Pamela Cotterill
Sue Jackson
Gayle Letherby
Editors

Lifelong Learning Book Series 9

Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education

Springer

CHALLENGES AND NEGOTIATIONS FOR WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Lifelong Learning Book Series

VOLUME 9

Aims & Scope
"Lifelong Learning" has become a central theme in education and community development. Both international and national agencies, governments and educational institutions have adopted the idea of lifelong learning as their major theme for address and attention over the next ten years. They realize that it is only by getting people committed to the idea of education both life-wide and lifelong that the goals of economic advancement, social emancipation and personal growth will be attained.

The *Lifelong Learning Book Series* aims to keep scholars and professionals informed about and abreast of current developments and to advance research and scholarship in the domain of Lifelong Learning. It further aims to provide learning and teaching materials, serve as a forum for scholarly and professional debate and offer a rich fund of resources for researchers, policy-makers, scholars, professionals and practitioners in the field.

The volumes in this international Series are multi-disciplinary in orientation, polymathic in origin, range and reach, and variegated in range and complexity. They are written by researchers, professionals and practitioners working widely across the international arena in lifelong learning and are orientated towards policy improvement and educational betterment throughout the life cycle.

Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education

Edited by

PAMELA COTTERILL
Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent, United Kingdom

SUE JACKSON
Birkbeck, University of London, United Kingdom

and

GAYLE LETHERBY
University of Plymouth, United Kingdom

Springer

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This book is dedicated to all women working and learning in higher education, and to WHEN, the Women in Higher Education Network.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Barbara Bagilhole is Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Equal Opportunities and Social Policy in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Loughborough University, UK. Her research and teaching interests include equal opportunities and diversity across the issues of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief and age. She is at present working on a large project funded by the Economic and Social Science Research Council on 'Women Engineering Students' and influences on their career aspirations. She has researched and published extensively in the area of equal opportunities and diversity in the fields of gender, 'race' and disability. Her last two books in this area are *Women in Non-Traditional Occupations: Challenging Men,* (2002), London: Palgrave Macmillan, and *Equal Opportunities and Social Policy: Issues of Gender, 'Race' and Disability,* (1997), Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman. Nationally, she is the Equal Opportunities expert on the UK Department of Trade and Industry policy implementation group for 'Women into Science, Engineering and Technology', and executive board member of the UK Through the Glass Ceiling Group. Internationally, she is a board member of GASAT (Gender and Science and Technology), WISE (Women's International Studies Europe), and ATHENA II (EU-funded network investigating the re-conceptualisation of EO policy and instruments throughout the EU).

Vivienne Barnes is a senior lecturer in social work at Coventry University where her main teaching includes social work with children and young people, research and management. Her previous career was in social work with a range of service users, and before moving to higher education she was a manager of local authority services for children and young people. Her research interests are primarily focused on children's and young people's protection, substitute family care and rights and she is currently completing a doctoral thesis at the University of Warwick looking at theoretical and practice issues in children's rights.

Lynn Clouder works at Coventry University and currently has two roles. She is a research fellow in Work-based Learning and works within the Inquiring Pedagogies Network (iPED) which is situated in the Centre for Higher Education Development. As well as having the opportunity to pursue her own research interests her main role is to encourage colleagues to become involved in pedagogical research and evaluation of their practice, thus developing research capacity across the university. She is also an associate director of the Centre for Inter-professional E-Learning

(CIPeL) and is responsible, together with colleagues in the Centre, for developing learning objects and activities and helping to embed inter-professional e-learning into health and social care programmes within the Faculty of Health and Life Science. Research and evaluation of the impact of e-learning interventions is a key aspect of her role.

Pamela Cotterill is a principal lecturer in sociology at Staffordshire University. She is currently an awards manager in the Faculty of Arts, Media and Design and, in the past, has been Co-Chair of the Women in Higher Education Network, UK. She is a member of the Higher Education Academy, UK. Her teaching and research interests are in social policy, mental health and women in higher education. She has published work on in-law relationships between women, feminist theory and methodology and women in higher education. Much of her work has been conducted collaboratively with Gayle Letherby. This includes 'Women in Higher Education: Issues and Challenges' (2005), a special issue of *Women's Studies International Forum,* 28:2-3.

Sue Goodman has been a research assistant in the Centre for the Study of Crime, Conflict and Control at Middlesex University for a number of years. During this time she carried out research in the fields of youth justice, hate crime and community safety in a number of London boroughs. She also continues to work as a special needs co-ordinator in a large inner city primary school. Sue continues to research in issues around work/life balance, which together with her background in counselling, are being employed within a variety of settings.

Maureen Hirsch has had a varied career, having first graduated in 1961, before any anti-discrimination law was in place, when it was still perfectly legal to refuse jobs to women because of their gender. This was a surprise to Maureen, who then became active in the second wave of feminism, having two children along the way. She worked in social work and then as a researcher at the National Children's Bureau. She tutored one of the first alternative access to university courses for adults from non-traditional backgrounds. She also worked for the Inner London Education Authority, helping to spearhead its radical anti-discrimination agenda before the Authority was abolished by the Thatcher government. Before moving into higher education she worked as Director of Training and Employment Programmes at the Refugee Council. She started work at Coventry University just short of her 50th birthday. Now she has officially retired, but is still active in research and teaching.

Christina Hughes is a senior lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick. She teaches on undergraduate and postgraduate modules in feminism and also research methodologies. Her current research interests are focused on the development of feminist theory, through a range of critical interrogations of

conceptual meanings, and on furthering understandings of dissemination. Her publications include: *Women's Contemporary Lives: Within and Beyond the Mirror* (2002), London: Routledge*; Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* (2002), London: Sage and *Disseminating Qualitative Research* (2003), Maidenhead: Open University Press. She is also co-author (with Loraine Blaxter and Malcolm Tight) of *How to Research* (2006 Third Edition), Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Sue Jackson is a senior lecturer in lifelong learning and citizenship and Head of School of Continuing Education in Birkbeck, University of London. She is also Director of the Birkbeck Institute for Lifelong Learning. She has been an active member of the Women in Higher Education Network UK, including as a member of the steering group. Sue's research interests include gender and lifelong learning both inside and outside the academy, especially with regard to social class and age. She is currently conducting research through an ESCR-funded project on lifelong learning and active citizenship for older women. Her publications include *Differently Academic? Developing Lifelong Learning for Women in Higher Education*, part of Springer's Lifelong Learning Series. She is currently working on a co-authored book, Reconceptualising Lifelong Learning, to be published by Routledge.

Gayle Letherby is Professor of Sociology at the University of Plymouth. Her research and writing interests include working and learning in the gendered academy, method, methodology and epistemology, reproductive and non/parental identity and the sociology of trains and train travel. With Pamela Cotterill, Gayle was Co-Chair of WHEN (Women in Higher Education Network UK) between 2000 and 2003 and this along with the collaborative research and writing she does, demonstrates her commitment to collaborative ways of working. Recent publications include *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice* (2003), Buckingham: Open University, and with Pamela Cotterill 'Women in Higher Education: Issues and Challenges' (2005), a special issue of *Women's Studies International Forum,* 28:2-3.

Amanda Loumansky is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Legal Research at Middlesex University Business School. Formerly, she was a research fellow in the Centre for the Study of Crime, Conflict and Control at Middlesex University. Dr Loumansky has carried out research in the fields of hate crime, risk management, community safety and youth justice. She also lectures and writes in the field of critical legal thought, ethics and the law. Her doctoral thesis 'Applications of Levinasian Philosophy to the Law' was a study of the work of the ethical philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. Her previous publications include *Me Voici, Here I Am, Here I Stand, I Can Do No Other* (2001), *Law & Critique*, *Vol 11, Issue 3, 287-300, Levinas, Israel and the call to conscience* (2005) *Law & Critique, Vol 16, Issue 2, 181-200* and with Sue Jackson (2004) *Out of the frying pan into the viva, Journal of International Women's Studies*, 5(3).

Jen Marchbank is Director of Explorations in Arts and Social Sciences. This exploratory course is a two-year interdisciplinary introduction to university education, at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. Jen's research areas are broadly defined as social justice and include gender, violence and resistance; care roles as politically expressed and gendered experiences of higher education. She is currently engrossed with writing an introductory, interdisciplinary textbook on gender (with Gayle Letherby); her son and moving to a new land.

Louise Morley is a professor of education at the University of Sussex, UK. Her previous posts were at the Institute of Education, University of London; the University of Reading and the Inner London Education Authority. Her research and publication interests focus on quality, equity, gender, power and empowerment in higher education. She has recently directed a DFID/Carnegie funded research project on gender equity in Commonwealth higher education (http://www.ioe.ac.uk/efps/GenderEqComHE). Recent publications include (with Annik Sorhaindo and Penny Burke), *Researching Women: An Annotated Bibliography on Gender Equity in Commonwealth Higher Education* (2005), London: Institute of Education Bedford Way Papers; *Theorising Quality in Higher Education* (2004), London: Institute of Education Bedford Way Papers; *Quality and Power in Higher Education* (2003), Buckingham: Open University Press; *Organising Feminisms: The Micropolitics of The Academy* (1999), London: Macmillan; (co-authored with Naz Rassool), *School Effectiveness: Fracturing the Discourse* (1999), London: The Falmer Press; (edited with Val Walsh), *Breaking Boundaries: Women in Higher Education* (1996), London: Taylor and Francis; (edited with Val Walsh), *Feminist Academics: Creative Agents for Change* (1995), London: Taylor and Francis.

Jackie Pritchard was a principal lecturer in nursing studies at Coventry University; recently retired she now works as a specialist visiting lecturer. For many years she was the course leader to the Health Visitor Course and later taught on a wide variety of post-registration nursing and midwifery programmes with a particular concern for research methods and communication skills. Jackie completed her PhD, *Public, Private and Personal: A Qualitative Study of the Invisible Aspects of Health Visiting,* University of Warwick, in 2001. She has maintained an interest in women's issues and has recently published an article 'Strengthening Women's Health Visiting Work With Women' in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, (2005). Jackie has worked full-time since leaving school and has experienced how to combine work, academic study and raising a family through these years.

Judy Purkis comes from a background in nursing and midwifery and completed her first degree in health and social policy at Warwick University. Combining 15 years in clinical midwifery practice with a subsequent MA in continuing education and professional development led towards her career development into higher education.

She was a full time senior lecturer in women's health studies at University of Central England before commencing an ESRC funded doctoral study in 2002. Currently completing her PhD exploring contemporary issues in midwifery practice she continues as a visiting midwifery lecturer and senior teaching fellow at Leicester Warwick Medical Schools.

Jocey Quinn is Professor of Education at the Institute of Policy Studies in Education, London Metropolitan University and also Visiting Professor in the School of Education, Exeter University. She was previously a lecturer in higher education at the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Exeter University and before that she was a senior research fellow at the Institute for Access Studies, Staffordshire University. She has a doctorate from Lancaster University. Her particular field is the socio-cultural study of higher education and her interests include the impact of feminist ideas on the curriculum, widening participation and the interface between universities and communities. She has published widely in this field including a research monograph *Powerful Subjects: Are Women Really Taking Over The University* (2005), Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books. Her current research interests include class, gender and 'drop out', international perspectives on widening participation and first generation entry to university and the relationship between subject disciplines and subjectivity.

Arwen Raddon is a lecturer in employment studies at the Centre for Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester. Her research interests are in the areas of gender, higher education and work, with an emphasis on feminist perspectives. She has published in the areas of higher education, lifelong and distance learning, international skills policy, and learning in small- and medium-sized enterprises. She has also worked on a range of research projects for organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Karen Ramsay teaches management studies, and gender studies at Bradford College. She began this study of women in academia as a postgraduate student while at Staffordshire University in her early thirties. Now, in her forties and going through an emotional menopause, she finds some of this material tricky to reconnect with: she is a non-mother, and says: 'now it is unlikely that I will bear my own biological child unaided'. As a postgraduate student, her interests were firmly in the public world of work, politics, and organisations. Over time, and especially through her relationships with women she has lived with, worked with and written with, her interests have shifted into a concern with family, kin, motherhood and caring, and particularly with her relationship to these places, identities, practices as a non-mother. Her current interests centre on gender and motherhood in higher education, and sexuality and the body.

Dr Jan Sellers has worked since 1974 in educational guidance, in the voluntary sector and in adult, continuing and higher education. She has published poetry and has taught creative writing, poetry, return to study, return to work and effective learning courses, in the UK and the USA. She gained her PhD in continuing education as a mature student in 2001. Since 1993, Jan has worked at the University of Kent, developing and managing the Student Learning Advisory Service: a resource for undergraduate and postgraduate students and for staff, designed to support effective learning. Jan was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2005 for her work in developing student learning initiatives and in supporting student retention in higher education.

Val Walsh is a freelance writer and a professional development trainer in language, communication and equality issues, working with people in business and industry and the NHS. Before this she developed and taught communication studies and women's studies courses in higher education, and was active in developing equality policy and practice. Research interests focus on women's autobiographical speaking and writing, with particular reference to the conjunction of social class and gender in the lives of women from white working-class backgrounds, and the impact of education and feminism on women's subjectivities. Published writing also includes work on women in art/education in the UK; the conditions for women's co-creativity; feminism and pedagogy; and organisational culture and equality issues in managerialist higher education. She has co-edited three women's studies collections, writes poetry, and is currently writing a script for a radio play. Val is a founder member of WHEN (Women in Higher Education Network UK) and currently on the committee.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The three of us have had several happy meetings together in preparing this book, sharing lunch as well as ideas; we have sent drafts backwards and forwards; have exchanged frantic emails; have sometimes despaired of getting the book finished; but have always enjoyed the pleasures of working together. Our first acknowledgement, then, is our thanks to each other!

However, the book is much more than the three of us. Very many thanks to all of the authors of these chapters, who have allowed us to use their work, and have stayed willing and cheerful throughout the process. The book is all the richer for the individual contributions of every one of the authors, and the combination of their work gives us a tapestry of issues that many of us face in working and learning in higher education.

Several of the authors undertook empirical work in their research for these chapters, and all of us drew on the work of others in formulating and taking forward our ideas. Thanks to all the women (and men), known and unknown, whose contributions are also in this book.

We have individually and collectively also received the help and advice of friends and colleagues, and the support of our families, to whom we are ever grateful. Our publishers, Springer, were supportive of this project from the outset, and we are very grateful to them for this and for their ongoing support. We owe particular thanks to Astrid Noordermeer at Springer, for helping us deal with more than one problem.

We have reserved our final thanks to the end – our thanks to the Women in Higher Education Network. We have all been members of the Network for some years: Pam and Gayle have been Co-Chairs, and Sue has been a member of the organising committee. The Network exists for women working in higher education, including administrators, academics and researchers. It holds conferences and produces publications, a long list of which precede this one. The Network has been important to all three of us, and to all the women whose chapters appear here and who developed their ideas through conference papers to WHEN. Our biggest thanks then go to all our colleagues who are part of the Women in Higher Education Network, with whom we hope to continue to work for a long time to come.

EDITORIAL BY SERIES EDITORS

This volume is a further flowering from the symposium ***International Handbook of Lifelong Learning***, which we jointly edited with Yukiko Sawano and Michael Hatton, published by Springer (formerly known as Kluwer Academic Publishers) in 2001. In those volumes we laid down a set of agenda for future research and development, analysis and expansion, strategies and guidelines in the field. It was clear that the domain of lifelong learning was a rich and fertile ground for setting out and summarising, comparing and criticising the heterogeneous scope and remit of policies and proposals in its different constitutive parts. Certainly the scholars and researchers with whom we discussed this matter seemed to agree with us that each of the chapters in the original *Handbook* would merit a separate volume on its own – to say nothing of the other possibilities that a more extended analysis of the field might quickly generate.

This volume is an outcome of those discussions. It is the work of our colleagues Pamela Cotterill, Sue Jackson and Gayle Letherby, in association with a range of authors from the United Kingdom and North America. In this book the authors explore the challenges and negotiations for women in higher education. They point out that, although in the 1980s and 1990s there was a widening of female participation in higher education, other organisations are often better at recognizing and developing lifelong learning and vocational opportunities for women than are higher education institutions. Making comparisons between life and Academia and in other professions, and between Britain and other parts of the world, they consider a number of key concerns facing women in higher education, such as: the often conflicting demands of home, work and emotional labour; inequalities in pay, status, prospects for promotion, and the nature of assigned academic duties and responsibilities; the demands of accountability; measures of success and achievement and pressure to publish in a context of heavy teaching loads and commitments to students; different forms of pedagogy, practice, theorising, research and approaches to collaborative engagement in the traditional structures and processes which continue to prevail in higher education. Chapter authors reflect on their own position in the Academy and some draw on empirical research with workers and learners. The collective approach is auto/biographical.

The authors show convincingly that women face multiple challenges in higher education. They negotiate these challenges in multiple fields of interest, activity, endeavour and responsibility. Often their survival is, in large part, due to their adaptability and a function of their flexibility. Sometimes, however, survival exacts a

high cost, particularly when women are challenged to survive in increasingly individualistic and competitive ways. Nevertheless many women are finding ways of working collaboratively, of developing identities which involve different ways of being "an academic", of achieving successful life-work balances, and exploring and developing feminist pedagogic principles and practices. The authors conclude that the Academy now needs to find ways to extend and broaden current conceptions and constructions of academic work, to create new conditions that enable academics to negotiate new ways of making meaning, and to develop opportunities for lifelong learning, that enrich lives, develop self-confidence and personal growth, open up and expand career prospects, enable people to explore and understand cultural differences, help with life-course transitions, and offer opportunities for new and creative ways of working. Societies, institutions and individuals would all benefit as a result.

We are pleased and excited that this important work helps carry forward the agenda of the Springer Series on Lifelong Learning. We trust that its readers will find it stimulating, thought-provoking and controversial. We are sure that this further volume in the Springer Series will provide the wide range of constituencies working in the domain of lifelong learning with a rich range of new material for their consideration and further investigation. We believe that it will encourage their continuing critical thinking, research and development, academic and scholarly production and individual, institutional and professional progress.

December 2006 David Aspin and Judith Chapman

Introduction

CONCEPTUALISING CHALLENGES AND NEGOTIATIONS FOR WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Pamela Cotterill[1], Sue Jackson[2] and Gayle Letherby[3]
[1]Staffordshire University; [2]Birkeck, University of London; [3]University of Plymouth

INTRODUCTION

Despite the historical tradition of academia as a male space (Evans, 1995; Abbott et al, 2005; Stanley, 1997; Letherby, 2003) it is possible to argue that the expansion of higher education in the 1980s and 1990s benefited women more than it did men. By 1995 there were two and a half times more women in the academy than in 1970/1 (Abbott et al 2005), and in the decade to follow the numbers of women undergraduate students had overtaken men with a substantial minority of these being older, non-standard entrants. Furthermore, as Paula J Caplan (1997: 3) argues:

> Visions of the academic life draw us women toward it, picturing an intellectual community whose members search with passion and integrity for Truth and Knowledge. We imagine that in academia we shall find freedom from bias, freedom from worldly struggles of power and wealth, freedom to choose what to study and what to say, and an environment characterized by tolerance and openness, where everyone's energy is focused on the open exploration of ideas.

However, whilst this may be the vision for some women, it is important not to view this widening of female participation in higher education through 'rose tinted glasses'. Other organisations are often better at recognising and developing lifelong learning and vocational opportunities for women than are higher education institutions. As Liz Stanley (1997: 5) notes:

> there are clear signs that higher education is becoming one of the last bastions against the recognition of 'women's worth': it is salutary to note that business, manufacturing and government organisations are all the more likely to value and to promote women than educational ones.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 1–12.

Similarly, Caplan (1997) suggests that many women who follow academic careers in the belief that these will be more congenial than careers in business, do not find the welcome that they had hoped for and expected.

Whilst there is much ambivalence in women's experience of the academy as teachers and students, it is clear that the increasing numbers of women students in higher education is part of a new approach to learning promoted by the current British government. The election of 'New Labour' in 1997 was immediately followed by the newly created post of Minister for Lifelong Learning, and a host of lifelong learning policies. Lifelong learning today is high on the political agenda in an educational climate that appears to be both vocational and instrumental. The widening participation targets of the current government in the UK, for example, which focuses almost entirely on those aged 18-30, clearly has its education agenda shaped by economic concerns, with increased participation planned for those considered to be most worth investing in for future productivity.

Nevertheless, the concept of lifelong learning remains contested. John Field (2000), for example, argues that so-called learning societies may generate even more deeply rooted inequalities. As Sue Jackson (2003, 2004b) has shown, these inequalities include both gender and social class. Taken at its broadest, lifelong learning means a cradle to grave approach to learning that includes formal, informal and non-formal learning, including training and skills development. Within the EU there have been two competing philosophies: that people should have an adult education entitlement after they leave school; and that education should continue after school, but without entitlement (Jarvis, 2001). In the UK, however, current lifelong learning policy leaves the responsibility for learning with its citizens, assuming that it is not for the government to take action, but for individuals to grasp opportunities (regardless of structural and material inequalities).

Within the last decade, student numbers in higher education have increased in developed countries by an average of 40%, whilst in the UK they have reached a massive growth of 81% (Schuetze and Slowey, 2000: 3). Nevertheless, this has not necessarily led to more equity. As a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows, such expansion 'has not been sufficient to reduce differences in rates of access of learning from different social and economic groups' (OECD, 1999: 69). Neither has it altered an academy which is imbued with gendered and classed ways of knowing (Jackson, 2004a). Additionally, expansion in student numbers has done nothing to alter the position of women working in higher education, where the challenges and negotiations remain as great as ever (Jackson, 2002; Cotterill and Letherby, 2005).

A similar picture can be seen in the United States and Canada. Caplan (1997) refers to the 'academic funnel', which shows that whilst women account for more than half of all undergraduate students in both countries, the proportion of women taking postgraduate courses and progression to academic careers falls at every stage.

Consequently, the proportion of women professors is roughly 10%. Caplan also points out that women are less likely than men to achieve full tenure or to be promoted.

It has been argued that a learning organisation is one 'where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning together' (Senge, 1990: 4; Keep and Rainbird, 2002: 65). Hans Schuetze and Maria Slowey (2003: 8) suggest that the transformation of higher education is part of the transformation of society. For women in higher education, as well as for women in a host of other organisations both nationally and internationally, the transformation of both still has a long way to go.

There is also much evidence in the academy as elsewhere that women experience sexism at work from male colleagues (Butler and Landells, 1995; Humm, 1996), that marginalisation is accentuated by other differences such as age, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, and social class (French, 1998; Magurie, 1996; Gibson, 1996; Corrin, 1994; Jackson, 1998; Jackson, 2003) and that some women who have 'made it' do so by distancing themselves from other women and from feminism (Bagilhole 1994). As Craig Pritchard and Rosemary Deem (1999) argue, women in management positions who want to work with an ethos of facilitation, support and empowerment often find themselves forced, by the processes and structures of the institution, to become different kinds of managers.

In terms of academic careers, the historical (male) higher education linear model that starts with early undergraduate experience, followed by a smooth upward progression through the ranks associated with increased income and prestige is now outmoded (Blaxter et al, 1998; Weiner, 1996). This has resulted in a widening of career opportunities but an increased number of insecure positions, and a reduction in career satisfaction and progression possibilities particularly for women who often enter late and are more likely to have a 'broken' career due to family responsibilities (Weiner 1996). Whilst flexibility and splintered lives and careers may be part of the 'postmodern condition', calling for us all to adapt and rise to the challenges and negotiations of lifelong learning, women in particular face a range of issues.

In this book the contributing authors are concerned to explore further the challenges and negotiations for women in (male dominated) higher education, although the issues raised are those faced by women working within other institutions and organizations. In this introductory chapter we focus on key issues and debates which are further developed throughout the book. As such we consider:

- home, work and emotional labour;
- careers, opportunities, payment and debt;
- accountability in higher education;
- measures of success and achievement for (women) academics and students;
- pedagogy and practice.

Within this we make comparisons between life in academia and in other professions and between Britain and other parts of the world.

CONCERNS FOR WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Home, Work and Emotional Labour

Women academics, like women in other male dominated professions, face a 'double bind'. What this means is that on the one hand the female academic is expected to be a professional (often associated with efficiency, expertise, detachment and objectivity) and on the other a woman (which owing to stereotypical gender assumptions, necessitates kindness, care and support). Caplan (1997) says that this catch-22 is part of the myth that women's nurturing abilities are boundless and that they can be caring or professional in the workplace but not both. Indeed, using a domestic analogy, we would further suggest that the nurturing women do at work is like invisible mending: unseen and unappreciated but, without it, the fabric of the workplace begins to come apart.

Added to this, as Sandra Acker (1980) points out, families are also 'greedy institutions'; and thus women with any domestic responsibilities at all are likely to suffer from the 'double burden' of paid and unpaid labour. Often they also suffer from the burden of emotional labour at work because of the expectation that they, rather than their male colleagues, will care for the emotional needs of students (and sometimes colleagues) as well as academic needs (Culley et al., 1985; Cotterill and Waterhouse, 1998; Letherby and Shiels, 2001). This is not to suggest that men do not have caring responsibilities at home and at work but it is fair to say that expectations and experiences are gendered:

> Care has increasingly become a 'maternal', feminized feature both in the wide community and in the communities of higher education. Whilst there are many respected male colleagues who practice it alongside us, we know that this aspect of our and their work is feminized and devalued. In the anxiety-driven context of higher education involvement in 'women's work' is polluting and has the potential to contaminate others by association. Academics seeking promotion must adopt 'masculine work practices' (Coppock, Haydon and Richter, 1995: 87), fostering relationships and developing skills which are recognized, valued and bring maximum rewards. (Cotterill and Waterhouse, 1998: 13)

Obviously, issues of emotional labour are not solely the preserve of women working in higher education. Arlie Hochschild (1983) who was the first writer to moot the term 'emotional labour' considered this concept in relation to female-dominated occupations such as air cabin crew. Other authors have found the concept of emotional labour useful in relation to the nursing profession (James, 1992), social work (Dominelli, 1997) and railway workers (Letherby and Reynolds, 2005).

Women students also manage home, work and emotional labour. The problems this induces are likely to be compounded by increasing debt and less flexible timetabling. Research on student experience indicates that at worst women's involvement in student life leads to physical and emotional abuse from male partners

(Edwards, 1993; Jackson, 2004a). Furthermore, as Robyn Thomas (1998) argues, higher education can be contradictory and confusing for women as it prepares them for high status jobs whilst not always challenging expected 'feminine' roles and behaviour. Again, Caplan (1997: 67) makes the point that women graduates who do go onto academic careers regularly encounter and experience this confusion. For example, she says that women are often judged on the basis of whether or not they have children, being seen as 'not real women' if they do not have children but as not taking their career seriously, or not devoting enough time to it, if they do.

Careers, Opportunities, Payment and Debt

Despite equalising policy, in Britain women's pay is still only 74% of men's. Similarly worldwide women earn less than men and are under-represented in high-income activities and over-represented in low income activities (WIEGO undated). Issues of debt and financial hardship are likely to affect some women academics despite the myth of long holidays and easy money. We know that women academics are disproportionately represented in the lower grades; there are more women on fixed, short term and part-time contracts, and that women are paid less (Jackson, 2002; Knight and Richards, 2003). For example, in Britain:

> The total number of academic staff employed in universities in 1999-2000 was 135,750; of that 64% were male (HESA data AUT, 2001a, June). Women comprise 53% of all part-time academics. Women's share of part-time employment in universities is lower than in the labour market as a whole, since many part-time lecturers are actually retired academics 'keeping their hand in'. Women, therefore, represent just over one-third of all academics, but a considerable amount of vertical segregation is evident. Of around 80 higher education institutions, only seven are headed by a woman Vice Chancellor or Principal, and only two of those are in the (more prestigious) pre-1992 sector. In the 'old' universities, only 9% of professors are women; with women making up 27% of senior lecturers and 57% of lecturers. Women are therefore significantly over–represented in the lower grades. At managerial level, only 19% of Deans of Faculty and 22% of senior administrators are women. . . . .
>
> As well as being more likely to be employed on insecure contracts, women in academia also earn less than their male counterparts. Overall, male academics earn on average nearly one-fifth more than women, and it appears that the gender pay gap is widening in academia, in contrast to the situation in the wider labour market. The largest pay gaps within subject areas were found in the sciences, with an average gap of just over £4,000; the highest was in anatomy and physiology, with a pay gap of £8,000 between men and women. (Knight and Richards, 2003: 216-218).

The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) have shown that the gender gap is evident in a small way at the beginning of women's careers, but peaks at 15% by the time the woman academic is 55. When they are employed on locally determined pay schemes, the situation is

even worse, with a peak pay gap of 19% for women aged between 51 and 55. The proposed proliferation in local pay schemes could see this trend exacerbated (Berliner *The Guardian,* 2003). Nor does this apply only in Britain. In the United States, inequalities in pay are evident in most academic institutions, exacerbated by the fact that women are more likely to be found in lower status institutions and carry heavier teaching loads than their male colleagues (Caplan, 1997).

Accountability in Higher Education

Higher education is affected by and reflects the political ideologies of the time. The marketisation of public services was a prominent feature of New Right cultural and political discourse that became known as Thatcherism. Debbie Epstein (1995) argues that higher education has been increasingly forced into, and indeed, in some cases embraced, the entrepreneurial culture. Arguably, the expansion (recent past and current) in student numbers has more to do with the cash nexus than a commitment to an expansion of educational opportunity. Thus, many changes in higher education in the last decade or so have been related less to knowledge production and pedagogy and more to ideological and market concerns. This entrepreneurial trend has affected working and learning relationships within the institution and impacted on student / tutor relationships. For example, the customer (student)/service provider (tutor) relationship is encouraged by current systems of student consultation. Student review and evaluation is a valid and necessary part of university life. But it is also possible to argue that the quantitative tick box end of semester/year approach used in many institutions can promote a view that students are expected to 'grade' their teachers. On occasion this can lead to offensive attack from students and defensive reaction from tutors (Marchbank and Letherby, 2002). Furthermore, because student evaluation is normally retrospective it does not benefit the students who have provided the feedback but affects the next cohort which may have different concerns. The net effect, therefore, is to undermine tutors' confidence in their professional ability and judgement, without any guarantees that the student experience is improved.

Not only does evaluation take place internally but also British universities are subject to external quality controls such as the Quality Assurance Agency (teaching) and Research Assessment Exercise (research). This external moderation and review encourages the development of a particular management focus within institutions to ensure improved performance on the criteria valued by the producers of league tables which appear in the media. As Louise Morley (2003) notes, these two quality accounting systems are gendered and contribute to polarised employment regimes. Whilst concentration on teaching quality is female-dominated, research quality is male-dominated. Thus, teaching and learning and research are gendered activities with higher status accorded to those who engage in research. Yet, ironically, as Morley (2003) further points out, quality assessment of teaching and learning is

welcomed by organisations representing students, because it has given them more say in areas where they are most affected. In Morley's (2003) research on the gendered experience of the teaching and learning audit, some women used terms such as 'abusive', 'violation' and 'bullying'. Others, especially younger women academics seemed to be more supportive of quality procedures than their male counterparts. Morley suggests that this might be because their under-representation makes them more compliant; and/or it could stem from a greater commitment to students; and/or because quality assurance has also provided some women with opportunities for promotion.

Measures of Success and Achievement for (Women) Academics and Students

Women in the academy, like all academics, increasingly find themselves caught in the 'publish or perish' dilemma (Broughton, 1994). In order to secure tenure (in the UK, USA and elsewhere) many academics start their career on short term research and/or teaching contracts. There are more women than men in these insecure positions (Letherby and Cotterill, 2001) and to achieve promotion it is necessary that they publish their work. In recent years the pressure on academics to publish has been accentuated by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Inevitably this public monitoring of individual research performance is likely to further undermine women academics. Given the burden of their other responsibilities, the processes of academic gatekeeping and the imposed hierarchies of approaches and outputs it is likely that women will become increasingly stereotyped as less 'research active' (Morley, 1995). Research by the AUT in June 2000 has shown that 'Men are almost twice as likely to be entered into the Research Assessment Exercise than women' (Knight and Richards 2003: 220). Leonard (2001, cited in Morley 2003)) points out that in the 2001 RAE, fewer than one in four panel members and only one in seven of the panel chairs were women and that the panels chaired by women were responsible for allocating less than 10% of RAE funding.

The 'better' research (demonstrated through published material) a university does the more funding it gets: 'Proof of performance and productivity requires outputs that can be measured and thus made visible' (Strathern, 1997 cited by Mace 2000). Thus, women's lack of participation in research and writing has implications for them, the institutions in which they work and the students they teach, not least because of the often unchallenged elision of quality with truth (Morley, 2003). On the other hand time spent on research and writing is time spent away from students. The widening participation and lifelong learning agendas bring with them students with greater need in relation to academic and professional skills. Parents and employers and students themselves are concerned with employability and arguably the time spent on upgrading students' skills represents a de-skilling of the academic job.

Pedagogy and Practice

When women entered the academy their aim was not simply to add women onto existing disciplines but to change and challenge the conceptual bases of disciplines and how and why things can be known and investigated. This was/is particularly evident within women's studies where there was a critique of knowledge production and an attempt to theorise differently. However, when women's studies developed some feminists were doubtful whether women should concern themselves with theory because traditionally theory had been used as a weapon by men against women (Robinson, 1993; Letherby, 2003). But theory itself is not inherently male and something so powerful and influential should not be left to men alone. Alongside attempts to theorise in different ways came new forms of research, writing and assessment. For example, students were encouraged to bring their experiential knowledge to the classroom to challenge and critique so-called objective, authorised (often-male) knowledge. In recent years, student-centred learning has been adopted by the mainstream as good practice (sometimes with no recognition of the origin of this practice). Women's studies has now gone in many UK institutions but our ideas and methods remain, finding expression in a commitment to widening participation and an emphasis on lifelong learning which are now formally adopted aspects of higher education policy.

With reference to relationships between academics, given all of the tensions and dilemmas noted in this introduction and in the other chapters in this volume, an 'emphasis on mutual concern and support' would seem to be needed (Keller and Moglen 1987: 505). However, as Evelyn Fox Keller and Helene Moglen note, this can be 'tremendously difficult to implement in the real world situation of the academic market' (ibid). Furthermore, although collaboration and collegiality on the surface appear to be more women friendly than competition and individualism, so-called 'collegiality' in the academy sometimes disguises individual self-interest (Morley, 2003). There is evidence of women working together and supporting each other (Chester and Nielson, 1987; Kaplan and Rose, 1993; Cotterill and Letherby, 1997) but such working relationships are not normally encouraged or valued in higher education. WHEN (Women in Higher Education Network) UK, in which the material for this book is grounded, is one such supportive network. To illustrate our point here, low participation in recent events has sometimes been due to 'pressure of work and lack of time' and 'lack of institutional support'.

Writing and Research about Women in Higher Education

As noted above the material from this book is derived from work within the Women in Higher Education Network (WHEN). WHEN has been in existence since the late 1980s and several books that are currently available are the result of WHEN endeavours. These include Sue Davies, Cathy Lubelska and Jocey Quinn (1994)

Changing the Subject: women in higher education London: Taylor and Francis; Louise Morley and Val Walsh (1995) *Feminist Academics: creative agents for change* London: Taylor and Francis; Louise Morley and Val Walsh (1996) *Breaking Boundaries: women in higher education* London: Taylor and Francis; Danusia Malina and Sian Maslin-Prothero (1998) *Surviving the Academy: feminist perspective* London: Falmer.

Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education builds upon and develops themes and issues from earlier WHEN publications. The rest of the book is organised in three thematic sections:

Ambivalent Positions in the Academy
Process and Pedagogy at Work
Career – Identity – Home

There is an introduction to each of these sections to guide the reader to the themes in individual chapters and connections across the book.

Chapter authors have adopted a variety of styles. Some reflect on their own position in the academy, some draw on empirical research with workers and learners. As women in higher education our collective approach is clearly auto/biographical. We recognize, as Charles Wright Mills (1959: 204) argued, that 'the social scientist is not some autonomous being standing outside society, the question is where he *(sic)* stands within it . . .' and we are also impressed by his advice regarding the use of personal life experience in intellectual work and his view that we are personally involved in the intellectual work that we do:

> learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine it and interpret it. In this sense craftsmanship *(sic)* is the centre of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product with which you work (Mills 1959: 216).

With reference to the research and writing process, it has now become commonplace for the researcher to locate her/himself within this process and produce 'first person' accounts. This involves a recognition that, as researchers, we need to realise that our research activities tell us things about ourselves as well as about those we are researching (Steier, 1991). Further, there is recognition among social scientists that we need to consider how the researcher as author is positioned in relation to the research process: how the process affects the product in relation to the choice and design of the research fieldwork and analysis, editorship and presentation (Iles, 1992; Sparkes, 1998; Letherby, 2003):

> self conscious auto/biographical writing acknowledges the social location of the writer thus making clear the author's role in constructing rather than discovering the story/the knowledge. (Letherby 2000: 97)

In addition, it is important to remember that writing about the self always involves writing about the 'other', and writing about the 'other' always involves some reference (even if not expressed on paper) to the self. Feminist researchers

argue that we need to consider how the researcher as author is positioned in relation to the research process, and that to ignore the personal involvement of the researcher within research is to downgrade the personal (Stanley, 1993; Letherby, 2003).

Of course we are ourselves all engaged in lifelong learning both as learners and as teachers. This, coupled with a concern for the major issues and concerns facing women in higher education today, is the main concern of the rest of this book.

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SECTION 1: AMBIVALENT POSITIONS IN THE ACADEMY

Introduction to Section 1

Pamela Cotterill[1], Sue Jackson[2] and Gayle Letherby[3]
[1]Staffordshire University; [2]Birkbeck, University of London; [3]University of Plymouth

SECTION SUMMARY

In this the first section of the book women's position in higher education as inevitably ambivalent is highlighted. Increased success in the labour market for women has not come without a price and many of the issues and experiences, challenges and negotiations highlighted here are relevant to women's position in the world of work more generally. Drawing on historical and contemporary data the authors in this section highlight the theme of male dominance within the academy and explore various responses and challenges to this dominance. As well as focusing on the problems that female academics continue to face, Barbara Bagilhole (Chapter 1); Karen Ramsay (Chapter 2) and Louise Morley (Chapter 3) raise questions about the inroads that women have made in challenging higher education as a bastion of surviving male dominance.

The concerns for women in higher education raised in this section are of course not discrete from those highlighted in Sections Two and Three; and the authors in this section engage with issues of process and pedagogy and career – identity – work, just as the authors in the following two sections of the book reflect on ambivalent positions in the academy. What is distinctive about these first three chapters though is the focus on the struggles for equality that women still face in the 'male academy'. The chapters in this section could be read then as a rather pessimistic opening to the main body of this book. However, they can also be read more positively as stories of success despite the odds, and examples of suggested strategies for future gains. As such these chapters characterise the position of women in the academy as ambivalent.

In Chapter One Barbara Bagilhole begins by relating the male dominance of the academy – historically and to date – to both sexist and inaccurate theories and pronouncements of women's physical and mental inferiority, and to the continued sexism within Higher Education. She continues with a consideration of the individualistic and collective strategies that women adopt in order to

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 15–20.

challenge their isolation. In order for women to thrive, rather than merely survive, in academia the challenge must, Bagilhole argues, include self-promotion and the promotion of other women.

In Chapter Two, Karen Ramsay draws on data from an empirical project which explored how different academic departments articulated sex and gender differences, and the relationship between gender and academic disciplines and academic cultures. Ramsay's data suggests that women in the academy are affected by cultural expectations of motherhood. She found that the woman-as-mother discourse was used variously in different disciplines to actively contribute to women's active inclusion, partial exclusion and the segregation of women in academia.

In Chapter Three, the final chapter in this section, Louise Morley reflects on the gendered implications of quality assurance and audit. Drawing on a study with women academics and academic managers across the HE sector who all had, at the time of interview, an involvement in audit, she suggests that quality assessment procedures appear to reinforce gendered divisions of labour and employment regimes in the academy. Morley argues that evidence suggests that teaching quality is female dominated and research quality is male-dominated, prompting her to suggest that there is a morality of quality with women heavily responsible for student-focused services.

KEY THEMES

One thing that all of the authors in this section are clear about is the dominance of men and masculinity within the academy. On the surface it may look like women have succeeded, for after all there are more women in higher education than ever before. Yet, as Barbara Bagilhole notes, quantitatively there is still a long way to go. And of course it is important not to measure success in numbers alone and all of the authors in this section point also to the qualitative differences in women academics' experiences of higher education. We have identified various themes through which to explore the quantitative and qualitative differences highlighted here and hope that readers are able to identify with these as well as finding other connections to their own experience.

Male Cultural Hegemony

From the accounts of all of the authors in this section it is clear that the presence of women as educators is significant. As Mary Evans (1995) argues education is no longer just about DWMs (dead white males) for in many subjects and on many levels, there has been a challenge to the orthodoxies of the past. The curriculum has broadened and is less rigid in its subject demarcation and the critique of knowledge production is part of (some) academic study. Feminists and others working outside of Western assumptions have been influential in these changes. As Evans (1997: 122) notes:

> . . . feminists can claim to have developed one of the now great traditions within the Western academy, that of suggesting that the universalistic assumptions of knowledge in our society are false, and partial, because they are drawn from the experience of only one sex.

Yet, as Barbara Bagilhole notes: 'In universities, men rule, and their ideas are the 'ruling ideas'. Academia is perceived as male and the common language of the university is masculine'. The male majority ensures the perpetuation of the male standard by male mentors. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident that in disciplines where not only the number of men – as tutors and students – vastly outnumbers the number of women, but where feminism has had less of an influence. Civil engineering is one such discipline and Karen Ramsay found that in order to survive women who enter engineering have not only to tolerate a sexist environment but also blend in and become 'one of the boys'. However, in all of the departments that Ramsay studied – Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and History and Cultural Studies – women were judged by the 'extra-organizational' women-as-mother discourse and their experience of higher education was influenced by the stereotypical norms of femininity. These norms are also relevant to women's and men's experience of quality audit in higher education. Not only are women expected to take a heavier burden of care (of both students and colleagues) but they do not seem to be able to get away with 'behaving badly' as men sometimes can:

> Often it's the women that are doing an awful lot of the labour, and an awful lot of the work … and it seems to me if people are going to misbehave in terms of their kind of commitment to work in relation to all this, then they're more likely to be men than women (a respondent cited by Louise Morley Chapter Three).

Women as 'Other'

As Sheila Gunew (1990) and Judy Wajcman (1991) note, the history of reason is the history of the gendered metaphor, with men being synonymous with reason and women with non-reason. In addition, as Barbara Bagilhole points out, historically women were not only excluded from education but knowledge was constructed from a man's perspective and women's exclusion was justified. This historical 'othering' of women was of course relevant beyond the academy. For example:

> If women get tired of bearing, there is no harm in that; let them die s long as they bear; they were made for that (Martin Luther 1483-1546 in Mills 1991: 168)

> A woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order (Edmund Burke, 1729-97 in Mills 1991: 27)

> Man should be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior (Nietzsche, 1844-1900 in Mills 1991: 248)

All of these pronouncements, and others like them, have legacies, as Bagilhole reminds us. Think for a minute of the many examples of the sexist treatment of women in both public and private. Arguably cartoons and jokes exemplify rather than exaggerate these experiences. For example: the cartoon of the man with his arm round a stereotypically attractive women at a party whispering in her ear 'You're stupid, I like that in a woman' or the boardroom table scene – six or so men and one women – with the Chairman remarking 'Thank you Miss Jones that's a great suggestion. Now would one of the men like to make the same point and we can make it policy'. There are of course many (not so 'funny') equivalent tales from women in higher education: the female academic passed over at interview or for promotion for a less qualified male; women having to remind others of their correct titles of Dr and Professor within as well as outside of the academy; female lecturers addressed as 'love' or even 'babe' by their students; the female vice-chancellor mistaken for a waitress at an official function. We could go on …

The construction of women as 'other' not only affects the dis/respect that others (including often other women) have for us but it also affects the tasks that we are given and the expectations that we have of ourselves and that others have of us. As Louise Morley highlights, the woman-as-carer stereotype and expectation has been successfully appropriated by those who control the teaching quality audit in higher education. For Karen Ramsay's female respondents the discourse of caring was contradictory – sometimes leading to value of women in the academy and at other times negatively impacting on their status as 'true' academics.

Failure and Success

When women began to enter the academy in large numbers (in the 1970s and the 1980s) they began to challenge both the knowledge and structures produced and perpetuated by men. Throughout this book there are many examples of women's success in challenging the male norm in higher education. However, as the chapters in this section all highlight, the changes that have taken place have been neither smooth nor complete. Indeed, we would suggest that many women in higher education still find themselves in positions of compromise on a daily basis. Sometimes it is keeping up the challenge that occupies our time and energy, as the experience of one of Karen Ramsay's humanities respondents' highlights:

> I never seem to stop. I don't know where work ends and life begins. Everything is work. Watching TV, reading, it's all about work: I think can I use this when I'm teaching.

On other occasions, as both Karen Ramsay and Louise Morley argue, accepting the 'feminine' role and the nurturing and caring tasks associated with this role leaves the female academic feeling both virtuous and resentful (even if, as Morley notes, these tasks are rewarded with pay and promotion).

One way to survive in the academy is to succeed, and one way to succeed - as Barbara Bagilhole notes - is to become a token chap; honorary man, queen bee, Margaret Thatcher. Yet, as Bagilhole argues, the production of academic work is dependent on all kinds of collaboration and women need to promote each other and themselves strategically. If competition is difficult for women (Keller and Moglen, 1987) finding the time for effective collaboration and support of others can be difficult also (Cotterill and Letherby 2003), but making the time to support other women can help us in raising the profile of our successes and challenging the naming of our failures.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Given the quantitative growth of women in the academy as workers it is argued by many that sexist practices and culture have been overturned, but the chapters in this section draw attention to the fact that women are still 'other' within the academy. In addition we suggest, and hope that readers of this book will agree, sexist prejudice and discrimination is widely experienced by many outside of the academy. So Simone de Beauvoir's (1949: 18) statement is still relevant:

> Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being … she is simply what man decrees … She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he the Absolute – she the other.

One aspect of this 'otherhood' as we have suggested above is male hegemony. Bob Connell's (1987) analysis is relevant here. He argues that although there are many different femininities and masculinities affected by ethnic, generational and class differences etc., the global dominance of men over women gives rise to 'hegemonic masculinity'. This is constructed in relation to other subordinate masculininites and femininities and its public face helps to sustain male power. All femininities are therefore constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men. Connell identifies three types of femininity: compliant (or emphasised) femininity, which is designed to accommodate the interests and desires of men; non-complaint femininity, which is resistant; and a third option which is a combination of compliance and non-compliance. Obviously, compliant/emphasised femininity is the most attractive as the aim is to maintain support for male dominance, and Connell argues that this option is supported by religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, welfare and taxation policies and so forth. Women's lives then are characterized by unequal power relations and further these unequal power relations are represented as right and proper:

> . . . those who control the schools, the media and other cultural institutions are generally skilled in establishing their view of reality as superior to alternative interpretations. While an oppressed group's experiences may put them in a position to see things differently, their lack of control over the apparatuses of society that sustain ideological hegemony makes the articulation of their self-defined standpoint difficult. Groups unequal in power are correspondingly unequal in their access to the resources necessary to implement their perspectives outside their particular group (Hill Collins 1994: 83-84)

With specific reference to the tensions and problems that unequal power relations within higher education bring, Breda Gray (1994: 75) argues that it is necessary to remain ambivalent about our position in the academy as this enables 'reflexivity, negotiations, movements and communications'. This is better, she suggests, than either complete acceptance of the 'current systems' or rejection of academia'. One of the ways to do this is through collaboration, as our collective experience with WHEN has shown us:

> 'Saving our Selves' [title of the 2003 WHEN Conference] then is something we need to continue to work for. Of course this does not mean that we should not be working with others (women and men) across the academic community. Indeed, survival in Higher Education sometimes involves making alliances with strange bedfellows. However, it is important not to forget that organisations like WHEN provide the space for the meetings of like minds and can act as a refuge from the trials and tribulations of our daily working lives and a boost to our political energy (Cotterill and Letherby, 2003).

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Chapter 1

CHALLENGING WOMEN IN THE MALE ACADEMY: THINK ABOUT DRAINING THE SWAMP

Women are Challenged in the Academy

Barbara Bagilhole
Loughborough University

INTRODUCTION

Marge Piercy (1987: 149) in her novel *Small Changes* about women fighting to make their way in a man's world had this to say about women trying to enter the academic profession: 'But universities are tight and prejudiced against women. It's rotten hard for a woman to get a decent job around a university'. Also, a quote from one of Tennyson's poems illustrates the underpinning of the problem:

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth
> Man for the sword and for the needle she
> Man with the head and woman for the heart
> Man to command and woman to obey
> All else confusion. (*The Princess*, 1847)

Higher education (HE) has long been declared inappropriate for women. Aristotle, basing his argument on a comparative study of the sexes in lower animals, held that 'woman was essentially different from man in nature, and hence that the former cannot profit by this Higher Education to be given citizens' (Monroe, 1919: 156). This view won dominance. Rousseau wrote: 'A woman of culture (i.e. education) is the plague of her husband, her children, her family, her servants – everybody' (Monroe, 1919: 566).

There are many examples of studies that were taken to prove that women could not benefit from HE. Eileen Byrne (1993) offers the following example of Paul

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 21–32.

Broca, a French brain surgeon. He apparently measured the weight of the brains of both men and women after autopsies in Paris, in the early 1860s. He found that the women's brains weighed on average less than the men's – proving, he felt, beyond a doubt men's alleged cognitive and intellectual supremacy. His findings of course reinforced and it was felt confirmed the existing strongly held belief that this was so. Only when the evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould re-examined the implications of the data in the 1980s was it discovered that the brain-weight difference was not due to sex as such, but to other differences such as age and height, and also importantly to a prevalent degenerative brain disease more common in women than men at the time. Obviously, Broca saw no need to cross check his results against other possible causes, since they confirmed the prevailing received wisdom of the time (and his own personal belief) that women were biologically inferior to men. Unfortunately, work such as Broca's hindered women's education by denying that they could benefit from secondary and higher education. He thus fuelled the alleged biological justification for their exclusion from advanced intellectual study.

Some commentators went even further to claim that women would actually be harmed by HE. Michael Kimmel (2000) points out that in the USA, the best selling book on HE in the nineteenth century was Edward C. Clarke (1873) *Sex in Education; or a fair chance for the girls*. In it Clarke predicted that if women went to college their brains would grow heavier and their wombs would atrophy. He cited the following as evidence. College-educated women had fewer children than non-college educated women. Also, 42% of the women in Boston area mental hospitals had college degrees, while only 16% of male patients had degrees. So colleges were seen not only to shrink their wombs they also made them insane. However, as Michael Kimmel (2000) points out, the illness that led to their hospitalisation was more likely to be the consequences of both expanding opportunities and frustrated ambition. In the UK, the mother of Vera Brittain (feminist writer and mother of former MP Shirley Williams) was openly criticised for allowing her to go to university. 'How can you send your daughter to college, Mrs Brittain! Don't you want her ever to get married?' (Brittain, 1933: 88).

STATISTICS

At this point, I would like to indulge the reader of this chapter in one of my fantasies. Imagine the scenario, you go to sleep one night and on waking after a peaceful night's sleep find that Cherie Booth is the Prime Minister; not only that but women make up 82% of all MPs. Also, 94% of high court judges, and 93% of senior police officers are women. Women hold 91% of editorships of national newspapers and 87% of professorships. Whereas women hold 92% of skilled trades jobs, men are the majority in administrative and secretarial (80%) and personal service jobs (84%).

In fact, 89% of nurses and 86% of primary and nursery school teachers are men. This looks likely to be a continuing pattern as modern apprentices in early- years care and education (98%) are overwhelmingly men, while those in construction (99%), engineering (97%) and plumbing (99%) are overwhelmingly women. In this workforce, 44% of men work part-time, but only 10% of women. These men working part-time receive on average only 60% of women's hourly part- time earnings. Whilst even men working full-time receive only 82% of women's average hourly earnings, and 75% of their weekly earnings. However, unfortunately for my fantasy and significantly for women's position in society the reverse is true (EOC, 2004).

The quantitative under-representation of women academics in universities is well documented. Overall women hold 42% of full-time academic posts (including both teaching and research), whereas they account for only 27% of senior lecturers, and just 13% of professors and 12% of vice-chancellors. The figures are even more revealing if we look at different disciplines; whereas 24% of education professors are women, only 2% of physics professors are women, and there are none at all in civil engineering (Universities UK, 2004). An independent report on higher education starkly showed that the average female academic will earn four to five years' salary less than an average male colleague for the same number of years worked (Bett, 1999). In fact more recent research by the Association of University Teachers (AUT), one of the two HE trade unions, demonstrates that the gap between the average salaries of women and men academic staff has widened (AUT, 2001a). Also, only 42% of women academics have full-time permanent positions compared to 59% of men; and women are 33% more likely than men to be employed on fixed-term contracts and 550% less likely to be professors (Higher Education Statistics Agency, AUT, 2001b).

Thus it not surprising that the national campaign to increase the number and quality of women's positions in professional and managerial positions (originally named Opportunity 2000 now renamed Opportunity Now) singled universities out as 'under-performing employers' who had 'signally failed to make enough progress in promoting women ... which sends a bad message to the next generation'. Using academic job titles, the campaign revealed very clearly that women in universities had not been able to overcome the obstacles that exist in 'long-established, very traditional environments' (EOR, 1997).

REASONS FOR WOMEN'S UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Evidence points to the fact that women students and academic staff still face a combination of structural handicaps and prejudice in the academy. As the statistics above demonstrate academia in the UK was created and is largely perpetuated by men for men. It is possible to argue that despite the raising of lifelong learning on the government's agenda for students, which could be extremely useful for women with

their pattern of educational and career breaks for caring responsibilities, universities are still not fully embracing this idea. Even the increase in students in the context of the government's predominantly vocational and instrumental view of higher education can be seen as a gendered phenomenon as their idea of lifelong learning is focused almost entirely on the 18–30 age group. Given women's patterns of career breaks and continuing responsibility for the informal care of family members, this is too early a cut-off point for them. Even Greenwich University, which is notable for a high number of mature students, uses a definition of maturity as over 21 or at the highest over 25 years old (MacLeod, 2005).

For academic staff, on the one hand, while transparent formal university processes seek to locate appointments and promotions policies within equal opportunity legislation, other important informal processes are opaque, if not invisible, e.g. definitions of merit, and ways of fostering career development. Rather, these latter rely on particular forms of self-promotion, promotion by certain influential others, and subjective interpretation of policies in a way that tends to marginalise women.

There is an enduring myth in academia that the 'best' candidates for a position or promotion are appointed. Barbara Bagilhole and Jackie Goode (2001) examined and exposed the widely held idea of an individualistic academic career that demands a certain kind of self-promotion, which is still perceived as an ideal model of achievement by those in senior positions. They demonstrate that there is a basic contradiction. While this idea is maintained, at the same time men gain over women through an inbuilt patriarchal support system. They do not have to make a conscious effort to be helped by it, thereby perpetuating the male cultural hegemony. Most women (and some men) are not admitted to this support system and if they are seen as needing or wanting to set up their own system in order to survive; this is viewed as a weakness. This conundrum makes HE a problematic work environment for women.

At the heart of male cultural hegemony in HE is the notion of men as knowledge creators and women as reproducers. As Michèle Le Doeuff (2003: x) argues there is a need 'to ask about the substance of what is commonly called knowledge or about the cultural milieu in which individuals and "knowing" meet'. Women's continuing exclusion from as much intellectual work as men makes it difficult for them to take part in the construction of knowledge.

There is a powerful norm which means that women are expected to take greater responsibility for teaching and learning, including the pastoral care of students, rather than research (Warwick, 2004). Women academics report higher levels of teaching and pastoral care of students than their male colleagues. Male academics discourage students from taking up their time, and encourage their women colleagues to take this heavier burden. This means that men can concentrate their time and efforts on research and publishing, the activities which receive the highest rewards in terms of status, promotion and ultimately financial reward (Bagilhole, 1993). This

differentiation of roles is common across the various grades in academia (Bagilhole, 2002). For overworked women academics research becomes a personal indulgence.

Val Walsh (1995: 86–7) asserts that: 'Acknowledging the roots of the academic and the scholarly within the psychosocial world of men has generally been resisted by male scholars' while men 'monopolise the construction and production of knowledge, and deploy it to their own ends'. Mary Evans (1995: 73) argues that 'control, rather than consumption [of the curriculum], is in the hands of men' therefore the academy's 'claims to universal and generally applicable knowledge – have to be challenged'. Women academics being in a minority find it hard to take up this challenge. In fact, the majority of women academics view being a minority as a major disadvantage. They suffer from the duality of being both 'invisible' and 'extra-visible'. Like all minorities, they are less confident of their abilities, less willing to take risks, less able to negotiate for their needs, and they experience performance pressures, and marginality. Women academics report social isolation and are less integrated into university departments than men (Bagilhole, 1993).

In universities men rule and their ideas are the 'ruling ideas'. Academia is perceived as male and the common language of the university is masculine: 'Rigid standards, stiff exams, hard and soft disciplines'. Being in a majority men are inducted into the profession under the tutelage of male models and mentors. They have more natural access to these support systems than women as men hold the senior positions (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001). This gives men a way of learning that Sarah Delamont (1989: 29) calls the 'indeterminate skills' of a profession; 'the taste of a group, its characteristic taken-for-granted view of the world ... tacit, indescribable competencies'. This sponsorship enhances men's self-esteem, self-confidence and their careers. Women have particular difficulty in securing access to academic networks, which are a crucial ingredient of professional career success. Network connections are looked for in promotion decisions. They bring mutual career benefits through collaboration, information exchange, contacts for research resources, career planning, professional support and encouragement (Bagilhole, 1993).

Many women in non-traditional, male-dominated occupations report difficulties with relationships with male colleagues, and some leave their positions because of negative relationships. They feel like 'outsiders', and that they do not really belong. They are 'double deviants' in that they work in a male environment but also expect equitable rewards (Bagilhole, 2002). Sexual harassment is a common experience for women academics (Bagilhole and Woodward, 1995). Also, women academics experience problems with male students in terms of questioning of and challenges to their authority (Bagilhole, 1993).

WOMEN'S INDIVIDUALISTIC STRATEGIES

So what have women done? In the past the most common strategies identified as adopted by women academic have been individualistic and it must be said from the statistical evidence above singularly unsuccessful.

Becoming a Token Chap – One of Them

Patricia Duncker (1999) in her novel based on the true story about a woman who pretended to be a man for 50 years provides us with an extreme example of one strategy adopted by some women academics. James Miranda Barry as a male impersonator had a career across three continents as a surgeon in the British Army. Only after her death in 1865 was it revealed that she was a woman. Especially pertinent and interesting for this chapter is that it was the desire to enter Edinburgh University, which was the catalyst for her life as a man.

> 'Listen, soldier [*sic*],' said Francisco [her father], 'would you like to study properly? At a university?'
> 'Yes,' I whispered, suddenly feeling sick and shivery.
> 'Well, that's what you're going to do. There's just one thing that you'll have to remember from now on. You never will be a girl. But you won't find that hard. You'll just go on being a tomboy.' …
> 'Welcome aboard, James Miranda Barry. You'd be wasted as a woman. Join the men.' (60)

We have no idea how many women passed as men in Victorian England. However, some contemporary women academics, although less dramatically, have tried to become one of 'them', wishing to deny their experiences as 'outsiders'. They show strong commitment to the male model of the profession. They try to rid themselves of all female characteristics, feelings and interests in order to survive. They do not want to be suspected of identifying with women. In contrast to male colleagues, they do not appear to favour members of the same sex.

There has been a considerable amount written about token successful women who succeed by using male criteria, and their subsequent failure to support other women 'by pulling the rope ladder up after them'; the 'Queen Bees' or 'Margaret Thatchers'. They are seen to experience a certain piquancy from being in a very small minority, or even the first or only woman, to have achieved their position. They are strongly individualistic and tend to deny the existence of discrimination against women. Thus, they assume the role of an 'honorary man' (Bagilhole, 1993).

Working Harder – Being Better Than Them

Another individualistic strategy identified in studies of women academics is that of working harder than the men around them and 'being better than them'. An historical example of this could be the most famous woman physicist, Marie Curie. Born in 1867, she was recognised for her work with Nobel Prize awards in both physics (1903) and chemistry (1911). As a mature student she got a late start with

her education, obtaining her *licence* in physics in 1893 and the corresponding degree in mathematics in 1894. In 1903, she finally received her doctorate. In 1910 she succeeded in isolating pure radium metal. She died in 1934 of leukaemia, thought to have been brought on by her extensive exposure to the high levels of radiation involved in her studies.

Her biography reveals that she faced discrimination as a woman. However, it concludes that 'She really won her battle as a woman by being as good if not better than men. The idea of choosing between family life and the scientific career did not even cross Marie's mind. She was resolved to face love, maternity and science, all three and to cheat none of them'. Whilst her achievements should not be belittled nor anything taken away from her reputation, how exhausting this all appears! Also, this strategy cannot work for all academic women who cannot all be 'superwoman' and better than the men. However, it is important to recognise that academic women are undoubtedly as good as academic men and should be rewarded for being so.

Women academics find themselves in a situation of conflict well known in research on minorities. They behave in accordance with their minority status. They are determined to succeed on the basis of their own merits, with no hint of patronage. One strategy that women academics employ leads them to strive to be incredibly conscientious and dedicated, putting excess pressure on them selves. This is reflected in the fact that most women academics feel they have to be better than their male colleagues to succeed (Bagilhole, 1993). It may be that this is actually so, as the Wenneras and Wold (1997) study showed. They interrogated the files of the Swedish Scientific Research Council to attempt to find out why women scientists received less grants than their male colleagues. They found to their astonishment that women who had been successful had in fact to publish more than successful men.

SO IT'S TIME TO DRAIN THE SWAMP

The word 'challenging' in the title of this chapter has been carefully chosen. Whilst women academics are unfairly challenged by the nature of the academic institution and the processes within it, just by their very presence they are also challenging to it. Therefore, as 'challenging women' it is important to consider strategic ways forward to effect change. It is argued that the often individualistic and unsuccessful solutions that women academics have adopted in the past should be rejected, and that consideration should be given instead to a strategically collective way forward. Also, it is argued that as liberal approaches to equal opportunities have failed in universities, there is a need for positive action measures to improve the position of women. Hence, the exhortation to 'think about draining the swamp'. When people are under threat, discriminated against and disadvantaged, they are likely to behave unquestioningly, and try to change themselves to 'fit in'. In other words – 'when you

are up to your ass in alligators you won't think of draining the swamp' (Holly, 1993). Importantly, women in the academy need to work strategically to transform the academic swamp – not themselves.

It must be recognised that it is the organisation and process of higher education that is the problem not women academics. As Eileen Byrne (1993) points out: 'If a plant fails to flourish, to grow or even to survive in our human-constructed garden, we do not blame the plant. We examine the soil; the position; the nutrition; and so on. We accept that it is we who have created an inappropriate ecological environment and that we must adjust that environment if plants, other than the indigenous hardy ones, are to survive and flourish'. The same must be done for the academic garden/environment.

The reality of the continuing and intensifying 'commodification' of higher education in the UK contains many restrictions and processes which dispropor tionately impact on women to their disadvantage (Bagilhole, 1995; Goode and Bagilhole, 1998). The major assessment exercise for research and publications has certainly in the past disadvantaged women if they took time out for maternity leave. Also, women academics cannot passively wait around for initiatives from the higher education sector to improve their position. As I have argued elsewhere (Bagilhole, 2000) these initiatives, for example, the Daphne Jackson Memorial fellowships for women returners to science and engineering, have proved to be 'too little too late'.

So to succeed it is argued here that there is a need for pragmatism. Women academics need to acknowledge the continuing and increasing pressures of accountability on academics. They need to adopt 'horses for courses', and 'render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's'. They need to show they can succeed in the goals now set down for a successful academic. However, they can only do this successfully from a collective approach.

The following two traditional Japanese sayings sum up quite aptly what happens to women academics, if they attempt an individualistic strategy. 'Being different is a very hard row to hoe', and 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered down' (*New Internationalist,* May 1992: 231). Therefore, women academics need to support a 'new girl network' analogous to the 'old boy network' for help in exchange relationships. An example of setting up of just such a network is the Through the Glass Ceiling Group (TTGC). In 1990 a group of some 40 invited senior women managers in higher education met in Birmingham, at the conference 'Breaking the Glass Ceiling'. The conference overwhelmingly decided to establish a more formal network. Their stated aims which they continue to pursue are to:

- establish a network of contacts between women working at senior levels in higher education;
- address issues of management development and management culture particularly, but not exclusively, as these concern women;
- provide opportunities to monitor and share good practice and training in equal opportunities;

- encourage women, via training, networking and monitoring to enter the world of educational management;
- make and maintain contact with other management development and similar groups.

(TTGC, 2004).

This group recognises that we must not be fooled by the image of an individualistic academic career we are sold by many men in the academy. The illusion is one of the academic as 'Superman' (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001), a man, a single operator (perhaps with a sidekick), one who can essentially go around solving problems single-handedly, asks nothing of others, completely in charge of his own destiny. Although where the male academic departs from Superman is that he wants as many people as possible to know his name.

The above is not reality. Academic careers are dependent on the support of colleagues and superiors. Men (and the very few women) who succeed accumulate these advantages, despite the lack of acknowledgement by many that this is so. For example, citations of published papers by others in a field are part of the process of gaining visibility and reputation. Another finding from the Christine Wenneras and Agnes Wold (1997) study was that an important factor contributing to Swedish scientists' success rate in getting research grants was whether they had collaborated with any of the people sitting on the decision making committee in the research council. These were overwhelmingly men, and thus the 'old boys' network' was seen as alive and well.

So we see that the skills needed for a successful academic career can be exposed as being part of a socialisation process, rather than only being part of an individual's natural talent or personality, that some men and virtually no women are allowed to participate in. The socialisation of successful academics involves reliance on colleagues to maintain their surveillance of the literature, for technical help, for friendship, informal communications, collaborative work, and co-authorship. There is no easy way for academics acting as individuals to make their own work 'weighty' for others in the field. Success is not achieved by publishing more, or even doing better research, but through personal contacts, friendships, and co-operative work with key players in the field (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001).

Judith Lorber (1994) identifies this circular proliferation of prestige, resources, and power as the 'Matthew effect'. This is because when talking about faith the Gospel of Matthew proclaims that: 'For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath'.

POSITIVE ACTION

When writing about the lack of success of women academics, Helena Kennedy (1996: 2) stated that: 'Whenever the absence of women at the top of any area of public life is raised, the inevitable response is that it is only a matter of time. Like fish growing feet, women are apparently evolving into suitable candidates and will get there in the end but the process should not be forced'.

However, as Thornton (1989: 127) starkly commented, 'the hegemonic, homogenising and institutional constraints which operate within the academy, the quintessence of arrant individualism and competitiveness, have rendered the realisation of action by and on behalf of women as a sex class impossible to achieve through a liberal framework'. Therefore, we need to construct a 'less domesticated and tamed' strategy to improve the position of women in universities, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Marshall, 1996). Ann Brooks (1997: xi) showed that 'a policy of affirmative action is capable of reaching parts unstimulated by a less robust commitment to equality'.

Also, the Academy of Finland (2001) (the country's leading national research funding body) made a press release about their Equality Plan, on International Women's Day. Their ground-breaking plan for 2001–3 contained a 40% quota for the minority gender (women) in academic researchers. Where applicants were equally competent and qualified for the research posts, it declared that preference would be given to the minority gender. The plan applied to all researchers funded from Academy sources, and they proclaimed that they hoped to see the whole academic community in Finland and around the world follow suit. Research teams applying for funding would have to provide an account of their gender breakdown and any staff recruited when submitting their final report and when seeking new funding. Extensions were to be granted to research posts and projects on the grounds of maternity, paternity and parental leave, and male researchers were to be encouraged to make use of their legal right to parental leave. Also, researchers with children were to be entitled to a 20% increase in scholarships for research training. Also, special grants were available for women and young researchers for periods of 2–6 months to prepare research plans.

It is argued here that such positive action initiatives are not only desirable in the UK, but imperative and possible. What they need is political will, which includes adequate resources.

CONCLUSION

Women academics are dedicated and committed, but disadvantaged and discriminated against by organisations and processes that are not fair to women, in a profession designed by and for men. Thus, the slow increase in women's

representation mostly at the bottom of the academic hierarchy cannot alone shift the nature and the process of attaining a successful academic career. The famous strategy of 'add women and stir' can only have limited results because it does not deal with the essence of the problem. Women academics need to challenge the academic process to make universities places 'for' women.

This is not an easy task. The production of academic work is heavily reliant on all kinds of collaboration, and whilst the discourse of women's preferred ways of working is characterised by a co-operative, collaborative ideology, it is not something that women have traditionally thought of in a strategic way, as something which can be embarked upon instrumentally to advance their own careers. However, this needs to change, as women create and exploit their own networks.

There is always a constant tension for women in the academy. They need to change the rules of the game and subvert the system of which they are to some extent a part. They have to 'bite the hand that feeds them' and 'be the enemy within' without totally destroying the profession – a game fraught with tension and hazard. However, this must be done because, as shown above, unless women set up their own 'sisterhood' women's success is dependent on the men in power who are largely working to maintain their and others men's positions. Reality for women in a man's world is that at some time or another, often a crucial time, she will realise that her male colleagues never really considered her 'one of them'. Therefore, women must promote each other and themselves strategically.

More women are now becoming survivors in a male preserve (David and Woodward, 1998). This needs to be perceived as an 'accomplishment' and translated into strategies for the 'transition from surviving to thriving'. Women must systematically and strategically include themselves in all gatekeeping activities in academia (Bagilhole, 2000). Unless exclusion becomes inclusion the negative circle for women is likely to continue to be reinforced.

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Chapter 2

WOMEN: MOTHERS AND OTHERS

Discourses of Women and Motherhood in Three Academic Departments

Karen Ramsay
Bradford College

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I reflect on empirical data collected in the early 1990s by myself as part of an MPhil thesis, which explored how different academic departments articulated sex and gender differences, and the relationship between gender and academic disciplines and academic cultures. Being a 'woman' emerged in the data as closely linked to caring, nurturing, mothering, and women as 'mothers' in the workplace were at times visible and highly valued as bringing something different to the department. In this chapter I reflect on this data in the context of the changes that are taking place in higher education, particularly in terms of widening participation in higher education and lifelong learning. The first part of the chapter outlines some key texts that make links between gender and organisation in academia. The second part of the chapter briefly describes the methods I used to collect the data, and the third part of this chapter presents some of this data in case study form. The data described here do suggest that women are affected by cultural expectations of motherhood, and that men who 'mother' in academia are feminised or seen as exceptional. In many ways this chapter does suggest that while higher education is in flux, gender relations in higher education, although changing, remain significant to an understanding of academic culture.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 33–52.

BACKGROUND: GENDER, MOTHERHOOD AND ACADEMIC CULTURE

Susan Halford, Mike Savage and Anne Witz (1997) argue that gender is 'embedded' in organisational practices. In banking and nursing, for example, organisation hierarchies reflected traditional gender roles in the family: bank managers are 'fatherly', while in nursing sisters are 'motherly', thus creating notions of gendered authority which effectively maintained the occupations as gender specific. In higher education gender is embedded in academic disciplines, the academic hierarchy and management practices (Smith, 1975; McDowell, 1990; Knights and Richards, 2003, Deem, 2003). Recent changes in higher education, such as widening participation, lifelong learning and new managerialism are impacting on women in diverse and often contradictory ways (Knights and Richards, 2003; Deem, 2003).

Linda Leigh McDowell (1990) argues that the organisation of academic work is constructed around family ideologies where the academic has a partner who deals with domestic needs, allowing the academic the freedom to work long and continuous hours and to have an uninterrupted employment career. She cites as examples of this underlying ideology the competitive 'publish or perish' culture in many departments; the value of visibility at conferences, which are often organised during the school holidays; and the lesser value given to family commitments. She claims that in academic organisations, the definition of success has developed around a concept of masculinity, which is individualistic and competitive.

A decade later, David Knights and Wendy Richards (2003) find that masculinity continues to inflect academic cultures with values that tend to favour a male way of life. They do note that while changes to the UK higher education system have heralded some greater opportunities for women, these tend to be in so-called 'softer' disciplines (social sciences and humanities), and that meritocratic systems that measure productivity, such as the Research Assessment Exercise ignore and obscure the reality of many women's lives as mothers and carers. Widening participation in higher education and lifelong learning require a much greater emphasis on teaching approaches that are accessible to non-traditional students, and on the pastoral care and support offered to students. As mothers, potential mothers, and even non-mothers, women are frequently positioned as caregivers in the system (Ramsay and Letherby, 2006) and therefore likely to benefit from the changes taking place in the culture and processes of higher education. However Rosemary Deem's research (2003) suggests that women's careers in academia continue to be disadvantaged by gender and by their roles as mothers.

In a study of women in pharmacy, Rosemary Crompton and Kay Sanderson (1990) found that women were actively sought out and often viewed as superior to their male counterparts, and the flexible contracts in this occupation made pharmacy an attractive career for women who wanted to combine professional employment with childcare. There was an assumption that women would have children, and that women (rather than men) would reduce their working hours to accommodate their

role as mother. This 'moral despotism' of motherhood which determined the balance of paid and unpaid work not only reflected the decisions the women made on the birth of their child but was a feature of the 'marketing' of this occupation to young (school age) women. The study by Crompton and Sanderson identifies the decisions that women themselves make in terms of the balance of employment and childcare and reflects Catherine Hakim's claim (1996) that some women actively choose motherhood as their main career and take employment that fits around their domestic responsibilities.

Halford, Savage and Witz (1997) suggest that gender appears to be less central to notions of authority or suitability at work. Instead people are being judged in terms of 'performativity', the ability to get things done through competitiveness and dedication to the job. However, this new apparently gender-neutral type of authority is dependent on the relationship between home life and work life, and they conclude 'performativity' 'valorises the independent, lone individual with no other commitment' (Halford, Savage and Witz, 1997: 264–5) and diminishes the importance of those people who have other commitments or value other aspects of their life.

In the organisations studied by Halford, Savage and Witz (1997) women were actively sought as potential employees, as they were seen to bring certain qualities required in a heterosexual culture: organisations rely on heterosexuality to maintain mixed-group order, to encourage bonding in team work, to define the status of a person's role and fundamentally, through sexual harassment, to maintain divisions between male and female occupations. Halford et al. refer to this as 'productive heterosexuality'. Thus, while women are no longer excluded from certain areas of the organisation, a particular form of feminine identity and behaviour is sought after and encouraged by organisational managers. In higher education organisations there is a similar process emerging, where women, as mothers and caregivers (whether biological mothers or not) are an institutional resource, and women, whether mothers or not, are sought after and shaped by organisational requirements (Ramsay and Letherby, 2006).

RESEARCH SITES AND METHODS

The remainder of this chapter deals with the data from the three academic departments that I studied. The data was collected through three case studies: the Civil Engineering Department at Uphill University, the History and Cultural Studies Department at Uphill, and the Mechanical Engineering Department at Green City Polytechnic. The pseudonyms I use for the two institutions reflect some aspect of my experience of the institutions during the time I collected the data. The data was collected in 1991/2, prior to the Polytechnic becoming a University, and throughout this chapter Green City is referred to as a Polytechnic rather than as the University it

later became. The data was collected at a time when the higher education system was changing and restructuring, and in my reflections at the end of the chapter I will comment on this.

My research strategy was influenced by my feminist politics and practice. My starting point was the feminist critique of positivist social science models which encourage researchers to produce abstract, 'alienated' knowledge which does not take account of the social 'embeddedness' of all knowledge claims (Kelly, Regan and Burton, 1992). Feminist researchers seek to make knowledge claims which are socially situated and the product of an 'academic labour process' (Stanley, 1990). Thus, like Gayle Letherby (2003: 79) I felt that 'the "dirtiness" of so-called "hygienic" research and the associated damage to the data collected (and potentiality to the lives of those represented) it is important that we consciously make our practices as transparent as possible'.

My decision to employ qualitative methods was both personal and political, and academic. Personally and politically I was committed to methods which did not silence submerged voices and experiences. I was uncomfortably aware of how bureaucratic and scientific management practices silenced many women and men working at the bottom or edge of the organisation. Research methods, which reflected positivist epistemological assumptions of an objective reality which can only be known through scientific, hygienic methods reminded me of my experiences as a subordinated worker; and I developed a political commitment to deconstruct the division between the expert, scientific knower and the passive object of study who responds to the researcher/managers preconceived and partial understanding of the world of the worker. Qualitative methods, especially as discussed by feminist researchers such as Anne Oakley (1981) struck me as politically and methodologically valid because they gave voice subjective experiences, and facilitated a description of the 'reality' of organisational life as a socially situated construction (Denzin, 1983), rather than as an inevitable and foregone conclusion. However, I am aware that I did fall into the 'gendered paradigm divide' (Oakley, 1998 cited by Letherby, 2003:86), in that I equated a certain method, the unstructured interview, with 'good' feminist practice. I rejected certain methods, notably the questionnaire, as 'masculinist', and I recognised in retrospect (Ramsay, 1996) that may, have produced equally useful though different data, and in a less personally painful way.

My strategy was to collect qualitative data that reflected the respondents' interests and experiences, although the research question was defined through my interest in women in academic cultures. I used three main research methods: participant and semi-participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and documentary evidence. My aim was to submerge myself in each of the departments. I studied each department in turn, for two to three days a week for twelve weeks each. I devised a research timetable, which was loosely followed in all three departments.

Most ethnographic research 'recipes' (Turner 1988) advocate a significant period of time spent in observation, followed by interviews. In this way, the interview topics are derived from and are relevant to the research context. I decided to follow these recommendations: I spent the first four weeks of each study observing and talking with people, making no attempt to direct conversations. This gave me a feel for the departments: who spoke (or argued) with whom, what the presentation rules were regarding clothing, interpersonal contact rules and so on. However, academic work is often solitary, and apart from formal meetings, much of my observation involved hanging around in the departmental office, the photocopying room and corridors waiting for something to happen. I often recorded in my field notes feeling visible, vulnerable and embarrassed, particularly in the two Engineering Departments where few women were visible beyond the departmental offices.

After approximately four weeks of collecting observational data I began to interview people in the departments. My interview style was conversational, with turn taking, respondents asking me questions and me answering. My aim was to understand their perspective and experience, and not solely to collect data, and therefore I was an active listener and active participant in these interviews, as I needed to clarify my understanding by interrupting, probing and questioning the interviewee. In many cases, with both women and men, these interviews really did feel like chats, and I often thoroughly enjoyed the experience. However, in some cases when interviewing certain male academics, it was clear that I was expected to be a passive audience to a masculine performance and none of my conversational cues, such as breathing in at the end of a strip of speech, or saying 'can I go back to … ' supported me in being active in the conversation. Sometimes I felt used as an emotional punchbag. In other cases, some men sabotaged the interviews by answering in monosyllables, indicating their discomfort or hostility to my questions. In these cases I felt that the men had agreed to be interviewed because to refuse might indicate some opposition to my research. Some of the women students were hostile to being interviewed as it marked them as 'different' to the male students.

While these experiences were often emotionally difficult to handle at the time (in Ramsay, 1996 I address some of these issues), this process did result in rich data by the end of the case study period in all three departments. I transcribed my observations and interviews at the weekends but I made little attempt to formally interpret the data until I had finished all the case studies. This was partly because I was so exhausted and partly because I was terrified that I would construct themes based on my emotional state at the time ('I hate this', 'they are all stupid'). I kept a diary and recorded my ideas and feelings throughout the process, which proved invaluable to me later.

My analysis involved coding each strip of conversation, and then linking similar units of data together into themes. Initially this felt very mechanical and I doubted whether I would arrive at a valid interpretation of the departmental cultures, as I felt that I was manipulating the data. Nevertheless, through this process a picture

emerged that I could check against my observations and field diary. This method of analysis can best be described as 'grounded' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, I was the 'instrument' of analysis (Stacey, 1991) and I already had a conceptual framework drawn from my feminist theorising, from my experiences in the field, as a feminist researcher and from my ontological standpoint (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Letherby, 2003) as a feminist. The following section of this chapter presents this data in case-study narrative form.

WOMEN IN CIVIL ENGINEERING AT UPHILL UNIVERSITY

The discipline of civil engineering has its roots in capitalist industrial development and in the modernist project, characterised by efficiency and progress. While civil engineering has brought the benefits of modernity to the material environment (transport systems, bureaucratic modern buildings, bridges which unify disparate areas of land), it has a reputation as dirty, technical and physically masculine which sits uneasily with the values of the professional middle classes who have sought to educate their daughters. This reputation makes it unpopular with young women and it is one many engineers in the university were anxious to dispel. One professor goes out to schools and other institutions and is determined to change this attitude:

> Many of the people ... would be horrified if their daughter were to enter civil engineering because their image is that it is a man's job and that it is a second-rate job; they would much prefer their daughters to be doctors or lawyers. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

This reflects a common solution to the problem of women in engineering: change the perception of engineering, rather than change what it means to be a 'woman':

> If you talk to a ... 12 year old, they will tell you it's a man on a building site with a wheelbarrow, a man. But when I tell them what civil engineering is about it is often the women who are more interested. I show them examples of pollution problems, using computer simulation. You're often doing mathematics which is thought provoking, which the women like. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

Rather than showing that women can do dirty technical work, the emphasis here has been to present engineering as gender-neutral and intellectual rather than technical. However, while the departmental culture was not perceived as a problem, the culture of engineering projects was another matter:

> The trouble is getting the experience in the drawing office and the building site. The building site is a hard-hat and welly-boot environment, and I don't think it is going to be too easy to change that. I think there are still some who can't kick the habit of wolf-whistling at women rather than working with them. (Gerard, Senior Lecturer, Civil Engineering)

This positions the problem outside of the department: 'they' are sexist, but 'we' are professional and gender-neutral. However, the reality of life in the department was unwittingly revealed during a conversation:

> If you took the applied social studies definition of harassment and applied it to engineering, then almost every student in our department can be flung in court and put in jail for years. It is not a realistic definition of harassment. If you have a room saturated by men, you hardly ever get a woman in there and if a woman walks in they are going to look at her. It's just the environment. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

Within this context, women who do enter engineering have to be able to tolerate this environment. Women who choose engineering are sometimes seen in the department as different to other women students and to the male students. Andrew, a Principal Lecturer, who is very supportive of women's equality projects, described the women students as 'more adventurous' and he wondered whether:

> If that was a kind of characteristic, a kind of tomboy rebel at school: shock 'em all, let's do something really different, let's go for engineering!

Women who enter engineering are often viewed as rebellious and adventurous. This view of women contrasts with the expectations that are placed on the women to conform to models of femininity that draw on discourses of women as essentially more caring and nurturing, more responsible and more conformist than men. While sexuality was rarely directly referred to, the observable culture was heterosexual, with clear categories of masculine and feminine behaviour and this culture made heterosexuality compulsory by its expectations of femininity.

> I'm the closest this department has to a woman (Andrew, Principal Lecturer, Civil Engineering)

The above exert comes from Andrew. He acts in a number of roles. As a Personal Tutor he sees many of the women students, he is involved in the departmental and institutional Equal Opportunities Committee, he acts as the Overseas Students Tutor, he is the named harassment contact tutor, he is a Student Counsellor at Student Services and is seen by many as a representative for gender issues in the department. Some lecturers told me that they felt that he did such a good job that they did not need a woman in the department to support the women students.

In this discourse 'woman' means caregiver. This notion of 'woman' justifies women's inclusion and their exclusion in department. The department had begun to diversify the curriculum to include environmental sciences which is of more interest to women. The Head of Department saw this as a way of including more women without weakening the scientific foundations of civil engineering.

> you have to accept that women are women and men are physiologically different and women have a more maternal instinct, and when they see the TV screen and the kids dying in Ethiopia, from lack of water, they do care about that more than men. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

However, the characteristics that women carry with them or are ascribed to them also justify their partial inclusion in the department:

> You'll never get a 50/50 split in the work force because not all women are in the labour market at any given time. Most women don't take less than two or three years (out of employment when caring for children). At least from my experience. Whenever my wife has had children she has been out for two or three years. Most mothers because of the maternal instinct will want to take a few years out, if they can afford it. So that's nearly 10% of their (working) life. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

Women, as potential mothers, were perceived as 'change agents'. Unlike the women who used their heterosexuality to win an unfair advantage (see below), 'women' who cared were seen as bringing maternal values to the discipline:

> Civil engineering has saved more lives than the whole medical profession put together with sanitary systems stopping cholera and dysentery, which have been caused by sewage and water pollution, and if we can increase the numbers of women the caring part is going to come to the fore. (Andrew, Principal Lecturer, Civil Engineering)

Andrew drew on a discourse which valued women because they were different from and better than men, on the basis of their ascribed role of mothers in society. A different discourse of women emerged in discussions with him of women's academic abilities, which were not seen as contradicting their maternal advantages. Women students were described as more outgoing, more organised, more mature:

> the groups which have a larger proportion of women in them finish their lab work quicker, write it up neatly – and much more intelligently structured, it is just such a pleasure to work with them. (Andrew, Principal Lecturer, Civil Engineering)

They conformed to academic standards of what a good student should do. However, many of the women students themselves sought invisibility in the department: they wanted to be like any other student (male). Versions of 'I just want to be one of the boys' were repeated to me many times by the young women I spoke to. Those who accentuated their gender (rather than scholarly) differences were labelled as a problem by some of the male academics:

> You've got two types of women in an Engineering Department. You've got what I would regard as 'students' and they are women, but they might just as well be men; the fact that they are women is irrelevant. They come to engineering because they are interested in engineering. They don't want to be treated any differently from the male student. [Pause]. And then you have a not insignificant number of women who are conscious of the fact that they are women in a male-dominated profession and they want to cash in on it. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

Most of the women I spoke to fell into the first category; they wanted equal treatment and to be treated as 'one of the lads'. They linked this to their treatment on work experience placements; in order to qualify as candidates for the Chartered

Engineers qualification, the student must have a balance of office and site experience and the women did not want their gender to exclude them from the masculine culture on site.

The second type of women students:

> Turn up at lectures smartly dressed: no man turns up to lectures in aftershave as a student, most men don't clean their shoes when they are students and most women don't bother with make-up. When they go for a job it's very different. Very few of the men wear ties but the very day they leave this office they start to wear a tie. And very few women wear tights, but the day they leave this office they invariably begin to wear make-up, tights and smarten themselves up. So there are some women students who do cash in on the fact they are women. Now they do perhaps prefer you to call them by their first names because they like to have attention drawn to them. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

Women who draw attention to themselves by engaging in male pursuits, by being assertive or emphasizing their femininity are seen as cashing in on their minority status. An incident serves to illustrate this distinction. A group of students (all male) had been refused in their request for a class extension on a piece of work which all the students were struggling with. A second delegation, two women, succeeded where the males failed. A notice was put up by the male lecturer involved which said that 'because [students' names] have been to my office and beaten me up I've given an extension on this work'.

> Now these women loved this, they told the boys, look what we've done chaps, you owe us a few beers. They revelled in it. (Cliff, Professor, Civil Engineering)

The departmental culture tended to value formality between role inhabitants. Formally this was defined in terms which drew on the division between the public world of employment and the private world of emotional relationships and sexuality:

> I think we have intellectual and educational and social relationships between men and women, and then there are sexual relationships. They're separate as I would see it and I can't see why we can't behave as human beings to each other when we are working and can't behave as pairs and partners when we want to rear children. I don't see why they shouldn't be separate most of the time, because let's face it, we are talking about 24 hours a day. (Gerard, Senior Lecturer, Civil Engineering)

When formality is reduced there is space for sex-role spillover. Women's behaviour becomes interpreted through their ascribed role in the private arena of the family, sexuality and emotion. It was this that one of the Professors feared when women who enhanced their femininity acted assertively.

This distinction between the private sphere of sexual relations and the public sphere of social relations facilitated the two discourses on women's identities and behaviours. The Head of Department articulated a discourse which defined women

as different through their relationship to the private sphere; the Professor was aware of this and was keen to discourage behaviours and language which would remind men that they were working with 'women'. In this way motherhood would appear, and then disappear when differences between female and male students was seen as a potential barrier in terms of supporting women's participation in engineering.

'Difference' was central to discussions of women's participation in engineering. Characteristics associated with feminine and masculine principles were drawn on and used to explain appropriate professional female behaviour. Primarily this involved heterosexual passivity for the women and active heterosexuality for the male students; professional behaviour for the women involved not using unfair advantages when competing with the boys; the most distinct advantage the women had was their sexuality in a compulsory heterosexual environment. Women who used their sexuality were cheating in a fair game.

The women students were ambivalent about this kind of strategy. On the one hand, they saw it as drawing unwanted attention to their different/gendered identity which they feared could cause them to be excluded on site, if not in the academy. On the other hand, they cheerfully admitted to manipulating their male peers with kindness or light-hearted flirting. When the manipulation was subtle (and a secret tactic) they were comfortable. When it became public knowledge it removed some of its power to influence and left these young women feeling vulnerable.

In this department, women's differences were drawn on and celebrated by some academics, but the women students, and some academics were concerned that 'difference' would lead to women being treated less equally. This is a theme that becomes even more clearly articulated when looking at mechanical engineering at Green City.

WOMEN IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING AT GREEN CITY POLYTECHNIC

Mechanical engineering also has a reputation as dirty, hands-on (and therefore not professional), and most academics in the Engineering Department at Green City were keen to dispel this myth. In conjunction with the Marketing Department, adverts for the School of Engineering were monitored to ensure they included images of the women students. The in-house newsletter carried images of women working on one of the main projects, a racing car built in the department. However, there was some muted dissent from some of the male academics as mainly male students and staff had built the car; the women had only a peripheral role in this project.

The low take-up of places by women was explained by the only woman engineer in the department in terms of the unpopularity of maths and hard sciences at school:

> Let's be honest, with english or history you can hide weaknesses. Part of it is presentation; if you can write well you can get away with not knowing all the facts. You can be a generalist. In maths and sciences if you don't know something, you don't know it. It's more demanding and many students are not that committed to learning hard maths or science. (Jean, Senior Lecturer, Mechanical Engineering).

Boys, she felt, were not always that enthused by maths or sciences at school and girls are not pushed enough to develop these skills and it is easier for them to excel in subjects which reflect 'feminine' skills. For the women students, it was the excitement of being part of a project that produced something at the end of it which motivated them.

The 'girls' described themselves in terms which suggest pioneers: women who do engineering have to have thick skins and not mind being stared at or teased. 'Teasing' was the term used to describe incidents where the women on the shop floor had been whistled at and had suggestive remarks made to them.

> They [the men] do that to anyone who's soft ... you have to work with them, not antagonise them. (Sally, Second-year Student, Mechanical Engineering)

These young women gave the impression of pity for these men who were so insecure that they feared people who were different to themselves. While Sally was the most vocal of this group of women, the others shared her interpretation:

> They [the men on the shop floor] will use anything to bring you down; you're new to them and they want to get one over on you. But they are OK once you show them you know what you are doing. (Phillipa Third-year Student, Mechanical Engineering)

> ... yeah, get them on your side ... by showing that you know what you are doing … be as good as the lads. (Ann, Third-year Student, Mechanical Engineering)

Women's lives were obscured in the way mechanical engineering was taught in the school. Mechanical engineering informs the organisation of many aspects of women's lives and healthcare was one area that they studied. However, the most recent and exciting project was the construction of the racing car which women had had a peripheral role in and had not driven at all. There was little attempt to introduce more domestic appliances as examples of the social application of mechanical engineering. When I suggested this to the women students they sneered at the idea of doing anything that was so 'boring' and domestic. I got the impression that engineering was a route, not only into a career, but out of domestic servitude they saw other women caught in.

Most of the women students were members of the Women's Engineering Society, which hosts conferences and seminars, and while this helped women to

network and gave them professional role models, they resisted separatism and chose to have men as honorary members, because they feared being ghettoised. They were all keen to be seen as engineers first and women second. The 'uniform' for both male and female students was jeans, sweatshirts and T-shirts, and none of the women appeared to use the strategies identified in the department at Uphill of using their femininity to gain advantage in the polytechnic.

However, one of the main reasons for recruiting women onto computing and engineering was to encourage the men to apply. While the female students were viewed as an academic asset in the department, they were often talked of by the male members of staff in sexual terms:

> Eighteen-year-old boys, well, sums are one thing but at the end of the day you want someone to sit in the refectory with and have a bit of a laugh with. And you don't necessarily want to be talking about cars and football all the time. (Carl, Senior Lecturer, Mechanical Engineering)

This was referred to as the 'crumpet factor' by a number of humanities lecturers, who talked resentfully of being expected to provide 'crumpet for their boys'. Men in the Engineering and Humanities Departments talked of the lack of women in engineering in different ways. In engineering the absence of women was 'caused' by the schooling system which failed to 'fire up' girls (and boys) for scientifically based technical subjects. The Humanities lecturers were at times scathing about the sexist attitudes of the men in engineering, particularly the students, and it was felt that little was done to challenge the attitudes held by the young men. The men in engineering appeared to feel helpless to change these attitudes. Humanities men thus felt themselves as being superior in the gender politics debate.

The women in engineering were keen to limit their differences to the male students and many women students I spoke to were football fanatics and many also played for the women's rugby team. Many of these women had brothers, fathers, uncles who were engineers and it was these family members they identified with and aspired to. While many said their mothers supported their career decision, their mothers did not feature strongly in their reflections of how they came to engineering.

Some women students had recently been to a Women's Engineering Society conference and came back full of enthusiasm for what women were doing. The enthusiasm was not that women were doing exciting things, but rather that they had the opportunity to be involved in something innovative in engineering. They were keen to show that what women did was equal to (that is, as good as) what men could do. Separatism, for them equalled 'less than', needing extra help, and these young women, rightly, felt they were equal to the men. When asked about the conference, they were quite pragmatic; they had not gone because it was for women, but because they could get funding for it. They saw little difference between men and women, other than in the eyes of society, but were prepared to trade on this 'difference' if it helped.

In showing that they did not discriminate against women students, most male lecturers emphasised the women's equality with the men students. 'Equality' in this context meant the obscuration of the social reality of women's lives and particularly the social organisation of biological reproduction. This was reflected in the women's own stories of how they were as good as the men. To engage in a discourse of difference also meant talking about aspects of their biology, which had, in the past, rendered them unsuitable for professional employment.

However, the inclusion of women did not extend to including or valuing any traditional subjects or characteristics associated with femininity. There was a clear division between femininity (and by extension the private sphere) and professional characteristics of intellectual and technical competence, which were associated with the public sphere of work. While these were not articulated as masculine, the women were concerned to avoid being associated with feminine traits of helplessness, dependency or technical incompetency. However, they were willing to use men's vulnerability to emotional manipulation on work placements.

WOMEN IN HUMANITIES AT GREEN CITY POLYTECHNIC

The issue of femininity and masculinity emerges clearly again in the final case study, where particular values associated with femininity, especially of nurturing and the support of weaker students are needed by the institution. At the Civil Engineering Department at Uphill University the role of this femininity had been played by a man concerned with 'others' (women, overseas students). In the final case study these 'other' students are in a majority, and while women are statistically more equally represented, the person who emerges as a caregiver is an older 'motherly' woman.

Five distinct groups coalesced during my study of humanities at Green City. These were part-time tutors, at that time all women; postgraduate students, many of whom also taught part-time; older men who had been in the institution for some time, were settled and did not seek further moves; young staff, both women and men who were still making their career moves and intended to move on; and one older woman who was settled.

While talking to the part-time women lecturers there was a clear sense of an organisational hierarchy. They were workers who had little say in the way their work was managed. However, it was not only that they were excluded on the basis of their part-time status (they were invited in the 'departmental' meetings but were not paid for that time); many did not want to take part in what they saw as a male-dominated exercise. The full-time women workers had no choice and had to develop skills to deal with the masculine culture of the department.

In this way, women were partially excluded from the decisions in the department and this at least contributed to the choice made by some of the women not to involve

themselves more in the department. A distinct subculture had developed amongst these women. The central actors in this drama were women who had taken women's studies as part of their first degree and valued a 'women's ways of being' above the rational combative style of masculinity which was tolerated in the public meetings. The culture of these informal meetings was one of inclusiveness. Unknown women (myself, for example) were included openly and participation was encouraged. The style here was one of reciprocal friendliness. The 'horror' stories neophytes use to elicit support were listened to with sympathy and ideas for coping in the institution shared.

The culture of the department was urbane. People had time to sit around talking to me and to each other about current issues. However this, I was told by Neil (Lecturer, Humanities), was a fabrication. People were seen as competent when, and if, they worked long hours and put their own work before their family or private life. The unclear boundaries, for non-mothers at least, between intellectual work and home-based leisure were drawn out by him:

> I think when I'm in the bath; I plan lectures while planting potatoes. How are they going to monitor and manage that kind of intellectual work? That can't be filled in a form, can it?

However, for Jane, a new member of the department, it was not the institution's bureaucratic practices as such that were oppressive:

> Because we don't have the weight of pressure from the institution, people don't see the pressure. Because it is all face-to-face interaction, it's difficult to say no. You know? You have to work out how you are going to manage this, how you are going to say no, but then you say yes. It's difficult.

None of the men talked of the pressures they faced in this very personal, emotional way. The pressure of work was explained in a language of material objects, papers to write, documents to prepare, forms to fill in. All of these had an interpersonal relationship attached to them that made them meaningful but this was not how the pressure was explained. The distinction between the public material life of the academy and the private, personal, emotional experience was kept intact for the men in this culture.

The most senior woman in this department was the main wage earner in her household and was career orientated on this basis. She was pragmatic about her relationship to the polytechnic, seeing work and emotions as separate issues; her private experience was kept to her personal life. For the younger women their identity, less formed through marriage or motherhood, was more tied up with their working life. And because their strongest emotional ties were with their women colleagues, their private emotional experiences were discussed more openly with other women in the institution. Further, the division of public and private was worked out differently for men and women. For many of the younger women, influenced by postmodernist debates in feminism, emotions and civil life were not separate; these were socially constructed distinctions, which reflected a masculinist way of being in the world.

One of the main issues referred to by many of the full-time staff was the use of and employment rights of the part-time staff. Part-time staff were central to the department. They could not get enough funding for more full-time staff, but a temporary budget was available for part-time staff; therefore the use of part-time hours was a strategic decision, to cope with financial restrictions. Most staff viewed part-time contracts as a feature of academic life and a main port of entry for young academics. This of course obscured the experiences of part-time workers who intended to remain on part-time contracts owing to domestic responsibilities. At this time there were no job share opportunities in the department and part-timers were a peripheral group in terms of the decision-making processes. While there was some movement from this secondary labour market to the primary labour market of full-time employment, most full-time posts were filled from people in secondary labour markets in other institutions: the most recent permanent, full-time posts had been filled by external candidates (one male and one female). The preference for 'new blood' was a bone of contention for some of the part-time staff, many of whom were parenting and were less geographically mobile as a result. The movement from the secondary to the primary labour market was restricted for them as their institution preferred to use them in the secondary labour market and encourage them to be the 'new blood' elsewhere.

While most lecturers were (or wanted to be) involved in pastoral care and personal tutoring, the part-timers only saw the students in seminars and tutorials and were therefore very conscious of the emotional work they engaged in, during teaching and counselling. Some felt that they were not given the recognition or support for this work. One story which was circulating at the time concerned a part timer, a mature graduate of a degree in the department, who, as a part-time tutor, and as an older [read maternal] woman had put in a lot of unpaid work (marking, pastoral care and preparation) and was presented with a £5 book token.

This story was told with some anger by a group of women in the coffee room. This was indicative of how undervalued the part-time workers were, that their overtime could be belittled like this. It was also, I was told, a reflection of how feminine tasks, the 'housework' necessary to keep the school 'tidy', were undervalued. All staff had to do this work, but the part-timers were not rewarded for it in their contracts, and so it became visible and was illustrative of how some tasks (lecturing class contact, research) were symbolically valued by payment, and other tasks (pastoral care, preparation) were not seen as 'work' but an extension of the person's personality and role elsewhere.

Full-time staff, while embarrassed by the insensitivity of this action, also felt that it indicated the way that their work as academics was being fragmented and standardised. Academic work involved a wide range of activities that could not and should not be quantified.

However, some talked of the dangers of placing too much emphasis on emotional rather than intellectual work that they were there to educate, not to

counsel students. This brought a fundamental schism into focus: many of the (women) part-timers experienced academic work as emotional, while many of the full-timers saw it as intellectual, and emotional issues were private.

What came through these women's conversations about academia was that they wanted to express themselves, to give voice to their own experiences of the world, and education had given them a window into a world where personal opinion and subjective ideas seemed to count. Especially for those who had done Women's Studies or feminism, academia created a space for them to explore feminism. However, the reality was something else:

> I never seem to stop. I don't know where work ends and my life begins. Everything is work. Watching TV, reading; it's all about work: I think, can I use this when I'm teaching? (Sally, Post-graduate Student and Part-time Lecturer, Humanities)

Listening to these women talk and comparing it with the women in engineering I was struck by my own empathic connection to those in humanities. The hopefulness, although dented by experience, contrasted with the pragmatic acceptance of the women in engineering that they had to fit in to, rather than change, the world. The women in humanities were sensitive to the patriarchal history of academia but felt the culture was more plastic than the world of commerce, and thus more able to be changed. Reading feminist histories helped this; women had changed the world and they were part of this history. The women in engineering explained the 'problem' I posed as one of access. The epistemological foundations of engineering were not a problem. The world had an external, material reality and it was this that had been denied to their mothers and foremothers and it was this they sought to challenge.

In summary, this humanities case study was characterized by a diversity of opinions. The range of disciplines brought together under the guise of the school may have accounted for the higher level of conflict openly articulated in the school. A culture of liberal debate was particularly evident here. The relatively strong presence of women of different ages and ethnic backgrounds reflected the disciplinary diversity. This was facilitated by the flexible labour market strategy, necessitated by a large number of students and the limited staffing budget. Women were not assimilated into the department, in the manner favoured by engineering staff and students, rather women had a distinct and different identity, articulated through feminist challenges of academia as a patriarchal institution. However, the tolerance of difference also allowed misogynistic values to survive unchecked, contributing to some women opting out of departmental decision making processes.

The frontstage of the institution had become more bureaucratic and standardised, and while this was experienced by some as the loss of 'community' and excluded non-committee individuals, the backstage and understage dramas were still subject to partisan political gameplaying, which excluded people not part of the understage dramas. Both the public and the private spheres were articulated in this department more through emotion than through sexuality. The emotional labour exerted by

academics was less valued than the intellectual labour which produced papers, reports and lectures. Particularly, women who 'mothered' students were accorded less value.

There was more space here for women to explore womanhood through feminist discourses and, like the women in engineering, their career decisions took the form of rejecting traditional feminine role models; in the humanities however, there was a greater value attached to a distinct feminist identity, although this was not shared by all women (though it might be argued that all women benefited from it).

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

From these three case studies it can be concluded that academic culture is unified in one respect: all the departments shared a common gender order which was accounted for by reference to dominant discourses of motherhood, what Albert Mills (1989) refers to as 'extra-organisational rules'. In all three departments there was, to a greater or lesser extent, a symbolic division of values and characteristics associated with the public and the private spheres. However, the articulation of the woman-as-mother discourse was mediated by the departments' disciplinary culture and strategic aims.

In the Humanities Department the woman-as-mother discourse was used to account for the predominance of women in part-time and marginal positions in the department. Societal forces were drawn on in this account and the department was the 'victim' of women's own choices to put their family first. Hakim (1996), in a study of women in British labour markets, also placed importance on women's agency and the choices women make between paid work and unpaid domestic work. She found that women either choose a career and put motherhood in second place, or choose motherhood and take part-time work which fits into the mothering routine. Hakim is keen to dispel the myth that women are powerless victims of a patriarchal society, whose choices are determined for them; instead she celebrates the rational choices made by women who put motherhood first. However, the pattern of women working part-time in the Humanities Department was not devised as a solution to the problem that women faced of juggling a career and motherhood. Rather it was a pragmatic solution which resolved a financial problem and enabled them to employ a relatively cheap and flexible labour force. In addition there was a policy of 'new blood' appointments, which meant that the women part-time lecturers were less likely to be employed by the polytechnic on a full-time contract, and were less mobile owing to their family commitments. As a consequence some of these women were trapped in part-time positions with little opportunity for advancement.

Traditionally, the institution's employment of its own graduates was the first port of entry for the neophyte academic, and this was certainly the case in the

Humanities Department, but as a result of the preference for external candidates some of these women were likely to stick at the bottom of the hierarchy.

As a consequence of this, some of the women part-timers were central to the staffing of modules and undertook a significant amount of pastoral care work, seminar tutoring and other 'housework' tasks in the department but had little control over their own labour process. As this work was done by women-as-mothers, the meanings constructed around the function of part-time lecturing positions were changing from a port of entry to a permanent position and the employment of part-time staff was moving on to the agenda through the actions of a senior full-time woman academic in the department.

A particular meaning was given to this woman-as-mother identity in the Civil Engineering Department, where sexuality also emerged as an issue in women's workplace identities. A 'good' female student was one who symbolised the caring values and characteristics of a mother, but who also made herself invisible in the masculinist heterosexual culture of civil engineering. The asexual, passive mother was held up as an ideal for women students, and those women who used their traditional femininity vis-à-vis heterosexual masculinity were seen as a disruptive element, cheating in a fair game. The 'moral despotism of motherhood', described by Crompton and Sanderson (1990) in their study of pharmacy, was also articulated in this department. It was assumed that women would leave the profession while their children were young, and this was presented to young women during their introductory talks while at school. In addition, and like the Humanities Department, engineering was seen as subject to the choices that women made to put motherhood before career.

In all three departments women, as students and to a lesser extent as members of academic staff, were valued in a heterosexual culture where they brought skills and represented values which were needed but missing in the departments. In this way women's heterosexual identities were 'productive' (Halford, Savage and Witz, 1997) in the departments, and was the justification for their inclusion and their exclusion in these departments. As Halford *et al.* found, women's assumed heterosexual identities acted as a stabilising element, encouraging team bonding and male competitive behaviours.

The women interviewed and observed in the three departments employed a range of strategies to manage their identities in relation to the male-defined culture and the meanings attached to being a woman. It is in the analysis of women's strategies of managing their identities that the differences between the engineering and humanities cultures become most apparent. In engineering the dominant coping strategy was assimilation, women sought invisibility and wanted to be treated as 'one of the boys'. However this also involved conforming to traditional stereotypes of 'good' women (asexual mothers) who supported and gave validity to the masculine pub and sport culture without challenging it by becoming a 'boy' and doing it as well as a boy. Women who did use traditional feminine symbols of make-up and skirts but also acted assertively were perversely sexualised in this culture.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

I have attempted to show how discourses of motherhood contributed to the inclusion, partial exclusion and segregation of women in academic departments. While motherhood was a common theme in all three departments and continued to shape young women students' identities (whether as something they rejected or accepted), the discourses of motherhood were fragmented and contradictory. The women students in both Engineering Departments showed little interest in mothering and were more concerned with building their careers. In contrast, women's robust participation as students in the humanities has meant that motherhood, and a celebration of women's differences is more fully embraced in this culture. However, although motherhood was embedded in certain roles and functions, these roles continued to be challenged and debated by the women involved.

The data, although now some ten years old, do highlight the extent that widening participation and a strategy of lifelong learning, require more than simply recruiting more women into non-traditional disciplines, or non-traditional students into academia generally. As Jane Thompson (2000) argues, it is not enough to squeeze more people into the system as it is; widening participation calls for a strategic change of the system. In this case, apparently gender-neutral management styles and meritocratic performance evaluation methods, such as the Research Assessment Exercise, need to be examined and understood as reflecting a particular masculine discourse that favours more men than women (Knights and Richards, 2003). The gendered division of academic work continues, with women being associated with the caring and pastoral work (though as Gayle Letherby and John Shiels (2001) show, it is work that is undertaken by both women and men, but unvalued when women do it), and given the political rhetoric of the New Left we might expect these tasks to be highly valued. However, so much of this work cannot be measured or the value quantified, and this work continues to be obscured and devalued in a system that is more and more structured by managerialism and market economic policies.

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Chapter 3

THE GENDERED IMPLICATIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AUDIT

Quality and Equality

Louise Morley
University of Sussex

This chapter raises questions about whether quality assurance has transformative potential in relation to gender in higher education. Quality assurance precipitates change, but it is questionable whether it incorporates an understanding of gender equity. Equity issues are not automatically performance indicators in quality audits in the UK. In taxonomies of effectiveness, the organisational world is presented as a rational surface, untainted by the chaos of unequal power relations in which the lived world is constituted. When gender equity in higher education is included, it is invariably represented by quantitative signifiers of change in the learning society e.g. the number of women students in science and technology courses. The policy context of lifelong learning often overlooks how gender structures opportunities. Indeed, gender is not a discourse in current UK higher education policy on widening access, as there is a common belief that the increase in the number of women undergraduates is a testament to modernisation. Whereas in current UK policy, participation of working class students has gained some attention, gender is not seen as a variable to be intersected with social class (DFES, 2003). In access debates, recognition of women's quantitative participation, without consideration of vertical and horizontal distribution, is assumed to lead automatically to a redistribution of opportunities and entitlements. This can also be seen as a politics of representation, or critical mass, with assumptions that all women's interests are now attended to simply by increasing the numbers in some disciplinary areas, at some levels and in some organisations.

Audit has produced a culture of measurement that is reductive and incompatible with the complex ways in which gendered power is relayed. There is very little attention paid to the sociology of gender in relation to quality in higher education. I wish to state what is obvious to feminist audiences i.e. that gender is qualitative as well as quantitative in higher education. The role of higher education in disrupting

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 53–63.

and reinforcing gender and class relations is an ongoing debate (Archer et al., 2003; Morley, 1999). Universities can be amplification devices for gender inequalities. They can also operate to challenge gender inequalities by enabling women to gain social and professional capital that underpins financial, intellectual and professional independence. Yet I also wish to argue that the quality and equality movements in higher education appear to have developed on two separate trajectories. For example, quality accolades do not necessarily coincide with equity achievements. Some of the most elite research organisations in Britain, with consistently high scores in the UK Research Assessment Exercises (RAE), also have the worst record on gender equity. Today, only 8.8 per cent of Cambridge professors and 9.5 per cent of Oxford professors are women compared to a national average of 13 per cent (Personnel Division, 2004).

Quality, it appears, is accompanied by a series of losses and gains for women in the academy. Yet there is a marked lack of intertextuality between higher education studies and feminist theory. Feminist scholarship has had limited influence on thinking about quality assurance. The lack of conceptual apparatus to evaluate quality means that it continues to be represented as an example of a modernist, rationalist construction of the universal subject, whereby teachers, researchers, managers and learners are constructed as disembodied, cognitive, socially decontextualised entities.

As quality and equality are both discourses, they are multidimensional. State intervention is perceived as transformation, democratisation and empowerment by some, with generative potential. However, for others, it is a form of symbolic violence, or state-legitimated bullying. For example, signs of quality have been introduced to reassure consumers that their interests are being met. These can be classified as consumer empowerment. However, it is important to ask what signs of quality are being evaluated and whether these are socially contextualised, and indeed, socially constructed. A key question is what counts as evidence of quality and are these gender sensitive. In the area of teaching and learning quality in higher education there has been the introduction of an array of mechanisms including learning contracts, guidelines, assessment criteria, learning outcomes, core skills – all of which in various ways attempt to systematise and codify student/teacher interactions. Herein lies a major contradiction. Neo-liberalist policies such as quality assurance in higher education can appear to be creating new structures of opportunity, voice and influence for traditionally silenced or subordinate groups. They can also be conceptualised, particularly by service providers, in terms of increased regulation and surveillance. To challenge the latter implies disapproval of the former. Hence there is often limited discursive space for resistance or even discussion of alternatives. Resistance to the corrosiveness of quality invariably leaves one open to charges of lack of care and attention students' entitlements and their lifelong learning. This is what I call the morality of quality.

In my professional practice, I have witnessed how the morality of quality often means that many women get co-opted into quality assurance work, with varying responses. I have been interested in how women experience and interpret recent policy developments. To that end, I have conducted a study based on semi-structured interviews with academics and managers including 12 women in Britain's 'old' universities and 6 women from 'new' or 'modern' universities. The sample referred to in this chapter comprises 10 female academics and 8 female managers. The informants were chosen for their involvement in audit. Some managed or co-ordinated the entire organisation's preparations while others were involved at departmental, subject or course level. Views of women with a range of engagements in quality assurance were elicited. There were critics, product champions and those who occupied both positions simultaneously. Informants criticised, relayed and transmitted quality discourses. They normalised and disrupted dominant constructions of quality assurance in the academy. Some offered gender-sensitive interpretations while others described their experiences and feelings unmediated by analytical frameworks.

My research seems to suggest that quality assessment procedures appear to be reinforcing gendered divisions of labour and employment regimes in the academy (Brooks and McKinnon, 2001; Morley, 2001; 2003). At the risk of introducing crude binaries, there is some evidence that teaching quality is female-dominated, while research quality is male-dominated (Morley, 2003). The morality of quality can be profoundly gendered, with women heavily responsibilised for student-focused services, while men are frequently more connected to the thrusting power of international research and publication. Some women's career ambitions can be more easily tied to domestic, rather than the worldly arenas. There has been some sex role spillover, with women's socialised patterns of caring getting appropriated by the teaching quality movement in the learning society.

In relation to quality management of teaching and learning, some women in my study have moved away from the status of research activity and into the world that ties them to organisational development and new managerialism (Morley 2001). So, while women are well represented as reviewers and managers of teaching quality, they are under-represented both as producers and reviewers of research quality. Diana Leonard (2001: 17) points out how, in the 2001 RAE, fewer than one in four panel members and only one in seven of the panel chairs were women, and that the panels chaired by women were responsible for allocating less than 10 per cent of RAE funding. Furthermore, men are almost twice as likely to be entered in the RAE than women (Knights and Richards, 2003). The point about transparency in the appointment of assessors has caused such concern that it has been noted as a recommendation in the Roberts' Review of the Research Assessment Exercise (2003: 40).

> The funding councils should monitor and report upon the gender balance of sub-panel members, sub-panel chairs, panel chairs, moderators and senior moderators.

A further argument relates to the possibilities for subversion or rearticulation. This suggests that the quality agenda can be appropriated to enhance the rights of less powerful groups e.g. students for whom English is a second language, students with dyslexia (Luke, 1997). As I have argued, quality assurance is a contradictory space. It is a regulatory, identity and entitlements project. It is represented as an emancipatory intervention, promising consumer empowerment and customer care. In that sense, there is some overlap between quality and equality. Externality has traditionally been an important driver for change for equity issues (Glazer, 1999). Carmen Luke (1997) argues that accountability measures, the `institutional economies' of quality assurance, and the new contractualism can be harnessed for equity ends. Jill Blackmore (1999: 47) also suggests that 'equity can be built into all contractual arrangements'. Externality is a key component of quality audits too. Yet in the UK's knowledge economy, there is a marked lack of integration of measures for quality and equality.

GENDERING PRODUCTIVITY

The two quality accounting systems (research assessment and teaching and learning) in Britain are contributing to polarised employment regimes and changing subjectivities and identities. Women and men in the academy often appear to be on different career trajectories. Women are already disproportionately concentrated in areas and institutions with the lowest levels of research funding (Lafferty and Fleming, 2000). Women, in general, apply for fewer research grants than men (The Wellcome Trust, 1997). The socially constructed indicators of career success reflect existing divisions of labour, with research at the top of the hierarchy. The quality movement could reinforce this.

In the UK, the Wellcome Trust and six of the UK's Research Councils commissioned an independent report from the National Centre for Social Research to analyse application and award rates. Some 3090 academic staff from 44 HE institutions were surveyed between October 1999 and February 2000. Of the women questioned, 50 per cent had applied for research grants in the previous five years compared with 59 per of men. This work showed that women also made a smaller number of applications and were less likely to be the principal applicant; they sought lower levels of funding that their male counterparts, and generally applied for grants for shorter lengths of time. In addition, only 46 per cent of women applied to the Research Councils or the Wellcome Trust for their grants compared with 65 per cent of men (NCSR, 2000). Only 22 per cent of Economic and Social Research Council grants were allocated to women in 2002/3.

This poses challenges about how to interrupt a gendered vicious circle. If women are too heavily burdened with teaching, they cannot do research. If they don't do research they are then ineligible to apply for senior posts. In addition to these

structural barriers, there are attitudinal barriers. In Sweden, Christine Wenneras and Agnes Wold (1997) found that eligibility criteria were gendered, and that women needed to be two and a half times more productive in terms of publications than their male counterparts to get the same rating for scientific competence.

The exclusion of many women from research opportunities might account for why so many get incorporated into quality assurance procedures for teaching and learning. For some of them, this provides a welcome opportunity to be included and valued. Involvement in quality management creates career opportunities for women, while simultaneously pushing them into a career pathway strongly associated with organisational housekeeping. A lecturer in my study discussed the gendered division of labour:

> There's us four junior women who are between 31 and 41 and we're none of us promoted and something has really had a sort of braking influence on all of our careers…we've all been pushed into the convening classes, teaching classes, taking on pastoral care. All these things which, I mean I think are terribly, terribly important but you don't see the men getting pushed into them…

Signs of productivity are socially constructed. The informant describes herself and her women colleagues as being less productive because they are producing fewer texts while focusing on quality teaching. Their work has less value as they assume responsibility for the domestic labour of teaching and administration while their male colleagues are left to focus on research. However, even when women do perform to the research agenda, they can also be judged wanting. Johanna Wyn et al (2000) note how research productivity has a hidden curriculum too, with certain areas being perceived as outside the mainstream e.g. qualitative inquiries, feminist research, and research on or by women. This raises important questions about whose knowledge counts in learning societies and economies.

It is a widely held view that research assessment is about regulation rather than creativity. I wish to question just how productive academics need to be! The imperative for productivity is perceived by many as punitive and more related to governmentability than to creativity. A reader commented on how peer competition is harnessed to enhance productivity:

> … this department, because it's got the five star rating sort of thing, it feels like a spiralling pressure, because everybody is sort of almost, not exactly putting pressure on each other, but you just get a sense that everybody is producing more and more, and more. So it's sort of spiralling upwards, the work.

The pressure seems to be paying off. Ivor Crewe highlighted Britain's (underfunded) productivity:

> The UK remains the second most important producer of scientific and scholarly research in the world in almost all disciplines and punches well above its weight. With 1% of the world population, it accounts for 4.5% of the world's spend on science, but produces 8% of the world's scientific papers, and 13% of the most highly cited. It wins 10% of internationally recognised science prizes and has produced 44 Nobel prize winners in the last 50 years. In fact UK research

> productivity is far superior to that of the US: our hard working academics produce 16 research papers for every $1m invested compared with the 10 produced in the US and the 4 in Japan.

Britain, it seems, is a world leader in the production of texts. Yet the costs are high in terms of occupational stress, the work/life balance and social relations. In the discourse of research productivity, competitive individualism is rewarded. In my study, moralised collectivism was frequently positioned in opposition to aggressive self-interest. A lecturer argued that the extensive administrative preparations for quality audits and the accompanying preoccupation with teaching and learning, requires significant amounts of self-sacrifice which is profoundly gendered:

> Often it's women that are doing an awful lot of the labour, and an awful lot of the work… and it seems to me if people are going to misbehave in terms of kind of their commitment to work in relation to all this, then they're more likely to be men than women.

Some members of the academic community see participation in the labour intensive preparations for audit as an essential part of maintaining good social relations – or a form of moral credit. Some social groups are more easily able to 'sign off' from duties of care, or set clear boundaries of responsibility, than others are. The material and symbolic resources of some members of the academy allow them to evade the pastoral and emotional labour requirements demanded by the changing economy of higher education. A senior lecturer commented on how delegation can be a euphemism for 'dumping':

> And one of the problems, as we all know in the academy, is that often it means that certain individuals construct their lives at the expense of others, and that is what happens in labour production in the academy, and I think that the QAA is one more formation which encourages that. It encourages people to dump on others, it encourages people to escape, and I can understand the escaping, and the getting out of it, and the leaving it to others, but when you actually are one of the others that it's left to…

Audit requires vast amounts of textual evidence (Newton, 2000). Data gathering and bureaucratisation invariably entails extra work for women. Quality assurance requirements make greedy organisations even greedier (Currie et al., 2000). There was a strong sense among some informants that it is work for work's sake -a kind of disciplinary regime to wear down the spirit. A principal lecturer commented on the demoralisation caused by preparing documentation that is never actually consulted:

> I mean taking back the boxes… It is obvious that a very high percentage of them just haven't been looked at ...These beautifully prepared boxes, exactly as we left them, in the room, and there are an odd one or two that you can see they've been through, that the corners are turned, and they're not in the wallets. But I would say that a fifth of the evidence has been gone through, if that. And that's just so soul destroying really.

The preparation of documentation and audit trails consumes women's time in a way that does not necessarily serve their long-term professional interests as a group

or as a collective. Dorothy Smith theorised the social division of labour as far back as 1987. She highlighted how women's invisible labour promotes men's authority. Celia Davies (1996) also wrote about women's 'adjunct' roles whereby male professionals are kept aloof and elite by armies of women who deal with the clutter. Women often appear to occupy adjunct roles in quality management, that is, they are appointed as deputies to focus on the quotidian details of assuring quality. A senior academic registrar observed how the male vice-chancellor needs to be protected from the labour intensity of teaching and learning quality:

> Within the senior management we have a pro-vice chancellor for teaching and learning, and she is the leading light when it comes to all things to do with enhancement and teaching, and pedagogy and all those sorts of things. … she's also engaged in quality assurance. The vice-chancellor himself chairs the quality committee. Which is seen as an important thing to manage and be seen to be close to if you like. But his involvement with it is much less direct than the pro-vice chancellor for teaching and learning for example, he's obviously not got the time available to spend working through these things.

A professor noted how even after having broken through the 'glass ceiling', she was still negotiating gendered divisions of labour:

> I am the only female professor in my department…every time that I get a research grant, my male head of department tells me that it must not affect my teaching… So, I start every research project feeling guilty and needing to prove how committed I am to students. The result is total exhaustion and overwork…I don't see my male colleagues getting torn like this.

Horizontal relations are also gendered it seems, with male professors feeling entitled to regulate the work of their female counterparts. It also seems that audit reinforces vertical power relations. A senior lecturer described how a male manager delegated and responsibilised her as a more junior woman:

> X's notion of taking over was to delegate everything and do nothing, and I then found myself reviewing the paperwork for something like sixty courses… I was given no extra time, I was given no administrative support. So I was auditing sixty courses on my own over the weekends.

Maybe women's labour can be appropriated for campus citizenship as women's time is worth less. Despite European Union Directives on equal treatment on pay, there is a sizeable pay gap between men and women in higher education (Bett, 1999). Analysis of data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency by the Association of University Teachers (AUT, 2001) shows that while women academics in the UK earned on average 15 per cent less than men in 1995, by 2000 the gap had widened to 16 per cent. This means that for every pound earned by a male academic, their female colleagues earn only 84 pence. Institutions at the top of the quality league tables also had higher gender pay gaps, with women at the London School of Economics, for example, earning 21 per cent less than their male counterparts.

In addition, centuries of status injury and intellectual misrecognition mean that many women themselves do not know their own worth. It appears difficult for some women to state boundaries or negotiate for better material remuneration as this contradicts gendered identities connected to altruism. Women academics often appear to negotiate a hybrid position between academic autonomy and the demands of compliance to traditional femininity. Some of my informants noted how women were being over-responsibilised with preparations for audits of teaching quality, whereas the more prestigious preparations for research assessment are undertaken by senior men. A lecturer commented on the gendered and generational aspects of audit:

> Well my theory is that it's younger female members of staff that take it (teaching quality) on in the first instance… my impression is that research committees are made up of, primarily, male members of staff, and those who head research committees and those that put in RAE submissions.

A senior lecturer speculates that women, especially young women academics, are more supportive of quality assurance procedures than their male counterparts:

> I do think also, that women of my age, I'm in my mid thirties, tend to be … more pro the quality culture than the men of my age. A lot of my colleagues are very against it and feel that their job is just to research. And sometimes I do feel that the objections are pursued along the lines that this is a surveillance culture etc., etc. A lot of my experience is it's my male colleagues who say that, my younger male colleagues, and they just feel it's encroaching on their research time essentially, and they feel that their job as academics is to do research, and not to do the form filling …

In this analysis, participation in quality preparations can be a form of role entrapment. It would be erroneous to represent women academics in terms of victim or angel narratives and to ignore hierarchies and power relations among women. Equally, unitary or deterministic representations of women and men do not contribute to knowledge about the complexity and multiplicity of experiences (Thomas and Davies, 2002).

INCORPORATING WOMEN

It is interesting to reflect on why women have been so heavily incorporated in teaching and learning quality. Apart from the obvious asymmetrical power relations in the academy, there could be socially constructed dispositions that make women more likely to take responsibility for the domestic labour in organisations. There is an affective aspect or psychic economy to quality audits. The continuous improvement discourse is reminiscent of the cultural pressures on women in general to strive for perfection. Powerful feelings are activated by the prospect of being audited e.g. shame, greed, guilt, fear, anger, desire, and pride. Naming and shaming is a central part of quality assurance procedures throughout the public services in Britain. Shame is a regulator of norms. Writing in Finland, Hans Mantyla (2000)

argues that shame is one of the very central aspects of academic work. The act of inspection itself has the potential for shame and humiliation. Becoming visible via inspections opens up the possibility of exposure of the flawed and lacking self that many women believe is their academic identity. Shame is connected to the belief that there is an ideal to which one is inevitably inferior. Fear of exposure of intellectual fraudulence and being judged deficient was a major preoccupation with informants. A senior lecturer described the effects of power on her body and her certainty of a shameful and humiliating inspection outcome:

> I had to leave at five thirty to go and pick up the QAA person to come and see me teach, and I was walking down the stairs with this person and I just felt sick in my stomach … and I actually thought I was going to vomit. And I was walking down the stairs thinking '…I feel ill, I feel sick… It was fear, it was anxiety, it was the thought that they were only going to see a few of us teach, that we could let the whole lot down if something went wrong, .. I felt totally surveyed…

A key consideration is why certain kinds of discourse produce ontological effects. The performative, according to Judith Butler (1998:280), 'can be one of the ways in which discourse operationalizes power'. The emotional costs and the impact on motivation, creativity and productivity are rarely factored in to thinking about quality assurance procedures in higher education.

A lecturer commented that in her organisation fear was purposefully activated in order to motivate people into preparing for teaching quality assessment:

> what the senior management team do is to is to visit at a certain point before the team are due, they organise trial runs. Their approach seems to be to terrify people in to proper action, and they do that through a, through various processes of sort of 'Oh we have to learn to play the game' but also 'You'll be humiliated if you don't.' And 'The university will suffer' sort of an economic argument. So there's sort of pressure in various ways. With them pressuring us really to take it on ourselves.

The discourse of excellence relies on activating fears about mediocrity. This can produce pressures that are so disabling that they in fact serve to convert excellence into mediocrity.

As I have repeatedly said, quality is fraught with contradictions and discontinuities. While audit is experienced as a form of symbolic violence by some women, it is perceived as a long overdue challenge to the elitism and mystification of academia. The accountability and putative transparency of quality chime in with equality principles. Furthermore, quality can offer new career opportunities for women. A lecturer relates how the quality industry is in the ascent compared to the descent of women's studies:

> … for some women it's been, you know a career opportunity… because they seem to be really good at administration … But again even that's like a double edged sword, I mean one of my very close friends and colleagues has got a promotion that now is much more of a kind of administrative role. She partly applied for that job because women's studies had been closed down at the institution where she worked.

The quality industry is perceived by some as highly generative. In much of professional life, there is a thin line between opportunity and exploitation.

SUMMING UP

Academic work is becoming more aligned with the service industries, with a remarkable lack of resistance from members of the profession. There is an assumption that quality is a common professional ethic and is therefore indisputable. Lifelong learning can result in a major distortion of work/life balance. Organisational members simply work longer hours to accommodate the increasing demands. This has equity implications, as men and women are often differently located in the struggles to achieve greater work/life balance (Deem et al., 2004; Morley, 2001). The policy of lifelong learning can imply that educators must have no boundaries. Richard Sennett (1998) observes that the imperative to demonstrate capacious, flexible responses is a characteristic of work in late modernity.

The academy is full of contradictions – structures are both enabling and restrictive. There are gendered sites of opportunity, modes of possibility and constraint. A tension in the audit culture is how women's interests are frequently subordinated to the larger goals of the organisation. If women do protect their own interests they are found guilty of neglecting their duty of care for others. Women's enhanced visibility as quality managers appears as a gain. However, short-term opportunities for individuals could lead to long-term constraints for women collectively in the learning society if quality continues to override or indeed overlook equality concerns in the academy.

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SECTION 2: PROCESS AND PEDAGOGY AT WORK

Introduction to Section 2

Pamela Cotterill[1], Sue Jackson[2] and Gayle Letherby[3]
[1]Staffordshire University; [2]Birkbeck, University of London; [3]University of Plymouth

SECTION SUMMARY

The authors of the chapters in this section consider themes of pedagogy and practice, raising issues regarding women's work in the academy that are as relevant to other education settings and contexts, and indeed to working in a range of organisations, as they are to higher education. Through auto/biographical reflection, life histories and empirical research the authors consider cultures of work, care and emotional labour, and measures of success and achievement for women in their lifelong learning. Concentrating both on the experience of women academics (especially Chapter 4, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) and on women students (especially Chapter 5 and Chapter 7) the authors in this section explore feminist practices within and in relation to non-feminist institutions.

In Chapter 4, Val Walsh draws on a peer-group life history project with 13 women academics from different white, working-class backgrounds. She considers some of the ways in which class and gender are spoken within life histories, and shows how class and gender shape experiences of subjectivity. The focus on this chapter then is on how women are variously positioned, and amongst other things, Walsh explores how the legacies from early schooling and from earlier self and external identifications impact on present identity. Concentrating on issues of language and emotion Walsh locates the experience of her respondents though an analysis of power relations. This chapter also provides us with a discussion of life history and demonstrates how in connection with feminist theory this method can enable us to ask and explore fundamental questions about the politics of knowledge production.

In Chapter 5, Jen Marchbank explores the development of feminist pedagogy within the field of information and communication technologies. She discusses how these developments can be approached to find new ways of delivering a feminist (or otherwise) curriculum in a feminist manner. Marchbank is concerned in her teaching to facilitate a dialogue between learners and teachers and she is concerned to encourage a more productive learning environment for students. Through a

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 67–72.

consideration of issues such as personal interaction, support and co-operation, access and safety Marchbank focuses on her own experience of using IT and considers just how feminist the process was.

In Chapter 6, Jocey Quinn focuses on the marketing strategies which have accompanied widening participation in UK universities. She argues that there is an emphasis, linked to the lifelong learning agenda, on marketing vocational degrees over more traditional ones and marketing the experience of higher education as consumer-driven and hedonistic. Students are assumed to study only in order to get a job and want to enjoy themselves socially in order to make studying palatable. Drawing on her study of two universities, Quinn suggests that marketing strategies which emphasise the pleasure principle in the student experience, are both gendered and ageist. The spirit of universities remains young, white, male and heterosexual. Yet Quinn argues that students have ways of constructing their own pleasures which are focused on the pleasure of study and learning. In particular, she notes that women students and women academics know the difference between the empty pleasures marketed by universities and the intellectual pleasures associated with the opportunities provided by intellectual space.

The final chapter in this section, Chapter 7, is written by Christina Hughes, Lynn Clouder, Jackie Pritchard, Judy Purkis and Viv Barnes who consider how the support and caring work that is part of the everyday teaching and administration takes up the space required for more prestigious research and publishing that contribute to career success. Caring then is a significant 'monster' and as it is women who are more likely to take responsibility for pastoral and caring work in the academy (see also Morley in this volume for further discussion in relation to quality audit systems and procedures) it is a monster that impacts on women's experience more than on men's. Yet, as Hughes et al. argue caring and pastoral work are also significant sites of feminist ethics in action, creating an alternative environment to that of competitive individualism. Focusing on vignettes from their own experience of teaching, research and administration the authors of this chapter reflect on their ambivalent relationship to 'care' in their daily lives as academics and propose that scrutiny of the foundations on which care in the academy is based is essential.

KEY THEMES

Val Walsh (Chapter 4) shows how experience and analysis can become woven as emergent theory. Despite the presentation of several themes below, we do not wish to show these as separate and discrete, but rather as interwoven themes that are embedded throughout this section. Whilst the authors of these chapters all consider higher education – both from the perspectives of women academics and women students – the themes that emerge will be recognised by readers working in other educational contexts and in other organisations. They are part of what it means to be

positioned in the gendered (and 'classed', 'raced', 'sexualised' and so on) workplaces in which we all find ourselves. We hope that readers will use and develop these themes, through their own experiences and analyses, to create their own emerging theories of process and pedagogy at work.

Knowledge Production

A key theme that runs throughout all four of the chapters in this section is the question of knowledge production. As Christina Hughes *et al.* show, we are all contradictorily positioned, and there is a need to question the privileging of identity where someone is believed to have *the truth*. This is a challenge taken up by Val Walsh, who advocates the use of life histories as knowledge production: a production of knowledge that is embodied and politicised in a feminist process which is part of women's survival and creativity. She argues that class consciousness as knowledgeable and creative can serve a specific contribution to knowledge production. Through life history approaches, argues Val Walsh, we are in a position to ask and begin to answer fundamental questions about the politics of knowledge production. Jen Marchbank was concerned to adopt innovative and empowering methods of assessment and she notes:

> It is my view that the emailed assignments assisted a feminist delivery of the class in a number of ways, … concerns re physical conditions and restrictions of times for students' work were ameliorated by students being able to select their own space, both physical and time, to complete assessments whilst specialised technological support was available for those with specific needs.

And Jocey Quinn challenges traditional scholarly 'worthiness' and demonstrates that knowledge production can be pleasurable.

Individualism vs. Collectivity

> Masculine ideologies are the creation of masculine subjectivity; they are neither objective nor value free nor exclusively 'human'. Feminism implies that we recognize fully the inadequacy for us, the distortion, of male-centred ideologies and that we proceed to think and act out of the recognition. (Rich 1986: 207 cited by Stanley and Wise, 1993: 59)

All of the chapters in this section challenge 'male-centred ideologies'. For example, Jocey Quinn questions the consumer-driven, marketisation of 'mass' higher education and the individualistic ambitions these promote. Through attention to method and methodology Val Walsh argues that auto/biography and life history approaches counter the individualism of 'the author' who places 'himself' at the centre of knowledge production, for the self is always implicated in relations with others who cannot be relegated outsiders. This is a theme continued by Christina Hughes and her colleagues. Although caring is a significant 'monster' for women, it is ambiguous and contradictory. They argue that there is a need to open up for

scrutiny the individualistic and competitive model that pervades work ethics. However, as Jen Marchbank shows, individualism and collectivity do not have to be viewed in opposition. In her development of feminist pedagogy and Information Communication Technology within the curriculum she has opened both individual and collective spaces for students.

'Massification' and Bureaucratisation

As highlighted in our introduction higher education in the UK in the twenty-first century is affected by both 'New Right' and 'New Left' policy and ideology. The impact of the focus on individualism, consumerism and quality pushed by consecutive Conservatives from the late 1970s through to the late 1990s has been recognised for some time. Similar strictures can also be seen to be operating in higher education worldwide. Thus, it is widely acknowledged that higher education is perceived as a product and higher-education institutions represent a 'service industry'.

Jen Marchbank asks how a mass higher-education system which is market driven and bureaucratised, and which succumbs to managerial pressures, can enable feminist pedagogic practice to operate. She shows how feminist academics can achieve this in a 'virtual' classroom, although at some costs to themselves. As Christina Hughes *et al*. show, women's caring work can both support feminist pedagogic practice and call into question women's identities as professionals. They argue that the consumer culture of higher education can shift the balance of power in favour of students, with ever more demands made upon women academics to engage in customer care. The material and political realities of the (quasi-)market relations of consumerism and financial restraint threaten women's work (or what is seen as women's work) in the academy. As Jocey Quinn concludes:

> Is it heresy to say that these monies spent on *lipsmackingthirstquelching* marketing would be better spent on *thoughtstimulatingideasgenerating* learning? So why this trend to market pleasure: what does it tell us about universities and their role? We need to ask, are free thinkers what our governments want, or do they want a soporific university full of dulled minds to bind to the global economy?

Lifelong Learning

More individuals in the UK have access to 'mass' higher education than ever before. In addition, the (New) Labour government's target for widening participation in higher education – to 50% of 18–30 year olds by 2010 – means that there are more to come. It stands to reason that if more of the population access university some of them will have fewer skills that those held by the 'traditional' entrant: less educational and cultural capitalism (e.g. Archer *et al*., 2003). Add to this the fact that in some cases educational inequalities have increased:

> economic disadvantage is linked with low levels of achievement (Kennedy, 1997), and 'since the late 1980s the attainment gap between the highest and the lowest social classes has widened' (Gillborn and Mizra, 2000: 18). Educational opportunities and achievements reflect not only class, but also ethnicity and gender inequalities, (Archer et al., 2003: 2)

For Jen Marchbank, an important aspect of lifelong learning is the process of feminist pedagogies. Although ICT was originally considered a masculine domain, she has found that feminist pedagogies have enabled her to deliver feminist (or otherwise) curricula in a feminist manner, using email and ICT to facilitate feminist pedagogic work. The 'virtual' dimension of this work enables students to use time and space in inventive ways in the development of their lifelong learning. For working-class and other women, usually those women placed as outsiders, education is complex and contradictory, and too often ignores or negates women's lifelong learning experiences. As Val Walsh shows, formal education offers both opportunity and censure, and can serve to colonise rather than empower. What many of the women in her study have learned is that the historical, social and academic contexts against which women academics from white working-class backgrounds construct their life histories are harsh. They are usually positioned within an assumed single working-class identity which is located in deficit and without culture. She argues that a life-history approach takes a more developed look at women's life experiences, and enables women to recognise the complexities of the learning that they do. Through a discussion of her own 'pleasures' in higher education and those of her respondents Jocey Quinn's chapter both challenges 'public' definitions of lifelong learning and celebrates 'personal' ones.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Whist the main chapters in this section concentrate on women's position in the academy, many of the issues raised equally apply to women outside of the higher education. Any woman may experience sexism at work, for example, or find herself constituted as 'outsider'. Joan Acker argues that both at national and world level, most of us spend our days in work organisations that are almost always dominated by men (Acker, 1990: 139). The workplace – whether that of higher education institutions or other arenas – remains highly structured with regard to gender, 'race' and ethnicity, social class, age, disability and other differences. Women continue to have lower average earnings than men and are more likely to be among the lowest paid, and furthermore women from lower socio-economic backgrounds enter the labour market at a lower rate than women from higher socio-economic groups (Purcell 2002). In the UK, women's employment rates are above the average of other EU countries across all working ages, and 11% of women in the UK are in managerial positions, higher than any other EU country (Women and Equality Unit, 2004). However, despite mass participation of women in the workforce, where it is

certainly the case that some women are surviving (indeed apparently thriving), the workplace remains market driven, highly bureaucratised and instrumental. In the EU, for example, more than 80% of all working women are found in the service sector where they are either employed or self-employed (WIDE, 2004).

Whilst caring work might be a significant site of feminist ethics in action, such women are likely to be employed in low-paid, low-status work, often without the security of a permanent contract. It is hard to find evidence that feminism has made any inroads into the production of new knowledges and different ways of being: indeed, we are more likely to be told that in an apparently post-feminist age the range of issues raised by feminists with regard to work no longer apply. Additionally, feminist pedagogies appear to have made little inroads into the lifelong learning agenda (Zukas and Malcolm, 2002), located within a discourse of vocationalism and individualism which locates women and working-class people differently from men and middle-class people and within which definitions of 'skill' are both gendered and classed (Jackson, 2003; Tosey and McNair, 2001). Such definitions exclude those whose contribution to the labour market is unrecognised or whose skills remain unvalued. Clearly, then, considerations of process and pedagogy at work raise issues for all women across the workforce. With reference to the experience of higher education the chapters in this section demonstrate the energy of the challenge that women academics and students can provide to entrenched (and newly formulated) oppressive ideologies and practices.

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Chapter 4

FROM TANGLE TO WEB

Women's Life Histories and Feminist Process

Val Walsh
The University of Liverpool

This chapter draws on a peer group life history project involving thirteen women academics from different white working-class backgrounds, who entered the academy as students during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s.[1]

The project came about as a result of an invitation to write a chapter for a book about social class in the lives of working-class women. As I plunged into this over several months, the extent and nature of the challenge became evident, and I realised it required more than a chapter. I found I wanted to share my intellectual excitement, and to use and explore the sense of disturbance precipitated by auto/biographical process. This would mean creating a dialogue with a number of willing women. So I put the process on hold, and wrote a different chapter (Walsh, 1997).

This chapter is the first to draw on the life history material recorded with the women who agreed to participate, and shows some of the ways in which class and gender are spoken within the life histories – as not separate, but not the same either. The women's awareness of and responses to women's liberation movements, and feminist research and writing indicate the tensions and opportunities afforded by these social movements and academic developments. The chapter foregrounds women's life histories within/as feminist research, and suggests that 'feminist process' serves a definitive function for women's survival and creative emergence: our very co/creativity. bell hooks (2000: 110) poses the challenge:

> If women are to play a meaningful role in struggles to end racism and classism, they need to begin with feminist consciousness. To abandon feminist movement is another gesture of collusion. Radical/revolutionary feminist politics bring a message of hope as well as strategies to empower women and men of all classes. Feminism is for everybody.

Yes, but … resistance and deferral are widespread. Women's life histories (here, the voices of Hannah, Jane, Janet, Laura, Lisa and Sophie) combine with feminist research and theory to throw light on these struggles and aspirations, inside and outside the academy.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 73–93.

FEMINISM'S PARTIAL INVITATION

The starting-point for feminist process is our acknowledgement that we are (variously) *positioned* as women, and that this is structurally and personally significant for our selves and lives, and in ways which can be detrimental to health, well-being, status, opportunity, influence and reward. We acknowledge our connectedness with other women, including women different from ourselves in socially significant ways – for example, across differences of sexuality, class, ethnicity, disability and age. Connection *and* difference are *both* intensified in this process of identification and emergence. It can be precarious and conflicted, as Morwenna Griffiths (1995: 22), writing about her own early encounters with feminism as a young, white, middle-class woman, testifies:

> No wonder I resisted feminism whenever it forced itself on my attention. Its critical questions about sex differences would have threatened the fragile edifice I had constructed.

Morwenna Griffiths' predicament demonstrates that initial receptivity to feminist conceptual frameworks depends on both a sense of *dissonance* (something's not quite right here) and a working level of *courage/confidence.* Both these go against the grain of normative western 'femininity', of being brought up to conform as 'girl', whatever our social-class background.

For working-class Hannah (38, heterosexual), feminism was a middle-class thing, but she came to recognise herself as addressed by it. She was matter-of-fact:

> When I did discover feminism, I had the feeling I already knew that … I was ready to take on the ideas because I was already doing it.

Lisa (43, lesbian) actively sought out feminism/feminists as soon as she could. She was vociferous:

> As long as I can remember I have been *angry* about women, *raging* about it! But I could never find the Women's Movement, it was always *closed, locked*!

This was in her northern undergraduate university city. Lisa had been a feminist at school as well as university, and 'got totally dismissed for that'. She identified *herself* as a feminist. Her *sexual politics* identified men as a problem. As both a socialist and a feminist, Lisa always wanted more from the academy than academic knowledge. Her anger, which has not subsided, targets both men and the academy, suggesting a connection between the two:

> I felt it had no application to social change – for example, male academics who don't even know where the local bus stop is!

For Jane (45, bisexual), however, feminism was seen as diversionary in her communist circles in London in the 1970s. This shows how coding feminism as not political (enough) was one way for leftist men not to take it seriously (bell hooks,

2000), making it taboo for women who were already politically active in class politics, if they wanted approval (sexual as well as political) within those activist circles. But Jane recounted how, over the years, 'mixing with more and more women has been empowering', and she spoke of 'the joys of sisterhood'. Both feminist politics and feminist identity came to inform and shape her life and work.

Janet (55, heterosexual) also said she had resisted being a feminist; she didn't like the exclusion that feminism made, advocating separation from men. Her narrative seems to speak out of both her early socialism, and a heterosexual identity and lifestyle marked by her involvement in the worlds of art and folksong, within which women were/are coercively positioned by heterosexual norms of availability and aesthetics (Walsh, 1992, 1998). As both artist and singer, however, she was aware that she was identified *by others* as feminist.

Experiencing the isolation of early motherhood, and what she described as her 'life with irresponsible men', had been influential factors. Later, when in crisis, she turned to books and feminist theory (she mentioned particularly writers Elaine Showalter and Valerie Walkerdine): 'I wanted some of that theory, I wanted to recognise myself, I wanted to know'. Her reiteration of the first-person pronoun and the verb 'want' (not need) are telling: *crisis* precipitated a search, which in turn ignited *(feminist) desire*. Desire produced risk-taking behaviour: *conscious* movement out of the danger zone of her life, into the uncertainty of the new and unknown, towards difference (feminism, theory, academic knowledge).[2]

Her turn towards feminism came in her forties, after bringing up two children more or less single-handedly. It may be seen as an example of how, for working-class women, feminism 'just does not figure as a form of identification' (Skeggs, 1998: 151), but 'operates in fragments, appropriate for some places and not for others' (ibid.). As an explanatory discourse, however, 'some feminist explanations [are] useful' (ibid: 157). Janet's crisis evidently brought sufficient fragments into view at once, to precipitate a conscious shift in identification: an epiphany. Speaking of feminism now, she describes it as 'all our mothers'.

Beverley Skeggs' research with working-class women suggests that disidentification with and resistance to feminism is bounded by a lack of movement into feminist conceptual frameworks. She sees this as rooted in the social location of working-class culture and the economic and social power relations which produce the fixity and dominance of 'respectable heterosexuality' (Skeggs, 1998).[3] These combined factors have consequences for white working-class women's attitudes towards feminism and women's movements, across differences in sexual preference and domestic lives.

Like Hannah, Lisa, Jane and Janet, Sophie (61, lesbian) identified herself from an early age as political (socialist) and preoccupied with social change. But she also reported ambivalence about feminism:

> I was quite resistant to some of its manifestations. I think it's partial. I just don't like The Line really.

Here, Sophie records her perception of feminism's address as a requirement to *conform,* and conformity was never her thing (see below). But she too, now acknowledges women's debt to feminist movements for change:

> It's easier for me now to take myself and other women seriously, which I didn't before – I do think we thought of ourselves as second-class. I was *seen* as a feminist; you see I don't want to be in a box.

These women are all what they are now, in part, as a result of the Women's Liberation Movement, feminism and the impact of women's studies in the academy. Also evident is ambivalence and caution, pain and anger in relation to white, middle-class, western feminism.

CLASS AND EDUCATION: THE FRUITS OF UN/BELONGING

The historical, social and academic contexts *against which* women academics from white working-class backgrounds construct their life histories, are harsh. These instrumental contexts have delineated a single working class, which has been experienced as in deficit: without culture (Collins, 2004). Keir Hardie himself wrote of the need of the working class for culture (Steedman, 1990: 12), and Margaret McMillan wrote of 'the full tragedy of working-class life' (*cited by* Steedman: 29). Nineteenth century stereotypes and disgust have persisted, perhaps even intensified (Collins, 2004), providing more than a backdrop to the entry of working-class women into higher education in the post-war period and since.

A white middle-class young woman at a comprehensive school in the 1990s could still say, albeit apologetically: 'I suppose it is a terrible thing to say, but they have no taste. They are not very educated. They are not very enlightened' (Phoenix and Tizard, 1996: 436). For white working-class women, the problem of remembering goes beyond circumstance to issues of embodiment, and the classing of women's experience of gender.

At her 'posh girls' school', Laura (38, heterosexual) said she had been viewed as *too* assertive, *not* ladylike. More than 20 years later, she remembers her 'unladylike' embodiment as *anomalous* in that classed ('posh') and gendered (girls) educational environment: both *too* (excess) and *not* (in deficit). Jane's early consciousness of class at her secondary modern school in the North led her to change her accent and concentrate on her appearance and dress. But moving South later, she found that being a 'groover' in the North, translated to 'slag' in the South. 'Groover' may be class and gender-neutral, but 'slag' connotes 'low-class', *sexual* identity: the 'monstrous' tag. Hannah said her interests are very middle-class now, but as for presentation: 'I can't be' and the impact of early elocution lessons has worn off. This suggests that either the effort involved in presenting as middle-class proved too

much (defeat), and/or Hannah came to see it as a waste of time in terms of her own value(s) and the meaningfulness of her life (agency).

Educated in the Midlands, Sophie said she had not felt oppressed as a working-class woman, 'cos I'm doubtful about the forces that could oppress me'. She said, 'I've never been submissive. I've always been radical, always against authority. I always had unusual ideas'. When women talk freely, beyond answering questions, we hear 'the emotionally laden language used to describe their lives' (Anderson and Jack, 1991: 14). Sophie's forceful language ('submissive', 'radical', 'unusual', 'against authority'), the conciseness of her statements, and the intensity of her reiterations ('never', 'always') convey a critical intelligence, and an awareness of power, authority, and the forces of coercion. Her words conjure up a socially aware and determined young woman, who was also anti-authoritarian.

Life history process starts out from what we think we know. It pulls us quickly into the unknown, of feeling and memory for example, as well as our differences. At the very least, we risk (knowingly and/or unknowingly) disruption of self and identity, and loss of composure. Like/as feminist process, life history process involves risk, specifically for women in a heteropatriarchal society.[4] Disclosure produces exposure. And in a society where class = working class = inferiority; where in psychiatry 'working-class signifies pathology' (Blackman, 1996: 362); where history, politics, literature and academia have all assumed and reiterated 'the inherent shamefulness of working-class experience' (Fox, 1994: 129), risk and shame are real and influential factors in both working-class lives and auto/biographical process:

> Shame involves the surprise revelation of one's very identity, the unprepared-for 'astonishment at seeing different aspects of ourselves, conscious and unconscious, suddenly coming together, and coming together with aspects of the world we have not recognized (Lynd 1958, 1966: 34 *cited by* Fox, 1994: 13).

Jane experienced her failure at the 11+ examination as shameful.[5] She was conscious that working-class was 'identified as ignorance, as outside the centres of knowledge'. Hannah too, spoke of how, at eight or nine, she was aware of the distinction between 'common' and 'not common', and was able to place her father's broad cockney accent.[6] As a result of elocution lessons she herself had two voices. She came to identify her family as working-class in the 1970s, when she studied sociology.

Sophie recognised herself as working-class via the radio in the late 1940s. She was aware of class before taking the 11+, but on entry to grammar school in the early 1950s, she was *immediately* aware of class, in what she described as a 'very posh' girls' school. However, her experience of shame was not in relation to class, but in relation to her lesbianism in her teens and twenties. Nonetheless, she said: 'I was well accepted really', and 'in the 1950s there were no words for it: I didn't categorise myself'. She had a 'lovely adolescence', and 'a sense of community,

loving those girls at high school'. Similarly, Laura said that after years of making herself invisible, on entering a small girls' grammar school in the 1970s, for the first time she did not feel invisible or uncomfortable. However, she did not take school friends home. Sophie and Laura are examples of white working-class girls temporarily finding comfort, solace and empowerment in what were white middle-class educational environments for girls.

For Hannah, Jane, Lisa and Janet, education was a destructive experience. Hannah was in the top stream of a comprehensive school, but not encouraged. Jane, at a secondary modern, said she received no encouragement to achieve, at home or at school. Lisa, at a convent grammar school, described how 'the teachers kept telling us how useless we were'. Janet described her similar experience:

> I was never seen as someone with potential at the grammar school, because of my background. I was not regarded as being the right material. I felt I was very capable … but I was told I wasn't.

Sophie submitted that 'education and class are mixed up'. For Jane 'it always felt like a collision (of working-class and education)'. And Lisa repeatedly pointed to the cultural deficit: 'You see I *had* a privileged education. That's not where it's at'.

So contrary to the view that education is the answer to class divisions, social mobility and cohesion, these life histories paint a more complex picture. Education as a process of 'conversion', of colonisation, presents itself to the working-class child/girl/woman as: both opportunity and censure; empowerment and undoing; the chance to belong and the requirement to disconnect. On its own, education does not necessarily improve the self-esteem and life chances of working-class women. On its own, it appears to be insufficient to our needs to survive and thrive, for example as academics.

HOW DOES IT FEEL? HOW DO I LOOK?

Until relatively recently class identity was not talked about in a way that Jane could identify with. Only since the 1980s has she been proud of her working-class identity. Despite being an active socialist from a young age, Lisa too said that it was only since the early 1980s that she had owned class issues. Identifying *with* is not the same as identifying *as* (Walsh, 1999).

During those early, openly feminist years, Lisa found herself in the midst of, and publicly if not personally aligned with, white middle-class women. She has had prolonged contact at close quarters, and this informs her testimony. She spoke with intensity of her *'unbelievable* internalised class oppression', which had not been lessened in any way by her 'acquisition of a "posh" voice' as a result of convent elocution lessons. 'I'm not embedded in the same discourse as middle-class women', she declared, and described elite students with whom she had studied, who 'never invested all that emotion and fear in their career development'. Pamela Fox

(1994: 6) has argued that some resistance theories, in their haste to value the 'creative collective' powers of subaltern groups, have underestimated 'the costs of exclusion from the controlling culture'.

Hannah, responding to my initial invitation to participate, addressed these differences at the outset: of those with or without a safety net, and the long-term consequences of internalised inferiority:

> I wonder if I am 'academic' enough for your project?. . . I have not spent that long within the wondrous groves of academia itself, and usually I have felt like an impostor when I was there . . Many working-class folk I know who 'succeeded' academically and professionally are afraid to take risks, afraid of being thought an impostor, afraid to aim too high, etc. (including me) and rarely progress as far as their talent might take them, while over-privileged, but above all confident, twits get promoted instead of and over us!

Hannah is the only woman of the 13 in this group who went straight on to do her PhD after graduating (and a year out travelling). She just missed an overall first at undergraduate level, and achieved a distinction for her doctorate. So on paper, Hannah counts as a high academic achiever. Yet she identifies herself here as less than academic because of how she feels inside the academic environment ('an impostor'), and the evidence she sees of working-class failure of nerve and lack of ambition. She combines strong, emotional language ('afraid', 'impostor', 'twits') with a slightly mocking, ironic tone ('wondrous groves of academia'), to make what is both an accusation of injustice, and a lament for working-class fear, insecurity and underachievement. Her understanding of what academic means seems to be about conforming to a particular set of classed codes and expectations (drawing down cultural capital), rather than any intellectual prowess.

Lisa's intensity focuses on the effort required and the cost involved in not losing her nerve, and in succeeding without cultural capital. She is clearly determined not to become one of the casualties referred to by Hannah.

> I have to *really* work hard, *really* struggle … *nothing* has ever come to me, been given to me. . . Nobody *EVER* made things easy for me … I've *always* been in opposition on my own and had to take a lot on myself to compensate. I'm an achiever against the odds. I've been in so many situations where people have tried to *crush* me and they haven't succeeded.

The language and plotting of her struggle are embattled and passionate: she uses intensifiers ('really', 'always', 'ever') and negatives ('nothing', 'nobody'). She puts *herself* on the line with her use of personal pronouns ('I', 'me', 'myself'), emotional adverbial phrases ('in opposition on my own', 'against the odds'), and her choice of strong verbs ('work hard', 'struggle', 'compensate', '*crush*'). Her public identity as a feminist early on in life has had repercussions for her experience as a student and academic in elite universities. At the same time, her political anger has fuelled her creative development as an academic, and driven her intellectual and professional purposes.

These life histories qualify any easy sense of progression and safety. The women may be published (even acclaimed) writers, researchers, exhibiting artists, academics, but they do not see the academy or their 'educated' profile and position as safe or settled. Jane confesses: 'I think I go into the academy shit-scared and spiky. … Oh, I don't know if I come across as stupid'. Janet maintains she had always felt like a 'usurper', and Lisa is adamant:

> It's [academic achievement] had *no* bearing on how I feel about myself … I tend not to fail because I put so much bloody effort in – but I often feel like a failure, even though I'm not.

Sophie, at sixty-one the oldest in the group, describes herself as 'a natural academic. Ideas are my thing'; but she too is 'very aware of this marginal, liminal identity'.

> I don't know that I feel like an academic today. I feel like there are roles that I've played . . . I performed as an academic … I worked alongside those institutions, but I was never in them . . . my intuition was too wide. *And I have a sense of identity with people who are trying to change the world*. [Emphasis added]

Here Sophie demonstrates how 'through tactical dis/identifications the autobiographical subject adjusts, redeploys, resists, transforms the discourse of autobiographical identity' (Smith, 1998: 111; see Etter-Lewis, 1991). This sense of provisionality and detachment (political energy and emotions being located beyond academia) also marks Janet's dis/identification as working-class now:

> But I don't regard myself as middle-class either, because I don't fit there . . . I feel as though I've lost all my places [*see* Jianli Zhao, 1996]. My emotions are with the working classes; my emotions are with people who don't feel that in many important ways they have enough to be an authority. *I feel I'm a new thing*. [Emphasis added]

Confidence and achievements have not replaced these internalised narratives of oppression – of inferiority, marginality and/or shame – so much as *displaced* them. They are still there, but so, happily, are other structures of feeling and identity. And just as we can recognise provisionality and detachment as informed and knowing stances or strategies, rather than marks of marginality, loss too is part of life's process, rather than a mark of defeat; and the ambivalence, hybridity and liminality alluded to by Janet, are variously understood and valued. Sophie is vigorous:

> Ambivalence, oh yes, *absolutely!* Oh yes, it is productive because it allows room for the doubt and change, and because you know what a minority is, you don't have to learn it. I used to think it was a disadvantage, but don't now. You don't take anything for granted.

Lisa points out that nobody could accuse her of being an ivory-tower academic. And Hannah looks back without flinching:

> I learned I was disgusting … It made it easier for me to empathise with deprivation, how to problematise everything.

Her everyday, emotional language is a prelude to the intellectual language of critical intelligence and conscience. There is no 'aesthetic of detached individualism' here (Gagnier, 1998: 265); no attempt to narrate her experience according to upper-class models (ibid.); nor does she speak as a victim. Through this heteroglossia[7] Hannah produces her own narrative authority.

The six women refuse to identify themselves as victims or survivors. As Lisa retorts: 'That takes away all your power!' And they all said yes to identifying themselves as creative now, though for some this had come late: 'Only since I've known who I am (recently)', said Sophie. Janet sums up how she sees the relation between academia and ordinary living:

> When you come in from the mess and stuff of ordinary living, the academy is so different – each questions the other … and I think you have to weigh them very seriously against each other – and by weighing them, you're breaking bits off each other and putting them into each other, enmeshing them.

Here, Janet's auto/biographical process works creatively to 'make intelligible a culturally unintelligible subject' (Smith, 1998: 113).

Nor is it the problem of the empty white paper, the problem of creative productivity and conscience described by Margaret Attwood (BBC Radio 4, 22 March 1999,): *Do I have anything to say?* (These women have plenty to say.) For marginals in particular, it is also the question of, when I speak: *Who do they think I am?* And *Who do I think I am?* Is this *my* voice speaking? For marginals, these are *political* questions of power and legitimacy, not (just) markers of internalised inferiority and poverty. As classed meanings they constitute self-knowledge, without which it would be more dangerous to proceed. This critical self-reflexivity[8] both grounds us in the social contexts of our own becoming, and extends us towards an articulation of 'the relationship between social formations and structures of feeling' (Fox, 1994: 14).

Historically, along with women, children, black people and those with mental health problems, working-class people have had to claim a complex psychology that is not attributed (see Steedman, 1993: 12). A complex psychology has rested with the Subject, the Master. So I am conscious of the danger that these women's statements may be heard as confessions of failure, rather than as the fruits of political awareness, and that they will be captured or resisted, rather than heard in all their sociological, intellectual, political and emotional complexity.

LIFE HISTORIES, FEMINIST PROCESS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Epistemology of Connection

To re/member through life history process is to reconstitute the past in terms of present preoccupations and purposes. Recorded life histories are *encounters*: embodied experiences which take place over time and in a particular location (very often the home environment of the narrator). Knowledge is produced in and through each other's company, exemplifying an epistemology of connection (Hill Collins, 1990: 217; Jordan, 1989).

Proximity rather than distance, dialogue rather than interrogation or adversarial debate, relationality (Hill Collins, 1990; bell hooks, 1989; Somers, 1994) rather than the hierarchy of the subject/object split provide both the conditions and the means to knowledge. This does not imply agreement, consensus or sameness at any stage in the process, although there may be (as in this case) a sense of kinship between participants, arising out of already glimpsed common identifications and/or interests. A kind of intimacy attends these occasions. An invitation has been issued and accepted; arrangements made, hospitality offered. Trust and commitment on the one side, care and responsibility on the other are defining features of this relationship. The relations constituted by life history process can be analogous to friendship. This intimacy[9] also means that the feminist researcher runs the risk of 'the delusion of alliance more than the delusion of separateness' (Stacey, 1991:116).

Life history process offers the possibility of going beyond 'the pre-constructed discourses and "surface assertions" collected through survey research' (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991: 89), highlighting 'the complexity, the ambiguities, and even the contradictions of the relations between the subject and the world' (ibid.). Moving from information-gathering to interactive process (Anderson and Jack, 1991: 23/24) and giving credence to the narrator's *interpretation* of events and feelings can substantially reduce the conventional power imbalance between research partners.

Both/And

> Black women seem able to combine the nest and the adventure. They don't see conflicts in certain areas as do white women. They are both safe harbour and ship; they are both inn and trail. (Morrison, *cited* by Reyes, 1996: 18).

Oral/life histories would seem to share many features which are particularly identified with and by black feminist epistemologies (Hill Collins, 1990). It has been black feminists who have provided both the experiential evidence (in poetry, song, essays, novels, autobiography, research) and the conceptual means (in their critical and theoretical writing) for understanding, for example, the significance of the

'both/and' stance for women and post-colonial subjects in particular, and its challenge to the 'either/or' of white western epistemology. These dispositions, values and strategies are echoed in the autobiographical and research narratives of women with working-class roots (Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997; Polkey, 1999; Chanfrault-Duchet, 2000).

Embodiment

Morwenna Griffiths (1995: 82) has drawn attention to 'the significance of bodies and material conditions' for constructing the self (*see also* Shilling, 1997), as has Carolyn Steedman (1993) in her hybrid text (critical auto/biography), *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives.* Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970, 1999) *embodies* these issues in 'fiction'. In *The Bell Jar* (1963), another hybrid text (autobiography written as fiction), Sylvia Plath 'explores the limits of women's autonomy and the secure first-person singular' (Evans, 2000: 79) in a society (the 1950s) which 'rigorously policed clothing and through this imposition assumed that the correctly dressed person can be interpreted literally as the sum total of their appearance' (ibid: 84). This period, and its immediate aftermath in the 1960s, are influential within the life narratives drawn on in this chapter. Mary Evans (ibid.: 88) draws out the significance of Plath's text for women then and now:

> In this culture, autobiography, in the sense of the revelation of the person and the internal self, is near impossible since the invasion of the person by the culture … is systematic and total.

This invasion emerges as a central object of scrutiny within women's life histories.

An epistemology of connection retrieves the body from its identification as matter, as 'lower', which produces self-hatred, denial and stigma for those identified / 'othered' as *body* (Walsh, 2005b). Embodiment as epistemological and cultural *value* (and political issue) makes room for movement*:* away from internalised shame and self-loathing (Griffiths, 1995: 24), towards self-acceptance/creativity/ celebration. This is neither confession nor forgetting: rather a re-membering which is critically self-reflexive and agentic (Norman, 2001).

Hybridity

The orality of life histories, as recorded and transcribed interviews/conversations/ dialogue/stories, mixes as both personal narrative and social commentary; combining attention to the social self with the interiority of autobiography: informal (talk, sociability) and formal (a prepared and structured occasion); the everyday (experience) and the academic (concepts, theory); memory/experience/ interpretation; feeling and thinking; speech and writing.

Interdisciplinarity/'impurity', even as it attests to its roots in marginality and 'difference', calls into question the security of the insider/outsider binary demarcation:

> On the contrary, it is auto-biography's movement *outward and across* from any individuated phantasy of being-in-the-world that is so important. Auto-biography traces how a writing of the self cannot simply exist as such, how the self is always implicated in relations with *others who cannot be relegated to an outside.* [Emphasis added at end] (Ahmed, 1998: 136)

Feminist auto/biography counters the individualism, the determining heroism of the (male) Author, at the centre/on top of, knowledge production. As Sara Ahmed notes (ibid.): 'In auto-biography, "others" inflect the self, rendering it impossible to designate this story as "my story"'. Closure, resolution, genre, all counter this complexity and inter-subjectivity.

> As soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity. (Derrida*, cited by* Kaplan, 1998: 208)

The working class has been identified in terms of all three of these (Collins, 2004), and the women participants in this peer project have variously grown to adulthood and academic identity with this knowledge and *experience.* Their presence in the academy is therefore both sociologically and epistemologically potentially disturbing, even disruptive of the status quo. Similarly, academic convention and propriety are disturbed, even perturbed, by the hybridity of life history process and auto/biographical positioning, especially when it constitutes itself as simultaneously knowledge production, therapeutics and politics (Walsh, 1997).

Out-law genres renegotiate the relationship between personal identity and the world, between personal and social history. Here, narrative inventions are tied to a struggle for cultural survival rather than purely aesthetic experimentation or individual expression (Kaplan, 1998: 212).

This different model of creativity and intellectuality is not just an alternative practice. In its methodology and productions, it functions self-reflexively as a *politics* of creativity; and in the relations it poses between itself and its readers, as a *poetics* of knowledge production. Following Juliet Kristeva (1976), Annette Kuhn (1990: 13) argues that 'a text may embody and produce the poetic to the degree that it brings to the fore the processes by which it constructs its own meanings'. For women and feminists, this is also a political as well as cultural process. Setting meanings in play (Kristeva 1975; Cixous, 1980), rather than offering solutions or conclusions, *a text is art-like.* The pleasure derived from the closure or resolution of the classic (or Hollywood) narrative is replaced by the 'bliss' *(jouissance)* of the text which challenges such closure (Kuhn, 1990; Barthes, 1975). As we have seen, narrative structure and textual organisation are not formal incidentals, but themselves signifying and significant features of feminist/life history process, as we prise open memory, history, culture (knowledge production itself).

Politicisation

The process of politicisation is precipitated once those from the margins start to tell their stories, that is, beyond the question and answer format. The 'co-enunciation and co-construction processes' (Chanfrault-Duchet, 2000: 62) of the life history relationship enact a rebellion which challenges the universalised subject/object norm: rendering us in that moment 'resisting subjects' (Smith, 1998: 433).

Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet (1991: 79) has drawn attention to the way in which the narrative structure of women's life histories is marked by 'key phrases' and 'refrains' which 'express[es] the harmony, the indifference, the ambiguity, the conflict, and so on, existing between self and society'. The 'key pattern' of the narrative structure 'most often deals with the reproduction or transgression of the hegemonic social model' (ibid: 80), as here for example, social class and/or gender (Anderson and Jack, 1991: 19–22; Greenman, 1996: 51).

Such narratives both make history and alter understanding of history. Both life history process and feminist process work simultaneously with the debris of history and the materialities of politics and subjectivities. Both function at *and constitute* that liminal ground between the public and the private, biography and autobiography, history and psychology. Despite expanding awareness over the last 30 years of the relational, epistemological and political complexities of 'the intellectual firecracker that autobiography has become' (Steedman, 1990: 248), it has proved to be *both* a key (out-law) genre (poetics) *and* strategy (politics) for feminists, as well as the subject of debate: for example, in terms of the *impossibility* of the subaltern, the stigmatised other, telling her own story (Spivak, 1988; Steedman, 2000).

Survival/Creativity

Women's life histories show how our meaning(s) are produced at the conjunction of conflicting discourses (Nussbaum, 1998: 164), for example, social class, gender, socialism, feminism. A feature of *feminist* auto/biographical process is coming to know this speaking as, amongst other things, bearing *witness, testifying*, giving *evidence*. It is the prelude to framing charges: the act of political *accusation and engagement*, rather than the confessional *mea culpa*. Adrienne Rich (1971: 35) famously defined *re-vision* – 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction' as being for women 'more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival'. But it is more than this. Feminist desire engenders 'the willingness to dream impossible dreams' (Griffiths, 1995: 190): the feminist imaginary itself. Feminist process therefore involves women in *both* deconstruction *and* reconstruction: responsibility *and* adventure.

RESISTING SUBJECTS AND NARRATIVE AUTHORITY

> It is (thus) *classed* meanings which are produced *im*plicitly by working-class speakers: they engage in their own form of double-voiced or split discourse which simultaneously represses and articulates their rebellion. (Fox, 1994: 107)

Women academics from white working-class backgrounds, including feminists, may ask themselves whether they still count as 'working-class speakers' (Willis and Corrigan, 1983). The concept of classed meanings, as 'forms of knowledge which cannot be assimilated back into the dominant contents of any particular "discourse" in its own right' (ibid., 90; *cited by* Fox, 1994), is worth considering in the context of feminist perspectives on class, and perhaps in particular the lives and works of women from white working-class backgrounds who are professionally involved in knowledge production.

As academics, we ask: 'Is class significant in the formation of subjectivity and how can we understand this?' (Walkerdine, 1996: 357). Our answering, however, is not 'academic'. As seen here, the emotionality of our positioning is incorporated in our testimony and our theory (Walsh, 1997). It is, as Valerie Walkerdine (1996: 357) suggests:

> The basis of another way of telling, a counter-memory, a new set of practices, which offer as much of a challenge to the Left and to feminism as they do to the Right.

As women's life histories and feminist theory together show, we are in a position to ask and explore fundamental questions about the politics of knowledge production, such as:

- How do women from diverse working-class backgrounds experience gender from a classed position as students and as academics?
- What is the significance of hybrid, marginalised, even stigmatised roots and identities for academic performance and knowledge production?
- What is the significance of our academic performance and knowledge production for our hybrid identities?
- In these academic locations are classed meanings 'more' or 'less'?
- Or something else altogether?
- Do they occupy a liminal space just *on* or just *off* the academic map?
- Can we conceive 'classed' as productive rather than stigma?
- And the process of class-consciousness as critical self-reflexivity, rather than wound?
- Might this (already) be a feature of women's or feminists' specific contribution to knowledge production, the organisation of the academy, and politics?
- What happens when women return, personally and professionally, to examine class from a feminist perspective and feminism from a classed perspective?

Can we rework the notion of classed meanings, beyond a category which trails its stigmatised and determining historical and sociological identity, as a sort of underbelly (closer to the ground) or sideshow (marginal)? Reconstituting the academy in terms of non-academic values, such as complexity, social and cultural responsibility, environmental and social sustainability, and social justice, surely requires this.

FIGURING OURSELVES IN GOOD COMPANY: MOVING BEYOND RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

> In the act of figuring oneself the self is not split and fragmented but most powerfully integrated, so that in this particular case the woman might stand there and speak, in a public place. (Steedman, 1990: 251)

Feminist process thus attends the undoing of damage, and this makes it distinctive as an academic enterprise which is also simultaneously therapeutics and politics. 'You are asking me things I haven't asked myself, you know, and it's odd' said Janet. Bearing witness pushes secrets into the open only if the moment is right: *the narrator decides* (Sommer, 1998: 200–4). For example, naming exclusion, injury and damage can re-enact and intensify feelings of loss, bereavement and abandonment: feelings of 'unbelonging' (Morley and Walsh, 1995), particularly if narrated, not as a politics, but as 'confession' (Felski, 1998: 88–92).

I am beginning to think that it has been fraught relations with feminism, feminists and other women (including non-feminists and middle-class women) which have been crucial in providing contexts, motivation and means to a new critical class-consciousness amongst these women from white working-class backgrounds, which is fuelling, for example, pedagogy, research, writing, editing and our involvement in this peer group project. Perhaps it is forms of *feminist* knowledge and courage which are turning us to a consideration of class in its conjunction with gender. As Donna Haraway (1991: 194/5) has suggested: 'Feminist accountability requires a knowledge tuned to resonance, not to dichotomy'.

The 'embodied' experience of immersing myself in the women's voices and words, thoughts and feelings, weaving back and forth, picking up resonances and echoes, as well as differences, has been complex. I have experienced recognition (Nelson, 1996), as well as shock and anger, grief and admiration; and I remembered laughter and mischief in the telling and sharing. Follow-up letters and conversations further develop relationship and research process: weaving experience and analysis as *emergent theory*. Our feminist process (this co-creativity) both questions and constructs the conditions for women's co-creativity, whenever we achieve these relations and movements.

> A lot of ripples have resulted from that interview (tho' actually our session feels less of a thrown stone and more of a long procession, a stately massage of some spiritual domain in me. …) I think its chief power was that it worked like therapy with a counsellor who understood my context for once, that I was being probed and interpreted and seen with the right eyes for once, instead of by middle-class well-meaning wankers who haven't understood where I am coming from. (Follow-up letter from Jane)

Life history process can be difficult, even distressing. Nor do I suggest that feminist process is pain-free, smooth-running, or easy to define. But I do still think it is worth the effort: that it *is* the sea-change, without which we will be left reproducing old oppressions in new guises, and mimicking men (behaving badly). Situating our knowledge is responsible academic performance and scholarship (Benhabib, 1992; Haraway, 1991; Skeggs, 1998):

> Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of 'objective' knowledge. (Haraway, 1991: 198)

In this way (and in alliance with others), we push questions of academic responsibility from the margins to the centre. *Emergence* displaces reason as the only game in town. As hooks implies in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter: *we are all implicated in what happens next.* As we face up to the global need to repair damage, make good mistakes, renew social fabrics and heal divisions, academic rigour must itself be reformulated in terms of conscientious efforts *to take responsibility* for lives and works, including knowledge production. The separations and disciplinary policing involved in maintaining 'purity' (for example, the binary strongholds of science/art, objectivity/subjectivity, reason/feeling) have been exposed as the exercise of power to preserve itself. It requires dedicated effort to keep society and the academy out of each other's hair, as if they did not share contexts, purposes and problems.

The critical reflexivity of feminist auto/biographical process is no mere add-on, but provides the means (not just material) for pedagogy, research and lives: 'to see together without claiming to be another' (Haraway, 1991: 193). This 'joining of partial views and halting voices' (ibid: 196), of situated voices in various states of emergence, is purposeful and *pleasurable*. It is not the pursuit of authority. It is not a battle or a race. On the contrary, feminist co-creativity assumes and fosters:

> The freedom to press on, to enter the currents of (our) thought like a glider pilot, knowing that (our) motion can be sustained, that the buoyancy of (our) attention will not be suddenly snatched away. (Rich, 1971: 43)

Turning risk, danger and exposure into creative fuel for living, loving and cultural production is the (feminist) move from tangle to web. A tangle may be interesting, even aesthetic, but it will not bear our weight.

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NOTES

[1] The project, Degrees of Change, takes as its starting-point the individual and collective significance for these women, of social class, gender, education and feminism, from childhood into adulthood. Ages range from 36 to 61. Of the six women cited here, two grew up in the North, two in the Midlands, two in the South of England (Walsh, 1998a). Names have been substituted.

[2] Movement (not just mobility) is theoretically and politically presumed virtuous and necessary; part of the rhetoric of 'independence' and 'autonomy', as well as oppositional discourses, for example of empowerment and creativity. Fixity becomes the sign of 'being done to', of lives where things just happen, of failure to make things happen or to be (someone). Beverley Skeggs (1998) explicitly connects working-class women with fixity, an inability to move (on/away). Julie Burchill (1998:11/12) recalls that, as early as five, 'I was aware that in my neck of the woods AMBITION was a dirty word, from a foreign language, something dirtier and more shaming to the family honour than even something to do with S-E-X would be. The world turned and you grew up to do exactly, but *exactly*, as your parents had done before you'. (*See also* Collins, 2004; Walsh, 2005c.) Sara Ahmed (1998:195) reports how, in a racist and sexist encounter with the police, it was through her self-identification as middle-class rather than working-class that she was able to renegotiate her position within the encounter: 'If I had been already positioned as working-class or indeed as Aboriginal, such movement within the event would not have been possible'.

[3] What Julie Burchill refers to as 'the slavery of full-on joyless heterosexuality' (1998: 33). *See also* Fitzgerald, 2002; Hughes, 2002; Owen, 1999; Spencer, 1999 on education and working-class women.

[4] I use this term to stress the centrality of institutionalised heterosexuality for patriarchal relations and structures.

[5] The 11+ exam was introduced in England and Wales by the 1944 Education Act, which aimed to select children for entry to three distinct kinds of secondary school: secondary modern (for the majority who failed the 11+), technical and grammar schools (the latter for the tiny percentage deemed 'academic'). The system ran parallel to the public schools, which drew/draw an elite entry by way of entrance exams and high fees.

[6] Michael Collins (2004: 130/131) sums up the negativity associated with 'the image of the cockney, the urban working-class character so many had investigated, championed, lampooned and aped.' He notes, 'It was an image that would become identified with the 'spirit' of the London blitz' (thereby acquiring positive, even nationalist, overtones). But earlier in his investigation of white working-class life in London (2004: 85), he quotes from a Report of the Conference on the Teaching of English in London Elementary Schools (1909), which while noting 'an element of loss when schoolchildren of Devonshire, Lincolnshire or Yorkshire were forced to forsake their native dialect for the King's English' declares that 'The cockney mode of speech, with its unpleasant twang … is unworthy of

being the speech of any person in the capital city of the empire.' The *stigma* attached to the cockney speech of the East End of London could not be expressed more forcibly than this, or made more official and incontrovertible than in such a report about language and education.

[7] Following Mikhail M. Bakhtin, heteroglossia refers to a proliferation of languages, words and meanings that mutually supplement and contradict one another: the way in which one person's language is permeated by the voices of others (Smith and Watson, 1998: 30–32). 'Heteroglossia assumes a pervasive and fundamental heterogeneity to human subjectivity. The text is multivocal because it is a site for the contestation of meaning' (ibid: 30). *See* Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, 1998; Sidonie Smith, 1998. Renee Norman's text (2001) embodies these issues and processes. *See* review, Val Walsh, 2005a.

[8] Reflexivity relates to ethical issues as much as methodological and epistemological ones (Forrest and Giles, 1999; Holland *et al.* 1998; Kenny, 1999; Norman, 2001; Reay, 1996; Pini, 1996; Skeggs, 1998).

Mats Alvesson & Kaj Sköldberg (2000) devote a whole book to the subject, including these observations:

Reflection means thinking about the conditions for what one is doing, investigating the way in which the theoretical, cultural and political context of individual and intellectual involvement affects interaction with whatever is being researched, often in ways difficult to become conscious of (245). Reflexive interpretation is the opposite of empiricism and theoreticism (the use of a single abstract framework offering privileged understanding) (249). It is about 'responding to the insights regarding the socially and textually constructing nature of research' (245).

[9] Relations of intimacy are open to abuse; for example, a research participant may feel 'plundered' for data, asset-stripped, then 'abandoned' abruptly (as one of the women described a previous research encounter). Nor can the life history occasion be used for consciousness-raising purposes: as Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet (1991: 89) cautions, 'this would be to practise a kind of savage social therapy'.

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Chapter 5

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Feminist Pedagogy and Information Technology

Jen Marchbank
Simon Fraser University, British Columbia

> Women's Studies have developed a particular pedagogic focus that values both recognition of the 'personal' and critical reflective thinking in learning communities. Feminist epistemology holds a sophisticated critical perspective on the relationship between technology and gender. These two factors combined with the pragmatic constraints of being a poorly resourced academic discipline have made Women's/Gender Studies at times circumspect about taking up opportunities for using ICTs in teaching (Goodman, Kirkup and Michielsens, 2003:6)

Nearly a decade ago, whilst leading a Women's Studies' programme in a British university, I became increasingly concerned with the misfit between what I knew to be good feminist teaching practice and the experiences of both myself and the students in the classrooms of higher education in the market-driven, 'massification' process of the 1990s (see Introduction; Morley, 2002). I found that the teaching approaches and methods used to create community and co-operation in my previous work within the context of community and adult education (both within and out with formal institutions of education) were not possible, nor did the student body of the mid 1990s seem to want such approaches (see Letherby and Marchbank, 1999; Morley, 2002). In addition, the successes of Widening Participation (at the time my institution was achieving well above government targets) also raised new issues such as students with different needs in terms of study and academic skills. It was time for me to find another way to 'do' feminist pedagogy, not to replace wholesale, my existing approaches, but to compliment them and to try and resolve some problems, I saw the potential, initially, in the use of email.

In this chapter I address some of the debates around feminist pedagogy and around the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education, I then provide a description of what I did in one class and analyse that approach against some of the main tenets of feminist teaching paradigms. This includes my experiences not just in doing this form of teaching but also of feeling somewhat of a traitor to my feminist principles, for as noted by Sara Goodman, Gill Kirkup and Magda

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 95–115.

Michielsens above, there is a well-developed body of critical work on gender and technology. The class described here ran from 1997 to 2002 and the class design was developed early in 1997. At that time I was unaware of any other feminist work in this area and did not know until recently that 2 years later, at a meeting of Athena,[1] Jalna Hanmer asked the question: 'When we are using ICT in our women's studies courses how do we remain faithful to the basic principles of feminist teaching?' (Michielsens, 2003a:16). This chapter is an exploration of the relationships between feminist practice and ICT usage in education and how I attempted to utilise ICTs, in a very basic way, to facilitate my feminist teaching practice.

Before turning to the main discussion it is necessary to acknowledge that what I term feminist pedagogy is not only visible in Women's Studies, for feminist teaching occurs across the curriculum. Other critical approaches to pedagogy share concerns with feminist teachers and I do not lay claim to the teaching and learning practices exemplified by Women's Studies practitioners to be the sole approach employing a form of anti-oppressive practice. I agree with Penny Welch (2002:115) when she argues that feminist pedagogy is:

> …part of the only body of educational writing in English that systematically deals with inequalities of gender, colour and sexual orientation in the Higher Education classroom and with the conflicts that arise out of difference. It may be, however, that those outside Women's Studies who want to teach in a way that promotes equality and respect for difference might prefer an alternative formulation.

It is also necessary to clarify that what I discuss here is a development I made to counter some concerns that I had with student learning and that I decided to utilise aspects of ICTs to overcome the problems I had encountered. I am not claiming that these developments were unique, in fact, many teachers much more literate with information technology than I most certainly beat me to the starting line, let alone the finish. I just wish I had had the benefit of their experience, wisdom and technical expertise! Nor do I claim that what I did was in any way technically innovative, limited as it was to email at first and then to a managed learning environment on an intranet (WebCT in this case). My aim with this chapter is to explore how using ICTs, even at a low level of technical use, can assist in supporting the principles and aims of feminist teaching practice. As such I address issues of feminist pedagogy and how they might be increased within an academic environment which is far from the feminist ideals of the Outsiders College envisaged by Virginia Woolf (1938) or the Women-Centered University described by Adrienne Rich (1986) through the use of ICTs.

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

Feminist pedagogy is not just about how we teach or how we learn, fundamental for feminist pedagogy is the questioning and deconstruction of what is deemed to be knowledge, feminist pedagogues ask questions about what is known, how things are

known, what knowledge has been granted value and what biases are present in knowledge? From the beginning Women's Studies and feminist educational practice was political, questioning the very structure of educational institutions: both Woolf (1938) writing in the inter-war years, and Rich (1973), writing in the early days of the Women's Liberation Movement, argued for a new form of educational institution without hierarchy, without competition but where staff worked collectively and where the boundaries of academia and the world are dissolved. Rich advocated teaching practice that focused on new, non-traditional learners, that was feminist and empowering and that valued the knowledge of experience. In many ways, these principles share values with Paolo Freire's (1970) work on education. Freire argued that the educational process transmits both objective knowledge and a hidden curriculum that supports the dominant culture and class, but that change can be made. Freire characterised the education process as oppressive and hierarchical, as a banking system where knowledge is a commodity to be accumulated, one which is transmitted from the teacher to the student, or rather deposited in the student by the teacher. In contrast to such banking model, feminists, like Freirian educationalists, have employed processes and practices that value the knowledge of the student and that integrate abstract knowledge with experience.

The early days of Women's Studies – often reported as the 1970s as this was when the first courses began but for many of us the same issues had to be addressed and challenged in the 1980s – can be characterised as a time when students and staff were engaged on the same project, a project to change both the structure of traditional learning and the knowledge tradition recognised. It was also about activism, both within and beyond the academy to create not just educational change but societal change (Michielsens, 2003a:17–18). With these values as the driving force feminist pedagogues developed approaches to teaching and learning that:

- recognise the value of experience (Humm, 1991; Lubelska, 1991; Evans, 1995),
- involve peer support,
- involve peer teaching,
- involve group work
- contain flexibility of learning modes
- are interdisciplinary in content and approach
- aim for the empowerment of the individual student (Hanmer, 1991)
- '.. implied horizontal relations between staff and students' (Michielsen, 2003a:18).

All this was deemed necessary for it was believed that nonfeminist teaching practice would negate any feminist content of classes:

> .... the methods which we employ in our teaching remain, by and large, traditional, mainstream and oddly incongruous with our goals. Innovative methodology, in its widest and most dynamic sense, should encompass the ways we teach and the environment in which we do this. The

> consequences of neglect are serious. How we teach is as, if not more, important than what we teach. (Lubelska, 1991:41).

Yet, it has to be recognised that there were always restraints in achieving these goals, given that Women's Studies took place not just in the community but entered higher education with its requirements for formal assessments, established learning outcomes and class timetabling organisation. As I have written before, with Gayle Letherby, our feminist teaching approaches are:

> … limited within an academic framework by what is acceptable to university hierarchies. Attempts to follow good feminist practice by utilising small groups, fewer lectures, more workshops and project based activities and team staffing (Lubelska, 1991, p45) from which the students benefit most are restricted by the demands of mass teaching (over 100 in some modules), time tabling conventions and the refusal of educational managers to register two staff members against one teaching slot. So, due to our commitment to such practices we end up teaching more hours than we are recorded as doing – a wonderful incentive to return to more structured and hierarchical 'talk and chalk' approaches which, we believe, is just the educational environment which marginalised and excluded many people in the past. (Letherby and Marchbank, 1999:173).

Alongside these pressures have been changes to higher education that have both changed the nature of the classroom and the students within it. In addition, many UK institutions have closed Women's Studies courses (FWSA Survey, 2005) yet feminist pedagogical practice remains. For some it has had to change, Welch (2002: 114) reports how the use of informal teaching methods became impossible as classes expanded leading her to decide that

> … for a period, I would concentrate on what I could contribute as a professional educator to the promotion of equality and social justice… I needed to construct and implement a pedagogy that was congruent with my values and enabled me to offer classes in which all students could get intellectual, academic and personal benefit.

A concomitant development has been the growth of technology, as Philip Barker (undated:1) itemises, 'We live in an age of computers, high-speed communications systems, intranets, WAP phones, MP3 music, digital radio, interactive television and 'all things nice'! …'. This too has had its influences on feminist pedagogy, from the most basic use in playing videos in class to the existence of complete distance courses in Women's Studies. Contrary to the British experience, where Women's Studies remains, such as in the USA, technology has provided opportunities for more students to study classes, through CD-ROMs and Classroom 'Chat Rooms' when other, classroom-based deliveries are regularly oversubscribed (The George Washington University).

MY FEMINIST TEACHING PRACTICE

Over the years that I have been involved in academia I have heard, read and experienced a range of teaching practices, some more progressive, some more traditional (especially in my own, formal, education). Years of involvement with Women's Studies and feminist teachers have exposed me to a number of ideas about teaching practice (and I have also learned from other colleagues aiming to achieve a socially just educational approach). However, I often feel a disjunction, a disconnection when I read exhortations to continue to 'fight the good fight' of feminist pedagogy as my personal experience, and that of others, just does not fit. Although I appreciate and agree with bell hooks (1989) when she asks feminists to continue to try to separate ourselves from traditional methods of teaching that merely strengthen relations of domination and oppression I sometimes wonder if we should refocus, not on reinforcing feminist teaching methods of the past, but on developing new feminist teaching methods of the future, methods which may be different but which are imbued with the same philosophy and epistemology.

Maryanne Dever (1999) has written of the dangers for higher education in the current climate, a climate experienced both in the UK and the USA. She argues that there is a move back towards the banking system of education and away from more liberationary approaches. Presenting an explanation for student passivity, competition and isolation, she argues for a 'renewed commitment to alternative understandings of the contract between teachers and students' (Dever, 1999:221). I too believe that there is a change in the student-staff contract, this is a change which reflects, in many cases, a market driven attitude of 'give me what I need', an instrumentalist educational system. Whilst Dever can be read as harping back to a golden ideal of feminist pedagogy what she does do is remind us of the need to focus on the fundamental issues of feminist pedagogy and to 'recover, retain or reinforce that sense of the political and politicised context of learning that was once so central an element on our programmes' (Dever, 1999:221). To me that politicised context does not mean inculcating my students with my beliefs but providing a space within which they can understand, question and investigate important social matters to develop their own opinions. In the early days of Women's Studies that meant a certain way of teaching, in the latter years of the twentieth century it looked a little different.

Like Freire's approach, in his proposed 'Education for Liberation', my own feminist pedagogy includes an education based on setting problems to be resolved and the facilitation of a dialogue between learners and teacher/s through which knowledge and experience can be integrated. As such, I, like many other feminist (and other critical) educators regard myself as a 'participant[s] in the learning process' (Lubelska, 1991:47), though one with greater responsibilities than the students. My teaching model integrates all of the feminist principles listed above and is, as I have written elsewhere with Gayle Letherby:

> … sometimes hard to operationalise both in terms of time, effort and emotional labour (for us and for students), is concerned with sharing and listening, student centred learning and the use of experience. This often involves the move away from traditional 'exams' and 'essays' towards presentations, group work and individually constructed assessments aimed at changing the learning experience of students (Letherby and Marchbank, 1999:175)

This has not always been without its difficulties given the managerial pressures within mass Higher Education and we cannot forget that sometimes students too resist (Letherby and Marchbank, 1999; Hughes, 2002), rejecting '… process-oriented feminist pedagogy in favour of more tangible products such as teacher-led lectures' (Morley, 2002:92).

Michielsen, writing about experiences across Europe, reminds us that since the beginnings of Women's Studies, teachers, students, universities, politics have changed and that:

> ... although the ambitions of students have changed a lot, academic texts about the principles of feminist pedagogy have NOT changed so much. This remark is not intended as a compliment. There is a real danger of sounding old-fashioned if you continue to speak of self-expression, experience driven learning, conscious-raising (sic) exercises etc. Those are the slogans of the 70s. What, however, is NOT old fashioned is the fact that feminist pedagogy is about constructing 'emancipatory classrooms' (Michielsen, 2003a:19).

Despite this being written several years after my starting to use ICTs in teaching I recognise my feelings within it. These feelings led me to develop other methods of teaching through which I aimed to still deliver an 'emancipatory classroom'.

Obviously, feminist approaches are not the only critical pedagogies to encounter the possibilities and pitfalls of ICTs. However, I believe that there are some specific features of feminist teaching practice that benefit from such innovations, not least because of the misfit between the theoretical paradigm of feminist education and the actual practice within the constraints of (mass) higher education. My own motivations for developing the use of, initially, email and mailbases and, later, WebCT sites include a desire to shift my own practice within a university setting to a closer approximation to my previous practice in Community Education and Continuing Education (see Marchbank, Corrin and Brodie, 1993). This desire arises from my observations of the tensions between what we would like to do as feminist pedagogues and what we are allowed to do in a more or less 'traditional' classroom. However, perhaps even more importantly I was encouraged to find a way to facilitate a more productive learning environment from my, and students', experiences of trying to do different pedagogies within the competitive and demanding environment of modern higher education. As such, it was primarily a result of student resistance to alternative pedagogical practices that I developed the use of email to:

- deliver aspects of the curriculum
- facilitate class based discussions and workshops
- improve groupwork experience
- provide modes of assessment

ICTS – FRIEND OR FOE IN FEMINIST PEDAGOGY?

A study conducted by Athena in 1999 showed great differences in the use of ICTs and other technologies in teaching across Women's Studies in European universities (see Goodman, Kirkup and Michielsens, 2003). This has been an evolving process: what was rare in 1997 had become virtually regular practice by 2001(Goodman, Kirkup and Michielsens, 2003). These developments, such as online Women's Studies classes, have been recognised as potentially very positive for Women's Studies and feminist pedagogy given that they are a means by which we can reach out to previously excluded members of society, for example rural communities. This is not to say that no wariness remains within the realms of feminist pedagogy – an earlier Athena study reported that the developments in ICTs and the subsequent changes for educational practices have been enormous and '... have been received both by enthusiasm as by anxiety and fear' (Peters, 2000:123) across Europe.

Reasons for a lack of enthusiasm for employing ICTs include a lack of knowledge and a lack of time – the two are inter-related as to gain the first requires spending the second. The Athena survey conducted in 1999 found that many teachers across European universities reported having neither the skills to use ICTs nor the time to develop them, and many were of the view that the time taken to learn to use ICTs would not be recouped by the benefits of using ICTs (Michielsens, 2003b:30). On a personal level I can relate to this, at the outset I was a pretty confident user of ICTs and felt that I could develop ways of using them, however, as technology developed at a fast pace I soon felt swamped by it all and left behind. Although, like many of the respondents in the Athena survey, I too was offered training this training was either not applied enough or was required to be done in my own time.

A further reason for feminist pedagogues' reluctance to engage with ICTs is the very nature of feminist pedagogy:

> During the 1970s and 1980s feminist pedagogy avoided engaging with educational technology. Its interest was focused on the human interactions that took place in the face-to-face classroom. It drew from a Freirian tradition of social learning for political liberation. It showed little interest in instructional design. This meant that Women's Studies and Gender Studies were not well placed in the 1990s to make good use of ICTs in teaching (Goodman, Kirkup and Michielsens, 2003: 14).

This quote refers to the European context but is not unique. In a similar vein, writing about the USA, Ellen Cronan Rose (1999:141) explains that there are

anxieties related to questions of just '..how congenial are these technologies to the kind of participatory, collaborative learning that is the hallmark of the feminist classroom?'. Whilst Helen Klebesadel (2004) notes that critics of online learning argue, reminiscent of Freire, that a hidden curriculum exists, 'one that reinforces gender, class, and racial stereotypes'. All of these concerns are well-founded and it is true that teaching an online class is different from a classroom-based class (Gamber, 2005) for the creation of a community within the cohort cannot happen in the same way in an online space. Nonetheless, despite these issues there is evidence that students of online courses and other ICT-facilitated learning accept the limitations of the approach and have 'understood their experience in pragmatic terms – they could not have taken the course in the traditional classroom and access through these means was better than nothing' (Whitehouse, 2002:210).

Using ICTs to facilitate feminist teaching is different, some things are lost and some things are gained. Lost to the teacher and the other students is the information we receive and perceive about another person when they have a physical presence in the classroom, 'the cues and clues have gone' (Gamber, 2005). In some ways ICT-facilitated teaching loses spontaneity, as Cayo Gamber, Co-ordinator of an online Women's Studies class puts it:

> Some of my best teaching happens when I just give up my notes and go where the class wants to take the discussion, sparking off each other – this doesn't happen as easily on the online course, every now and then I'll be beaming at the computer at something a student has written and I have to write and tell them that I'm beaming rather than them seeing my response. (Gamber, 2005).

However, she went on to say that as responses from other students and from staff to a student posting on a course website are not verbal, are not necessarily immediate and are not in real time, that is they are asynchronous discussion boards, then it is possible to 'write a thoughtful response and we are always coming at each other at our best' (Gamber, 2005).

Safety is a further matter for consideration regarding the use of ICTs in feminist teaching. Given that the subject matter of feminist courses can be challenging and that personal experience is encouraged those of us who teach in such ways always begin courses with the establishment of protocols for respecting the experiences and opinions of others (as do many others in, for example, nursing, counselling, social work, see Noden, 1999). Discussion boards and email communications provide a space not only for students to offer peer support (Eule, 2003b; Whitehouse, 2002) but also may result in students accidentally disclosing information to the whole group in error not to mention the danger of assuming a class based discussion forum is as anonymous as an internet chatroom and disclosing personal information which may be regretted later. Of course, this can also happen in a classroom context but there is concern that the greater 'distance' created by the technological interaction may be a disinhibitor.

Concerns with the use of ICTs in education are not restricted to feminists. Alan Staley argues that many examples of ICT usage in education:

> … have merely automated existing processes and have not significantly added value to students' learning other than providing access and flexibility…. Unfortunately, many examples of using ICT to date indicate a common approach is to simply automate existing curricula and reinforce learning processes that have existed for centuries (Staley, 2002:1).

Like other progressive approaches, feminist pedagogy is concerned with developing critical thinking and deep learning in students and uses such as described by Staley go little way to achieving feminist teaching goals. Pamela Whitehouse (2002) has reviewed a number of different means of using ICTs for Women's Studies and concludes that one means of balancing the benefits of ICTs with the limitations of them is in course designs which incorporate both virtual and face-to-face approaches. As she argues, '[t]he hybrid course offers multiple entry points for different types of learners' (Whitehouse, 2002:222) whilst permitting space for discussion as well as problem-based learning, peer interaction and peer support, to aid deep learning. This was the approach I employed as I was seeking to develop ways in which my preferred teaching methods could be facilitated in an environment where my usual application of them was no longer possible.

SO, WHAT DID I DO?

I have used, and continue to use, aspects of ICTs across all my teaching, however, one class in particular utilised ICTs as an integral, and mandatory aspect of teaching, learning and assessment. Several years ago I was concerned by students expressing negative experiences of groupwork and of classroom behaviour that created atmospheres far from conducive to the sharing of personal experience (Letherby and Marchbank, 1999). I was also seeking a resolution to the lack of preparation of (some) students for workshops and seminars sometimes due to a lack of resources within the institutions, e.g. library stock and (more) often due to a lack of planning and management on the part of the student (related to external pressures on their lives too). Also, the prevailing agendas of higher education had influenced the nature of the student body, with more students arriving in higher education with a range of support needs in academic and professional skills due to expansion of higher education (see Introduction). In addition, the successes of lifelong learning approaches ensured that the 'traditional' 18 year old student was not the only one in the classroom, in fact, over the period discussed here my Women's Studies' students ranged in age from 18 to 72. As such, many students had to juggle the same issues as many women academics, such as the management of home, study and care (Cotterill and Waterhouse, 1998). Other inequalities were also evident over the years, not least the continuing inequalities of gender and social class (Jackson, 2002; 2003).

What I developed was a class that utilised email to deliver content, increase shared learning and to assess students individually and collectively. Students used email to communicate with each other both individually and in groups and to communicate with me. For the first three years I arranged a class mailbase (this being an email 'club', anything sent to it was delivered to all members). Subsequent to this was the introduction of WebCT, an online learning intraweb at my institution which also provides a discussion forum for students, but primarily, for me, superseded the use of the mailbase for the distribution of class administration and curriculum content and I continued to use email as the medium for the groupwork assignment as it was more familiar to students. Although over the years WebCT also provided an environment for other, additional pedagogical material.

The class, Gender and Social Policy was a core option at level 2 for students of Women's Studies and of Social Policy and a free elective for others and was first taught in the academic year 1997/8. It was taught in a 2 hour, face-to-face, block (with a break) which limited the class number to a maximum of around thirty, and was timetabled each week for 30 weeks (though formal teaching ended in week 26). The class was assessed by examination (50%) and by a phased assignment of five pieces (also worth 50%). These assignments formed a major aspect of the use of ICTs by students to create a greater collaborative environment within each cohort as three of them were delivered by e-mail. These three were:

1. Short answer questions on an article received by email (later posted on WebCT), emailed to me alone. Sample answers were later posted for all to see.
2. A Research Report summary and analysis of a self selected resource for the class, sent to the module mailbase. Students were required to locate a research/information source relevant to the class on the internet, write a summary analysing and evaluating its usefulness for the class. Examples of some appropriate topics were provided for guidance.
3. Email Groupwork – students were required to work in groups to provide a gendered analysis of a specific social policy (from UK or elsewhere) of their choosing, and instructed as follows:

> You will be required to work in groups which 'meet' via email rather than face to face. Although this is a group exercise the grade awarded will be based half on the group report and half on the individual contribution to the final report and to the management and support offered in the research, delivery and submission of the report. The use of email is essential. The final report and all the email correspondence related to its completion should be emailed … by (date), (Marchbank, 1997–2001).

The remaining two aspects of the phased assessment were an individual class test (under examination conditions), designed to inform students at the half-way point of their strengths and weaknesses in the class, and a poster presentation

(students elected to work in a small group or individually), on a student determined topic, class time was scheduled for the display and discussion of each poster.

Each aspect of assessment was both summative and formative in that all grades went forward to the final class grade; however, each piece was constructed to build into a system of integrated knowledge and understanding which prepared each student for the final summative assessment, the examination. Given the heavy assessment throughout the class the examination, although the same length as other papers at this level in social science required only two, not three, essay answers. In addition, the formative aspect of assessment was in the last three deliveries of the class, aided by the facility within WebCT to set self administered practice tests, voluntary exercises and to 'publish' past papers. For the final two deliveries of this class I was able to provide a past paper with an option for students to select to view a list of bullet points that might be included in a strong answer.

In addition, the mailbase (and then WebCT) was used to publish workshop stimuli material in advance to allow students space to reflect on their own experience and biography before the formal class. In the first couple of years this was limited to the provision of text and the occasional internet link. The increasing sophistication of WebCT (and my IT knowledge) allowed for further developments such as web-based 'treasure hunts', problem-solving exercises etc.

...AND HOW FEMINIST IS IT?

At the time I developed this class I was concerned not with following the dictates of any one particular feminist approach, rather I was focused on ensuring that the basic principles of my own feminist pedagogy were incorporated into the class. However, the class had to fit with the quality mechanisms of the institution: that is it had to achieve previously published learning outcomes, limiting the role students could play in determining the curriculum; it had to have a final examination restricting my choices of assessment; it had to take place in 2 hours a week in a formal classroom, although I was able to opt for two consecutive hours to facilitate discussion, and it had to be open to all students with the necessary pre-requisites, which meant it was not limited to women, to Women's Studies nor even Social Policy students. In the end the majority of students who took the class each year were women, were Women's Studies with the minority being men and/or Social Policy students. Each of these points, in their own ways, is a limit on the development of a course as wholly feminist, but no more so than any Women's Studies class in higher education.

Although I was not consciously seeking to follow any particular 'recipe' for feminist pedagogy it is useful to compare my practice against the criteria set by others, in this case Cathy Lubelska (1991) and Penny Welch (1994), though the writings of many others could be selected.

Lubelska (1991) advocated the existence of five factors that are required to be present to assist and ensure feminist pedagogy:

1. a supportive and co-operative environment of learning
2. a willingness in exploring women's experiences to accept that we need to utilise all evidence
3. to be adventurous in our search for appropriate teaching methodologies
4. to draw on and be receptive to what other disciplines have to offer
5. and that

> ..assessment should reflect the learning situations...If we stress shared resources, co-operative projects, student research and the value of each student's skills and experiences, we need to explore appropriate methods of evaluating these. (Lubelska, 1991:47).

Similarly, Welch (1994) has outlined three principles, for non-oppressive education and a socially just practice, they are:

1. to strive for egalitarian relationships in the classroom
2. to try and make all students feel valued as individuals and
3. to use the experience of students as a learning resource

In addition, it is important to note that other anti-oppressive approaches to curriculum delivery have been documented, one such is the work of Pauline Noden (1999) who sought to develop working systems for collaborative projects and group learning in Social Work education. Noden discusses the importance of appropriate physical conditions, time of classes, group composition and the extensive negotiation of ground rules that she utilised.

By taking my practice on the class Gender and Social Policy and relating its aspects to the various criteria listed immediately above I aim to illustrate how even the very simple use of ICTs can facilitate feminist pedagogical aims. In the following I detail aspects of my approach on the class Gender and Social Policy and relate them to aspects of feminist pedagogy to illustrate where I believe my, rather basic, use of ICTs supported, and in cases permitted, feminist pedagogical practices.

ACCESS TO THE CLASS

Equality of access to the learning experience is a fundamental aspect for feminist and other anti-oppressive educationalists and whilst ICTs can facilitate access, fear of, lack of ability with, or no access to, ICTs can merely create another layer of alienation from the learning experience for some students. Obviously, in order to operate any class involving even the most basic of ICTs it is vital that students have access to, and be able to employ, the technologies required. With the advent of computer classes in school has come an associated assumption that all students are IT literate. However, as David Tucker, Janice Whatley and Ray Hackney (1997)

note, even on a Business Information Technology course, 'Undergraduate students usually lack confidence in using the technology so there is a requirement for tutors to closely monitor student progress, particularly in the early stages.... and to provide constructive feedback and support on a timely basis' (Tucker, Watley and Hackney, 1997:1). Whilst Elisabeth Skinner (2002:4) has observed that '[t]he idea that younger students arrive in higher education with a full complement of ICT skills is still a myth'. In fact, Ann Davidson and Marina Orsini-Jones (2002) found that in one English university the number of students describing themselves as confident computer users varied with subject, from over 80 percent in Physiotherapy to around 40 percent in Women's Studies.

From the outset I applied a principle from my community education background – that is, too much responsibility is disempowering rather than empowering. I held the view that expecting students to already have, or to develop, adequate IT skills would not only be incorrect but would place the onus too much on students. Instead I programmed into the curriculum workshops, taught by the School technical staff, on email and word processing. With the introduction of WebCT I also programmed an additional workshop simply on the skills necessary to access and employ WebCT specifically related to this class, (in addition to the institutions' generic training for all new first year students). Like Whitehouse's experiences, what initially occurred was that the 'workshop atmosphere fostered a sense of camaraderie and "we're all in it together" that provided successful models of women using computers which might not have evolved so quickly if the course were totally online or face to face' (Whitehouse, 2002:218). In addition, over the years, these workshops had the added aspect of indicating to me the increase in student computer literacy from 1997 to 2001 which has been phenomenal. From a starting point of only some familiarity amongst students with email by 2000/01 both workshops really only required a brief introduction and 10 minutes of questions and answers. Yet this IT literacy has its limitations, for like Gamber (2005), I too have found that students' IT literacy far surpasses my own when it comes to aspects such as Instant Messaging but, despite tutorials and reminders, students continued to 'post' material in formats not readable to others. In other words, students were able to use their own technology but remained illiterate regarding the interaction, or not, of that technology with that of others.

Davidson and Orsini-Jones (2002) argue that IT competence and access are '..critical factors in determining how students receive C & IT materials'. However access to the technology has not been too much of a difficulty. Their survey, conducted at Coventry University where this class was taught, found that the vast majority of students (82%) succeeded in accessing WebCT whenever they chose to (Davidson & Orsini-Jones, 2002). Given that only 36% of students in the WebCT survey had internet and WebCT access off campus the success of such pedagogical practices is related to the provision of equipment on campus. However, it must not

be assumed that such technology is available off campus. This might be taken to be a reason for the non-development of courses, yet, the previously mentioned Athena survey reports that 3 out 5 teachers were of the opinion that their Women's Studies students had access to a PC, either at home or on campus (Michielsens, 2003b:28).

CLASS CONTENT

As the use of email was only one aspect of the class there were other ways in which feminist pedagogy was supported: from the class content in general to the methods of face-to-face teaching. The teaching of Social Policy usually does not focus only gender, and the curriculum traditionally focuses on social administration of services, such as housing and education whilst many issues deemed to be 'private' have not always found their place within mainstream Social Policy classes, instead being found in specialist courses. The curriculum of this class did include such 'private' issues, for example: the policy discourses around childcare; domestic violence law; urban design and personal safety/access and reproductive policies. The teaching approach I adopted was to provide empirical information and to assist students in relating their own lives, or the personal experiences of others, to the material they were studying. In addition, the use of ICTs, firstly the mailbase and later WebCT, permitted me to deliver additional support material that students could choose to access. For example, I posted 'Virtual' lectures to compliment what had been covered in class; Self Directed tutorials on both technical and social policy topics; additional reading recommendations and bibliographies; links to useful external sites; relevant press releases from government bodies and Treasure Hunt exercises in which students were guided through complex issues, for example domestic violence, by linking to particular sites, and using the information found there to answer formative questions (the 'treasure'). Accessing and utilising this material was voluntary. In addition, students were encouraged to post information, comments and useful resources to the whole class (either by mailbase or on the Discussion Forum facility within WebCT).

ASSESSMENT DESIGN

Given the structural restrictions of the institution it was required that this course be assessed by coursework and examination. For most classes this was interpreted to mean a single essay and an examination. I was concerned that such didactic assessment only tested students' mastery of the subject as taught, not any wider conceptions. Restricted as I was to a 'coursework' and an 'examination' I designed a coursework in five parts, as detailed above. The grade for the coursework was treated cumulatively, that is, the five marks were added together to achieve a single

grade and, as long as an overall minimum mark was achieved which satisfied the university requirements, students were submitted for the final examination with, potentially, advanced grades. It is my belief that the emailed assignments assisted a feminist delivery of the class in a number of ways, not least being that Noden's (1999) concerns re physical conditions and restrictions of times for students' work were ameliorated by students being able to select their own space, both physical and time, to complete assessments whilst specialised technological support was available for those with specific needs e.g. large screen for one student with a visual disability.

SUPPORTIVE, COOPERATIVE AND VALIDATING ENVIRONMENT

Reflecting on feminist issues regarding the learning environment I believe that the concerns of Lubelska and Noden regarding the creation of a supportive and co-operative environment were met, in particular, by the first two assignments of this particular class design. Both of these were delivered by email, though to different audiences: students were required to send their first assignment directly to me, the second went to the mailbase. For Assignment 1, this ensured that I could check that they were all able to use the technology and so I could aid them develop their skills on a one-to-one basis (treating people equally but not identically as Welch also advocates). As the second assignment was sent directly to the mailbase all contributions were available for the whole class to consult and use – in this way students shared their findings and taught each other. This developed a co-operative use of research and analysis, treated all contributions as equal (as material was distributed automatically prior to grading), and meant that the skills of individual students were appreciated by more than just the tutor. Although a facility for the sharing of information became available within WebCT I chose to continue with the mailbase aspect as it exposed students to another mode of IT usage and, given that WebCT is an educational software and not likely to be used outside of an educational setting, the continued use of the various aspects of email was a deliberate attempt to '...emulate the situation in which many students might find themselves in their future working lives, thus providing a realistic environment for the students' (Tucker, Whatley and Hackney, 1997:2)

Students also experienced a small degree of empowerment as they were able to select for themselves the resource analysed in Assignment 2 (likewise the group determined the topic in Assignment 3 and again students chose their topic for the fifth assignment, the poster). This also required students to comment on the source's utility for the class, it required that students' reflect on their own experience of both the class and the use of the internet for supporting academic work.

EMAIL GROUPWORK

As I have said the impetus I had for developing this mode of teaching relates to my experiences of youth work and reading of some rather idealistic exhortations to empower students which in many cases actually seemed to disempower as many people as they empowered (see Letherby and Marchbank, 1999; Marchbank and Letherby, 2001). Having moved from Community and Continuing Education into mass Higher Education it was clear to me that groupwork in particular was unpopular with students despite staff valuing it for reasons of cooperation, peer learning etc. Students complained of group members failing to turn up to work, of people not 'pulling their weight', of being excluded deliberately or sub consciously from group discussions through e.g. English not being first language, being hearing impaired, or simply not being one of the 'in crowd'. My personal experience of attempting to develop ground rules as advocated by Welch (1994) and Noden (1999) amongst others was that such ground rules did little to ameliorate a range of power differentials within the group. In addition, my own experience is reflected in the survey conducted by Sue Ledwith and Anne Lee (1999:111) at Oxford Brooks which concluded that: ' [S]tudents consistently thought that their individual assessments better reflected their ability than their groupwork did.' Whilst I recognised that this could easily be anxiety and displacement, the increasing diversity of the student body was making it more difficult for students with different life patterns to find times to actually meet up. In addition, I was concerned that some students, through their verbal abilities, were able to dominate group activities and discussion. I was seeking a means by which the contributions and skills of all students could be recognised in an assignment that was collective, not individual. Like Whitehouse (2002:218) I found that by using email, or in her case asynchronous discussions, 'students who usually emerge as "natural" leaders in face-to-face discussions cannot dominate…'. I required that students do a groupwork assignment, the major topic to be determined by the student group but to be approved by myself (as assignments had to achieve previously published learning outcomes). I sought to engender the collectivity principles of feminist pedagogy whilst removing the barriers of modern higher education, including student competition.

My solution to these problems was to require students to meet 'virtually' and to record all their correspondence regarding the development, management, research, discussion and writing of their report. As the students met 'virtually' rather than actually I was able to award grades according to each participant's contribution to research, analysis and project management by reading these communication (I only read them after the reports were submitted). After analysing all communications amongst the group I awarded a group mark and an individual mark for this assessment. I awarded the individual grade on the basis of the evidence available from the email communications involved in the development of the report, in this

way students who expended time and energy in project development were rewarded more highly than those who allowed themselves to be 'carried'. In other words, I awarded grades as did Tucker, Whatley and Hackney in a similar, but unassociated project, based '..not only on the basis of the quality of the group's work but also on each individual contribution to, and understanding of, the work undertaken' (Tucker, Whatley and Hackney, 1997:2). Thus, individual concerns could be addressed without sacrificing collective responsibility and peer support to learning.

Given that students were not required to meet 'actually' each participant selected for themselves their time of contribution, be it 6am on a Sunday morning (from home) or from a library machine at 4pm on a Thursday. Within the confines of the time limit it was possible for each participant to take their own time in responding and contributing, an advantage for those whose analytical or language skills[2] required them to work at their own, individual pace rather than be left behind in a faster moving group activity. The asynchronous nature of email also permitted space for students to reflect on what their peers had contributed and to provide thoughtful responses. As such, the principles advocated by Welch (1994): to strive for egalitarian relationships within the class; to make individuals feel valued and to genuinely enable all students to take up the invitation to participate equally in the class were, in my opinion, achieved as particular barriers (such as physical access and time to meet up) were removed.

One critique of this method is that, in being textually based rather than verbally based, it can be exclusionary for students with reading disabilities such as dyslexia (Salmon, 2000 cited in Skinner, 2002). However, my own experience is that students with communication challenges, from visual impairment to deafness to dyslexia found that the loses they experienced in communicating orally were more than replaced by the opportunity to read material at their own pace, to view that material in media that worked for them, to reflect on that material and to respond in writing (with the advantage of spell checkers if desired). By the final delivery of this class students had abandoned 'academic' English in their virtual groupwork communications preferring the speed and ease of writing in 'text speak' (eg, b4 we read article, rel8 to what said in class').

CONCLUSIONS

In summary then, this method of employing ICTs met Welch's (1994) and Lubelska's (1991) recommendations. Lubelska's environment of learning was facilitated by the mailbase and then WebCT as these systems allow for each student to have the opportunity to reflect on and inform module content in relation to their own experience. The flexibility permitted by, at first the mailbase and now WebCT, for the delivery of content also meant that face-to-face classes were much more interactive and reflexive as anxieties about ensuring the delivery of material were

removed from my concerns. Lubelska's third and fourth points were addressed simply by the use of ICTs. I believe my usage enhanced the student experience and, rather than causing a degree of alienation (Rose, 1999), increased student integration. Lubelska's final point is that assessment should reflect the learning situations. Within higher education feminist pedagogy will always have to accept the necessity of assessment. However, this module with its six different forms of assessment provided a forum for students to display and share their knowledge, gain skills and experience and, as such, in my opinion, ameliorates some of the worst tensions between higher education and feminist pedagogical principles.

However, there are other limitations on 'how feminist' this approach was. The most obvious being that I used my power, derived from my status within the university, to enforce the mandatory use of ICTs. In doing so, not only did I facilitate student sharing and learning I have to acknowledge that I did so by using my power, and my power also existed in that I was the one grading and assessing contributions and my power to set the curriculum (within the constraints of the quality mechanisms of the university). It would be facile to argue then that students were truly empowered in this class. Their power lay in the ability to choose a different class and in their choices of what experiences to share; to select topics for 3 of the 5 phased assignments and in having personal choice and responsibility regarding downloading and/or using the material made available via ICTs.

I would say to anyone wishing to develop such a course that it has many advantages; students can truly share their learning; ICTs can guarantee availability of information to each student; whilst requiring them to take responsibility for their own learning in that it is their responsibility to download material. The most important aspect for me was the use of a method that allowed students to be more equal in their access to groupwork situations: unrestricted by inappropriate meeting times; language or knowledge advantages and enabled me to award more accurate grades according to contribution and effort. However, although this is one method of facilitating group involvement the process actually required a greater input from me as a class tutor than if I were simply reliant on lectures and an assessed essay. Likewise, with all email submissions, as the university and individuals provide a range of technological approaches it means that I, as the tutor, had to be able to read all versions of work, no matter what system or software students employed. This was verymtime consuming. In addition, to grade each groupwork I also spent a great deal of time downloading and organising emails again very time consuming.

To staff I would say that this is a time heavy practice and should not be undertaken without support from various sources. For example, I relied upon the technicians to teach 4 hours of e-mail skills to students at the beginning of each module; on Computing Services to establish the mailbase each year and upon my own abilities to resolve technical problems discussed in class. This is not a mode of teaching to be undertaken lightly for although there are many gains to be achieved using ICTs, saving the time of the teacher is not one of them (Michelsens, 2003b;

Gamber 2005). However, this use of ICTs did reduce inequalities to groupwork, allowed a range of students across degree routes and friendship networks to work together and has produced some very good, and occasionally excellent, work. In addition, I believe that it achieved a '..feminist pedagogic agenda of creating more democratic classrooms' (Vogel, 2002:204).

Last Words

In the Introduction it is noted that differing philosophies exist across Europe regarding post-16 learning, the main difference being on the matter of whether or not post-school education is an entitlement or a personal responsibility. Despite these differences extensive growth in higher education has been achieved, as reported in the Introduction, at an average rate of 40 per cent in developed countries. This has not been to the universal advantage of Women's Studies. Although early successes of life long learning benefited Women's Studies greatly, as it was an area of study attractive to adult women 'returners' in particular, the British experience shows that other agendas, such as the policy to increase the number of 18–30 year olds experiencing higher education, has provided opportunities for the closure of Women's Studies courses citing that such courses are no longer financially viable in mass higher education (FWSA, 2005). Yet international comparisons indicate that Women's Studies remains popular and thrives, in particular in Canada, the USA and in many European institutions where students enter universities studying flexible 'liberal arts' programmes permitting space to explore a range of classes. In the UK with our system of having to state on application and entry the subject in which one hopes to graduate students are increasingly seeking out 'safe' options in terms of employability. Fortunately, this has not meant that feminist teaching practice has disappeared and, as this article shows, that teaching practice is alive and adapting to the new demands of higher education. Further, the development of the use of ICTs also seems to be opening up studying beyond the classroom, which can only aid learning throughout life.

NOTES

Philip Barker (undated) provides guidance on the steps necessary to build ICT teaching practices, see reference below.

[1] Athena is the Advanced Thematic Network in Activities in Women's Studies in Europe, it is currently based at the Centrum för Genusvetenskap (Centre for Women's Studies) at the University of Lund, Sweden.

[2] E-mail correspondence in general usage is informal and this informality is an acceptable aspect of the groupwork correspondence, as such students only need to make themselves understood to each other and do not need to worry about grammar and spelling

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Chapter 6

WELCOME TO THE PLEASURE DOME

Women Taking Pleasure in the University

Jocey Quinn
London Metropolitan University and Exeter University

INTRODUCTION

> Acute pleasure (tinged with envy) seeing through half- drawn curtains pleasant, lamp-lit, bare-walled studio-like room and young man working at a big desk. Still excited enviously by student life…: Perhaps shirking responsibility: want to be in grooming stage: approbation, advice, competition at hand always. (Antonia White, Diaries 1926–1957 (1992: 35)

Writing in the 1950s the novelist Antonia White paints an evocative picture of a student framed and lit, as if on stage, playing their pleasurable role. She evokes many of the idealised and classed pleasures associated with study: a pleasant space set aside for absorbing work, preparing for the future and being supported all the way. Many things have changed since the 1950s, not least the fact that students exist in far greater numbers and are now more likely to be female than male. Yet there is no mass access to the pleasures White describes. The student has had a rude awakening, as state financial support has decreased, as has the individual time and attention they might expect in their studies. Study now takes place amidst a flurry of other demands from part-time jobs to childcare. The peaceful bare room has become horribly cluttered; but pleasure remains as a powerful factor and motivating force for universities, lecturers and students. How is it framed? What would we see if we looked through the window now? In this chapter I explore three different manifestations of pleasure: pleasure as it is employed by universities, as it is pursued by women students across ages and as it is envisaged by women academics, myself included.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 117–129.

WORK HARD/PLAY HARD: MARKETING PLEASURE TO WIDEN PARTICIPATION

Antonia White's vision of pleasure may be a touch passive for current tastes: after all this was the woman whose greatest pleasure was *the sound of someone else making my tea*. Contemporary pleasures tend to be more cacophonous and instead of looking through a window we often view them through a screen. Several years ago I sat in a cinema watching the adverts when suddenly the audience was assaulted by a particularly manic jumble of overheated images and sounds. I could not fathom what was being advertised or why until I realised, with some embarrassment, that it was my own university that was being sold. This was a cinema advert aimed at recruiting new students and couched entirely in terms of rampant pleasure and consumption. Universities have always traded on their capacity to produce certain types of pleasure for students, from May balls and punting to the pleasures of counterculture. However, the aggressive marketing of universities using entertainment media and targeting what one university calls '*pleasure seeking hedonists*' is quite a new phenomenon. In the UK it seems to be tied to widening participation and the goal of 50% participation of those under 30 by 2010. With mass participation comes mass-market strategy. Is there an assumption that higher education has to be sugar-coated for the corrupted tastes of fast-food entrants? There is a school of thinking within the Lifelong Learning agenda (see NAGCELL, 1999) that believes learning should be 'wrapped' in leisure activities to attract what are known as 'hard to reach groups'. It appears wrapping is being extended to HE in the belief that university education must be disguised as entertainment for it to become palatable.

Having become interested in this question, two years ago I made a close study of ten HE prospectuses from the Midlands, where the university I then worked for is located. I found that bars and drinking were amongst the first images shown in every one. Similarly, particularly for city universities, the synchronisation between study and shopping opportunities was highlighted. Government policy in the UK has done all it can over the last decade to produce universities as market places and students as consumers (Morley, 2003). Similarly the drive to replace 'useless degrees' with vocational ones (to quote the then Minister for Higher Education (UUK, 2002), has been accelerated. I have argued elsewhere that this proceeds from some questionable and untested assumptions about what students want (Quinn, 2001). Here I want to home in on the question of pleasure. Clearly pleasure is important to all living things, but is plastic pleasure really what students want? My contention is that marketing pleasure and pumping up vocationalism are different sides of the same coin. Students are assumed only to want to study to get a job and play is sold to make this studying grind palatable. In this chapter I explore and challenge this assumption, paying particular attention to the position of women in this context.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

I am going to use a range of research data from different universities to explore this question. The methodological approach employed was qualitative and participatory. The aim was to uncover what sorts of discourses participants employed to understand and express their experiences of engaging in higher education, either as students or as lecturers. Participants were encouraged to set the initial framework for investigation and identify what issues were important for them. However the research was conducted from a feminist perspective in that it recognised gender, power and difference as determining factors in these discourses and the interpretations that could be made of them. In analysing the data an interdisciplinary theoretical perspective was employed which drew on feminist theory from the fields of education, women's studies, cultural studies, sociology, human geography and queer theory.

The first was an in-depth study of 21 women students in their second year of interdisciplinary degrees in 2 HE institutions, a post-1992 university and a college of higher education applying for university status, known under the pseudonyms of Expanding University and Pleasant College (Quinn, 2001, 2003a). This study involved focus groups which used videos of feminist perspectives on ecofeminism and black women's writing to stimulate discussion about how women and feminist ideas were represented in environmental studies and american studies curricula. This was followed by interviews to explore individual perspectives and histories of life and study, diaries which were kept during a week of study and allowed participants to reflect on the intersection of their experiences in HE and as women generally, and observations of lectures and seminars. The study's focus was whether the mass participation of women students and the growth of feminist knowledge had really changed mainstream cultures and curricula.

The second was a study of retention at another post-1992 university, which I shall call Local University, which included women students and involved a series of focus groups with first-year undergraduate students carried out over 3 years (Thomas, 2002, Slack and Casey, 2002) and also focus groups with part time HND students. The aim of this study was to trace the ways in which students were responding to the university and how the university was addressing their needs effectively. The students from both these studies were varied in age, a mixture of working-class and middle-class and included some, if not many, ethnic-minority students and students with disabilities.

The third study was a study of diverse academics working at a medium-sized research-intensive university which will be known as Aspiring University (Quinn, 2004). This involved 7 focus groups with 40 people including 16 women academics. They included senior academics with high research profiles, academics with management responsibilities, new lecturers, academics active in widening participation, academics with a role in external work with the community or

business and academics involved in mentoring others. These participants were recruited from seven Schools including a broad range of science, humanities and social science subjects. Participants ranged widely in age from their 20s to 60s. One focus group was all male, one had only one woman and the rest were evenly mixed. There was a small amount of ethnic diversity and a number of participants were foreign nationals. In addition to data about women academics drawn from this study I shall also draw on my own research diaries for reflections.

PLEASURE-SEEKING HEDONISTS

There is no doubt that the fabled pleasure-seeking hedonists do exist in universities and make good use of bars and clubs. This was recognised in the accounts of both students and lecturers. At Local University, for example, hedonism is associated with individualism and a freeing-up of social conventions: with a certain blurring of gender boundaries:

> The social side of university is the best thing. You could wear a pink tutu and no-one would care.
> (Male student, Local University)

Such hedonism is connoted with youth and seems to be taken up most freely by young male students. This may be true of Western youth culture more generally, but in the university the boundaries between work and play are particularly permeable and the permissions to cross them more open. However, it is interesting to find students reproducing the official work-hard/play-hard narratives that underlie the push to pleasure in universities:

> You get the opportunity to go out, but everyone understands that work comes first. Everyone goes out on Wednesday, but everyone's there at nine o'clock next morning
> (Female student, Local University)

The connection between the right to pleasure and the imperative to work hard and dutifully appears to have been well established. However, not everyone is permitted to be a hedonist, or, indeed, claim sexual freedom. Student hedonism has its own conventions. An older woman in her forties studying at Local University had come to realise this the hard way:

> I went out and got drunk and fell over. I think they think I'm behaving in ways people of my age shouldn't so they don't know how to behave or interact with me
> (Female student, Local University)

Expanding University too had its share of hedonists and the culture of excess could be excluding, creating resentment amongst older women with responsibilities. Ruth, struggling to combine studying with the disintegration of a violent marriage took some delight in the downfall of the young pleasure seekers she had known:

> Ruth: 'They just seemed they could stay up all night and do all the reading and all this and be out partying (laughs) all the time. But they haven't lasted these ones.'
> JQ: 'Have they left?'
> Ruth: 'Yes … the ones who were never there.'

Here pleasure operated as antithetical to studying, separating and removing the students altogether; a dubious outcome for Expanding University's recruitment drive. There was certainly some envy in Ruth's account where she compared their freedom to the demands of her own life. Perhaps the university's blatant appeal to the young, free and single marginalised mature students from the start. It positions them as an afterthought, much as they are in the government's widening participation strategy, which focuses entirely on the under thirties. Expanding University actively tried to tie the institution to the party town where it was located and celebrated its strong ties with media and sporting stars at every opportunity. Being a student was a key to a glamorous and exciting nightlife. Yet the women I researched, young and old, repeatedly revealed their mistrust and even fear of the club culture which they perceived as seedy and threatening:

> Anyway done all the errands I needed to do and went out to a club with college friends. It made me feel old as well as deaf! Had a good dance but well realised that it's not my scene any more. I think the last time I went to a club was 9–10 years ago, but they don't change and only remind me of a cattle market.
> (Ruth, 29, diary)

They were not anti-pleasure, far from it, but they could see the darker side of what was being sold to them in the name of study. The pleasure that the university sought to attach itself to operated in a context where sexism and potential violence against women was a perpetual undercurrent. It was not at all gender neutral and certainly it was raced and identified predominantly as white. The city in question has an alternative culture of black social clubs, but these were not the clubs the university sought to link itself to.

HOMELY PLEASURES

If we turn to Pleasant College, which was located in the same city, it also tried to market itself as a 'happening place', which was somewhat belied by its quiet suburban location and sedate campus. It was rather more successful at promoting what we might call homely pleasures. Its marketing sold it as a welcoming home from home which was 'hospitable, welcoming, cheerful' and students did respond well to these pleasures. Most important amongst them was being accepted and known:

> It's friendly here because everyone knows you. I've been in big universities and no-one speaks to you, but it can take hours to get across campus here because that many people stop you
> (Katy, 30)

The college itself sets up this discourse of naming and knowing right from the start; new students are welcomed with a glossy magazine listing the names of all incoming students and including photographs of them moving onto campus. Here the college seems to have intuited well the need for students to feel part of social networks (Thomas, 2002). The notion of feeling 'right' and 'at home' often recurred in student accounts. Nevertheless, as I've argued elsewhere (Quinn, 2003b) it is the students themselves who really create this sense of home by their interactions and their ability to imagine the university as a space of belonging. They engender this pleasure rather than passively consuming it. Nevertheless institutions too need to validate this desire for home comfort as a legitimate one. Not all universities feel like home, particularly for part-time students:

> In the college you felt like you were being looked after, your tutors were like parents. Here we are just wandering about the place like orphans.
> (HND student)

INTELLECTUAL PLEASURE

The one kind of pleasure universities seem to shy away from portraying is the pleasure of learning. One would be forgiven for thinking snooker was the main activity they offered. Swots and boffins are not cool; thinking is not allowed. Associative links with the media and sport are deemed to be what turns the widening-participation student on. When one has the opportunity to talk in more depth to students about their learning, images of intellectual excitement do emerge quite clearly:

> The times I'm here take on a different meaning and I feel totally absorbed. One of the lecturers he's so good you're concentrating on him the whole time and it does leave you thinking about things, you're driving home thinking about things. It puts another dimension in my life.
> (Joanne, 48, interview)

> Susan: 'Oh I love it. I'll be heartbroken when I leave, imagine having to go back to work! No I really love it here. I'm so happy. I've got another 12 months to go and I can't imagine what I'll do without it'.
> JQ 'What do you love?'
> Susan: 'Well I'm here because I want to be here-that's the most important factor. It's something I've chosen to do .I just enjoy myself tremendously.'
> JQ: 'What's been your most positive experience of being a woman student?'

> Susan: ‘ It’s the whole experience. Its just excellent .Being able to enjoy the subjects I study, the pleasure I get in just learning stuff and discuss it with people who know what you are talking about.’
> (Susan, 42, interview)

Although we are told by the government that the function of HE is entry into a good job, both Joanne and Susan bucked that trend. They had both left quite successful but boring careers to study american studies. Their studying pleasures were evoked as ones of transportation out of the humdrum into the meaningful: enjoying and loving ‘thinking about things’ and ‘just learning stuff’. Thinking and learning are buzz words in these narratives not something to hide away. Studying allowed them and others in my study, across age and class, to experiment with thoughts and feelings and feel they were playing an active part in their subjecthood. The fact that this was an accredited licence to think, although sometimes demeaned by their families as a ‘hobby’ or ‘swotting’, was very important to them.

Even for the HND students on day release from their jobs, who were not very happy with university life, the idea of love of learning was a powerful one:

> JQ: ‘Are you interested in other forms of learning that aren’t work related?’
> ‘Oh yes there are loads of things I’d like to do, there’s so many things This summer I’m doing a course in painting and I cant wait to get those brushes out!’
> ‘I’ m doing a course working with children taking them out hiking and camping.’
> JQ: ‘It sounds like in spite of everything you haven’t lost the love of learning. Is that right?’
> ‘Yes!’
> ‘Yes!’
> ‘We’ll never lose that.’
> (HND focus group, discussion)

CREATING THE PLEASURE DOME

From the above accounts it could be inferred that pleasure is what drives the learning experience, even in the most unpropitious circumstances. Universities may seek to co-opt and control pleasure but I found students have a way of constructing their own, in unexpected ways. In Expanding University, Liz, for example, felt at 54 she’d left behind the years when she was young and attractive, always the centre of attention and desire. However, she did not lament this. Her party days had gone but in the university she was cresting other kinds of excitements. She evoked them in a corporeal way, almost as a romance with ideas: the ‘start of something wonderful’.

> It’s like ‘hey where’s the party gone?’ I feel invisible now as a woman, but being invisible is the start of something wonderful because then you start looking and there’s so much that excites me.

The young students also tended to reverse expectations. They did not like clubbing much. What they loved was 'snowboarding' which Bridie evoked in the following terms:

> The feeling of being in control but also a bit out of control. You're not really in control that much when you're going fast down the side of a mountain.

This was a much more adventurous pleasure than anything to be found in a club and it was recounted in almost sexual terms. If ideas and mountains are sexier than clubs, perhaps Expanding University's marketing section is hopelessly out of touch. It seems the university cannot construct a pleasure dome for its students or a persona with which to enter it: the students will find their own.

WOMEN ACADEMICS AND THEIR PLEASURES

Valerie Hey (2004) has taken up the question of pleasure I first raised in Quinn (2003c) and developed a taxonomy of 'perverse pleasures' for women academics. She highlights the ways in which we are seduced and entrapped in the ambiguous pleasures of competition and encouraged to delight in our own triumph over others in terms of research funding, publication, indicators of esteem, but also enjoy intellectual pleasures, find unexpected and even banal pleasures in everyday academic life and enjoy pleasure in academic friendships with other women. She argues that:

> whilst academics like all professional communities have modes of inclusion and exclusion, prestige and honour systems are not new. What is different I think is the intensification in enticements and seductions in the spaces of the academy … The fact that feminists have so easily 'rolled over' and bought this package indicates a number of processes not least the pliant nature of our own socialization. (2004: 35)

She sees feminists not as immune to these pressures, but in some ways particularly susceptible, because of our complex positioning as outsiders/insiders in universities

In my research with academics I have tried to trace what geographies of the possible might exist for contemporary academics and map the terrain that exists in one particular part of the field (Quinn, 2004). As I had anticipated, pleasure was an active force in these narratives, but not necessarily the secondary pleasures of the trappings of academic success. Although the women academics that I researched were successful, in that they had permanent positions in departments with high research ratings in a university that was 'a sort of upper-medium first division type of university'(focus group), they tended to be highly sceptical of the value of research and publication indicators. They saw them as the university's prime concern, but not as their own motivators. Instead they returned constantly to the pleasure of ideas, the

excitements of new connections, particularly in research: 'generating your own enthusiasms and things to pass on to other people' (female science lecturer). In this they spoke a common language with male academics. In looking at the focus group transcripts it is not really possible to distinguish the language the female academics use for academic pleasure from that of the males. Interestingly, this is not because the women use a masculine form of address, but because they all use what might be stereotyped as a female language of the emotions. Female and male academics positioned themselves as sharing understandings and feelings which the bureaucracy of the institution could not or would not understand. Theirs was a language of love:

> 'I think it's more loyalty to science, curiosity. It's not so much about the university … '
> JQ: ' So you're driven by a love of science then?'
> 'Yes I think it's in the bottom of my heart. That was the case but you don't say that, you don't say that.'
> JQ: ' Are you not allowed to say that?'
> 'No, no, no, no, not really. I think it's usually you know you have to do research, demonstrate in teaching, bring a grant you know bring money and that's important, but you know bottom of heart science is what we want to do.'
> 'You were saying earlier you don't know, you don't see why people do it but it's the love that decides.'
> (focus group discussion).

Of course this devotion made them exploitable. There were some indicators that women were more likely to be used by institutions and by students. They were the ones who spoke most often of high administrative and pastoral demands. In discussing students, pleasure reared its head. Women academics were very scathing about those students who expected their devotion to hedonism to be nursed by female staff:

> But these are, you know, these are 18 to 21 year olds that spend all night drinking, that are expecting us to almost physically get them out of bed in the morning, sit them down somewhere, force feed them the information, make them do their homework and I wish they'd stop calling it homework because its not.
> (Female Lecturer, Science focus group)

Their self images as having been industrious and focused young female students were affronted by what they perceived as the callous disregard for things they held dear, by the current generation of highly privileged middle-class students:

> The students we're getting are not as independent thinkers as they used to be. They can't spell any more they read very little … We often link it to how they've been educated but of course then there's the question of customers. I mean they're paying fees they expect you to deliver. But you deliver on their terms. And it never was, it never was
>
> So it's a kind of a culture that everybody needs to adjust to and that creates the kind of student who is not able to stand on their own two feet but demands everything from you

> But demands success without necessarily the ability or commitment to do it.
> Without putting in any effort. That's quite usual.
>
> (Female Professor and Lecturer Humanities Focus group)

Teaching was not necessarily seen as a pleasure, although this varied across Schools. Those who had developed highly participative pedagogies because of the nature of their discipline found more opportunity to share pleasure in the classroom than those who had to teach in huge lecture theatres. Despite these pressures and dissatisfactions, intellectual pleasure had the strongest pull. For these women, being an academic was a rich source of pleasure that they would not forgo for any other occupation.

PERSONAL PLEASURES

I will conclude by pondering the 'autobiography of the question'? Why was the question of taking pleasure in the university worth my attention? This takes me back to the Antonia White quotation with which I started this chapter. The studying vision she presents I find as enticing as she does, and perhaps for the same reasons, because it offers a supported state of transition: a cocoon, and a peaceful one where the energetic pursuits are reading and writing. These are amongst my best pleasures too (and if someone brings me a cup of tea, then so much the better). I could, on one level, see my job progress post PhD, moving from a crowded open plan office (without windows) to my current 'personal study' with its views of trees and flowers as a successful attainment of this vision. Of course the cocoon is hardly a safe one, as my colleagues who were recently 'persuaded' into voluntary severance can attest. We are naive if we feel our occupancy is at all assured. Nevertheless, compared with so many work spaces in so many sectors it remains a privileged one.

So what happens within the cocoon? If I consider my research diaries where I like to trace my ideas and thoughts, there is more than engagement, more than a strong thread of enthusiasm and even some eureka moments. There is something like joy in the moment of intellectual creativity. Elizabeth St Pierre has beautifully expressed the feeling that we get when entering 'smooth mental space' where the possibilities of our own thoughts start to unfold:

> it seems barely possible but then impossibly obvious. It is an affirmative joyous space, perhaps the most thrilling of all the fields in which we work … I often found myself moving into it as I took my early morning walks down littered sidewalks, priming my body and mind for the days writing, or when I wrote myself into some new understanding, watching words appear on the computer screen that I did not understand but knew I must stick with.
> (1997: 371–2)

Valerie Hey (2004) talks about the addictions of bidding and publishing, but the ultimate addiction is the search for this smooth space.

The insider/outsider positioning that Hey explores and its enticements and pleasures are also reflected in the seesawing movements of elation and anxiety found in my diaries. I suspect from talking to other women academics that these are not at all uncommon. The following excerpt following the formal upgrading of my thesis, a crucial moment which allowed me to progress onwards from MPhil to PhD level, is typical in its flavour:

> My PhD was converted and 'warmly supported' and they enjoyed my work and found it fascinating. What more do I want – the moon on a stick of course.
> Am sitting in Preston station now-reflecting that I have come far in 2 years despite the odds and so glad to be where I am now and not where I was then.
> (JQ research diary)

I envisaged gaining my PhD as a process of reconstituting myself as a powerful subject with the culmination a form of triumph. However, I now see this as an illusion of accomplishment. That subjecthood is being constantly reworked and reclaimed within academic life. Once attained, the doctorate ushers in a constant process of always wanting more, always defending what you have. Subjectivity is a never-ending flow (see Grosz, 1994) and for everyone, the world in which we engage constantly acts upon and shapes our subjective sense of self. As feminists we tend to be hyperaware of this and it even becomes part of our academic practice .I think that this melding of study and subjectivity is a form of pleasure, if sometimes a twisted one. Elspeth Probyn (1993: 84) asks: 'Is there a way of using the self that does not condense into a privileged moment of 'me'' and that challenge is a pleasure in itself. To be present in research and writing without being merely self-indulgent is a keen puzzle that always engages me.

However, pleasure is not only solipsistic. What the Antonia White picture leaves out, but Valerie Hey (2004) recognises, is the pleasure of working with others, of sharing ideas and working towards common goals. This is not always easy to attain in academic life and many tensions have to be negotiated, but it can and does happen and it is precious. The FAAB (Feminists Against Academic Bullshit) collective has captured some of the pleasures and absurdity of academic life in their burlesque performances, for example at the BERA (British Educational Research Association) conference (2003) and Gender and Education conference (2005). They receive rapturous responses because they give us back some of the sense of pleasurable resistance that impels our most creative thoughts, with a glimpse of collectivity and sisterhood. They allow us to feel that we can be creative and enjoy ourselves with ideas, that we are not simply drudges on a treadmill that turns our thoughts into products and rankings. Leaving the cocoon for the thrill of travel and the excitement of seeing powerful women speak (and hopefully getting a bit of their inspiration rubbed off on you) is magic. The best academic work carries with it that spark that makes reading and listening a thrill and offers up a vision of possibility. This year my greatest academic pleasures have been listening to Michelle Fine (2005) talking about her research with women prisoners, thinking how research can make a

material difference whilst still being intellectually challenging and complex; listening to Elizabeth St Pierre (2005) and her ongoing work with older women from her home town, confirming that thinking through and with writing is a legitimate way to go. These moments of challenge and validation give me reassurance that our work is not futile, and that I can do it the way that I want to, not cut my shape to fit the expectations of others. They give me a pleasure that is lasting.

As I try to finish this chapter late at night, my ten year old daughter says: 'Mum I wonder sometimes how you do it' and that is a pleasure too.

CONCLUSION

I have argued elsewhere (Quinn 2005) that the university exists on a symbolic level and that its symbolic meanings may be the most important ones. Marketing strategies recognise this of course but seem to do so in a simplistic way. So a prospectus may have the odd wheelchair or black face, but these have little symbolic power if the spirit of place is persistently evoked as young, white, hedonistic, able-bodied, heterosexual and keen on pleasures such a s snooker and beer. The emphasis on certain forms of pleasure and consumption which universities are associating with widening participation and lifelong learning excludes many students and potential students from feeling they are or could be 'real' students .It excludes Muslims and all those who do not want to socialise in bars, it excludes those in poverty, or drives them deeper into it to keep up with the consumption race. It tends to exclude the mature and those without any leisure time. This does not mean, however, that pleasure should be foresworn. Some pleasures are fun but empty but some are exciting and nourishing. There is room in life for both, but women students and women academics appear to know the qualitative difference, even if universities do not. Is it heresy to say that these monies spent on *lipsmackingthirstquenching* marketing would be better spent on *thoughtstimulatingideasgenerating* learning? So why this trend to market pleasure? What does it tell us about universities and their role? We need to ask, are free thinkers what our governments want? Or do they want a soporific university full of dulled minds to bind to the global economy? Look around and see what you think.

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Chapter 7

CARING MONSTERS?

A Critical Exploration of Contradictions and Ambiguities

Christina Hughes[1], Lynn Clouder[2], Jackie Pritchard[3], Judy Purkis[4] and Viv Barnes[5]
[1]*University of Warwick;* [2]*Coventry University;* [3]*Coventry University;* [4]*Warwick/Leicester Medical School;* [5]*Coventry University*

INTRODUCTION

Feminist research has substantially demonstrated how caring is a significant 'monster' for women in the academy. This is, of course, because it is mainly women who both undertake, and are formally given, responsibilities for pastoral and caring work (Morley and Walsh, 1995). It is also because, in the wider academy, this work is generally held to be of very low regard. Undertaking the necessary support, counselling and listening work that is part of everyday teaching and administration is not only time consuming but also emotionally demanding. The work of care is also largely invisible. Yet, caring and pastoral work are significant sites of feminist ethics in action where one is creating an alternative environment to that of competitive individualism. Doing care also carries the intrinsic rewards and dubious pleasures of feeling good about oneself. The nature of care is, therefore, seen to be 'monstrous' as it is shot through with contradiction and ambiguity.

'Caring' also holds a contradictory and ambiguous place in feminist theorising. For example, it is posited both as a hallmark of woman's difference and it is viewed as an entrapment of subservience from which woman must escape. Thus, 'ethics of care' feminists argue that care is a higher order trait that should be celebrated and nurtured as intrinsic to woman's difference. This is because care offers an alternative to the hegemonies of individualism and atomism. Nonetheless, ethics of care feminists are also demonised, not only for their perceived propensity to essentialism, but also for the ways in which they offer rather sanitized conceptualisations of connection and relatedness that lie at the heart of care (Flax, 1997). The contradictoriness and ambiguity of 'care' are also evidenced in poststructuralist accounts of the

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'caring' subject. Here the marks of contradiction and ambiguity are in terms of subjectivity. The poststructuralist subject is considered to be fragmented and processual. Through 'the doubled sense of 'subject' (subject/ed to and subject of action' (Jones, 1997: 263) poststructuralist conceptions focus on how the 'caring' subject is achieved and resisted, how it is 'socially produced and 'multiply positioned' – neither determined nor free, but both simultaneously' (ibid).

In writing this chapter we neither intend to 'take sides' in this terrain nor do we wish our work to be seen as an act of closure. Rather, we imagine our readers as entering into our analysis at many points in terms of their own experience, knowledge and politics of care. We hope, of course, that some of what we have to say will provide food for further thought. Our interests are primarily concerned to create an open-ended exploration of the varied ways through which we can theorise care. In particular, we are interested in how we can understand the relationship of care to our senses of selfhood and how we can evaluate its potential for feminist change within the academy.

To provide a framework for this interrogatory space our chapter outlines two predominant approaches to caring within feminist scholarship. Using a number of vignettes that have been drawn from our experiences of teaching, research and administration, we explore our varied responses to the situations of 'care' in which we have found ourselves. We also consider how care has become part of our identities. These vignettes were generated through what we describe as 'auto/biographical focus group' work. This seeks to combine those elements of auto/biographical approaches that recognize the inter-relationship of self to the production of knowledge (Letherby, 2003) with the 'explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group' (Morgan, 1997:2). Accordingly, the reflexive conversations we undertook about our personal experiences of care work in the academy were prompted by the ethics of care literature outlined below. As autobiographical accounts, their role is to unsettle any undue sense of objectivity that is often attributed to the production of academic knowledge. The forms of data that were produced were stimulated by listening to, and engaging with, each other's experiences. These served to remind us of the similarities of our situations and also the ways in which we differed.

Our first approach to the analysis of these vignettes is concerned to highlight the multiple ways in which academics care in the academy. Here, we use Joan Tronto's (1993) typology of care and apply them to aspects of our experience. In our analysis here we explore how we are contradictorily positioned as caring/not able to care subjects. Thus we are individuals who enact acts of care towards colleagues and students. But we are also paid workers in more-for-less employment economies who are left with little time to care. On the one hand, therefore, we endeavour to work within an ethic that sees care as an important aspect of our ways of being in the academy. In this our care work strives to offer an alternative space to that constructed by a survival of the fittest culture drawn from economic liberalist

discourses of competition, atomism, individualism and rights. Yet, on the other hand, we experience how caring work can create a sense of personal isolation, frustration and resentment and lead to being overworked. All of which in turn produce exhaustion and stress.

Our second approach explores caring as an aspect of subjectification through a focus on the processes of submission and mastery (sic). By subjectification, we are talking about the ways in which we develop our sense of identity. For example, when we invoke the word 'I' about ourselves, what kind of person are we referring to? What is our sense of selfhood? In this part of our chapter, therefore, we want to look at care as a form of identity. In particular, we are interested in how we become configured as caring people. What is it about being a caring person that is so desirable that we submit to these ideals? How can we become mistresses of caring and so exhibit our talents, competencies and expertise as caring people? These questions are important because they help to explain and understand why we continue to do care when it can come with some of the costs we have outlined above. Responding to these questions also contributes to explanations of how we can experience care as both pleasure and pain.

Indeed, it is here that our chapter connects with some broader concerns with lifelong learning in terms of our focus on care, not as an innate characteristic of womanhood, but as a learnt condition of identity. As Christina Hughes (2001) has previously noted, the study of adulthood and lifelong learning requires the researcher to not only take a 'cradle to grave' approach but also a lifewide one. Such an approach necessarily recognizes how 'learning occurs in parallel with, in competition with or instead of other adult activities' (Hughes, 2001: 602; see also Blaxter and Tight, 1994; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 1997). Thus, Blaxter and Tight (1994) note how women's responsibilities for family care work impact on the ways in which they are able to engage in formal study (see for example Raddon, 2004). Women's responsibilities for care have, of course, been well documented within feminist literature (Hughes, 2002). This includes the care of children and stepchildren (Hughes, 1991) and the emotional and practical needs of others (Cotterill, 1994).

Nonetheless, on those few occasions where the lifelong learning literature includes care as a relevant aspect of people's experiences, the approach tends to be more concerned with how learning can accommodate caring responsibilities. In this way, learning and care appear as two variables that need to be accommodated to one another. Thus, the timing and organization of formal classes will take account of school hours and may include crèche arrangements. In contrast, our analysis does not follow the separatism of this kind of 'accommodation' approach. Rather, we seek to integrate care and learning through an analysis of everyday pedagogies (Baxter and Hughes, 2004; Hughes, 2004a; Luke, 1996). Learning, from this viewpoint, is considered to occur in the everyday social relations of daily life. It is, therefore, commonly casual and rhizomatic and often imperceptible and unconscious. Moreover, as Carmen Luke (1996) indicates, theorisations of pedagogies of the everyday draw on Foucauldian discussions of the micro operations of discourse

and in so doing recognise the simultaneous nature of agency and structure and the workings of power. In this way, pedagogies of the everyday extends older social learning theories that have been heavily critiqued as suggesting the subject is a passive container waiting to be filled by emphasising how learning to be, in this case, a caring subject, is enacted through forms of resistance and desire.

These issues are important in pointing to our conclusion. Here, we want to draw on the ambiguous and contradictory 'monster' of care as a learnt condition that is constructed in the everyday of academic life. In this respect, we want to turn the usual question of 'what has been learnt' into any analysis of how we are also the producers of that learning environment. We argue that these issues would be central to a deconstructive approach to care and as such it is ethically irresponsible not to open up the power relations of care to scrutiny.

CARING: A REVERSE DISCOURSE?

> A democratic ethic of care starts from the idea that everybody needs care and is (in principle at least) capable of care-giving, and that democratic society should enable their members to give both these activities meaningful place in their lives if they so want. These conclusions can only be reached, however, when we acknowledge that caring should be integrated in the fullest possible manner in any vision of social life and social policies, and when we insert by consequence the care perspective in our everyday social and political theories. (Sevenhuijsen, 1999: 17)

The origins of an ethics of care discourse are based on work undertaken by the feminist psychologist Carole Gilligan (1982). In listening to the voices of women making decisions about abortion, Gilligan (1982) argued that women's patterns of moral reasoning did not fit into existing male-as-norm theories of human development. In particular, she argued that the women in her research stressed issues of connection and personal relationships when making moral decisions. This was contrasted with the ways in which dominant moral theory held that moral dilemmas can be resolved by an abstract view of formal rights.

Gilligan argued that this different pattern of reasoning was associated with a different sense of self. Whereas men have a sense of self as autonomous and separate, women have a sense of self as interdependent and relational. This relationality is summarised by Ruthellen Josselson (1996:1) as a 'web of connection to others [whereby] life unfolds as a kaleidoscope of relationships'. In consequence, ethics of care feminists posit an ethics of care as an alternative to the individualism and atomism at the heart of rights based moral reasoning. They point out that acts of care, and a caring disposition, are the hallmark of relationality and connection. Overall, an ethics of care contains five aspects (Diller, 1996):

- In contrast to humanist ideas of the separated individual, an ethics of care assumes that we live in necessary relation to each other. In this way the basic ontological position of an ethic of care is that of relationality;
- An ethics of care demands that we take up the other's position as our own. This act of engrossment is not the same as putting oneself in another's shoes. It is not one where I project how I would feel and act but it is where I accept the other's views and feelings as my own;
- An ethics of care focuses on the particular not the general. Thus, an ethics of care does not seek resolution through some universal set of rules or principles;
- An ethics of care requires the one who cares to act. It is a commitment that one follows through from engrossment to action on behalf of the cared for;
- Caring comes first. Caring is an elementary and primary aspect of the human condition. An ethics of care requires that ethical justifications shift away from rights issues to how we can live within relations of caring.

Notwithstanding, early feminist ethics of care theorists have been accused of essentialism. This was because the tenor of their arguments suggested that caring was an innate disposition of womanhood (see for example Noddings, 1984). However, more recently, ethics of care feminists have taken a deconstructive approach and have particularly focused on the problems of rights based ethical paradigms as individualistic and competitive. For example, Selma Sevenhuijsen (op cit) argues that care is such a universal need that it should be incorporated as fully as possible into political and ethical discourses. Sevenhuijsen (1998; 1999) draws attention to the universal nature of care by commenting that we all need care and are capable of giving care. She remarks that the problem of care is not confined to, say, how we balance the caring demands of motherhood with the requirements of paid employment. Rather, adults are confronted with issues of care in their workplaces, their friendships and in their relations with older relatives. In this way, the concerns that surround care have gone beyond the traditional dividing line between public and private spheres of life. It is, therefore, a timely moment to take feminist concerns for an ethics of care beyond their essentialist assumptions.

In developing her ethics of care agenda Joan Tronto (1993) argues that it is necessary to understand how current moral and political theories work to preserve inequalities of power and privilege and in so doing degrade those who do caring work. Tronto illustrates how the complex interrelations of the discourses of individualism, autonomy and 'self-made man' shape taken-for-granted understandings of care as a devalued activity. In consequence, dominant moral and political discourses about care ensure that care is contained within the realm of the private, the personal and the trivial. For example, in paid work environments such work is not conceptualised as care but as 'service', 'support' and 'assistance'. To illustrate this breadth to care, Tronto conceptualises care into four phases. These are: caring about, taking care of; care giving and care receiving. We apply Tronto's four phases

to our biographical vignettes. We do so to point up the multiple forms in which care is enacted in paid work environments and to highlight the contradictory ways in which we find ourselves positioned in relation to care. Whilst we might, at times, view caring as an important political act that can be set against more individualistic forms of behaviour and organisation, we also find ourselves personally compromised by care when it comes at such a cost to our health and sense of well-being. This can particularly be the case in more-for-less, time-poor working environments where organisational and student expectations increase as resourcing diminishes.

FOUR FORMS OF CARE

Caring About: Being Collectively Responsible

> It really matters to me that we work as a team. I see this as being important because it means we are not left as isolated individuals in a difficult working environment. But trying to create a culture for this is an upward battle. For example, take the time of year when that envelope arrives with the dreaded word **Timetable.** It's that time of year – time for the Course Tutor to work out next year's timetable. I panic and then get angry. Not only do I have no time at the moment to think about this – but I feel it's grossly unfair that I have to chase around after other staff who can't be bothered to think about it either. Even when they're sent a draft of the timetable, a significant minority of staff don't bother to look at it and then mistakes, clashes etc only become apparent when the teaching begins – and who has to sort it out then? The Course Tutor, naturally. I share my panic and anger with last year's course tutor who is a much more patient and rational being and says she'll help me.

Joan Tronto describes *caring about* as the first stage in caring. This involves an initial recognition that care is necessary if we are to live in a world that is not, so fully, based on individualistic values. We may, for example, care about the world's poor or the homeless. We may care about what happens to our children or our partner. Tronto notes that it is often perceived that what we care about is defined in individualistic terms as a form of personal identity. In drawing on this analysis in respect of the first vignette above, we note that what is cared about is the development of a collective sense of responsibility for the achievement of tasks. However, when this is absent, what is produced is a sense of that very isolation one was hoping to overcome. In this respect we should consider the invocation of the personal pronoun 'I'. In this vignette this works to produce a sense of identity of one who cares. However, through the frustration experienced, there is an alternative identity of one who lacks patience and is irrational. Here, we would want to argue that whilst, as Tronto suggests, caring about can be taken up as a sense of personal identity and values, this leads to simultaneously being positioned as both the one-who-cares and also as the one-who-is-put-upon. Caring, in this sense becomes an

individual responsibility rather than an attempt to build a collective culture. Accordingly, as the vignette demonstrates, whilst some are able to ignore the demands of caring about such matters, for others the responsibility associated with 'caring about' can cause resentment. For some, it appears such work is happily embraced perhaps at that moment in time or perhaps through some longer term accommodation to such frustrations. For others, it is undertaken but neither silently nor with grace.

Taking Care of: A Conversation at the Photocopier

> S: I seem to spend so much time copying lecture notes and overheads for our students with 'special needs'. The list of students who expect these is growing.
>
> P: But if it makes life a bit easier [for special needs students] surely you don't begrudge it?
>
> S: It's not that I mind. Don't get me wrong. It's just so time- consuming and it's an extra thing to remember. As if there isn't enough to do. I believe in equal opportunities but .....
>
> P: Then don't complain.

Joan Tronto illustrates how the values we place on care are structured in such a way that the types of care undertaken by the most powerful are those that are most highly valued. In contrast the types of care undertaken by the least powerful are those that have the lowest value. This brings us to a consideration of Tronto's second phase of care. This is *Taking Care of*. This involves notions of agency and responsibility. *Taking care of* means that one has taken responsibility for a need and has decided how to respond to it. When *taking care of* is associated with the public spheres of life it is viewed as prestigious. When it is associated with the private realm it is viewed as trivial. Moreover, the forms through which we *take care of* influence our judgment of its importance. *Taking care of* by devising policies tends to be the work of those at the higher echelons of institutions and even in these days when greater numbers of women are entering managerial and higher levels, broadly this mainly remains the work of men. *Taking care of* by carrying out the effects of a policy is usually undertaken by those lower down an organisation's structure. This is, of course, where we find the bulk of women.

Our second vignette is focused on taking care of particular student needs. Such needs, often identified through first-hand experiences of student difficulties, may then converge with broader organisational policy. In this case it is that of equalising opportunities. However, whilst the institution has decided to take care of student needs, it appears to have failed to take care of staff needs. Yet, it is these staff who are charged with the responsibility of doing the day to day work that is required to ensure such policies are instituted and effective. An unintended consequence of this can be the creation of oppositional groups vying over needs and resources. In this case, it would be staff versus students. In addition, the interjection by 'P' in the

above vignette highlights how *taking care of* issues of equality is perceived to be a higher order form of care than doing the care work required to ensure that equality is achieved. This ordering of the values of different forms of care means that the grounds for any complaint from 'S' are both trivialised and removed. As the vignette demonstrates, 'S' is effectively silenced by the comment 'Then don't complain'.

Care Giving: As a Tutor

> J phones me. He's just applied for a job although he graduated last summer. He's spent the last 6 months renovating a house he'd bought. I was J's personal tutor for 3 years. We began our career at university in the same month. J asks me whether I could give him advice about the interview and his job application. I had done mock interviews with the other tutees in the group who were applying for jobs immediately they graduated. J has phoned me in the middle of my busiest teaching period of the year. I admit I'm busy, give him advice about completing his application form over the phone and agree to fit in a mock interview next week. I want him to do well. But how far and for how long does caring go on?

The third phase in Joan Tronto's phases of care is that of *care giving*. This is the direct meeting of care needs and involves physical work and coming into contact with those who need care. Tronto notes that primarily the giving of care is the work of slaves, servants and women. When men undertake this work we find a pattern of exceptionalism. Doctors have higher status than nurses and men who enter the caring professions, such as social work and teaching, are more likely to reach the top of career pathways. The issue of care giving is addressed in this vignette in terms of its open-endedness and as an aspect of an on-going relationship. The vignette raises a debate about the relationship between care giving as a professional activity and the more personal care giving that we do with friends, partners, children and so forth. In this vignette, care giving comes in the form of mock interviews that help prepare students for their first jobs. Such work can, indeed, be part of a range of skill development activities that universities have designed in order to prepare students for their working lives. However, as a professional activity, one might expect the responsibility for the delivery of these skills to cease once the student has completed his or her degree. If we contrast this notion of a time limit on our responsibilities for care to the personal realms of our lives, we find a distinction. Personal responsibilities to give care to friends and family, extend over a lifetime. As a professional, therefore, care can be viewed as arising simply as an institutional requirement. In the latter, care arises through longer term emotional and subjective attachments and through normative responsibilities to care for kin.

However, the above vignette indicates how these simple binaries of public and private care are crossed. Here, care giving is linked not only to a sense of ongoing responsibility toward those whom we have tutored but it also arises from a long term relationship with another person. In this case, the author of this vignette had tutored 'J' for three years. As such, we might assume that continuing to give care means that

one has remained true to the tenor of an already developed relationship. In this way, care giving can act as a way of being in the world that seeks to transcend the more utilitarian requirements of organisations that assume responsibilities to others cease once they are no longer connected to the institution. However, this vignette also raises a dilemma of expectation. Once one has begun to give care and created a relationship in terms of care-giving how, and when, is it permissible to change the dynamic?

Care Receiving: Allowing Oneself to Receive Care

> It was near to the end of term. The students were feeling tired. I was tired. The two-hour seminar was going to be hard work. The students had been given two papers to read in preparation for the session. Having begun with questions such as, 'were they readable?' 'were they understandable?', I received no response. Eye contact was poor. A few people began to fidget in their seats. I carried on as the realisation dawned, that the papers were largely unread. A few more questions and – silence. More direct, I ask, 'so who has read either of these papers?' Silence. I inwardly fume. 'Well you are wasting my time'. The room remained silent as I left – the session over.

The final phase of Joan Tronto's typology is that of *care receiving*. This is perhaps one of the most overlooked aspects of care but is central to an ethics of care position. In attempting to create a world where caring is central, one not only seeks to act towards others within various caring dispositions but one also has to accept that we have our own rights and needs for care. This is a central point of Carole Gilligan's (1982) classic work on an ethics of care. Gilligan argued that relationality is so central to women's psychology that they were far too disposed to put others needs before their own. Gilligan argued that, from a psychological point of view, this was problematic because it left women without a sense of autonomy and independence. In short, one of the messages of Gilligan's work is that women need to be more selfish and less selfless. Indeed, the issue of autonomy can also be viewed from the perspective of those who need care. Being the one who needs care can also be seen as a threat to one's sense of autonomy. This is because to receive care is to place oneself in a position of dependency and those with most needs are perceived to be the most dependent. In addition, we are either pitying or disdainful of those who need care.

The vignette above speaks of the need for care. In doing so it illustrates something of the culture and dynamics of the university in terms of the relationship between students and lecturers. Is it a warrantable request to ask students to care for their lecturers in terms of undertaking set work and participating in a seminar? Certainly, as we have indicated, care ethicists would argue that care should be reciprocal. Yet the customer culture of higher education shifts the balance of rights and responsibilities between lecturer and student much more in favour of the student. In this way, the care needs of students are prioritized over those of teachers

and lecturers. In such a situation, tutors have to become more assertive, even demanding, of their need to receive care. This can give rise to uncomfortable situations as the vignette demonstrates. It also, again, places student and teacher in oppositional positions that promulgate a survival-of-the-fittest culture.

Overall, these vignettes illustrate a number of different ways in which, as academics, we experience and interact with the organisation and students in the complexities of caring. They demonstrate the variety of forms of care and, indeed, use the language of care to name everyday organisational practices. However, whilst caring can constitute an alternative form of organisation to more common individualistic and atomistic practices, we have also illustrated how caring creates a number of dilemmas and brings significant costs when set against the multiple demands of teaching, lecturing, administration and research. The question that arises is why women, in particular, continue to undertake care when they also experience its tyranny. One answer to this has come from those working within post-structural views of subjectivity. We turn to this next.

MASTERING CARE

> I spent all day yesterday helping a student who was being threatened with eviction and couldn't complete her coursework. It meant a fair few phone calls to various support services and I course I got nothing else done. But I felt really good about myself. I hope I made a difference.

In this part of our chapter we want to look at care, not as a process or a task, but in terms of its role in shaping and making our identities. In particular, we are interested in how being a caring person has become an aspect of who we believe we are. We hope that by so doing we can offer one explanation for why we appear to be so willing to take on the onerous, difficult and exasperating elements of care when, from the viewpoint of economic rationality, such choices come with heavy costs. In particular, we explore how we are seduced by caring discourses by taking up Beverley Skeggs (1997: 62) point that 'The seduction of caring may be that it offers a means to feel good, even morally superior.' We explore the argument that the feelings of goodness that arise from have a sense of oneself as a caring person are the key to why we persist in doing and giving care. This is particularly so when we simultaneously find we are exhausted and tired, or angry and annoyed, about the amount of caring we do. We turn here, therefore, to an alternative way of conceptualising care. This is through processes of subjectification and desire.

Skeggs notes that the caring person is defined through the conflation of *caring about* and *caring for*. Thus, the caring person has a social disposition that exhibits concern for others and is also one who undertakes the practices of caring. Skeggs demonstrates this point through a table of items derived from the data she collected from research on young women who were taking a child care course at a further

education college. This table sets out the essential qualities of a caring person in terms of higher order traits. It illustrates that these qualities include being: kind and loving; considerate about others; understanding; warm and friendly, reliable; sympathetic; tactful; never selfish; never cruel and nasty; never unkind; never sharp-tempered; never unpleasant; never impolite (Skeggs, 1997: 68 passim). Skeggs also asked the women in her research to rank the qualities that they believed they had themselves. She notes that in most cases they considered that these were their own attributes. In this sense, they had developed a sense of mastery over these qualities and could now practice them with relative expertise. These characteristics, their senses of self and their everyday caring practices were at one.

In seeking to explain the processes through which these young women came to identify so much with these qualities, and to desire to be this caring person, Skeggs explores the curriculum of the child care course these students were taking. She notes how the development of the caring self was enhanced through the ways that the courses classified the caring person in terms of the above characteristics and used this classification as the basis of coursework and assessment. In this way, the course acted as a form of surveillance over students to see if they had the qualities and dispositions necessary to be an expert carer and, if not, it attempted to shape them in that direction. For example, the course presented a range of techniques of the 'correct' ways in which caring should be undertaken. All of these were based on a model of the 'family' as the site of care and this reinforced an intrinsic coupling of care and family. In gendered respects, this further reinforces the notion that it is women who do the caring work. Students, therefore, had to do projects on 'the family' that included presenting photographs of their own family and classifying 'problem' families. The course also presented information on child development and 'remedies' for bad behaviour. The students studied topics such as maternal deprivation and undertook courses that developed skills in constructing children's toys and clothes. They were taught about 'bad' practices through case studies and videos and were expected to list the faults of 'non-caring' others. Their assessed work included questions over their priorities. For example, they were asked in one assessment whether they would be willing to give up a cinema trip with friends if their employing family required them to baby-sit at the last minute. Clearly, a caring worker would put the family's needs first. Moreover, these aspects of the curriculum, and its linkage to the idea of the family, created frameworks which further personalised this learning as it led these students to evaluating their own and their family's caring practices. One young woman, for example, wondered whether her father would have stayed with them if her mother had been more 'caring'.

In each of these ways, the caring self is monitored, enhanced and shaped. Drawing on discourses of motherhood, femininity and familialism, the placements, course work and evaluations that form part of formal technologies of surveillance embeds an ideology of caring that is based on self-denial as an enactment of responsibility. This caring self is honed and reinforced through mechanisms of

self-surveillance such as self-reflection and self-examination as the women question their own upbringing and their qualities as caring people. Moreover, the extent to which these processes of subjectification enhanced feelings of moral worth and goodness and reinforced gendered stereotypes around specific forms of care can be seen in how these young women formed judgments of others. For example, they were very critical of middle class women who 'farmed' their children out because this was seen as indicating that such women were uncaring and unnatural. In these ways, caring is a higher order trait that in consequence enhances its desirability in terms of developing a sense of self that, maybe at times feels morally superior, but certainly quite often makes one feels one is a good woman.

Skeggs' research demonstrates the formal aspects of a care curriculum. However, this curriculum is also present in the everyday (Paechter, 1999) through the learning we achieve within our families, through the media and formally in our professional lives. The consequence of these learnings is that in order to signify our goodness to others as well as to ourselves, we care about our courses, we undertake the necessary administration and chase our errant colleagues with a pleasant demeanor. To show that we can take care of equal opportunities we learn to subordinate our bodies to our minds as we work through our tiredness to produce the course handouts. To show that we are givers of care, we undertake our 'own' work (writing research papers, marking exam scripts) late at night or during the weekend. To show that we have no needs for care ourselves, we rarely expel our students from the seminar room for failing to do the set work.

In terms of the processes of subjectification, what we find, therefore, is that there is a simultaneous process happening here. As one submits to the demands of specific discourses of caring and, at the same time, masters them as forms of practice and self-reflection, one more fully develops an identity of caring. As Judith Butler (1995: 4–) notes in this regard 'The more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved.' The more, therefore, we become expert practitioners of care, the more fully we develop our senses of being caring people. Each of above examples is, therefore, well practiced habits. We repeatedly stand by the photocopier and do the necessary copying. We sit, listen, counsel, advise and give time to our students in tutorials. We learn that we should not complain. We feel pleasure at our achievement of being caring.

Nonetheless, there is a striking ambivalence to caring. At the subjective level our feelings about care are diverse and contradictory. Alongside the joy and pleasure, we still get cross and angry at being required to care, though perhaps less often. We experience guilt when we 'fail' to care. We sometimes put ourselves first through showing care for the self though we know that this transgresses the mores of good womanhood. This ambivalence is also evidenced at the institutional level. The academy requires us to care in all its forms. How else could it function if we ceased not only to undertake the work of care giving but also the work of caring about and taking care of? Yet we can also be accused of caring too much when for example,

we express empathy for a student who has been caught cheating at course work or exams. In this, our identities as professionals are called into question within the 'real world' marketised cultures of higher education. So, how might we proceed?

TOWARDS DECONSTRUCTING CARE

Our chapter has explored some of the many forms of care that we enact in our daily lives as academics. We have indicated the dilemmas and delights that we experience when caring in the academy and also how we have achieved our, ambivalent, identities as caring people. We now want to pick up on some of the questions and dilemmas that we have raised in order to consider some of the work that needs to be undertaken to begin to develop an ethically informed model of care in the academy and how this can inform debates within the lifelong learning literature.

One of the key dilemmas we have highlighted is how, in enacting aspects of care, we are consistently positioned within oppositional interests. We have noted, for example, how our needs as workers are set against those of students. We have indicated that our own caring practices set us in opposition to those of marketised higher education cultures. Our positioning, at the intersection of these discourses and interests, means that we experience both the pleasures and pains of care. But, at a political level, our individual practices of care leave us as individualised workers. We become – and feel – individually responsible for the failures of our own care practices or, indeed, our failures to care. These oppositional interests can be seen in the following ways:

- Through quantification – 'Who has the greatest rights?' 'Who has the most rights?' 'Who is likely to be most harmed?'
- Through competitiveness – 'Me not you.'
- Through individualism – 'I' rather than 'Us' or 'We'

The setting up of oppositions between groups of people inevitably leads to antagonistic relations. Such debates become construed in terms of who has the greatest rights. This focus on individual rights detracts from how caring relations are practiced within a wider context of social arrangements. In this respect, we would point to the evidence that illustrates how the giving of care is women's work (Cotterill, 1994; Hughes, 2002). We would also point to the material and political realities of the academy in terms of its placing within quasi-market relations of consumerism and financial restraint. The resultant more-for-less-economy exacerbates the care requirements of women staff to the extent that care becomes a monster of our daily relations. Whilst our experiences are based in England, evidence from Australia and North America points to similar trends. For example, autobiographical memory work produced by Bronwyn Davies and colleagues (2005) similarly demonstrates the tensions evidenced by the impact of neo-liberalist or new

management regimes in higher education. Further research would, of course, illuminate how varied cultural contexts shape the particularities of caring experiences internationally within the academy.

One of the responses to these oppositions is to argue for an ethics of care where the values of relationality and connectedness are foregrounded. However, an ethics of care, in and of itself, does little to uncouple the gendered relationship of care and womanhood. Indeed, as critics of care ethicists have pointed out, many who argue for an ethics of care are reinforcing essentialist views of womanhood as innately caring. In addition, simply replacing the current individualism of rights with an ethics of care does little more than reverse the margins and centres. We are replacing individualist rights with those of relationality and collectivism. Such a situation simply becomes similarly hegemonic as we are all charged to care, and to be caring, in particular prescribed ways.

It is here, therefore, that we wish to explore the potential of understanding care as both learnt, and as produced, through the everyday pedagogies of the institution. In this respect, most analyses of learning, including lifelong learning, place the greatest emphasis upon the idea of the social actor as an individual in a learning environment. Whilst we would not disagree with this, as Christina Hughes (2004b) has previously argued, one problem with this is that this downplays the idea that we are also producers of that environment. Indeed, the term pedagogy, commonly defined as the science of teaching, reminds us that just as much as we learn from others in the everyday, we are also teachers of the everyday. In this respect, we need to focus on the individual as both learning from society and as producing the norms and values of that society. In this view pedagogy relates to a micro-level analysis of knowledge production where the focus of attention is on the taken-for-granted, normalised relationships where we are simultaneously teachers and learners.

In considering our 'monster' of care from this viewpoint, we would highlight the ways in which our caring behaviours can act as forms of social regulation upon others. One of the most common forms that this can arise is through the regulation of gendered behaviours around care. Just as the respondents in Skeggs' study were disdainful of those women – their future employers – who leave their children in the care of others and so were reproducing the very conditions of their own gendered subjectification, so too we can make judgments of our colleagues that are similarly regulatory. And, indeed, similarly rebind us to caring subjectivities. We might, therefore, irk at how our male colleagues spend less time on pastoral care but the very fact that we continue to spend more time on these activities sends specific messages about what it means to be a 'good' female academic. Similarly, in our gossip over the photocopier, and despite our feminist credentials, we can still make gendered judgments over particular colleagues in terms of their capacities, or otherwise, to show care. The pleasures we experience in some forms of caring are similarly shared and similarly taught. Viewed in this way, the vignettes that we have

produced about our own experiences of care teach many lessons about what it is to be a woman academic. One of these might be that we are fools to care if it produces such concerns and anxieties and leads to being overworked and stressed. In this case, those who learn this lesson are less likely to act with caring dispositions. What they learn is that you are better to put the self first, if only as an act of self-preservation.

And so we return to the loop of the binary. In this case, we return to the individual versus the collective, to atomism versus relationality and to the ways in which we are all caught up in the production and reproduction of mores and values around care. We need, therefore, to ask how we can get beyond this loop. Here, we would point to the potential of a politics of deconstruction. Deconstruction has become an important tool within the postmodern. 'Deconstruction can be read as a form of ethical practice that is concerned with "what happens to ethics" as knowledge frameworks are increasingly challenged' (Garrick and Rhodes, 1998: 177). As such:

> Deconstruction does not say there is no subject, there is no truth, there is no history. It simply questions the privileging of identity so that someone is believed to have the truth. It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced. (Spivak, 2001)

To this end a deconstructive approach would certainly require us to explore organisational life in terms of its everyday pedagogies. It would require us to ask what we are learning *and* teaching lifelong, not simply in our formal courses, but through our everyday behaviours in terms of care. It would require us to consider how we are placed in contradictory positions and how we reproduce those contradictions through the very models we use to question the situations we find ourselves in. For example, we might begin by asking the question 'Who cares for the carer?' but we then need to go beyond this to highlight the complex and contradictory power relations at the heart of such a question. We would, for example, challenge a simple binary model of lecturer versus student by illustrating how we are all positioned and caught up within the needs and requirements of care.

A deconstructive approach would also draw attention to the binaries at the heart of caring in terms of their gendered qualities. It would highlight that those who are required to give care are women academics who occupy the lowest ranks of the institutional hierarchy whereas those who are mainly concerned with caring about the wider policies of the institution are predominantly White, middle class males. In so doing, a deconstructive approach would draw attention to the implicit power models of care and the social relations that are thereby construed in terms of who is allowed to name the 'truth' of care. Such an approach would highlight that this 'truth' has too much rested on a disconnection between the material and subjective realities of funding, promotion, career, work-loads, student recruitment and progression and so forth and the hierarchical experiences of the needs for care. It would, overall, foreground the institutional culture as central to the production and

reproduction of the problems of care that we have highlighted. In so doing, it would require collective change at the level of institutional culture rather than the individual responses that are the elements of our vignettes.

Finally, in response to those who would argue that:

> deconstruction and/or postmodernism is irresponsible in its relativism. The charge is reversed: it is irresponsible to continue to privilege the escape clauses of a foundational appeal. (Stronach and MacLure, 1997: 98).

In this we would argue that it is irresponsible not to explore the bases upon which the foundational appeals of care are based. Why for example it is a mark of the 'good' woman to care and how does this become conflated with the role of the female academic? Who has legitimated that it is permissible to 'care about' the quality assurance of our institution but it is not permissible to 'care about' the student who 'cheats'. How come a customer care culture sets up an opposition with the needs of staff for care?

Our intention in writing this chapter was to begin a debate. It was to argue that it is irresponsible not to open up for scrutiny the individualist, atomistic and competitive model that lies at the heart of the dilemmas of care in the academy. Yet in arguing for a deconstructive move we are aware that this can leave us with no firm epistemological ground. Deconstruction can be used to 'uncover contradictory and historically conditioned assumptions within prevailing discourses, and challenge distinctions between representation and the 'real'. There is, however, no guarantee that users will not, in turn, find themselves deconstructed by engaging in the very act of employing deconstruction as a strategy; a strategy that itself can be read as a discursive outcome of power relations' (Garrick and Rhodes, 1998: 182). Yet deconstruction has a central role to play, if we are to *take care* to develop an ethically informed model of care in the academy that does not reinforce and recreate the binaries of opposition that are not only antithetical to the development of social justice but also create care as a lifelong learnt and taught monster.

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SECTION 3: CAREER – IDENTITY – HOME

Introduction to Section 3

Pamela Cotterill[1], Sue Jackson[2] and Gayle Letherby[3]
[1]Staffordshire University; [2]Birkbeck, University of London; [3]University of Plymouth

SECTION SUMMARY

In this final section of the book, the complexities of career and home for women are considered, including what this means for ways in which women identify themselves, and are identified by others. For many women, these are fluid, changing and contested identities, and 'career' and 'home' are inevitably intertwined with constructions of gender, as well as of social class, 'race' and age. Whilst the chapters explicitly consider women's identities as learners and teachers in higher education institutions, the issues raised will be familiar to most women trying to juggle 'home' and 'work' whilst struggling against structures and barriers that impact upon the development of a career. Many women, too, will recognise the problematic nature of 'career', definitions of which are often structured around linear and hierarchical patterns which more traditionally fit men's working lives. Whilst the chapters in this section could be supposed to have some sense of linearity – studying (Chapter 8); routes and entries into academia (Chapter 9); part-time working opportunities (Chapter 10); and maintaining a work/life balance whilst developing a career (Chapter 11) – it is evident that women's lives and the opportunities, challenges and negotiations that they face, are considerably more complex. For the women represented in this section – both authors and participants in research – both 'career' and 'home' act as signifiers of and for women's identities.

In Chapter 8, Arwen Raddon considers constructions of gender for women who are juggling home, work and study, especially with regard to the potential impact of gender relations and discourses surrounding the home as a location of study. She focuses on the experiences of a group of UK distance learners, and addresses the conflicts and tensions which her respondents have encountered in trying to work and study whilst running homes and bringing up families. She asks how gender-related issues and experiences might impact on individual learning approaches and learning needs. She concludes that in terms of motivation, time and support there are gender-related patterns and themes which need to be deconstructed if women's lifelong learning is to be supported and developed.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 151–158.

In Chapter 9, Pamela Cotterill, Maureen Hirsch and Gayle Letherby draw on their individual and collective stories to trace their routes and entries into academia and consider commonalities and differences in their identities and experiences in relation to their feminist academic lives. The theme of age, generation and gender is explored with reference to differences and similarities between them; and to the (gendered) issues of motivation and expectation, friendship, space and identity. The authors' approach to this chapter is personal and auto/biographical, as well as political and theorised. Whilst their experiences relate specifically to the 'greedy institutions' of the academy, they also relate more generally to the 'greedy institutions' of home and work in ways that will resonate with women both inside and outside of the academy.

In Chapter 10 Jan Sellers problematises part-time working and full-time living. She asks her readers to consider what career pathways, accidents and strategies have brought them to this current moment, whilst reflecting on her own response. In doing so, she recognises that the stories we tell to ourselves, as well as to others, represent 'snapshots' which could be – and often are – differently constructed, depending on context and audience, as well as on emotions and identity. In telling her stories, the author experiments with metaphor, and uses metaphors or quilts and quilting to help understand women's career patterns. She draws on wider and international comparisons for women working part-time outside the home, showing the rich complexities of women's lives as they construct careers out of fragments whilst at the same time managing multiple professional and personal demands.

The final chapter in this section and the main body of the book – Chapter 11 – also considers work/life balance. Amanda Loumansky, Sue Goodman and Sue Jackson argue that the more conventional way of writing 'work-life' balance fails to recognise gendered patterns: 'work', for women in particular, includes work in the home as well as in the workplace, and 'life' may leave little room for personal interests to develop. The authors explore the relationship between work/life balance and lifelong learning, and consider how lifelong learning fits into women's lives, both inside and outside the formal workplace. They conclude that women's working identities, including academic identities, are developed in negotiated and contested spaces. Through a series of interviews with women currently working in the academy, the chapter explores pathways into the academy; 'flexible working'; and recognition of and opportunities to pursue life long learning.

KEY THEMES

Whilst there are differences in the chapters – differences of approach as well as differences of content – all the authors in this section consider aspects of, and challenges to, women, work and home. In particular, they are interested in exploring questions of career, identity and home with regard to lifelong learning, although this

in itself is a contested term. Several themes weave in and out of the chapters in this section, as well as between them. If we draw on Jan Sellers' metaphor for a moment, the chapters in this section can be read as separate and discrete, but can also be read through their themes and the issues that they raise. We invite readers to start to piece together their own quilts, identifying for themselves the most relevant / interesting / challenging / colourful themes which can be sewn together into simple or complex patterns of meanings.

Care and Emotional Work

Part of these complex patterns develop from the costs of the care and emotional work which women give to service children, partners, parents, work colleagues, students and each other. With Arlie Hochschild's (1983) *The Managed Heart* in mind, Hannah Frith and Celia Kitzinger (1998) note that 'emotion work' includes the regulating and managing the feelings of others and oneself in order to conform to dominant expectations in a given situation. Women's identities are often closely tied to the expectation that they will give this labour willingly and lovingly, and the emotional contradictions that this can bring. Care and emotional work are given at a high cost – psychological and with regard to the development of career – although the giving (and sometimes the receiving) can also be pleasurable. In the main, caring work is unrecognised except when it goes wrong, and even when recognised it is seen as women's 'natural' role. As Amanda Loumansky et al show, women are often valued for the care and emotional support that they give rather than, for example, their intelligence or management. Pamela Cotterill Maureen Hirsch and Gayle Letherby demonstrate that women academics suffer from expectations that they, like women in general, are seen as responsible for others' emotional needs where men are not. As several of the chapters in this section show, responsibility for care and emotional work operates to the detriment of career development, especially when 'careers' are seen as linear progression routes from which we deviate at a price. Jan Sellers shows that for women working part-time outside the home, this was a 'choice' (sometimes an imposition) that resulted from gendered constructions of who constitutes care givers. As Arwen Raddon discovered, for women studying at home (as well as working outside of the home) family responsibilities did not lessen, and they are still the prime givers of care and emotional work. Loumansky et al demonstrate that the care and emotional work that is demanded of women as academics as well as wives, mothers and daughters can inhibit women's career progression. As one woman in their study said:

> I think in terms of being a woman, we are the ones that when our parents get old have to look after them. I was the one that needed to be with them when they became ill. At the end of the day you have to get your priorities right, and your family have to come first.

Care and emotional work extends beyond the home. In higher education institutions, women are more likely than men to hold pastoral responsibilities, and to feel a sense of responsibility towards colleagues and students. All of this can add to high levels of stress as well as to the double burden of managing home and work.

Managing Home and Work

The ways in which women juggle and struggle to manage work and home is a key theme in all the chapters in this section, although of course 'work' is something that women also do in the home. As Amanda Loumansky, Sue Goodman and Sue Jackson show, debates about work/life balance that inform both policy and practice rarely take into account the gendered nature of the workplace and the home. This is perhaps particularly the case for Arwen Raddon's distance learners, who also study in the home. Although studying at university is more usually seen as a public activity, distance learning transgresses supposed public/private boundaries. In terms of widening access to higher education, and promoting lifelong learning, distance learning gives an apparent ability to combine study with home and work life, although men have more possibilities than women to compartmentalise home/work/study. Because of the demands of home life, 'high achieving' women are more likely to be those who hunt out physical and intellectual spaces in the workplace or in libraries rather than in the home. Pamela Cotterill, Maureen Hirsch and Gayle Letherby demonstrate how women trying to develop their careers within the demands of 'greedy institutions' often take work home. This is an issue faced by many of the women in the research carried out by Loumansky et al. However, as Cotterill et al show, expectations and measures of success at work and expectations and measures of success in our personal lives leave many women feeling that both at work and at home they are not 'good enough'. Additionally, as Jan Sellers shows, the challenges that are made to women, and the negotiations with which they have to engage, are as strong in the home as they are at work. The reason that so many women turn to 'part-time' work stems from the division of labour in the home as well as from structural barriers to career development in the workplace. Flexible working enables women to (partially?) fulfil their responsibilities for families and the home as well as at work. Throughout this section, there are stories of women trying to develop careers, bring up children, manage the home, study, and negotiate identities for themselves.

Careers and Opportunities

Care and emotional work, as well as managing home, work and study, all impact on the gendered development of careers and on the opportunities (or otherwise) that may develop. In each chapter in this section, women are working to carve out some sort of career for themselves – although 'career' is not always how they describe

their working lives which, as Jan Sellers indicates, come about through purpose and design, through accident and fortune (or misfortune), with and without children. As one of Sellers' respondents' notes:

> I suppose one can talk about a career looking backwards, but looking forwards is another matter... My life might look now like having had a career, but it has been much more a series of happenings built out of solving (or not solving) the immediate problems, overcoming the immediately presenting obstacles (or not overcoming them) as well as one might; built also from hanging on to what one had that seemed valuable and not to be sacrificed.

The apparent 'accidents' of career sometimes come about through decisions about what is important and meaningful, and from enquirying minds. As one of Amanda Loumansky, Sue Goodman and Sue Jackson's respondents says:

> It wasn't really planned, more of an accident. I like finding things out. It was more, 'Can I continue with this?' Trying to expand on the finding things out side of things.

Several of Arwen Raddon's respondents were engaged in learning for career development and felt that undertaking a professional postgraduate qualification would enhance their career opportunities. However, in her chapter, Jan Sellers asks the reader to consider the 'glass ceiling' that acts as a barrier to so many women. As can also be seen in chapters 9 and 11, though, when the glass ceiling is shattered, the shards of glass that fall from the sky can be dangerous and damaging.

The chapters in this section remind us then that as Kate Thomas (1990) argues that higher education can be contradictory and confusing for women as it prepares them for high status jobs while not always challenging expected 'feminine' roles and behaviour.

Collaborative Alliances

One way in which women protect themselves from any fall-out to which they may be prey is through the development of collaborative alliances. Of the four chapters in this section, two are written collaboratively, each by three women. The authors of all the sections have aimed to work collaboratively with the other women in their chapters – either co-authors or interviewees. This is most explicitly discussed by Pamela Cotterill, Maureen Hirsh and Gayle Letherby, who reflect both individually and collectively on their routes into higher education, and explore their friendship over several years and through their similar and different journeys. They say that:

> Collaboration of any kind helps give a voice to individuals with different experiences and demonstrates the influences that shape individual life choices and lifecourses. Feminist collaborative writing does all of this as well as replacing the isolation of working alone with the empowerment that comes from mutual support.

This is a far cry from the 'unrewarded' emotional work that women undertake: collaborative alliances are about mutuality, respect and friendship. It is clear from several of the chapters that it is this aspect of work which reinforces positive aspects of identity for women. For many of the women, the academy encourages competitive and individualistic ways of working, which collaborative alliances can help to protect against (see also Introduction to Section Two). They develop collaborative alliances to enable them to hold onto and develop identities which are important to them, including feminist identities.

Feminist Methodologies/Epistemologies

Amanda Loumansky, Sue Goodman and Sue Jackson state:

> One of the most central components of a feminist methodology is the engagement with research as praxis, bringing about change in women's lives. Feminist research, interwoven as it is with feminist theory, is political – it is inevitably about understanding and ultimately transforming the conditions and realities of women's lives. It was our aim in this research to prioritise the voices of the women whom we interviewed, and who helped us develop our own understandings and lifelong learning.

It is clear throughout this section (and indeed in the book as a whole) that the authors are concerned with feminist research methodologies, although for some this is more explicit than for others. For Jan Sellars, this includes an invitation to her readers to bring their own stories, experiences and analyses to the project of imaging career. She does not see herself as the holder or producer of knowledge: rather the process is one of exploration and developing understandings. Pamela Cotterill Maureen Hirsch and Gayle Letherby use a critical and reflexive auto/biographical approach to explore socially located and structured understandings of gender, age and generation in the multiple aspects of women's lives in the academy and beyond. For Loumansky et al, feminist research methodologies are impelled with a concern for social justices; whilst Arwen Raddon argues that feminist and poststructuralist approaches, in particular, have highlighted the inseparable nature of researcher values, epistemologies and the research process. She argues that it is the epistemological framework underpinning research that enables the researcher, and the research process, to be sensitive to gender issues.

For all the authors in this section, it has been an aim to prioritise the voices of the women whom they interviewed and with whom they shared ideas; to recognise ways in which readers will engage with the chapters in multiple ways; to develop their own understandings and lifelong learning; and to explain some of the conditions and realities of women's lived experiences.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Gendered, raced and classed positions in the labour market have implications for levels of pay and personal opportunities, as well as for career development. Employment is still organised hierarchically, with low-knowledge skilled women and men at the bottom rungs and in low-paid insecure work (Brine 1999; Toynbee 2003). Women in the academy could then be said to be privileged in terms of work opportunities. However, as is clear from the chapters in this section, women in the academy – like women throughout the employment market – often find themselves working 'flexibly', which can mean part-time paid employment and lack of job security.

The chapters in this section all consider some of the challenges and negotiations which women in higher education face, often on a daily basis. However, both the challenges and the negotiations will be recognised by women both outside the academy and beyond the UK, where all of this research is placed. There will be few women reading this book who have not struggled with developing careers in a job market which abounds with sexism, racism, classism, ageism, heterosexism and dis/ableism, whilst challenging, negotiating and often maintaining their (gendered) positions in the home. It is little wonder that our identities are fluid, changing and contested. For many women in this section and, we suspect, or many women reading this book multiple identities are carried with us every day. However:

> All identities are not equally available to all of us, and all identities are not equally culturally valued. Identities are fundamentally emeshed in relations of power (Roseneil and Seymour, 1999:2).

Whilst we have argued that identities are fluid, multiple and contradictory, the chapters in this section have also clearly demonstrated that there are also structures in place that reinforce gendered, classed and racialised social divisions. Writing about raced and gendered workplace interactions, Patricia Parker argues that:

> Power relations are patterned through taken-for-granted often hidden assumptions about gender and race that are embedded in organisational discourses and that privilege the experiences and interests of dominant racial and gender groups – non-dominant cultural interests and experiences are suppressed, devalued and muted (Parker, 2002:1)

Norms are constructed which differ not only for women and for men, but also between social classes, who inherit different 'worlds of feeling'. They are determined by the specific tasks allocated to each social grouping according to the division of labour within the prevailing mode of production, and that division of labour is gendered under patriarchal capitalism' (Colley et al, 2003). Additionally, as Cotterill et al so clearly show in this section, age is a key identifier within gendered divisions of labour.

For women within these chapters and beyond them, it is apparent that within families women engage in emotional labour far more than most men, taking responsibility for maintaining the emotional aspects of family relationships,

responding to others' emotional states and also acting to alleviate distress (Reay 2002). Women learn what it means to be identified as primarily a carer rather than a worker. For women trying to develop academic (or other) careers, new identities and ways of being need to be carved out. Writing about academics, but equally applicable to women in other careers, Valerie Hey (2004) asks whether women are more likely to over-comply and be over-zealous in attempts to prove themselves 'good enough'.

However, it is apparent from the chapters in this section that women do not always accept the constructed norms and identities of home and work with which they are expected to comply. Heidi Mirza talks of identities of refusal: ways in which dominant discourses can be resisted to redefine the world according to one's own values, codes and understandings (Mirza, 2003: 131). Collaborative alliances and networking can lead to collectivity and transformative agency, opening up a 'third space' (between public/private) of strategic engagement, finding other ways of knowing (Mirza, 2003: 135).

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Chapter 8

DISTANCE LEARNERS JUGGLING HOME, WORK AND STUDY

Is Gender an Issue?

Arwen Raddon
University of Leicester

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the impact of gender in approaches to, and experiences of, distance learning. Distance learning is a growing phenomenon worldwide (Perraton, 2000). It takes a number of forms, spanning correspondence courses through to internet-based programmes of learning. This generally involves a learner receiving a package of learning materials, be they printed, online or broadcasted on television, which they study outside of the institution (e.g. at home, at work, in local learning centres). They may study alone or as part of a group of distance learners, and the learning materials may be supplemented with various methods of teaching, support and communication. For example, this can include seminars, online lectures, group discussions, residential teaching sessions, and support via telephone, email, post, the internet or in person. Learners, learning providers, governments and international bodies are increasingly regarding distance learning as an effective form of lifelong learning. In particular, distance learning is seen as enabling adult learners to combine home, work and studying whilst upgrading their skills and knowledge. As such, the social discourse of access and widening participation is often partnered by the economic discourse of 'learning while earning'.

The Open University (OU) was one of the forerunners of distance education in the UK, and many 'traditional' universities have now developed distance learning programmes alongside their campus-based courses. The research outlined in this chapter focuses on learners studying with a 'traditional' UK university, which has one of the largest numbers of distance learning students after the OU. In terms of widening access to higher education and promoting lifelong learning, distance learning has

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 159–181.

proved popular with mature learners and those working full-time, due to the apparent ability to fit learning in between home and work life. As with higher education more widely, women now form a large part if not the majority of learners on distance education programmes (e.g. von Prümmer, 2000). As will be discussed here, as the number of women learners has grown over the last 20 years, some questions have been raised about whether distance learning fulfils women learners' needs and suits their learning approaches, and about the ways in which gender impacts on experiences of distance learning. Nevertheless, feminist literature and research in this area remains fairly limited and gender is often not considered as an issue.

This chapter opens with an outline of the literature in the areas of distance learning and approaches to studying, which suggests binary views on the existence of gender-related experiences of, or approaches to, studying at a distance. It then considers issues of epistemology and gender-sensitivity in the research process and methodology, proceeding to explore some of the findings from a survey of one group of UK-based distance learners. This survey formed the first wave of a longitudinal study that made use of a number of methods to explore distance learners' experiences over time. Drawing on responses to attitudinal statements and survey respondents' descriptions of their experiences of juggling home, work and study, this chapter explores some of the gender-related patterns, themes and experiences. This is particularly in relation to motivations to study, time and support. Within this discussion, reflections are made on using a survey to explore these issues, and how this shaped the focus of the subsequent waves of this research on distance learners.

GENDERED APPROACHES TO AND EXPERIENCES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

There have been relatively few studies specifically dealing with gender and approaches to studying in distance learning. Studies of learning approaches and styles have been very influential in educational development, the psychology of learning and management development. Studies of learning approaches were developed through experimental research. One of the key studies was that of Ference Marton and Roger Saljo (1976) who asked students to read a text in a 'naturalistic setting'. They then tested students' knowledge by asking them questions related to the text, and later on they asked how they had gone about reading the text in order to identify their approach. This helped them to identify two approaches to learning – surface and deep learning. Essentially, those who took a surface approach tended to try and memorise details of the text, while those who took a deep approach tried to understand the meaning of the text rather than the detail. This work was further developed by a number of authors into a range of quantitative measurement techniques to map out approaches and styles of learning.

Some of the most widely used include Noel Entwistle's (1981) Approaches to Studying Inventory (ASI); David Kolb's (1984) influential Learning Styles Inventory (LSI); John Biggs' (1987) Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ), which explores styles and strategies of learning; and Peter Honey and Alan Mumford's (1986) Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ), which was developed for the management field but is also used in the field of education. Subsequent authors have tested and refined these instruments, and adapted them to different situations. For example, these techniques have been used to consider whether there are differences between learning styles in the distance learning context and on-campus (e.g. Diaz and Cartnal, 1999).

Within studies of learning styles/approaches and distance learning, gender is generally considered as one of a range of variables including age, ethnicity, dis/ability and so on. The majority of studies of learning styles and learning approaches have concluded that there are no statistically significant gender differences in either the campus-based or distance education context (for a review see: Richardson, 2000; Severiens and Ten Dam, 1994; Severiens et al. 1998). So it might appear on the surface that gender is not an issue when looking at approaches to distance learning. Nevertheless, while useful, the majority of these studies draw on a number of popular survey-based measurement techniques, with gender as one of many variables tested for significance. Such studies have involved large numbers of students from all over the world, and among various cultures, which could suggest they are 'representative'. Indeed, following successful usage in different countries, a number of quantitative techniques are seen as particularly generalisable and transferable to different contexts (Richardson, 2000).

However, Sabine Severiens and Gert Ten Dam (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of such inventories and techniques widely used to measure learning styles and approaches. They conclude that many of the learning styles/approaches/conceptions models were formulated without due consideration for gender, being developed using primarily male samples. As such, they argue that the resulting tools are unlikely to be gender-sensitive. Indeed, if we look at an instrument such as Peter Honey and Alan Mumford's (1986) Learning Styles Questionnaire, they refer to he/his/him throughout their manual. They state that this is because the majority of their sample was male, and that the small female sample did not display any statistically significant differences, with 174 women surveyed of 1,302 total sample. This in itself positions men as the norm, and women as the other. While they ask those making use of the LSQ to aid them in building up any information about gendered differences, it could be argued that they might not be asking the right questions if they wish to find out about gender differences, indeed, this was not one of the aims of their instrument. As Sabine Severiens and Gert Ten Dam (1994) note, a lack of gender sensitivity in the research instruments may falsely lead the users of such models to the conclusion that gender is not an issue. The very foundations on which such influential and widely supported models were built are positioned

within the 'no difference' discourse of 'sameness' between and amongst women and men – albeit with men's development forming the 'norm' for all human development, and women's development being judged as underdeveloped or 'deficient' when it 'deviates' from the 'norm' (Gilligan, 1982: 18). Thus, while these kinds of studies can be useful, it is important to be attendant to the underlying principles on which they are constructed.

More qualitative, in-depth studies in this area have been quite rare. One more qualitative study by Elizabeth Beaty et al. (1997) found that individual experiences of learning might involve gendered themes. However, any specifically gendered experiences have been questioned since the sample for this research did not involve any men (Richardson, 2000).

More recently, Margaret Taplin and Olugbemiro Jegede (2001) conducted a mixed-methods study of distance learners, which explored issues of gender and focused on both women and men's experiences and approaches. A survey and follow-up telephone interviews were conducted in the Open University of Hong Kong, focusing on high- and low-achieving women and men learners who had completed their studies. The study found that more of the high-achieving learners were married than the low-achievers and, in terms of gender difference that more men fitted into the high-achievers category. It was thus concluded that having support from a partner or spouse can be particularly important. Equally, they concluded that men appeared to be better able to combine studying with managerial responsibilities, such as being an employer or being a head of department. Supporting the idea that women learners are more likely than men to seek out connection with others, Taplin and Jegede also found that women were more likely to seek help with problems, whether from tutors or other learners. One of the interesting findings of the study was that high-achieving women learners tended to take a different approach to their studies than high-achieving men learners. The women tended to develop individual strategies for using the learning materials and applied the learning to examples from everyday life, whilst the men learners tended to follow the guidelines set by the course planners. The authors reflect that this may mean that tutors will need to encourage women and men learners to take different approaches to studying. However, they note that further research is needed to clarify this apparent gender difference in study approaches. An additional factor that is highlighted is place of study. Taplin and Jegede found that while a large number of learners studied at home, this was particularly evident among low-achieving women learners. High-achieving women learners, on the other hand, were more likely than low-achieving women learners to study in their office at work or in the library than at home. The study did not collect data about aspects such as responsibilities at home, although they conclude that it is 'necessary to find out more about the quality of the home study environment' and the 'distractions' that might impact on women's studies when they are required to carry other roles alongside studying (2001: 151).

A number of feminist studies have set out to explore gendered difference within experiences of distance learning and in doing so have touched on issues of women's learning styles and needs. One of the difficulties with these studies is that they do not explain what they mean when they refer to women's learning styles and approaches. Christine von Prümmer (1994: 3) asks whether distance learning programmes take account of women's 'specific learning styles', in light of their 'double or triple workload'.

Similarly, Jennifer O'Rourke (1999: 107) alludes to 'women's reality and … women's preferred approaches to learning' as some of the issues that must be taken into account when introducing new learning technologies to distance education. Since these writers do not outline what constitute women's preferred styles or approaches, it is hard to discuss this in relation to the wider literature on distance learning and learning approaches or styles. However, what these writers do highlight are the material realities that often impact on women learners in a different way to men learners, such as care and domestic work, with the double or triple workload of caring and domestic work in the home being combined with paid employment.

In terms of meeting women learners' needs, there are conflicting views within these studies over the suitability of distance learning for women and the extent to which it fulfils women learners' needs. On the one hand, it is argued that distance learning may allow access to previously denied opportunities to women (Faith, 1988; Kirkup, 1996). On the other hand, Margaret Grace (1994) argues that women distance learners' absence from the university exacerbates women's lack of recognition and visibility and their isolation in the masculinist academy. More recently, Hanafi Atan et al. (2005: 13) argue that women distance learners have particular 'requirements' due to their:

> distinct characteristics ... [of spending] most of their time at home and are isolated. They also come from diverse backgrounds, economically, socially and educationally and inevitably, possess a multitude of family and household responsibilities.

However, the extent to which women distance learners spend more of their time at home, or are more isolated than men distance learners is questionable. Many women distance learners, like men distance learners, combine studying with working full- or part-time.

Much of the research on women, gender and distance learning was carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since this time, there have been surprisingly few feminist and gender analyses of distance learning. Much of the debate in distance learning research is dominated by discussions about technologies and tends to be focused on descriptions of practice rather than theoretical analysis of distance learning practices (Berge, 2000). However, the situation of women in higher education, and society, has changed somewhat since the early 1990s and this remains an important area of research. For example, while we cannot overlook inequalities in the academy, or indeed material inequalities within and outside of the

academy, the number of women in higher education in the UK and other advanced economies is now higher than ever (Quinn, 2003). Thus, it could be suggested that women are now experiencing less invisibility and exclusion in higher education.

Equally, focusing on women's 'specific learning styles' and 'preferred approaches' can create a fixed understanding of learning approaches and styles. This potentially 'essentialises' women's experiences of distance learning, treating women as a homogeneous group and unquestioningly portraying the 'reality' of women distance learners. Such an approach seems to ignore both the many differences among women learners and the similarities between women and men learners. Indeed, in constructing learning approaches and styles as fixed, there is an assumption that they neither differ between women (and in some cases as seen as above, do not differ between women and men), nor change over time according to contextual factors. The study reported here seeks to both explore some of the ways in which gender impacts on approaches to and experiences of distance learning, and to develop a better understanding of some of these similarities and differences between women and men learners.

METHODOLOGY/ EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminist and post-structuralist approaches, in particular, have highlighted the inseparable nature of researcher values, epistemologies and the research process. Thus in this next section I briefly discuss linkages between my epistemology and my methodology, proceeding to a discussion of the survey findings.

While it is hard to quantify what it is that makes a study gender sensitive, I would argue that it is the epistemological framework underpinning research that enables the researcher, and the research process, to be sensitive to gender issues. This research draws on feminist post-structuralist theories of gender, with the understanding that while the categories 'female' and 'male' are socially, historically and linguistically constructed, there remains evidence worldwide of gendered structural and material inequalities, both within the 'private' and the 'public' spheres (Bradley, 1999; Francis, 1999). Thus, while I seek to trouble essentialist claims to women's styles, approaches or roles, I also seek to trouble claims to 'sameness' and equality and try to move beyond these 'either/or' binaries.

Using a questionnaire

This first stage of my research made use of a postal survey. Quantitative research has received many criticisms within feminist research. It has been seen, for example, as seeking to explain rather than understand social phenomena, collecting data about a pre-defined and pre-coded set of experiences, rather than allowing for a range of experiences and stories (Maynard, 1994). Nevertheless, a number of feminist

researchers have also argued against the rejection of these methods. Liz Kelly et al. (1992), for example, found in their research around the highly sensitive area of sexual abuse that the use of a questionnaire gave respondents a certain sense of protection and anonymity when dealing with painful memories and sensitive issues. Furthermore, in terms of the distribution of, and audience for, social research, quantitative data continues to exercise more influence over policy makers and government decisions, and to be more widely disseminated (Oakley, 2000). Thus, while qualitative data can create an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, it can be very helpful to complement this with quantitative data in order to reach a wider audience. For this reason, it would seem politically important for feminist researchers to be able to use and understand quantitative methods of research. Thus, I happily admit, like Gayle Letherby (2003), that I most enjoy conducting in-depth and interview-based research, whilst recognising the great importance that more quantitative methods such as appropriately designed, gender-sensitive questionnaires have in the research of power relations. Indeed, qualitative and quantitative methods are not dichotomous, since more qualitative research methods can provide quantitative data or be quantified, and vice versa (Kelly et al., 1992).

Indeed, the most important element in the choice of methods is that they suit the research topic and aims (Oakley, 2000). I chose to use a survey for a number of reasons. Access is a major issue when researching distance learners, since they are often geographically dispersed, potentially completing their studies without attending the university. As an outsider-researcher (e.g. not a tutor or member of staff), using a questionnaire was one way to gather data from a large group of dispersed students. Although most of the research in this area appears to have been undertaken by people working in the field, many studies continue to use surveys rather than in-depth interviews. However, while access was an issue in my research, it was not the priority.

This survey formed the first wave of a longitudinal research study, in which I intended to integrate a number of methods to gather general data about a larger group of learners, followed by in-depth interviews with a smaller group of learners through their two-year programme of studies. The research focused on students on three related distance learning courses (with shared modules and the same tutors), provided by a 'traditional' university in the UK. By starting with a survey, I was able to gain some general information about the individuals taking the courses, their motivations, and their experiences. I also sought to explore some aspects of popular research tools widely used to measure approaches to studying, whilst experimenting with ways not only of being sensitive to gender issues, but of contextualising individual approaches and experiences. This was something I felt was lacking in many of the studies that made use of the idea of approaches to, or styles of, learning. For example, the majority of these research tools rely on predetermined statements to which respondents answer yes/no and which, when coded, are rated against 'norms'. Peter Honey and Alan Mumford's (1986) research can be used to map

respondents against the norms of four learning styles (reflector/theorist/pragmatist/activist) and against occupational profiles. Such data and classification can be useful; however, it is also decontextualised from respondents' 'lived realities'. When I completed these surveys myself, I found it hard to give definitive yes/no answers. This led me to reflect more widely on respondents' experiences of participating in this kind of research. What kinds of experiences impacted on their responses? Were they able to give a definite yes/no answer, or did they find that their response differed according to changes over time? Did they have space to express this uncertainty? Thus, my own aim was to make use of some of these survey tools, but to combine them with more open questions and an opportunity to reflect on the context of their responses. Mary Belenky et al. (1986: 15–16, original emphasis) refer to a similar process of 'removing the blinders', in which they return to consider initially blind coded data within the context of each respondents 'life story'.

Thus, in order to design the survey, I drew on studies such as those of Biggs (1987), Entwistle (1981), and Honey and Mumford (1986) to develop a set of attitudinal statements relating to distance learning. Respondents were asked to rate the statements as strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree. When discussing the results below, the strongly agree/agree and the disagree/strongly disagree results are combined except where it is particularly useful to consider degrees of agreement or dissent. While these were still a fairly limited range of responses, measuring the strength of agreement allows greater room for differences among individuals. Equally, the survey was designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data through a range of open and closed questions, drawing on, among others, elements of the work of Carol Gilligan (1982), Mary Belenky et al. (1986), Marcia B. Baxter Magolda (1992) and Sabine Severiens et al (1998). Thus as well as attitudinal statements, I asked individuals to describe their experiences of distance learning in their own words, to reflect on what was important to them in their lives, and I asked for feedback about the questions and survey design.

THE FINDINGS

The findings of the survey will now be outlined, focusing in particular on issues around motivations for studying and time to study.

The survey was sent to the 200 UK-based students registered on 3 professionally-oriented MSc courses. As stated, these were all in a similar subject area with shared modules and the same tutors. These courses were provided by a 'traditional' UK university, which has a substantial number of mature students (over 21 years of age) on similar distance programmes. Table 1 gives a profile of the 60 returns (30% response rate). Although not necessarily representative, the aim of the survey was to gain a general picture of the kinds of learners engaged in this programme and some of their experiences of, and approaches to, studying.

It is important to highlight that this is a professionally-oriented course, with many of the learners working in fairly senior roles or advanced in their career. Hence, over half the students are over the age of 40 and, if they have children, these tend to be older children. Indeed, just under half of those in the sample have no children. When looking at other courses, and in different contexts, caring for young children might be an additional responsibility for many learners. However, in this

Table 1. Sample Profile (N=60)

		Percentage %
Gender	Female	65
	Male	35
Age	20–29	7
	30–39	28
	40–49	52
	50–59	13
Marital status	Single	17
	Married	56
	Divorced	15
	Other	12
Children	Yes	51
	No	49
Work	Full-time	92
	Part-time	6
	Other	2
Household income group	10–15K	2
	16–20K	0
	21–30K	21
	31–40K	22
	41–50K	17
	51–60K	17
	61K+	21
Proportion of household income earned by respondent	0%	2
	10%	0
	20%	0
	30%	7
	40%	7
	50%	7
	60%	17
	70%	8
	80%	10
	90%	5
	100%	37

case we can infer that issues such as childcare are likely to have less of an impact on balancing home, work and studying. Nevertheless, there are a small number of respondents with young children, and family responsibilities are mentioned by many of the respondents.

When reporting quotations from individual respondents, information is given on their marital status and how many children they have. These details are not given in order to classify respondents by their marital or parental status, but because whether someone is single and living alone or lives with their partner and children gives an initial, albeit superficial, signal of some of the kinds of roles (e.g. partner, parent) and responsibilities these respondents have in the 'private' sphere, alongside their employment in the 'public' sphere. As Sabine Severiens et al. (1998) highlight, contextual issues such as the nature of the course and the context of the learners can have important implications for learner motivation and approaches to studying.

MOTIVATIONS FOR STUDYING ON THE COURSE

In terms of respondents' motivations for studying on this course (*see* Figures 1 and 2), there are some interesting differences between women's and men's responses. For example, 59% of women and 47% of men are doing this course for promotion reasons, while 29% of women and 55% of men were encouraged by their workplace to get a professional qualification. In addition, 37% of women, compared with 30% of men, are thinking of a change of career. This would seem to support previous findings that women, even at a senior level as many of these respondents are, are less likely to gain promotion than men (Ross, 2000), and that female employees generally have lower access than male employees to training (DfEE, 2000). Indeed, when asked what had been most beneficial to them in undertaking their studies, 33% of men compared with 15% of women listed their workplace as a source of support (*see* Table 2 on page 186). When a course is professionally-related, workplace support can be essential if learning is to have subsequent career benefits (John Brennan et al., 2000); although a number of respondents were undertaking studies in order to change jobs and may not necessarily seek support from their current employer.

APPROACHES TO STUDYING AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Within these distance learning programmes, learners worked through a set of primarily paper-based course materials. These could be supplemented by contacting tutors via telephone, email or in person, and by attending non-obligatory residential teaching weekends. In terms of time spent studying and individual time management, when asked if they were '*generally* able to study for the same number

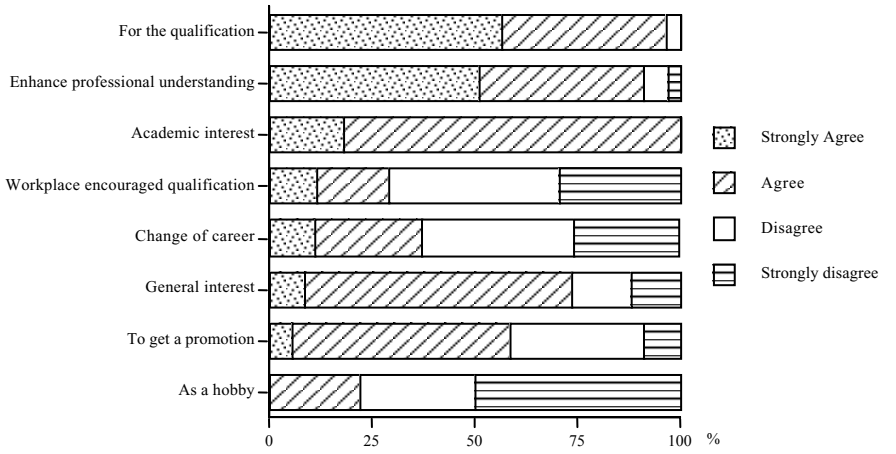

Figure 1. Women's reasons for doing this course (ranked following strongest agreement)

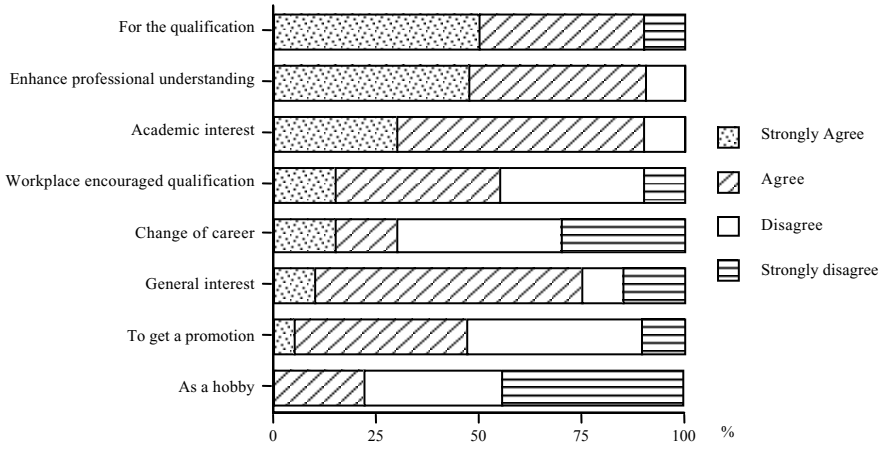

Figure 2. Men's reasons for doing this course (ranked following strongest agreement)

of hours per week throughout the year', the survey found that 48% of men compared with 18% of women said they were able to do this. As will now be discussed, a number of attitudinal statements that followed up further on this question gave some interesting results.

Table 2. 'What has been most beneficial to you in terms of supporting you through the duration of your studies?'

	Female (N=39) %	Male (N=21) %
Course tutors/ administrative staff	34	38
Family	24	43
Support from partner/spouse	27	14
Workplace	15	33
Use of new technologies	7	29
Work colleagues	12	19
Self	15	10
Residential weekends	10	10
Fellow students	7	10
Friends	10	5
Parents	5	0
Flexibility of course	2	5
Course materials	2	5
Domestic support from partner	5	0
No support given	0	10

N.B. This data shows frequencies gathered from qualitative statements, so does not add up to 100%, as some respondents wrote more than one thing that had been beneficial to them.

As Figures 3 and 4 show, while there is a fairly even positive/negative response overall for women and men in terms of the statement 'I am not very organised in my approach to my studies, I just do some when I can', 35%, of men 'strongly disagree' – inferring that they believe themselves to have an organised approach – compared with 16% of women. Furthermore, 68% of men compared with 50% of women said that they 'always meet [their] deadlines'; while 38% of men 'find it easy to put time for [their] studies', compared with 26% of women. In addition, 35% of men, compared with 10% of women always approach their studies in the same way, regardless of deadlines or disruptions.

Good time management is often identified as one of the key factors in successful distance learning, and 'poor time management' as one of the main reasons for student dropout (Sherry, 1996). On the surface, these responses might suggest that men have a more organised approach to studying and better time management than women. However, this might equally suggest that the male respondents have been more able to put other responsibilities aside and to compartmentalise aspects of both their 'public' and 'private' life. Indeed, if we look closer at a number of different areas, there is evidence of gendered experiences of both time and support, which will now be explored.

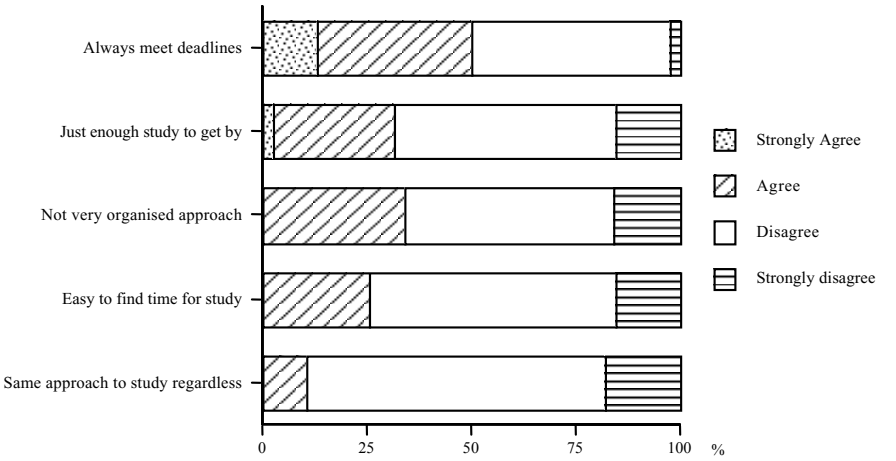

Figure 3. Attitudinal statements regarding time management and approaches to studying – women (ranked following strongest agreement)

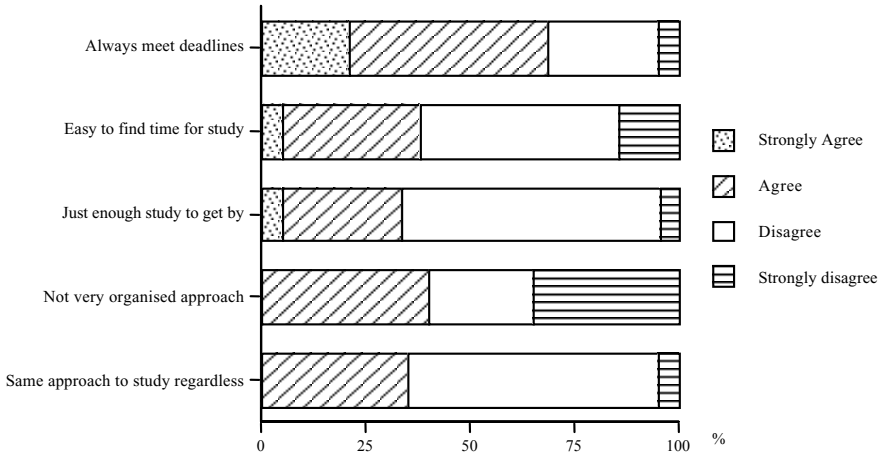

Figure 4. Attitudinal statements regarding time management and approaches to studying – men (ranked following strongest agreement)

Location of Study and Issues of Time

Most distance learning study takes place in the 'private' sphere of the home. Of the 60 respondents, 56 did most of their studying at home. The remaining four male respondents all studied at work. Three of these had children, two of which made a

very deliberate divide between their work and study time on the one hand, and their limited time at home with their family on the other. While studying in higher education has often been seen as a 'public' sphere activity, particularly for women (e.g. Edwards, 1993; Merrill, 1999; Pascall and Cox, 1993; Wisker, 1996), distance learning appears in many cases to transgress the supposed public/private boundaries. Indeed, the same might also be said of some of the working patterns that were evident in the survey responses. For example, respondents wrote about bringing work home, working very long hours and working away from home: at times transgressing the 'private', 'personal' sphere of the home. Nevertheless, for women distance learners who, as will be seen, tend to have the major responsibility for domestic chores and for childcare, there are additional demands on the time in which they can study.

Indeed, time is not a straightforward concept, but is socially constructed (Davies, 1990). It is 'subjective, political and value-laden', with differing degrees of autonomy and entitlement for different members of a family (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001: 140). Cath Sullivan and Sue Lewis' (2001) research on home-working and gender found that women interviewees tended to experience time differently to men. Women tended to work in 'polychronic time' (which predominantly involves experiencing tasks simultaneously)', while men tended to work in 'monochronic time' (which predominantly involves experiencing tasks sequentially)' (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001: 139, citing Hall, 1983). These understandings of time draw on the constructions of industrial time in the 'public', male sphere, and domestic time in the 'private', female sphere. In this way, Sullivan and Lewis found that men were better able to form a clear division and compartmentalisation between work and home.

If we return to the respondents who were *not* able to maintain the same number of hours study every week (82% of the women and 52% of the men), they explained this in a number of ways. For many women and men, including those with and without children and working full- and part-time, work commitments were an important reason, with 35 mentions of work-related issues among these respondents. For example, the following respondents, including one man with young children, talked about work issues being the primary factor:

> Work commitments. Frequent evening work means I can only study at weekends. So I block complete weekends to read and write prior to assignments. (Female, divorced, children: 25, 23)

> Excessive workload in current job position. (Male, married, children: 10, 8)

> Have to be very flexible in line with work demands and have to take holidays to write up assignments. (Female, single)

'Family' commitments were specifically mentioned by eight women and two men, while 'home' commitments were specifically mentioned by five women. Indeed, women respondents tended to write far more than men about family responsibilities, and about caring for their children and other relatives, for example:

> Children's extra curricular activities – no support from 'then' partner. (Female, single, children: 25, 11, 4)
>
> Family arrangements – 14 year old has severe disabilities and sometimes requires more intense care – Busy at work and family means little energy/time for study! (Female, did not give marital status, children: 15, 11, 6)
>
> Care commitments of elderly mother who lives 120 miles away. Job constraints – away from home. (Female, married, children: 28, 24)
>
> Domestic pressure. When children are home – I have other commitments – Xmas etc. Work pressures – Lots of meetings and so on. (Female, married, children: 24, 22, 18)

Two men did mention caring responsibilities for parents under different questions. However, overall not only did the women respondents appear to find it more difficult to maintain the same number of hours studying each week, but there was also stronger evidence of the triple role of carer, worker and student in the women's responses.

Sources of Support

Another area in which women's responses were quite different from men's was in terms of domestic responsibilities and the support of partners and family in this respect. For learners who are working full- or part-time and often have family, social and community commitments, it is likely that support from family, friends, tutors and the workplace will be important for successful course completion. Furthermore, in terms of domestic responsibilities, previous research has highlighted that the 'private' sphere of the home is subject to gendered power relations (e.g. Edwards, 1993). Women have traditionally had less access than men to the 'public' sphere and, therefore, have been less capable of distancing themselves from domestic work and responsibilities. In particular, men's power over resources and decision-making is an important element in this distancing (Pahl, 1983). Nevertheless, even when women work full- or part-time, let alone studying as well, there is little impact on the gendered division of labour in the household (Pilcher, 1999). With the majority of these women respondents working full-time, many in senior roles, and earning a substantial part – if not the whole – of their household income (e.g. 38% of women earn 100% of the household income and 23% earn 60%), I was interested to see if this was reflected in the kind of support respondents wrote about.

Respondents wrote about a number of sources of support in undertaking their studies. The following table shows the various sources of support described, by gender. This was an open question, so these categories are based on respondents' own descriptions.

Most respondents described multiple sources of support. However, in terms of the most cited source of support, for women this was the tutors and support staff on the course (34% of women). For example, two women wrote:

> Course clerks, lecturers' excellent support and solutions provided. Problem never seems quite that bad after a chat. Very flexible approach takes the pressure off. (Female, single, children: 25, 11, 4)

> Family support and understanding, staff at [course provider] are very approachable and I know there's someone there if I need help. (Female, single)

The most cited source of support for men was their family (43%). As two men wrote:

> Ability to study in the workplace and a family that has adapted to the change in routine. (Male, married, children: 10, 8)

> Family essential. Technology – effective use essential. (Male, divorced)

Interestingly, family was not cited by those men who indicated 'single' as their marital status (14%), with aspects such as support from friends, residentials, tutors and the course provider's website (technologies) featuring instead. Of the seven single women (17%), two described family as an important source of support. The remaining five single women tended to write mainly about self-support and support from tutors, with one mention of friends.

Women's overall lower citation than men of family as a source of support in their studies might be suggested to support previous research highlighting problems women have experienced with their families generally, and partners in particular, when returning to study. A number of studies have found that women returning to learn are less likely than men to receive support from their family. Indeed, they may experience increased demands (von Prümmer, 1994). This does not appear to be the case here although, as various writers have stated, without in-depth research such issues are unlikely to be voiced, and this remains an area for further research (Edwards, 1993; Merrill, 1999; Wisker, 1996). Indeed, Barbara Merrill (1999) highlights that there is a particular need for research into men's experiences of support in returning to studies, since research has tended to focus on mature women students. Merrill's research found that men did experience problems, although there were 'gender differences' in the way that these were experienced. This was particularly in relation to domestic and childcare responsibilities. There are a number of responses in my own research regarding conflict between undertaking studies and family life, but only one that openly states a lack of support and this was from a respondent's parents:

> I sometimes feel guilty that I don't have time at weekends for my husband and parents particularly (my parents can't understand why I'm doing the MSc). (Female, married)

Indeed, while difficulties with partners have been highlighted in some studies of mature (mainly women) students, 27% of women and 14% of men wrote about receiving some form of support from their partner/spouse, for example:

> My wife has been very supportive. My [dissertation] supervisor has been helpful and available when needed. (Male, married, children: 23, 21)

> Husband's wholehearted support which is practical as well as moral. Useful contacts at work and support by phone from [course provider] staff when needed. I also use several internet sources of information which help my perspective. (Female, married)

> My wife and the ability to defer completed assignments. (Male, married)

> Partner – he could not have been more supportive. (Female, 'other' – living with partner)

> My husband has been very good. Gets up on Sat/Sun morning leaves me alone with a cuppa and he does housework. (Female, married)

> Good support from work, colleagues, family, partner, course staff. E-mail has proved very good communication aid. (Male, married, children: 21, 20)

> My husband is a brilliant support and encourages me. E-mail has been very useful. Contact with my 2 university colleagues also. (Female, married)

Notably, the women in particular write very positively about their partner's support. This is rather different to the ways in which women in other studies have described partner support in undertaking their studies, which was more in terms of 'permission from the men they live with' (Pascall and Cox, 1993: 70). It is not clear from the responses to this survey why fewer men have written about partner support and there is no mention of a lack of support specifically from either partners or family.

While the nature of partner support was not described in most cases, two of the women specifically wrote about their partner taking on more domestic responsibilities in order to support them through their studies. As previous studies have found (e.g. Wisker, 1996), this support can be highly beneficial to women returning to study. Equally, however, two women wrote about this domestic support as a source of tension when asked about any conflict they experienced between their studies and other aspects of their life:

> Very supportive partner who does most domestic chores, but feel I have little time for him. (Female, 'other' marital status)

> Reduced social life, do not arrange to meet people or go out as often as we might. My husband has taken on many of the tasks we normally share i.e. cleaning, washing and ironing so has less time for the ones that he does i.e. decorating. (Female, married)

There were very few mentions of domestic-related responsibilities in men's responses to any of the survey questions (I have included aspects such as gardening

and pets within 'domestic responsibilities', since these home-related activities were mentioned by several of the respondents). The following comments were made by three men when asked to describe any sacrifices they had made in order to undertake their studies. Notably, these are statements about doing *fewer* domestic-related activities and again, the impact of studying on relationships:

> Yes, I no longer go fishing, I spend the time with the family, no DIY or decorating gets done and family time at weekend is paramount. (Male, married, children: 10, 8)

> Nothing specific. You just do less in the way of leisure and spend your weekends studying rather than gardening, walking, DIY, visiting friends/relatives etc. (Male, married, children: 23, 21)

> Yes. The decorating and garden have suffered. So have my relations with my partner. I am now having to make amends for 2 years of neglect. (Male, divorced, children: 31, 26)

Women respondents, however, wrote about domestic responsibilities in answer to several questions, as included in some of the data already presented. Furthermore, while some of the women had put certain domestic-related activities 'on the back burner', several women wrote about the ways in which they fitted their domestic responsibilities in around everything else, rather than lessening these activities. In terms of sacrifices, four women wrote about the impact of their studies on their domestic responsibilities and, indeed, their friendships, for example:

> My non-work days were formerly for home maker activities – cleaning/shopping etc. Those are now being squeezed into evenings and weekends. Contacts with friends have suffered. (Female, married, children: 15, 13, 9)

> Yes, friends went on the back burner for the second year and I did no gardening during my year 2 – and as someone with a big garden that did cause a few problems. I had to find new homes for my chickens and ducks. (Female, single)

> DIY projects/gardening/reading for leisure on 'back burner'! No holiday away last year – studying and cost of course. (Female, divorced)

Moreover, when asked to describe any conflicts experienced between studies and other aspects of their life, nine women wrote specifically about domestic responsibilities, for example:

> Domesticity takes up a lot of time. Family are quite demanding (including partner). I have to 'steal' time from work as I like to be ahead of deadlines. (Female, married, children: 23, 21, 18)

> Work, very demanding. NO STUDY LEAVE. 'SINGLE' HOUSEHOLD, so also have to do all home activities – shop, garden, maintenance, as well as try to find time for family and social. (Female, divorced, children: 25, 23, respondent's emphasis)

> Fatigue after work impacts on quality of studies. Studying impacts on time to spend with family and friends and time to spend cooking and cleaning etc. (Female, married)

> Children/partner feel neglected. Demands of home (cooking, cleaning, DIY, garden) coupled with long hours of full-time employment have proven a formidable barrier to finding time to study. (Female, married, has children but ages not given)

> Generally conflicts are avoided because I am very organised and I have a huge amount of support from my husband, family. I employ a live-in help to assist with housework and help in the garden is also paid for. (Female, married, children: 7, 6)

As can be seen from the last quote, paid support for domestic chores is one way for women to distance themselves from domestic responsibilities, giving them time to concentrate on their work and studies. It may be that, as with other studies, men do not see domestic issues as relevant or important (Sue Scott, 1985), so may omit them from their responses. It could be argued that the women's responses are socially and culturally constructed, drawing on discourses of the good wife/mother/partner, as well as the good student. Such responses may be evidence of women's need to show that they are not neglecting their mother/partner/family roles (von Prümmer, 1994), as well as their feelings of guilt and conflict at neglecting the 'greedy', all-consuming institution of the family (Edwards, 1993). Nevertheless, the material reality remains that while gender roles and responsibilities are changing over time, women generally continue to have primary responsibility for domestic and care work. This has an impact on the time that women have to study and both their experiences of and approaches to studying. Men might appear on the surface to have a better level of time management, with an organised approach to their studies. However, when we consider the context behind these responses, it is clear that women's ability to fit in their studies is subject to the gendered time and politics of the home.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Overall, in terms of motivations, time and support, there do appear to be gender related patterns and themes, as well as similarities of experience and approaches both amongst and between women and men. By using both open and closed questions, as well as allowing degrees of agreement/disagreement (as opposed to a simple yes/no answer), I was able to consider these issues from a number of different angles. Thus, while superficially women might appear less organised in their approach to study, by looking at their different roles and responsibilities we can see that: a) there was evidence of gender-related themes in terms of responsibilities and commitments drawing on their time, and b) women's responses in other areas of the survey highlighted that many of them had a fairly structured, organised approach to their studies.

I would argue that contextual issues such as individuals' personal circumstances, the hours they can give to study – and why – and their reflections on their experiences, add an important dimension to considerations of individual approaches

to studying at a distance. These aspects enabled me to form a better understanding, albeit a snapshot, of the context in which these learners undertook their studies. I was able to consider aspects such as the nature of studying on a professionally-oriented programme, study that takes place primarily in the home, and the impacts of gender relations and discourses surrounding the public/private and home/work binaries. On reflection, a particularly striking aspect of this step in my research process was that, while I started out exploring experiences of, and approaches to distance learning, I was particularly engaged by respondents' individual (written) stories about their studies. Such stories are vital to understanding the context in which they studied and in which they made particular responses to my questionnaire (how much time they study for, how they use their materials, what their preferences for learning were, etc.). As a researcher, however, these stories also added to the richness of the data generated by the survey, adding personal stories about the 'lived realities' of combining home, work and studies. Measuring approaches to studying and using quantitative tools have their place, but have added value when they enable us to engage with individual circumstances.

In terms of gender sensitivity, combining open and closed questions also gives respondents room to write about issues such as what motivates them to study, why it is difficult or easy to find time to study, what kinds of responsibilities they have, experiences of combining multiple responsibilities, forms of support and so on. While there were a range of responses and experiences, it was notable that issues such as caring and domestic responsibilities, in particular, were areas in which gender themes were highly evident. This reflects the large body of feminist research on gender, learning, care and domestic work. While I would avoid 'essentialising' women or men distance learners' experience, since there were a range of experiences and themes, gender clearly is an issue. Themes such as domestic work are not captured in studies of approaches to studying since these focus far more on how people learn, but often overlook the context in which they do so. In order to further explore this context, my own survey fed into in-depth interviews that would follow a small group of distance learners through the two years of their studies. Although I shifted away from a specific focus on approaches to studying, the survey data provided a useful snapshot of a group of distance learners and how they approached their studies. Moreover, it provided an impetus to gain a better understanding of learners' context by further exploring individual stories of combining home, work and study and some of the issues that could not be fully captured in a one-off survey, such as changes in motivations, developing confidence and changing personal circumstances.

In conclusion, I would argue that gender remains an important issue for consideration in the study of experiences of, and approaches to, distance learning. Nevertheless, there is a need to go beyond the either/or approach to consider the multiplicity of experiences and approaches, as well as the nature of home-based study and the potential impact of gender relations and discourses surrounding the

home as a location of study. This is particularly important given the increasing numbers of women and men studying by distance learning, and taking up the discourse of distance learning as an effective means of combining employment, home life and lifelong (l)earning. Many of the women and men surveyed were indeed studying in order to further their careers, with men appearing to gain a higher level of support from their workplace to do this than women. This reflects the often gendered nature of access to education and training opportunities, whether at a distance, on campus or in the workplace. For this group of learners, when it actually came to the realities of fitting in their studies around their busy home and working lives, this was not necessarily as straightforward a task as the rhetoric might suggest. There was evidence of long working hours and the greedy nature of the workplace for the majority of respondents. However, there were particular challenges for women trying to find time and space to study in the 'private' and 'personal' sphere of the home. This dimension both highlights the shared experience that women and men distance learners have of time pressures and trying to learn while they earn, and the specifically gendered aspect of women's responsibility for caring and for domestic work in the 'greedy' sphere of the home.

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Chapter 9

THREE AGES OF WOMAN

Age and Generation in the Academy

Pamela Cotterill[1], Maureen Hirsch[2] and Gayle Letherby[3]
[1]*Staffordshire University;* [2]*Coventry University;* [3]*University of Plymouth*

In this chapter we focus on our experiences as 'older' women within the academy. Our approach is historical in two ways: first, in that we consider our different routes into both feminism and higher education; second, in that we first wrote a version of this piece in 1999 for a WHEN conference and here we reflect on some of the differences for us – both individually and collectively – between then and now.

Firstly though to introduce ourselves: at the time of writing, Maureen is a 66-year-old retired social policy lecturer who maintains research and teaching links with the academy and is active in local politics. She has had a varied work life and also brought up two (now adult) children and worked full-time in higher education for 16 years. Pam is 56 years old, a sociologist by background and an awards manager in a faculty of arts, media and design. She came to higher education as a mature student in her thirties and began teaching at the age of 41. Gayle also came to higher education non-traditionally at the age of 28. She is now 46, has been employed full time for 11 years and is currently Professor of Sociology at the University of Plymouth.

For our original paper **(**Cotterill, Hirsch and Letherby, 1999) we each wrote individual stories within which we traced our routes and entries into academia and considered commonalities and differences in our identities and experiences in relation to our feminist academic lives. We were struck by the similarities in our stories, despite the many differences of experience. From this autobiographical starting point we began to theorise on the aspects of our lives that we already knew were significant. These concerned our personal and academic identities and our personal politics and their relevance to broader issues such as ageism, sexism, gender and work, isolation and collaboration. In this chapter we draw on these original stories and ideas and update and reflect further on more recent changes in our experience and our thinking.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 183–200.

Our approach is grounded in personal experience not only because we believe that the 'personal is political' but because we also believe that our experiences are relevant to broader discussions relating to women within and beyond the academy in terms of personal lifelong learning. Thus, we agree with Jane Ribbens (1993) who argues that:

> A critical reflexive form of autobiography . . . has the sociological potential for considering the extent to which our subjectivity is not something that gets in the way of our social analysis but is itself social . . . I would suggest that the key point is that 'society' can be seen to be, not 'out there', but precisely *'located inside our heads'*, that is, in our socially located and structured understanding of 'my-self', 'my-life', 'me as a person', and so forth (original emphasis)

The sociological concept of the lifecourse is also useful when reflecting on our own careers and those of others who have not adopted the traditional male linear higher education career path (Blaxter *et al*. 1998; Weiner, 1996; introduction in this volume). Traditionally the life cycle approach was considered to be the most appropriate way to understand individual lives. However, the life cycle approach implies a rigid set of transitions and implies an 'ideal' life within which events such as education, marriage, parenthood, career progression, death should occur only at the 'right time'. But this rigid chronological approach does not allow for individual (and family) lives 'which differ from the ideal' (Cotterill, 1994: 112). Given this, the lifecourse approach which 'encompasses social and demographic changes which affect all our lives as well as the personal biographical events in each individual's lifecourse' (Cotterill, 1994: 112) would seem to be more appropriate.

So, although grounded in the personal and the individual we suggest that our stories are illustrative of the issues women face in higher education today not least in relation to expectations and measures of success for them at work and the relationship between these and the expectations and measures of them in their personal lives. External and self-expectations leave many academics feeling that both at work and at home they are not 'good enough'. Thus, recent changes in the cultures of higher education and the effect of these on how we balance our time and responsibilities between the 'greedy institutions' of home and work are also a part of our stories as is consideration of the significance of friendship and collaboration. As well as having resonances for other women working in the academy in the UK we suggest that our experience has some global significance and consider some specific points of connection with international colleagues and with women outside of the academy.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections. In 'Past and Present Identities' we introduce ourselves in more detail drawing on our original stories and updating these with detail on our current positions. In 'Motivations and Expectations' we begin to consider how our experiences resonate with changes in mass higher education and the position of women in the academy more generally. In 'Age, Generation and Gender' we critique the significance of 'growing older' and in

'Friendship and Collaborations' we continue to reflect on the significance of our professional and personal identities and relationships. Finally, in 'Thinking Back and Looking Forward' we reflect once more on our earlier experiences and consider our futures, conscious of course that as soon as it is completed this piece itself becomes an historical document.

PAST AND PRESENT IDENTITIES

We start with the beginnings of each of our individual stories:

> I was born in 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War. I was brought up in a 'political' household by parents who had met through their mutual political activism on the 'Red Clyde' and opposition to the rise of fascism. The ideals of our household were very specific and absolutely clear. You should so live that when you died, when you were at the edge of your grave, you could know that you were leaving the world a better place by your activity and commitment. You should know that you have contributed to the 'greatest cause' – the coming to power of the working class. As a Socialist you should spend your life trying to make the world a fairer and more equal place, where your fellow human beings were no longer exploited and where people in every country would join together to end the tyranny of global capitalism. It is very difficult for me, even today, to understand how most of my fellow human beings do not seem to want to join this struggle!
>
> In 1970 I joined a consciousness raising group. Feminism engulfed me: I was euphoric with this new understanding of the world. I helped set up the first South London Women's Centre and within that AWARE: Action for Women's Advice, Research and Education in an old short-life property in Vauxhall, South London. I went to every workshop, took part in ground breaking discussions in conferences and summer schools and participated in many demonstrations – a Woman's Right to Choose, 24 Hour Day Care, even picketing the Passport Office for the introduction of 'Ms' on the passports!!
>
> My identity is still one of action in the world and this affects my attitude to the academic endeavour. I have academic friends who have never had any other kind of job and have no idea what it is like at the subject end of their research, or to live a life and carry out work without the mental examination of this as a phenomenon. One long standing friend has made an entire and very lucrative career on the basis of studying industrial relations but has never belonged to a trade union himself and never been in a position where he might have taken part in any action for better conditions or defence of existing conditions. (Maureen, 1999)
>
> I came into higher education as a non-standard entrant, mature student, in 1981 at the age of 33. . . . by the end of my first degree in sociology, I was not anxious to leave academia. Immediately after graduating, therefore, I embarked on postgraduate study for a PhD. My research examined relationships between mothers and daughters-in-law and I was fortunate to receive financial support for this work from an ESRC competition award.

By 1989 I had my PhD but I had not published, not attended conferences or given papers and, importantly, I had not got a job. I made the decision, early on, that I would concentrate on my research and aim to complete on time. In hindsight, it was the only decision I felt comfortable with at the time. I was not confident and did not believe myself to be a 'proper' academic. I dreaded anyone even asking me about my research; a simple inquiry into 'how's it going' was enough to turn me into an incoherent wreck. I was terrified of other sociologists, convinced they were all intellectually above me and were bound to ask me questions which I would not be able to answer. I did not want to 'network'. I persuaded myself that I just needed to concentrate on my research and the future would take care of itself.

It didn't. In 1989 I had six hours of teaching each week filling in where I was needed and taking what I was offered. However, there were jobs going in sociology, including some in my own department. For various reasons, I wanted to stay within the institution where I had been a student. I was still lacking in confidence and also realised that by not networking with colleagues elsewhere I had put myself at a disadvantage when it came to applying for jobs. And, if I am honest, I simply did not relish having to travel long distances to reach my place of work. The reasons (or excuses) are personal and some might say implausible. There were others more convincing. I had joined a number of women academics who were developing a women's studies degree and I was encouraged by them to believe that I could make a valuable contribution to this development. I was also taking on more teaching and was about to be interviewed for a full-time, temporary post of one year's duration, to cover the sabbatical leave of a colleague. (Pam, 1999)

I left school at 18 in 1977 with two A levels and seven O levels. Having been told by a Careers Officer that I was 'not University material' as it took me two attempts to get my maths O level I decided to train to be a nursery nurse. I liked children, fully intended to have some of my own some day and saw nursery nursing as a useful way to fill in some time until I became a mother; an added bonus being that I would develop some useful skills along the way. I qualified in the summer of 1979 and married 10 days later – the future looked bright.

Twenty years later I remain biologically childless (although for the last seven years I have had a parental relationship with two teenage boys/young men). Following a miscarriage in 1985, and feeling that I could not work with children for a while, I studied sociology at A level whilst at the same time keeping my 'feminine' work options open by brushing up on my typing skills. The A level in sociology was an accident in that the psychology course I had planned to do didn't recruit enough students. However, it was an accident that had a profound and lasting influence on my life. I found sociology intellectually stimulating and challenging, politically thought provoking and personally exciting and I didn't want to give it up. Consequently, I began an undergraduate degree in sociology in the autumn of 1987 (whilst still trying to get pregnant again) and this was followed by a PhD which I finished in 1997. Between October 1990 and June 1994 I taught full-time alongside my doctoral work and in July 1994 I began my first full-time academic job as a lecturer in sociology – the position I hold now. Somewhere along the line (looking back I'm not sure where) my 'interest' became my job, my career: significant to my identity in a way I never expected work to be.

> My undergraduate work, my postgraduate and postdoctoral research and writing and my teaching in the areas of sociology and women's studies have all been affected by and in turn often contribute to my feminism. My political awakenings in this area and others were stimulated by my early sociological discoveries and it is fair to say that the evening I signed on for that night class changed my life. I have studied and written of issues that are close to my own experience: demonstrated not least by an undergraduate study of miscarriage, doctoral research on the experience (predominantly women's) of 'infertility' and 'involuntary childlessness' and a growing interest in working and learning in higher education[1]. Whilst politically committed to all of these concerns I have discovered that they are not necessarily the best areas through which to make (sociological) friends and influence people. Yet, I stubbornly pursue these interests and feel critical of others who 'cop out' if the issues that they feel politically drawn to are not academic 'flavour of the month'. (Gayle, 1999)

For all of us though things are somewhat different now:

> My position has changed radically since 1999. In July 2004 I had to retire, reluctantly, at the age of 65. I count myself lucky to have a part-time hours contract, so that I can still teach and work with our research centre. In 2002 I was elected as a local district and town councillor. This gives me the opportunity to work directly on local homelessness, housing policy, economic development, and other issues.
>
> However, it has been very important to me to be in regular contact with the university and my colleagues and to be able to participate in the same sorts of intellectual efforts as before. Work with shape and purpose is very important to me. The whole madness of Quality Audit and the grindingly purposeless administration has a lesser impact on me in my new semi-detached position and I pity my colleagues as I see them physically fade during the year under the administration and teaching heel, while they comment on how healthy and energetic I look. I teach and lead an undergraduate module that I have always enjoyed as I find the social work students responsive and dynamically interested in the area of social policy. I do some other teaching and I am involved in some research work within the university with the Centre for Social Justice.
>
> I have been surprised to find that I actually miss the level of analysis in discussion which is there in academic day-to-day interchange. The surprise is because I didn't notice it while at work full-time. Like many others I frequently regretted that there never seemed to be time to engage in anything but the most perfunctory 'chat'. In actual fact, we had made an increasing amount of time available to ourselves for formal discussion in seminars over the last few years – and the type of 'chat' is quite different in academic settings from elsewhere. (Maureen, 2005)
>
> I still work in the same institution but no longer in the School of Social Sciences. There have been a number of permutations regarding names and sociology has been relocated in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and, latterly, in the Faculty of Arts, Media and Design. This latest change is, in some ways, the strangest not least because I would guess that there are not many sociologists in the country teaching on sociology degrees located in such a faculty. My job has also had a number of permutations. I have filled the role of Award Tutor, Field Tutor and am

now an Awards Manager. I have helped develop an award in women's studies, led that award for a number of years and, eventually, seen it withdrawn. Along with my colleagues, I have 'reinvented' myself a number of times to meet the demands of my institution, first as a lecturer in women's studies, then as a lecturer in crime and deviance and latterly, as a lecturer in mentoring. Teaching and pastoral support of students has been a continuing focus, juggled with increasing management responsibilities. At the same time, I have struggled to maintain a research profile and have contributed to successive rounds of the Research Assessment Exercise. My professional relationship with Gayle was enhanced when we undertook the joint-Chair of the Women in Higher Education Network. This provided an opportunity to promote women's interests more widely through the organisation of WHEN conferences, workshops and publications. (Pam, 2005)

I am in a very different position now to the one I was in 1999. Between 1999 and 2005 there were many changes for me at Coventry. With others, I mourned the demise of women's studies as a degree at Coventry, helped develop and teach on a degree in criminology and become more involved in teaching and supervising masters and doctoral students. In 2001 I was appointed as Deputy Director of the Centre for Social Justic., In the spring of 2003 I was awarded an internal Readership and alongside these two new roles I undertook a three-year stint as Associate Head of Subject (with a short period as Acting Head).

Over these six years I continued to teach and managed a much higher administrative load than I ever envisaged having responsibility for. During this time, my role with the Centre for Social Justice and my Readership afforded my research a legitimacy that I welcomed. As well as continuing with my own (individual and joint) writing and research projects, from 200I began to win monies to undertake research within the local communities on issues such as the experience and support needs of young parents, the needs of foster carers and women and children's experience of domestic violence.

Although I have always engaged with my discipline and research interests externally my responsibilities and relationships outside of the institution have increased considerably not least in relation to external examining, professional organisation committee membership and study visits in the UK and abroad. In addition, in October 2005 I started a new job as Professor of Sociology at the University of Plymouth. (Gayle, 2005)

MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Adapting to Institutional Change

As noted throughout this volume and elsewhere many changes in higher education in the last couple of decades have been related less to knowledge production and pedagogy than to ideological and market concerns (e.g. Epstein, 1995; Goode and Bagilhole, 1998; Letherby and Shiels, 2001). The entrepreneurial trend has affected

working and learning conditions and has consequences for staff and students not least in that the result has been more students but no more staff. As Pam states in her original story:

> Higher education has changed enormously since I was appointed in 1992. Colleagues have witnessed modularisation, semesterisation and expansion of the numbers of students entering universities. Mass education has not been supported by a corresponding injection of human and material resources to cope with inevitable problems and demands. Within many institutions the need to do 'more for less' has resulted in innovatory responses to teaching and learning with a shift towards distant learning packages and new technology 'learning spaces'. Whilst there is value in these innovations, the impact of this approach has changed the quality of our professional relationship with students.
>
> Higher education is also driven by 'quality assurance'. This involves lecturers in paper trails which require that every area of the work is recorded. Administrative demands increase in consort with the number of forms to be filled in, submitted and filed. Modules and degrees must be monitored carefully to meet government requirements on standards and benchmarking. It is difficult to see how these endeavours improve the students' experience. (Pam, 1999)

Like other writers in the area we would suggest that the impact on staff is gendered in that women academics are much more likely to be challenged by students (and colleagues) especially when concerned with feminist issues (e.g. Webber, 2005; Lee, 2005). Yet, at the same time women academics suffer from expectations that they, like women in general, are seen as responsible for others' emotional needs where men are not (e.g. James, 1989; Perriton, 1999; Letherby and Shiels, 2001). Despite this, teaching and other work with students is something that we have all found valuable. We are each committed to education as an empowering life-changing experience and not just the means to a qualification and feel frustrated by changes and demands that hinder this:

> I have always been glad that I worked in the sector of higher education which has broadened the possibilities of working class people and minorities, but I have increasingly felt limits might exist to this development and perhaps that they should. Some of the students entering the university in the last few years show little intellectual curiosity. There are also very few mature students coming in on non-vocational courses. I must say I miss them. (Maureen,1999)
>
> In theory I support wider participation and access but extra students bring with them more teaching and more emotional work and in the current managerial climate much more tedious bureaucracy as we are encouraged to demonstrate that we have completed the 'quality loop'. (Gayle, 1999)

Even though widening participation and the lifelong learning agendas might appear at first glance to support each other in practical ways, the widening participation generation (who of course are also affected by the higher education as product mentality) includes many more individuals whose personal agenda is not necessary to learn but to get the qualification they need. Furthermore, lifelong

learning is accessible and useful only to those who are aiming to enhance their employability as funding changes have virtually ended adult education in many areas (NIACE, 2002; Jackson, 2004). This of course has implications for lifelong learning in the lives of older people. Older people's forums have all been concerned about what has happened to adult education – much of which has disappeared and the rest of which is very expensive, even with concessions given to those on state retirement pensions. Adult education was affected by the central government drive to make all 'education' fit a system of points and exams and qualifications. An Indian cookery course that Maureen attended was abolished the following year as it did not lead to a certificate, diploma or degree. It did not have adequate educational objectives and was not adequately theorised or evaluated.

Personal and Political Working Experiences

To varying degrees our original stories demonstrate the relationship between our politics, our biographies and our research interests. Our 1999 accounts demonstrate that although we were each committed to what we did we sometimes felt that our achievements did not always meet our motivations and expectations or indeed the expectations of us both within and outside the academy. For example:

> As we all know academic life is far from the 'ivory' haven it's cracked up to be, not least in relation to the actual amount of time we each spend working, and home is often a work space too. Meeting the challenge of the three headed monster of administration, teaching and research makes it hard at times to maintain a sense of 'real life'. Ironic really since academia is often not given the credit of being a 'real world' occupation.
>
> Coming to higher education as an 'accidental tourist' with no particular ambitions I do feel privileged to be able to spend so much time thinking about issues that concern me so much. Also, having been empowered by my own academic experience I hope that the research and teaching work I do helps a little to empower and stimulate others. (Gayle, 1999)
>
> I think that the coincidence of my reaching my late 50s and so finding other jobs closed to me coupled with the widespread changes in higher education and the greater formalisation of what an academic career is have made work life problematic for me. I do not aim to retire until I am forced to: at 65. Sometimes I regret moving into higher education, though it is not without its rewards. There is no doubt that I find it hurtful that my skills and experience have been ignored very largely, because I do not meet the new and absolute requirements of academia. Were I younger I would have been able to get out and go back to campaigning work or something else which would have met my personal value needs. I tried in my mid-50s, but even though applying for two separate jobs with large voluntary organisations with strong campaigning credentials, where I met all their criteria very well, my age even by then probably did not help – and in both sets of interviews the questioning at certain points suggested that I had been living in an ivory tower and may have lost contact with the real world! (Maureen, 1999)

What we did all share and feel positive about though is the feeling that the work we were doing was important to our identities and not just a way of filling the time and/or earning the money to maintain the rest of our lives. With respect to the future we envisaged some differences. Maureen expected to retire from Coventry and Pam, owing to personal circumstances and commitments, did not wish to leave the Staffordshire area whereas Gayle aware that her 'career-clock' was ticking did not envisage the rest of her working life at Coventry. Clearly our differences in age intersected with our gender and our intellectual and political motivations and expectations in these predictions.

AGE, GENERATION AND GENDER

Clearly, we are conscious of the intersection of age and gender to our experience. As Meg Maguire (1996: 27) notes:

> A variety of explanations have been generated to account for the persistence of female subordination in the workspace, from patriarchal relations to capitalism to the gendered nature of work itself. One manifestation of this is vertical and horizontal occupational segregation, where women doing similar work to men are more likely to be classified as doing unskilled work and where men in the same occupation are more likely to be managers. Another outcome is the positioning of women as a 'reserve army' able to move in and out of employment as economic need arises. In occupations which are traditionally feminized areas of labour, such as education, discourses of maternity (as well as passivity) are employed to constrain and regulate the work of women. While there are a variety of factors which are utilised, sometimes in isolation and sometimes in tandem with other oppression, to ensure the subordination of women (at work and elsewhere), there is an additional need to focus on the issues of age in relation to unequal relations for women and between women in paid employment.

As Maguire and others (e.g. Trowler, 1998; Anderson and Williams, 2001; Morley, 2003; Cotterill and Letherby, 2005) argue women who work in higher education 'are concentrated in subordinate positions with an occupation which is organised and managed by dominant male workers from the same occupational class and education background' (Maguire, 1996: 27–28). Men are much more likely to hold higher positions – both administratively (e.g. head of department and dean) and in relation to research (reader, professor, director of research centre) and conversely women are much more likely to hold short-term contracts and to be located in areas that are considered 'softer' and have less status: i.e. administration and pastoral care rather than research and publications. In addition women are often not even credited with the status they deserve. As Gayle wrote in 1999:

> Men who don't have doctorates are often 'given them' and are often asked for by title and family name whereas women are often de-doctored and asked for by first name only. Personally I have

> often been called 'love' or 'dear' by the men and women that I teach and on one infamous occasion a female colleague was addressed by one male student as 'Babe'.

We recognise of course that women are not a homogeneous group and that it is necessary to consider different experiences with respect to class, ethnicity, sexuality etc. which can further add to the marginalisation of women in the academy (e.g. Morley and Walsh, 1995; Morley and Walsh, 1996; Anderson and Williams, 2001; Howie and Trauchert, 2002). As three white able-bodied heterosexual women we acknowledge the privilege that these aspects of our identity bring but whereas Maureen feels that other influences have cancelled out the significance of her financially and culturally privileged 'middle-class' upbringing there are times when Pam and Gayle still feel surprised or even vulnerable as 'working class girls done good'. Other 'differences' between us such as our different (and changing) statuses as mother or not; political activist; paid worker or 'retired' person are relevant to the way we position ourselves and are positioned both within and outside the academy. Yet, for us gender and age remain the most important influences on our experience.

Like Maguire we would argue that the experience of older women is compounded by ageism and sexism analytically and materially and like her we are also interested to consider when does a woman become an 'older' woman and more specifically when does a woman in higher education become 'past it'. Re-reading our 1999 stories we note that we each wrote about the ways in which women are viewed and valued differently in the academy by students, colleagues and management and in various situations we have each felt taken for granted as reliable, steady workers and passed over for 'bright young things' both male and female. This is relevant both in relation to internal promotion and to jobs in other academic institutions and elsewhere indicating perhaps the threat that 'older' women represent. If older women were in fact weak and ineffective they would pose little threat. Older women with the experience that comes from age are contenders for dominant positions specifically in higher education and more generally in wider society. This alone explains their marginalisation and attacks on their status (Maguire 1996).

However, we are aware that it is important not to over state the case. As Celia Davies and Penny Holloway (1995: 17) argue:

> Universities at present are not comfortable places for academics of either sex. The pace of changes and the accompanying intensification of work have made sure of that. But we would do well not to ally ourselves completely with those who set their faces totally against the new regime and hark back to a golden age of freedom and collegiality. To do this would be to ignore the disadvantages that the gender regime entailed. There is a potential, and we put it at no more than that, for a new and more inclusive debate to be had in the contemporary vocabulary of goals, missions, strategies and performance. To the extent that there are growing numbers of women in strategic places in Higher Education, to the extent that students are giving positive feedback for the work that women do, and to the extent that the new feminist scholarship is

> enlivening and rejuvenating us, so we may find the energies to seize the opportunities presented by the new regime and to struggle against the ever present danger of deeper entrenchment of sex inequality in Higher Education.

In addition just as it may be difficult to define just when a woman becomes 'old and past it' it is also difficult to determine when she stops being seen as 'young and silly'. Although, maturity confers wisdom on men 'naturally' this does not appear to be the case for women (for a similar discussion see Coleman, 1990; Bernard and Meade, 1993). Having said this there are opportunities for women working in the academy in the twenty-first century that were not available even ten/fifteen years ago. As Louise Morley (2003) notes, the move to the quality audit culture within higher education has opened up some opportunities for women, mostly in the administrative management areas rather than in the traditional areas of teaching and research. There is however a contrast between the speed of the changes and the slowness of gendered change in universities and much of the debate focusing on gender equity and higher education takes place within high-income countries (Morley 2005). New opportunities bring new challenges as Pam's 2005 account demonstrates:

> Although I am older, in terms of agility I seem to be more able as I have certainly climbed a little way up the greasy pole. This is more by accident than design. In 2001 my line manger (so called) was appointed to a senior position in the Faculty leaving his job vacant. I was asked to take his place but the conditions were not favourable. This was not a promotion and there was no opportunity to apply for the principal lectureship which he had held. After some thought, I agreed to take the post on a job share basis with a colleague. I felt that this was the best option because, at least, it semi-formalised a role which I expected I and my colleague would undertake informally as a consequence of no one else being willing to take it on. To her credit, the Dean did secure an honorarium for both of us for the duration of the post.
>
> This job lasted rather longer than the two years originally envisaged and finally came to an end in January 2005. This was the result of further structural and managerial changes within the university and towards the end of a difficult period where faculties and departments had been 'at risk' and a number of colleagues had left voluntarily or had been made compulsorily redundant. As part of the 'restructuring, new positions in Award Management were created and I was appointed to one of these on a temporary, two year, principal lecturer contract. This is my current position. The work involves responsibility for the delivery of a number of awards and the management of staff and resources. It builds on experience gained in the past and draws on strengths I had from 'being good at paper work' and 'being good with students'. It is early days but, so far, the job is enjoyable and rewarding but more demanding than previous ones particularly with regard to 'people work'. I am fortunate in that I believe I have the support and goodwill of most of my colleagues but, even so, I have learned very quickly that I need more than the usual amounts of tact and diplomacy if I am to avoid the pitfalls of 'human resource management'.

It is also possible for women to succeed within the 'publish or perish' research world but research promotions like administrative promotions impact upon one's ability to maintain a personal and social life outside of the academy. The culture of working too many hours each day and, indeed, the necessity to do so if real success is to be attained within the academy, continue the imbalance of gender at `the top' given that women are more likely to be carrying the 'double-burdens' of labour at home and at work. Government policy, stimulated by EU directive, is to promote work/life balance, but employers will only take this seriously when they are faced by legal challenge. For universities as employers, this practice is, perhaps, particularly difficult to change.

Furthermore, as Colleen Chesterman *et al.* (2005) note gender is significant at all levels of the hierarchy. Chesterman *et al.* discuss the experience of senior women executives in Australian universities and their impact on management cultures and strategies. Significant issues include discrimination encountered and resistance to gendered ideologies which work against women's opportunities for promotion and the authors explore traits of reticence and ambivalence which contribute to women's reluctance to apply for senior positions. They conclude that overcoming this reluctance is a significant problem for universities if they are to take seriously the challenge of shifting male-dominated management roles. On the other hand as women with experience of an immediate working environment where, despite the male character of the university and its hierarchy, sexism is challenged to some extent, spending more time in the 'real world' can be a bit of a shock as Maureen has recently found whilst becoming more involved in Labour Party local politics:

> Conservative, Labour and Independent men have distinguished themselves in various instances in discussion – showing the strong survival of highly stereotyped views of women as 'silly' (frequently used of women in other party groups) 'do-lally', incapable, etc. By far the most common epithet is 'silly'. 'Silly woman' should really be the words to describe the human female for so many men councillors of my acquaintance still.
>
> Chairing my party group, I asked for someone to take the minutes and asked for it not to be a woman (in fact there are very few women, but I could feel movement from both sides of me about to offer – the two other women). I was then told by one of my male colleagues that this was against the law and he could take me to court for it. Comrades all!
>
> In one Social Scrutiny Group meeting, when we were discussing putting into effect the Council's latest Equality and Diversity policy, I commented that it was a pity that as groups of councillors we were not more representative of our population: 'for instance, there are very few women councillors'.
>
> An opposition councillor reared up in his seat, pointing his finger at me and shouted: 'Don't you dare say that I don't represent all my residents! I've spent 20 years representing my residents'. I did ask him how he was going to work to put into genuine effect the policy that we were just approving, but he did not bother to reply.

> Not only do I find entrenched chauvinism and sexism in male political colleagues, but I've found the same in organisations of older people that I have been involved with either as a researcher or as a participant. The men stick with their old prejudices, and some of the women too. (Maureen, 2005)

Despite, perhaps even because of, our gender and age and our experience of male hierarchies inside the institution and outside of it we have achieved many of our intellectual and political goals. Yet, our own experience of lifelong learning, both within and beyond the academy, remains ongoing.

FRIENDSHIP AND COLLABORATIONS

Several writers working in the area of higher education have written about the importance of networks. For example as Barbara Bagilhole (1994: 27) argues:

> The route for women must be strategically planned; 'if it is not possible to do so the route is probably not through publishing more, or even through doing 'better' research, but through personal contacts, friendships, correspondence, visits, conferences, seminars, and co-operative work with key actors' (Delamont, 1989: 260). Weston entreats us all to 'remember and remind our successful women colleagues not to pull the ladder up after them' (1993: 7). Since institutional structures are slow to change and women at the moment do not appear to be encouraged to full participation in the academic profession, one strategy is to 'bore from within and to work on informal levels of the organisation' (Nichols et al 1995). This is not to ignore institutional responsibility for the support and retention of women.

With reference to our experiences the relationships we have with each other and with other like-minded women (and men) help to sustain and enrich us. As Pam wrote in 1999:

> Although we [Pam and Gayle] work in different universities, our work experiences are similar and we also write and publish together as often as we can. We also try to be around for each other and, through the mediums of e-mail and telephone, provide one another with support and sympathy when needed. Our collaborative work is an essential part of our relationship and, although it is often put on the 'back burner' in the face of other, more immediate demands, we have always managed to find space to continue. A further, more recent, bonus has been the opportunity to forge links with other colleagues at Coventry, through Gayle. I have become a regular, if infrequent visitor to Coventry and have given two or three papers there in recent years. I have always been greeted warmly by colleagues at Coventry and now look upon it as a 'safe space' to try out new ideas before seeking a wider audience. (Pam, 1999)

Things change though and Pam and Gayle's move into management positions have of course impacted on their relationship with colleagues and friends. Whereas, Pam and Gayle value the support they could give each other during their 'transition to management' individually they have each struggled with maintaining their

political principles whilst at the same time 'getting the job done'. Maureen, however, was unhappy about some of Gayle's early management behaviour and worried that their friendship could not survive. Together and with others we explored these tensions and our individual practice and managed to find reconciliations. Despite the problems we have had our individual and group friendship add to the work we do because as well as providing support it offers (safe) challenge and critique and has introduced each of us to issues that we would otherwise not have considered. Maureen writes in 2005:

> It is difficult to generalise from our particular situations for as, of course, particular personalities can be crucial. For me, Gayle's generosity of spirit has been extremely important in our friendship and collaboration. I remained nervous about attempting to write and publish as I had entered academia late in life, but with a background of our friendship, my working in collaboration with Gayle, who was so much more successful and experienced at it, was liberating for me. Gayle has been keen to see others obtain the enjoyment and satisfaction that she has from academic writing – setting up writing groups and workshops for those interested. She did not guard her time and experience only for herself, but was always the instigator of our joint work.
>
> One example of our three-way working friendship is this paper.

Collaboration of any kind helps give a voice to individuals with different experiences and demonstrates the influences that shape individual life choices and lifecourses. Feminist collaborative writing does all of this as well as replacing the isolation of working alone with the empowerment that comes from mutual support (Bagilhole, 1994; Kerman, 1995; Cotterill and Letherby, 1997). There is of course much evidence that some women disassociate themselves from women and feminism in order to try and do well (e.g. Bagilhole, 1994; Morrison, Bourke and Kelley, 2005; Cummins, 2005) but we would suggest that although working together takes effort and compromise at times the rewards it brings are obvious: personally, politically and theoretically.

THINKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Some women compete within the academic system on its terms, attempting to attain success via research ratings, publications, committee memberships, delivering conference papers and so on. Some women dedicate their lives to challenging the system and traditional definitions of knowledge. Most feminist women probably find themselves falling somewhere between these categories, making compromises and struggling with the inevitable contradictions encountered by feminists working in higher education (Gray 1994: 78). We feel that this piece demonstrates that although there are differences between us we feel part of this third group. In 1999 we reflected on our (then) past and present experience:

In all the jobs I had previously I was promoted and I expected that this would happen again. Then came the removal of the polytechnics from the local authorities followed by the conferral of 'university' status upon them. At the same time as these changes began so came the managerialist approach. The men were firmly established and their career pattern was established with them. The expectation, as we all know, is that women will have led male lives, with male timespans and freedoms. A history like mine fits neither this male history nor the latest expectations of which people can pursue an academic career. (Maureen, 1999)

Looking back, my work history seems to be one where I have chosen a pathway because all the others seem less attractive. I came into higher education as a mature student not because I was fired by a burning sense of injustice that I never had the opportunity to shine; I was never that sure of myself. Rather, I came to higher education simply because I couldn't bear to be a secretary any longer. I registered for a PhD not because I was driven to do research but because I did not want to return to the nine 'til five routine of paid work. I was tenacious in securing my present post only because I did not want to move away from home, relatives and friends. On reflection, therefore, it is clear that my academic career is marked by a lamentable lack of ambition, and yet this does not concern me as much as it might or perhaps should. Breaking through the glass ceiling can leave you treading fearfully across an unsafe floor. Although I have neither the desire nor the agility to climb the greasy pole, I still find much to celebrate in a job which, with all its dimensions, continues to enrich my life. (Pam, 1999)

So what of the next 20 years or so? This question has been foremost in my mind recently since someone I hadn't seen for a while asked me if I was 'still at Coventry' I find that I do have ambition and hope in the future to be able to spend more time on research and writing and also hope that my work will continue to make at least a few people think differently. Yet having celebrated my fortieth birthday I appreciate that I am in competition with people of my own age with more experience and those who are younger who are likely to be considered to have greater potential at possibly cheaper cost. Added to this I am also aware of how my sex, my interests and my political commitments may not always!!! work in my favour. (Gayle, 1999)

So, where are we now?

I see my life as continuing in a pattern of community activity and involvement. But I might get fed up with it all, resign from everything and cultivate my garden. At the moment, that would still feel like the antechamber of death. Being a Labour councillor at the moment is one of the most stark examples in my life of having to consciously compromise and 'allow for it', etc. Yet I wish to challenge, I do challenge, but with less expectation of effect. (Maureen, 2005)

I still do not think I am especially ambitious and when I look back on my career, I am rather surprised at the turns it has taken. When I completed my PhD and secured my first permanent post, I did not expect to end up as a manager. Indeed, I expected to teach and research, write and publish. I have done all these things but research has been on the periphery and administration and management more central. Looking back, I cannot waste time on regrets but I am a little saddened that I have not had more space for the more creative aspects of academic life.

> Nevertheless, academia has served me well. Yes, it has changed beyond anything I might have envisaged at the beginning of my career but I am still here and cannot now, as in the past, think of anything I want to do more. (Pam, 2005)

> Recently, I've felt as if my work has crowded out other aspects of my life and identity and I've been making an effort to 'do other things' and feel fulfilled in other ways. Yet, I also acknowledge that I do have 'ambition' both in terms of the impact of the research I do and in terms of my own career. This is reflected in my applying and being appointed to a Chair in another university which no doubt will bring new challenges and rewards. (Gayle, 2005)

All of this of course leads us to reflect further on the status of work and ambition for women both within and beyond the boundaries of traditional working lifecourse expectations. Our reflexive consideration of our own and each other's experience of age and generation in the academy will likely speak to other single and joint accounts within higher education – both in the UK and elsewhere – and to women's struggles more generally in both domestic and professional contexts. We remain concerned and interested in the relationship feminism will have within and on the academy in the future. We could also reflect further on issues of praxis at grass-roots level and within the academy and unexpected lifecourse choices and experiences. But that's for another paper. For now and in conclusion and despite the differences between us the thing that unites us most (at least in the context of this chapter) is that fact that we are all concerned to maintain the voice of feminism in the academy. The differences in age between us are negated by our shared place in a generation of academic feminism.

NOTES

[1] Gayle writes 'infertility' and 'involuntary childlessness' in single quotation marks to highlight the problems of definition.

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Chapter 10

IMAGING 'CAREER'

Part-time Working, Full-time Living

Jan Sellers
University of Kent

INTRODUCTION

Let me ask you this. Here you are, reading this; here am I, earlier, writing. How did you get to this place and this point in your life? What are the career pathways, the accidents and strategies that have brought you and me together at this moment? I will tell you part of my story in this chapter, and part of the stories of others; in doing so, I invite you to reflect on your own. What are the images, the metaphors, you use to picture your own life history, or that aspect of it called 'career'?

The concept of 'career' may be used to relate to employment alone, or have wider implications. How does this concept relate to part-time, hourly paid workers in the academic hierarchy? In this chapter I discuss 'career development' and review a wide range of metaphorical images of 'career'. This discussion is grounded in research by others on women's role in the labour market and women's working lives, showing the complexity of most women's careers in relation to those of men. I draw on my own biography and those of respondents from my doctoral research: women who have worked as part-time, hourly paid lecturers in continuing education programmes within further, adult and higher education institutions.

The women on whose work I focus have insecure, temporary, term-time only contracts, in posts often described as 'visiting lecturers', 'associate lecturers' or 'sessional tutors'. They frequently work for more than one employer in roles including teaching, outreach, centre management, development work and educational support – all on similar, insecure contracts. Though the posts are temporary, there is often considerable continuity of work, and some part-time lecturers are employed for many years. This 'temporary' workforce makes a crucial contribution to lifelong learning throughout the post-compulsory and higher

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education sectors. Examples in this chapter illustrate the rich complexity of these women's working lives, and draw specifically on those with experience of work as part-time lecturers in the HE continuing education context. Their commitments and responsibilities include multiple employment; the care of children, elders and others; voluntary, creative and political activism; education, training and research. This diversity contributes to experience and abilities in women workers that are insufficiently acknowledged, let alone sought after, by those involved in recruitment and staff management.

I am most grateful to the participants in my research, who were generous with their time and reflections as they completed questionnaires. To maintain anonymity, some details have been changed. Part-time work with the Open University, because of its different contractual nature, has not been included in this research. For clarity, I have used the term 'visiting lecturer' to refer to hourly paid, sessional tutors and visiting/associate lecturers unless otherwise indicated.

WOMEN'S CAREERS AND THE VISITING LECTURER

Factors influencing women's career development (and that of men, though not necessarily in the same way) include discrimination on grounds of race; gender; age and disability, including the multiple discrimination experienced by black and Asian women (Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe, 1985; Gutek and Larwood, 1987; Bruegel, 1994; and others). Other powerful influences include the economic climate; the impact of class, culture and family aspirations; education and regional opportunities. Women are more likely than men to work part-time; to hold temporary posts; to take a leading role in parenting and the care of elders; and to relocate owing to their partner's change of job. As a result, women's career patterns have been shown to be considerably more complex than those of men, as highlighted in quantitative and qualitative research by Teresa Rees (1992); Shirley Dex (1984, 1987); Catherine Hakim (1996); Shirley Dex and Andrew McCulloch (1997); Rosemary Crompton (1997); Julia Evetts (2000) and many others. In some respects, the extent of the differences between women's careers and those of men may be changing as employment generally becomes less secure; some male careers are now moving towards the complex and fragmented state long familiar to women (Handy, 1995; Dex and McCulloch, 1997).

Internationally, there has been a rise in part-time employment, illustrated, for example, in Trish McOrmond's comparison of the UK with Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US (2004); and Mark Smith, Colette Fagan and Jill Rubery's discussion of the increase in part-time work across Europe (1998). Education is a traditional field for the employment of women; within this field, visiting lecturers form a substantial body of staff, a phenomenon echoed in a number of other developed countries (Bryson, 2005: 5). These workers are engaged through

choice or circumstance in 'flexible employment': employment that is temporary, term-time only and often involving few hours per contract (Thurman and Trah, 1990; Dex and McCulloch, 1997).

Research on the experiences of visiting lecturers, though not common, was more prevalent in adult and further education than in higher education until recently. Initially, such research focused on the education and training of visiting lecturers (Graham *et al.*, 1982; Foden, 1992). Jane Andrews and Cecilia McKelvey examine the motivation and experiences of new and trainee FE lecturers, including those taking up roles in adult education (1998, 1999). Ann Jackson (1998) and Clive Pearson (2002a, 2002b) explore strategies for staff development in relation to visiting lecturers. Terms and conditions of employment of all part-time teaching staff in HE, other than those in fractional posts, are explored by Christopher Husbands and Annette Davies (2000) who find sufficient variety to create a nine-fold typology of part-time contracts. Derek Betts (2000) and Liz Allen (2001) give valuable reviews of the experiences of part-time FE and HE staff, including visiting lecturers; my own work illustrates the experiences of women visiting lecturers in adult and continuing education (Sellers, 1998, 2001) and in adult basic education (1995a). Colin Bryson and Tracy Scurry explore the impact on the individual of temporary, fragmented careers in HE (2002). Janet Powney *et al.* (2003) explore equality issues in HE staff recruitment, development and promotion, with considerable reference to the experiences of visiting lecturers. Elizabeth Walker *et al.* (2000) and Frances Rothwell (2002) consider management implications in relation to part-time staff in FE, including visiting lecturers. The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education makes a valuable contribution in describing the difficult employment conditions of visiting lecturers who are agency workers (NATFHE, 2002).[1]

The marginalisation of hourly paid teaching staff in HE is evidenced by, and reflected in, a lack of data. The research paper *UK Academic Staff Casualisation 1994–95 to 2000–01* (Association of University Teachers, 2002) is based on data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency that specifically excludes staff on less than a 25% (of full-time) contract, and therefore excludes many of the most casualised staff.[1] Colin Bryson's 'Working in Higher Education Survey' specifically excluded hourly paid staff 'because their employers could not identify them' (2004a: 195). Two further reports by Bryson focus specifically on visiting lecturers in HE. The first arises from the Part-time Teachers Initiative, a collaboration between the Learning and Teaching Support Network Generic Centre and the Higher Education Staff Development Agency (2004b). The second is a NATFHE report, *Hiring Lecturers by the Hour: The Case for Change in Higher Education* (2005).[1] Bryson presents detailed and timely considerations of the management and development of visiting lecturers, and urges the need for change, arguing that more secure employment for visiting lecturers will benefit staff, students and employers alike. Though there are examples of good practice, these and earlier studies have found that visiting lecturers suffer from poor

management. Common experiences, also reported by many respondents in my own research, include restricted access to career and educational development opportunities; a lack of integration into academic departments and teams; poor information flow; an expectation of undertaking unpaid work such as participation in meetings; and the insecurity arising from temporary employment, often due to short-term approaches to planning at departmental level.

Liz Stanley (1990: 7–8), discussing the sexual division of academic labour within universities, notes that 'within teaching in particular, women are many fewer in absolute terms than men in most disciplines, and are concentrated at lower points in the hierarchy (very few full professors, not many senior lecturers, more lecturers, more temporary lecturers)'. Visiting lecturers are at the foot of this employment hierarchy. Jean Gardiner and Rebecca O'Rourke (1998: 38–9), in their study of women's career development in the Department of Adult Continuing Education (DACE) at one university, note that:

> The success of DACE in surviving the cuts and policy changes of the 1980s and 1990s was largely based on the shift of full-time staff from teachers to programme managers and the increased proportion of teaching done by part-time tutors, about half of whom are women. Part-time tutors have no job security and every appointment is conditional on adequate recruitment of students. By comparison even part-time lecturers on fixed-term contracts feel privileged.

Change is inevitable: recent legislative developments in the European Union concerning employment and equality issues have begun to have a profound impact on the employment of hourly paid, part-time staff throughout the HE and FE sectors. These include the EU Part-time Work Regulations (2000) and the EU Fixed Term Work Regulations (2002). The implications of these for HE in the UK are explored by Bryson (2005). At the time of writing, it is possible that the employment rights of many visiting lecturers in HE will be substantially improved, with transfers to fractional appointments and indefinite, rather than fixed-term, contracts. A recent example is Westminster University (Demopoulos, 2005). On the other hand, there is the risk of universities and colleges turning to agency employment; and of the loss of work as the availability of sessional work diminishes (Sellers, 2001; Bryson, 2004a). All of these factors have come into play in recent years in FE, and the use of agencies has had a particularly damaging impact on staff (NATFHE, 2002).[1]

(PART OF) MY STORY

My own career is no exception to the complexity outlined above. My working life has a common thread of education and guidance, linking a variety of jobs – paid and unpaid, full-time and part-time, permanent and temporary. I have worked as a careers adviser in Lancashire; as a project worker and training organiser in the voluntary sector, in Los Angeles and in London; as a visiting lecturer, and a

community education administrator and organiser; and, since 1993, as co-ordinator of the Student Learning Advisory Service at the University of Kent, teaching and developing student learning support.

This occupational list is curriculum vitae material, a career snapshot. I could describe it very differently. It presents one picture and obscures others: no reference here to lower status work, the tea-lady and the typist, and work at the fish-and-chip shop in Kendal when I dropped out of university for a while. There are other stories missing: a family history, an autobiography, stories of friendship networks, of creativity and of learning. It can be argued that we all have multiple and parallel 'careers' of which paid work is only one facet (Tight, 1997).

My 'learning story' begins with childhood in London and undergraduate studies in Cardiff, as the first member of my extended family to go to university; a connection here to a family story, linking work and class and opportunity and history together. There are major boundary stones along the journey: vocational qualifications in guidance and in education, and a PhD in Continuing Education completed in 2001. These boundary stones are markers of increased confidence and autonomy as a learner (Bron-Wojciechowska, 1995: 17). Other, less formal events relating to work and study also turned out to be significant points of change. These include the decision in 1989 to reduce my working hours in order to spend more time writing poetry; the study of poetry and poetry writing at residential centres run by the Arvon Foundation; a postgraduate research skills module at Kent; becoming a student of the Chantraine Dance of Expression in 2002.[2] These experiences have informed and transformed different aspects of my life, not least my work as teacher and adviser in HE. Part of the learning story, for me, is to identify the moments of epiphany: the moments when I made (make; will make) a breakthrough in understanding, a breakthrough transforming my knowledge of, and relationship to, the subject matter and often reshaping my sense of self as a learner.

Other times of change have been initiated by times of personal crisis or difficulty (health, relationships, deaths in the family); by external circumstances (redundancy; government policy) and by all manner of incidents – happenchance, serendipity, even red tape. These are not the stories appearing in a traditional account of a career, but to make time for such stories strengthens our shared understanding of the intricate patterns shaping our working lives. This approach has been explored in considerable depth by Bettina Aptheker (1989), problematising the concept of 'dailiness' to explore the richness of women's lives; I draw on some aspects of her work below.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Spoken and written languages are rich in imagery. As part of everyday discourse, we use metaphor and simile to illuminate and illustrate dialogue. The choices we make to describe careers, working lives or occupational development are not neutral but

are associated with the same value choices that govern other uses of language. Miriam David and Diana Woodward 1998: 4) note that:

> Moves towards personal reflections and evaluations of work and careers have been a continuing development in the last five to ten years within the social sciences. Indeed, some sociologists have now argued the importance of 'reflexivity' as part of the key changes in social life generally towards the end of the 20th century

My research draws deeply on 'personal reflections and evaluations of work and careers', as recorded in questionnaires by women reflecting on their working lives as visiting lecturers. I took up work of this nature myself in conjunction with other, more secure employment. When the 'secure' post was made redundant in 1990, I was glad to be able to scrape a living in adult education. In team meetings, at the coffee counter and the photocopier, and struggling with book bags in remote car parks late at night, I got to know a host of committed and talented visiting lecturers. These colleagues were making a very considerable contribution to local and lifelong learning. This experience, as I – like others – juggled part-time commitments to make a living through a collection of contracts, inspired my choice of doctoral research topic, in deciding to consider the 'career patterns' of women part-time adult educators.

I devised a six-page questionnaire which was eventually completed by 174 women in different parts of the country, current and former visiting lecturers who have worked for a wide range of employers. The questionnaire was itself an experiment in gathering qualitative, as well as quantitative, data: the information given by these respondents included highly reflective analyses on their part, in reviewing their careers. (The potential for questionnaires in enabling such reflection has also been noted by Colin Bryson and Robert Harvey (2000) and by Frances Rothwell (2002).) Drawing on these responses, I used qualitative data analysis software (QSR Nud*IST) to explore their accounts.[3] I also conducted more detailed analyses of the working lives of 72 respondents. Though my research has focused on women in adult and continuing education, my findings also contribute to understanding of the careers of women and men in any insecure educational post, and to the literature on women's part-time work and on specific spheres of employment.

THE LANGUAGE OF CAREERS

Malcolm Tight (1997: 22–4) provides a useful summary of definitions of 'career'. These include 'the pattern of work-related experiences that span the course of a person's life' (Thomson and Mabey, 1994); 'that trajectory through life which each person undergoes, the activities he or she engages in to satisfy physical needs and wants and the even more important social needs and wants' (Goldschmidt, 1990);

careers as 'journeys and routes' and 'stories to be told [about these journeys] ... and there is a need to weave into the story elements which show the storyteller as an active participant in determining their direction' (Nicholson and West, 1988). These definitions range from the specific (work-related pattern; activity engaged in) to the imaginative and reflective (story and storyteller) and from the present tense to the past, introducing the idea that a career can only be defined (even shaped and reshaped) retrospectively. Within these definitions, the notion of 'development' is perhaps implicit as part of the 'pattern', as points on a 'trajectory' or aspects of 'journey'.

The concept of 'career' itself may be challenged. Nicholson and West (1988: 88) ask if we use the idea for comfort in reflecting on disorder: 'Is the idea of a "career" a comforting story we tell ourselves to make sense of work histories which in reality has been made up of rapid, at random and unconnected changes?' Myra McCulloch takes a more proactive stance: 'Career is an unhelpful concept. It implies a linear progression. It implies rationality. What is needed is commitment to chaos, to accommodation, flexibility and resilience' (1998: 206). Tom Schuller argues that 'linearity critically constrains our ability to think creatively about alternative patterns analytically and practically' (1995: 5). His historical overview of images of the life course include the medieval circle, the arch and the tree of life, curved forms that give way to linearity: the staircase, the pyramid and the straight line. In the discussion that follows, I have chosen to use the term 'career' whilst recognising its problematic nature.

In research on career development, Esther Diamond (1987), Gutek and Larwood (1987) and others have found that the focus has frequently been on the white, male, middle-class career, characterised by traditional, hierarchical progression. Women's career development has often been considered merely as a variation on that of men, drawing on a 'deficiency' model (women's career as 'lesser' than that of men owing to lower perceived ability or to breaks for childcare). The language of metaphor is revealing in this context. The 'glass ceiling' is a familiar image of career restriction; there are also 'glass walls' (limiting access to the jobs which would put women in a position to break through the 'glass ceiling') and, for some, 'glass escalators'. David Maume argues that a 'glass escalator' operates specifically for white men, in contrast to a glass ceiling for black women and men and for white women (1999: 504). In contrast, Belinda Probert's extensive study of gender equity takes a hammer to the glass ceiling, questioning its existence in contemporary Australian academic careers (2005). Institutional progress in challenging discrimination has had its impact, and Probert finds that women's career barriers lie, not within the academy, but at home:

> The absence of many women above Level C in the career structure [i.e. associate professors or professors] would appear to be linked to the way households organize the division between paid and unpaid work rather than to discrimination against women in the workplace.
>
> (ibid.: 65)

This question of unpaid work in its varying forms, and who has the primary responsibility for it, has a critical impact on the careers of many women including those employed as visiting lecturers, as illustrated below.

The 'pyramid' and the 'ladder' are two traditional images of careers, often used in careers guidance literature (as well as research literature) to describe occupational opportunity. The pyramid represents a career structure within a single organisation or vocational discipline: wide opportunities at the base, fewer opportunities as workers move to higher levels. The rigid structure of the pyramid suggests no flexibility outside the fixed framework. (In her discussion of American and Canadian academia, Paula Caplan (1993) inverts this image with the concept of an academic funnel, narrowing and sifting so that few women reach the most senior posts.) The career ladder offers a single route with no possibility of movement to either side, or of career breaks. It offers the possibility of falling off the ladder (but one would then have the choice of beginning at the bottom again, with injuries to impede progress); of changing ladders; or, perhaps, of walking away from the ladder, refusing the structure offered. The anonymous author of 'The Community Education Coordinator' (1993: 9), writing about her own, non-linear career, remarks that '[one] reason why the concept of "career as the ladder" is inappropriate for many women is the number of rungs which are removed if she takes time out to look after her family'.

Amongst other images, the career 'trajectory' (Goldschmidt, 1990, *in* Tight, 1997) has resonances of a launched missile or perhaps a meteor with a single possible route and destination; a notably successful career may be described as 'meteoric'. The linear and speeding quality of the metaphor allows little scope for the erratic or obstacle-strewn nature of many careers. As Meg Stacey notes, reflecting on her career as a senior academic:

> I suppose one can talk about a career looking backwards, but looking forwards is another matter ... My life might look now like having had a career, but it has been much more a series of happenings built out of solving (or not solving) the immediate problems, overcoming the immediately presenting obstacles (or not overcoming them) as well as one might; built also from hanging on to what one had that seemed valuable and not to be sacrificed.
>
> (1998: 84–5)

This is a working life subject to chance, obstacle and serendipity. Implicit here is the idea that the 'happenings', whatever their immediate outcome, lead to a growing richness of experience ('valuable and not to be sacrificed') to be built on for the future.

A career 'path' is a commonly used and flexible metaphor, with implications of varied routes and choices. Nicholson and West (1988: 4), exploring management careers, use the metaphor of a journey through the countryside:

> Organisations are not pyramids, they are scattered encampments on a wide terrain of hills and valleys, and careers are not ladders, but stories about journeys and routes through and between

> these encampments. Some of these paths and stories are well trodden and well-known, others are improvised, haphazard. Many have unclear beginnings and no obvious endings: they just peter out. Careers, as stories of these journeys, often get better with the telling

Malcolm Tight (1997: 22–4), in his research on learning experiences, emphasises the changing nature of careers and of the words we use to describe them. In discussing Nicholson and West's metaphor, he notes 'here we start from the analogy of the map, but a map which is not necessarily wholly understood by those who move across it'. 'Career' in Tight's description is a broad concept. There are 'particular careers' (the learning career, the work career, the family and social career) which are aspects of the complete 'life career' that Tight has been mapping. Each 'particular career' focuses on a specific life activity that may carry a second role of linking – stitching the 'particular careers' together, or shaping their relationship – and may also enable the development of a fuller life ('energies and interests frustrated elsewhere').

Images of maps and journeys offer scope for complexity and also for chance. In *Negotiating the Glass Ceiling: Careers of Senior Women in the Academic World* (David and Woodward, 1998) 16 current or retired academics reflect on their careers. The editors, reflecting on their findings, note that 'the notion of "travel", or the career as a journey, is common for our women and has been used as a metaphor without our prompting' (ibid.: 15). They also find that 'serendipity was a major theme in all the accounts' (ibid.: 11). In discussing career planning in one of these accounts, Myra McCulloch rejects the map image as restrictive: the colouring in of maps, she argues, limits the imagination, and 'life is not neat' (ibid.: 200). McCulloch offers a more challenging image:

> what might be called the garbage can thesis of career planning; problems and solutions do not exist in direct relation to one another. Every career decision I have made has turned out to be more or less wrong, but it's turned out right(ish). The roles of chance or contingency are central to this thesis.
>
> (ibid.: 200)

It is, perhaps, only someone very senior in her field (in this case, a pro vice-chancellor) who could present a garbage can thesis with confidence, and I have not pursued this – though I did eventually focus on an image that incorporates the idea of a piecemeal collection with its own meaning, coming to fruition.

EXPERIMENTS WITH METAPHOR

As I have shown, discourse on careers is often full of imagery: the ladder of opportunity, the pyramid structure of occupational hierarchies within organisations, the glass ceiling, and the career 'path'. Dismissing the term 'career', one respondent participating in my research reflects that 'it doesn't feel like a "career" – that

denotes aims, ambitions and up the hierarchy ladder to me – it feels like a VERY interesting life' (Sue, art lecturer). Hélène (women's studies lecturer) notes: 'My career hasn't been a track or a path – it's been "doing the next thing" and resembles a spider diagram – with some webs of interconnections'.

I used my own career as a starting point in experimentation with metaphor, drawing on experience in adult education where I and others had worked on designs for lifelines with collages, drawings and painting as part of life history exploration with adult students. At this point, Mary Ann Sagaria's work on the quilt image had a strong impact on my progress. I had used this metaphor in poetry, but not in other forms of reflection on life history (Sellers, 1995b). Sagaria (1989), writing for employment advisers, argues that the metaphor of a patchwork quilt works well for women in that it offers an image of variety, complexity and interconnections, typical of women's lives. In common with Sagaria, I shared the view that a life might be compared to a quilt gradually constructed with many meanings, coming slowly to completion. My ideas on this were strengthened and extended by Bettina Aptheker's (1989) *Tapestries of Life: Women's Work, Women's Consciousness and the Meaning of Daily Experience.* Aptheker draws on a host of ordinary experiences of extraordinary creativity, hypothesising 'dailiness' in working towards deeper understanding of women's culture. To examine 'dailiness' is to 'take the patterns women create and the meanings women invent and learn from them' (ibid.: 9). Consequently, women's creative, necessary work takes on new meaning:

> In studying women's quilts, and by extension the many specifically female artefacts produced in the course of a lifetime, we are able to construct a more detailed understanding of the dailiness of women's lives. Moreover, we conceive the ways in which that dailiness has structured women's thinking. We see that the quilts, the stories, the gardens, the poems, the letters, the recipes, the rituals are examples of women's ways of knowing ... a focus on the practical, an integration of the abstract and the practical, a continual analysis and reworking of context, which comes out of the particularity of women's labours and consciousness.
>
> (ibid.: 4)

Quilts and other textile images – spinning, weaving, tapestry – are common in women's writing about their lives. Use of the quilt as a metaphor offers the potential to illuminate a range of life situations. Quilters themselves may represent in their works many aspects of the life of the maker, or a crucial event (such as the famous *Underground Railroad* quilt design representing escape from slavery). Quilt-making has been part of women's work for centuries, in many parts of the world. Research into the quilting tradition has been especially predominant in the USA, with substantial reference to the social contexts of quilting. Aptheker (1989: 8) regards the quilt as 'a metaphor for the way in which we as women might piece the diversity of our experiences into meaningful and useful patterns'. The concept is far from new. Aptheker cites Elaine Hedges' (1982) work on nineteenth-century quilters, where one woman described quilts as 'the hieroglyphics of women's lives' (*cited in* Aptheker, 1989: 70).

How can the metaphor of the quilt be used to add to understanding of the career patterns of women visiting lecturers? A number of respondents commented that they did not regard themselves as having a career, or that their career had been odd, peculiar: 'a funny sort of career development' (Ursula, French lecturer). Trends began to emerge: a juggling of carer roles with other work, a breadth of paid and unpaid activity, a richness of experience to offer and the development of a broader portfolio of classes as lecturers gained in confidence and knowledge. The image of the quilt lends itself to diversity and embodies concepts of creativity and of adaptability. Used as a metaphor, it may, as Sagaria argues, be a way of validating and recognising the extent of a woman's working experience, drawing on elements of her life that the traditional representation omits or ignores: 'Like quilts, many women's careers are traditional in appearance, but a closer examination reveals an elegant unfolding and discovery of self' (Sagaria, 1989: 4–15). As hand-made quilts are often constructed slowly over many years, demonstrating subtlety and complexity, so a working life with a range of part-time employment and other commitments also demonstrates gradual change and growing complexity in its patterns.

In a series of conference workshops and in a postgraduate seminar, I drew on the quilt image to provide paper patchwork quilting exercises: opportunities for individual and shared reflection and reconsideration of career complexity. On several occasions, participants were able to construct their own 'quilts' or take the idea home to work with. These proved thought-provoking and fascinating exercises, though not without risks; some participants found the process of reflection and connections exciting and affirming, while others found them disturbing. Linden West (1996: 215) notes that 'the biographical is clearly a sensitive and potentially disturbing region to enter'. Jacqueline Monbaron (1995: 319–29) reported difficulties inherent in autobiographical exercises within the teaching of adults, difficulties that may in part be caused by teachers not recognising the depth of the personal challenge involved in considering one's life journey.

In analysing data provided by respondents in my research, it became possible, in Aptheker's words, 'to piece the diversity of [their] experience into meaningful and useful patterns'. Where respondents had evidently taken a considerable amount of time and thought over the questionnaires, a clear 'unfolding and discovery of self' (Sagaria, 1989) was demonstrated in several ways. First, the career itself was shown, developing, shaping and reshaping, in the light of experience. Second, respondents themselves commented on the process of their own career development. A third demonstration came in occasional remarks about the experience of completing the questionnaires:

> difficult to complete as I have done so many different things and it would be too long to find accurate dates. However they do all form a coherent whole and I hope that is clear. It is all that experience that has led to me having something to teach people. (Harriet, counselling lecturer)

> I hope to publish either singly or collectively my poems and this is the first time I've written this in a formal way. It gives the edge to my aims in life, affirms my step on the road I am taking. (Sandra, assertiveness lecturer)
>
> This enabled me to look at what I had achieved and where I want to go. (Gail, creative writing lecturer)

WORKING LIVES

The 'quilt' metaphor worked, in theory and in practice, in workshop contexts. However, it was not feasible to take this non-linear approach further in analysing 174 questionnaires. I drew on QSR Nud*IST qualitative data analysis software to conduct an initial survey of the careers information that had been shared with me, and then selected 72 questionnaires for further analysis. This core group of respondents had provided considerable biographical and chronological detail about their careers and working lives. I then created a 'timeline' showing the career of each respondent from the age of 11, using Microsoft Excel as a drawing and painting tool. The timelines draw on Nick Farnes' work on life course analysis (1996: 341–52), creating 'lifelines' to consider connections and events in the lives of Open University students, and on the earlier work of Shirley Dex (1984). I mapped out parallel and sequential roles in four distinct strands of life activity: paid employment; family and carer roles; education and training; activism in other areas including creative work, political work and voluntary work. The timelines vividly portrayed individual career development and enabled comparison between different age groups.

These 72 women were all experienced, current or former visiting lecturers. Of these, 57% lived in London or South-East England, 40% in the North and 3% (2) in the Midlands. At least 15% were from working-class backgrounds. The data on ethnicity were disappointing and it is only feasible to say that, in terms of respondents who chose to provide this data, black and Asian respondents were poorly represented (7% of the total 72 respondents identifying as Asian, Indo-Caribbean or mixed race). Fifteen per cent noted that ill health or disablement had affected their working lives. The age range of the 72 respondents was approximately 28–69. In summary:

- 75% were current visiting lecturers
- 76% held a teaching qualification above introductory level
- 75% had taught for at least seven years
- 25% had taught for thirteen years or more
- In their teaching in adult and continuing education,
  61% had taught in HE
  79% had taught for a local education authority
  33% had taught in the voluntary sector

The majority had worked as visiting lecturers in both further and higher education; 43% had experience of teaching at three types of educational institutions (adult education providers in higher education, adult or further education colleges and services, and the voluntary sector). Subjects taught ranged across the disciplines, from Art to Ecology, with regional variations (Danish and Marine Biology in the North-East; Caribbean History and Gujerati in London). The educational background of respondents was diverse, reflecting age, opportunity and the impact of legislation and cultural change in the twentieth century. Most (79%) were graduates, and 33% had been mature students. Thirteen held a masters degree (18%) and six a PhD (4%). Of the 15 who were not graduates (21%), 13 had vocational qualifications and two had no formal qualifications beyond school level. These last two, respectively, taught a European language (mother tongue) and art appreciation (based on a long career of work and research in the field).

Some respondents were current, and some former, visiting lecturers; for the most part this was an occupation entered in maturity. Though 75% were in paid work at the age of 25, only 6% reported being visiting lecturers at this age. At 35, however, 48% were visiting lecturers, and this rose to 70% at age 45. There were clear patterns of earlier careers (often in fields traditional to women) that ended, or were put on hold, when children were born. Following periods of time at home (very varied in length), some respondents took up work as visiting lecturers as a route back to full-time employment; others furthered their education at college or university and started to teach at a later stage. Whether or not they had had a career break, some worked solely as visiting lecturers, whilst others combined this with work relating to the subject discipline such as counselling or the arts; with more secure teaching; or with work in a different field altogether. As visiting lecturers, some taught for a few hours a week at a single institution, but it was common practice to work in this capacity for more than one employer, with simultaneous contracts that might involve travel across several boroughs or counties in the course of a working week. The phenomenon of simultaneous employment has also been noted by Derek Betts (2000), Colin Bryson and Tracy Scurry (2002) and others.

The differing career experiences of women in different generations appeared clearly between younger and older cohorts of visiting lecturers, as change took place in cultural and social constraints and opportunities. For example, those born before 1945 were far less likely to go straight to university from school, compared with the younger generation:

> My working class origins were both an incentive and a drawback. I was highly motivated but my background precluded knowledge and information on how to pursue an academic career in the climate of the war and the 1940s. (Brenda, philosophy lecturer)

In contrast, another respondent was one of very few who commenced work in adult education on graduation:

> I entered adult education immediately upon leaving University [in 1950]. I was given a Cassell Trust Award to enable me to learn to teach adults under the aegis of Oxford University Delegacy. I worked full-time in adult and further education until the birth of my first child. From thence I taught part-time. (Anna, history lecturer)

Others described their struggle for education as mature adults:

> I waited till my daughter went to university 10 years ago before I started full-time education myself, and found studying very much in conflict with my husband till I was divorced 5 years ago, since when I have studied continually and worked full-time. My children encourage me to study, as they have their own lives (Gail, creative writing lecturer)

Some women had two very different careers: a career before having children, and an (often longer) career in a different field afterwards. This was distinctively the case where women started work in a traditional occupation after leaving school or college, became mature students and subsequently changed career direction. Others had little or no paid work experience before starting a family, and developed their careers at a later stage:

> I stopped work when the younger children were babies (I used to work as a secretary). Whilst they were small, I undertook a part-time degree through the University. Therefore, in a way, although hard, [being a mother] gave me a new, more rewarding career … After obtaining my degree, I couldn't find work, and decided to become a volunteer for Adult Education. I enjoyed this very much, and took the opportunity of further training to gain employment as a sessional tutor. (Kathryn, sociology lecturer)

Most respondents (86%) had children (at home or grown up). Family responsibilities, relationships and roles had a considerable impact on the careers of some respondents. This included late and demanding carer roles, taking on the care of elders, siblings, other family members and friends:

> My career has been practically brought to a halt because after I married … I made the decision that I would seek work in the same geographic area as my husband. This resulted in unemployment! (Grace, biology lecturer)

> Looking after children had a profound effect on my working life. It determined my availability for work and the courses I taught. I was totally caught up in society's expectations of women however hard I tried to put them on one side. (Jenny, study skills lecturer)

> My husband and I look after his parents, aged 93 and 94 ... I had to give up any prospects of becoming full-time when my husband's parents moved in with us. (Vicky, Dutch lecturer)

Families and partners were also reported as a source of strength and encouragement. Brenda (philosophy lecturer) listed these positive influences on her career:

> 1) A supportive husband and family. 2) A father who had a very positive attitude to education for women. 3) My own enthusiasm for learning and passing on learning.

However, as with family formation, it is women who continue to bear the brunt of care. Alison Morehead's concept of 'the power of absence', the right to be away from the household, relates powerfully to the experiences of these women trying to negotiate time outside the home for their education or work (2003, *cited in* Probert 2005).

Why had women become visiting lecturers? Their reasons varied considerably. A significant percentage used part-time work as a bridge back to employment after having children, or chose to work part-time in order to support their work in the arts, or their own education. Others were seeking full-time work, but not able to obtain it, and made a living with a collection of part-time contracts. Some respondents were initially volunteers, especially in adult basic education, and later became paid visiting lecturers, broadening their scope to include HE. Others were invited to take up teaching. With the exception of structured volunteer opportunities, routes into sessional teaching were often informal:

> Was asked, when deputy head of centre saw my paintings in one-woman show, to teach art. (Sue, art lecturer)

> Two main routes: (1) The [regional] School of Ministry and the Area Health Authority asked me to do some training because of my work as a counselor; (2) I needed suddenly to find some kind of paid work so I wrote to the Adult Education Principal and offered a course. (Harriet, counselling lecturer)

A lecturer with an earlier career in performing arts commented:

> I liked looking after the children so only wanted part-time work. I was invited to run a course at the local college of FE in the early 60s when they were developing 'liberal education'. I liked teaching. I was also doing radio work … so it fitted in well. (June, drama lecturer)

This was her starting point as an adult educator, at the age of 37. Six years later, she was a qualified teacher and was continuously involved in teaching and community arts until her retirement. However, the sessional teaching carried a price:

> Now in retirement I do not have an occupational pension because as a part-timer I could not contribute … I have been very aware of the difficulties for women who wish to combine parenting with a paid and satisfying working career. The right to opt for part-time work was important. (June, drama lecturer)

Many respondents commented on the pleasures of teaching, 'helping women to build up their confidence and helping them to achieve their goals' (Inez, computing lecturer), and the students themselves could be inspirational:

> my main hope and source of joy are the mature students, I can identify with their needs and aspirations. Many overcome great difficulties to re-enter education, despite being put-off. (Mary, psychology lecturer)

> I enjoy trying to pass on my own enthusiasm for subject and 'open some doors' into a perhaps new area of knowledge for students. It is a pleasure to see students pass from a phase of hesitancy at the beginning of a course to the stage where the subject begins to 'gel' and they can take off on their own. (Gill, archaeology lecturer)

As with lecturers in adult basic education (Sellers, 1995a) the majority of difficulties encountered were outside the classroom: insecurity of employment, the consequent uncertainties of income and planning and the administrative and unpaid work expected of them.

> The insecurity of the employment is one of the main difficulties. I don't know what my hours will be until enrolment is complete. (Shaheen, health studies lecturer)

> Demands made on tutors in addition to teaching and preparation seem to be increasing with an increasing number of staff development sessions, staff meetings, enrolment days etc. While all these things are obviously necessary it can get out of hand particularly if teaching in more than one centre, each of which is arranging such sessions. I find it a problem firstly to decide how much time it is reasonable to give to such things, given that I am only actually employed for a very few hours, but secondly not wishing to appear to be negative or uncommitted, with an eye on future career prospects. (Gill, archaeology lecturer)

The career aspirations of visiting lecturers were diverse. Some were satisfied with their present situation: '*Deo volente* I want to continue to teach till I drop' (Anna, history lecturer). Others had found ways of moving on, building on their sessional work:

> My decision to leave full-time employment was influenced by [illness]. I was in a fairly stressful job, had been promoted into management … so was not doing what I enjoyed most anymore. I needed a way of earning money where I could be flexible and work at my own pace. In fact it was a very positive step because it eventually led to counselling training and my becoming an accredited counsellor. (Rosemary, guidance studies lecturer)

Though some respondents progressed to more mainstream posts, it was clearly difficult to do so; as Powney *et al.* (2003: 13) note, 'a series of fixed term contracts does not provide secure employment or offer substantial promotion possibilities'.

The respondents proved to have increasingly complex patterns of activities and responsibilities over the course of their working lives. For many respondents, teaching (with one contract or more) was one strand of a complicated, simultaneous range of responsibilities. These included voluntary work; family commitments,

caring for up to three generations; cultural work, paid or unpaid, as writers, artists or craftswomen; continuing study, including research and training for further or different career developments; and other work, sometimes in a newly chosen field related to their studies. Some achieved multiple (simultaneous) careers, notably those in fields apparently suited to part-time development: creative careers (artists, writers) and counselling or therapy careers. These careers demonstrated, if not necessarily commitment to chaos, certainly the commitment to 'accommodation, flexibility and resilience' called for by McCulloch (1998: 206):

> Being a working wife and mother – paid or not – makes me a five-ball juggler qualified to make anything out of nothing. (Cristina, Spanish lecturer)

CONCLUSION

One powerful characteristic of many of the older visiting lecturers is a late flowering of academic, creative and political strengths: postgraduate study, publication, art exhibitions and commissions, work in local politics and in community initiatives. These achievements indicate a seizing of opportunity not always matched by employment status. Looking at a broader career picture, including volunteer work, creative unpaid work, education and carer roles, patterns emerge: early, straightforward linear careers developing a complexity and multiplicity, moving in and out of paid work.

In workshops developing the 'career quilting' concept, much interest arose in the different nature of women's career development. There was a strong sense that this difference was, on the surface, an obvious phenomenon, but at the same time somehow hidden. On the one hand, we all knew that women were more likely than men to have career patterns that were disrupted in some way; especially in that women were likely to be the primary carers for children and older members of the family. On the other hand, many of us over the years had experienced information on career development, including interview feedback, which described and prioritised the experience of men: women's experience was invisible. The existence of a substantial body of research on women's careers came as a surprise to some. Many had had little or no experience of career discussion and exploration that valued and recognised the rich complexities and possibilities of women's career development, and the breadth of experience that women can bring to their working lives. On an individual basis, to positively value and celebrate such complexity may contribute to fresh insights and strength in considering career planning, and my findings in this regard support those of Mary Ann Sagaria. At a departmental and institutional level, staff development as well as recruitment in many universities would benefit from a fresh approach, a re-visioning of how the diverse strengths of all part-time staff, including women visiting lecturers, might be built on, and how their management and continuing professional development might be supported.

As women's careers may be marginalised by comparison with those of men, in the same way the contribution of visiting lecturers may be marginalised at departmental and institutional level. The work of women in these posts may therefore be doubly marginalised. These are complex working lives, more so because of the care responsibilities which many carry across generations. A greater sensitivity by employers to the needs of workers with responsibility for children, elders and other vulnerable family members will benefit the whole workforce. Legal change may open the way for an increased flexibility in the workplace, and more 'family friendly' approaches to employment than has hitherto been the case. In the current climate of EU employment law reform and its consequences, the work of visiting lecturers should be seen in its true light: an intricate web of teaching, development and support services, often drawing on very considerable expertise and experience. This forms a crucial underpinning to the work of many universities and colleges, and a highly significant contribution to lifelong learning in the UK. It is crucial that the rich experience of these, currently temporary, staff is recognised and included, to play a full role in the universities of the future.

NOTES

[1]The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) has recently merged with the Association of University Teachers (AUT) to form the University and College Union. At the time of writing, the new website is under development; AUT and NATFHE publications may be moved. In the event of difficulty locating publications, please follow the UCU publications link and its search facilities: see http://www.ucu.org.uk/.

[2]The Arvon Foundation runs residential creative writing courses at its centres in England and Scotland. Details: http://www.arvonfoundation.org/.

The Chantraine Dance of Expression is open to all, regardless of ability and experience. Details: (UK) The Chantraine School of Dance, Patricia Woodall, 25a Menelik Road, London NW2 3RJ; (France) Ecole de Danse Alain et Françoise Chantraine, 12, av. Sainte-Foy, 92200 Neuilly-sur-Seine.

[3]Training on use of the qualitative data analysis software QSR Nud*IST was kindly provided by Ann Lewins and colleagues at the University of Surrey's Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) Networking Project. Further information: http://caqdas.soc.surrey.ac.uk/.

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Chapter 11

WOMEN AND WORK/LIFE BALANCE

A Higher Education Perspective

Amanda Loumansky[1], Sue Goodman[2] and Sue Jackson[3]
[1]*Middlesex University;* [2]*Middlesex University;* [3]*Birkbeck, University of London*

INTRODUCTION

Debates about how to achieve a work/life balance have become common. Worldwide, companies and institutions are becoming aware of the benefits of providing their workforce with flexible work policies. Such benefits can include higher morale and a greater sense of responsibility to the employer, as well as enhanced productivity. However, in both policy and practice the gendered nature of the workplace and the home is rarely taken into account. In the UK, for example, the Government states that it is committed to encouraging the growth of flexible working and other work/life balance policies because it both benefits employers and enables employees to better balance their family responsibilities with work. The Trades Union Congress calls for people to have far more choice about the hours they work, and to be able to fit work around their caring responsibilities and their other interests. However, there is no apparent recognition that family and caring responsibilities are very differently structured and organised for women and for men, as are the opportunities for the development of 'other interests'.

This chapter seeks to explore the attitudes and experiences of a group of women working in Higher Education towards achieving a work/life balance. In referring to 'work/life' rather than the more common 'work-life' our aim is to indicate interweaving complexities rather than compartmentalisation. 'Work', for women in particular, includes work in the home as well as in the workplace, and 'life' may leave little room for personal interests to develop. Central to our study is a wish to explore how lifelong learning fits into women's lives, both inside and outside the formal workplace, and to consider the relationship between work/life balance and lifelong learning.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 223–240.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Much has been written about lifelong learning: indeed it has been suggested that 'lifelong learning – that is, the recognition that learning may stretch out across a lifetime – is the new educational reality' (Field, 2000: 1).

In coming into office in 1997 the new Labour government in the UK showed its immediate commitment to this new educational reality by appointing its first Minister for Lifelong Learning. In his Foreword to the Green (consultative) Paper *The Learning Age: a renaissance for a new Britain* (DfEE, 1998), David Blunkett – then Secretary of State for Education and Employment – stated that the fostering of an enquiring mind and a love of learning are essential elements of lifelong learning. However, that same Green Paper all too clearly linked lifelong learning with economic policies, making it clear that the emphasis should be on 'work', rather than 'life'. The Green Paper described education as 'the best economic policy we have' (DfEE 1998: 9).

> However, what lifelong learning means, what types of learning should be emphasized and what it will be important for people to learn are far from clear. This vagueness about the meaning of lifelong learning means that the Green Paper seems to be pointing in two directions at once (Young, 2000, 97).

A discourse of lifelong learning is linked in the Green Paper and subsequent policy documents to economic participation through the employment market and the development of skills and training. However, education, training, the workplace and interpretations of 'skills' and are all highly gendered areas. Economically the needs of the system are that of capitalism, ignoring (but depending upon) the contribution that women in the home make to the economy. Such a learning agenda can only continue and replicate the structural inequalities of gender, class and other differences, where only certain types of knowledge, skills and work are valued and opportunities for many women and other marginalised groups are limited.

But what of the opportunities to engage in lifelong learning for those women who are already employed in Higher Education? It became clear as we started our empirical research that the very term 'lifelong learning' rests on shifting sands for the women we interviewed. According to Tom Schuller (1999:24)

> Of all the family of terms connected with adult learning, lifelong learning is today arguably the one commanding the most general recognition as a generic term covering policy and practice. But even the most superficial acquaintance with the debate shows us how often the vocabulary changes.

We share Schuller's perception that lifelong learning is a comprehensive and elastic term. Definitions are fluid and imprecise, loosely used with vague but hegemonic understandings. Meaning is elusive and, despite the myriad of definitions available, the phrase escapes definition, and has been described as 'slippery'

(Hodgson, 2000). Lifelong learning is a highly fluid and contestable concept (Field 2000; Hughes 2001; Jackson 2002, 2003), with multiple overlapping and differing meanings. In trying to develop our understandings of some of these overlapping and contested meanings, we allowed the women we interviewed to use their own understanding of the term, although for some this meant that the term remained unproblematised:

> (L)ifelong learning is seductive concept: how could any of us not support the idea of continuous learning through formal education and informal learning, through our work and leisure activities, through experience and for pleasure. If we take lifelong learning in its broadest sense – all learning that occurs both formally and informally, consciously and unconsciously – it is not possible not to be a lifelong learner (Jackson, 2004:12).

In the present study, we focus on women working within a particular Higher Education institution. It is therefore accepted that their experiences cannot be held to speak for all women, and some of their concerns will inevitably be specific and related to those most commonly found in an academic environment. However, that is not to say that their experiences are entirely removed from those that are encountered by women elsewhere. What emerges from these interviews is that women in Higher Education tend to relate the issues of lifelong learning to their research outputs: in other words, women in work appear to be equating lifelong learning with developing the areas needed for advancement and promotion. In spite of this, and perhaps not unsurprisingly, it is clear that women still tend to perceive themselves as the 'Other' in an environment that appears by temperament and structure to be male-dominated, and this particularly affects those women who do not feel that they share the same freedoms as their male counterparts in pursuing their careers.

Concepts of self are never neutral. They are located within constructions of insiders and outsiders, determining who is recognised or recognises themselves as an insider or outsider and who is considered an academic researcher and who is not. Located within discourses of personal agency, structural inequalities and exclusions are often ignored and the emotionality that is ascribed to women as part of their gender roles is regarded as inferior to male logic and rationality (Francis, 2002). Apparently 'objective' academic knowledge is in fact partial because it excludes experiences of marginalised identities, but it is also distorted when those who produce knowledge fail to recognise their own social/cultural/historic locations. Beverley Skeggs (1997: 167) describes 'the unremitting emotional distress generated by the doubts and insecurities of living class that working-class women endure on a daily basis'. Many of the women in this research, whether or not they identify as working-class, also live the emotional distress described by Beverley Skeggs, generated by the doubts and insecurities of balancing work and life in a gendered academy. These are points to which we will be returning later in this chapter.

Although this chapter is about the lives of women working in a higher education institution in the UK, we anticipate that women living under similar conditions in different societies will find our work relevant. We have deliberately set out to present our findings in a way that we hope will resonate with women in different countries because we believe that many women will be able to relate to these common experiences. Social interaction both inside and outside the workplace is becoming increasingly complex and making greater demands upon individuals to order and manage their own affairs if they are to operate effectively. Furthermore, an increasingly sophisticated media exposes people to competing values and beliefs, and the higher expectations that appear to be the inevitable companion of a society that is becoming increasingly affluent, and apparently more tolerant and enabling of its citizens to pursue complementary and alternative life agendas. However, those most affected by injustices are the most knowledgeable and able to 'open up the hegemonic lies' (Fine, 2005).

> Power relations are patterned through taken-for-granted often hidden assumptions about gender and race that are embedded in … discourses … that privilege the experiences and interests of dominant racial and gender groups – non-dominant cultural interests and experiences are suppressed, devalued and muted (Parker, 2002:1).

We return to these issues later in the chapter.

METHODOLOGY

In this research we have adopted a feminist methodology, agreeing with Anne Byrne and Ronit Lentin (2000:7,8) that:

> Feminist research methodologies, impelled by a concern with social justice, were initially focused on making women's experiences present and visible, revealing evidence of economic, legal and social gender-based inequalities. Feminist research methodologies are designed to reveal the gender problematic, through prioritising women's lived experience of the social, telling this experience 'in their own voice.' The practice and consequences of research are scrutinised in terms of their beneficial or harmful outcomes for women as an oppressed group.

Feminist methodology/ies involves 'approaches to the problems of producing justifiable knowledge of gender relations' (Ramazanoglou and Holland, 2002: 10). Methodology in social science entails:

1. a social and political process of knowledge production;
2. assumptions about the nature and meaning of ideas, experience and social reality and how/if these may be connection;
3. critical reflection on what authority can be claimed for the knowledge that results;
4. accountability (or denial of accountability) for the political and ethical implications of knowledge production (Ramazanoglou and Holland, 2002: 11).

It has been suggested that 'social scientific training encourages us to look for systematization, linkage, unification, and synthesis' (Hughes, 2002:174). However, it may also be the case that disjunctures and disconnections become part of the analysis. Christina Hughes describes 'conceptual literacies' as acts of 'sensitization to multiple meaning', central to which is 'an awareness of the political implications of debate and argument over meaning' (2002: 187). In developing the methodology for this project, a feminist epistemology was deployed in establishing competing and gendered definitions of lifelong learning, in determining what counts as (valid) knowledge and in conceptualising gendered power relations. One of the most central components of a feminist methodology is the engagement with research as praxis, bringing about change in women's lives. Feminist research, interwoven as it is with feminist theory, is political: it is inevitably about understanding and ultimately transforming the conditions and realities of women's lives. It was our aim in this research to prioritise the voices of the women whom we interviewed, and who helped us develop our own understandings and lifelong learning.

THE INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

For the purpose of this research we designed a semi-structured interview questionnaire focusing on three main themes. Firstly, pathways in to Higher Education and career structures are discussed. We then move on to ask how easy or difficult it is for women in Higher Education to pursue their own lifelong learning, and whether such learning is valued within the institution. Finally, we explore whether in achieving some form of work/life balance women face different challenges to men in their careers.

We acknowledge that the notion of women who work in Higher Education as being oppressed might strike some as being perhaps rather frivolous when set against the more obvious and acute forms of oppression encountered by other groups of women, such as mothers living in sink housing estates struggling to bring up a family without assistance apart from the minimal aid provided by the state. However, working in higher education, including as academics, does not make us middle-class (Anderson, 2001). Oppression is a comparative term and it is clear that the women in this research are disadvantaged when their situations are compared to those of the men with whom they work. It is clear too from the interviews that the oppression is real, and that the problems they face impact negatively upon their lives, and more specifically on their careers and aspirations. This chapter is therefore written in a way that we hope enables the voices of the women we interviewed to be heard, and for their stories to be told. Anne Byrne and Ronit Lentin (2000:7,8) go on to say that

> In the first instance, the feminist researcher accounts for herself and her motivation in carrying out a particular piece of research, placing herself reflexively within her research text. Our own investigative assumptions and procedures are made explicit as we seek to explain how we know what we know.

Placing ourselves reflexively in our research text we began to realise the importance of including our own stories. Sue Jackson has previously reflected on who she was and who she has become by the process of looking into a mirror and describing who is staring back. Thinking of her own life she asks:

> Who do I see, looking into that mirror? I see a working-class girl growing up in the heart of a working-class community of the East End of London in the 1950s. I see a young woman leaving school at 15, with no educational expectations or aspirations. I see a woman with two children, tentatively reaching out to start some adult study, beginning a journey of lifelong learning. I see a woman gaining qualifications, embarking on and developing her academic career. I also see a woman unsure of her identity….I see a middle-class woman gazing deeply into the eyes and soul of the working-class woman gazing so intently back (Jackson, 2004: 3).

What did the other two of us see when we gazed into the mirror and, perhaps more importantly, who did we see gazing back? When we looked into the mirror we saw one of us studying for a degree at the age of 31, believing the employment opportunities it would yield would provide her with job satisfaction and her family with financial security. One of us studied for a degree when much younger and had completed it before family responsibilities arrived. However, we both completed post-graduate qualifications whilst constantly juggling with bringing up young families and working full time. Although our post-graduate qualifications were differently structured, often the achievement of a work/life balance eluded us or was achieved at great personal cost. This has been especially so as we continue along the pathway of trying to secure permanent employment within our chosen fields in higher education. Gazing back at us were two women who found that the only work available was often in the form of a short term contract. This leads to a constant blanket of insecurity that permeates any kind of career or financial planning and always feeling 'other' to those whose place in the institution was secure. Where was the space for our own lifelong learning amongst the need to survive? The lack of tenure meant that sabbaticals were out of the question as were research breaks, and yet we both knew that we had to retain the energy to maintain our own lifelong learning, as not to continue to engage in learning would for both of us be unthinkable because of the pleasure we derived from it. This is something on which Sue Jackson has previously reflected:

> Initial considerations of registering for a PhD. The reasons are complicated. I need to do something for myself again. I want to write. I need to write. I could try a variety of forms, and yet I choose a PhD. Why? I can justify it to myself and others in terms of advancing my career. It's OK to spend the time, the money, the personal resources, to take 'time out' from family life, if it's for a career, rather than for 'me'. Is this a gender issue? I do, in any case, want to advance my career, and it seems I won't be able to do this without a PhD. My non-traditional c.v. works against me. Is this a gender issue? (Jackson, 2004: 82).

All three of us are inspired by the words of Audre Lorde (1984:38) who stated:

> Sometimes we drug ourselves with dreams of new ideas. The head will save us. The brain alone will set us free. But there are no new ideas still waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves – along with the renewed courage to try them out. And we must constantly encourage ourselves and each other to attempt the heretical actions that our dreams imply, and so many of our old ideas disparage.

We moved on to question whether we had ever achieved a work/life balance. If not, how had it constantly eluded us for so many years? Were other women's experiences the same as ours or had we just been particularly unlucky? Was it that our juggling was just not skilful enough? We pondered how we would know when we had achieved a work/life balance. Would everything become manageable? Would we feel like we were not compromising our child care responsibilities or our partnerships? We concluded by thinking that perhaps such a balance is to be viewed the same as the idea of democracy, something never quite attainable but always to be worked towards, whilst never quite understanding what it means!

THE PARTICIPANTS

We have used semi-structured interviews and personal biography to record the experiences of the nine women who agreed to take part in our study. We aimed in our in-depth interviews to recognise the complex issues that affect women's lives and the development of academic identities. In particular, we recognise that a conventional linear approach can fail to recognise the intersections of family, education, career paths as well as gender, 'race' and social class that affect life choices (or non-choices) (see eg Blaxter et al 1998, Weiner 1996). We ensured that we allowed sufficient time to enable interviewees to develop issues they wanted to raise. The interviews set out to value and build on the experiences of the interviewees, and recognise the importance of 'voice(s)'. The researchers worked with the interviewees to develop key aspects of the interview, so involving the interviewees in the research project.

An opportunistic sample of women working within a particular Higher Education institution were chosen for interviewing. They ranged in age from 30 years to 60 years, and were of varying ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds (for a fuller discussion see Anderson and Williams, 2001). The positions the women held within the Higher Education institution ranged from researchers, through the various lecturing scales, to high level management. We would like to thank all of them for the time that they spent with us being interviewed and for being so willing and

generous of their time and experiences. We followed on from previous work of Sue Jackson: when discussing whether to name her interviewees she states:

> I have here chosen to write the lecturers' comments collectively rather than separately, again because of issues of confidentiality. Some of the lecturers said that their positions are well known within their department, and this alone might identify them. Although my collective and nameless writing up of the lecturer's comments and views might appear to distance them and seems not to acknowledge them as individuals this is not my intention (Jackson, 2004:92).

Therefore in order to preserve the women's confidentiality, which was the basis upon which they agreed to be interviewed, we have decided to present the interviewees' comments collectively, and to say very little about them individually. The main point that they all share is that at the time the interviews were carried out they were all employed in Higher Education.

PATHWAYS INTO ACADEMIA

We began our interviews by asking about the pathways the women had taken to their current position. The reasons the women gave for finding themselves in their present positions were varied:

> It wasn't really planned, more of an accident. I like finding things out. It was more, 'Can I continue with this?' Trying to expand on the finding things out side of things.

It was the chance to be involved in the project she was working on rather than making a decision to work in Higher Education that had brought this respondent to the university. Future employment depended on an interesting project becoming available and this could just as easily be in a private company or government department as well as a university department. Another interviewee thought that she had 'drifted' all her life. She went on to say

> At the end of the PhD I still didn't know what to do. Although thought processes do kick in they are made more determined by whether something is sustainable. I drifted into a variety of short term contracts, eventually a senior lectureship came up, applied for that, got that. It's just gone on from there, really. I wouldn't say there was a plan. Thought processes do kick in I think, in terms of going through research, to teaching, to management. I have got more into management roles. Although they haven't been things I have sought, they have more been things that people have come up and said 'Why aren't you going for that?', I've then thought 'Maybe I should.'

For some, the move to academia marked the beginning of a second career, albeit one into which the women felt that they had 'drifted' as the following comments explain

> I didn't decide to go into teaching. I've been a nursing sister. I'd gone as far as I could in general nursing without going into the administration side of things. I worked in a dynamic therapeutic community and I was of the opinion that you had to be dynamic to work there. Your patients

> need the best from you. The moment you become tired the best thing you can do for your patients is to move on. It was a phenomenal experience and the work we did there was brilliant. But I knew that when I left there I would move on and follow another path. When I finished the PhD it was a question of looking round, 'Now what?' I was and still am interested in Law and I wanted to keep that going. I knew that one way of doing that would be to work in HE, but I didn't intend coming into HE. Most importantly I needed a job. I was living very close to here, somebody alerted me to the advert and I thought 'I quite like the look of that' so I applied.

It is interesting to note that this woman had moved out of a highly gendered career where the emphasis was on caring, into her role in Higher Education where she was very much valued by the students as being 'someone who cared about us.' Another woman also felt that the move to Higher Education marked the beginning of a second career:

> I didn't start out wanting a career in Higher Education. I joined the charity Voluntary Service Overseas as a volunteer and then trained to be a school teacher. After 13 years I came back because I was burnt out from teaching and the lack of intellectual challenge.

Two of the women interviewed came in to Higher Education after earlier careers working in a business environment. Interestingly enough, it was these two women who had made a conscious decision to become lecturers rather than just 'drifting' into it. For example, one of them said:

> At the end of my degree I wanted to move on to lecturing which I saw as a career rather than staying as a legal secretary which I thought of as just a job. When I started studying Law I was taught by a couple of lecturers who really inspired me. Probably from about the second year of being at university I started to think that I wanted to carry on studying and working in Higher Education. I liked the environment and I wanted to be a part of it.

For the other woman it was her work as a secretary, transcribing the work of a professor, that eventually brought her into Higher Education:

> I started editing from home doing students' work. I then did a professor's work and became fascinated. I enrolled to do a BA. Got a grant to do a Masters and have been here ever since.

Another replied

> I liked the people at the University, having worked with them before. An opportunity came up and I needed to get out of my work place. I enjoyed research when I studied at undergraduate and post graduate levels.

This interviewee had taken a drop in pay to work in Higher Education as she had two part-time positions, but she thought that it was worth it in order to work in a research environment. Some women were drawn to the stimulus of working with students as well as the research component of their jobs.

> I like my job, I like my work. I think this can be a difficult place at times but that hasn't dented overall what I enjoy. I enjoy contact with the students. I enjoy the teaching; I enjoy the lifestyle because I've got autonomy. I decide when I am in, when I am out, when I do my work. I do a lot of work in the evenings and at weekends. That suits me. I can't decide to do that in any other profession. I like the lifestyle. The freedom in how I want to work impacts on your life generally. My life feels more my life here than it would working somewhere else.

As it can be seen from these quotations, for some women the pathway into academia was accidental or they just drifted into it, whilst for others it was a clearly planned move including, for some women, as a second career.

THE DRAW OF FLEXIBLE WORKING CONDITIONS

For some of our respondents the move into academia was a conscious decision, as the flexibility it offered provided a way to combine a career with motherhood and family responsibilities. One woman commented:

> I completed my first degree, had a baby and needed to work. I did supply teaching and then got a job as an assistant lecturer. After the PhD I had another child and went into teaching because it was there, it was handy, a job in the world of education, fitted in with child care. The key thing for me at this time was flexibility. The job enabled me to be at home during the day and to work in the evenings. It was a good compromise.

Another response was that

> It was the only option open to me after I finished university because I got married and had a baby. When I graduated I was pregnant. I tried very, very hard to get a job through the milk round but couldn't get one. I had a good undergraduate degree, I filled in an ESRC application form along with a lot of other application forms and I got a grant to do my PhD and it fitted in fine with child care. It was completely flexible. HE enabled me to have that flexibility at that time. I used to work all night long when my child was sleeping. This carried on for five years.

The following interviewee's career choices were clearly influenced by the fact that some of her work could be done at home. She said that:

> When I became a student I thought that working in a higher education institute as opposed to working in the City would be much more conducive to the bringing up of a young family. I appreciated the huge work load involved but thought that this could be fitted around the children's needs. Working late into the night on a series of part time contracts whilst trying to write my PhD became a way of life for many years.

It's not just the responsibility of children that the women we interviewed had to take into account. As this woman states:

> I think in terms of being a woman, we are the ones that when our parents get old have to look after them. I was the one that needed to be with them when they became ill. At the end of the day you have to get your priorities right, and your family have to come first. I can thoroughly relate to people with elderly parents and people with young children. I try to say to others who are ill themselves or who have sick families 'if you are run over by a bus life will go on.' I just try and be realistic, but I don't like missing things. I do have a fantastic husband. He deals with most things. I've probably been lucky although I have had my share of difficulties, but because of that I can understand it in other people and we are lucky, we can work at home. We can get things done. I think women need to use that, but we have to constantly juggle. I honestly think that the only way to get anything done is to juggle extremely effectively and efficiently.

One woman said

> Academic life is quite flexible. You can work the hours that you need to. This means that some weeks you are working a lot of hours because you have deadlines to meet. I try and stick to a 9am to 5pm routine but there is flexibility. If I have to read articles then I don't have to be in the office to do that. I can have the freedom to go and work at home, because I work at home quite well. I enjoy it and can get on with it. I do like the flexibility that comes with the job.

For some women the flexibility needed to juggle family responsibilities was to some extent made possible by the choice of being able to work at home or in the office and was an important factor in their choice of career.

THE ROLE OF LIFELONG LEARNING

When we asked our next question about the opportunities available to pursue their own lifelong learning, a common response was that by coming into the academic profession they could continue to enjoy exploring their subject, working in an environment where that knowledge was valued, and where they could share it with others. It was a lifestyle that suited them, as can be seen from the following comments. The comment that the move to academia was an opportunity to build lifelong learning into her career was put succinctly by the following interviewee, who said that it was:

> A chance to be intellectually challenged again – reading as part of the job.

The importance that is placed on intellectual freedom and the chance to develop thought processes is borne out by the next comment:

> I think that you can explore ideas and that's a luxury that I am not prepared to give up. When I think that I'll go freelance or I can't bear it any more, or the paperwork is coming out of my ears, I look at my friends in the civil service, who might be getting paid a lot more than me, but I don't want those jobs where I am filling in target sheets.

The point the above interviewee made about the luxury of being able to explore ideas is what we believe is a fundamental reason why women continue to strive for careers in academia. The statement below shows that this woman is clear about the opportunity to continue to develop professionally by engaging in lifelong learning:

> I have gained valuable experience, and I have done things that not many people get the opportunity to do. I have worked in prisons and not many people get security clearance and are able to get in, so that was a valuable experience. The other thing about academia is that I have to read articles and I enjoy it.

On the other hand, the following woman was highly supportive of students' lifelong learning but viewed her own opportunities to engage in lifelong learning as extremely limited. She said:

> I have always supported lifelong learning. I've always supported part time students. I've always been a socialist, but it's never occurred to me that I would be able to pursue my own lifelong learning.

Another woman, in discussing the importance of continued learning, also talked about the benefits of working as part of a team. She placed great importance on the friendly atmosphere in which she worked. She said

> Working in a way that has given me access to huge amounts of literature that I wouldn't have had access to. Working with students and the high that I get when a lecture goes well. Also, the learning is not just one way, I often learn from my students as well as them hopefully learning from me. I've enjoyed learning research skills, I'm still on a learning curve there. Winning contracts, working together as a team, I've made some good friendships. It has been a nice working environment. It has been a lot of fun.

Higher Education in the UK is to a large extent focused on the demands of the forthcoming Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The effect of this is that most of the women equated lifelong learning with the research that they undertook in order to be entered into the next RAE. As Sue Jackson explains:

> The main purpose of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the UK is to enable the higher education funding bodies to selectively distribute public funds for research. Institutions conducting the research judged to be of the highest quality receive a larger proportion of the available grant, with 'high quality' dependent on how much of the work is considered of national or international levels of excellence. Power is often in the hands of those who attract research money, and who are considered to be highly valuable assets. Established researchers are being offered posts and research money on the strength of their contribution to the RAE (Jackson, 2004:87)..

The negative effects of being part of a system geared towards the RAE were explained by one woman who said that:

> The stress of the job, the amount of paperwork and the lack of sharing and collegiality. As soon as you finish something you are on to the next thing, especially with the RAE. You've got to be innovative, but what does that mean? You're on a treadmill. Always having to prove yourself. If you are a black woman or a working class woman in higher education you are always having to prove yourself. You think there is a point where it should all end, but it doesn't. The higher up I've gone the more isolated I become.

For some, the RAE meant that there was a constant need to be generating new ideas, but lack of research time means that:

> I can't explore ideas in any depth. I am always thinking and jumping from one thing to another. Then I wonder what am I doing, I find that I am starting to do policy things rather than theoretical things. I've never had a sabbatical in my life.

Another pointed out the reduced support she received as woman. She said:

> This is where my domestic life impinges. I would have to be superhuman, because if you don't do the research you can't have a sabbatical and go to conferences. To do research we need a wife. For example no account is taken of problems in accessing lifelong learning. We need to look at the outcome of opportunity. We are not all at the same starting place, men and maybe single women are able to make better use of opportunities to engage in lifelong learning. For example if we are offered training it may go out on a global email but who can take it up?

Perhaps our most positive interviewee found that the lifelong learning on offer enhanced her ability to do her job and was very satisfied with the opportunities offered by the institution.

> The last job that I was employed in, you set up interviews, you did them and you went to the university every 3 months. In terms of courses, you just didn't have the time. There wasn't any help and support with anything. Here I have been on quite a few courses, which I hadn't been aware of before. I've been on equal opportunities courses and I have recently done an HTML editor's course. The university has organised a fair few seminars and workshops on funding and how to go about funding. So that for me has been really useful.

It seems that most of the interviewees view their ongoing research as their main contribution to lifelong learning. Perhaps this is to be expected with the next RAE looming over us. Perhaps because of the way that the interview questions had been framed it was inevitable that the women expressed their view of lifelong learning in comparatively narrow terms. It was clear that their views were formed by their generally frustrating experiences. Even when these women could look back on real and significant achievements in their particular career, they inclined to express dissatisfaction when considering these achievements against those of male colleagues. They tended to view themselves as disadvantaged in relative terms to their male counterparts. The following comment highlights the fact that many women feel that they are not being supported through the promotion process. Being a woman does not make one part of an 'old girls network' in the same way that the 'old boys network' is said to exist for men:

There is a lack of role models for promotion. Also you now seem to need so many qualifications to even start a career that having children just holds you back. If you make it to management level you are expected to be 'on call.' There is no formality in terms of when you work. It is expected that if you are part of management you will work late. I have family care commitments but I have never taken any days off because of this.

Another woman commented:

I do think it is more difficult being a woman. I do think you have to doubly prove yourself. It would be fair to say that when I was promoted I was promoted at the same time as two other colleagues within my school and I was the youngest by a long way. Other people in my school asked how I had managed to get promoted over a particular man because they didn't understand it. I think it was felt that they needed to put me in my place.

The following comments echoed the above position:

I think men can be more forthright than women. That people will accept a certain amount more of it because they are men. You don't fit a mould or a pattern. Or rather you fit some other mould or pattern. I see chaps employed here who will be difficult in meetings, you will still see them rise, but you don't see it so much with women. I think it is generally the perception that women don't do that and I find that my experience of the women here is that they don't speak up for themselves, they don't fight their corner, and will sit quietly through meetings. Very few of the women speak, so that when you get someone like myself who does speak, you look different. I perceive it to be an obstacle for me. I have one instance where I think it has been,where I applied for a job that I didn't get. A white man, in exactly the same position as me got the job. I was going to write to the Dean to point that out and then I thought it would look like sour grapes so I said nothing. Where we are different is that he plays the game and I don't, he is a male who will run around and do anything and everything that's asked.

She went on to say that:

There are a lot of women doing a hell of a lot of work in the belief that it is going to get them up the hierarchy and it won't. It's still the case here. You have research, teaching and administrative work, three major wings. For promotion you have to excel in two or three of these, but it's still the case that administrative tasks do not really feature, and that research is tops. It's mostly males that are doing that. We are blindly following a path, believing it will open a door.

However one woman said:

There is a game to be played and I think women can be as destructive as men. It's still a masculine structure. The force that is driving it is very much male. When I first got my position I reflected and thought why me? Why now? What had I done to break this ceiling and it worried me for a very long time? I worried that I was a token. I worried that my work wasn't good enough. I wonder every day why I have this position, why I was allowed in. Why not someone else? If I was a man I wouldn't question it. I would think I was good and I am here because I am good and I deserve it.

Perhaps the strongest criticism is for other women, colleagues whom one woman described as having 'lost their humanity on the way up.' She went on to explain:

> Some of my worst experiences have been at the hands of other women that would call themselves feminists. I have suffered levels of harassment that I wouldn't want to get into and women that in the past I have trusted have let me down. People who were radical people when they came in and then they became managers and I have been a manager so I know how the system gets you. Quite radical people now say uncritically that we have to deliver on all these things which are really inane and pathetic. You say why and they say because … and you still say why but you don't get anywhere. The point that I keep coming back to is that these women who used to be radical feminists are now speaking in a language that is belittling of the work people do. We are losing the humanity in our decision making.

It would seem that many women are yet to achieve full equality in the workplace. The real struggle begins for most women when it comes to utilising their rights. Thus male dominance in the academic world continues to live on. The authors are left with the view that the continued and ongoing struggle women face when working in academia and trying to achieve a balance in their lives is by no means over yet. Women often are unable to participate effectively in academic life without feeling that they have compromised their roles as women. They are forced to be more passive than they would wish, to take roles they would not choose to take and lack career opportunities like training and sabbaticals. It is still a man's world and an uneven playing field.

Maintaining this work/life balance whilst trying to push the greater cause for the good of our gender inevitably proves difficult at times. There is a constant need to prove ourselves in the hope that an institution will be impressed by the huge amount of work that we do, but it feels that it is never quite enough. Yet we somehow need to find ways to maintain our own lifelong learning.

The current strains women face in society such as rising child care costs and the gender pay gap, whilst trying to live up to the notion of the 'superwoman' often leaves many women feeling inadequate and as if they have failed. Many women who do feel they have achieved great status academically will often believe that this is at the cost of their personal life. One interviewee said:

> You have to put yourself to one side so much. You become what they want you to be. I think that happens so much with women, you fulfil the role that every one wants you to be and then you begin to believe that this is your role. You have to make your choices and that is what I am doing now. I had no work/life balance but now I have stopped opening my emails at home. It is totally liberating. I have also brought all my books in to my office. I thought I couldn't live without my books at home and if the email went down I thought I was going to die, but it has been so liberating. It's like getting rid of your security blanket and it's so much better.

Many higher education institutions in the UK have been slow to adopt the flexible working hours and favourable work conditions, such as childcare at work,

that would allow women greater chances of success in being high career achievers academically. For example one woman noted the impact that introducing a third semester would have on those with young children:

> Having a family shouldn't stop you from doing the same as anybody else. Now we are asked to be here until 7pm for open days. Well what are you meant to do if you have young children? Why should you be seen as unco-operative because you have to go to your youngsters at home? I would dread to be in that situation but too many women are. The other thing is the bringing in of the third semester. Who looks after the children during the third semester which is effectively their summer holiday? The jargon is there, the words are there, the rhetoric is correct, the policies are there but the practice is not. I think that men have a much easier time within the institution and also the way that they are looked after outside of it. Most men that I have worked with in higher education are like little boys with a mummy at home, not a wife. Their washing is done, their cleaning is done, the shopping is done, the ironing is done. All they have to do is get into work, do their job and go home again. Now if I had that, I could probably be very successful, whereas the women who are doing that are also trying to be successful. Those that break through are few and far between.

It may be, as mentioned by several of our interviewees, that lack of tenure meant that they did not have the confidence to apply for sabbaticals or research breaks as they were worried about future employment. Some of our interviewees mentioned peer review with regard to obtaining tenured employment but felt that this was weighted in favour of male employees as the majority of the peers carrying out the review were male. This may be a misperception, but from our research it appears to be a widespread view. Lack of security and short term contract working appears to make us carry out a vast amount of extra work in order to prove ourselves worthy of a permanent contract, even if not tenure. This means that trying to strike a balance between work and home life is much harder and in many cases impossible.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It would appear from our interviews that often the 'unfriendliness' of the academic environment manifests itself in its blindness to the difficulties and impediments faced by women, as these are not the same as those encountered by men. Academic identity is a negotiated and contested space: multi-faceted, fragmented and ever changing. Constructions of identities that are created through discourses and practices of the academy must be located within debates that consider inclusion and exclusion. The nature of the difficulties faced by women within higher education is little different to those faced by women elsewhere, who seek to escape the drudgery of traditional female occupations and carve out for themselves a more fulfilling and rewarding career path. Men clearly expect women to compete on apparently equal terms although the conditions they face respectively are far from equal. Men, in

general, have the luxury to focus on their careers in a way that women largely cannot. Higher Education institutions often fail to appreciate the real and considerable sacrifices made by women in pursuing their careers and as a consequence frequently fail to make concessions. There is little recognition that equality of competition does not lead to equality of opportunity or equality of outcome. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that women tend to regard themselves as 'other' to what is, essentially, a male institution.

We must stress that these women's experiences were not entirely negative. Whilst there are many obstacles faced by women, it is important to emphasise that for many women the undoubtedly high cost was a price worth paying when set against the rewards of being able to follow what they see as a stimulating and interesting career path. There was recognition that to a large degree they were privileged (albeit a privilege hard won) to be working in a Higher Education institution and this did generate a not inconsiderable sense of job satisfaction. Certainly, there was stress and worry, particularly in trying to keep pace with fresh objectives (such as those arising from the RAE), but these also contributed to a feeling that their work was both challenging and stimulating.

The important thing that we can take away from the interviews that we conducted is a growing realisation by women that through the tribulations that they face in the workplace they are helping to challenge traditional notions of what the workplace is entitled to expect of its employees. Traditionally few concessions had to be made because as long as it was assumed that men were the breadwinners and women, by and large, stayed at home, it was considered entirely reasonable that an employer could make unconditional demands upon a workforce. However, while the advances that women have made are by no means insignificant it should not distract us from the very real obstacles that women still face and the frustration that this engenders within us. The unfairness experienced by women is real and the time for addressing its causes are long overdue.

Lifelong learning offers the potential to help militate against some of the imbalances of gender, and should be able to offer women opportunities to both develop their careers and to engage in learning for its own sake and for personal development, thus enhancing work/life balance. For some of the women in this study, however, although there could be joys and pleasures in developing their lifelong learning, it could also be seen as one more task in their lives. In the Green Paper discussed above, David Blunkett stated that:

> Learning has a wider contribution. It helps make ours a civilized society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community. It strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation. It helps fulfil our potential and opens doors to a love of music, art and literature. That is why we value learning for its own sake as well as for the equality of opportunity that it brings (Blunkett, 1998).

If lifelong learning is to help in balancing life/work experiences, it needs to move from an emphasis on work alone towards this vision.

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Final Comments and Reflections

THE CHALLENGES AND NEGOTIATIONS OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION[1]

Pamela Cotterill[1], Sue Jackson[2] and Gayle Letherby[3]
[1]Staffordshire University; [2]Birkbeck, University of London; *[3]University of Plymouth*

INTRODUCTION

In this, our final chapter, our aim is not to summarise the rest of the book, but to open and develop some of the debates that have been initiated here. In particular, we want to consider issues of lifelong learning and educational opportunities more widely. In considering some of the challenges and negotiations of lifelong learning for women in higher education, we consider not just women as academics, but also women as students. In addition, we go beyond a context of higher education into the broader fields of lifelong learning. We hope that readers of this book will recognise something of themselves in the issues we raise, and that they (you) will explore and develop emerging themes.

It is not possible nowadays to open a university prospectus or access the website, without encountering a reference to lifelong learning. Lifelong learning journals and articles on lifelong learning proliferate. A click on Google brings up half a million UK sites and two and a half million worldwide. A discourse of lifelong learning abounds. This all sounds well and good. There can be no-one reading this book who does not agree that learning is a good thing, and who believes that we all do – or should – carry on learning throughout our lives. However, whilst we might be agreed on that, we may find it more problematic to agree what lifelong learning means. Definitions are fluid and imprecise, loosely used with vague but hegemonic understandings. Meaning is elusive and, despite the myriad of definitions available, the phrase escapes definition, and has been described as 'slippery' (Hodgson, 2000). Lifelong learning is a highly fluid and contestable concept (Field, 2000; Hughes, 2001; Jackson, 2002, 2003), with multiple overlapping and differing meanings.

P. Cotterill, S. Jackson, and G. Letherby (eds.), Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education, 241–253.

Whilst lifelong learning can mean all learning from the cradle to the grave, including formal, non-formal and informal learning, it is most frequently taken as synonymous with formal post-compulsory and, increasingly, post-14 learning. However, lifelong learning includes learning in educational institutions, in the workplace, in the home, and in religious, voluntary and community organisations.

Lifelong learning is a route for personal and political economic growth; it encourages development individually, locally, nationally and globally. It enables personal fulfilment; and the development of an active and inclusive society. Clear links are made between community learning and social and political change and between informal learning and the development of citizenship (Coare and Johnston, 2003). However, as all the contributors to this book have shown, lifelong learning can also be a mechanism for exclusion and social control, upholding and generating deep-rooted inequalities. The policies and practices of lifelong learning have been appropriated by whoever has an interest in doing so, including both the political right and left. In fact, lifelong learning can be all things to all people, and nothing to anyone.

Whilst lifelong learning is said to open up possibilities, for some the possibilities are greater than for others. Socio-economic and other factors lead to a narrowing down or even absence of possibilities, whilst the more privileged are able to claim greater access to limited resources. Take higher education. There are very many talented and qualified working-class young people who are denied places at 'elite' universities, which remain dominated by largely middle-class groups, ensuring the reproduction of privilege in an expanded higher education system. Whilst working-class students are occupying some places at post-1992 universities, apparent hierarchies of learning means that this can be bound with perceptions of lower quality education and feelings of deficit, reflecting and reproducing positions of disadvantage (Archer *et al*., 2003). Minority ethnic groups are generally well represented in higher education, although they too are disproportionately located within the post-1992 universities. Women are now taking their places in universities in equal (or above equal) numbers to men, but are still primarily located in specific subjects and disciplines. Very few women, for example, read 'hard' sciences or engineering. The position of women students, like that of women academics, can be related to the 'male cultural hegemony' as discussed by Barbara Bagilhole (Chapter 1). Furthermore, an analysis of gender and higher education involves more than a numbers game in that women as workers and learners are likely to be positioned in lower status roles (e.g. Louise Morley, Chapter 3) in relation to stereotypically gendered expectations (Karen Ramsay, Chapter 2). Structural inequalities are ignored in a debate that speaks only of rights and responsibilities. Whilst at its best, lifelong learning can be inspirational, at its worst, it can produce and reproduce structural and material inequalities.

The European Commission declared 1996 the European Year of Lifelong Learning, and from the late 1990s onwards lifelong learning became part of the new

educational landscapes of Europe. In a Memorandum, drawn up in Lisbon in 2000, a 10 year Mission was set for Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (European Council, Lisbon, March 2000).

But European adult learning participation rates are lower than those of its major global competitors, including higher, adult and vocational learning. A need was recognised to improve/develop participation and coherent lifelong learning strategies were seen as a key way to achieve this. The Commission identified technological and digital developments, intercultural relations, ageing populations and global markets as key areas for strategies. There was a recognition that formal learning has dominated policy thinking, and that non-formal and informal learning are largely ignored (European Commission, 2001). By 2004, in an interim report on progress towards the Lisbon goals, a key message was articulated, stating that higher levels of participation in lifelong learning, especially in adult life, must be achieved, with corresponding reforms in education and training.

Similar concerns were being debated globally. In Australia, for example, there was concern that a capacity to achieve higher levels of educational participation may be undermined by the widening socio-economic gap between individuals in highly paid/high-skilled jobs and people in low-paid/low-skilled work. A report for the Australian government concluded that the emphasis the Australian lifelong learning policy agenda places on individuals' co-financing of their own learning contradicts its stress on lifelong learning as a remedy for social exclusion (Watson, 2003).

As Amanda Loumansky et al show in chapter 11, although in Britain the newly elected New Labour government appeared to show an immediate commitment to lifelong learning, it very clearly linked lifelong learning to the economy. Indeed, from the outset the Prime Minister emphasized the economic above other elements of learning, stating that 'learning is the key to prosperity', and 'education is the best economic policy we have' (DfEE, 1998: 7-9). There were also additional competing discourses about lifelong learning, showing on the one hand that individuals (especially workers) should be responsible for the development of their own lifelong learning, and on the other that lifelong learning needs government intervention (Young, 2000: 97). Such intervention can take the form of 'various incentives, mainly financial, such as vouchers or tax breaks, but also persuasion, veiled threat or even moral bullying' (Griffin, 2001: 12).

Today, the main purpose of lifelong learning appears to be that it leads to economic participation and greater opportunities in the employment market, enmeshed in competitive advantage. Current UK policies on 'lifelong' learning are focused primarily on economically active 18 to 30 year-old people with discourses that are linked, through the labour market and the development of skills and training, to economic participation and the knowledge economy. However, such a learning agenda (re)constructs the structural inequalities of gender, class and other differences, where certain types of knowledge, skills and work are valued above others.

DISCOURSES OF PARTICIPATION

All this is the backdrop to the ways in which the women represented in the chapters of this book are experiencing lifelong learning within a higher education context. There are increasing pressures within universities to compete in a global knowledge economy in highly individualistic ways. In considering what lifelong learning adds to discourses of participation, Jim Crowther (2004) argues that the state fosters conditions where people are expected to see themselves as lifelong learners, with the most active learners obtaining the highest levels of success. Discourses of participation in lifelong learning are closely aligned to the development of social capital. They highlight ways in which lifelong learning helps interweave diverse sets of relationships and develop the capacity for reciprocal trust and co-operation. However, social capital can be used to exclude as well as include:

> Communications may not be shared with outsider groups, and new ideas and skills may be ignored because they come from outside the network. (Field, 2000: 129)

Being included or excluded from any particular network can be partly determined by a sense of personal identity, including constructions of gender and social class as discussed in this volume by Val Walsh (Chapter 4) and by Pamela Cotterill, Maureen Hirsch and Gayle Letherby (Chapter 9). Despite the rhetoric, policies and practices of lifelong learning are aimed at the development of other forms of capital apart from social. In her considerations of formations of class and gender, Skeggs argues that:

> respectability is one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class. It informs how we speak, who we speak to, how we classify others, what we study and how we know who we are (or are not). (Skeggs, 1997: 1)

Constructs of 'respectability' play a role in determining entitlement to learning opportunities, and in the development of identity capital. A sense of identity is a major issue in understanding and explaining people's participation. Cote and Levene (2002) introduce the concept of identity capital to explain the assets accumulated by some members of society through social environments. Identity capital includes intangible resources such as ego strength, locus of control and self-esteem, developed through access to particular learning opportunities and definitions of citizenship and inclusion. However, in her work with women access students, Penny Jane Burke (2004) shows how the women's narratives demonstrate a reinforcement of meritocratic discourses that construct access students as individuals outside of gendered and classed relations. With lifelong learning policies constructing access education as primarily a functional and utilitarian bridge into work, the complex social processes of identifications, exclusions and inclusions that operate within (and outside) educational sites are obscured. A sense of identity is developed through our understandings of who we are not, as well as of who we are.

To know that we are women, for example, may mean that what we know is that we are not men. To recognise possession of a working-class identity may entail an understanding of exclusion from a middle-class identity.

Cultural capital, too, depends on exclusionary practices. Bourdieu (1997) describes cultural capital as the assets obtained by more privileged groups who have the power to convert their own tastes into social distinction. In struggles for possession of cultural capital, cultural assets become generative sources of power, helping to perpetuate social and economic advantage (and disadvantage). Cultural capital is a resource that yields power, including distinctions of social hierarchies. Its accumulation enables 'intergenerational' transmission through families whose class position determines the amount of cultural capital gained through, for example, universities, museums and other cultural sites, determining what counts as knowledge.

Whilst cultural capital depends in part on collective learning (Fyfe, 2004), human capital is a personal asset that refers to the knowledge, skills and qualifications that an individual accumulates during a lifetime, through organised learning. The development of human capital is the responsibility of individuals, who must maximise their learning opportunities, although the types of opportunities are selective and hierarchical. In a discourse of individual autonomy, it is incumbent on individuals to find, recognise and develop the learning opportunities which will enable them to take their place in a working society. In a focus away from 'class' and towards a discourse of social inclusion and exclusion, access to inclusion is seen as via paid employment. To be included, we need possession of or access to material capital. Other forms of active engagement in society – unpaid work in the home and/or caring work, for example, or volunteering – remain undervalued. Ironically, though, these very activities – caring and emotional work – are a significant part of the normative female academic's role (see Christina Hughes, Lynn Clouder, Jackie Pritchard, Judy Purkis, and Viv Barnes, Chapter 7 and Karen Ramsay, Chapter 2). The 'socially excluded' are those who are not defined as economically active. A language of widening participation for disadvantaged social groups has all but disappeared, with an emphasis on individual need to 'Aimhigher'.

Today, 'progressive' universities, working with a widening participation agenda, have become old hat. The real progressive universities are those which deal only with employment. Take the UK government initiative, for example, of having the University for Industry, aiming to increase levels of skill in the working population, with the flagship of learndirect, a government sponsored initiative in workforce development. Or take the corporate universities including the much heralded but ill-fated National Health Service University, metamorphosed into the NHS Institute for Learning, Skills and Innovation. The NHS exemplifies carefully placed boundaries, job demarcation and separation – often with regard to gender – and it was always unlikely that the learning encouraged by the NHSU would challenge this. Power relations can and do subvert learning opportunities.

Outside of universities, the Learning and Skills Council – responsible for post-16 training in the UK – pays close regard to the development needs of small firms. The Learning and Skills Council has also promoted a new initiative, with the launch of the Modern Apprenticeships Scheme. Schoolchildren as young as fourteen are now able to spend two days a week in the workplace learning 'on the job' skills. Over a quarter of a million learners are currently on apprenticeship schemes: these have been particularly successful with regards to business administration, engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy, land-based provision, retailing, and health and social care. Such apprenticeships are likely to be gender specific. Women and girls currently take up only a tiny percentage of apprenticeships in the manual trades, yet the biggest skills gaps that have been recorded are in building, plumbing and engineering (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000478/index.shtml).

The British government describes the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme as an exciting prospect for any pupil wanting to pursue industry-specific vocational programmes on top of the core national curriculum. Maybe so, but it is likely to ensure that working-class young people (especially working-class boys) are able to take their place in a prescribed socio-economic order. There is nothing new about this of course, but arguably there is less concern today with the need for skills than there is with creating new types of malleable workers, willing to train and retrain, and to accept responsibility for their career or lack of it (Crowther, 2004).

However, when skills are seen to form an inevitable part of education and learning, these are the particular skills identified by employers as gaps in the labour market. These skills go on to form part of education policy and strategies. It is not surprising if the public has come to view all education – including higher education – as one that needs to emphasise employer needs and economic policy. Yet, as Paul Armstrong (2000) shows in his work on social exclusion and lifelong learning, the direct relationship between education and employment has always been problematic. Whilst there is inevitably some relationship between education and the economy, it has never been a simple causal one.

And yet even for those in employment, for many the work they do is poorly paid, unrewarding and exploitative, whilst working-class men are still disproportionately affected by long-term unemployment. Although not so affected by unemployment, women still earn less than men, are more likely to be in part-time non-secure and hourly paid work, are less likely to have work-related pensions or other benefits and are less likely to reach senior management positions. Despite the seeming frenzy of worry that girls do better than boys at school, learning does not appear to balance out gender inequalities in the workplace, and divisions of labour remain gendered, classed and 'racialised'. (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Hakim, 2004)

And so, in a world where – as Margaret Thatcher (Britain's Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990) so infamously stated - 'class' is outdated and there is no such thing as 'society', it is every man for himself and, as long as he is white, middle-class and

not disabled, he is likely to succeed. So, with all this talk about lifelong learning, what we want to ask here is whose lives are included, for how long, and engaging with what types of learning.

Negotiations into and through education are complex and mediated not only by gender but by other factors. Today, it is no longer fashionable to talk about class, but about socially included and excluded groups. However, we remain stubbornly unfashionable here. 'Class' is complicated and controversial, but we, like others (Archer et al., 2003; Skeggs, 1997) still find it useful for considering life chances, including educational life chances, where opportunities have both expanded and retracted for working-class students.

Issues of identity – including working-class identities - remain central to how we negotiate our learning opportunities. We all have to recognise something of ourselves in current or future possibilities and a sense of who we are (or are not) can exclude us from places where we perceive ourselves to be already excluded (Reay *et al*., 2001). Universities continue to be seen as 'not for the likes of us', with working-class identities not associated with academic success. Whilst more students from lower socio-economic groups and working-class backgrounds are going to university, the balance between the social groups remains pretty much unchanged. There is still a large gap in entry to higher education by social class, with students from middle-class backgrounds three times more likely to go to university than those from poorer backgrounds (http://www.statistics.gov.uk). Tackling social exclusion is often linked to raising or changing working-class aspirations or attitudes (Archer *et al*., 2003). Young working-class people may view themselves as 'not good enough' and believe that they 'know their limits' in relation to post-compulsory educational routes. However, these views are constructed and compounded by complex social and institutional factors, and are exacerbated by educational policies that impact upon inner-city 'failing' schools and disadvantaged communities (Archer and Yamashita, 2003). All too often, this means that working-class identities are seen in deficit.

RHETORIC AND REALITY

In the UK, the government has been very interested in showcasing foundation degrees, launched in September 2001. Within the first 4 years, over 24,000 students have signed up for a foundation degree, many of them likely to be from lower socio-economic groups: clearly a mark of success. And yet the currency of these two-year vocational degrees is still to be determined. Whilst they might open up training routes, they are unlikely to foster engagement with lifelong learning, and are designed to equip students with the technical skills needed by employers. The DfES tells employers that foundation degrees will help develop, upskill and retrain the current workforce, leading to more flexible employees. Clearly flexibility will be of some benefit to the workforce, giving greater opportunities for employment in changing

markets. But to stay continually flexible also means having to accept short-term contracts and less job security, as well as having to be prepared to continually retrain. It may also mean juggling huge amounts of labour at home and at work leaving little time for anything else (Jan Sellers, Chapter 10 and Amanda Loumansky, Sue Goodman and Sue Jackson, Chapter 11) including further lifelong learning (Arwen Raddon, Chapter 8). Today, learning is about developing the skills necessary to take our places in a global economy. This means that jobs for life are no longer an option – instead we are expected to aim for employment for life. For many of us, the employment available to us is determined by many factors that have nothing to do with whether or not we have taken a foundation degree, including our gender, 'race', socio-economic background and age. In a skills-based agenda for learning, all skills are not equal and some skills will not be recognised at all, including the skills women develop in the home, and the skills that are developed in community and voluntary work. Some skills – explicitly linked to the economy - will be valued highly; others (like teaching the arts, humanities and social sciences) will not.

For in today's climate of rights and responsibilities of citizens, the emphasis is on learning, not teaching. Teachers are no longer needed: they have become facilitators of learning. Learners must take responsibility for self-directed learning and personal development plans; they must choose and combine routes of learning that meet their specific needs. At the same time, they must be aware of and exercise their rights as customers and consumers in a market-led education system. Teachers supply what learners demand. (Marchbank and Letherby, 2001)

And yet they do so within the boundaries of regulations and funding and procedures and quality assurance and subject reviews and assessment exercises (Morley, 2003). If students demand that they are offered interesting and exciting courses which enable them to expand their horizons, develop new passions for learning, build confidence and self-awareness, yet also say that they do not wish to submit formal assessment – that learning for the love of learning is enough, educators are not able to oblige. We know that learning for its own sake is supposed to develop active citizenship, community involvement, and be better for our health and family relationships (Schuller *et al*., 2004). Yet teachers cannot facilitate that learning unless they determine the outcomes of the learning in advance, and ensure that those (our) outcomes are the ones students have achieved. Students engage in learning for all sorts of reasons, and sometimes choose to abandon learning programmes also for all sorts of (very legitimate) reasons. Yet in such circumstances, it is not just the students who are deemed to have failed, but also their teachers and indeed their institutions. Many institutions are, therefore, having to think very carefully about the sorts of students they want to attract and about how to attract them (Jocey Quinn, Chapter 6). These students are more likely to be 18 year-olds with 'good' A levels – so much for widening participation.

The government has the laudable aim of achieving a 50% participation rate of a university education for people aged 18-30. It is a start, and foundation degrees have

played their part in this. However, in around 30 years' time nearly half the population of Britain will be over 50, the majority without a university education. There are growing numbers of elderly people for whom learning could take on increasing importance. There are currently more people in the UK over the age of 60 than there are under the age of 16. However, few of these learners or potential learners are likely to be interested in assessment, to which funding is attached. Over 40% of daytime students on non-vocational, non-accredited courses are aged 60+, compared with fewer than 20% on vocational and accredited courses. Additionally, it can be particularly difficult for older learners to access funding. They often want to learn for leisure reasons, whilst funding is generally directed towards vocational learning (NIACE 2002).

The current figures for participation by the over 50s are shameful, and yet for working-class people, women and minority ethnic groups in this age range, participation in most forms of post-compulsory learning even when younger will have been minimal. For most people in these groups, including one of the authors, continuing in education beyond the age of 15 was not an option, not even an unfulfilled dream. Education was not for the 'likes of us'. And current widening participation and Aimhigher initiatives, including the funding that supports them, means that education remains not for the 'likes of us'.

So with all this talk of 'life'long learning, whose lives do we mean? Not it seems the lives of the over 50s, nor the lives of those who want to engage in learning for its own sake, nor (unless we mean 'lifelong training') the lives of working-class people, nor the lives of many women or people from disadvantaged groups or of those who are socially excluded. We are, we are told, living in a knowledge society. If so, then we need to ask questions about how 'knowledge' is defined, or 'expertise', or 'skills', or 'qualifications', or even 'learning'? And by whom? 'Knowledge' becomes that which is constructed by those who have the power to do so, including the state, employers and educational institutions, especially universities (Jackson, 2004).

One initiative of the current UK government is to establish a network of knowledge exchanges to be examples of good practice in the links between teaching and business. It is expected that this initiative will encourage and enhance the development of joint ventures between universities and businesses, between which sector skills councils will be expected to forge strong relationships, with substantial developments of the links between education and employment highlighted in *Learning to Succeed* (DfEE, 1999).

Despite the rhetoric, lifelong learning is not primarily about social cohesion, or active citizenship. With its widening participation target focusing almost entirely on those aged 18-30, the current Government clearly has its education agenda shaped by economic concerns, with increased participation planned for those considered to be worthiest investment for future productivity. Much policy interest is directed at

producing an efficient and productive workforce, a workforce in which opportunities are still created or denied according to gender, social class, ethnic background, disability, age and other differences.

As has been shown in the chapters of this book, learning can become a form of cultural, social and economic production and reproduction. Paul Armstrong (2000) suggests that there is doubt as to whether the attainment of education for the masses in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a victory for the working classes or the beginning of the end of their class consciousness. The same could be true today, with lifelong learning serving as a distraction from the more fundamental issues of welfare reform (Crowther, 2004).

And yet this is not – cannot be – the whole picture. Lifelong learning has such immense possibilities not least because it offers opportunities for new and creative ways of working (Jen Marchbank, Chapter 5). Just because lifelong learning may have become appropriated now in a discourse of individualism and instrumentalism, does not mean that we want to give up on it. As teachers and facilitators of learning (including our own), we have seen the differences that lifelong learning can make to people across the lifespan and in different ways. It should have the capacity to enrich lives, to develop self-confidence and personal growth, to enable people to explore and understand cultural differences, and to help with lifecourse transitions. And yes: lifelong learning can also help develop career opportunities. This aspect is not insignificant – it is just that it should not become the *raison d'être* for lifelong learning.

Although disadvantaged groups are currently largely excluded from the production of knowledge, especially in formal educational institutions and in the workplace, knowledge gained from and through our cumulative experiences is a valuable addition to current definitions of lifelong learning, producing new knowledges and ways of knowing. Many of the possibilities for lifelong learning are currently being fulfilled outside of formal educational institutions. There are many community-based learning initiatives: the University of the Third Age thrives for older learners; organisations like the National Federation of Women's Institutes have their own colleges and learning programmes; book clubs proliferate in village halls across the country; faith-based organisations have full learning programmes for adults and children; and learning takes place in museums and galleries. But if working-class people are to be constrained in a never-ending cycle of skills-based training to enable them to go from one short-term job to another, then lifelong learning will become the preserve of the middle-classes, or – to put it another way – those in higher socio-economic groups, who have the time and the resources to participate.

END POINTS

As has been seen throughout this book, in the lifelong learning stakes, gender matters. If we remind ourselves for a moment of the key themes of the book, it is

clear that constructions of gender are embedded throughout, although gender intersects with social class, age, 'race' and ethnicity. In the introduction to the book, we highlighted:

- home, work and emotional labour;
- careers, opportunities, payment and debt;
- accountability in higher education;
- measures of success and achievement for (women) academics and students;
- pedagogy and practice.

The book has journeyed through these themes and more; more explicitly perhaps in some sections and chapters than in others, but they are nevertheless evident throughout. The challenges that women face in higher education are multiple. Some are met with enthusiasm and pleasure. Others can at times drain us of time and energy. We negotiate multiple fields, and through multiple identities. That women are surviving at all is in large part due to adaptability, but sometimes that survival is at too high a cost, including having to survive in increasingly individualistic and competitive ways.

What is also clear though is that many women are finding ways of working collaboratively, of developing identities which involve different ways of being academic, of challenging life/work balances and of exploring and developing feminist pedagogic principles and practices. The academy now needs to meet some of these challenges for itself, and to find ways to develop lifelong learning that extends beyond current constructions of academic work to negotiate new ways of making meaning.

NOTES

[1] An earlier and abridged version of this chapter, entitled *Whose life is it anyway?: Considering "difference" in lifelong learning*, was given at the 35th Annual SCUTREA Conference, Sussex (July 2005) and included in the conference proceedings.

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