5]

At this point in history there existed no specific pedagogy or philosophy about the existence of 'daughters' or 'girls' and no understood sentiment or rationalised practice. The treatment of girls and the notions which accompanied girls' existence or girls' characteristics were imbedded in the kin, feudal and religion-based society and 'regulated' by the therein functioning codes, rituals, rules of conduct and manners. Life phases of girls were ultimately marked by bodily-sexual and social factors such as the possession of an intact hymen and the loss of it, the occurrence of the first menstruation (menarche) and the (first) pregnancy and childbirth, the state of daughter-ship, of wife-ship, of motherhood, and of widow-ship. In medieval society bodily processes received cultural values and meanings and significance. Overall, no differentiation was made with regard to the life phases of a woman. Girls were, as soon as they started to menstruate, 'ready' for marriage, if not already promised (among the nobility).

When married they were, despite not attaining majority, regarded as adults.[6]

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the society of the Low Countries went through a transformation which ultimately and irrevocably influenced and changed girls' existence and, thus, the understanding and perspective on female youth. A number of interlocking processes underlie this transformation, of which the most important are the Reformation and Humanism, urbanisation, the development of overseas trade, the commercialisation of the agrarian sector and, finally, the immigration waves from the southern regions. These processes tied in with a relatively early development of embourgeoisement and the emergence of class of high bourgeois or Dutch 'nobility' (patrician en regents) which in turn influenced the development and existence of a distinct urban culture.[7] This urban culture, the existence of a high bourgeoisie, the relative wealth and well-being is well documented by the numerous seventeenth century Dutch master paintings, which provide us with a window to the rich Dutch interiors and exteriors of the Dutch golden age.[8] Immigration from the southern regions influenced the rise of marriageable youngsters in the cities, but also allowed for the rise of differentiation in education and schooling, for example through the creation of so called 'French' schools – technical schools which focused on learning practical skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, useful for trade, industry and manufacturing.[9]

A surplus of marriageable daughters came into existence, notably in the urban regions as a result of the no longer self-evident entry into convents, the waves of immigration and other factors such as a relatively late age of marriage. Girls and young women entered areas of the labour market, especially manufacturing, small business and fisheries, but also crafts and trade.[10] The parents of this upcoming middle class of traders, merchants and crafts people began to send both their sons and their daughters to the new 'French' schools.

At this point in time, philosophers, moralists and medical science slowly started to turn their gaze towards 'woman' in general and 'female youth' in specific. From the sixteenth century onwards medical doctors, philosophers and pedagogues developed an interest in the constitution, nature and pathology of female youth, in the first instance centred on the topic of puberty, sexuality and the menarche.[11] With the onset of an understanding of a period between the menarche

and the loss of virginity (marriage) the discourse on this new female life phase commenced. A humanistic philosopher and pedagogue, such as Juan Luis Vivés, used medical knowledge in his tract on the education of girls from the nobility.[12] Significantly, his treatise was not only, as was customary in former tracts, a formulation of behavioural and moral codes and etiquette, but also a philosophy, a praxis and a moralistic explanation of pedagogical goals. As such, it was the first treatise in history which attempted to specify something like a 'characteristic' of girlhood and female youth.

The social, economic, mental and discursive developments had repercussions on sixteenth and seventeenth century manners and conventions between the sexes and generations. In the Republic a culture of courting and marriage developed in which the parent/daughter relationship resulted in the existence of a precarious balance between changing bourgeois attitudes and existing reformative ideals. This meant, for example, that on the one hand, a social development took place in which increasingly broader layers of the population no longer demanded that their daughters marry the partner chosen for them; yet, on the other hand, there was a continuing reformative discourse, supported and stirred up by seventeenth century moralists such as Jacob Cats, that marriage ought to be the ultimate goal for a girl.[13] Amidst this tension between conflicting expectations, codes and morals, a culture of courting and marriage combined domesticity with a relative freedom of being in public places and spaces such as markets, gardens, play grounds, courtyards and plazas. The relative freedom and the increasing practice of marrying 'late' (highest among the farmers, then followed by the bourgeoisie, and finally the nobility) did not, however, lead to a culture of premarital sex. Despite typical Dutch (and German) practices such as 'night courting', the percentage of illegitimate children remained, relatively speaking, extremely low.[14]

However, from the viewpoint of the Low Countries mentality, the emergence and growth of the courting culture and the visibility of groups of unmarried girls and young women in the cities, on markets, trade and labour market, in households and in so-called 'female courtship markets' was not unproblematic. In numerous seventeenth century sketches, prints, master paintings, burlesques, theatre and other forms of art, free, independent and domineering housewives, premarital sex, premarital pregnancy and its consequence of a marriage 'trap' for young

male courtiers, contributed to the relationship between the sexes, and became ridiculed, critiqued, moralised and satirised.[15]

Language reflected the occurring changes and perspectives with regards to girls and girlhood. In the sixteenth century a new word emerged, describing youngsters of the female sex. This word 'meisje', ('girl'), differed from the former description 'daughter', 'maiden' or 'virgin' in that, for the first time, it reflected an identity in itself, an autonomous category. The notion 'girl' was new because it was no longer directly linked to those categories which were embedded in the notions of 'daughter' and 'virgin'/'maiden', namely birth, the social categories of kinship and sexual virginity. The notion 'girl' referred to a social state of relative female non-adulthood in its own right. In more or less the same period, this process of naming and, thus, the representation of a social understanding of children and youngsters of the female sex, emerged in other European countries. Typical for the Low Countries, however, was that next to the notion of 'meisje' ('maiden', 'girl') and 'young daughter', the notion 'spinster' (female lover) came into being.[16] 'Meisje' referred, for the first time in history, to a whole new life phase of girlhood – namely puberty and adolescence. The seventeenth century has been identified as the period of sexual ripening and availability on the matrimonial market. In this period of female 'jonckheit' (youth) canvassing for a future husband stood central.

Through the discursive transformation of 'daughter-ship' to 'spinster-ship', and the specification of female sex as well as female generation, this period was marked by two processes. On one hand, girls and young women became increasingly visible in the public sphere and, on the other hand, a social, cultural and a discursive visualisation of female youth as a life phase took place. A life phase in which self-evident tutelage, lack of power of decision, and the functioning of girls as a 'gift' gradually changed into forms, rituals of negotiation between daughters and parents and between female and male courtiers.[17]

At the end of the eighteenth century bodily and constitutional aspects of female youth, influenced by the increasing respectability and institutionalisation of medical science, became part of regular scientific discourse. Former vaguely described ailments of girls, such as love sickness and morbus virgeneus (sickness of virgins) received new and more specific definitions.[18] Ailments became more closely linked to menstruation and the uterus and became perceived as be-

longing to the female sex, specifically to girls. Contrary to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term 'love sickness' was rarely used.[19] At the end of the eighteenth century the preferred notion was 'green sickness' or 'chlorosis', which had a more medical scientific tone to it. Simultaneously, enlightened pedagogical philosophies and praxis emerged which, through reasoning and rational consideration, began differentiating and specifying female life phases. What became self evident was the notion of difference. Female character or femininity became defined as female 'nature'.[20]

Influenced by Rousseau, the call for 'naturalness' of the Dutch girl was frequently heard among Dutch moralists. Not artificial, pretentious or insincere, but natural and simple, because in these characteristic lies 'true beauty'.[21] Female nature was also linked to the ability of bearing children and, thus, her 'being' was identified with motherhood and mothering. This is why the famous Patriot couple, the enlightened ladies Aagje Wolff and Betje Deken, criticised eighteenth century upbringing of girls. Not from the viewpoint that both boys and girls have a right to intellect, education and science, but from the viewpoint that traditional education only leads to a state of idleness and vanity and does not prepare a girl adequately for the grand tasks of motherhood and pedagogy. A new bourgeois ideal emerged: that of the woman as a rational and emotionally mature governess of household and family.[22]

It is not only through the influence of these enlightened ideals that 'spinster-ship' (female courtship) became exchanged for the perspective of motherhood. In the period of the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the French period in the Netherlands and the period in which the Netherlands develops as a united state, the economy deteriorated. The costs of goods and food rose more quickly than wages, and in sectors of industry, manufacturing and fishery unemployment increased. As a consequence of these and other factors, the age of marriage rose again. However, this time, compared to the former periods, sexual intercourse before marriage had become more habitual. The number of illegitimate children increased and so did a relative increase in so called 'paternity actions'.[23]

In the relationship between the generations, the precarious balance, on the one hand, of marriage plans of parents and kin and parental authority and, on the other hand, the conviction that youngsters should be free in their choice of love and marriage (provided

the boundaries between religious milieu, class and descent were respected) shifted again. With the increase of interaction between the sexes and, indeed, of sexual interaction and the increase of unwanted pregnancies, girls became increasingly confronted with new demands of virtuousness, morals, and the future responsibility of a pedagogically reasoned interaction with children and emotional interaction with their husband. The concentration and focusing on the family, together with a further process of differentiation of various layers of classes among the bourgeois class, and the privatisation of the family sphere increased.[24]

Language reflected these changes and differentiations. Words emerged such as 'juffer, 'juffrouw' and 'mademoiselle' (all translatable as 'miss'). These words point to the fact that the distinctions between grades of bourgeois classes grew in importance. A female servant wished to be called 'juffrouw' ('miss') in order to distinguish herself from 'maid', and the posh young ladies from high bourgeois French speaking and French oriented circles wished to be called 'mademoiselle' ('miss') in order to distinguish themselves from the 'lady's maid'. The disappearance of the notion 'female courtier' ('spinster') showed a trend towards the decline of the seventeenth and eighteenth century courtship culture. Instead, the notion 'old spinster' became popular, referring to the pejorative state of those who remained unmarried.[25]

From 1870 onwards girls became accepted in tertiary education. Youth psychology, youth pedagogy and youth movements emerged.[26] Body culture and sport entered Western societies in which bodily expression and visualisation of healthy bodies became increasingly important; although the Netherlands lags behind the new fashionable trends of body culture in Germany, England and France. By the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, in the Netherlands, with its relatively late industrialisation, the rise of the welfare state and the emergence of religious pillars, sunbathing and the sporting body were perceived as indecent.[27] The medical concentration on the female youngster found a new incentive as two important medical events happened. While the epidemic of chlorosis died down with the discovery of iron deficiency in the mid nineteenth century, a new disease rose in the firmament of the medical catalogues: anorexia nervosa.[28]

At the turn of the century scientists, doctors and pedagogues be-

came increasingly concerned about female adolescence. Influenced by Freud and psychoanalysis, a new interest in a girl's sexuality and her state of mind emerged. Her ailment was not named 'anorexia', but 'anorexia nervosa'. Her fits, discontentment, her rebellion, her masturbation became analysed as hysteria, as neurasthenia, as mental. Her life phase became further specified by the Freudian construction of a differentiation of the female orgasm: the clitoral orgasm became attributed to the life phase of puberty and adolescence, the life phase of girlhood, of non-mature femininity. According to Freud, the vaginal orgasm belonged to the mature heterosexual woman who had successfully completed her oedipal phase.[29]

At the turn of the century, scientists, doctors and pedagogues became increasingly concerned about female adolescence. In the wake of Dutch modernisation, increasing urbanisation and industrialisation, new objects of concern emerged for pedagogy, emancipation movements, church and state: the working girl and the girl with a job in the big city. The central question now was whether decency and domesticity, future motherhood and paid labour could be combined. Despite the fact that the majority of lower class girls and girls from the agrarian sector always had worked, the massiveness of this group of bourgeois female youngsters inspired pedagogy and psychology to the writing of extensive reports. Subsequently, the pillarised institutions attempted to incorporate them into their church, political, free youth, labour and women's movements. The state and government held conferences and published reports in which were expressed a fear for the young woman's health, civilisation, delinquency and her capacity to organise a poor household in a rational and economical fashion.[30]

The focus on motherhood did not disappear, but the interest in her psyche, social position and well-being created further social and scientific specification on her life phase. The notion of the 'female adolescent' appeared in the firmament of Dutch society and culture. The 'girls' world' emerged with girls' schools, girls' movements, girls' journals, girls' books, and girl culture. Psychology invented new psycho-social life phases: the pubescent girl, the adolescent girl, the teenager, the flapper, and (concerned) the mass girl.[31]

From the third quarter of the twentieth century the second wave, the sexual revolution and the invention of the contraceptive pill, a stable welfare state and a still growing prosperity, again transformed further the relationship between parents and daughters in a renewed 'loos-

ening' of ties.[32] From the 1980s onwards, paralleling the worsening economical situation and a labour market in need of cheap (female) labour, a new wave of concern with regards to girls emerged. Renewed medical and psycho-social interest in so-called 'girls' diseases', focusing on anorexia nervosa and renewed social and sociological concern with regard to girl's cultures, sexuality, incest and sexual abuse, girls' prostitution, and pregnancies, drug use and crime, again, fill reports, books and influence law making. A new law came into being: girls become independent at the age of eighteen which means that they are no longer able to depend on welfare or a working partner.

This process can also be found in language. The word 'meisje' goes through a second important transformation (the first was from 'daughter' to 'maid', to 'meisje' 'girl'): 'meisje' becomes 'maid', which doesn't refer to 'workmaid' but to an 'adult' form of 'meisje'. The diminutive disappears, signalling a new phase in the state of girlhood: she has grown up. The notion 'girl power' finally emphasises this process of 'growing up' and of individualisation of the life phase of female puberty and adolescence.

Preliminary Conclusions: Major Trends

This process of specification of the life phase of female puberty and adolescence reveals a set of important shifts in history. First, a shift takes place with regard to those who have authority over life phases: self evident power of parents, kin and the church shifts towards analysis and research; thus, towards the authority of those medical doctors, philosophers and pedagogues who consider themselves and who are increasingly considered as experts of this life phase. This shift is paralleled by a shift from authority of parents and kin to authority of the state. This process can also be seen as a process of the loosening of ties of kinship: 'daughter-ship' shifts towards 'female courtship' and 'girl-ship' towards 'maiden-ship' ('maiden' here as the 1980s notion of a 'self responsible, grown up girl'). The relationship between generations, between parents and daughters, between adults and girls changes from a self evident and unreflected, not rationalised power relationship to a philosophically argued authority and power relationship. The relationship between the sexes also changes: the former marriage partner became a courtier and the courtier/lover became – in a culture of co-education and co-existence, of youth culture and youth movements – a peer and possible partner.

Despite the modern call for adulthood of the girl, the primary concern is still focused on her body and her sexuality. True, in this respect important shifts took place: virginity, menarche and menstruation are no longer taboo, and the call for decency and domesticity has disappeared. Instead, concern for teen pregnancies, safe sex, drugs and prostitution and health have emerged. The life phase of a girl is still considered to be of a precarious bio-social and psychosocial balance. A phase where much more can go 'wrong' than in a life phase of a boy. That is why the life phase of a girl is considered a field to which, apparently, many experts have access and, apparently, have a right to speak – producing endless discourses of concern: government and policy makers, academics, scientists, welfare workers, activists, feminists, fashion, media and popular culture, and, finally, girls themselves. She also has become the spokeswoman of her own life phase.

In conclusion, the increasing attention on and specification of the life phases of female youth, the loosening ties between parents and daughters, elder and youngsters, girls and boys, the growing possibilities of choice and negotiating, but also the growing of social, cultural and individual tasks and duties and finally the growth of a discourse which underscores the precariousness of female puberty and adolescence, all this culminates in the current ethic and demand for self-control of girls with regard to their individual, social, bodily and sexual capacities. It is the paradox of Western civilization that increasing attention, concern and (self) liberation has led to a life phase which allows for some play and independence, but which has also increased considerably the responsibilities, complexity and, thus, the burdens of girls' existence.

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NOTES

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CONFERENCE NOTICES

UNITED STATES

Rural Women's Studies Association Conference
22 — 25 June 2000
Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, Minnesota

For more information:
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Fifth Southern Conference on Women's History
15 — 17 June 2000
University of Richmond and the Library of Virginia

For more information:
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Charlotte, NC 28223
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NORWAY

Conflict and Cooperation in Sites of Cultural Co-existence: Perspectives from Women's History
The International Federation for Research in Women's History Conference
6 — 13 August 2000
Oslo

For more information:
Nancy A. Hewitt
Department of History
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GERMANY

Internationale Frauenuniversitat (ifu) — International Women's University — during the World Exhibition EXPO 2000
15 July — 15 October 2000
Hanover

For more information:
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Book Reviews

TALKING UP: YOUNG WOMEN'S TAKE ON FEMINISM
Editors: Rosamund Else-Mitchell and Naomi Flutter
Spinifex Press, North Melbourne, 1998. $24.95

As everyone knows, the '90s feminist has the weight of the world on her shoulders, charged, as she is, with the dubious honour of reining in the behemoth that has come to represent ''70s feminism' and reinventing a more 'sassy' sisterhood, without losing her taste for revolution. *Talking Up: Young Women's Take on Feminism*, edited by Rosamund Else-Mitchell and Naomi Flutter, is one of a number of recent Australian titles attempting to challenge the stereotype that young women are too bewildered, uninterested, or ungrateful to use the 'f' word in the 1990s.

Inspired by the attention that young women's relationship to feminism has received in the Australian media since the controversy surrounding the high profile Ormond College sexual harassment case, *Talking Up* invites twenty one young feminists to make their own contributions to the debate over just 'what drives young women and what drives them mad' (back cover).

Keen to challenge the image of young feminism portrayed by Kathy Bail's influential riot grrl manifesto, *DIY Feminism*, as 'disorganised' and 'largely about individual practice and taking on personal challenges', Else-Mitchell and Flutter offer these narratives as evidence of the continuing currency of feminism as a personal and social identity devoted to interventionist political strategy.[1] The participants are asked to reflect on the ways in which feminism as a political identity has become meaningful to them and discuss the manner in which they have chosen to express this commitment in their daily lives.

The absence of overly prescriptive contribution guidelines invites considerable diversity in the content and style of the participants' narratives. Most of the women are university educated and the collection includes a number of formal academic pieces alongside a majority of more personal reflections on the ways they bring their feminism to their work as writers, academics, parliamentarians, development workers, lawyers, students, and community activists.

A number of common themes run through the collection, which opens with a consideration of the limitations of individualist interpretations of social life and a discussion of the continuing relevance of 'gender inequality' as a focus of social investigation. These sentiments are reinforced in the first section 'learning feminism' by three personal reflections on the advantages of coming to see college life, the legal profession, and the union movement through a feminist lens. Negotiating feminist relationships to our bodies and our sexuality is the focus of section two, 'bodies and battlefields', which tackles representations of female sexuality, body-consciousness, the potential for radical heterosexuality, and the politics of femme. 'Generat-ionalism: the ties that bind' reflects on the impact of age oppression in young women's lives and examines the political legacy of our mothers and grandmothers. It includes an interesting discussion of the limitations of using the mother-daughter relationship to symbolise the connections between second and third generation feminists.

Section four, 'voices: mapping the self', is a rather more eclectic mix dealing with the ways in which we come to define ourselves. It contains a poetic piece on cultural identity and feminism, a more theoretical reflection on the role of silence in feminist politics, a discussion of the relationship of first world feminism to gendered oppression in the Third World, and a consideration of the affinities between feminist struggles and the fight for native title. The collection closes with 'acting up', an exploration of the ways which we chose to express the activist urge. Included are reflections on the Beijing Conference, politics and the media, and the need for young women to find forms of feminist activism that make the movement their own.

The contributions are confident and articulate and, while there is considerable variation in the degree of intellectual insight offered by the individual pieces, they are clearly testament to the enduring significance of the feminist political project as a platform for action and debate in young women's lives. Perhaps the greatest strength of the collection is the challenge it poses to the image of young women as immobilised by their futile efforts to reconcile 'feminism' and 'fun'. The task of reworking the feminist canon to suit our goals and aspirations in the late 1990s is depicted as an exciting and productive project. Our relationships with our feminist inheritance are portrayed as not only antagonistic, but inspiring. As one of the contributors

offers (p. 227): 'we understand the power of the f word to connect us with our history and take pleasure in its loaded meanings and hoary old stereotypes'.

KIRSTY WILD, *Massey University, Palmerston North*

[1] Kathy Bail (ed), *D.I.Y. Feminism* (Allen and Unwin, St.Leonards/Sydney, 1996) pp. 15-16.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT: A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE

Anne B. Smith

Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1998.

Smith's fourth edition of *Understanding Children's Development* is an exciting contribution to the literature on New Zealand children's social development. The text discusses the development of children's language, cognition and gender role within the context of their families, school, and wider New Zealand society. Smith is the sole contributor, except for Keith Ballard's chapter on disability and development.

Smith draws on a range of theoretical frameworks to locate children's development with their everyday interactions at home and at school. Smith uses Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, and sociocultural theory, to discuss the centrality of social interactions in children's development, and in different cultural contexts, while a neo-Vygotskian framework highlights children's development through everyday shared experiences. This theoretical approach contrasts to earlier editions of this text where Smith drew on the Piagetian concept of a predetermined developmental sequence. As Smith points out, Piaget fails to take into account either the proactive role that children play in their own development or the ways that cultural practices and beliefs impact on development.

In each section, Smith backgrounds dominant theoretical frameworks, and explores children's development within the context of home and school. Smith makes practical suggestions for structuring teaching in order to optimise children's learning. Smith challenges the utility of psychometric tests that are referenced to the dominant

middle-class norm, and calls for assessments that measure the teaching environment, as well as identifying children's individual strengths and needs. Ballard is also critical of 'objective' tests that often serve to exclude children with disability from mainstream education. Both authors highlight the need for more informal, and ongoing, assessments that identify different social skills that children bring to the classroom. Smith suggests ways that teachers might extend children's verbal skills by providing a relaxed and responsive classroom environment where children have opportunities to extend their reciprocal verbal interaction. Smith is critical of monocultural classroom environments, and stresses the importance of culturally appropriate teaching and learning styles in order to optimise the educational success of Maori children.

The chapter on children's active roles in negotiating their own relationships, and contributing to their own development, is a timely addition to the fourth edition, reflecting the increasing child-centred focus in recent Western social science literature. Additionally, Smith discusses children's emerging role in the research process, drawing on studies that have utilised children's interpretations of their experiences.

The revised chapter on families acknowledges the diverse structure of New Zealand families in the 1990s. Smith highlights the catastrophic decline in living standards for many New Zealand families in the early 1990s and discusses the devastating and cumulative impact of poverty on children's relationships and development. Smith is critical of deficit models that blame families for children's lack of educational success and makes a strong plea for external agencies to provide more tangible support for families.

Ballard's chapter on disability and development is more a submission for children's inclusion in mainstream education than about development per se. The debate about exclusion-inclusion of disabled children from mainstream education is complex. Ballard argues that attitudes, as well as institutional practices, jointly construct ideas about disability, and it these attitudes that either support or deny children with disabilities access to mainstream education. Ballard presents compelling arguments for children with disabilities to have access to the same social and educational opportunities as all children. The exclusion of children with disabilities denies all children opportunities for everyday interactions with each other, Ballard suggests.

It is inevitable that there are gaps in such a comprehensive, and multi-disciplinary, text of children's development. While Smith explores the sociocultural contexts of Maori and Pakeha children, there are few references to New Zealand children from other cultures. The high proportion of New Zealand children of Pacific Islands ethnic origin, and the increasing numbers of Asian children, warrants more in-depth examination of the strengths and needs of children from a wider range of cultures. It would be useful to have this information incorporated into discussions on culturally appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Secondly, while Smith acknowledges the important role of both siblings and peers in facilitating young children's social development, there is only brief reference to recent studies on the socialising role of siblings in children's development. Thirdly, the actual development of children with disabilities still requires more in-depth analysis. Finally, it would be useful to address the pragmatic concerns of effective mainstream teaching of disabled children in New Zealand's current climate of declining resources.

Notwithstanding these gaps, the book is an invaluable resource. The book is refreshingly short on developmental psychological jargon. Indeed, the clear writing style makes this book accessible to New Zealand parents, as well as to professionals from a range of disciplines. The extensive reference list is a rich resource in itself, encompassing local and international developmental literature from a variety of disciplines. The text provides a balance of contemporary theoretical frameworks and discussion of children's social development within some of the various social, economic and cultural contexts that characterise New Zealand families in the 1990s.

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THE STORY OF A NEW ZEALAND WRITER: JANE MANDER
Rae McGregor
University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1998

Rae McGregor became interested in Jane Mander when studying *The Story of a New Zealand River* in a post-graduate course on Australian & New Zealand Women Writers.[1] She went on to do, as her dissertation, a bibliography of the Mander papers in the Auckland Public Library.

The only biography of Jane Mander, by Dorothea Turner, part of the Twayne series, had appeared in 1972 and was long out of print.[2] Rae McGregor contacted the elderly Dorothea Turner who, before her death, gave her access to the material she had gathered for her research. And so we have a new biography. Turner's, as the Twayne series expects, was a critical biography, in that Turner gave critical analyses of Mander's novels. These still remain important in any discussion of Mander's work. Rae McGregor has produced a full and interesting biography, not a critical account of the novels. While not giving us any substantial new information about Mander, it is more detailed and has some new photographs. It's good to have an in-print biography which gives us all there is to know about Mander.

Jane Mander, whose father was a timber miller and later the MP for Marsden (1902–1922), came from the Kaipara region, worked as a school teacher and journalist (her father bought up the *Northern Advocate*) and at the age of 35 in 1912 left for the University of Columbia journalism course in New York City. She was not to return to New Zealand for twenty years, in which time she had five novels published. After her return in 1932, until her death in 1949, she published no more fiction.

In her preface McGregor writes (p. 8): 'While it is debatable as to whether *The Story of a New Zealand River* is the best New Zealand book ever written, it did cut the tired connections of the Victorian novels which had formed the basis for New Zealand literature'. Katharine Mansfield thought otherwise. In a review of the novel when it first came out Mansfield wrote:

> that brings us to the fact that Miss Jane Mander is immensely hampered in her writing by her adherence to the old unnecessary technical devices – they are no more- with which she imagines it necessary to support her

> story ... Why is her book not half as long, twice as honest. What right has she to bore her readers if she is capable of interesting them.[3]

Mansfield is right in that *The Story of a New Zealand River* is still influenced by the nineteenth century 'Victorian' novel , but despite Mansfield's modernist comments, *The Story of a New Zealand River* is an important New Zealand novel.

An exciting insight into how novels can affect us today comes in McGregor's last chapter – it is titled: 'If Aunt Jane Had Been Alive Today She Would Have Knee-capped Jane Campion (Judy Beetham, Jane Mander's great niece)'. This chapter records the history of *The Story of a New Zealand River* from the purchase of the film rights by John Maynard and Brigid Ikin in 1985. With assistance from the New Zealand Film Commision Ikin and Maynard worked on a script for a film. It is a fascinating account, finishing with Campion's *The Piano,* which Campion denied had any relationship with Mander's novel. McGregor argues that the resemblances are unmistakeable. This is a useful addition to Turner's biography.

While celebrating the fact that a New Zealand publisher considers it worthwhile to produce a biography of a New Zealand woman writer (none of whose books are now in print – is it more important to have a biography or a reprint of a novel?), I'd query this passage (pp. 69-70):

> There have been suggestions that she may have been a lesbian, but that suggestion probably had more to do with the fact that she returned to New Zealand with a severe short haircut, and wore clothes that were devoid of flounces. Her style of dress suited her tall thin frame – it was smart – influenced by living in New York, and her loud dogmatic voice made her appear eccentric. Putting all these things together and that she never married, some people have made the assumption she was lesbian. Jane was a person who maintained her private life as just that – private. A great burner of letters, she destroyed many letters she received and nothing has come to light that suggests she had a lover, whether male or female.

McGregor has unearthed some new photographs of Mander. I've shown them to a wide assortment of lesbian friends. Mander sits, legs akimbo, grinning, a sailor's cap on her head and they all say, 'of course, she's a dyke'. It may take one to know one. The cover photograph shows a discreetly wistful feminine Mander. Mander does not write about lesbianism – no one could back then, but that's no reason not to

take seriously the suggestion that some readers of Mander have made. McGregor says she was celibate and had no lovers, male or female. In her articles written for New Zealand papers while she was overseas Mander talks of meeting Djuna Barnes and Radclyffe Hall. Just as Frances Hodgkins remains officially a celibate woman, dedicated only to her art, despite what any lesbian reading her letters and biography can see as a life that was lived amongst lesbians and supported by lesbians and gay male couples, so Mander remains a celibate. Terry Castle talks of what she calls 'ghosting the lesbian', that is, that the biography of a famous woman can discuss sixty or seventy years without mentioning the 'l' word.[4] Of course Mander burnt her letters. Of course Ngaio Marsh wrote a closet biography. But now in 1999 isn't it time to acknowledge these women's fears, to say that now and forever women should not need to hide and burn their loves?

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[1] Jane Mander, *The Story of a New Zealand River* (Whitcombe and Tombs, reprint, Christchurch, 1938).
[2] Dorothea Turner, *Jane Mander* (Twayne Publishers, New York, 1972).
[3] Claire Hanson (ed), *The Critical Writings of Katharine Mansfield* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1987) p. 101.
[4] Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1993) pp. 4-5.

STILL LIFE: HIDDEN STORIES OF STILLBIRTH AND FORBIDDEN GRIEF

Lois Tonkin

Hazard Press, Christchurch, 1998. $24.95

Breaking the conspiracy of silence surrounding birthing dead or dying babies is the focus of Lois Tonkin's book. The intensity of this experience resonates throughout the narratives of 17 women who, from the 1940s to the 1990s, gave birth to babies who died before, during or after birth. Their experiences are reinforced by one midwife's experience within the New Zealand health system over the past decades.

As a grief counsellor, Lois Tonkin states she also requested in-

terviews with obstetricians practising during the time these women's babies died. Tonkin found it unfortunate that the obstetricians approached were 'unwilling or unable ... to tell their story' (p.8); although they did state that their behaviour towards these women reflected the medical views held at that time. Underlying the obstetricians' refusal to participate in this project is the assumption that the medical profession must remain objective. Due to this medical objectivity the obstetricians' reluctance to offer a subjective perspective is perhaps not surprising.

The lack of other voices reinforces the subjective nature of the stories in *Still Life*. Perhaps the most unnerving aspect of the book is the way the women appear to confess their socially proscribed grief. As Foucault argued, confession is a ritual perceived as having the power to transform. On one level this perception negates the women's personal narratives by transforming these from a process of grief to one of healing through confession.

The 'hidden stories' and 'forbidden grief' found in the title are brought to the surface throughout *Still Life.* Applied within a feminist framework the women's subjugated knowledges provide a rich text for analysis. One way to read these narratives is through the suggestion that women's reproductive powers culturally define womanhood. For the women in *Still Life* the construction of motherhood is in contradistinction to their lived reality. Faced with the unexpected death of their babies these women attempted to regain some equilibrium in their lives and, in the process of re-balancing, blame and guilt were difficult to avoid. The women 'privately, secretly' continue to carry their sadness, anger and longing for their child, and 'often feel ashamed that they haven't dealt with their grief better ... Their shame, and their sense of inadequacy that in some way they haven't coped as they should have, compounds their grief' (p.9).

The negative self-reflections these women hold resonate throughout their stories. The treatment they received from 'medical staff, funeral directors, family and friends', who 'maintained the conspiracy of brightness around the grieving parents' only served to reinforce the women's self-view: 'their grief, and very often the existence of their baby, was often simply not acknowledged' (p.8). The contradictions between the ideal of motherhood and the reality of birthing a dead or dying baby resulted in the personal 'hell' found in the women's narratives. This hell and the implied 'failure' of these mothers

took on a poignancy for the reader.

Forbidden grief suggests an unlawful act has occurred. The women's grief over their failed motherhood can be compared with Kafka's *'In the Penal Settlement'* in which an apparatus is used to inscribe punishment bodily.[1] Internalised inscription has been taken up by the women and reinforced by those around them, professional and lay people alike. The resulting forbidden grief has then been deciphered by the women as a form of punishment for their shame and guilt. These women have not forgotten their babies and it could be argued, have not forgiven themselves for their grief.

Yet, in a largely positive sense, the women in *Still Life* have found that their experience has impacted on their lives. Most of the women have, since their baby's death, questioned the medical profession's 'knowledge as truth'. The women's insistence that they would now react more assertively as women and mothers (to be) attests to their resistance of objective knowledge as truth.

Tonkin hopes that these women's narratives will 'encourage' others who have suffered the tragedy of an infant death to uncover their 'hidden stories' and acknowledge their baby, irrespective of the time that has passed since the death. However, not all mothers of dead babies will find comfort in reliving their own grief through the narratives in *Still Life.* This book is, however, suitable for a wider audience. For women (and men) who have not experienced the death of a baby *Still Life* is recommended reading. Acknowledgement of the intense emotions these women experienced following their babies' death, the ability to face their forbidden grief and the courage to share their hidden stories may elicit change in 'our society's attitude towards grieving people' which 'is often still judgmental' (p.8).

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[6] Franz Kafka, *In the Penal Settlement: Tales and Short Prose Works* (Secker and Warburg, London, 1949).

INTERACTIVE IDENTITIES: JEWISH WOMEN IN NEW ZEALAND
Livia Kathe Wittmann
Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, March 1998. $24.95

Livia Kathe Wittmann tells in the introduction of *Interactive Identities: Jewish Women in New Zealand* of an incident at a symposium in Germany: 'My fellow participants were less interested in what I had to say about the fictional representation of Jewish culture in Hungary than in the question I raised at the beginning of my paper: from what subject position am I addressing the issues presented?' Tracing the complex interstices of her own identity as a German-born Hungarian Jew now a permanent resident of New Zealand, Wittman offers her biographical sketch as a way into reading her book exploring one of the many 'others' whose presence – one fifth of the population – explode the myth of homogenous Pakeha in New Zealand's bicultural organisation.

This personal story is a useful key into a rich work which explodes essentialising categories in the historically sensitive locus of identity of 'Jewishness'. Predicated on, as Wittmann discovered at the outset of the project, a dearth of knowledge in this country on what it means to be Jewish, *Interactive Identities* examines Jewish women's identities through interviews with forty-eight Jewish women throughout New Zealand. Quoting from the transcripts, Wittman aims to 'respect the distinct voices of the women' as they responded to strategic questions. Her success in preserving individual expressions is due not only to sensitive contextualising, but also in large part to the unstinting commitment of the author to confronting the prickly notion of identity, and the apparent honesty and directness of the interviewees.

Take 'Kathryn', for example (like all the women, identified by fictional first name, a device which gives the book a highly readable style) responding to the question, 'Do you see yourself as a New Zealander?':

> Part of you was desperately trying to be a Kiwi, like everybody else, totally unsuccessfully, and part of you was in your parent-roots-world of middle-class, European, Jewish values ... So you were forever with a foot in two camps. So yes, in that sense you were neither New Zea-

> lander nor were you part of the other world. And you were torn inside, or I found myself torn inside out (p. 47).

In the chapter 'Jewish Collective Identity' – introducing the turbulent, unique history of the Jews – the author argues that Jewish identity is ever-evolving as it interacts with and responds to contemporary discourses. The same can be said for all collective identities, but Wittmann points out, quoting Lyotard, that Jews 'cannot be perceived just as one of many ethnic or cultural minorities because of their specific history of centuries of persecution'. Charting the polylogue of critical voices and philosophical positions on what constitutes Jewishness, Wittmann presents two variant interpretations of such a collective identity in New Zealand: self-defined collective identity and personal interpretation of this identity. She then concludes her background chapter with a leading question about the mechanisms of identity formation.

'Jewish Cultural Identification in the Context of Biculturalism', the next chapter, attempts to address this, and justifiably occupies over a third of the book. It immediately makes a connection between Maori and Jews in New Zealand – a connection which has been made cestry am compelled to explore further), 'saw similarites in the history of the Jews with their own, especially regarding the loss of land' (p. 37).[1]

Acknowledging that one of the driving forces of her study was to determine how Jewish women in New Zealand perceived their identity in terms of the binary model of contemporary New Zealand society, Wittmann quotes 'Berta' recalling that her mother (a German Jew) was referred to as a 'Pakeha' by a Maori woman. Similar conflation and elisions of identities between Pakeha and Maori recur throughout the chapter in the interviews. The eloquence and erudition of the women's voices is marked; was Wittmann's sample taken solely from politically active, educated Jewish women who participated in New Zealand public life – or are these general traits of Jewish women in New Zealand ?

This is, however, a minor query of a work which challenges as it informs (with excellent endnotes), going some way to fill a void. Exploring not only the essentialising limitations of biculturalism, Wittmann delves into the conflicts in gender role expectations in the final (and for me the most fascinating) chapter, 'Gendered Identities': being able to go only so high up in (patriarchally dominated)

Jewish organisations while simultaneously embracing feminist ideals. This is one of the many conflicts of interest *Interactive Identities* charts, and in allowing the different strands of women's testimonies to stand side by side, Wittmann's book is a model for new ways of reading Aotearoa/New Zealand: multicultural, pluriethnic, receptive to and inquisitive about diversity in all its forms.

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[1] Lazarus Goldman, *History of the Jews in New Zealand* (Reed, Wellington, 1958).

FOLDING BACK THE SHADOWS: A PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Sarah Romans

***University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1998*, $39.95**

How do you fold shadows? Where do you find the corners in order to begin? Would the act of folding (so aptly reminiscent of women's work) contain such an amorphous and all pervasive substance as a shadow and, if one could fold them back, what would be revealed?

For me this metaphor of folding back shadows, with all its attendant questions, is illustrative not so much of what this book achieves but of the philosophy which seems to underlie the project itself and is shared by many of the contributors. This particular approach appears to view the complex, fluid, often socially determined and at times chaotic area of mental health as something amenable to a controlled, precise and 'objective' course of action embodied in the notion of folding. 'Folding' does seem an extremely fitting metaphor to describe the way in which women's personal experiences with mental health issues and the suffering many of them have endured are deftly reduced to categories of disorder, epidemiological statistics, and factors of causality, morbidity and mortality. It is this supposedly neutral, objective approach implicit in the medical model as it coldly calculates and categorises the subjective web of women's social realities that has led some writers to comment that the fields of psychiatry and psychology suffer from 'physics envy'.

To her credit Sarah Romans does acknowledge that a reliance on the medical model will obscure the influence of social factors, a view which seems to be reflected in her decision to include contributions such as the illuminating historical chapter by Barbara Brookes, Hilary Lapsley's astute critique of mental health issues and services for lesbian women and the profoundly moving personal experiences of Julie Leibrich. Unfortunately this acknowledgement does not seem to carry through into the rest of the volume. This is clearly evident in terms of the (often obscure) psychiatric language, content matter and the sheer weight of contributions by those in psychiatry rather than from those with other perspectives on mental health. One of the most striking (and for me shocking) examples of this perspective is Cynthia Bulik's chapter 'Women and Disordered Eating' in which she suggests that there is evidence of a 'heritable component' to eating disorders because they 'are found at a rate greater than chance in family members of women with anorexia' (p. 180). This statement leaves me not only incredulous that the historical development of this problem and its contributing social factors could be so completely suppressed but that the basic tenet of psychological research drummed into undergraduates everywhere ('correlation does not imply causation') is simply ignored.

The astounding general lack of political and social critique which pervades many (but not all) chapters is another frustrating issue and one which is undoubtedly connected to the volume's underlying philosophy. Joanne Baxter's chapter on cultural issues does provide a useful outline of the tensions in this area as well as a summary of Durie's whare tapa wha concept of Maori mental health (involving the inter-relationship of spiritual, mental, physical and family well-being) but there is little which relates this to the lived experience of wahine Maori, racism, violence and their (ill)treatment by mental health services. Peter Cheung's research on the mental health of Chinese and Vietnamese women in New Zealand is timely and will hopefully ensure that the needs of these groups are better provided for. It is sad, however, that he does not give consideration to the universalist tendencies of much cross-cultural psychiatric and psychological research. We are left wondering whether the levels of 'disorder' measured by his research are in fact Western constructs or perhaps whether the issues considered important by these communities themselves are not erased by these same measures. Similarly, the impact of vio-

lence on women is addressed in the chapter by Judy Martin, Eleanor Morris and Sarah Romans but much of this is devoted to effects on children whilst rape and sexual abuse are scarcely dealt with. Calls by feminist psychologists, such as Einat Peled and Michelle Fine, to redefine these issues as social problems rather than further pathologising women survivors seem to be very far removed from a chapter such as this, even whilst it explicitly claims to take account of the social factors impacting on women's mental health.[1]

In balance, the strength of this book is two-fold. Firstly, it contains a great breadth of material from substance abuse, suicide, severe mental 'illness' to psychotherapy, pharmacology, gender differences, cultural issues and social roles. Whilst the specialised language may make some parts difficult for those without a psychiatric/psychological background to understand, this is not always the case and many authors write in a clear and structured manner. Romans' efforts to gather this breadth of material in one volume and to include New Zealand information wherever possible demands commendation. Secondly, as alluded to above, her inclusion of contributions from women outside the realm of psychiatry does broaden the appeal of the book and give it some balance. For me personally, the most profound of these was Julie Leibrich's account of her own experiences – her struggles, her pain, but also her immense courage, and guide to recovery through finding the healer within. The final words about what those working in the area of mental health need to know should be hers: 'Find the space within your heart and rest there ... Then listen to the people you want to help ... Discover your ability to love and your ability to suffer. Through this you will find compassion. And the healer within yourself.' (p. 277).

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[1] Einat Peled, 'Children Who Witness Women Battering: Concerns and Dilemmas in the Construction of a Social Problem', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 15 (1993) pp. 43-52; Michelle Fine, '*Ethical Wonderings at the Outer Edges of Qualitative Work with Urban Adolescents – Delights and Perils: A Look Through Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality*', Seminar given in association with IRI and the Marsden Project 'Youth First', July 1999.

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